

Digital census begins

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The country's first ever digital population and housing census began across the country on Wednesday. One hundred and twenty one thousand field enumerators will carry out the field operation of survey. The process will be completed by April 1. The data collected will be released by April 30 which will then be approved by the Council of Common Interests (CCI).

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Earthquake in Turkiye, Syria

Humanitarian services of Pak's rescue teams lauded

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday appreciated the humanitarian services of Pakistan's search and rescue teams sent to support and assist the earthquake-affected brotherly people of Turkiye and Syria.

Addressing a ceremony to honour Pakistan's search and rescue teams, the prime minister said they had gathered to praise them as they had worked tirelessly in Turkiye and Syria, and rendered commendable services. The 220 million people of Pakistan prayed for their success and appreciated the humanitarian services. He said, "With hard work, dedication, and professional manner, our teams performed the rescue work and saved dozens of people trapped under the rubble. With your benevolent and caring efforts, you have carved a place in the hearts of the people of Turkiye. They will remember your services forever."

The prime minister recollected that during his visit to the quake-hit region of Turkiye, he met the teams working there. "On behalf of myself and on behalf of the government, I want to thank and appreciate you because you have strengthened the brotherly and fraternal ties with these two countries, and infused vigour and affection in these relations with your meritorious services," he added.

The prime minister observed that the people of Turkiye were looking towards them not because they had a dearth of resources but due to the



deep-seated humanitarian and religious bonds spanning over centuries. The relationship dated back to centuries and cemented further with the Khilafat Movement, he added.

The prime minister said the members of the rescue teams were the 'heroes of the entire nation'. He opined that philanthropists, members of the NGOs (non-governmental organisations) and charity organizations, and the people of Pakistan had shown generosity for the quake-affected people of Turkiye and Syria with huge contributions.

The prime minister also commended the NDMA for its main role in the dispatch of relief assistance and goods, besides appreciating the contributions of Pakistan International Airlines and Pakistan Air Force. He mentioned that Pakistan had dispatched tons of relief assistance and

the most needed items, including tents, blankets, food, etc. An order for manufacturing 50,000 winterized tents was also placed which would be sent soon.

He said the Federal Cabinet members, parliamentarians, and government officials had also committed their salaries for the relief fund. The prime minister also distributed certificates of appreciation among the members of the rescue teams. The federal ministers were also present on the occasion.

Earlier, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Chairman Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik lauded the efforts of the teams which worked in the adverse weather conditions and rescued precious lives. He said the people of Turkiye expressed their gratitude to the prime minister and the people of Pakistan for their generous assistance.

SC bars PM from judges appointment in GB

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan (SC) has barred Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif from judges appointment in Gilgit Baltistan on Wednesday. As per details, the judge's appointment in the Gilgit Baltistan case was heard by a two-member bench of the Supreme Court headed by justice Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan.

The Supreme Court also issued a stay order until the final verdict of this case. The chief minister Gilgit Baltistan has approached the Supreme Court on the matter of judges' appointment. The federal government has asked the court to give them some time. The additional attorney general (AIG) asked for one week time from the court but the CM Gilgit Baltistan's counsel Makhdoom Ali Khan opposed the AIG request.

He said that this case has been in court for one year and despite the case being in court the judge's appointment has not been stopped. Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan said that nothing will happen if the appointment is stopped for two weeks. The judges have already been appointed so the constitutional aspect of issuing notice will be decided at the next hearing. He asked who appoints judges in Gilgit Baltistan. The AIG responded that the Prime Minister of Pakistan appoints judges in Gilgit Baltistan. At this the Supreme Court adjourned further hearing till March 15.

KP CM launches digital census

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan has formally launched digital census in the province as part of the 7th national census in the country. A ceremony to this effect was held here at Chief Minister House Peshawar on Wednesday which was also attended by the authorities of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan kicked off the census by writing enumeration numbers at the gate of Chief Minister House, Peshawar.

Speaking on the occasion, the caretaker Chief Minister said that census is of vital importance with regard to comprehensive planning for national development adding that equitable distribution of resources as well as development strategies are planned on the basis of statistics obtained through census. He said that census indicates increasing ratio of population and distribution of urban and rural population in addition to determining important socio-economic factors in the society.

The Chief Minister said that digital census is being conducted for the first time in the history of Pakistan in which modern technology is being used unlike the traditional method of census adding that under the digital census mechanism, citizens have been provided the facility of self-registration. Muhammad Azam Khan remarked that it is the national obligation of every citizen to ensure accurate data entry of his family members during the census.

Elections in KP, Punjab to be held in 90 days, rules SC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to hold the election of the provincial assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) in 90 days.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Munib Akhtar, and Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar supported the verdict, while Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail and Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah opposed the admissibility of the suo moto notice and dissented from the majority decision.

The court order stated that it was the constitutional duty of the Federation, in terms of clause (3) of Article 148, to ensure that the government of every province was carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.

"There can be no doubt that this duty includes ensuring that a general election to the assembly of every province is held, and enabled to be held, in a timely manner within the period set out in the Constitution. This duty is in addition to, and applies independently of, the duty cast under Article 220 on 'all executive authorities in the Federation and in the provinces to assist the Commissioner and the Election Commission in the discharge of his or their functions."

"It follows that the Federation, and in particular the Federal Government, is, inter alia, obligated, on an immediate and urgent basis, to forthwith provide the Election Commission with all such facilities, personnel, and security as it may require for the holding of the general elections."

