

ZHOB (PPI): Seven people, including a tribal elder, were shot dead in Zhob on Thursday. The incident was reported from Margha Kabzai area of Zhob where tribal leader Ahmad Kabzai and six of his companions were murdered and another injured. The Levies officials said that the incident was result of an old enmity. Their vehicle in which they were travelling was sprayed with bullets on Ghorlam Road in Margha Kabzai area of Zhob.

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) on Thursday approved an increase Rs3.23 per unit in wake of surcharge on the electricity bills as the government scrambles to secured IMF bailout package. Nepra Chairman Tausif H Farooqi heard the request sent by the government for increase in surcharge rate. The government sought surge in surcharge to meet expenses.

Shehbaz calls for national unity to tackle challenges

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday urged the national political leadership to forge unity for addressing the pervading challenges of economic instability and poverty, without letting the situation to further deteriorate.

The prime minister, addressing the Senate's special session marking its golden jubilee celebration, said economic stability without political stability was an unfulfillable dream. He said by assuming the government in tough economic conditions, the coalition parties had sacrificed their politics for the sake of the state.

He told the session, also attended by the diplomatic corps, that the staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was expected to reach soon as the country had accepted even the toughest conditions. The delay in the agreement, he said, was also due to the disorder created by the political opponents.

"A leader is poised to ruin the country, which cannot be allowed. We will not allow it," he said and clarified that during an attempt to arrest him, the government showed restraint just to avoid any restlessness. "But it is not possible to put the interest of the state and its 220 million people at stake," he warned. "Let us brighten the future of Pakistan. We should strive and not conspire, remove hurdles instead of creating more, unite the nation instead of creating division," the prime minister advised.

He recalled the historic incidents of the 1965 and 1971 wars, and the war against terrorism when the whole nation exhibited unity to overcome the challenges. He expressed his gratitude to the friendly countries for extending support after the unprecedented floods hit Pakistan. The

imported inflation created by the Ukraine war in form of surged oil, gas, food and fertiliser prices added up to the woes of developing countries like Pakistan. He told the session that the previous government had signed and flouted an agreement with the IMF undermining Pakistan's trust and making the 220 million people bear its brunt.

He said instead of shying away, the coalition parties opted the course of protecting the state, ignoring its political cost. He said to satisfy his ego, ex-prime minister Imran Khan refused to sit with his opposition even during the challenging circumstances of COVID-19, and confrontation with India and also ridiculed his idea of the Charter of Economy.

He said currently he was going in total defiance of the national institutions, including the judiciary and promoting the politics of agitation. Prime Minister Shehbaz said during the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government, the then opposition leaders were implicated in false cases but they neither uttered a word against the institutions nor violated the laws. He said Imran Khan launched a defamatory campaign against the incumbent government and labelled it as an "imported government" but later backed out of his claims of any US role in the removal of his government.

The prime minister reiterated his call for the national leadership to join heads and make major decisions on economic reforms, economic agenda and austerity measures, and ensure their implementation. He also lauded the historical role of political leadership in the past which played its historic role in promulgating the 1973 Constitution which granted equal rights to all the four provinces of the country.

He said the Senate of Pakistan always made legislation on all issues

PM inquires after health of Fazl

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday here arrived at the residence of the Chief of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Maulana Fazlur Rehman to inquire about his health. Federal Minister for Communications Maulana Asad Mehmood and Maulana Lutfur Rehman were also present at the meeting.

The Prime Minister inquired about the well-being and health of Maulana Fazlur Rehman, prayed for his early recovery and expressed best wishes for him. The two leaders also discussed in detail the present political situation in the country.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also said that the federal government would ensure early completion of its development projects in Sindh province.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah here, said that Thar Coal Project would not only help overcome country's energy needs but also open up new avenues for development in the area. He said that the center and federating units would have to make collective efforts for the public welfare. In the meeting, they discussed the matters pertaining to Sindh province, Federal ministers Ahsan Iqbal and Sardar Ayaz Sadiq also attended the meeting.

of importance through minute deliberation and seriousness. Later, Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani presented a memento to the prime minister as part of the 50 years celebrations of the Senate. The prime minister also presented a medallion to the Senate chairman as part of the celebrations.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing a special session of Senate of Pakistan to mark the Golden Jubilee of Senate.

PM assures early release of Dr. Aafia

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday instructed the Foreign Ministry to remain fully engaged with the US Government and Pakistan's Mission in Washington, for Dr. Aafia Siddiqui's well-being and for her early release. The matter was discussed as Dr Aafia's sister Dr Fowzia Siddiqui called on the prime minister here.

Dr. Fowzia thanked the prime minister for receiving her. She appreciated that the government measures the government was undertaking for Dr. Aafia's well-being and requested the Government of Pakistan to redouble its efforts for the early release of Dr. Aafia.

Toshakhana case No respite for Imran as court maintains warrants

ISLAMABAD (APP): A local court on Thursday, here, dismissed the plea of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan, seeking cancellation of non-bailable arrest warrants in the Toshakhana case and maintained its earlier orders to the police to produce the accused after arresting him.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal said that the application had been viewed from every legal aspect before issuing this order. He announced the verdict which was earlier reserved after hearing arguments from the lawyers.

Earlier during the course of the proceedings, Inspector General of Police Islamabad Akbar Nasir appeared before the court and adopted the stance that how he would answer to the families of the police personnel who suffered cruelty in Lahore. The IG further apprised the court that unarmed police personnel were sent there for the execution of the court orders.

The IGP said that no representative of Islamabad police was allowed to meet Imran Khan, adding that an assurance was also given last day regarding his appearance. No one had talked to Islamabad police in Zaman Park instead the police was "attacked with petrol bombs", he confided to the court. The IG Islamabad contended that everyone was equal before the law. "If one person is given the relief then other people have the same rights," he said, adding that the police water cannon was burnt and 65 personnel were injured in the clashes with the PTI supporters who resisted the arrest of Imran. Earlier, the judge remarked that the Islamabad High Court (IHC) had endorsed the orders of this court.

Govt nothing to do with warrants of arrest: Marriyum

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb has said that Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Imran Khan was "uttering blatant lies". "Government has nothing to do with his arrest, nor his arrest has anything to do with the delay in elections as Imran is pro-

jecting in the foreign and domestic media", she said while talking to Sky News.

The minister said Imran Khan was continuously breaking the law instead of cooperating with the police which was only implementing court orders. She said corruption cases were registered against Khan and he had to be arrested and brought to court to face the charges.

India okays purchase of military equipment

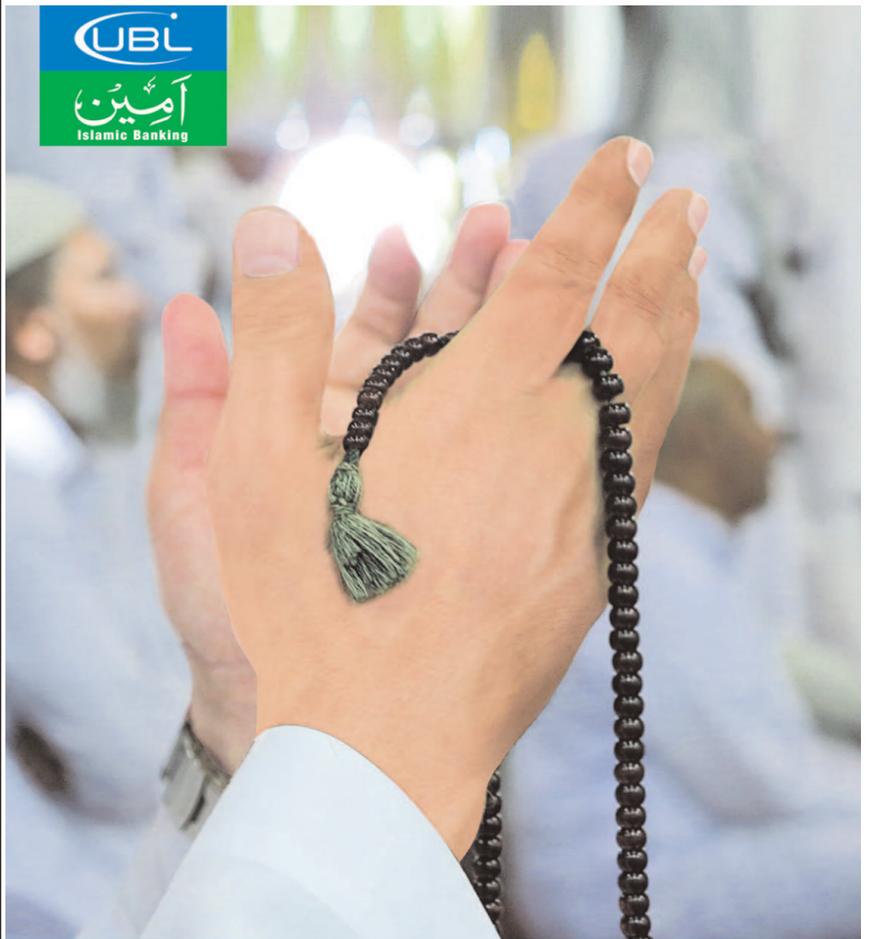
NEW DELHI (Agencies): India on Thursday approved purchases of missiles, helicopters, artillery guns and electronic warfare systems worth \$8.5 billion as it sought to add more teeth to its military.

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), the top government body for capital acquisition approvals for the Indian military, approved the orders worth 705 billion rupees (\$8.52bn) for all its services, the Defence Ministry said in a statement. All orders would be placed with Indian companies, it said, keeping with a push by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to boost domestic defence manufacturing.

Flanked by fellow nuclear-armed powers China and Pakistan and running tensions with Chinese troops along its disputed Himalayan frontier, India has been seeking to modernise its mostly Soviet-era military equipment. The focus on the navy, which accounted for approvals worth 560 billion rupees on Thursday, comes after India expressed concern last year over Chinese activity in the Indian Ocean. The list of purchases approved included 200 additional BrahMos missiles, 50 utility helicopters and electronic warfare systems for the navy.

BrahMos is a supersonic missile with a range of around 300 km that has been jointly developed by India and Russia. All three Indian military services have been using versions of the missile for over a decade. The DAC also approved manufacturing of a diesel marine engine, which will be a first for India.

It approved the air forces proposal for a long range stand-off weapon to be used by the Sukhoi-30MKI fighter jet. The army got the nod to buy 307 units of 155mm/52 caliber towed artillery guns, along with high mobility vehicles and gun towing vehicles.



Hajj-e-Baitullah... Aapki Khidmat UBL Ki Sa'adat

Hajj applications can be submitted from March 16, 2023 till March 31, 2023 in any UBL branch.

Regular Hajj Scheme		Sponsorship Hajj Scheme	
South Region	North Region	South Region	North Region
PKR 1,165,000	PKR 1,175,000	USD 4,285**	USD 4,325**
Infant* PKR 61,865	Infant* PKR 62,865	Infant* USD 227**	Infant* USD 231**
Selection will be through balloting.		Selection will be on first come, first serve basis.	
For foreign remittance payment Account Title: Hajj Collection 2023-MORA Account IBAN No: PK26UNIL0109000293302713 Swift Code: UNILPKKA741			

The amount mentioned above does not include Qurbani. Given information is provided by Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) and can be changed.

*Born after Aug 02, 2021.

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Kalma Chowk underpass to be opened on March 23

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Minister for Communications & Works and Excise Punjab Bilal Afzal on Thursday said that on Pakistan Day (March 23), the Punjab government would fully open the under-construction Kalma Chowk underpass for traffic.

He was presiding over a review meeting of the under-construction CBD Punjab Boulevard and Underpass project on Thursday at the site. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Lahore Central Business District (CBD) Authority Imran Amin and Chief Engineer Riaz Hussain briefed the provincial minister on the progress of the development work.

Bilal Afzal said that there must be no compromise on global safety standards in this project. He said that it was a positive aspect that no accident occurred in such a big construction project so far.

The minister said, "In view of public difficulties, as soon as a part of project is completed, it is opened for traffic." Later, Bilal Afzal inspected the construction work on the spot and directed the officers that all the concerned departments should work together day and night to complete the project on time. He urged the officials of Nespak to provide all possible cooperation in achieving the set goals and remove the obstacles in this regard. Earlier, the provincial minister was told in a briefing that the excavation of Ali Zeb Road underpass would be completed on 19th March and the carpeting of the road would start on March 20.

The CEO assured the Minister that every possible effort would be made to complete the work by March 23.

Addl. IGP visits BQATI

KARACHI (APP): Additional Inspector General of Police Karachi Javed Alam Odho on Thursday visited Bin Qasim Association of Trade and Industry (BQATI). The IG was briefed in detail on Port Qasim by the Association's officials, said a news release.

The industrialists apprised the police chief of the problems being faced by them. They demanded for the increase of number of traffic police personnel to ensure the smooth flow of traffic. The BQATI officials requested the IG for establishment of a separate police station for Port Qasim. Additional IGP Karachi directed the SSP concerned to work with the DIGP to determine the jurisdictions of police stations and resolve the security issues. The DIGP will consult with the BQATI to address traffic issues. The police chief told the business community to work on the command and control CCTV network in which police would fully cooperate with them.

On this occasion, shields were presented to Karachi Police Chief, DIGP and SSP. BQATI President Rashid Jan Muhammad, Senior Vice President Usman Ahmed, Secretary Abdul Rahman and other members were present on the occasion.

'Parliamentary contacts vital for boosting ties between Pakistan-Kosovo'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf on Thursday stressed in enhancing Parliament-to-Parliament contacts, which he termed vital for deepening the economic, political and cultural ties between Kosovo and Pakistan.

The speaker expressed these views during a meeting with Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to Pakistan Agon Vrezezi who called on the former.

He also believed that establishing parliamentary friendship groups between the parliaments of both countries would take bilateral ties to new heights.

"Pakistan attaches great importance to its ties with Kosovo. Despite the long distance between the two countries and the absence of Resident Missions, Pakistan

and Kosovo people are very close to each other," he added.

The Speaker also highlighted the devastating impacts of climate change on Pakistan, particularly the devastating floods of 2022.

Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo to Pakistan Agon Vrezezi expressed his gratitude to the Speaker for the warm reception. He shared that it was his first visit to Pakistan and that he found the capital to be a calm and beautiful place. He also apprised that Kosovo had a young and resilient population, and its current leadership was eager to establish linkages with other countries around the world. The ambassador expressed his appreciation for Pakistan being one of the first countries to recognize Kosovo's independence.

PPP Central Punjab submits 285 nomination papers on 202 seats of PA elections

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Central Punjab submitted nomination papers of 285 candidates for 202 seats of the Punjab Assembly elections in various offices of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

According to the PPP sources on Thursday, Afraz Naqvi, Rana Faqir, Sajjad Nazir, Zafar Alisha, Akram Rana, Sufyan Khalid Gharki, Farooq Ashraf, Zulfikar Hayat, Naem Dastgir, Rai Imtiaz, Imran Noel, Raza Abbas, Muqoob Toloo, Shaheem Safdar, Arshad Khan, Asif Khokhar, Zubair Hamza, Rukhsana Baunayad, Dr

Jahanzeb, Rai Ahmad Hasan, Ali Hasnain, Ghulam Mujtaba.

Malik Hashim, Tanveer Mohal, Khalid Nawaz Bob and Chaudhry Iftikhar submitted their nomination papers from different districts.

About 42 candidates had submitted their nomination papers from Lahore, 40 from Rawalpindi, 20 from Sialkot, 30 from Faisalabad, 15 each from Sheikhupura and Kasur, 11 from Attock, 10 from Chakwal, 21 from Gujranwala, four from Mandi Bahauddin, 10 from Sargodha and four candidates had submitted their papers from Mianwali.

Minister for working on dairy sector to enhance milk, meat production

LAHORE (APP): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain on Thursday stressed the need for working on dairy sector by utilizing modern technologies to enhance milk and meat production.

Presiding over the concluding ceremony of a two-day International Conference on Health Security (ICHS) organised by Department of Veterinary Medicine the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS) in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and under the umbrella of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) held at a local hotel, he said strong linkages were required to fill the gap between consumers' demand and product quality research. He said such conferences were necessary for the development of livestock sector. He advised that climate change must be included in the curriculum to address climate issue in Pakistan. He lauded the UVAS for arranging the conference.

Speaking on the occasion, UVAS Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Nasim Ahmad said that ICHS under the CPEC provided unique opportunities to jointly work with Chinese well-known universities for the capacity building in the areas of dairy and meat products processing and value addition. He also mentioned the role, ranking and historic importance of the UVAS in Pakistan to uplift the livestock sector.

Earlier, Professor Dr Joon Seok Chae from College of Veterinary Medicine, Seoul National University Republic of Korea presented the recommendation of the conference while ICHS Organizing Secretary Professor Dr Aneela Zameer Durrani presented vote of thanks.

The conference strongly recommended promoting community engagement in health emergency preparedness and response through education, training and participation in decision-making processes. The conference also recommended promotion of collaboration and information-sharing among countries, governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector to foster a comprehensive and coordinated

response to global health threats.

The experts urged that there was a dire need for the international collaboration among countries to address health security challenges through sharing of knowledge, resources, and adapting good practices and ensure equitable access to essential technologies, including vaccines, diagnostics, and treatments, especially in low- and middle-income countries like Pakistan. They also called for enhancing the capacity of veterinary and healthcare systems to deliver quality healthcare services during emergencies outbreaks, floods and other natural disasters.

It was observed that the production of livestock was decreasing due to the stress of the climate change which was alarming for the food security. Zoonotic importance of various diseases needed to be highlighted and human, veterinary and environment dealing components should be sensitized along with the public at large, the participants observed. The speakers stated that the national health security plans should also be looked as a civic responsibility rather than considering it the sole responsibility of the government.

The conference said that it was need of the hour that national security as perceived in the constitutional framework should be revised and redefined to include emerging, re-emerging and other transboundary diseases of human and animal as one of the main threats to the health security and food security of the human population.

During the two-day conference, 24 international and 60 national speakers joined virtually and 64 research papers were presented in the conference. Advisor Higher Education Commission (CPEC) Lt Gen (R) Muhammad Asghar, Director General CPEC (HEC) Dr Safdar Ali Shah, Principle KBCMA-CVAS Narowal Prof Dr Younus Rana and renowned veterinary & medical practitioners, scholars, researchers and academicians experts from different countries, including Korea, China, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the USA and across Pakistan participated physically and virtually in the ICHS.



LAHORE: Punjab Governor, Baligh Ur Rehman in a group photo with successful students at the 13th Convocation of University of Lahore.

Ahsan for strict action against hoarders during Ramadan

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal has underlined the need for ensuring strict monitoring of edible items and taking action against the elements involved in their hoarding during the holy month of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak.

Chairing a meeting of the National Price Monitoring Committee, the minister directed the provincial authorities to ensure a smooth supply of essential commodities, especially gram flour and dates in the open market, keeping in view their

demand in the fasting month.

He also directed the Ministry of National Food Security and provincial governments to maintain the prices of essential items and take necessary measures for bringing down the prices of edible oil aimed at extending maximum relief to the common man during the holy month.

The minister expressed concern that despite the decrease in the prices of edible oil in the global market, its positive impact did not reach Pakistan, directing the departments concerned to resolve the

matter immediately.

Officials of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics gave a detailed briefing regarding the prices of food items

Ahsan Iqbal voiced concern over an undue increase in the prices of food items in the Federal Capital, asking the chief commissioner to immediately control the prices of edibles.

He also directed assistant commissioners for taking effective measures in their respective areas to ensure the provision of essential items at the prescribed rates.

Drizzle in Lahore makes weather pleasant

LAHORE (NNI): The weather got pleasant after it drizzled in different areas of Lahore on Thursday. Dark clouds covered the sky and intermittent drizzle continued.

Light rain continued on Davis Road and Abbott Road, Shimla Pahari, Mall Road, Canal Road and Railway Station also experienced drizzle, people came out of their homes to enjoy the pleasant weather.

The humidity ratio in Lahore was 44%, the wind speed was 14 km per hour, the minimum temperature recorded in the city was 17 degrees celsius and the maximum was 32 degrees celsius and the visibility was up to 22 kilometers.

Sheikh Rashid slams govt for sleeping on the job amid economic slump

RAWALPINDI (NNI): Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Thursday hit out at the government over an inaction as economic crisis continues to deepen amid delay in bailout package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In a series of tweets, the former interior minister said: "Our economic crisis has become a question mark in the world."

He said the IMF deal was still under a cloud of uncertainty as the government lacked international lobby and assurance for external

financing.

"No one takes them seriously," he reproved the government.

He said the UAE and Qatar were shying away from giving assurance for revival of the IMF programme, adding that the wishes of the US were yet to surface. He also slammed the government for increasing petrol prices.

The AML chief said international media massively covered the violent situation at Zaman Park, adding that international community was condemning the registration

of cases against PTI chairman Imran Khan.

He said the government could not undermine the influence of the ex-prime minister whether he is put in the jail.

Criticising PML-N Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz for scandalising judiciary, he said the current government was a "puppet set-up".

He said the tenure of interim government would end in 90 days, adding that state institutions were bound to follow the Constitution.

'Safai Nisf Iman hai' cleanliness drive continues despite rain

RAWALPINDI (APP): A two-week-long "Safai Nisf Iman hai" cleanliness drive initiated by the Rawalpindi Waste Management (RWMA) was underway to keep the city neat and clean despite the rains.

According to RWMC spokesman, Chief Executive Officer Rana Sajid Safdar deputed additional sanitary workers to clean and dredge major drains to avoid urban flooding. The RWMC cleaned nullahs and choked drains during continued rainfall since last night to ensure sanitation in several city areas. He said additional staff had been assigned duties in three shifts to ensure cleanliness round the clock during rains so that some sanitation-related problems could not become hurdles in the smooth water flow. He informed RWMC workers removed hundreds of tonnes of waste in the Rawalpindi city areas while drains blocked during the rain had been opened immediately. He said that complaints received on social media platforms were also being addressed instantly.

The spokesman informed that to create awareness about cleanliness, the social mobilization and communication team of RWMC today organized an awareness session at Punjab Group of Colleges in Union Council-26. The teams also lectured the students and college staff about the importance and effectiveness of cleanliness and requested the citizens to participate in the cleanliness campaign.

PFA disposes of 1,015,820 litre tainted milk in a year

E.P. Report

LAHORE: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has disposed of 1,015,820 litres of substandard and adulterated milk during one year besides imposing a fine of Rs35.345 million on 3,262 milkmen.

This was revealed in an annual performance report of PFA Operations Wing regarding the anti-adulteration milk campaign. The authority has inspected 42,660 milk carrier vehicles laden with 65,241 million litres of milk.

However, teams found chemically contaminated and substandard milk in 5,448 milk carrier vehicles. PFA Director General Muddassir Riaz Malik said the quality of millions of litres of milk was examined by modern lactoscan machines and discarded 25,395 maunds of milk after proving contamination of polluted water, urea and hazardous

ingredients in the milk.