"In like manner, it is the duty of the provincial governments, acting under the caretaker cabinets, to proactively provide all aid and assistance as may be required by the Election Commission. The duty cast upon the authorities as set out in the 2017 Act must also be discharged forthwith and proactively."

"It furthered that in ordinary circumstances the general election to the Punjab Assembly ought to be held on 09.04.2023, the date announced by the President in terms of his order of 20.02.2023. However, we are informed that on account of the delay in the emergence of the date for the holding of the general election, it may not be possible to meet the 90-day deadline stipulated by the Constitution."

"It is also the case that (possibly on account of a misunderstanding of the law) the Election Commission did not make itself available for consultation as required under the 2017 Act. The Election Commission is, therefore, directed to use its utmost efforts to immediately propose, keeping in mind ss. 57 and 58 of the 2017 Act, a date to the President that is compli-

Ramazan relief package

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government on Wednesday finalized the relief package for Ramazan. As per details, the government will provide Rs 5 billion subsidy on 19 necessary items in Ramazan. The subsidy is allocated to people who are registered in the Benazir Income support program in Utility stores. Sources within the Ministry of Industries & Production said that the subsidised items include flour, ghee, pulses, sugar etc.

Govt jacks up power tariff for export industry

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government has jacked up power tariff for the export industry by Rs 12.13 per unit on Wednesday. As per details, the increase in power tariff is made to implement the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions. The government also has ended the subsidy on power for the export industry.

The power supply to the export industry at Rs 19.99 per unit has been withdrawn and the notification will be effective from today. The power division has written a letter to K-electric and all the power distributing companies for the implementation of this decision.

The decision to withdraw subsidy on electricity for exporters will generate Rs 51 billion. Earlier, the federal government agreed to raise prices of electricity and gas as Pakistan and International Monetary Fund (IMF) moved closer to the revival of \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) stalled for months.

The Fund and Pakistan had moved closer to the revival of their loan package as Islamabad agreed to several conditions including increasing energy prices and improve tax collection, as demanded by the IMF. International Monetary Fund (IMF) has asked Pakistan to impose roughly Rs600-800 billion in additional taxes in the second round of talks to revive \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF). During the meeting, the Fund set tough conditions for additional measures that included imposing roughly Rs600-800 billion in additional taxes.

Imran orchestrated attack on Judicial Complex: Sana

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah on Wednesday said the attack on the Judicial Complex in Islamabad by the PTI workers was carried out under a well-thought-out plan which showed that party chief Imran Khan was the "main architect and mastermind". The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman, he said, was solely responsible for the violence at the Judicial Complex on Tuesday as it was he who had directed his party workers to gather there to pressurise the courts. Imran Khan very much knew about his fate as his crime had been proved in the Toshakhana case and the wrong affidavit submitted in the Tyrian White case, and that was why he used social media to incite his party workers to violence, the minister said addressing a press conference.

He said all the fuss at the Judicial Complex was orchestrated by him in a bid to conceal his crimes. It also showed how the former prime minister would make court appearances leading a mob in total disregard for the law, Rana Sanaullah, however, made it clear that the government was not oblivious to its duties and would enforce the writ of the state.

He said two first information reports (FIRs) of the incident had been registered, nominating 150 PTI workers, including Imran Khan as accused. Some 29 accused had been arrested, while further arrests would be made after confirmation

through CCTV footage. He said weapons were also recovered from the arrested persons, while an armed policeman of a province was also taken into custody.

The minister urged the judiciary not to give any relief to Imran Khan in the cases as he was the "mastermind" of the attack on the Judicial Complex. Rana Sanaullah said the PTI leaders and workers could not spend even five days in jail. Ironically, they themselves had courted arrest under their 'Jail Bharo' movement and were now seeking bail. Imran Khan realized that the so-called drive had flopped and that was why he announced to abandon it, he added.

He said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz had always respected the courts and its leader and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had attended dozens of court hearings at the same Judicial Complex. He alleged that Imran Khan Niazi had no moral values and was bent upon creating chaos in the country. He urged the nation to protect Pakistan from the "evil of Imran Niazi" by not voting for him in the upcoming election.

The minister said he had also ordered a departmental inquiry against the policemen, who had manhandled media personnel during Imran Khan's hearing at the Judicial Complex.

Commenting on the verdict of the Supreme Court regarding the election of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies, Rana Sanaullah said the Federal Government would

PM's son-in-law gets extension in interim bail

LAHORE (INP): An accountability court in Lahore has extended interim bail of Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif's son-in-law Haroon Yousaf in a money laundering case. Haroon Yousaf appeared before the NAB court for an extension in interim bail, while the court showed resentment over the absence of the NAB investigation officer.

The court while extending the interim bail of PM Shehbaz Sharif's son-in-law Haroon Yousaf till March 16 and directed the investigation officer of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to the next hearing. It is to be mentioned here that a case has been under hearing at the accountability court against the prime minister's son-in-law Haroon Yousaf Aziz.

Earlier the court restrained the NAB from the arrest of Haroon Yousaf Aziz. Haroon Yousaf, PM Shehbaz's son Suleman, and daughter Rabia Imran were declared absconders by the court for avoiding their appearance in the case proceedings.

US state secretary says no plans to meet Russia, China at G20

NEW DELHI (Agencies): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he had no plans to meet his Russian or Chinese counterparts at a G20 foreign ministers' meeting, as Ukraine and China tensions overshadow attempts by host India to forge unity among the world's biggest economies.

The gathering in New Delhi will be the first time Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov have been in the same room since a G20 meeting in Bali last July. "If Russia ... were genuinely prepared to engage in meaningful diplomacy necessary to end the aggression, of course, we'd be the first to work to engage, but there's zero evidence of

that," Blinken told reporters ahead of his arrival in Delhi.

A meeting of G20 finance ministers in Bengaluru last week failed to agree on a common statement after Beijing and Moscow sought to water down language on Russia's war with Ukraine. But Washington was optimistic this week's summit would produce a declaration reflecting "the majority, if not the overwhelming majority of the G20 continuing to stand against Russia's war", a senior State Department official said. Lavrov arrived late on Tuesday in India — which has not condemned the war — and will use his G20 attendance to lay into Western countries, according to the Russian foreign ministry.

The West wants to "take revenge

for the inevitable disappearance of the levers of dominance from its hands", the ministry's English-language statement said. "The destructive policy of the US and its allies has already put the world on the brink of a disaster," it added. The US secretary of state also said he had no plans to meet Chinese foreign minister Qin Gang on the sidelines of the two-day G20 gathering.

Blinken had a fiery encounter with top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi last month in Germany after the United States shot down a suspected Chinese spy balloon over its east coast on February 4. The incident led Blinken to nix a rare trip to China, slamming the "unacceptable violation of US

sovereignty and international law" which "must never again occur", the State Department said. Beijing, which has also been angered by Washington's stance on Taiwan, denies it uses spy balloons and says the craft was for weather research.

Wang "urged the US side to change course, acknowledge and repair the damage that its excessive use of force caused to China-US relations", state news agency Xinhua reported. Blinken also warned Wang against providing "material support" to Russia's faltering war effort, as is speculated in Washington. Beijing denies any such intention. Xinhua quoted Wang last week as saying China was willing to "strengthen

strategic coordination" with Russia after meeting Lavrov and President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

Blinken was also expected on Friday to meet his counterparts from the Quad group, which includes the United States, Japan, Australia and India, and is seen as a bulwark against China in the Asia-Pacific region. Japan's foreign ministry said the meeting would affirm the group's "commitment to strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law". India wants to use its G20 presidency this year to focus on issues such as alleviating poverty and climate finance, but the Ukraine war and its effects are set to dominate the agenda.

Hosting the G20 puts India in a tricky position because while it shares Western concerns about China, it is also a major buyer of Russian arms and has ramped up Russian oil imports. India has not condemned the Ukraine invasion, although Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Putin last year that this was "not a time for war", in comments seen as a rebuke of Moscow. European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said he was confident India would use the meeting to "make Russia understand that this war has to finish". "Certainly the success of the meeting will be measured in respect to what we will be able to do on that," he told reporters in Delhi.

LWMC removes 2000-ton solid waste from drain

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC), in collaboration with the Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA), removed over 2000 tons of solid waste from Shanghai drain here.

According to a spokesperson, the LWMC deployed additional workforce and staff including 25 sanitary workers, four dumpers and excavator near Shanghai Road for conducting the operation.

The special operation was launched on Feb 11, 2023, and it continued till proper cleaning of the drain.

Spokesperson said 70-75 tons of solid waste was removed on daily basis from the drain.

The LWMC enforcement team also issued over 50 notices and 20 challans worth Rs 36,000 over illegal dumping of waste in drain. LWMC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Babar Sahib Din said that the department was alert for providing cleanliness facilities to dwellers of Lahore.

He added that all the drains of Lahore would be cleared in collaboration with WASA.

The clearing of drains is as important as the cleaning of our home, streets or main roads, he added.

Minister orders internal audit of PILAC

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Information and Culture Amir Mir on Wednesday ordered an internal audit of the Punjab Institute of Language Art and Culture (PILAC) for the last two years. The Minister visited the PILAC along with Secretary Information and Culture Ali Nawaz Malik, he presided over a meeting regarding performance review of the department.

Secretary Information, Additional Secretary Culture Nazia Jabeen and other officers attended the meeting. Amir Mir directed to contact PEMRA to get the status of semi-commercial radio station for PILAC FM 95.

The Minister said that semi-commercial status would make the radio station financially self-sufficient.

Provincial Minister for Information and Culture Amir Mir directed to immediately create a scheme for online availability of Punjabi literature and send it to secretary information & culture and to include Punjabi encyclopedia project in the Annual Development Plan (ADP) of the next financial year.

The Information Minister said that new projects should be started under Public Private Partnership (PPP) to get the institution out of financial crisis.

He also directed to form a committee to find opportunities to make PILAC financially independent. He said that digital art gallery project should be made a part of the next ADP.

PILAC should organize special broadcasts and cultural events on Punjab Culture Day, he added.

Two more routes of women-only pink bus service launched

F.P. Report

KARACHI: People's Pink Bus Service dedicated for women has started its journey on two more routes in Karachi. Provincial Ministers Sharjeel Inam Memon, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah inaugurated the People's Pink Bus Service on Wednesday in a ceremony held at Sea View. On this occasion, Chief Minister Sindh's Coordinator Shahzad Memon, MPA Sadia Javed, Transport Secretary Abdul Haleem Shaikh, Managing Director Sindh Mass Transit Authority Zubair Chana, Project Director NRTC Sohaib Shafiq and others were also present.

Addressing the ceremony, Provincial Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Sindh Government of Pakistan People's Party has started the People's Pink Bus Service across Sindh on the directives of the party leadership.