He said that every milk-carrying vehicle entering in the city is checked by PFA's mobile testing labs fully equipped with state-of-the-art lacto scan machines and for this purpose special screening pickets placed at Gujumat, Ada Plot, Babu Sabu, Ravi Bridge, Saggiyan Bridge and other points of the city.

He said that adulterated ingredients were usually used for increasing the thickness and quantity of milk. He added that the use of tainted milk poses a threat to users' health.

Muddassir Malik added that the food authority has been providing a free milk testing facility to citizens and telling them about the quality of milk that is being used in their houses on a daily basis. He has requested people to pay a visit to the nearest PFA office with 200ml raw milk to get it tested free of cost.

Minister stresses modern technology use in health sector

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Health Minister Dr Javid Akram has said that the use of modern technology in the health sector is need of the hour, and online treatment facility is being introduced in the provincial capital.

He expressed these views while addressing the inaugural ceremony of modern virtual hospital technology at the annual conference of The Health Bank (THB) Global at the Pakistan Society of Internal Medicine, here on Thursday. He said THB Global had improved health sector in the country and the development projects announced in the sector were commendable.

The Punjab health minister said that among the

development projects announced by the THB Global for the country and the region was a modern virtual hospital that would provide its patients with personalised care both at home and online.

Zarmina Jafar, chief executive of THB Global, said in her address that after Singapore, Dubai, Karachi, Kuwait City, now the THB Global's offices at Lahore was dedicated to helping people at their homes. She said that people did not have enough time to come to hospital again and again, and our virtual hospital would provide them with all kinds of online treatment facilities and our doctors would also go to their homes for check-up.

Chief Med Tech

Innovation Officer Dr Sohail Chughtai said in his address that the way forward for the treatment of diseases was found and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) had been signed with various institutions including Saleem Memorial Hospital and Fatima Jinnah Medical University Lahore. Enterprises Karachi Hospital, Pakistan Academy of Family Physicians, Health Science Academy, Academy of Family Physicians Pakistan and other institutions. Professor Dr. Bilal Ahmed, Professor Dr. Soumya Iqtdar, Professor Dr. Farhan Isa Abdullah and others informed conference participants about online treatment in their speeches.



LAHORE: Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) staffer busy in repairing the security cameras at Mall Road.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan chairing 2nd meeting of Provincial Caretaker Cabinet.

CTD arrests two most wanted terrorists

PESHAWAR (INP): Anti-Terrorism Department (CTD) after getting intelligence based information on Thursday has arrested two most wanted terrorists in Kohat region.

According to CTD Peshawar officials, the department received some secret information that some terrorists were getting refuge in Kohat region. CTD deputed a team to crackdown on terrorist and it after a successful operation nabbed two terrorists belong to Dara Adam Khel. CTD officials say that the arrested terrorists were also wanted in serious cases of terrorism, including attacks on Jangalkhel police station, Billi Ting police station and Jamana police station.

According to the CTD officials, the terrorists were being interrogated to get more relevant information about their network in the region and abroad.

Police have resisted case against them.

SCCI, TEVTA KP sign MoC to launch skills training program

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR, March 16: In order to impart business community about technical skills and equip with modern tools, the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP-TEVTA) have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) under TEVTA Sector Support GIZ programme.

The MoU was signed by SCCI President Muhammad Ishaq and Director Academics/Operations TEVTA KP Sadiq Orakzai during a ceremony held at the chamber's house on Thursday.

During the signing event, the official concerned told the participants that the agreement has been signed for next five years during which members of business community will

be trained in various skills trades/fields besides on-job training programs will be launched in industries and foster the mutual cooperation between SCCI, TEVTA and German-funded GIZ program.

Apart from the SCCI vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, GIZ regional representative Tahir Orakzai, members of Chamber's Advisor Council Dr Khalid Khan, Faiz Muhammad, Sharif Khattak, former president Sherbaz Bilour, SCCI's executive members S.Minhajuddin, Laal Badshah, Javed Ahmad Khan, former vice president Abidullah Yousafzai, Ihsanullah, Saddar Gul, Ishtiaq Muhammad, Faiz Rasool, Fazal e Wahid, Shahrukh Khan, Asif Aziz, Malik Mohsin Sajjad, Waqar Ahmad, Secretary General Sajjad Aziz, members of business, traders, manufacturers were present during the meeting.

Ishaq while speaking on the occasion termed the signing of MoC with TEVTA KP as a major step, saying that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had been confronted with enormous difficulties for the last several decades, which have impacted negatively on trade, business and industries activities that eventually triggered unemployment massively.

He added joblessness is a major challenge not only for the government as well as private sectors as well.

The SCCI chief emphasized the need for equipping educated youth with technical know-how.

He maintained that signing MoC was the similar purpose to give training to youth in various trades along with obtaining high academic qualification so that they can be able to get instant jobs with technical skills after completion of their studies. Ishaq said the assistance from experts, especially those people having technical knowledge under training program.

He said the business community will be fully benefited from the MoC.

He informed that SCCI is taking pragmatic steps for industries-academic linkages and has already signed memorandum of understandings (MoUs) with different public-private sector universities in this regard. The chamber president stressed the need for capacity building of technical training institutions and revamping of the curricula and putting into the modern lines.

Earlier, Director academics/operations TEVTA KP Sadiq Orakzai briefed the participants regarding various skill development projects.

PBA announces strike against inflation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar Bar Association (PBA) Ali Zaman Advocate said that inflation has impacted every segment of society especially working class, on Thursday.

PBA president said that petroleum prices have been decreased in international market but it home the price-hike has announced which cause further inflation. He claimed that current has failed to provide any relief to public at gross root level.

PBA president argued that government withdraw price-hike of edible items in wake of holy month of Ramazan.

He added that working class has been compelled for starvation in fresh wave of inflation.

PBA president also announced strike from court's proceeding against high-inflation and argued public to join hands.

Teacher's duty in exams, polls banned

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa education department has banned the duties of teachers in elections and exams.

As per details, the KP education department has issued a notification regarding teachers busy in census. They directed the concerned departments to not include teachers in any training as huge number of teachers are already busy in census.

The letter further stated that appointments and postings of teacher are stopped till the completion of census.

Furthermore, the education department has send letter to all the boards, directors and other concerned officials.

Governor urge students to venture into new fields of science

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali here Thursday highlighted the importance of young generation for the development of the country and said that youngsters should venture into new fields of technology and prepare themselves to meet the challenges of current world.

He expressed these views as a Chief Guest in a ceremony held at Government College Fajrabad (GCF). The ceremony was also attended by Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali, Chairman Peshawar Board, Nasrullah, Principal Government College Fajrabad, Dr. Taj-ud-Din and faculty members.

Addressing the ceremony, KP Governor urged students to work with dedication and added that their hard work and honesty would open new vistas of progress and growth for themselves.

He also urged students to abide by the golden principles of discipline, unity, mutual respect, honesty, and tolerance in their lives to achieve success. He said that students should use the contemporary digital platform to acquire knowledge of their respective fields.

Governor said that the promotion of quality education is the top priority of the government and added that steps have been taken to

facilitate students and improve facilities in educational institutions.

He also laid the foundation stone of a new academic bloc in the college and announced the renovation of the college hall. He said that steps would be taken to make arrangements for parking in the college.

Haji Ghulam Ali also distributed certificates among students for their performance in intermediate examinations.

On the occasion, City Mayor, Haji Zubair Ali announced 50,000 rupees for the student of the college Touqeer Zia who topped the Peshawar board in 2021-22.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali and Mayor Haji Zubair Ali giving certificates to students for their performance in intermediate examinations.

Ban on keeping tyres in open places

PESHAWAR (APP): The Commissioner Peshawar Division, Muhammad Zubair chairing a meeting here Thursday directed ban on storing tyres in open air and collecting water in without-lid containers under section 144.

The meeting was also attended by Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali, deputy commissioners, district health officers, Chief Executive Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar and officials of administrative departments.

On the occasion, districts administration of Peshawar division briefed the meeting about overall dengue situation. The meeting decided imposing ban on storing tyres in open places and storing water in open containers under section 144.

The meeting was informed that Pesho has also been contacted to reduce load

shedding in areas that were declared sensitive. Meeting also decided to expedite desilting of canals and streams under Clean and Green Peshawar campaign.

It was decided that district administrations would submit action plan about preventive measure against dengue. Meeting also constituted a committee to implement action plan under headship of Deputy Commissioner.

Hundreds of graduates secure degrees

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: As many as 162 graduates of BS programs were awarded degrees under various cadres by Northwest Institute of Health Sciences Peshawar on Thursday.

The cadres Nursing, Anaesthesia, Medical Imaging Technology, Doctor of Physical Therapy and Medical Lab Technology-sessions 2014 up to 2022.

The event was attended by the Chief Guest, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Tariq Khan, Chairman Alliance Healthcare Private limited, Mr. Afsar Khan, Chief Operating Officer NWIHS, Dr. Zia ur Rehman, CEO, Northwest General Hospital and Research Center, Dr. Sidra Jabbar Dean Medical Education NWGH and Dr. Noor ul Iman Principal NWSM. Faculty members and parents of the graduates, as well as other distinguished guests attended the

prestigious ceremony.

During the ceremony, 15 outstanding graduates were awarded gold medals, including Mr. Yasir Ahmad, BS Nursing, and Dr. Muhammad Nasir, DPT, Dr. Lailma Maqbool, DPT, Dr. Sabeen Mazhar, DPT, Mr. Muhammad Ibrahim-Anesthesia, Mr. Maoz, BS-MIT, Mr. Izhar Muhammad, Mr. Tariq Shah, Mr. Gulzaar Khan, Mohammad Suhail, Mohammad Ibrahim and Mr. Ihesham Jameel.

Other notable gold medalists' graduates included Mr. Aqib Usman, BS-Anesthesia session 2014 to 2018, Mr. Omair Ahmad, Anesthesia session 2015 to 2019 and Ms. Iqra Bibi, MLT session 2018 to 2022.

They achieved 1st positions throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Khyber Medical University Exams in their respective technologies.

Earlier, Mr. Afsar Khan, Chief Operating Officer, NWIHS presented well-

come note before the audience and spoke about the history, strength and services offered by the institute in the field of health education.

The Institute is committed to produce high quality graduates in the field of BS Nursing, Doctor of Physical Therapy and BS Allied Health Sciences. NWIHS provides opportunities for students in respective disciplines, to work, acquire skills and enhance their capabilities.

NWIHS produces graduates who have the potential and ability to meet the challenges in a rapidly changing global environment.

Shields were also awarded to the newly successful graduates including Dr. Lailma Maqbool, Mr. Syed Maaz Hussain and Mr. Gulzaar Khan on the basis of their outstanding contributions to curricular and co-curricular academic activities.



PESHAWAR: SCCI President Muhammad Ishaq and Director Academics/Operations TEVTA KP Sadiq Orakzai signing MoU.

Pesco notifies power suspension

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) on Thursday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Jamrud Grid Station on 17th and 21st March from 9 a.m. to 3p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Gulabad, Kidney Center, Hayatabad 3 feeders will face inconvenience.

Likewise, it said that power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Phase 7 Hayatabad Grid Station on 18th March from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. due to which consumers of 11 KV Hayatabad 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, Old Hayatabad, Deans Heights, Shaukat Khanam, Hayatabad 4, PC Hotel, Frontier Ceramics, Frontier Green Wood feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Peshawar University Grid Station on 17th and 21st March from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV

University Campus, Canal Town, Malakandher, Engineering, Regi, Gulabad, Taj Abad, Agriculture, Mera Achini, HMC, Ring Road, Danish Abad, Rahat Abad 1, CMB, Ambela, Achini 1, 2, Rahat Abad 2, Sufaid dheri, Old Bara Road, JAF, Academy Town, Canal Road, DAH, HBK, Askari 6, Commercial, Building Abdul Razak feeders will face inconvenience.

Moreover, the power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV RMT Grid Station on 17th and 21st March from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Safdar Abad 2, RMT, Durrani Media Colony, Professor Medical Town feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Bannu Grid Station on 18th March from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Bakakhel, Cantt 1, City 2, Amandara 1 and Ismail Khela feeders will face inconvenience.

Cloudy weather predicted

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

It said scattered rain-thunderstorm with gusty winds is likely to occur over Swat, Chitral, Lower and Upper Dir, Shangla, Buner, Malakand, Kohistan, Battagram, Torghar, Manshera, Abbottabad, Haripur, Mohmand, Bajaur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Charsadda, Peshawar, Khyber, Kohat, Hangu, Kurram and Abbottabad districts.

Isolated rain-thunderstorm with gusty winds are also likely to occur in Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Karak, Orakzai, DI Khan and North and South Waziristan districts.

During the last 24 hours, dry and partly cloudy weather occurred in most districts of the province. However, an isolated rain-thunderstorm occurred over Bannu district. Rain recorded in Bannu was 02mm.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 30/17, Chitral 26/06, Timergara 29/12, Dir 27/06, Mirkhani 25/06, Kalam 20/00, Drosh 24/11, Saidu Sharif 28/10, Pattan 32/14, Malam Jabba 16/06, Takht Bhai 30/15, Kakul 25/08, Balakot 29/12, Parachinar 22/06, Bannu 31/14, Cherat 25/19, D.I. Khan 35/19.

Beggary turns into lucrative business in provincial metropolis

PESHAWAR (APP): Beggary has turned into a profitable business in the provincial capital as beggars, earlier limited to bazaars and roads, have now stretched to streets and colonies in the district.

A survey conducted in the city, revealed that a record increase has been witnessed in the number of baggers especially at marriage ceremonies and outside the mosques.

It was reported that along with locals, a large number of beggars from Punjab and Sindh were also seen begging at different crossings, roads, main markets and posh areas. On the other hand, the district administration and Social Welfare Department, despite their continuous efforts, seemed helpless to curb the menace of large-scale beggary.

According to an earlier report prepared some five months back by the district administration, there were above 1,600 professional beggars in Peshawar city with estimated income of Rs300, 000 per month." The report was prepared by the committee headed by Assistant Commissioner Peshawar Dr Ehtesham-ul-Haq.

The officials said that there is an organized mafia behind the beggars, which include women and children, and every effort will be made to root them out from the city.

The report revealed, "Beggars in important commercial areas, such as Peshawar Sadder, earn an average of Rs6, 000 per day while in posh areas such as University Town and Hayatabad, a beggar earns an estimated Rs10, 000 per day."

It has pertinent to mention that the Peshawar High Court had issued special instruction to the district administration for making Peshawar free from professional beggars

Thousands of beggars including children, women and elderly people have adopted the profession of beggary and earn a hefty amount on a daily basis. Sometimes, the daily-wage labour and other poor people also join these beggars to make their both ends meet.

With the advent of the holy month of Ramadan, a visible surge in the number of beggars has been witnessed in the city.

Research organizations to furnish specific recommendations for public sector development

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Secretary Higher Education Archives and Libraries, Mr. Dawood Khan has said that International Conferences have to play a major role in providing goal oriented and field related specific recommendations according to the requirement of the Government.

This he said as a chief guest at the concluding ceremony of the two-day International Conference on sustainable utilization of natural resources 2023 organized by the National Centre of Excellence in Geology, University of Peshawar.

He said Higher Education Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Peshawar was giving prior-

ities to research and development and encourages interdisciplinary approaches for solutions of the institution's problems.

He further said that universities shall establish think tanks to provide research based solutions to the governments. He remarked that specific recommendations of this international conference shall be sent to the government after mutual consultation. Provincial Secretary appreciated the role of Director, National Centre of Excellence in Geology (NCEG) University of Peshawar for arranging such event.

Vice Chancellor University of Peshawar Prof Dr. Muhammad Idrees in his address hoped that recommendations of the



conference will bring positive change to the fields of minerals, natural hazards, forest, water resources, agriculture and other fields of earth sciences. He said that the Centre was playing its due role in Water and Soil Conservation, Environmental Impact Studies, Disaster Management, Agriculture, Oil & Gas Sector, Mines and Mineral Exploration, Energy Crises, Communication and Works and Industries. He stressed the need that government

major contributions towards resolving issues of public and private sector organizations through multidisciplinary research. He said that the Centre was playing its due role in Water and Soil Conservation, Environmental Impact Studies, Disaster Management, Agriculture, Oil & Gas Sector, Mines and Mineral Exploration, Energy Crises, Communication and Works and Industries. He stressed the need that government

shall enact law to involve NCEG for providing technical solutions to the problems in the field of earth & environmental science to the relevant Government Departments.

The Chief Guest also appreciated the exhibition and visited the stalls of NCEG Labs, Gems and Jewellery and a stall of GIS & Space Applications in Geosciences (G-SAG) and National Centre of GIS and Space Applications (NCGSA).

Blood donation camp held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Fatimid Foundation has arranged blood donation camp at University of Malakand, on Thursday.

According to details, as many as 120 bags blood donated by students including Chain Blood Malakand chapter representatives.

Vice Chancellor University of Malakand Dr. Rashid Ahmad and Deputy Director student societies Jameel Anwar Abbasi cooperated during the blood donation camp.

Vice Chancellor University of Malakand appreciated Fatimid Foundation commitment to serve humanity.



In brief

Crackdown against outlaws Syed Wailullah Shah

NOWSHERA: District Police Officer (DPO) Nasir Mahmood ordered crackdown against drug-dealers and areal firing while directed to concluded pending investigations on priority basis, on Thursday. This he ordered while chairing crime meeting in which deputy superintendents of police, station house officers and investigation officers were present. He ordered indiscriminate actions against outlaws and stern prosecution to ensure rule of law. During hearing arrangements for crackdown against criminals were discussed and stern action should be sought against outlaw activities in the premises. DPO directed to arrest proclaimed offenders and drug-dealers to eliminate crimes from the society.

ANF recovers 90kg hashish

GWADAR (INP): The Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) has recovered 90kg of hashish hidden in a house near Jiwani Gwadar. As per details, the ANF has registered FIRs against the accused under the anti-drug act. In a separate case, a smuggling attempt was foiled by the ANF and 13kg of Hashish was recovered from the smugglers. The ANF also seized 42 thousand of intoxicated tablets concealed in a plastic bag near the Torkham border. ANF recovered 15kg of hashish from the Kohat Indus Highway toll plaza, 20kg from the Angur Adda border and 4.8kg from Karachi Indus chowk. Earlier, the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) arrested drug dealers for supplying drugs in educational institutions near Gojra.

FIR against PTI leaders lodged

B A H A W A L P U R (APP): Bahawalpur police have registered FIR against a senior leader and activists of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf for conducting protest and disrupting routine traffic in Ahmadpur East area. According to a FIR No. 184/23 registered by PS Ahmadpur East (City) district Bahawalpur under Section 154 Criminal Procedure Code with the E-Tag No. CAPE-3/15/2023-1031 dated 14th March 2023, Assistant Sub-Inspector, Abid Hussain submitted that he along with other police officials riding official police vehicle was on routine patrolling in Munir Shaheed Chowk area of Ahmadpur East City when they noticed that Ticket Holder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf identified as Shahzain Abbasi, Tehsil Sadar PTI, Hafiz Muzaffar Kareem and other PTI activists including Sajid Siraj Jalwana, Muhammad Shakeel, Muhammad Alam, Abdul Basit, Muhammad Usman, Qamar Shehzad and Mistri Pappu having clubs and sticks came at Munir Shaheed Chowk and blocked the road. The plaintiff further submitted that the accused burnt tyres and raised slogans and disrupted routine traffic.

Swindlers deprive citizens of cash

MULTAN (APP): Swindlers deprived a prayer leader and a passer-by of motorbike and cash amounting to Rs. 170,000 respectively in different incidents here on Thursday. According to police, a citizen named Muhammad Ramzan was looted by two unidentified men under the pretext of giving him a lift on their motorbike. They snatched Rs. 170,000 cash from him as soon as they reached Basti Nandla, in the limits of BZ police station.

Step-mother arrested for murder of minor in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Lower Dir police claimed to have arrested a step-mother and her brother-in-law for brutally killing a 5-year old child Ayan Khan who was found dead on Feb, 22 at a nearby hill. According to a press release issued by the district police officer Tariq Iqbal a special investigation team finally traced the blind murder case in the jurisdiction of Lal Qila police station.

The DPO said that step-mother of the child and her brother-in-law Bakht Zada, a resident of Zaimdara were arrested by police. He said the accused confessed to the crime and said the child was killed with the help of a sickle. Police also recovered the sickle used during the crime.

The Maidan residents on the call of Maidan Action Committee had staged a massive protest rally at Kumbhar against the incident here the other day and demanded the police high ups to arrest the killers soon. The local residents, meanwhile, appreciated the Lower Dir police for tracing the case and arresting the perpetrators.

Meanwhile, a motorcyclist identified as Iftikhar Wali, 24 was killed while

two others were injured when a Suzuki pickup and a motorcycle collided head on at Shamshi Khan Talash due to over speeding, police and rescuers said. They said the Rescue 1122 medical team shifted the injured Iftikhar Wali, Taj Wali and Zahir Khan to the district headquarters hospital Timergara where Iftikhar succumbed to injuries. The deceased was serving in the army as a soldier.

The local police arrested the Suzuki driver and started further investigations. Also in the day the Rescue 1122 team and local residents rescued a minor who was trapped under a collapsed mud heap at Odigram area. The rescuers pulled the child out of the debris and provided first aid to him.

Ramazan market to be established: The district administration and the tehsil municipal administration started work on the establishment of Ramzan Sasta bazaar at Timergara.

The Timergara Tehsildar Amjad Khan, tehsil chairman Mufti Irfan-u-Din, TMO Kashif Khan and district food controller Shahab ud Din visited the site selected for the bazaar. Talking to local journalists Mufti Irfan said that dozens of cabins and stalls would

be set up at the bazaar during the Holy month of Ramazan to provide the customers with eatables including flour, meat, fruit, vegetable, chickens, ice etc at subsidized rates. He said that a complaint cell would also be set up at the bazaar for quick response.

Free medical camp held: Al-Khidmat Foundation tehsil Balambat gave free treatment and treatment to 37 children suffering from skin disease. Sprayed In the local madrasa of Odigram, on Thursday.

According to details, as many as 37 affected students suffering from skin disease were assisted by the team of Al-Khidmat Foundation on the instructions of President Al-Khidmat foundation lower dir Hafiz Ullah Khaksar, Qazi Inayatul Haq Saeed Bhai. Under the supervision of Waqar Bhai Zaidan Bhai and Director Al-Khidmat Hospital Majeedullah the children were treated and the necessary medicines were given. Irshad Roghani also provided full support. Al-Khidmat Foundation Tehsil Balambat distributed Ramadan and Eid packages to dozens of orphans, widows and the poor with the support of a Turkish welfare organization.

Free flour be available at utility stores, declared shops

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warraich said that free of cost flour will be given during holy month of Ramzan to peer and deserving people registered under Benazir Income Support programme and Ehsas Ration Programme in the district while free of cost flour will be available at trucking points, Utility Stores and nominated shops.

Addressing a meeting held at District Complex, DC directed the officers of different departments to finalised all necessary arrangements promptly for distributing three bags of 10 kg to registered families

each on merit and transparently. He also directed the officers to made-arrangements for giving away free of cost flour at union council level in rural areas.

Mushara held: District administration arranged 'Mahfil-e-Mushaira' at family Park in connection with 'Jashan-e-Baharan' celebrations. Prominent poets of the country participated the 'Mahfil-e-Mushahara' and recited their fresh poetry. A large number of people belong to literary and educational segments of society attended the 'Mahfil-e-Mushaira' and applauded the poets.

ADC Ishfaq Ahmad said on the occasion that sports completions, floral exhibi-

tion, tent paging, horse dancing and other programmes were arranged to provide recreational opportunities to people and people were attending different events with zeal and zest.

Population welfare observes Punjab culture day: Population Welfare Department also celebrated Punjab Cultural Day. District Population Officer Hafizabad Sajida Mushtaq told that different aspect of Punjabi Culture was highlighted in the programmes held at population welfare centres in the district. A large number of women, doctors and other staff attended the functions. The participants of the events wore tradition Punjabi addresses.

Punjabi culture day celebration inaugurated

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Mrs. Deputy Commissioner Aaysha Umer Farooq Warraich inaugurated Punjabi Cultural Day held at Government Islamia Post Graduate Collage for Women Hafizabad, on Thursday. Principal Shumaila Yaseen, DO Sports Nabeela Cheema, DO Population Sajida Muahataq, professors, students and other prominent women also attended the function.

An attractive set of imaginary village in the college ground was established which was reflecting different aspects of Punjabi Culture. Different stalls of traditional Punjabi meals were also set up and students highlighted Punjabi marriage, customs and other values through different plays. Students and women took keen interest in cultural programs.

Timely completion of projects directed: Deputy Commissioner Umer Farooq Warraich directed the officers of nation buildings departments to ensure timely completion of ongoing development projects earliest so that people can get benefits of government expenditures soon as soon possible.

He issued these views while visiting different development projects in the district, on Thursday. DC also visited BHU Dheranke

Lalke and reviewed availability of treatment facilities in the Basic Health Unit.

While inspecting RHC Vanike Tarar, DC directed the doctors and paramedical staff to perform their duties with the passion of serving the humanity. He checked outdoor, indoor, lab, X-ray room, Ghani Ward, medicine store etc. and reviewed provision of healthcare facilities to patients. He directed the Medical officer of the RHC to improve cleanliness and service delivery and other arrangements. He also visited water supply and disposal unit and standard of cleanliness in Vanike Tarar.

CEO health directs provision of quality facility: Newly appointed Chief Executive Officer Health, Dr. Fariha Akram Malik said that provision of the best health facilities to the people is my top priority according to the agenda of the Punjab government whereas result-oriented steps would also be initiated to curb menace of quackery and quacks will not be allowed to play with the life of innocent people at all. While talking to journalists, she said that effective measures would be taken to improve provision of treatment facilities in the government hospitals in the district. She said that quacks did not deserve any mercy and indiscriminate action would be taken against quacks in the district.



HYDERABAD: A cyclist crossing rail track as train approaching on the same track may cause any mishap, needs attention of authorities concerned.

Woman shot kills daughter-in-law

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A woman shot dead her daughter-in-law on broad-day light in Meena Bazaar in Takhtbai Tehsil, locals and police officials told.

The relevant officials of Takhtbai police station told that the alleged killer identified as Zaitoon, 40, along with her slain daughter-in-law named Kainaat, 25, was shopping in the local market when the murder incident take place.

The officials told that both the women were busy in their shopping in the said bazaar when all of a sudden the accused woman shot her daughter-in-law on her head who died instantly.

However, the rescue-1122 rushed to the spot after getting informed by someone and shifted the victim to tehsil headquarter hospital Takhtbai where the doctors confirmed her death. After committing the murdered crime, the alleged killer went to the relevant police station and surrendered herself along with pistol. The police officials told that they had registered FIR on the complaint of Saleem Khan, brother of the slain woman and began further investigations into the case to ascertain real motive behind the murdered crime. They, however, told that the complainant had cited domestic dispute as reason for committing the murdered incident.

CPO reviews criminal cases

F.P. Report

MULTAN: A meeting was held under the chairmanship of City Police Officer (CPO) Multan in which cases under investigation of murder, rape, kidnapping for ransom and other serious cases were reviewed, on Thursday.

According to details, CPO Multan directed all the officers to settle the cases under investigation on merit in a timely manner. He said that the wanted accused in these cases should be arrested and investigated on merit.

Also keep in touch with litigants in serious cases. CPO Multan Mansoor Ul Haq Rana said to provide justice to the citizens without discrimination. He directed to arrest criminals, fugitives from court and released habitual criminals and take legal action. Apart from this, CPO Multan gave necessary instructions to establish law and order in the city and control crime.

Police signs agreement with Medi Healthcare

F.P. Report

MARDAN: District Police Officer (DPO) Najib-ur-Rehman signed an agreement with Medi Health Care and Aspire Grammar School to facilitate the children and families of serving, retired and martyred policemen.

According to the details, District Police Chief Najibur Rahman has concluded an agreement with the owners of Midi Health Laboratory and ASPIRE Grammar School to facilitate the serving and retired policemen including children of martyrs. As per agreement the both institutions will provide all kinds of medical facilities by Midi Health Laboratory for serving, retired policemen and children of martyrs on special assistance and discount. ASPIRE Grammar School will accommodate the children of the said police personnel on 50% discount for education assistance and admissions. The discount will cover up the admission fees and monthly fees.

According to the official website of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police, as of December 2021, the total

strength of police in Mardan district is 3,679 personnel, including officers and constables. Pakistan Citizen Portal, the number of police personnel martyred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) from 2010 to 2021 is 1,168. According to various sources, at least 72 police personnel have been martyred from 2010 to 2021 in Mardan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) due to terrorist attacks, targeted killings, and other acts of violence.

BISE Mardan trains 400 teachers on Marking and Assessment: Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Mardan held a series of training workshops on Marking and Assessment concluded which had trained 400 participants from both public and public sectors attended the symposiums, on Thursday.

The trainings were arranged on the direction of chairman BISE Mardan Farid Ahmed Khattak. Total number of participants in these Workshops were 400 which include male and female participants from

public and private sector of Mardan Swabi and Nowshera. Chairman BISE Mardan addressed the participants and thanked them for attending the Workshop.

The workshop was also graced by Ibrar Ahmad Principal GPGC Mardan and Hafiz Zubair Ahmed Principal GHSS No 3 Mardan. Controller of Examination Wajid Ali, Focal person/Assistant Controller secrecy Iqthedar Ali and Deputy Controller of Examination Ishtat Ali were present on this occasion.

A meeting also held in the honor of Fazl Amin Assistant Controller of Examination Conduct on his retirement. The Chairman and other Staff members appreciated the services of Fazl Amin and honored him gracefully. Chairman also told the participants the 200 KV transformer is installed at BISE Mardan and soon the express line will also be made available to BISE Mardan for switch power transmission. The Chairman concluded the Workshop session with a vote of thanks.

Public demand availability of subsidized flour in Buner

F.P. Report

BUNER: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Relief Latif-ur-Rehman was held Kuli Kachari in which AC Gagra Sher Ali Khan along with TMO Gagra Khaleq-ur-Rehman and heads of line department were present at tehsil Hall on Thursday.

The local elders and representatives of different associations and general people were largely participated. The ADC in his brief speech shared it was just an opportunity to bridge

between line departments and public. He elaborated the representatives of different associations and general public as well to bring their problems and issues into the notice of the heads of line departments and the line departments heads to make sure addressing these issues within a month period so as to share feedback.

On the occasion numbers of ranking leaders, elders and public shared their issues common among them were subsidized flour, encroachments

on roads, slow pace of work on roads, traffic jam, narcotics dealing, revenue record mistakes, thorough fare closure, lack of health care and issues of commodities rates and other issues related to public interests.

The ADC and the AC in their responding speeches welcomed all of the participants and the speakers for bringing their issues into the notice of the authorities and assured them early relief as soon as possible and feedback report within a month period.

Welfare of journalist top priority: Secy Information

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Secretary Information and Public Relations KPK Arshad Khan has said that the welfare of journalists and solving the problems of working journalists is the first priority for which all the resources are being used. During the dis-

cussion with the delegation led by President AMDUJ Shahzad Alam, the delegation included senior journalists Zia-ul-Haq, Sartaj Khan from Charsadda, Siraj Khan, General Secretary of Swat Press Club, Murad Ali Khan. Sartaj Khan gave a detailed briefing on the problems of journalists in Charsadda.

On this occasion, Arshad Khan said that my aim is to reduce the problems of journalists across the province and to provide them with all possible facilities for which all resources are being utilized. They sacrificed their lives for the welfare of the people, which will be written in golden letters in history.

S Arabia, Iran rapprochement impacts on Muslim world

Asad Ali Shah

ON Friday, March 10, 2023, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Iran announced the resumption of diplomatic relations after a seven-year hiatus. Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Council, and Musaad bin Mohammed, Saudi Arabia's security adviser, struck a deal in Beijing recently with People's Republic of China served as the mediator. According to the agreement made between the Middle Eastern countries, each will reciprocate by opening embassies in the other's country.

Also, the two nations decided to resume their cooperation and security pact, which was first inked in 1998 and 2001, respectively. The accord will have a significant impact on Middle Eastern politics, global

politics, and the Muslim Ummah since both nations have participated in proxy warfare in places like Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, etc.

Relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran have been strained since the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979. However, the relationship became increasingly tense with the Arab Spring, which witnessed pro-democracy uprisings against tyrants in the Middle East and Northern Africa. They were both supporters of opposing political parties.

Similarly, Saudi Arabia and the United States joined forces in Syria to depose Iran-backed President Bashar al-Assad. They all contributed to opposing parties and were involved in proxy warfare all over the place. In 2016, the KSA executed Nimr Baqir al-Namr, a renowned Shia preacher, for seeking foreign intervention in the Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia. As a result, huge protests erupted in Iran, culminating in an attack on the Saudi embassy in Tehran, leading to rupture of diplomatic ties between Riyadh and Tehran.

Yet, the latest agreement seems poised to put an end to the decade-long conflict. The resumption of relations will have a huge influence on the Middle East. And it has the potential to end all of the problems and instability that many Gulf countries are currently facing as a result of the proxy wars between Riyadh and Tehran.

Both nations may agree on a wide range of topics, including an inclusive setup in Yemen, Syria, and other places. Additionally, both Riyadh and Tehran are capable of putting a stop to foreign intervention in the Middle East, such as that of the United States and Russia. In addition, both oil-rich countries can help rebuild war-torn coun-

tries like Yemen and Syria.

Despite all of these hopes, some observers assert that the arch rival's elevation to the position of archangel after normalization of relations would be challenging because both nations have engaged in proxy conflicts all over. And bridging the trust gap between Saudi Arabia and Iran will require a lot of work. But here it is worth mentioning that China will try her best to make the deal successful and bring both countries come closer.

In addition, the news of the restoration of ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran has alarmed Israel, which has plans to unify the Arab world against Iran. It was "a total and deadly failure of the Israeli government's foreign policy," according to Yair Lapid, the head of the opposition in Israel.

Furthermore, the deal was mediated by China, demonstrat-

ing the country's recent renunciation of its position of neutrality in international affairs and its adoption of the role of World leader. According to some commentators, China's mediation of an agreement between long time Gulf enemies is "a broader symptom of a changing global order".

Aside from this, China imports 36% of its energy from the Middle East and has extensive bilateral economic links with Gulf Cooperation Council worth USD 160 billion as of 2020. It was also challenging for China to act jointly in the Gulf States under such conditions. The only answer was to bring them together, which China has tried to by brokering agreement.

The accord between Saudi Arabia and Iran provides Pakistan with the opportunity to strengthen its economic ties with Iran and contribute positively to

the two Islamic countries' reconciliation. Pakistan had historically been hesitant to capitalise on its advantageous location and cultivate trade connections with Tehran because to its later position in the Middle East and probable pressure from the KSA. It is now free to define its own foreign policy while prioritising its own interests.

In conclusion, normalising relations between Riyadh and Tehran benefits nations; it also will benefit the Middle East in general and the Muslim Ummah in particular. This agreement should be the first step towards the Middle East's future rapprochement, with further progress achieved on all outstanding issues between the two countries. Yet, much need to be done in the years to come in order to achieve prosperity and peace in the conflict laden Middle East.

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US announces \$331m in new aid to Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA (Agencies): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has announced \$331m in new humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia during a visit to Addis Ababa aimed at improving the United States' relations with the East African country. The aid package was made public during a visit by Blinken to a United Nations logistics warehouse in the Ethiopian capital after he met with the country's leaders.

"This funding will provide life-saving support to those displaced and affected by conflict, drought, and food insecurity in Ethiopia," Blinken said in a statement. The new assistance brings the total of US aid for Ethiopia in 2023 to \$780m, the top US diplomat said. He added that the funding will supply "food, shelter, safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, healthcare efforts, education, and other key services" to Ethiopians. The announcement came as Blinken held talks with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Foreign Minister Demeke Mekonnen earlier in the day. His visit to Ethiopia also follows an agreement last November to put an end to deadly fighting between Ethiopian government forces and rebels in the northern Tigray region.

The US had criticised Abiy's government for alleged atrocities committed by Ethiopian forces and their allies during the conflict, which killed tens of thousands of people and displaced millions. Washington imposed wide-ranging restrictions on economic and security assistance to Addis Ababa amid the fighting, and it also cut the country off from a duty-free trade programme designated for sub-Saharan African countries. The US Department of State said Blinken and Abiy discussed the "significant progress" made in implementing the peace agreement. "This progress includes improved humanitarian access and restoration of basic services," it said in a statement. "The secretary reiterated US support for efforts by the parties to achieve full implementation of the agreement in order to lay the groundwork for a sustainable peace."

The State Department added that Blinken and Abiy also discussed the "importance of accountability for the atrocities perpetrated by all parties during the conflict". For his part, Abiy said in a Twitter post that he discussed various bilateral issues with Blinken. "We have agreed to strengthen the long standing bilateral relations [between] our

countries with a commitment to partnership," he wrote. Rights groups have been critical of Ethiopian forces and their Eritrean allies, accusing them of major abuses, including murder and sexual violence, in their war against Tigrayan forces - the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). A UN-backed commission last year found that both government and Tigrayan forces committed human rights violations, including war crimes. Last week, Amnesty International USA urged Blinken to "put human rights at the heart of his conversation with Prime Minister Abiy". Ethiopia - Africa's second most populous nation, with more than 120 million people - has denied the most serious allegations of human rights violations during the war. It previously rejected the US criticism and accused Washington of meddling in its internal affairs.

Blinken's trip is the latest in a series of visits to Africa by senior US officials as the administration of President Joe Biden looks to reinforce ties with countries on the continent amid competition from China and Russia. The US secretary of state will head to the West African nation of Niger, which has been confronting armed groups, on Thursday.

Prisoners transferred to El Salvador mega-jail

EL SALVADOR (AFP): A second group of 2,000 inmates were moved amid tight security to a new prison built in El Salvador to accommodate more than 40,000 suspected gangsters targeted in President Nayib Bukele's "war" on crime. "In a new operation we transferred the second group of 2,000 gangsters to the Center for the Confinement of Terrorism (CECOT)," Bukele said on Twitter.

The president published a video of heavily tattooed barefoot men in white shorts with their heads bowed and hands cuffed behind their backs being hurriedly moved around and loaded onto buses. Bukele has boasted that the new facility is the largest mega-prison in the Americas, but rights groups have criticized it over its severe conditions. Defense Minister Rene Francis Marino said 1,200 soldiers took part in the security operation that began at dawn and included three Air Force helicopters.

The first 2,000 inmates were moved last month. The prison was built to accommodate some of the 65,000 suspected gangsters detained as part of the war on crime launched last year by Bukele, who ordered a state of emergency a year ago, allowing arrests without warrants in the violence-plagued country. The transfer operation took place on the same day that Justice and Security Minister Gustavo Villatoro asked parliament to extend the state of emergency for another month. The prison in Tecoluca, 74 kilometers (46 miles) southeast of the capital San Salvador, is built from reinforced concrete and made up of 32 cells of about 100 square meters (1,075 square feet), designed to hold more than 100 inmates. Each cell has only two sinks and two toilets, with 80 metal bunks for every 100 prisoners and no mattresses. Rights groups have criticized the construction as a violation of incarceration standards.

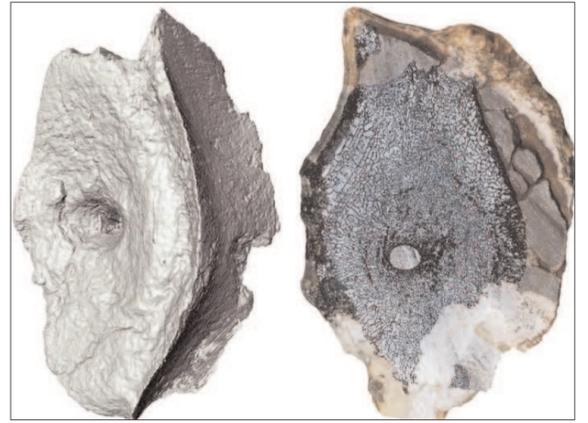
Oldest fossils of remarkable marine reptiles found in Arctic

WASHINGTON (Reuters): Ichthyosaurs were a successful group of marine reptiles that prospered during the age of dinosaurs, some reaching up to around 70 feet (21 meters) long - exceeded in size in the history of Earth's oceans only by the largest of the whales. But their origins have been a bit mysterious. Fossils dating to about 250 million years ago unearthed in a harsh and remote locale - Norway's Arctic island of Spitsbergen - are now providing surprising insight into the rise of ichthyosaurs.

Researchers said they found remains of the earliest-known ichthyosaur, which lived approximately 2 million years after Earth's worst mass extinction that ended the Permian Period, wiping out roughly 90% of the planet's species amid massive Siberian volcanism. The 11 tail vertebrae discovered indicate that the animal was about 10 feet (3 meters) long, making it a top predator. Like whales, which are mammals, and the various other reptile lineages that have inhabited Earth's oceans, ichthyosaurs evolved from ancestors that walked on land and underwent a land-to-sea transition.

The researchers had thought any ichthyosaur living 250 million years ago would have been a primitive form, not far removed from its land-living forerunners. The fossils showed this one, which has not yet been given a scientific name, was quite advanced anatomically. "The real surprise was that after a suite of geochemical, computerized microtomographic and bone microstructural analyses, the vertebrae turned out to be from a highly advanced, fast-growing, probably warm-blooded, large-bodied at around 3 meters long, and fully oceanic ichthyosaur," said Benjamin Kear, curator of vertebrate palaeontology at Uppsala University's Museum of Evolution in Sweden and lead author of the research published in the journal Current Biology.

"The implications of this discovery



are manifold, but most importantly indicate that the long-anticipated transitional ichthyosaur ancestor must have appeared much earlier than previously suspected," Kear added. In light of this discovery, it may be that ichthyosaur origins predated the mass extinction event by up to perhaps 20 million years, Kear said. The Triassic Period that followed the mass extinction was the opening act of the age of dinosaurs, though the oldest-known dinosaurs did not appear until about 230 million years ago.

The site where the fossils were found is a classic Arctic landscape with high snow-capped mountains along the coast of a deep fjord. The fossils were exposed along a river channel fed by snow melt that cuts through rock layers that were once mud at the bottom of the sea. While today there are polar bears and beluga whales at Spitsbergen, 250 million years ago the sea there would have been teeming with fish, sharks, shelled squid-like ammonoids and crocodile-like marine amphibians called temnospondyls. The mass extinction shook up land and marine ecosystems and opened opportunities for new species to fill ecological roles

vacated by extinct creatures. Ichthyosaurs quickly became dominant and endured until about 90 million years ago.

Many ichthyosaurs looked like dolphins, except with vertical rather than horizontal tail flukes. Others resembled large whales. The biggest included Shastasaurus, at about 70 feet (21 meters). They ate fish and squid. Fossils show ichthyosaurs giving live birth to their young. Until now, the oldest-known member of the ichthyosaur lineage was a 16-inch-long (40-cm-long) creature called Carorhynchus that lived 248 million years ago in China.

Researchers in recent decades have identified the earliest forms of whales, including one called Ambulocetus, dubbed the "walking whale" because it retained limbs that enabled it to still move around on land. "Most excitingly, the mysterious 'walking' ichthyosaur ancestor is undoubtedly still out there waiting to be uncovered," Kear said. "Only now we will have to start looking in even older rocks, which is exactly what we will be doing on our next fossil-hunting trip to Spitsbergen this summer."

Ex-Mexican presidential candidate sentenced

TEXAS (Agencies): A former Mexican presidential candidate has been sentenced to nine years in prison after officials accused him of spending millions of dollars in bribes on property purchases in the United States. Tomas Yarrington Ruvalcaba, the 66-year-old former governor of Tamaulipas in northeast Mexico, received the sentence in a US District Court for southern Texas.

Judge Roldando Olvera also ordered the ex-governor to surrender a condominium he purchased in Port Isabel, a coastal city in Texas. He had faced a maximum sentence of up to 20 years.

Yarrington Ruvalcaba pleaded guilty in March 2021 to conspiracy to commit money laundering, admitting to US authorities he took bribes in exchange for business contracts in the state of Tamaulipas in northeast Mexico. Federal prosecutor Alandar Hamdani hailed the decision as "bringing a corrupt politician to justice".

"Even if you are governor of a Mexican state, we will not stand idly by when you use your position to wrongfully fill your pockets and violate the laws of the United States,"

Hamdani said in a press release issued by the US Attorney's Office. Yarrington Ruvalcaba served as governor from 1999 to 2005 and, during that time, allegedly accepted \$3.5m in bribes from individuals and companies hoping to forge business deals in his state. That money was then laundered into the US through luxury purchases, including cars, aeroplanes and properties including estates and beachfront condos, according to prosecutors.

One of those luxury condos, in the Texas resort town of South Padre Island, was forfeited to the government in 2012. It was estimated to be worth \$640,000. The ex-governor is also accused of using nominee buyers, or straw men, to mask his participation in the purchases. As a former member of Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), once a significant political force in the country, Yarrington Ruvalcaba was a candidate for president in 2005.

He was charged in May 2013 and arrested while travelling in Italy in April 2017. Prosecutors allege he was using a fake name and passport at the time. Italian

authorities approved his extradition to the US the following year. In its statement, US authorities said they expect Yarrington Ruvalcaba will face "removal proceedings" to Mexico, where he also faces an investigation. The state of Tamaulipas serves as the base for one of Mexico's most powerful criminal organisations, the Gulf Cartel. Recently, four Americans who crossed into Matamoros, Tamaulipas - across the border from Brownsville, Texas - were caught in a shootout and kidnapped by armed men. A Mexican woman was also killed in the crossfire.

Authorities searched to recover the kidnapping victims and found one alive, one injured and two dead in wooden shack on the edge of the city. The Scorpions faction of the Gulf Cartel claimed credit for the kidnapping last Thursday, issuing an apology for violating its commitment to "respecting the life and wellbeing of the innocent". Local media reported that the cartel delivered the five members responsible to authorities, dropping them off with their hands tied on the street.