In the first phase, the route was started in Karachi on a trial basis.

After its great response from citizens, the pink bus service for women was launched in Hyderabad. He said that two new routes of Pink Bus Service are being launched Karachi from today. He said that

Pink Bus Service facility is being extended for the convenience of our mothers, sisters and daughters so that they can reach to their destination without harassment in modern commuting facility. He said that this is a big initiative of Sindh government towards the empowerment of women. He said that it will make easy for women to go to schools, colleges and offices.

He said that there is no separate bus service for women in the developed countries of the world.

There are only 12 countries in the world where there is a separate bus service for women and Pakistan is among these countries. He said that the international media praised the launch of People's Pink Bus Service. The minister said that pink bus service will be extended to Sukkur, Larkana and every district so that women can have safe travel facilities. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that Pakistan People's Party always tried to empower women. He said that 2 new pink bus routes from Power Chowranghi North Karachi to Indus Hospital and Numaish Chowranghi to Sea View are starting today, while the number of buses has been increased on the Model Colony to Tower route.

Colorful event held at Peshawar Model School Charsadda branch

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: A colorful event was held at Peshawar Model School Charsadda branch. During the annual grand ceremony prizes were distributed among position holders who got prominent position in Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education. Peshawar. Additional Deputy Commissioner Nawab Sameer Hussain Laghari was special guest on the occasion.

PMS Charsadda director Khawaja Shiraz Nasir, principal Nusrat Nazir and guest of honor and former student Dr Hadiqa Gul distributed shields and other prizes among the position holders, teachers and staff of various cadres on this occasion. On the occasion the school children presented national songs, tableaux, speeches and educational sketches while fatiha was offered for the departed soul of the deceased student Mehreen Khalid, who was a position holder in the top ten in Peshawar Board

matriculation year 2022.

The school principal Nusrat Nazir while presenting performance of the school said that Peshawar Model School Charsadda Branch is continuously getting significant positions in the Top 10 and 20 including Top three which is the result of the efforts and teamwork of the school administration and teachers.

Chief guest ADC Charsadda Nawab Samir Hussain Laghari said that PMS Charsadda branch is playing a key role in the promotion of purposeful and quality education. Graduated students can become a useful citizen of the society, he said, adding promotion and publication of modern science and contemporary sciences is inevitable in order to face the challenges of the present era.

In order to be able to serve the country and the people, he said that the new generation is our future and its best upbringing and education is the duty of the society including parents and teachers.

Turkish Consular General expresses gratitude for extending support following quake disaster

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Madressatul Islam University, on Wednesday, organised a condolence ceremony to express solidarity with the people of Turkiye in wake of heavy human loss in the recent earthquake. Turkish Consul General in Karachi Cemal Sangu, Vice Chancellor SMIU Dr. Mujeeb Sahrai, faculty members, staff and students presented flowers in the respect of victims who lost their lives in the earthquake in Turkiye and Syria. On this occasion, SMIU announced to donate one-day salary of its employees of 17 and above grades for Turkiye.

The Turkish envoy Cemal Sangu, speaking at the occasion, expressed deep sorrow and grief on a vast scale human casualties and destruction in Turkiye and vowed, "Although it is the most difficult time for our nation but we are resilient and determined to rebuild our country."

He said the Turkish nation had a very special bond with SMIU due to the close relations of its founder Khan Bahadur Hassan Ali Effendi with Turkiye.

Recalling his recent visit to SMIU and decision taken in a meeting with the Vice Chancellor for working together in area of education, Cemal Sangu said that he had not imagined that he shall come soon to SMIU to attend a condolence meeting

organised for his countrymen.

He said that on the very first day of the earthquake, a large number of people of Pakistan had visited the Turkish Consulate in Karachi to show solidarity and expressed their deep grief for human loss in Turkiye. "We, our entire nation and the government of Turkiye are thankful to the people of Pakistan, especially SMIU for extending their support towards us," Turkish CG said and added that the emotional support of Pakistan's people was their strength. Vice-chancellor Dr. Mujeeb Sahrai said that the day of 6th February was a catastrophic one for Turkiye and it would be remembered as a disastrous day in world history due to heavy human losses due to the earthquake.

He said that the world was changing rapidly due to the climate change and in the last year many parts of the country particularly Sindh had affected by disastrous rains and floods. Climate change might cause such natural disasters in future as well so comprehensive efforts were required for disaster risk reduction, he stressed. Earlier, Wafa Mansoor Buriro on behalf of SMIU's faculty expressed deep condolence with the Turkish Consul General and the people of Turkiye.



KARACHI: Provincial Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon addressing the inaugurated ceremony of People's Pink Bus Service.

Tarar appeals court to conduct hearing of Tyrian White case on day to day basis

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Interior Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday demanded the court to conduct hearing of Tyrian White case on day to day basis as the PTI chairman was using delaying tactics instead of facing the case.

Addressing a press conference, he said that an affidavit was submitted in the court declaring the aunt of Tyrian White as her guardian but Imran Khan had now challenged the jurisdiction of the court instead of facing the case about it.

In both aspects of this particular case, Attaullah Tarar viewed that Imran Khan would be disqualified because he had concealed facts being a public figure as information about kids was necessary to be submitted to the Election Commission of Pakistan and Federal Board of Revenue

before contesting the elections.