Indonesia arrests four foreigners

JAKARTA (AP): Indonesian authorities said they have arrested four foreigners for allegedly trying to smuggle drugs into the country, including a Nigerian man who had swallowed dozens of capsules filled with more than a kilogram (2.2 pounds) of methamphetamine. A Brazilian man and three Nigerian men were arrested separately between January and March at Soekarno-Hatta international airport in Jakarta and several apartments in the capital, police spokesperson Trunoyudo Wisnu Andika told a news conference in Jakarta.

Indonesia is a major hub for drug trafficking in Southeast Asia and has strict drug laws, with convicted smugglers sometimes executed by firing squad. Gatot Sugeng Wibowo, chief of customs at Soekarno-Hatta, said officers arrested Malachi Onyekachukwu Umanu, a Nigerian who arrived at the airport from Ethiopia on March 5 with no suitcase or bag. His suspicious behavior prompted officers to check his body, and an X-ray turned up some 64 capsules inside his stomach. Authorities managed to force all the capsules, which were filled with a total of 1.07 kilograms (2.3 pounds) of crystal methamphetamine, out of his stomach within three days, Wibowo said.

Customs officers at the airport also arrested a Brazilian man, Gustavo Pinto da Silva, shortly after he arrived from Rio de Janeiro in early January, carrying a backpack, suitcase and surfboard. He initially refused to let officers test the contents of liquids in his luggage. His resistance led officers to further investigate the substance, which was stored in six toiletry bottles and had a strong odor. Lab tests confirmed the fluid was 2 liters (67.6 ounces) of liquid cocaine. Police said it was worth 20 billion rupiah (\$1.3 million). Police also arrested two other Nigerian nationals along with an Indonesian man and woman who tried to smuggle 1.04 kilograms (2.2 pounds) of crystal meth from India wrapped in lace fabric through a post office in Jakarta.

Italy's court orders new trial for US tourists

ROME (Reuters): Italy's highest court ordered two American tourists to stand a new trial for the 2019 killing of a policeman in central Rome following a botched attempt to buy drugs, but upheld a murder sentence for one of them. Last year an appeals court had convicted Finnegan Lee Elder, who was 19 at the time, to 24 years in jail for stabbing Mario Cerciello Rega to death in Rome, while his friend, Gabriel Christian Natale-Hjorth, then 18, was handed a 22-year term.

The Rome-based Court of Cassation said Elder was guilty of murder, but ordered a new trial because some related allegations were not sufficiently corroborated. Cerciello Rega, 35, was not armed at the time and was stabbed 11 times by Elder with an 18-cm (7-inch) blade that he had brought with him from

the United States, police said. The court said Natale-Hjorth should stand trial again because there was not enough evidence of his complicity in the killing. He did not handle the murder weapon during the attack but was tussling with the second police officer, Andrea Varriale.

The Court, which only rules on whether the laws have been correctly applied and not on the merits of a case, said there was not enough evidence the two tourists were aware they had police in front of them, something they both deny. "From the first minute we examined the court papers, we realised that Elder had absolutely no idea that he was facing two police officials. That intervention was anomalous. This decision could have a great influence on the penalty," said Elder's lawyer Renato Borzone. The two

Americans, who both come from California, were in Italy on holiday and tried to buy drugs from a local dealer in a Rome tourist hotspot. They have said they were cheated, but managed to grab a bag off an intermediary as he tried to escape.

They subsequently agreed to meet the dealer again to get their money back in exchange for the bag, but instead the two policemen showed up in plain clothes. Elder has admitted killing Cerciello Rega, but both he and Natale-Hjorth said they had acted in self-defence because they thought the two policemen were thugs out to get them. "We are very satisfied with the outcome. We finally have someone who has heard our reasons. Now a new page in the trial is opened," said Natale-Hjorth's lawyer Fabio Alonzi.

Philippine, US annual drills will be biggest ever

MANILA (Reuters): The Philippines and the United States will carry out their biggest ever joint military drills next month, a spokesperson for the annual war games said, highlighting improved ties with the Western power under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. This year's "Balikatan" or 'shoulder-to-shoulder' drills also come against the backdrop of what the Philippines calls "aggressive" Chinese actions in the South China Sea.

The drills, held from April 11 to 28, will see 17,600 participants from both sides, including around 12,000 from the United States, and "live fire exercises into the water" for the first time, according to Col. Michael Logico, director of the Philippine military's training centre and spokesperson for the event. "This is officially the largest Balikatan exercise," Logico said. Previously, the biggest joint drills were undertaken in 2015, with more than 11,000 troops participating.

The larger-scale drills follow Marcos' decision last month to expand the United States' access to his country's military bases, which China says undermines regional stability. Regarding the possibility of the joint exercises further infuriating China, Logico said, "We have the absolute, inalienable right to defend our territory. We are here to show that we are combat ready." The Balikatan exercises are to be carried out across several provinces, including Palawan, which is near the South China Sea. They will also see some 111 participants from the Australian defence force, though their participation will be limited to "smaller land-based exercises", Logico said.

Iranian Nobel winner urges EU 'not to give in' to Iran

TEHRAN (AFP): Nobel Peace Prize-winning Iranian lawyer Shirin Ebadi urged the EU to maintain pressure on the authorities in Tehran over human rights violations. "Subordinate aid to Iran, contracts with Iran, and treaties with Iran respecting international norms, otherwise the money will not benefit the Iranian people at all," the activist said in a speech to the European Parliament.

Ebadi -- who won the Nobel Prize in 2003 and now lives in exile outside Iran -- insisted that "sanctions work" against the authorities in Tehran. "Do not give in to this regime," she told EU legislators. The European Union has imposed multiple rounds of sanctions on Iranian officials for their fierce crackdown on protests over the death in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini. Amini died in custody in Tehran last September after being arrested for an alleged violation of Iran's mandatory dress code for women. The 27-nation European bloc has so far stopped short of formally labelling Iran's Revolutionary Guards a terrorist group.

"Say it officially," she urged the EU. She said that since the start of the protests over Amini's death "at least 500 people" had been killed and 20,000 imprisoned. "Don't look

away from the immense violations of fundamental rights in Iran," she said. Her address came on the eve of MEPs voting on a resolution on Iran, in particular on the mystery poisonings of thousands of schoolgirls. Ebadi shrugged off claims that poverty in Iran was due to sanctions being imposed by the international community on the country. Instead she pinned the blame on "the misappropriation of funds" and "bad economic policies" by the authorities. "Democracy is the key to Iran's future, it is the key to peace and stability in the whole region, and it is also in your interest," she argued. "If democracy comes to Iran, there will be fewer refugees in your country."

of the road. Haaland said the debate had "created a false choice, seeded over many years, between valuing conservation and wildlife or upholding our commitments to Indigenous communities." She directed her agency to review previous land exchange proposals, including one that was rejected by the Obama administration in 2013 that would have allowed a road for primarily health and safety purposes.

NASA unveils sleeker spacesuits for future US mission to Moon

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Moonwalking US astronauts of the future will have sleeker and more flexible spacesuits as NASA is ditching the puffy white suits worn by Neil Armstrong and his fellow Apollo astronauts half a century ago. The United States National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) unveiled the first prototype for a newly designed next-generation spacesuit, specially tailored and accessorised for the first astronauts expected to venture back to the Moon's surface in the next few years.

The future moon-wear was displayed at the Johnson Space Center in Houston during an event hosted by the media and students by Axiom Space. NASA awarded the Texas-based company a \$228.5m contract to build suits for Artemis - the successor to the Apollo Moon programme. The Artemis programme aims to return humans to the Moon in late 2025 for the first time since the historic Apollo missions ended in 1972, an initial step towards an eventual voyage to Mars. The new suits, branded by Axiom as the "Axiom Extravehicular Mobility Unit" or AXEMU for short, are more streamlined and

flexible than the old Apollo suits, with a greater range of motion and variability in size and fit.

The pressurised garment has multiple protective layers, a backpack with life-support systems as well as lights and a high-definition video camera mounted on top of the bubble-shaped helmet. The "next generation" spacesuits will not only enable the first woman to walk on the Moon but they will also open opportunities for more people to explore and conduct science on the Moon than ever before. "NASA's administrator Bill Nelson said. NASA said in a statement that the new suits would be tested in a "spacelike environment" prior to their use for the Moon mission.

"Inside of this box are all the parts and the components to keep you alive," Russell Ralston, deputy program manager for extravehicular activity at Axiom Space, said of the suit's "portable life support system". "You can think of it as like a very fancy scuba tank and air conditioner kind of combined into one," Ralston said. Designed to be worn for up to eight hours at a time, the new suits will fit a broad range of potential wearers, accommodating at least 90 percent of the US male and

female population, NASA said. The precise look of the suits, however, remained a closely guarded trade secret. Those on display came with an outer layer that was charcoal grey with dashes of orange and blue as well as Axiom's logo on the chest - intended to obscure Axiom's proprietary outer fabric design.

The company said the suits to be worn on the lunar south pole by astronauts will be white because that is the best colour to reflect the harsh sunlight on the Moon's surface and protect the wearer from extreme heat. Vanessa Wyche, the Johnson Space Center director, said the new suit has "more functionality, more performance, more capability" than the bulky version worn by Apollo astronauts. "We have not had a new suit since the suits that we designed for the space shuttle and those suits are currently in use on the space station," Wyche said.

"So for 40 years, we've been using the same suit based on that technology," Axiom said it collaborated with costume designer Ester Marquis from the Apple TV+ lunar series For All Mankind to create the custom cover layer using Axiom's logo and brand colours.

US withdraws Trump-era land deal in Alaska wildlife refuge

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The Biden administration said it rescinded a land swap deal struck by former President Donald Trump's interior secretary that would have allowed a new road to cut through an Alaska wildlife refuge. The decision comes as President Joe Biden's administration faces heavy criticism from environmental groups for its approval earlier this week of a massive oil and gas development in Alaska's

Arctic. In a statement, the Interior Department said Secretary Deb Haaland withdrew the 2019 land exchange deal between the agency and the Alaska native King Cove Corporation, but would be open to examining other proposals to replace it. Supporters of the land swap in the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge in southeast Alaska have argued that a road is crucial to giving residents of King Cove, an Aleut

village of about 1,000 people, access to an airstrip at the village of Cold Bay in case of medical or other emergencies. Environmentalists have said a road would destroy valuable habitat for birds along Kinzarof Lagoon, and would set a dangerous precedent for other wildlife refuges. The deal set by Trump's Interior Secretary David Bernhardt in 2019 was particularly controversial because it left open the door to commercial use

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Pakistan's role in Afghan education sector

THE department of information and culture of Badakhshan, Afghanistan Northeastern province has told the media that the provincial government has managed to provide free education for nearly 500 students in the province. According to the details, male students who could not afford educational expenses in private educational centers are being provided free of cost education in IT, the English language, calligraphy, and religion. Initially, the program has been started for six months which is likely to continue and expanded to the majority of the population in the future.

The Taliban-ruled Afghanistan is passing through very dire situations amid global restrictions against the Taliban regime, coupled with the global energy crisis, inflation, and worst humanitarian conditions in most parts of the country. The Afghan nation is embattled with multiple issues ranging from law and order problem to a lack of essential needs for living including jobs, health, and education facilities, and the absence of fundamental rights and civil liberties. However, the health and education sectors are completely dysfunctional because of the availability of essential infrastructure, funds, trained staff, or technical expertise in war-hit regions. At the helm of all those administrative and financial issues, the recent gender-based actions and ban on girls' education proved to be another setback for the already malfunctioned education sector in Afghanistan.

Historically, Pakistan has played an important role in the promotion of education in its neighboring country while half a million Afghan refugee students are studying in Pakistani educational institutions, and benefit from Prime Minister Scholarship program for Afghan students active since 2009. Thousands of Afghan students are studying in Pakistani educational institutions under Allama Iqbal Scholarship Program and Hanns Seidel Scholarship programs. Other than government-funded educational programs, Pakistani teachers, Philanthropists, and charity organizations had played an important role in the provision of religious and modern-day education to their Afghan brethren by establishing schools, and seminaries in various parts of Afghanistan. Pakistan not only assisted the Afghan people through the provision of all possible help on its own land but also provided substantial financial and technical support to the Afghan government to establish educational facilities inside Afghanistan to help mitigate the needs of Afghans.

In this regard, Liaquat Ali Khan Engineering Faculty, Balkh University, Rehman Baba High School, Sir Syed Science Faculties in Jalalabad and Nangarhar, and Allama Iqbal Arts Faculty University of Kabul are magnificent projects that not only satisfied the needs of Afghan youth but created strong fraternal bonds between the two brotherly nations. Recently, the government of Pakistan has issued Special RFID Cards to Afghan students to facilitate their admission and travel to Pakistani schools in border regions on daily basis for educational purposes.

Currently, the Afghan nation faces multiple issues, however, scourges of poverty and illiteracy are sharply pushing Afghan youths into the hands of Afghan warlords, terror outfits, and drug traffickers, which is not only causing serious social and security problems for the Afghan government but also increasing the same risks for regional nations. The Afghan authorities have launched an initiative to provide free of cost education to poor youths in their country but the resource-deficient nation needs foreign support for the continuation and expansion of this endeavor. Therefore, regional countries particularly Pakistan's government, INGOs, and the private sector must support these endeavors to play a constructive role in eradicating poverty and illiteracy in their neighborhood, to realize the collective goal of peace and stability in the region.

Why Indonesia fails to address the West Papua conflict

IT has been over a month since an armed group abducted Phillip Merthens, a New Zealand-born pilot, on February 7, 2023, in Indonesia's Nduga, West Papua. The group is the West Papua Liberation Army. Known by the acronym TPNPB, it's an armed wing of the Papua Liberation Movement (OPM). As local media reported, TPNPB, led by Egianus Kogoya, a local commander, stormed the Susi Air small plane after it landed, set it afire and took the pilot hostage. TPNPB then brought him to its stronghold area where it would use him as its "political leverage". The military and police still have no clue where TPNPB is hiding the pilot, mostly due to terrain difficulties.

However, the military has swept into villages to gain information about the armed group's whereabouts. Intimidated, some Papuans have fled their villages in Nduga and Lanny Jaya regencies. Following the kidnapping, a deadly riot erupted, and most recently, armed confrontations between the group and the security forces have killed both civilians and soldiers in Yahukimo and Puncak regencies. It's clear from all of this that there is no end in sight for the intensified hostilities that have plagued West Papua over the past six years. Yet the reality is that none of this is surprising.

To understand this increasing escalation, it's vital to look at the failures of successive Indonesian governments in responding to the crisis. The central government focuses more on addressing the effects than the causes of the conflict. Its counterinsurgency

policies - whether development programs, a special autonomy for the region or out-and-out military operations - are aimed at reducing Indigenous discontent and violent attacks from the TPNPB to controllable levels. There has not been a sincere political process between the central government, Indigenous Papuans, and nationalist groups in West Papua. That's why these policies have met with distrust among Indigenous

When Joko Widodo became Indonesia's president in 2014, there was hope for a resolution to the crisis. He released a handful of Papuan political prisoners and vowed to address the 2014 Paniai human rights abuse case, relating to an incident where the Indonesian army fired on hundreds of Papuan protesters, killed four teenagers, and wounded more than a dozen others in highland Papua.

Papuans, even as the TPNPB armed group has developed more deadly capacity to attack civilians and security forces.

It is worth remembering that the roots of the conflict aren't new and have been building up since the 1960s. Since becoming part of Indonesia through a widely criticised referendum called the Act of Free Choice in 1969, the western half of the island of New Guinea and Indonesia's easternmost region, commonly referred to as West Papua, has barely enjoyed stability. This disputed referendum - when the military handpicked less than one per cent of the West Papuan population to vote for integration with Indonesia under the threat of violence - set a precedent for how the Indonesian state disregards Papuans' interests.

From the 1970s to the 1990s, the Indonesian government settled hundreds of

thousands of people from other parts of the country in West Papua through the transmigration program, aiming to forcibly change the region's demography and control the region, even as the government also embarked on military operations. The result: A decline in the number of Indigenous Papuans on their own land, numerous deaths, and massive displacement. Because

of these measures, Papuan identity - as distinct from Indonesia - emerged not from cultural, religious and physical differences but rather from racial discrimination by the state, combined with Indigenous Papuans' past and contemporary grievances. The conflict has led to both a non-violent movement and an armed struggle to defend Papuans' identity and rights.

When Joko Widodo became Indonesia's president in 2014, there was hope for a resolution to the crisis. He released a handful of Papuan political prisoners and vowed to address the 2014 Paniai human rights abuse case, relating to an incident where the Indonesian army fired on hundreds of Papuan protesters, killed four teenagers, and wounded more than a dozen others in highland Papua. A promise to open West Papua to foreign journalists was seen by many as

another sign of Widodo's goodwill. However, the commitment to address the conflict fell apart in the waning days of his first administration.

Under Widodo's second administration since 2019, Papuan grievances have intensified. Instead of the root causes of the conflict, the state has focused chiefly on development and infrastructure programmes,

including the Trans Papua highway that's under construction in some regencies in West Papua, a food estate, a special economic zone, strategic tourism areas and palm oil plantations. The main beneficiaries of these initiatives are mostly nonindigenous Papuans residing in coastal and urban areas. Indigenous Papuans, particularly those living in highland areas, barely reap the benefits of development projects. Instead, they live in constant fear and trauma due to escalated violence. Hundreds to thousands of civilians are caught in the crossfire and suffer displacement and other human rights violations every time armed confrontation breaks out between security forces and TPNPB.

In 2019, racial slurs directed at Papuan students triggered peaceful demonstrations that then turned violent across Papua.

Rather than acknowledging and resolving such deep-seated racism and discrimination towards Papuans, Indonesia in 2021 revised the special autonomy for the region first introduced in 2001, for another 20 years. It has also divided the region into six provinces. This top-down set of policies - implemented without wide-ranging consultations with Papuans and their representatives - reflects a desperate strategy aimed at containing the conflict rather than resolving it and exposes the failures of the central government. Meanwhile, TPNPB has consistently rejected state policies, including economic activities, in highland Papua. The group has warned against the continuing operations of commercial flights and has even shot a handful of planes flying across highland areas. It has demanded that non-Papuan civilians leave conflict zones. The recent kidnapping of the pilot suggests that the TPNPB believes its previous warnings have fallen on deaf ears.

But the conflict and its escalation also highlight the unresolved transgenerational trauma that Papuans continue to endure. This, reinforced by the availability of relatively sophisticated weapons - accessed by TPNPB from illegal trade with the military and police as well as illicit supplies from Papua New Guinea, Thailand, and the Philippines - has facilitated armed campaigns since 2018 in Nduga, the poorest regency in Indonesia. Indeed, TPNPB has recruited its members mostly by capitalising on the deep grievances of Papuan youth. I know, because as a local volunteer in 2019, I spoke to a handful of Nduga's dis-

placed children interested in joining the armed group because of deep-seated trauma and hardships living in uncertain conditions. They were barely receiving a proper education in their districts and were enthusiastic about meeting teachers and studying at an emergency school built by local humanitarian volunteers. Yet the Indonesian government has systematically failed to recognise and address transgenerational trauma among armed conflict-affected victims in Papua, particularly the children. This contrasts starkly with its massive deradicalisation programmes elsewhere in the country.

At the same time, TPNPB has modified its fighting capacity to intensify armed attacks against the state and civilians. Financial support from its sympathisers has also increased. Its organisational structure has been modernised, with Papuan youth occupying key positions. Lastly, its use of social media to counter government narratives by exposing the state's power abuses has grown more sophisticated. In short, Indonesia's relationship with Papuans appears set to only get worse. It doesn't have to be that way. A lesson from armed conflicts in the deep south of Thailand and in Mindanao in the southern Philippines is that the presence of credible and trusted individuals or groups is crucial to initiate peace talks. That's an element missing in the Papua conflict. The capture of the pilot is only symptomatic of this trust gap. It's a deficit that is only deepening, and the Indonesian government has no one but itself to blame.

Forget Nazis, Britain's cruel refugee plan mimics its own history

IN the end, it was a single tweet followed by a blatantly partisan attempt to get its author to shut up that made Britain's stiff upper lip quiver. After celebrity football commentator Gary Lineker expressed his discomfort with the ugly rhetoric accompanying the Conservative government's proposed "Illegal Migration Bill", aimed at asylum seekers, the BBC took him off air.

On his personal account, the politically moderate Lineker had criticised a "cruel" policy and suggested that the anti-migrant rhetoric was reminiscent of 1930s Germany. An obvious distraction from the widespread economic suffering in Britain and multiple allegations of Tory corruption, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's sensationalising "stop the boats" policy would see desperate people arriving on Britain's shores on rubber dinghies being criminalised, detained, deported, and barred from ever returning. The United Nations has described this as illegal.

In truth, Lineker had violated not the BBC's "impartiality" guidelines, but an unwritten national code. Britain in its apparently distinctive goodness must never be compared with the Germany that the Allies finally defeated in the second world war. There can be no suggestion that if it

does not pull back from xenophobia and demonising people deemed "others", Britain might itself center down the path Germany once took. Cultural theorist Paul Gilroy describes Britain as suffering from a "pathology of greatness" embodied by the mixed martial and football chant: "Two World Wars and One World Cup". A sense of itself as eternally the good guy, never in danger of becoming like the bad one, is fundamental to Britain's official but somewhat deluded narrative of itself. Although he had not in fact referenced the Nazis, the Holocaust or concentration camps Lineker, reinstated by the BBC after a huge outcry, was still accused of making "Nazi slurs". This false claim came from tabloids complicit in describing, equally falsely, "swarms" of refugees and "illegals" flooding into Britain". Lineker had pointed out that there was no such "influx", puncturing a hole in a fiction propagated by both ministers and media. Britain processes far fewer asylum applications than Germany, for instance.

Still, those who balk at the parallel need not look to the German past. Britain's own long imperial and post-war history furnishes sufficient examples of dehumanising language and lethal racism. Unlike the repeated citation of "the finest hour", and Britain's heroic victory

(with Allies) in the anti-Nazi war in popular history, there is a stark silence in this country around Britain's history of racial violence and ethnic cleansing. This history of white supremacy and racial terror is the more relevant background for understanding Britain's brutal attitude towards asylum seekers from war-torn regions of Asia and Africa. The contrast between their treatment and the laudable generosity offered to Ukrainians fleeing war who are deemed to be more "like us" (meaning white and European) is telling.

It is no secret that to enslave, subjugate, conquer or dispossess peoples over four centuries, the British Empire developed ideologies that deemed the darker peoples of the globe either less human than Europeans or less than human altogether. Some South Africans, seen as "savage" and sexually insatiable, were exhibited in "human zoos" while the "violent" and "primitive" Kikuyu in East Africa were corralled into small reserves, condemned to be "squatters" on their own land now called "the White Highlands". Bengalis dying in their millions from a colonial famine were mocked by Churchill as "breeding like rabbits", while the Indigenous peo-

ples of North America were regarded as cannibals and unable to farm the land, which could conveniently be taken from them. The Secwepemc leader, George Manuel, recalls being asked by a white colleague as late as the 1970s: "Do Indians have feelings?" The idea that the world's darker peoples are less sensitive to ill-treatment remains pervasive. As its government demonises undocumented people seeking shelter today, it is worth remembering that Britain has historically been more a refugee-making country than a refugee-taking one.