During the trials against PML-N leadership in past, Tarar said that the hearing of the case was conducted on day to day basis but Imran Khan had been escaping to face the court by using delaying tactics. "Appear before the court, if you have nothing to hide and if you are "Sadiq and Amin" he said. He questioned "Why the jurisdiction of the court is challenged by the Imran Khan, if he has nothing to hide". He asked Imran Khan to argue the case on the merit and not to challenge the jurisdiction of the court about hearing this particular case.

He said that Sita White was brave lady, who had fought a case in the Los Angeles court for the rights of Tyrian White with all evidences.

He said the verdict of the Los Angeles was known to everyone.

Attar Tarar condemned Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Insaf leadership for entering in the court with armed men and using honorable court premises for political gathering.

He also condemned misbehavior with the journalist and said it was the top priority of the government to safeguard the rights of the journalist community. To a question he said on February 23 Justice Yahya Afridi and Justice Athar Minallah had declared that the petitions were not maintainable. These two judges later recused themselves from the case but the footnote in today's judgment clearly said that the two judges had dismissed the petitions and their rulings were part of Wednesday's judgment, he said. "After this there is no need for a review or further interpretation... We believe that these petitions have been rejected by 3-4 and now the decision should be done in the high courts," he said.

Californian Democrats delegation calls on Speaker PA

LAHORE (APP): A 12-member delegation from California State Assembly called on Speaker Punjab Assembly Muhammad Sibtain Khan and discussed Pak-US relations and current political scenario during a meeting at Speaker's Chamber, here on Wednesday.

Speaker Sibtain Khan hailed the prominent role of overseas Pakistanis in strengthening Pak-US relations during meeting with the delegation led by Overseas US-Pakistani democrat Dr. Asif Mehmood. The delegation comprised Chairman Appropriation Committee of the California State Assembly Chris R. Holden, Melanie Caldwell, wife of Chris R. Holden, Focal Person Farooq Arshad, Dr. Asif Mahmood, Wendy Carrillo, Anna Goddard (Ms. Anna Goddard), Willie Armstrong, Eloise Gomez Reyes, Farooq Arshad, Christopher Reyes, Michael Meeks, Mike A Gipson, Adriel Yang and others. Dr. Asif Mehmood informed the Speaker that different US companies were keen to invest in agriculture, information technology, education, health and other sectors in Pakistan.

36th int'l book fair

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) Chairman Muhammad Saleem Baig inaugurated the 36th International Book Fair here at Expo Center on Wednesday. The PEMRA Chairman hailed the book fair's organizers including Saleem Malik, Mohammad Faisal, Kashif Mir and Mian Babar Hameed. He said, "Book is a symbol of life and a healthy society." He congratulated the administration for organizing the book fair and appreciated their efforts. Around 200 stalls were at the fair and PEMRA Chairman also visited various stalls.

At the book fair, to be continued for five days, rare and unique books will be available at 40 to 50 percent discount. PEMRA Punjab Director General Ikram Barkat, Director General (Operation) Muhammad Tahir, Director (Legal) Tahir Tarar, Regional Director (Lahore) Ayesha Watto, and other officers were also present.

Youth urged to work for economic development of country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Wednesday urged youth to focus on innovation and vocational education for the economic and social development of Balochistan.

Talking to a delegation of youth and elders of port had the potential to change the destiny of the province. He emphasised the importance of skilled human capital and assured

the delegation that their problems would be addressed. In the meeting, issues related to the development of Balochistan and especially Chagai district were discussed.

Moreover, the chairman informed the delegation about the upcoming Golden Jubilee of the Senate and the role of the Upper House of the Parliament in solving the problems faced by the small provinces. The participants expressed their

commitment to work together for the development of Balochistan and the welfare of its people.

Sadiq Sanjrani said that skilled people played a pivotal role in achieving development goals. There was no lack of talent among the youth of Balochistan and many projects were being in pipeline in the province, he added. The delegation expressed gratitude for Sanjrani's efforts in developing Balochistan.

Rangers arrests four of street criminals gang

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Police in a joint intelligence based operations in Hasrat Mohani Colony and Pak Colony areas of the city have arrested four of a gang allegedly involved in robberies, street crimes and arms supply.

The agencies also recovered arms and ammunition from the possession of arrested,

according to spokesman for Rangers on Wednesday. The gang consists of 8 to 10 members and was involved in more than 200 robberies and street crimes during which they snatched motorcycles and mobile phones from citizens. Besides the apprehended accused were also involved in collecting extortions.



KARACHI: Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Iqbal Memon in a meeting with official of Pakistan Bureau of Statistic (PBS) as first-ever digital census begins at Commissioner office.



TRIBAL AREA ELECTRIC SUPPLY COMPANY PESHAWAR

INVITATION TO BID

Tribal Area Electric Supply Company (TESCO) invites Bids from the firms, who have valid PEC license 2022-23 in relevant category and field of specialization codes "CE-10 & CE-11" having experience of 02-Nos similar works within DISCO / PPMC / NTDC in last 05-years & Registered with Income Tax Department and active on Tax Payers list of active Tax Payers of Federal Board of Revenue for the following work.