Enslavement literally turned human beings into cargo while indentured ripped many desperate people from homelands in Asia and deposited them to work on British plantations for pitiable wages. These extraordinary renditions took place on large ships rather than the small boats decreed by Sunak and his ministers but the dehumanising of people on the high seas is not new to Britain. The dismissive attitude to desperate people on inflatable dinghies braving danger to get to British shores is faintly evocative of the callous spirit of those ship captains who threw enslaved people overboard in order to be able to claim merchandise insurance as illustrated by the infamous

1781 Zong massacre.

In her book, *Bordering Britain*, the legal scholar Nadine El-Enany has pointed out that Britain's borders and the successive legislations which have shaped them such as the 1981 Nationality Act "maintain the racial order established by colonialism" in which Black and brown bodies are coded as racially inferior and disposable. In colonial Kenya, to name just one example, the Native Registration Amendment Ordinance meant that a hated "kipande" or passbook had to be worn around the neck by African males. It determined where they could go and whether they could work even as most had been displaced from their fertile agricultural lands by white settlers, history's most lethal economic migrants. Having liberally expanded into the world in the centuries which preceded it, Britain contracted into itself in the post-war era, then narrowed the definition of who was allowed to be British.

The Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 strove to stop members of what Queen Elizabeth had - as princess in 1947 - described as "our great imperial family" from aspiring for citizenship. It is no small irony, of course, that the most vicious iteration of racist British immigration policy has been fronted by two British Asian politi-

cians with family connections to East Africa: Sunak and Home Secretary Suella Braverman. As is well-known, many Asians from Uganda and Kenya themselves arrived in Britain seeking refuge after being expelled from these newly independent nations. El-Enany describes how grudgingly Ugandan Asians were admitted to Britain. Even these extremely modest numbers elicited viciously racist rhetoric most infamously from Conservative MP Enoch Powell in his infamous "rivers of blood" speech, as National Front members chanted "Keep the Asians out".

It is deeply reprehensible that ethnic minority politicians like Sunak and Braverman, instead of honouring the histories of anti-racist struggle which afforded their families shelter in Britain in the face of hostility, have sought to enact upon others the cruel expulsions visited upon previous generations. This is not holding them to a different standard. It is to insist on an obvious moral principle, the golden rule - that you must afford to others the same principles of refuge and inclusion that were offered to you. A divided Britain stands on the edge of a moral chasm. Unless it pulls back, it risks becoming another grim historical warning.

Aljazeera

Israel was built on burned Palestinian villages

EARLIER this month, Israeli settlers set ablaze the Palestinian town of Huwara, near Nablus, in what many described as a pogrom. Sameh Aqtesh, a 37-year-old Palestinian father of five, was shot dead, dozens were injured and many homes and businesses were vandalised. Since then, there have been subsequent attacks on the town and neighbouring areas. The Western media has taken an interest, but it framed what happened in Huwara as tit for tat between Palestinians and Israeli settlers. As a result, the coverage of the pogrom in the West ignored not only months of escalating settler violence but also the reality of Zionist settler colonialism.

So-called liberal Zionists and Israelis who consider themselves on the left of the political spectrum also showed an interest in Huwara. Since the pogrom, dozens of Israeli activists descended on the town to demonstrate. A small minority among the tens of thousands of Israelis attending the "pro-democracy" protests against the coalition government's judicial reform plans have also raised anti-occupation slogans in the wake of the attack on Huwara. Others have taken to writing publicly about the shameful nature of what took place, claiming that at this moment "to love Israel is to denounce it". "This is of concern to Jewry all over the world," said British Jewish historian Simon Schama. "It's absolutely, utterly horrifying." Israel's

1948 declaration of independence - "a noble document, which promised equal civil rights to all religious and ethnic groups" - had disintegrated, he said. For these Israelis and Zionists, what happened in Huwara is seen simply through the prism of Netanyahu's right-wing coalition government. In other words, as a regrettable symptom of the Israeli regime's shift to the right and the inevitable emboldening of Israeli settlers in the West Bank. This is an astoundingly deluded take on reality.

Indeed, portrayals of Israeli settlers in the West Bank as completely separate and inherently different to the rest of Israel is a demonstration of cognitive dissonance par excellence.

One does not have to dig that deep to discover that the burning of Palestinian villages is not a new tactic in the Zionist playbook, rather it is a core feature. In 1948, the year of the Nakba, over 450 Palestinian villages and towns were wiped from the map by Zionist militias and 800,000 Palestinians were forced into exile as a result. Indeed massacres such as the one in Deir Yassin and Tantura remain etched in Palestinian collective memories. Today, some of the Israeli regime's most important landmarks sit where Palestinian localities once stood, from Tel Aviv University to Ben Gurion airport. Many of the Israeli activists who came to demonstrate in Huwara, came from their homes, hipster bars and artisanal bak-

eries in Tel Aviv that sit on top of destroyed Palestinian villages. Far from Schama's description of a noble document, the Israeli Declaration of Independence institutionalised Zionist settler colonialism and the destruction of Palestine. In the decades that followed the Nakba, the destruction of Palestinian villages continued to be a core feature of the Israeli regime. In 1967, when it conquered the West Bank and Gaza Strip, more villages were wiped out and yet again hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forced into exile. In the Old City of Jerusalem, an entire neighbourhood - the Maghrebi Quarter - was razed to the ground. The year 1967 also marked the start of the settlement enterprise in the West Bank and Gaza, spearheaded by an

Israeli Labour government and not a right-wing one as some might have presumed. While the discourse of the far right has undoubtedly led to more settler attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank in recent years - such as the one in 2015 when Israeli settlers invaded the village of Duma, south of Nablus, and set alight the Dawabshah family home killing an 18-month-old Palestinian baby - the erasure of the Palestinian people is in the essence of the Israeli regime. To separate the actions of settlers in the West Bank from the rest is an attempt to conceal the reality of Israeli settler colonialism that exists from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. That is why the pogrom in Huwara has to be understood as a simple continuation of a settler colonial legacy.

How Israel is affected by Saudi-Iranian rapprochement

Faisal J. Abbas

AMID the barrage of Saudi-related news since last Friday, a peculiar US media "exclusive" about the Kingdom's "price" for normalizing ties with Israel went unnoticed. Unsurprisingly, this "news" - I use the term loosely - was overshadowed by the groundbreaking Saudi-Iranian pact mediated by China. The so-called "price" isn't news because there's nothing new about it. More precisely described as ideas, they have been discussed since the era of Donald Trump, whose senior adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner led efforts to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A senior Saudi official confirmed to Arab News that the latest leak of these terms did not come from the Kingdom, which means the source was probably a senior US adviser with ties to Israel or a national security role.

I myself heard some of these Saudi "conditions" at a high-level briefing last year, where it was made clear that they could be discussed only AFTER a solution was found for the rights of Palestinians - which has always been the first condition for Saudi Arabia. The context is for the Kingdom to be treated in the same way as some of the countries that have peace treaties with Israel when it comes to rights and privileges. Issues such as the right to peaceful use of uranium, joining NATO in some capacity, and being named as a US strategic ally, could all be discussed after a Palestinian solution is found.

Moreover, had editors at the Wall Street Journal and The New

York Times - which carried the "news" - done a little research, they would have found that their "scoop" had already appeared in 124 in Israel last December and the Jerusalem Post this January. Understandably, for Israeli media, these stories were timely. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had just won re-election, having campaigned on making Saudi normalization a priority. Of course - as a senior Saudi official told me at the time - that element of Netanyahu's rhetoric was for internal Israeli campaigning and consumption. Netanyahu also raised the issue in an interview with the Saudi media outlet Al Arabiya December last year. The appearance was paraded by some of Netanyahu's enthusiasts as a first (wrongly, since he had also given an interview to Al Arabiya in August).

So if there's nothing new here, why am I writing about it? Two reasons: first, because the pact with Iran (assuming the regime in Tehran sticks to it) has given the Saudi relationship with Israel new salience; and second, because the Saudi terms themselves need to be discussed. Those reasons are intertwined. It has been suggested that the deal with Iran is harmful to possible Saudi normalization with Israel, with the Biden administration culpable of so alienating the Kingdom that it chose the Chinese as mediators. That is partly true, but not wholly. As I said in my last column, China was chosen purely because Beijing has leverage over Iran, and this has nothing to do with the relationship with America. Moreover,

the White House has said it was aware of the discussions and Secretary of State Antony Blinken has welcomed the agreement.

Of course, it can be argued that if Tehran behaves itself going forward, then Israel loses the important card of "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." But I would argue that this card was never going to be sustainable, it relies on too many variables. What is sustainable, however, is what Saudi Arabia has long been advocating: a fair and just solution to the plight of Palestinians. This country has argued for decades that it views the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a land dispute, not an ideological war. Unlike the Iranians and their proxies, we have no wish to throw Jews into the sea or abolish the state of Israel. Clearly, a just solution requires bold and capable Palestinian leadership, and an acknowledgment that they have a well-earned reputation for never missing an opportunity to miss an opportunity. On the other hand, Netanyahu's new far-right government has gone too far in oppressing and intimidating Palestinians. Condemnation has come from their closest allies in Washington, from members of the American Jewish community, and even from Israel's own citizens who have taken to the streets in protest. Israel's actions also embarrassed signatories to the Abraham Accords (the UAE condemned Israeli aggression at Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jenin refugee camp), which makes it harder for other countries to even consider taking the same route.

As for the other Saudi conditions, the way I see them is a natural result of normalizing ties with Israel. After all, no one has anything to fear from Saudi exploitation of its uranium reserves. As for joining NATO in one capacity or another, I do believe the issue is bigger, and has to do with flip-flopping US policy. On one hand, American officials give repeated oral assurances that they are committed to the security of the Kingdom, but refuse to put that in writing or in a formal framework. The declassification of the Houthis as a terrorist group and withdrawal of Patriot missile batteries - while Saudi civilians were being attacked - still leave a bitter taste in the mouth of the Kingdom. When the Biden White House denies Saudi Arabia the means to defend itself, refuses to guarantee Saudi security in writing (which it knows all too well that this is in its own interests), and negotiates with Iran about everything apart from the security of its own allies, then Riyadh cannot be blamed for seeking alternatives to defend its people, such as accepting the Chinese offer to mediate.

Israel, meanwhile, is a victim of collateral damage as a result of strained Saudi relations with the US, and self-inflicted wounds from its treatment of the Palestinians. The good news is that despite the deal with Iran, there is still hope for Israel to normalize ties with the Kingdom. However, Israel should first take a leaf out of the Old Testament: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Arab News



Rift among Republicans grows over US support for Ukraine

Rob Garver

Ar rift is growing within the Republican Party over the degree to which the United States should continue to support Ukraine in its effort to expel the Russian forces that are attempting to take over large swaths of the country. While key Republicans in Washington are still broadly supportive of the US effort, which has channeled tens of billions of dollars in money and materiel to Ukraine since the launch of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, dissenting voices are increasingly making themselves heard.

This week, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis became the latest high-profile Republican to suggest that the US should back off its support for Ukraine. Though he has not officially announced his candidacy, DeSantis is widely expected to seek the Republican presidential nomination in 2024. On Monday, Fox News host Tucker Carlson tweeted out the text of DeSantis' response to a question that the host sent to several potential Republican presidential contenders, asking about their positions on the war. "While the US has many vital national interests - securing our borders, addressing the crisis of readiness within our military, achieving energy security and independence, and checking the economic, cultural and military power of the Chinese Communist Party - becoming further entangled in a territorial dispute between Ukraine and Russia is not one of them," DeSantis wrote.

The governor described the US commitment to Ukraine as a "distraction" from other serious challenges, criticized the Biden administration for offering a "blank check" to Kyiv, and denounced a policy of "regime change" toward Russia - something the Biden administration has specifically said it is not pursuing. DeSantis' comments received enough attention to merit a response from the Ukrainian government. Oleg Nikolenko, spokesperson for the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry, tagged the governor on Twitter, writing, "We are sure that as a former military officer deployed to a combat zone, Governor @RonDeSantisFL knows the difference between a 'dispute' and war. We invite him to visit Ukraine to get a deeper understanding of Russia's full-scale invasion and the threats it poses to US interests."

Former President Donald Trump, who has announced he is running for the Republican nomination next year, has previously expressed extreme skepticism about US involvement in Ukraine. However, in responding to Carlson, he was somewhat less clear about continued US funding of the war. He said that opposing Russia in Ukraine is not a vital strategic interest for the US. However, while he demanded that European countries provide more financial support for Ukraine - and reimburse the US for some of what Washington has provided - he seemed to hedge somewhat when it came to the

prospect of shutting off the flow of funds. Trump went on to call for immediate negotiations on ending the conflict, while insisting that the war never would have happened if he had been in office, and that he could broker an immediate peace. "If I were President, that horrible war would end in 24 hours, or less," he wrote. Other declared or potential Republican presidential contenders were more in favor of continued support of Ukraine. Nikki Haley, the former South Carolina governor who served as Trump's ambassador to the United Nations, said during an appearance in Iowa last week that it is "imperative" to provide Ukraine with the equipment it needs to defend itself.

"If we win this war, this will send a message to China. It'll send a message to Iran. It will send a message to Korea. It'll send a message to Russia," said Haley, who announced her candidacy last month. "If we lose this war, we need to take dictators at their word. They said Poland and the Baltics are next, and you're looking at a world war." Former Vice President Mike Pence, a possible presidential contender, characterized continued aid to Ukraine as a policy that former President Ronald Reagan, a Republican icon, would have supported. "This is not America's war. But if Putin is not stopped and the sovereign nation of Ukraine is not restored quickly, he will continue to move toward our NATO allies, and America would then be called upon to send our own," he said. DeSantis' comments on Ukraine drew disagreement and some outright rebukes from senior congressional Republicans.

In an interview with Politico on Tuesday, Senator John Cornyn commented on DeSantis' position. "I'm disturbed by it. I think he's a smart guy. I want to find out more about it. But I hope he feels like he doesn't need to take that Tucker Carlson line to be competitive in the primary," Cornyn said. "It's important for us to continue to support Ukrainians for our own security." On Twitter, Senator Lindsey Graham wrote, "To those who believe that Russia's unprovoked and barbaric invasion of Ukraine is not a priority for the United States - you are missing a lot."

Graham went on to compare those calling for decreased support of Ukraine to the European nations that ignored the rise of Adolf Hitler in the 1930s. "The last time someone in Europe claimed the land of others, and tried to take it by force of arms, was Adolf Hitler's attempt to build a Third Reich," he wrote. "Those who miscalculated Hitler's intentions paved the way for a wider war and missed many opportunities to stop him early on." Senator Marco Rubio, from DeSantis' home state of Florida, seemed to suggest that the governor's position might be a result of inexperience with foreign policy.

"I don't know what he's trying to do or what the goal is," Rubio said in an interview with conserva-

tive talk show host Hugh Hewitt. "Obviously, he doesn't deal with foreign policy every day as governor." In an email exchange with VOA, Michael O'Hanlon, a senior fellow and director of research in foreign policy at the Brookings Institution, said he did not believe DeSantis' comments on Ukraine are representative of the feelings of most elected Republicans. "I am skeptical the GOP will really stop supporting the war," O'Hanlon wrote. "DeSantis' comment isn't indicative of the center of gravity, and he isn't even in Congress. Time will tell." However, while DeSantis' position on the war in Ukraine might not put him in the mainstream among Capitol Hill Republicans, it is one that many Republican voters appear to be adopting as the war continues, and US expenditures on it mount. "Republicans are becoming more wary of the Biden administration's program to support Ukraine," Carroll Doherty, director of political research at the Pew Research Center, told VOA. While he stressed that it's not a majority of Republicans who have turned against the war, it is a significant percentage. "Republicans, essentially, are divided on this," he said. The Pew center conducted a poll in March 2022, the month after Russia's full-scale invasion began. The results showed widespread support for helping Ukraine, with 74% of Americans saying that the Biden administration was either providing the right amount of aid, or should provide more, including 72% of Republican and Republican-leaning respondents, and 77% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning respondents. Only 7% of respondents said the US was doing "too much," including 9% of Republicans and 5% of Democrats.

Since then, the percentage of Americans saying the US has given "too much" aid to Ukraine has steadily increased, hitting 26% in January, the last time Pew asked the question. However, the growth was much more pronounced among Republicans and Republican-leaning independents, with 40% saying the US has given too much, compared with 15% of Democrats and those who lean Democratic. The percentage of Republicans and people who lean Republican reporting that they see the Russia-Ukraine war as a threat to the US has also changed dramatically, falling from 51% in March 2022 to 29% in January 2023. The percentage also fell for Americans as a whole, from 50% to 35%, and for Democrats and people who lean Democratic, from 50% to 43%.

Doherty said that the sharp divergence between Republican and Democratic attitudes toward the war is a common feature of much political polling in recent years. "You see it across many, many issues, once an issue becomes highly visible or becomes essentially a political issue," he said. "Attitudes have become more and more polarized by partisanship." VOA

UK should end demonization of immigrants amid labor shortage

Mohamed Chebaro

IT may be a simplistic observation, but it is often not mentioned: A politician whose parents were migrants is today working to bolster the UK's broken asylum system to curb new arrivals' entry to the UK. Interior Minister Suella Braverman, whose Indian-origin parents migrated to the UK in the 1960s, is also using a simplistic formula to defend the new law she has tabled in Parliament. She says there has been "too much" immigration and the country is facing an "invasion" by migrants. Braverman is also attacking opposition parties and other people who have been vocal in saying that her new plan, just like her Conservative Party's past policies, is unworkable, difficult to apply and simply an electioneering stance aimed at boosting the party's chances in the next general election.

In other words, she is appealing to those British people who are sensitive to any foreigners' presence in the UK, despite the shortages and broken services in many economic sectors as a result of the Conservatives' Brexit deal, which did not factor in the exit of the country's large European workforce. This has left many businesses and services starved of skilled and unskilled labor, frustrating the government's attempts to get the economy growing again. The Illegal Migration Bill, which is designed to "Stop the Boats," had its second reading in Parliament early this week. It aims to reduce

the number of people entering Britain irregularly on small boats, which last year exceeded 45,000, up 500 percent on two years ago. Many come from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran and Iraq. The new legislation will permit the arrest of asylum-seekers who arrive on small boats, as well as their detention without the right to bail for at least 28 days. They will then be "swiftly" deported to their native country if it is deemed safe or to a third country based on a unilateral agreement often paid for by British taxpayers.

Braverman's efforts have been criticized by various "naive dogooders," as she described them, with TV celebrities and others becoming entangled in the saga. The national broadcaster, the BBC, was also dragged into the fray of the debate. It has often been accused by consecutive right-wing Conservative governments of lacking impartiality. The home secretary has also attacked those who have reminded her of her origins, saying that she has been subjected to "grotesque slurs" and that she refuses to be patronized on what views are appropriate for someone of her background. Contrary to Braverman's allegations, the UK receives far fewer immigrants than many other European countries. But it has suffered from a chronic failure to tailor and implement a clear and workable migration system over the

years due to a variety of moral failures and commercial interests. Britain's asylum system is riddled with loopholes that unscrupulous businessmen and people smugglers alike have been milking for material benefits, such as by charging large fees to transport people illegally or the money earned from housing asylum-seekers.

Shipwrecks, the threat of drowning, wild animals, criminal gangs, getting lost in a jungle or even being met by hostile legislation, as is the case in Britain, has not deterred many people from taking their chance to seek better opportunities and a chance to be employed, or from fleeing civil strife, open wars or corrupt and dysfunctional states. Others have fallen prey to geostrategic efforts aimed at blackmailing Western countries through weaponizing immigration. For example, Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto this week claimed that Russian Wagner Group mercenaries operating in some African countries have been fueling irregular migration toward Europe as a way of hitting back at the nations supporting Ukraine following the Russian invasion. In this complex landscape, where the geopolitical is impacting the national and domestic, the UK is no different in its attempt to rethink its position to meet new adversities. But London ought to listen to the voices warning it against rushing into policies that will ultimately

not work, as rejecting those that arrive on small boats outright and sending them back where they came from requires bilateral agreements or new conventions to organize those returns. As a result of Brexit, the UK has lost its access to the Dublin Regulation that allows EU countries to return migrants to the first country they set foot in on arrival to the bloc. The resistance of migrants to comply with biometric registration might be the first obstacle that multilateral rules could help avoid in the journey toward getting a better grip of who to admit and who to reject.

The UK's bilateral deal with France to increase law enforcement on the French side of the Channel is unlikely to alone deter small boats or offer a long-term solution. Neither is the Rwanda deal or similar agreements struck with a few countries, coupled with financial arrangements paid for by the British taxpayer. Studies and expert reports have all been warning about labor shortages and, if we are to trust this government and its interest in encouraging economic growth, streamlining immigration should be its first priority. That would allow it to serve society and the economy instead of continuously using anti-immigration rhetoric for short-term electioneering reasons, while spoiling social cohesion in a country where more than 16 percent of the population were born abroad, according to data from the 2021 census.

World must act now to end carbon offset scam

Ranvir S. Nayar

AN investigation by European media houses - British newspaper The Guardian, German weekly Die Zeit and SourceMaterial - in January concluded that there are gaping holes in the program of carbon offsets used by Verra, the world's leading carbon credit certifier. The report indicated that more than 90 percent of the company's rain-forest offset credits do not represent genuine carbon reductions.

Following the publication of the report, Verra, which dominates this rapidly growing market that is valued at \$2 billion a year, last week said it would scrap the system by 2025 and introduce a significantly different mechanism to prevent misuse or abuse. The serious loopholes found in Verra's certification program is just the latest scandal to hit carbon offset schemes since they were launched more than three decades ago. The idea, proposed and propelled by the big industry lobby in the developed world - Big Oil, steelmakers, car-makers and food companies - was always viewed with huge suspicion by environmental activists. They have accused the big corporations, with increasing proof, of simply cheating and lying when it comes to carbon offsets or carbon trading.

The system is without any checks and balances and looks custom-made for fraudulent claims to pass through. Basically, it allows a big polluter, say Shell, to "offset" its carbon emissions from its oil wells in the North Sea by undertaking, financing or part-financing, or basically hav-

ing any role in certain measures in faraway Burundi or Cambodia. All the companies have to do is to show that they have committed a certain amount of their budget to organizations that plant trees, protect trees, harvest water or literally any other thing that can even remotely be passed off as environmental protection. Big industry, as it is prone to do, has turned this activity into yet another revenue stream, with an extensive "stock market" of carbon trading, allowing a company that has excess carbon credits - meaning it did not pollute "enough" or it purchased carbon credits in some remote area - to sell them to another firm that has polluted more than it was "allowed."