Tender #	Name of Work	E/Cost (PKR)	Bid Submission Date & Time	Bid Opening Date & Time
10/GSC (2022-23)	Construction of Divisional Office at Ghallani Mohmand District.	48.264	16.03.2023 (11:00) AM	16.03.2023 (11:30) AM
11/GSC (2022-23)	Construction of RCC Sheds & Concreted floors in TESCO Regional Stores Hayatabad, Peshawar.	68.925		

- Bidding documents containing detailed Terms & Conditions etc can be obtained from the office of Executive Engineer GSC Division at TESCO Regional Store Hayatabad Peshawar during office hours by eligible contractors on submission of allowed copies of CNIC, PEC License, (showing original), experience certificate with completion certificate, NTN, FBR Tax, returns for the year 2021-22, current Bank Statement of last 06 months, affidavit that the attached documents i.e, PEC, FBR, NTN, CDR (2% of bid cost) and work orders etc are genuine. Found fake at later stage, the firm will be held responsible for all consequences.
- The Tender firm will be issued to only those firms whose performance is satisfactory during last 01-year in TESCO, particularly & in other DISCOs to the proprietor of firm or his legally authorized by showing the authority letter on Non Judicial Stamp paper duly counter signed by the oath commissioner and signed by the owner of firm in original.
- Last date for submission of applications for tender documents is 10/03/2023.
- Deadline for issuance of tender documents is (02) working day before opening date of tender.
- Price of bidding documents is Rs. 2000/- (Non-refundable) for each Tender deposit in the account of XEN TESCO GSC Division Peshawar account No.0010045345220016 (0854) in the Bank of ABL Tower Branch Phase-V Hayatabad Peshawar.
- The contractor who quotes rates, more than 10% below the Engineers Estimate shall have to submit additional 8% security in shape of call deposit from any scheduled Bank of Pakistan with the bidding documents.

Note:- Pay order not acceptable & the contractor must ensure to provide the complete brochure of firm having detail of T&P and expert man power, financial statement of permanent employees etc at the time of issuance of tenders.

This advertisement is also available on PPRA website at www.ppra.org.pk & www.tesco.gov.pk

Executive Engineer TESCO (GSC) Division,
Industrial State Hayat Abad Peshawar (091-9217401)

DPR/2023/06



7th population census to continue till April 7

PESHAWAR (APP): Like other parts of the country, the seventh population and housing census and first digital self-enumeration has started across the province and will continue till April 7.

The Department of Education, Police, Pak Armed Force, and Statistics Bureau would conduct the national census while people could also count themselves in the census by using the option of self-enumeration.

Self-enumeration is a new concept that gives every resident the option to count themselves in the census. Any household member can register all members of the family who live and eat together as a Household.

According to Statistic Bureau, hostels, jails, Madrasah, rehabilitation centers, orphans, and old houses would be considered collective households and could not be able to avail the facility of self-

enumeration.

All the Divisional Commissioners, being chairman of the Divisional Census Committee, were supervising the census and would ensure mutual coordination among the line departments besides monitoring the daily reports.

Under the digital census, the Peshawar division had been divided into eight circles where the relevant staff would visit door-to-door and verify the details of each household.

FC arranges free medical camps at three areas

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Security Forces are continuously focusing to facilitate local populace of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's tribal districts and Chitral. Steps are being taken to organize free medical camps in far flung areas to provide basic healthcare facilities to the local community and to improve their health and wellbeing.

In this regard, free medical camps were organized by Frontier Crops Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pandiyali & Ambar, Mohmand District and in Arandu, Chitral. The camps provided free medical services to the local communities with a total of 1150 patients treated including 271 males, 359 females and 353 children.

The medical services offered included consultations, diagnostic tests and medications. In addition to the medical services lab screening tests were conducted to identify any underlying health issues in the patients.

The Security forces expressed their commitment to continue such initiatives in the future, which will not only provide medical assistance to the local population but will also promote a healthy and prosperous society.



PESHAWAR: A worker of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics collecting data for digital census.

KPBC observes strike against ignoring PHC's judge

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council (KPBC) has strike and observed boycott from court proceeding against ignoring Peshawar High Court (PHC) judges for evaluation to Supreme Court of Pakistan, on Wednesday.

It is worthy to mention

that no judge has evaluated to SCP since 2017 while only one Justice is serving at Supreme Court from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

KPBC claimed that PHC's judges are eligible for evaluating to SCP on seniority and added that equal representation at Supreme Court of provinces are mandatory. KPBC claimed that petition

of late Chief Justice PHC Justice Waqar Ahmad Seth is still pending despite his departure two year earlier.

KPBC demanded to summon meeting Judicial Commission for evaluation of judges to SCP from PHC on seniority basis. On the contrary, lawyer's strike has compelled litigants hopeless and obtained new dates for hearing.



PESHAWAR: Assistant Commissioner Syed Ihsan Ali Shah checking gauge at petrol station. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

PLB demands transfer of workers welfare fund

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial President People's Labor Bureau Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shah Zulqarnain on Wednesday demanded of the federal government that the workers welfare fund should be allowed to remain with the federation as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is already suffering from severe economic crisis and owes about 900 billion rupees.

In a statement issued here Shah Zulqarnain said that by transferring the workers welfare fund to the provinces, millions of

industrial workers and employees across the country will be directly affected. People's Labor Bureau

Provincial President Shah Zulqarnain demanded of the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Federal Minister for Overseas and Human Resource Development Sajid Hussain Turi that the Workers Welfare Board was established by Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto for the welfare of people to get various benefits,

including dowry grant, free education and scholarship for the children of the workers in industry.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan Assemblies had also passed resolutions against the transfer of workers welfare funds to the provinces that these institutions should not be handed over to the province.

The Labour Union Federation Employees Association has announced a peaceful protest in front of Parliament House in Islamabad on March 16, 2023 for their rights.

KMU introduces new syllabus of Islamiyat

PESHAWAR (APP): Vice Chancellor Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq on Wednesday said that after introducing a modern modular curriculum in medical colleges now in all undergraduate medical, dental colleges, nursing, physiotherapy, and allied health sciences institutes a new syllabus of Islamiyat has been also introduced.

He said that the new Islamiyat curriculum will not only help young doctors and other health care workers to raise awareness about the basic beliefs and practices of Islam, but it will also help inculcate in them

basic human ethics.

He expressed these views while speaking as a chief guest at the introductory ceremony of the new curriculum of Islamic studies at the undergraduate level. On this occasion, the Convener of the Islamiyat curriculum committee and former VC Prof. Dr. Hafiz Ullah, members of the committee Prof. Dr. Hafiz Abdul Ghafoor, Qari Roohullah Madani, Prof. Dr. Rashid Ahmed, Dr. Braikhna Jameel, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Zahid, Dr. Syed. Hamid Habib, Dr. Abdul Manan, Ms. Samina, and Director Academic Muhammad Islam were

also present.

Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq said that after harmonizing the medical curriculum with the modern requirements, KMU has introduced Islamiyat new curriculum in undergraduate medical, dental colleges, nursing, physiotherapy, and allied health sciences institute to train the young doctors and health care workers of the province.

We certainly do not lack good doctors and medical experts in terms of professional skills, but we are acutely lacking in such medical experts who are the best doctors as well as have the best morals, compassion, and sincerity.

Atif lauds SC's verdict on elections

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader, Atif Khan has praised the verdict of the Supreme Court, which upheld the constitution and directed the Election Commission to hold elections within 90 days.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, Atif Khan emphasized that every citizen has the right to vote and choose their representatives, and this fundamental right cannot be denied to anyone. He also criticized the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) for allegedly trying to evade holding elections due to the fear of defeat.

"The PDM is running away from the elections because they know that they cannot win. They are afraid of facing the people's mandate and have resorted to every possible tactic to postpone the elections," Atif Khan said.

He further added that the PTI is confident of winning the upcoming elections and coming into power once again.

CCP arrest PO, alleged ice-drug seller

PESHAWAR (APP): Capital City Police have arrested an alleged notorious deadly criminal and pro-claimed offender during an operation in the jurisdiction of Police Station Mathra, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

On the tip of the presence of the wanted pro-claimed offender, Station House Officer (SHO), Mathra carried out an operation under the supervision of DSP Warsak Circle, Ishaq Khan and arrested the notorious ice-drug seller.

The arrested accused was wanted by various police in cases of kidnapping, extortion, terrorism, dacoity, murder, attempted murder, attacks on police, narcotics, gambling and other heinous crimes.

During the initial investigation, the accused confessed to involvement in various heinous crimes.

In another operation, the city police have arrested an alleged ice-drug seller Wajid Ali son of Esa Khan, resident of Mathra.

Rasm-e-Qul F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Qul for Late Doctor Bajji sister of renowned Skin Specialist Dr Durra e Kamil and Dr Abdul Mateen former Vice Chancellor Peshawar University and wife of Swabi Bar President Fazl e Rahim Advocate will be held on Thursday 2nd March 2023 in her ancestral village Sheikh Jana Swabi tomorrow.

Local Council Board to be developed on modern lines: Caretaker Minister

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Local Government, Elections and Rural Development Sawal Nazir Khan Advocate has said that Local Council Board will be developed on modern lines and further strengthened. He said special reforms would be brought to increase the annual revenue of the board.

He expressed these

views while addressing a briefing regarding the local council board, given to him at Local Council Board Hayatabad Peshawar on Wednesday.

Secretary Local Government Zaheer-ul-Islam, Secretary Local Council Board, Additional and Deputy Secretary Local Council Board, DG Local Government and other officers were present on the occasion. Expressing his confidence over the brief-

ing regarding Local Council Board, the caretaker minister Local Government said that a comprehensive strategy is being evolved to make local council board more efficient and vibrant while no compromise would be made regarding maintaining merit and transparency in the board.

He said the process of reward and punishment in the board would be continued while all lawful steps

would be taken to root out corrupt elements from the board. He asked the officers of the department to take practical steps to evict occupants from government properties.

He directed to make a website of the local council board wherein the people have an access to all information regarding the department so that the department could facilitate the public regarding its duties and facilities.

TSA-ICP demands judicial inquiry probe into Bashir murder case

PESHAWAR (APP): Teaching Staff Association, Islamia College Peshawar (TSA-ICP) has demanded the constitution of a high-level judicial committee to probe the brutal murder of lecturer Bashir Ahmad.

The demand was made during a press conference addressed by the President

TSA-ICP, Professor Dr Izhar Ahmad and office bearers of the other universities on the campus here at Peshawar Press Club (PPC) on Wednesday.

They demanded that a high-level security audit be conducted in instant case and that the staff security guards deputed on the gates

be suspended for their negligent conduct and facilitating the accused in escape till the completion of investigation.

The office bearers of the teaching staff said that the murder of the Lecturer Bashir Ahmad is far from an ordinary incident; that is rather a ruthless, brutal and

shocking act committed most inhumanly and has terrorized the entire academia, students and all the citizens of Peshawar.

Therefore, they are demanding to add Section 311 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and Section 7 Anti-Terrorism Act to the FIR of the incident.