That the whole carbon trading/carbon offset system is a scam has long been evident to everyone except the regulators and the businesses. Organizations such as Greenpeace have been criticizing carbon trading and offsets for years, saying they are nothing but a huge invitation for polluters to continue polluting. Environmental organizations say that governments have taken a back seat on the issue, pretending that carbon offsets actually lead to something, meaning there are no checks whatsoever on the claims of billions of dollars being "invested" in carbon offset programs being run by all and sundry all over the world. The calling out of Verra's hugely flawed certification program is just the tip of the iceberg of malaise afflicting the global car-

bon offsets system.

As the world hurtles toward climate catastrophe, governments can no longer afford to turn a blind eye to this fraud, since it is bound to increase significantly in the years to come as countries and companies race to meet their commitments to cut their carbon footprint by the first deadline of 2030, as set by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The world's carbon emissions are meant to go down by nearly half by that time. However, not a single country seems to be on track to meet that target. This means that an increasing number of companies and countries will be tempted or forced to use the carbon offsets system to show that they have curtailed their emissions. Hence, the opportunity for fraud on a much larger scale will be increased, since for the most part it is still a voluntary system.

Since it involves billions of dollars changing hands every year, and with the amount set to rise much higher in the years to come, it is highly likely to attract all kinds of shady dealings and could even attract criminals or money launderers, since it is an area where the two parties' word - the company that is trying to offset its emissions and the organization that is meant to ensure the money is used to protect the environment - is taken at face value. One can be sure that thousands of skeletons will tumble out of these closets whenever, or if ever, they are checked by regulators or independent auditors. Governments owe it to

themselves and their citizens to intervene rapidly and either scrap the system or create a framework of checks and balances, whereby the carbon offsets are determined in real terms and on the ground, not by an estimate or a mere piece of paper issued by a company whose interests lie in generating more and more such certifications. An intervention is becoming ever more urgent as, over the past few years, a number of companies and organizations have started reaching out to consumers for a contribution to reduce their own carbon footprint. This is the kind of system that Verra has been overseeing. It is now commonplace for airlines to add a small voluntary contribution by travelers to "offset" the carbon emitted during their flight, or for a garment maker to offer supposedly carbon-neutral clothes.

In both of these cases - and almost any other similar case - the consumer has to place blind faith in the company that is asking for a contribution. They have little or no knowledge and certainly no control over how that money is utilized. This is a scheme that is primed for fraud due to these limitations and the widespread appeal to consumers of wanting to do their bit to fight climate change.

The sooner the world's governments take their heads out of the sand and look at the market, the quicker they can save their citizens and the planet from being ripped off. What is desperately needed is a reduction in carbon emissions, not some fudged accounting, which is what carbon offsets are.

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.



100-index Pakistan Stock Exchange loses 179 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) declined by 179.95 points on Thursday, showing a negative change of 0.43 per cent, closing at 41,694.09 points against 41,874.04 points the previous day.

A total of 234,696,217 shares were traded during the day as compared to 233,271,322 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs.7,462 billion against Rs.8,441 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 341 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 186 of them recorded gains and 128 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 27 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Telecard Limited with 14,286,000 shares at Rs.8.27 per share;

Ghani Glo Hol with 11,906,682 shares at Rs.12.35 per share and Maple Leaf with 11,817,956 shares at Rs.27.02 per share.

JDW Sugar witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.24.76 per share price, closing at Rs.356.09, whereas the runner-up was Archroma Pak with an Rs.20.00 rise in its per share price to Rs.445.00.

Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.180.00 per share closing at Rs.5,115.00; followed by Pak Services with Rs.129.03 decline to close at Rs.1,591.47.

Rupee gains 43 paise against dollar

The Pakistan rupee recovered 43 paise against the dollar in the interbank trading on Thursday and closed at Rs 282.42 against the previous day's closing

of Rs 282.85. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 283.5 and Rs 286.5 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs 3.49 and closed at Rs 300.12 against the last day's closing of Rs 303.61, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen increased by 03 paise to close at Rs 2.12, whereas a decrease of Rs 2.08 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 341.81 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 343.89.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal went decreased by 12 paise each to close at Rs 76.89 and at Rs 75.18

respectively. **Gold prices up by Rs.1,100 to Rs.203,500 per tola**

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.1,100 and was sold at Rs.203,500 on Thursday against its sale at Rs.202,400 the previous day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 943 to Rs. 174,468 from Rs. 173,525, whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went up to Rs.159,930 from Rs. 159,065.

The price of per tola and ten-gram silver remained constant at Rs.2,150 and Rs.1,843.27 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by US\$2 to \$1926 against its sale at \$1924, the association reported.



SIALKOT: President Sialkot Tax Bar Association Muhammad Farhi Ejaz Khan presenting a shield to Chief Commissioner Inland Revenue RTO Sialkot Syeda Noreen Zahra during AGM.

CC assures support to women for sustainable tax culture

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Chief Commissioner, Regional Tax Office (RTO), Rawalpindi Tahmina Amir on Tuesday assured her full support to business women for creating a sustainable tax culture in the country.

Tahmina Amir in a meeting with a delegation of Women Chambers of Commerce discussed issues faced by the women in taxation. The delegation appreciated the efforts of Chief Commissioner RTO for bringing reforms in the department.

They reiterated the commitment to continue playing their due role to promote tax culture among the masses.

Commissioner withholding Nafeesa Satti and Commissioner Cantt Zone Shabana was also present on the occasion.

US investors keen for exploring investment avenues

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Furniture Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq on Thursday said that US investors wanted to further explore investment avenues in the diversified furniture industry in Pakistan and showed keen interest in joint ventures in the furniture sector.

The CEO of PFC is currently visiting the United States for discussing the existing trade and investment potential with their counterparts for joint ventures in the furniture sector, said a press release.

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

PFC is holding successful results-oriented meetings with their counterparts and they are interested to visit Pakistan and invest in the furniture industry, he added.

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

Minister appreciates barter trade model

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar here on Thursday appreciated barter trade model, which he said could be utilized for enhancing the exports from the country.

During a meeting with a Chinese business delegation led by Hou Jianxin, Chairman Shandong Xinxu Group Corporation China, the minister said framework on barter trade model had been approved by the Federal Cabinet.

According to press statement issued by the commerce ministry, the minister said, China was playing a significant role in the economic development of Pakistan however added the

barter trade model would inject new energy to the bilateral trade.

He also assured full support of Pakistani government to the Chinese Companies to enhance export volume of the country.

On the occasion, Hou Jianxin, said that while taking the benefit of the decision of Shandong government, a Chinese province, to shift Chinese industry to the Pakistan, he came up with the vision to build industrial park in Pakistan.

The Industrial Park would serve as a focal point for all the industrial requirement of Pakistan from China and vice versa, he continued.

The Chairman said, the

projects like solar panels assembly plant, metal refining plants, fertilizer production plant, food processing plants (dry milk production, seafood processing, meat processing) etc. were being considered for future investment.

He said Pakistan and China enjoyed strong relations and expressed the hope that the trade and economic ties between the two countries would be further cemented with the passage of time.

Qamar appreciated the decision of the Shandong government to shift its industry to the Pakistan, which would not only save foreign reserves but also create job opportunities in the country.

HABIBMETRO, IDEMIA and VISA commence Tokenization & Digital Card programme



F.P. Report

KARACHI: In continuation of its innovation journey, HABIBMETRO, in collaboration with VISA, commenced its Tokenization & Digital Card programme by introducing IDEMIA as a solution provider in Pakistan. This initiative was taken to further enhance HABIBMETRO customers' digital payment experience and make it more secure and convenient.

Tokenization replaces sensitive bank account information, such as the 16-digit primary bank account number, with a unique digital identifier called a 'token'.

allows transactions to be processed without exposing account details for a more secure digital payment experience.

Moreover, with a 'Tap To Phone' feature, HABIBMETRO customers will be able to make contactless payments by tapping their mobile phones on devices enabled with contactless payments, hence opening up a world of convenience.

In addition to this, HABIBMETRO customers will also be able to obtain a Digital Card quickly and conveniently via the HABIBMETRO Insta Mobile App using the IDEMIA Digital Card solution, eliminating the need for extensive documenta-

tion. The Digital Card will allow HABIBMETRO customers to conduct safe and secure online payments with flexibility of card limit, expiry and issuance of multiple cards as per requirement.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Ahmed Shah Durrani, Group Executive Retail Bank and Chief Digital Officer, said, "At HABIBMETRO, we are extremely excited to offer Tokenization and Digital Card solution to our customers. We are grateful for the expertise extended by IDEMIA and VISA to make this project a reality. This collaboration enables HABIBMETRO to make progress towards its vision

of offering best-in-class innovative digital solutions and providing unparalleled service to its customers."

Serigne Dia, Vice President, Payment Services (Middle East and Africa), Financial Institutions, IDEMIA, commented, "We are thrilled to partner with HABIBMETRO to enable seamless, secure and tailored digital payment experiences to their cardholders. Leveraging the IDEMIA Digital Card services, HABIBMETRO can now digitize their Visa cards for a variety of proximity and remote payment use cases."

Commenting on the new alliance, Umar Khan, VISA's Country Manager for Pakistan, said, "We are delighted to partner with HABIBMETRO to bring quick, convenient and secure digital payment experience to customers in Pakistan. The Tokenization and Digital Card programme, to be launched in collaboration with IDEMIA, will further empower HABIBMETRO customers to use digital payments and online channels with full confidence as they navigate the benefits of cashless commerce."

HSHM sign agreement with IU for hospitality educational based projects

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Hashoo School of Hospitality Management (HSHM) has recently signed an Agreement with the Iqra University, Karachi (IU) for hospitality educational based projects and skill development programs for the youth, in Karachi, Pakistan.

The agreement was signed by Mr. Haseeb Gardezi, Chief Operating Officer, Hospitality and Education Division, Hashoo Group, and Dr. Mirza Amin Ullah Haq, Registrar, Iqra University, Main Campus, during a special ceremony, attended by Mr. Naveed Lakhani, Chairman, Iqra University, Dr. Zaki Rashidi, Director of Bahria Campus, along with the senior management of Hashoo Group and Iqra University faculty members.

"Today is a very important day in the history of

HSHM as we are partnering with the most iconic institute of Pakistan, Iqra University," said Mr. Haseeb Gardezi. "The shortage of skilled and experienced leaders in the hospitality and tourism industry is a pressing issue in Pakistan. To address this, earlier we introduced the HSHM programme in Islamabad, KPK and now in Karachi, aiming to train and equip hospitality students with the necessary skills to meet industry demands in all the major cities of Pakistan. Upon graduation, the students will be offered guaranteed job placements at Hashoo Hotels across Pakistan", he further added.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Zaki, Director, Iqra University, Bahria Town campus spoke at length regarding the partnership. He emphasized that academia coming close to industry will accrue positive div-

idends for both partners. He showed his resolve to ensure that this new program will attract many potential students as it has a lot of scope for future.

During his address to the audience, Mr. Naveed Lakhani emphasized the significance of the hospitality industry in Pakistan. He further explained the necessity of education in hospitality and tourism in Pakistan, which would provide students with global opportunities. Mr. Lakhani expressed that the faculty at Iqra University is enthusiastic about this partnership and will work towards making it successful. He also expressed his interest in future collaborations with Hashoo Group in various fields.

HSHM, the leading institute in the hospitality and tourism education industry, has been operating in Islamabad for over a year and a half, with the first

batch of students to graduate in September 2023. To expand their reach, earlier HSHM partnered with IMSciences in Peshawar and are now teaming up with Iqra University in Karachi, an institution that has been in operation for over two decades. The admissions are open for HSHM courses which will be available at the IU Main Campus, a purpose-built, 13-storey educational infrastructure, offering unparalleled on-campus facilities to its students. HSHM's goal is to connect with Pakistan's youth, offering practicals, internships, and guaranteed job placements at Hashoo Group hotels. With a global curriculum, along with seasoned faculty from around the world, HSHM is looking forward to providing world-class education in hospitality, tourism, and hotel management by expanding to other cities across Pakistan.

Millat Tractors hosts annual function



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Millat Tractors Limited, the leader in manufacturing of tractors and farm machinery, hosted its

Annual Function 2023 to celebrate the company's achievements over the past year, honor the outstanding performance of its employees and recognize their con-

tribution to Millat's numerous successes.

The event provided an excellent platform for the management and employees to intermingle and

freely exchange ideas for the company's future growth. They reiterated their commitment to achieving greater excellence in product and service delivery with a clear competitive edge.

Senior executives enlightened the participants on Millat's strong performance in the tractor market and shared their vision and goals for the year ahead. They dilated on the company's initiatives for the accomplishment of new milestones.

This event proved a great success and the attendees appreciated the effort put in by Millat for organizing it and making it so memorable.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Two ships, MSC Iris and Maersk Brooklyn carrying containers, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal the other day.

Meanwhile, three more ships, Navios Constellation, White Purl and Khairpur with containers, LPG and mogas also arrived at the outer anchorage of Port Qasim during the last 24 hours.

A total of 06 ships were engaged at PAQ berths during the last 24 hours, out of them, two ships, MSC Iris and MSC Anchorage left the port on Thursday morning and four more ships, Maersk Brooklyn, Kano, YM Saturn and Sea Journey, are expected to sail later today.

Cargo throughput of 145,874 tonnes comprising 90,726 tonnes of imports cargo and 55,148 tonnes of export cargo including containerized cargo carried in 5,140 containers (1,896 TEUs Imports and 3,244 TEUs export) was handled at the Port during the last 24 hours.

There are four ships at the outer anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, two ships, Navios Constellation and Khairpur, and three more ships, Olympia, Chemroad Zenith and White Purl carrying containers, mogas, chemicals and LPG are expected to take berths at QICT, FOTCO, EVTL and SSGC on Thursday.

Court Notice

In the Court of Saima Razzaq, Civil Judge, VI Bannu, Suit No.164/1, institution 20.12.022 Next date of hearing is 05.04.2023. Title: Ghulam Nabi vs Collector etc To: 5. Zinat Aman widow 6. Nadeem Ullah Khan 7. Saleem Ullah Khan 8. Arif Ullah Khan 9. Inam Ullah Khan, 10. Mst: Nilofar Aman. Naaila Aman Daughters of Aman Ullah Khan R/O Kala Khel masti Khan Bannu, presently Abroad. The defendants are informed through this notice to appear in this court on 05.04.2023. After this no excuse would be accepted and ex-parte proceedings shall be initiated against you. Given under my hand and seal of this court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Saima Razzaq, Civil Judge, VI BANNU, Suit No. 358/ Inim, institution 02.06.016 & 27.7.017 & 09.03.021 Next date of hearing is 21.03.2023. Title: Ahmad Ali Khan vs Saif Ullah etc To: 4. Rasool Niaz 6. Suleman Sons Sial Ullah Khan 11. Hazrat Ali Son Rasool Rahman 12. Siraj son Dilawar Khan 13. Dilawar Khan son Rasool Rahman R/O Nurur Tehsil & District Bannu, presently Abroad. The defendants are informed through this notice to appear in this court on 21.03.2023. After this no excuse would be accepted and ex-parte proceedings shall be initiated against you. Given under my hand and seal of this court.



Bowlers script stunning Zalmi fightback to knock United out

In brief

Players need maximum training

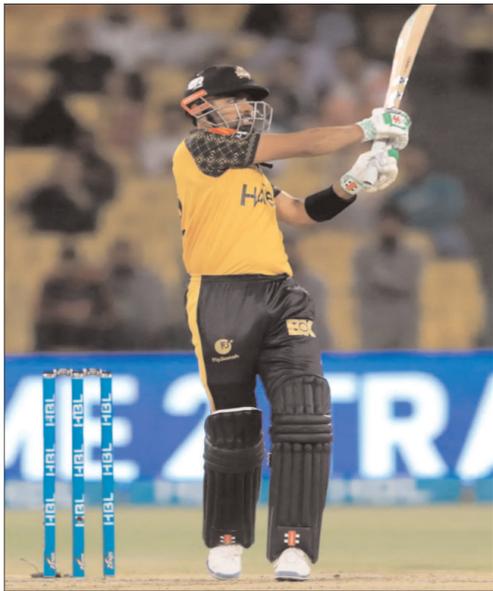
ISLAMABAD (APP): Head coach of national athletics team, Chaudhry Asghar Gul, wants players to be provided with maximum training, as to compete and win laurels for the country at international level. "Pakistani athletes have to work hard to achieve results in the world of sports. The government needs to organize as many training camps in collaboration with the Athletics Federation of Pakistan for the players to give them maximum training," he told APP here Thursday. To a question on performance of Pakistani coaches, he said that coaches were also trying all-out efforts to prepare players but they need to be given courses according to modern and new technology to compete at international level. Gul said there was no lack of talent in the country but need to provide facilities to the players as per modern standards. He said Pakistani athletes have won countless medals at international level. "Arshad Nadeem had made the country proud by winning gold medals in Commonwealth Games and Islamic Solidarity Games. Therefore, to encourage and promote the players we need to provide international level facilities to them," he said.

Tennis Tournament

ISLAMABAD (APP): Captain Fahad Khan Shaheed Tennis Tournament will commence at the Pakistan Sports Complex from Saturday (March 18). According to chief organizer of the Tournament Inam ul Haq, the male and female players from all over the country will feature in the Tournament. "Three categories, including men's singles, ladies' singles and senior 40 plus will compete in the tournament," he said. He said that the tournament would continue till March 21. "The guest of honor at the closing ceremony of the Tournament will be Vice Chancellor Institute of Space Technology Gen (R) Rehan Abdul Baqi. Medals, he said and added the certificates and shields will be distributed to the winning players after the final. It may be mentioned here that Captain Fahad Khan Shaheed used to play tennis in Lahore.

Wheelchair cricket

RAWALPINDI (APP): Margalla Tigers and Pindi Warlords were declared joint winners of the first edition of Capital Premier League (CPL) after the final between the two top wheelchair-bound teams was abandoned due to a heavy downpour in the city on Thursday. Both the teams were scheduled to lock horns at 9:00 AM at Rawal Cricket Ground Rawalpindi but the fixture could not go ahead as planned as the play was not possible due to continuous rain and a wet outfield. Pakistan Wheelchair Cricket Council (PWCC) in collaboration with the Bank of Punjab organized the three-day event. A total of four outfits - Margalla Tigers, Pindi Warlords, Murree Hawks and Islamabad Kings featured in the event. The country's top-notch wheelchair players along with budding wheelchair-bound cricketers were part of the participating teams. Margalla Tigers and Pindi Warlords had made it to the final after finishing top at the points table. The apital Premier League ended Group Head of Bank of Punjab, Ijaz ur Rehman, who was the chief guest at the concluding ceremony gave away trophy to the winning teams.



LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Peshawar Zalmi skipper Babar Azam's 64 off 39 and Salman Irshad's 2-18 inspired the team to a narrow 12-run win to knock out Islamabad United in their Pakistan Super League (PSL) 8 eliminator at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium.

The victory has set up a tantalising second eliminator against hosts Lahore Qalandars on Friday, with the victor set to take on Multan Sultans in the final which has been rescheduled for Saturday.

Peshawar has consistently relied on their top order to give them blistering starts and Thursday was no different as Babar and opening partner Saim Ayub smashed 60 in only 4.4 overs. The young duo of Haseebullah Khan (15 off 11) and Muhammad Haris (34 off 17) then carried on the momentum as Peshawar looked on course to score in excess of 200 as they reached 109-2 at the halfway point of their innings.

Conditions became more

difficult for the batsmen from there on though as the ball didn't come onto the bat in the same way once it got older, but Peshawar would have still been disappointed to finish on 183-8.

The target was always going to be a challenging one considering the conditions, but Darren Sammy may have wanted more from his players, especially since Peshawar were 137-3 in 13 overs when Babar was dismissed. Muhammad Wasim was the pick of the bowlers, giving away only 1-29 in his four overs but Islamabad skipper Shadab Khan did his share of damage with 2-40, especially considering one of those two wickets was that of his opposite number Babar.

Islamabad enjoyed a similarly wonderful start as Alex Hales smashed 57 off 37 deliveries and was ably supported by Sohaib Maqsood, who scored a steady 60 off 48.

Islamabad looked to be in cruise control when they were

on 128-1 after 14 overs. However, the scoring predictably became more laboured in the latter part of the innings as the ball got older and Peshawar applied the squeeze wonderfully. Things went south quite drastically for Islamabad from there on in though as they went from losing four wickets and scored only 14 runs in the next 16 deliveries.

By the time Colin Munro was put out of his misery after scoring four off nine by Salman Irshad, the match was all but over. Irshad took 2-18 in his four overs, using the conditions to his advantage with deadly precision.

No team had won chasing a total at the Gaddafi this year, so Shadab's decision to bat first after winning the toss came back to haunt him.

Shadab will lead Pakistan in Babar's stead for the series against Afghanistan, but the Pakistan skipper comprehensively won the battle of wits against his understudy as he

used his bowlers perfectly to knock out the tournament's most prolific chasers so far in Islamabad United.

Babar Azam breaks Chris Gayle's record in T20 cricket: Babar Azam has become the fastest batsman to reach 9000 runs in T20 cricket history.

The Peshawar Zalmi skipper reached the milestone during his 64-run knock in the first eliminator against Islamabad United on Thursday in PSL season 8.

Babar has achieved the feat in just 245 innings, breaking the record of West Indian legend, Chris Gayle, who took 249 innings to reach 9000 runs.

After Babar and Gayle, Virat Kohli (271), David Warner (273) and Aaron Finch (281) are the next fastest to breach the 9k mark.

Babar has also scored the most T20 centuries (8) by any batsman in the world since 2019. The next on the list is Jos Buttler with 6 centuries.

HBL PSL 8 final to be played on Saturday

LAHORE (APP): After taking into consideration bad weather forecast over the coming days, the Pakistan Cricket Board has decided to hold the HBL PSL 8 final on Saturday, 18 March, at the Gaddafi Stadium with Sunday and Monday to be treated as reserve days. The final was scheduled earlier for Sunday, 19 March, in Lahore.

Najam Sethi, Chair of PCB Management Committee said: "The HBL PSL 8 is our marquee event. All the teams

aim and prepare whole year to not only feature in the final but to lift the Supernova Trophy, while the passionate cricket fans also wait anxiously to see their favourite team being crowned as the champion.

"As such, and on the basis of available information about bad weather forecast, it is a sensible and proactive approach that we use the off-day and play the final on Saturday, and utilise Sunday along with Monday as reserve days.

This will give us two reserve days in case the match cannot be completed or played on Saturday instead of the traditional one day.

"We have spoken with the teams involved in the Play-offs, and they are not only aligned to our decision but have backed and supported our decision.

"There will be no inconvenience to the cricket fans as tickets purchased for Sunday's match will remain valid for Saturday's rescheduled final."

Open Tennis Tournament from March 18

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Tennis Association (ITF), in collaboration with Impetus, would be holding the ITC Open Tennis Tournament would kick off at the Islamabad Tennis Complex from March 18.

Tournament Chief Organizer, Davis Cup Coach Fazal Subhan informed APP that Khadija Laghari had been appointed as the Chairperson of Organizing Committee of the tournament while Kamran Khalil would act as Tournament Director.

"Eight categories of competitions will be held in the tournament, including men's singles, men's doubles, women's singles, boys under-18, ladies under-18, boys under-14, boys and girls under-12 (mixed) and boys and girls under-10 (mixed) categories."

The finals of the tournament would be held on March 19, whereas prizes will be distributed among the winning players after the final competitions.

Raza, Holdstock included in Elite Panel, Dar steps down

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Ahsan Raza and South Africa's Adrian Holdstock have been included in the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Umpires even as veteran Aleem Dar has stepped down after 19 years on the elite panel, standing in a record 435 men's international matches.

The ICC Elite Umpire Selection Panel headed by ICC General Manager - Cricket, Wasim Khan, made the additions during the annual review and selection process, increasing the number of umpires on the panel from 11 to 12, said a press release.

Aleem, who has been on the Elite panel since its inception in the year 2002, has officiated in more Tests and ODIs than any other umpire and is second in T20Is, behind compatriot Ahsan. Aleem reflected on his career and thanked his colleagues over the years.

Aleem Dar said, "It has been a long journey, but I

have enjoyed every bit of it. I have had the pleasure and honour of umpiring the world over and what I have achieved is something I did not even dream of when I started in the profession.

"Though I am still keen to continue as an international umpire, I felt it was now the right time, after 19 years on the road to step away from the Elite panel and provide an opportunity to someone from the International Panel. My message to umpires the world over is to work hard, maintain discipline and never stop learning."

"I thank the ICC, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and my colleagues on the panel for their support over the years. I would also like to thank my family; without whose support I could not have gone on for so long. I look forward to continuing to serve the game as an umpire."

ICC Chief Executive Geoff Allardice said,

"Aleem's contribution to international cricket and to the ICC has been truly remarkable. Consistently elite performances over such a long period saw him enjoy enormous respect across all involved in international cricket. I wish Aleem all the best for the future and I am sure his involvement in the game will continue for many years to come."

Ahsan and Holdstock were enthusiastic on being inducted in the panel. Ahsan Raza said, "I feel extremely honoured and proud to be included in the Elite panel. I've always wanted to officiate regularly alongside the best match officials. "I have already officiated in international matches across formats as well as in ICC events, so am aware of the enormous responsibility that this position entails. I hope to put all my experience over the years to good use but will continue to learn from my senior colleagues on the panel."

National Open Polo semifinals

LAHORE (APP): Diamond Paints emerged as winners of the penalty shootouts contested among three teams that helped them qualify for the semifinals as the fourth team in the Century Ventures National Open Polo Championship for Quaid-e-Azam Gold Cup 2023 here at the Lahore Polo Club on Thursday.

The penalty shootouts were played among three teams including Diamond Paints, FG Polo and DS Polo. From Diamond Paint, Chulo Corti managed to convert three penalties out of four to help side emerge as triumphant. From FG Polo, Ramiro Zavaleta could slam in only one out of four penalties while from DS Polo, Javier Gurrero failed to convert a single one.

Great fun to play in Legends League Cricket Masters, Shoaib Akhtar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Pakistan fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar, who is currently playing for the Asia Lions franchise in the Skyexch.net Legends League Cricket Masters (LLC) in Doha, has said that he is happy to meet his old friends and recall past memories with them.

"I would like to thank Vivek and Raman Raheja for a fantastic job in putting this mega tournament together. It's a great fun to play against these guys. The platform is providing me an opportunity to meet my old friends. It's a burst of memories when we all are playing together. We share old anecdotes from our playing time. We share a good bond and give our best so that the

fans can enjoy," the 47-year-old said in a statement on Thursday while sharing his experience to play in the LLC Masters. The third edition of LLC Masters is underway at Asian Town Cricket Stadium, Doha, Qatar. Three teams India Maharajas, Asia Lions, and World Giants are competing for the trophy. Top retired cricketers from international teams are playing in the LLC Masters 2023.

"The LLC is a wonderful tournament. The tournament has become larger than life. The league will start to get more competitive now going forward with the recently-retired players who might join the league in coming seasons, the league will only grow."

The 'Rawalpindi Express' is hard to derail, despite several injuries over the last few years, it has not stopped him from charging at full speed towards the batter. "Unfortunately I injured myself while diving yesterday and twisted my knee. If I was not injured, I would have definitely bowled my four overs and try to add value to the team. But last year I made sure that I play every game and bowl four overs. It's about how much can I participate and make it big for this league. I am just a little contributor to make this league better and enhance the value of my team." Shoaib etched his name in cricketing history by becoming the first player to shatter the elusive 100-mile barrier.



LAHORE: Group Head of Director Sales & Alternative Distribution at Jubilee Life Insurance Company Ltd., Munawar Khalil presenting Safe Hands of the Match award to Abas Afridi after Multan Sultan's win against Lahore Qalandar in HBL PSL Season 8.

7th PARCO T20 Cup comes to a thrilling close with OGDCL emerging as champions

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The 7th edition of Pak-Arab Refinery Ltd. (PARCO) T20 Cricket Tournament reached its conclusion with an exciting final between Oil and Gas Development Company Ltd. (OGDCL), and Pakistan State Oil Ltd. (PSO) at Moin Khan Academy, Karachi.

The much-anticipated match saw a thrilling display of cricketing talent and sportsmanship from both sides, as they battled it out to claim the coveted trophy.

The grand closing ceremony was attended by distinguished guests from sports and media fraternity, and top executives of leading companies.

In a nail-biting finish, OGDCL emerged victori-

ously by defeating PSO by 14 runs, Muhammad Bilal played a pivotal role in his team's success.

Speaking at the event, Mr. Shahid Mahmood Khan, Managing Director PARCO, expressed his delight at the success of the tournament. He extended heartfelt felicitations to team OGDCL for winning the 7th PARCO T20 Cup and praised all the participating teams for their sportsmanship and commitment to the game.

PARCO vows to continue initiatives that provide healthy engagements and strengthen the bond of the fraternity. The success of 7th PARCO T20 Cup is a testament to the company's commitment, as it looks forward to organizing similar events in future.

PARCO has been organizing the industry cricket tournament since 2015. This year, 12 leading companies from Pakistan's petroleum industry participated in the PARCO T20 Cup for 33 nail-biting matches. PARCO, TOTAL PARCO Pakistan Ltd., Shell Pakistan Ltd., Cnergyico PK Ltd., Pakistan State Oil Ltd. (PSO), Oil and Gas Development Company Ltd. (OGDCL), Pakistan Petroleum Ltd. (PPL), National Refinery Ltd. (NRL), Attock Petroleum, Pakistan Refinery Ltd. (PRL), Hascol Petroleum Ltd., and United Energy Pakistan Ltd. competed for the cup and made the event memorable with their participation.



PESHAWAR: A group photo of Junior and Mr Peshawar 2023 winners of class and position holders with guests.



In brief

IRSA releases 85,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 85,200 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 66,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1429.10 feet and was 31.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 22,300 cusecs while the outflow was 43,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1099.30 feet, 49.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 22,500 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 47,300, 35,700, 30,200 and 7,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 11,900 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 3,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Non-duty paid cigarettes seized

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Regional Tax Office (RTO) Rawalpindi on Thursday confiscated non-duty paid cartons of cigarettes worth Rs 24.4 million after intercepting two trucks during patrolling. Upon receipt of credible information, the Inland Revenue Squad of Enforcement Network (IREN) seized 350 cartons (3,500,000 sticks) of a local brand of unpaid duty/taxes counterfeit cigarettes, said a news release issued here. The illegal stock of cigarettes involving tax evasion of approximately Rs.18.2 million/- was confiscated. The stock has been shifted to the FBR office for further investigation. The IREN Squad Rawalpindi Hub has enhanced its patrolling of all major routes and started 24-hour vigilance.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Thursday issued a power suspension programme for Friday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 a.m. to 02:00 p.m. Rawalpindi Cantt. Circle, Islamabad Feed Mill, Jatha Hathial, Pind Jhatla, Lab-II, Reliance Waving Mill, Bhall, Jarar Camp Feeders and surrounding areas.

Water level in drain under-control

ISLAMABAD (APP): Rescue teams vigilant, water level in drain under-control following rain spell. Rescue teams are on high alert to meet any emergency situation following the rain spell in the Federal Capital. Due to precautionary measures by Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration, the rainwater running beside the slums of I-11, G-9, H-13, I-10, F-7 and G-7 are at normal level and under control, said press release. Assistant Commissioners and Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) rescue officials remained in the field and ensured the water level in city's drain are out of danger, Meteorology Department predicted a spell of heavy rain in city.



ISLAMABAD: Pro Vice-Chancellor, International Learning and Teaching, University of London, Professor Mary Satisny calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Mushaal says Kashmiri women worst victim of Indian state terrorism

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairperson of Peace and Culture Organization, Mushaal Hussein Mullick lashed out the fascist notorious Naredra Modi-led government for using women as weapon of war in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), whose lives, security, dignity and honour have been snatched by Indian occupation forces to quell the freedom movement.

Speaking at a seminar on "Struggle of Kashmiri Women Living under Indian Occupation" organized by Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology (SZABIST) University and Youth Forum for Kashmir as the chief guest here on Thursday, she said that they had played a critical role in shaping the movement and advocating for their deprived fundamental rights, women have been at the forefront of the struggle for justice and freedom in Kashmir. She lauded the role and contributions of Kashmiri women in the ongoing freedom struggle in the occupied valley to break the shackles of Indian subjugation.

NDMA's first SimEx on Floods & Rain Emergencies concludes

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) conducted the First Simulation Exercise (SimEx) for floods and rain emergencies with support of Ministry of Climate Change, UNICEF and Welt Hunger Hilfe (WHH) that concluded here on Thursday. The SimEx was held from March 14 to 16 which was part of the NDMA's efforts for a proactive approach to deal with disasters and emergencies, a news release said. Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman, Chairman NDMA Lt. General Inam Haider Malik and UNRC/HC, Julien Hameis attended the closing session of SimEx and distributed certificates among the participants. Sherry Rehman appreciated the level of participation

during the Simulation Exercise and lauded the efforts of NDMA for organizing the event. She underscored the need for preliminary preparedness at community level after devastating Floods 2022. She said that it was a critical time for us to prepare ourselves for the future by learning from experience of recent floods. She also indicated that the government would also conduct similar simulation exercises for forest fires and other hazards. The chairman NDMA highlighted that simulation exercise was a resounding success. He appreciated the level of coordination and readiness displayed by all the participating departments and humanitarian organizations. He expressed that this exercise had helped us to identify areas where we

could improve our response and strengthen coordination protocols for rain & flood emergencies. Over the course of three-day long exercises, coordination and response time of various agencies were tested by playing erratic rainfall situations like Floods 2022. The exercise was overseen by the National Disaster Management Authority, which collaborated with multiple stakeholders to ensure the exercise was conducted smoothly. Emergency responders, including NDMA, PDMA, Armed Forces, PMD, FFC, Rescue 1122, UN organizations, NGOs and Representatives of other coordinating Federal and Provincial departments participated in the scenario-based table top SimEx; the first of its kind organised by NDMA.

to say that the women in Kashmir were still struggling for justice and rights, adding that India forces in IIOJK were using rape as a weapon of war and a tool to suppress the peaceful struggle for the right to self-determination. Narrating the ordeals of Kashmiri women, the chairperson said that over 682 women had been martyred by the fascist Indian forces since January 2001, besides rendering over 22,958 women widowed while 11,256 women were molested/disgraced. However, she made it clear that despite these state terrorism, they could not defuse the flames of the struggle for the right to self-determination. Mushaal went on to say that thousands of women lost their sons, husbands, fathers and brothers in the occupied territory, who were subjected to custodial disappearance by Indian troops.

for justice and freedom in Kashmir. She lauded the role and contributions of Kashmiri women in the ongoing freedom struggle in the occupied valley to break the shackles of Indian subjugation. Mushaal, the wife of jailed Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Mohammad Yasin Malik, said that the ongoing fascist by Indian forces badly impacted the women's physical and mental health, as well as the ways in which gender-based violence was used as a tool of repression and control in the region. Mushaal stated that the women of IIOJK have been facing systematic and widespread human rights violations including sexual assault, rape, disappearance, torture, abductions, killing and humiliation by the Indian army, police, security agencies and Indian-sponsored terrorist groups. The Hurriyat leader went

Admin foils two bids to smuggle 1390 flour bags

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police here on Thursday foiled two bids to smuggle 1390 flour bags.

According to a district administration spokesman, the authorities of the food department along with Potohar Division police conducted raids in different areas and rounded up two drivers namely Moaz Ahmed and Siyad on recovery of 1390 flour bags. He informed that the accused were trying to smuggle flour bags out of the Rawalpindi division.

The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police on the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi were strictly monitoring all the exit points of Rawalpindi district to foil wheat and flour smuggling bids, he added. He said, dozens of bids were foiled during the last 10 days and teams recovered thousands of wheat, flour and fine flour (maida) bags from the possession of the arrested accused.

Scholarships for Pakistani students

ISLAMABAD (APP): International Development Minister for the Scottish Government Neil Gray has announced to double the amount of scholarships for the Scotland Pakistan Scholarship Scheme for Young Women and Girls administered through the British Council.

The £500,000 additional funding will double the number of school and university scholarships available to women and girls in the worst flood-affected areas, ensuring they can continue their education with minimal disruption, said a news release of the embassy issued here on Thursday. Launched in late 2013, the Scotland Pakistan Scholarship Scheme for Young Women and Girls' aims to make education at the higher education and secondary level more accessible to underprivileged girls across Pakistan by providing them with scholarships. The scheme funds graduate studies for Pakistani women in any HEC-recognized university across Pakistan.

BISP reaches over 247,000 children and 231,000 PLW

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) has so far reached over 247,000 children and 231,000 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) under the Benazir Nashonuma initiative. According to an official source, these beneficiaries had been served through the network of over 400 Nashonuma Centers across the country.

The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) intervention of Benazir Nashonuma was designed in August 2020 to increase the uptake of Health and Nutrition services of its beneficiaries.

The primary objectives of the program were to prevent stunting in children under two years of age, improve weight gain of pregnant women during pregnancy, reduce anaemia and micronutrient deficiencies, and prevent low birth weight.

World Food Programme (WFP) is the lead implementing partner for Ehsaas Nashonuma. The programme aims to address stunting among pregnant and lactating women (PLW) and their children less than two years of age through the pro-

vision of additional cash of Rs. 2,000 per quarter per PLW and boy child and PKR 2,500/- per quarter per girl child of BISP beneficiary families.

In return, mothers must commit to attending regular antenatal health checks and awareness sessions during pregnancy, consuming specialized nutritious food (SNF), and taking their children for immunization and regular health checks. According to the statistics, Pakistan's high rates of malnutrition (40.2% stunting, 28.9% underweight, and 17.7% wasting) are indicative of an ongoing child nutrition crisis. Such levels of malnutrition rank Pakistan as the second-highest burden country in the region.

The first 1,000 days of a child's life are a window of opportunity to lay a strong foundation for later achievements. This timeframe is a period of enormous change characterized by a high degree of plasticity in the child's neurological development. Investments in the early years of life are the foundation of human capital, and human capital is a key driver of economic development in the modern economy.

Polio vaccination campaign continues

ISLAMABAD (APP): A polio vaccination campaign is being held in 21.54 million children under the age of five years continued on Thursday in Sindh and Punjab.

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

In the first phase, over 17.41 million children under the age of five in 13 districts of Punjab and 16 districts of Sindh and Islamabad will be vaccinated from March 13 to 17.

The second phase will be held from April 03 to 07 - during the second week of Ramadan - to vaccinate more than 4.12 million children in 12 districts of Balochistan and 26 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the seven endemic districts in the southern region of the province. Federal Minister for Health Abdul Qadir Patel urged parents and caregivers to ensure that their children receive the life-saving polio vaccine so that they remain protected from poliovirus, which has been found circulating in environmental samples.

"The presence of wild polio in the environment shows that the virus is circulating in our communities and posing a serious risk to our children," said Abdul Qadir Patel, the minister. "With Ramadan around the corner, population movements can increase the risk of further spread, therefore, it is critical that parents and caregivers vaccinate their children in this and every campaign," said the minister.

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ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Peace and Culture Organization, Mushaal Hussein Mullick addressing to the event on "Struggle of Kashmiri Women Living under Indian Occupation" at SZABIST University.

Governor holds meeting

BALKH (Agencies): Acting Balkh governor, Mawlawi Mohammad Yusuf Wafa said in a meeting with district governors and police commanders that no security officers or Mujahid would be allowed to search houses in plain clothes. He termed Balkh an important province of Afghanistan and said that ex-governor, Shahid Mohammad Dawood Mozamal, governed all the organizations well and everything will continue the same.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Shabaan 24, 1444 — Friday, March 17, 2023

26 detainees return home

KABUL (Agencies): Afghanistan's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation said that 26 Afghan detainees were released from foreign prisoners and returned home. The detainees were brought from the prisons in foreign via the Spin Boldak border crossing. Women and children who had been imprisoned in Sindh province for lacking residency documents were among those who had been released, according to the Ministry.

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

IEA: 1880 Afghan Refugees return to country from Iran

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation on Thursday announced that 1880 Afghan migrants returned to the country from Iran. The returnees entered Afghanistan through the 'Islamqala' border in western Herat province. The Ministry of Repatriation has announced that out of 1880 people, 230 have been introduced to the United Nations agency for refugees to receive basic aid. Over the past weeks, the Taliban's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation has repeatedly reported on the return of Afghan citizens from Iran. Some of

these refugees have been forcefully deported, and others willingly left Iran, according to a statement by Taliban officials. Since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, thousands of Afghans fled Afghanistan to the neighboring countries fearing persecution and death threats. Most of these people entered host countries through illegal channels, now facing serious problems including forceful deportation and imprisonment. Over the past couple of weeks, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan have extradited thousands of Afghan nationals due to not having legal stay permits (visas).

While in Afghanistan, under the Taliban regime, a large majority of the Afghan populace suffers dire poverty, hunger, unemployment, instability, isolation, and several other challenges of a different kind. Some experts have described the main reason for the migration of Afghan nationals to the neighboring countries as extreme poverty, unemployment, lack of job security, and political instability. Meanwhile, some local residents say that in the absence of jobs, they don't have a choice but to migrate to other countries no matter what the consequences might be.

Hebatullah meets Customs officials

KANDAHAR (Agencies): The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Mullah Hebatullah Akundzada met with the customs officials of the country, according to Finance Ministry. The Supreme Leader called on Mullah Mohammad Nasser Akhund, Deputy Minister of Revenue and Customs of the Ministry of Finance, Mufti Abdul Mateen Sayed, the General Director of Customs, and all the officials of the country's customs to meet with them in Kandahar. They shared a detailed report, since the Islamic Emirate's rule and their proposals for improving the affairs with the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The IE Supreme Leader, gave important instructions on the matter in aim to provide better services for the Islamic ruling system, treat people well, provide facilities for merchants and other related sectors.

Factory to produce 3,600 tons of cement

KABUL (Agencies): A new cement factory will be built in Shorandam town of Kandahar, producing 3,600 tons of cement per day, the Minister of Mines and Petroleum said during his visit to the southern province. Shahabuddin Delawar said that up to \$100 million will be invested in the factory, adding that 5,000 people will directly and indirectly be employed. The Minister of Mines and Petroleum also emphasized that after the takeover of the country by the Islamic Emirate, all mines are under the control of the government and no one can extract or smuggle minerals illegally. Shahabuddin Delawar added that the country's mines are contracted based on a transparent process and mines are extracted based on contracts. According to him, extraction of lead mines in Kandahar will also be contracted out, and the road from Kandahar to Uruzgan will be asphalted from its revenues. Delawar added that mining has played a major role in covering the national budget.

Commission launched to reform universities

KANDAHAR (TOLOnews): The acting Minister of Higher Education, Nida Mohammad Nadim, announced efforts to bring about reforms in higher education institutions in the country. Nida Mohammad Nadim, at a graduation ceremony for students in one of the private universities in Kandahar, said that in the past years, young people were given a diploma in exchange for money, and some universities were created by the powerful. "Maybe it will be decided in the case of some of those institutions whose foundation is based on corruption, do not have the will to serve, and corrupt society—we will try to find an alternative," said Nida Mohammad Nadim, acting Minister of Higher Education. Nida Mohammad Nadim added that this ministry assigned a commission to eliminate the challenges of



private universities and called on the Islamic Emirate to provide work for youth who graduate from universities. "I asked ministers... to provide work for youth because they are talented and powerful," said Nida Mohammad Nadim. "We call on Islamic Emirate to support the education sector, and encourage them," said Sayed Faruq Nayemi, head of the private educational institution union. The acting minister of higher education announced efforts to strengthen private centers of higher education and added that the government cannot solve all the challenges alone.

Govt, people responsible for secure environment



KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan's Acting Deputy Prime Minister, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir in a meeting with Kabul Governor, Sheikh Mohammad Qasim, said that establishing a peaceful environment is the joint responsibility of the people and government. Deputy PM Abdul Karim stated that establishing a secure environment is not the sole responsibility of the security forces. Ordinary people's active engagement and cooperation play a vital role in this regard, according to the statement. Sheikh Mohammad Qasim, Kabul governor shared details on the security, social and economic situation of

Kabul, and said that the security situation in Kabul has improved to a great extent. He further added that administrative and security officials are working extremely hard to restore peace and security in the capital city of Kabul, and avoid threats from terror groups. Besides appreciating security personnel's efforts, Abdul Karim provided some instructions and recommendations to the Kabul governor to avoid possible threats from insurgent groups in Kabul and other provinces of Afghanistan. This comes as the security situation in Kabul remains unchanged to a greater extent. Since the

overthrow of the previous government in August 2021, the Islamic State Khorasan militants (ISIS-K) have intensified their attacks in Kabul and other parts of Afghanistan. Over the past 18 months, IS-K insurgents have targeted foreign embassies, diplomatic missions, hotels, and educational institutions, claiming the lives of scores of innocent civilians. Furthermore, anonymous murders and target killings have also occurred in the heart of Kabul in the recent past. Besides all the propagation, security remains a major challenge for the de facto authorities of Afghanistan among other issues.

Afghanistan to build large canal on Amudarya River

KABUL (Khaama Press): According to a report last week, the officials visited Balkh province, bordering Turkmenistan, to examine the progress on the Qosh Tapa Canal. The Qosh Tapa is an enormous canal building on the Amudarya River, raising the concern of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan due to the potential effect for drawing water and affecting the countries.

The project was inaugurated last year and covered 285 KM, beginning from the Amu River in Balkh Province, passing through Jawzjan, and ending in Faryab. The project has three phases. The first phase is 108 kilometres, which is expected to be implemented over the next year. The second and third phase, which makes up 177 kilometres, is expected to be

completed within five years. According to officials, the irrigation scheme has a catchment area of 550,000 hectares. The Canal has a 650 cubic meters capacity per second, covering three provinces of the country, Balkh, Jawzjan and Faryab; among them, the last two provinces share a border with Turkmenistan. The neighbouring coun-

tries, including Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, worried about the project's effect on them as the downstream countries. Since Afghanistan is an upstream country, due to the two decades of conflict has yet to be able to use its water resources. As a result, most neighbouring countries took advantage of the situation and utilized the water without consoling Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's Acting Public Health Minister visits Qatar

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan's Acting Public Health Minister Dr Qalandar Ebad departed Kabul on Thursday for a six-day visit to Qatar. According to the Ministry, Dr Ebad leading a high-ranking delegation, will meet with Qatari authorities to discuss cooperation and investment in the country's healthcare sector, capacity building for Afghan doctors, and coordinating health services with Qatar. In a recent interview with Aryana News, the minister of public health said the Ministry would build two hundred health clinics across the country next year.



"Not only have we kept the former hospitals and clinics active, but we have also upgraded the hospitals and built new hospitals at the district and village levels," said Dr Qalandar Ebad. He also said that the maternal mortality rate has decreased compared to last year due to the quality of

health services. The Ministry also initiated a four-day polio campaign program with the collaboration of international partners to eradicate it from the country. According to a new WHO report published on January 25, 2023, it is predicted that more than 17.6 million people—of whom 53% are children—will need humanitarian health assistance this year, with 5

million of them residing in urban regions and 12.6 million in rural ones. The availability of healthcare services has been severely limited in rural areas. At the same time, the existing healthcare system has become overburdened due to growing emigration and displacement to urban areas. In 2023, 28.3 million Afghans, or two-thirds of

the country's total population, will require immediate humanitarian aid, up from 24.3 million in 2022, showing a 16% increase. The report said that despite the problematic humanitarian situation that has raised the population's health risks, the WHO would stay in the country and continue to deliver humanitarian services in cooperation with its health partners.

Save the Children calls for schools to reopen for girls

KABUL (Agencies): UK-based Save the Children organization has called on the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) to reopen schools for girls when the new academic year starts next week. "Save the Children is calling for the ban to be lifted immediately and for girls to have full access to education when schools return on March 21," a statement issued by the

organization said. This comes after an 18-month ban on girls above Grade 6 getting an education. The child rights organization said "a failure by the Taliban to reverse this ban will drive up child marriage, exclude half of future generations from the workforce and entrench families further into poverty, having a profoundly damaging impact on the country's future."

Save the Children's Acting Country Director for Afghanistan, Olivier Franchi, said: "Afghanistan is the only country in the world that has banned girls above sixth grade from education, yet girls here are striving for a better future, and they know the best path to success is through school. When their education is cut short, they face increased risk of early marriage, violence, abuse and

other forms of exploitation. "Every day that girls are out of school is a wasted day—not only for them, but also for communities in desperate need of skilled doctors and teachers, and for the long-term economic development of the entire country. "It is critical that girls are not left behind when schools reopen. We urge the Taliban to allow girls to go back to school without any further delays."

Business center for women opened in Balkh province

MAZAR-E-SHARIF (Khaama Press): An all-female commercial centre with 300 shops was opened in Mazar-e-Sharif City in the Balkh Province. The centre has created business prospects for more than 120 Afghan females selling women's products and manufactures, includ-

ing cloths, cosmetics, handicrafts, confectionaries, and cellphone repairs. Earlier, a restaurant was opened by Rahela Yusufzai in Mazar-e-Sharif to encourage women to become self-sufficient. "Women can work; it is hard to be in the community and stay at home all the

time; I often considered starting my own business and working there," Yusufzai added. However, women entrepreneurs in Balkh province complain about the lack of market within and outside the country for their products since the regime changed.

The female entrepreneurs claimed that over half of the women have left their businesses due to the lack of government policies encouraging women-made products and handicrafts in the country. Moreover, the country's low purchasing power and economic crisis dull the women's made products and manufactures. The local officials said that despite the "lack of sales market for women's products," the Chamber of Industry and Mines in Balkh province would support female entrepreneurs and business initiatives. However, reports showed that in January this year, several women's shops in the province were directed by the Taliban's vice and virtue department to close their businesses immediately, media reports said.



Kandahar exports volume doubles

KANDAHAR (Agencies): Local Chamber of Commerce and Investment officials of Kandahar said that exports from this province to abroad have increased this year compared to last year. Officials of this chamber, Engineer Abdul Baqi, during a meeting, said that they exported 124,655 tons to other countries, but this year, during the 11 months, it has exported 33,6036 tons of dry and fresh fruits, pomegranate juice, medicinal plants, and grains to abroad.

The head of the Chamber of Commerce and Investment, Mohammad Sadiq Mohmand said that with the arrival of the Islamic Emirate, business, and industry have improved. People work here with different traders and industrialists. He asked for a solution to the existing issues in the sector of visas for foreign citizens.

IEA delegation discusses bilateral trade relations with Iranian officials

KABUL (Khaama Press): Iranian Ambassador to Kabul Hassan Kazemi Qomi said that representatives of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of Taliban have discussed the expansion of bilateral trade between Iran and Afghanistan. Hassan Kazemi Qomi, Iranian envoy to Afghanistan wrote on Twitter that Taliban representative and Iranian officials have also discussed the inauguration of the Khaf-Herat railway, which will facilitate the transfer of commercial goods between the countries. The railway line links Khaf in the north-eastern Iranian province of Khorasan Razavi to Herat, the center of the western Herat province of Afghanistan. Mr. Qomi further added that besides growing trade

activities in Chabahar Port, removing transit barriers at the border areas has been part of the agenda of the meeting between the Taliban and Iranian officials. Qomi described the visit as quite effective to boost economic and trade relations between the two countries. On Tuesday, the Taliban announced that Noorullah Azizi, the Acting Minister of Commerce and Industry of Afghanistan had met with Iranian officials in Dogharon, Khorasan, Sistan and Baluchistan and Chabahar Port. Over the past weeks, Taliban officials have repeatedly traveled to Iran, taking on stocks of issues once on Afghan refugees problems in Iran, supervising the Afghan Embassy in Tehran, and building economic and diplomatic ties

with Iran. Furthermore, the Taliban's Minister of Refugee and Repatriation traveled to Iran on March 13, aimed at discussing the problems of Afghan refugees with Iranian authorities. Iran has maintained close ties with the de facto authorities of Afghanistan since the group's return to power in August 2021. Besides delivering humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan, Iran has kept its diplomatic mission operational in Kabul and lately handed over the Embassy of Afghanistan to Taliban diplomats in Tehran. Many economic experts believe Iran is keen to invest in Afghanistan in different sectors given that the security situation remains stable, and terrorism does not pose immediate threats.

Pakistan direly needs women's financial inclusion: President

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday said Pakistan direly needed financial inclusion of women to turn fifty percent of its population into a productive workforce. He said helping women promote their business startups through information technology was the fastest route toward their empowerment.



Addressing an event BizNet 2023 themed 'Celebrating Diversity, Inclusion and Pakistan Startups', he said financial empowerment of women and other under-represented groups such as differently-abled persons was crucial for the progress of the country. President Alvi emphasized gender parity at the level of organizations and companies and urged them to ensure their representation in mainstream and leadership roles.

In the digital age, he said, technology could increase the productivity and efficiency of a business. Inclusion of women in IT-related startups could also help them earn a livelihood from their homes, he added. He stressed that women needed to be encouraged to become bank account holders in order to keep authority over their finances.

He pointed out that despite the rights enunciated by Islam for women, the culture and harassment were the two main impediments to their emancipation. He highlighted that it

was important for society to adopt a positive approach toward women by creating opportunities and ensuring a harassment-free culture for them.

The president expressed concern that fifty percent of the women graduates of medical colleges quit pursuing their careers after wedlock, which was a big loss of a talented workforce. He proposed counseling parents, husbands, and women doctors to help them encourage in utilizing their professional capabilities. He mentioned that both religion and the country's law supported women's right to inheritance, however, ills in the society hindered this in a majority of cases.

The president regretted that the business loans for women offered by the State Bank of Pakistan were not even utilized by five percent of them. In this regard, he said, the responsibility lied on women parliamentarians and other prominent women to effectively com-

municate the message to ensure gender equity.

He mentioned that the Special Technology Zones Authority could also play a role in advancing the role of women in diverse fields of economy. Birgit Lamm, Country head of Germany's Friedrich Naumann Foundation said her organization was committed to promoting entrepreneurship among the masses including women to help them engage in business activity in a dignified manner. Ifikhar Hussain, CEO of Transforming Hub and Founder of Women Business Network said Biznet aims to bring the legacy of big business, financial institutions, policymakers, and successful startups under one roof to initiate a much-needed collaboration for the rapid growth of economy. Faryal Sadiq, Chief Sustainability Officer of Interloop startup spoke about extending technical support to women to ensure equity and diversity in businesses.

Imran 'ready to talk to everyone' for sake of country

LAHORE (Agencies): Amid worsening political turmoil in the country in the backdrop of recent clashes between the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) activists and the law enforcers in connection with the possible arrest of Imran Khan, the deposed prime minister has said that he is ready to "talk to everyone" for the sake of the country's interest, progress and democracy.

Taking to Twitter on Thursday, the PTI chairman said that he would not hesitate from rendering any sacrifice for Pakistan. In another Tweet, Khan expressed heartfelt gratitude to the people who joined him in his struggle for "real freedom" and prayed for the success of his movement. Imran Khan said that he believes in the rule of law and said, "I will appear in the court on March 18, then why is the whole drama being created?"

A district sessions court in Islamabad had issued a non-bailable arrest warrant for Khan and instructed the police to arrest him and produce him before the court on March 18 in connection with the Toshakhana case. Khan claimed that the attempts to arrest him were not being made to present him before the courts but to "kill" him. Talking to journalists, the PTI leader expressed fears that he would be "subjected to torture" if he is arrested. "I've never refused to appear before the court, but they are calling me to a place where I have security concerns," he said as he sustained injuries in an assassination attempt in Wazirabad on November 3, 2022.

Details of deal with IMF to be made public: Ishaq Dar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday assured that details of the staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will be made public.

Speaking at the Senate Committee of the Whole, the minister said once the staff agreement is signed, it will be put on the website of the Finance Ministry and nothing will be concealed. The minister said that the regime of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had signed an agreement with IMF in 2019. The Finance Minister said he believes in transparency and fiscal discipline in the country. Responding to the points raised earlier in the Committee, he said nobody in Pakistan can compromise on the nuclear and missile assets of the country. "We are responsible citizens of Pakistan, we represent the people of Pakistan and we are here to guard the national interest of the country," he added. He further said that Pakistan was a sovereign nation and nobody in the world had the right to tell us what range of missiles we should have.

Imran booked under terrorism charges

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman and deposed prime minister Imran Khan was booked in a terrorism case over violence in Zaman Park. A case has been registered against the PTI chairman and other party leaders at the Race Course police station on the complaint of SHO. The FIR carries 20 Sections including Section 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act. The other section includes interference in state affairs, illegal gathering and refusing to receive court summons on the complaint of SHO Rehan Anwar.

The FIR stated the party workers and hundreds of supporters committed serious crimes at the nod of the former prime minister. It added that the PTI workers damaged state properties and used petrol bombs. The violent clashes inflicted injuries on 63 policemen, including the DIG operations of the Islamabad police, it added.

Islamabad police along with Punjab police and Rangers launched an operation to arrest PTI Chairman Imran after a district and sessions court issued his non-bailable arrest warrants for failing to attend the hearing in Toshakhana reference.



PESHAWAR: Lieutenant General Hassan Azhar Hayat, Commander Peshawar Corps interacting with prominent Ulemas of KP and newly merged districts.

LHC bars Imran from holding rally at Minar-e-Pakistan

LAHORE (PPI): The Lahore High Court Thursday extended the halt in police operation to arrest former prime minister Imran Khan for another day and also barred Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) from holding party rally at Minar-e-Pakistan on Sunday.

On Wednesday, the LHC had ordered police to stop its operation against Imran Khan until Thursday morning (today). PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry had moved the high court yesterday seeking to stop the police operation in Zaman Park. After an initial hearing, the high court had ordered police to suspend the operation till 10am today — which helped calm the situation at the former prime minister's house which had turned into a battleground.

Imran Khan had also announced a historic rally on Sunday (March 19) at Minar-e-Pakistan (Greater Iqbal Park) in Lahore to launch the party's election campaign despite security concerns. However, the court during proceedings on Thursday stopped the PTI from holding a rally at Minar-e-Pakistan and asked the party to let citizens live their routine lives.

Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh noted that neither the LHC nor the Islamabad High Court (IHC) had stopped the law-enforcers from executing Imran Khan's non-bailable arrest warrants. The judge said he does not "find any issue" in the situation, but noted that neither of the parties involved in the case has studied the law. "All of these issues have arisen because the law was not read," he said, adding that today, "all of us will read the law together". He said that both sides have "jammed the system". Justice Saleem reprimanded the

PTI counsel and said that the issue is of Imran Khan's warrants and the party keeps knocking on the doors of both IHC and LHC. "You are unaware of where you have to plead. We just have to follow the law in this case." "Neither the LHC nor the Islamabad High Court (IHC) has stopped the execution of the arrest warrants," Justice Saleem remarked during the hearing.

"All of you should sit together and find a solution. If you want to hold a public meeting, plan it 15 days in advance. Let the life of the nation run normally. Your rally will not be held on Sunday," he ordered. "Even if someone is getting married, he plans for the event much in advance. Our nation is being disrespected. I did not touch the arrest warrant. You must bring yourself into the system. Everything has got a method. Apply your plans under the policy we provide you. Everyone has rights, and they need to be balanced," the judge added.

As Fawad entered the courtroom, the judge told him that his party was not following the law. "You people have pushed the nation into suffering." At this, the PTI leader told the court that when the party chief has to appear before four courts subsequently, it becomes hard for him to handle the situation. "We are 100% sure about a possible attack on Imran Khan and that is why we had requested his presence at hearings via video link," Fawad added.

The judge then said that there is a proper procedure for seeking security for a person and stressed that the party should bring "itself inside the system's ambit". The judge then asked the PTI leader to sit down with

authorities and sort out the issue. "We are being embarrassed as a nation," he remarked, asking the party to once again reschedule its rally. Punjab Advocate General Shan Gul then told the judge that IHC's order has also been issued. The advocate general said that there is no need for this hearing. At this, Justice Saleem said that he has not touched the arrest warrants. "Neither the Lahore High Court nor the Islamabad High Court stopped police from executing the arrest warrants," he maintained.

"The decision of the IHC has come. This hearing is no longer required. Only the matter of security can be discussed," the Punjab advocate general said. "Are you serious about this case?" Justice Saleem asked from the petitioners' lawyer. "We are waiting for the detailed decision of the IHC and the sessions trial court of Islamabad," the lawyer replied. "Is all the work to be done by you?" the LHC judge questioned the lawyer. "You people don't read the law. That's why you keep beating about the bush. I don't think there is any problem in this whole issue. Everything is in the law," Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh remarked.

"Neither side reads the law. All these problems are due to not reading the law. Today, we will read the law together. The system has been jammed from both sides. The issue is of warrant, [but] sometimes you go to the Lahore High Court, sometimes you go to the Islamabad High Court. You don't know where to go. You are not following the law. The entire nation is suffering," the LHC judge commented. The court then adjourned the hearing till 11am today.

KP Governor: ECP informed about security concerns

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Ghulam Ali here on Thursday said that he had informed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) about the security concerns of the provincial caretaker government related to polls.

Talking to media, he said that political matters should not be taken to court rather, such matters should be solved amicably, adding that all the political parties of the country agreed on one point that there should be no separate election in the country. The Governor

said that two days ago, several former MPAs of PTI contacted him from Zaman Park and requested to hold elections simultaneously adding that he advised them to convince their leader Imran Khan in this regard.

Ghulam Ali said that if elections are not held simultaneously, then the same would happen after every five years. "Imran Khan won seven out of eight seats in the by-poll but still he made hues and cries of rigging over his defeat from one constituency," he expressed. He said that the situation of Zaman Park earned bad name for

the country and such an incident should not have happened, adding that it would not be remembered in good words in the history.

The Governor said that the political people never fear arrest rather they present themselves for the arrest without any resistance. Regarding posting and transfers in the province, the Governor rejected his involvement in any posting and transfer and said that during the tenure of PTI government, a specific segment of bureaucracy was running the affairs of the province.

Covid-19 trend: NCOC recommends mask wearing

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) on Thursday recommended wearing mask at crowded tightly enclosed spaces and healthcare facilities. According to NCOC, guidelines were issued for the period upto April 30, 2023 keeping in view the current COVID-19 trend across the country.

Meanwhile, health officials said that 129 new Coronavirus cases were reported during the last 24 hours across the country. As per the data shared by the National Institute of Health (NIH), the case positivity ratio was 2.98 per cent while 14 patients were in critical condition.

No death was reported from the Coronavirus in the last 24 hours while 4,334 Covid-19 tests were conducted. As many as 523

tests were conducted in Lahore out of which 43 cases were confirmed with a ratio of 8.22 per cent, while 225 tests were conducted in Rawalpindi out of which three cases were reported confirmed with a ratio of 1.33 percent. 14 cases were confirmed from 333 tests in Islamabad with a ratio of 4.20 percent.

Minister for National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination Abdul Qadir Patel said the government had strengthened the role of Border and Health Services in Pakistan to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19. The minister said there was a surveillance system at all entry points of the country including airports. There will be rapid tests and screening of passengers at all airports, he added. He said the situation was

completely under control and asked the general public to avoid listening to rumours. He added the Corona case passivity ratio was just 0.3 to 0.5 in the country while 90 per cent of the country's population already got the Covid-19 vaccine. "An efficient system with a proper management team is fully functional in the country to remain vigilant and is ready to make an emergency plan to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19," the minister added. He said the Border and Health Services Pakistan was ensuring the implementation of international health regulations. He said that in case of any untoward situation, the health system was fully prepared to deal with any sub-variant of Covid-19 including BF.7 in the country.

US announces \$4.5m programme for Pak farmers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United States on Thursday announced a \$4.5 million programme from its Department of Agriculture to strengthen fertilizer efficiency and effectiveness for Pakistani farmers among other initiatives at the conclusion of the second meeting of the US and Pakistan Climate and Environment Working Group.

Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman and the US Department of State's Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs Monica Medina led their respective sides, a joint news release said.

The officials and experts engaged on climate and environmental issues, including climate change,

energy transition, water management, climate-smart agriculture, air quality, biodiversity, and waste management, including plastics recycling.

The two sides discussed the impacts of the devastating floods in Pakistan in 2022 and emphasized the importance of building resilience to the impacts of climate change.

The United States expressed support for Pakistan's "Living Indus" initiative to restore the ecological health of the Indus River Basin. The two governments recommitted to tackling the climate crisis through cooperation on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Both governments resolved to continue deepening their bilateral partnership through the US-Pakistan "Green

Alliance" framework. The "Green Alliance" would help the two countries jointly face the climate, environmental, and economic needs of the present and future, especially through partnerships on agriculture, water, and clean energy.

Regarding agriculture, the two sides discussed the importance of adopting modern farming practices and innovative seed varieties to bolster resilience against climate change. On water management, the governments identified technical assistance, governance, and water efficiency mechanisms as areas ripe for cooperation. They emphasized the importance of supporting nature-based solutions and building community resilience to climate change.

Bilawal for OIC body to ensure finance, trade equality

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Thursday proposed to establish a special task force of experts at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) forum to develop a strategy to secure equal treatment in the rules and structure of international finance, trade and taxation.

"We must also demand a speedy debt restructuring for 60 financially vulnerable countries, the redistribution of unutilized SDRs (Special Drawing Rights) to developing countries, large lending by multilateral development banks, massive public-private partnership investments, sustainable infrastructure and the mobilization of the promised climate financing of US\$100 billion," he said while delivering his opening statement as Chairman of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) at the 49th Session of the CFM in Nouakchott, Mauritania. He said Pakistan had been hit hard by the devastating floods last summer after facing the negative

impacts of COVID, inflation, economic collapse in Afghanistan, and consequences of the Ukraine war.

He thanked the brotherly Islamic countries for their generous support for Pakistan in the hour of need. As regards the Palestine issue, the foreign minister said the OIC member states must continue to condemn Israel's repeated aggression against the Al Aqsa Mosque and in the occupied Palestinian territory. The people of Palestine must have their own state within the 1967 borders with Al Quds Alsharif as its capital. "This may seem a daunting task today, yet I am convinced that the arc of history in the hand of Almighty tends towards justice."

Regarding the Kashmir issue, FM Bilawal said the United Nations Security Council had adopted a resolution that the people of Jammu and Kashmir must be able to exercise the right of self-determination through a UN-sponsored plebiscite. However, India moved away from its com-

'Need to bring accountability through Parliament'

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday said there was need to bring accountability, governance and unity in prevailing system through the Parliament. Speaking at the Senate Committee of the Whole declared at the special session summoned to celebrate Golden Jubilee of the Upper House, the minister extended her heartfelt congratulations on the fiftieth anniversary of the Senate.

Senator Rehman said, Golden Jubilee of Senate is a source of pride for all of us. Chairman Senate and Senate Secretariat deserve congratulations for holding this special session. She added that the Senate was the guardian of the country's federal aspirations. The minister noted that it was a matter of pride for her to serve the people and the country in this august House.

Sherry Rehman said, I pay tribute to my mentor and leader Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto who understood the power of the Parliament. I am proud to belong to the party that created the Constitution of Pakistan; The Constitution of Pakistan holds the country together, she said, adding, My leaders have always followed the constitution, parliament and the law. Despite the harshness and reprisals, the leaders of my party kept the constitution and the law high.

Sherry Rehman mentioned that President Asif Ali Zardari was kept in jail for 12 years without any crime. The last time when the police came to arrest him, he served tea to the police and treated them well. Faryal Talpur was sent from hospital to prison in an armored vehicle at night, she said, adding.

CEO Economic Zone removal: PHC stops KP caretaker govt

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan and Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim has stopped caretaker government from removal of Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zone, on Thursday. The counsel for petitioner Shumail Ahmad Butt Advocate argued that caretaker government is removing CEO economic zone without jurisdiction while it is place on cabinet meeting agenda. The counsel added that caretaker

government is obliged to hold free and fair election which is clear from section 230. He added that it is initiated on behalf of Minister for Industries to favour another candidate.

In the meantime, Justice remarked that the previous government has also appointed CEO six month earlier, however, the counsel argued that the procedure of appointment is starting one year ahead and added that the petitioner is re-appointed on the position.

Although, Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan observed that whose behind this to disturb whole system? Shumail

Ahmad Butt advocate argued that caretaker Chief Minister is favouring relatives.

Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan inquired from Shumail Ahmad Butt that he will adjust his relatives or set aside during his one-day of kingship while Shumail Butt argued that he will not accept it because on the next day he should be dethroned. The divisional bench of PHC has stopped caretaker government from removal of CEO Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zone and ordered Secretary Industries to submit reply while adjourned further hearing till 28th March.