PFLMA holds central executive committee meeting

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A meeting of the Central Executive Committee of Pakistan Flour Mills Association was held under the National Food Fortification Program with the support of Nutrition International, in which the Central Chairman of Pakistan Flour Mills Association Asim Raza, Vice Chairman Flour Mills Association Sindh Haji Yusuf, Vice-Chairman Flour Mills Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Muhammad Iqbal, National Program Manager Dr. Irfanullah, Provincial Program Manager Imtiaz Ali Shah, Group Leader Pakistan Flour Mills Association Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Naem Butt and other leaders of the association participated.



National Program Manager Dr. Irfanullah while discussing in the meeting said that malnutrition can be controlled through food fortification, especially this program is very important to meet the food deficiency for children and pregnant women in this regard. Nutrition International is providing all possi-

ble support to the Food Department and flour mills.

On the occasion, Chairman Pakistan Flour Mills Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Muhammad Iqbal said that vitamin B12 from the wheat flour fortification program under the National Food Fortification Program, iron, zinc and folic acid can pre-

vent many diseases. While vitamin B12 can prevent cancer and help to avoid common diseases.

He added it is also very useful for pregnant women and children. He extended that the guidelines will be followed under the National Food Fortification Program of Nutrition International.

Secretary visits EZDMC headquarters

PESHAWAR (APP): Newly posted Secretary Industries Khyber Pakhtunkhwa/ chairman Board of Directors (BoD) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC), Kamran Afridi visited the headquarters of the company, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

At arrival he was received by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) KP-EZDMC, Javed Iqbal Khattak, Chief Commercial Officer (CCO), Adil Sala-huddin and other senior officials of the company.

During a meeting with KP-EZDMC headquarters, he was given a detailed presentation regarding all ongoing projects and activities planned for the future.



PESHAWAR: Director TKS Asif Sarwar and Principal TKS Junior Campus Arooj Afroz giving shield and certificate to position holder student during 7th Annual Prize Distribution Ceremony of TKS.



In brief

WHO Rep visits Nowshera Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: World Health Organization representative for Pakistan, Dr. Palitha Mahipala, visited the district health officer's office in Nowshera in connection with support to be extended to different hospitals of the districts. He met the district health officer Dr. Muhammad Shoaib Khan and the Additional deputy commissioner Nowshera Miss Wazir. WHO's representative for Pakistan donated essential medicines and took up the responsibility for the complete renovation of two health facilities destroyed during the last flash floods. He added that WHO would be providing all the medical equipment, furniture, and other necessary items for these health facilities. "WHO is already supporting the rehabilitation of 36 healthcare facilities across the province that have been devastated in the last flash floods," He added. Later WHO's country representative inaugurated a nutrition stabilization center and clean drinking water filtration plant at district of Haripur. DHO Dr. Shoaib while thanking the WHO officials for their extended support told that the announced support will help revamp and provide health services in the district. He furthered that health services in the district were compromised during the last flash floods. Additional Deputy Commissioner Miss Wazir acknowledged the support of the WHO told that Nowshera is one of the most affected areas by the last floods. It is encouraging that the world community including WHO is taking steps towards an improved healthcare system.

PML-N mobilizes workers F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) workers initiated public mobilization for upcoming elections and for party gathering in which Maryam Nawaz will participate on 6th March. This was claimed by PML-N Takhtbhai city president Haji Abdul Razaq, general secretary Habib-ul-Najat and Umar Khan in press statement issued to media personnel. They claimed that all preparation going with full swing to welcome PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz at Takhtbhai on 6th March. The statement further claimed that Mardan is power corridor of PMLN and public will welcome Maryam Nawaz in large number which will decide the fate of upcoming elections. They argued party's activists to propagate PML-N narrative to every nook and corner of Pakistan to compete with fascism.

DPO meets media personnel F.P. Report

HARIPUR: District Police Officer (DPO) Haripur met with President Electronic Media Association Haripur Sardar Asif and officials and other members, on Wednesday. According to details, Electronic Media Association Haripur felicitated on the placement in Haripur and had detailed discussions and suggestions regarding the recent happenings across the district. District Police Officer Haripur talking to the officials and members of Electronic Media Association Haripur said that the police and the media are hand in hand. The positive influence of the media can help in controlling crimes. Measures will be taken to establish peace.



HYDERABAD: Members of Civil Defense Society holding a rally on the eve of World Civil Defense Day.

Journalists trained for responsible reporting

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: United Nations Development Project (UNDP) held a three days training on responsible reporting on Climate Change and Glacial Lake Outburst Floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (GLOFs) for journalists, on Wednesday. The training was organized by UNDP's GLOF-II Project which is a joint initiative with the Ministry of Climate Change and supported by Green Climate Fund. The training briefed 27 journalists from Chitral, Swat, Upper Dir, Peshawar and Kohistan on catastrophic impacts of climate-induced disasters such as Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), torrential rains, and floods.

They were also briefed on how to ethically and responsibly report these disasters through various news mediums, given their implications on human lives and habitations. The

training sessions also included in-depth discussions on ethics of digital journalism, story-telling, multimedia reporting, narrative journalism, creative formats, hand-held shooting techniques and journalists' safety and security.

The participating journalists shared their own experiences of reporting as well especially during the floods of 2022. Trainings on responsible and ethical reporting on climate-induced disasters is important considering foreseeable GLOF events in the monsoon season because of global warming.

"To understand the ethics of journalism is essential, especially when it relates to the unshakable reality of climate change. We as journalists hold a huge responsibility to inform people on the happenings of the climate without inflicting undue stress on them as they are first-hand victims," said a participant as she explained the significance of the training. This training for journalists was the first in the series of trainings by the GLOF-II Project; more journalists' trainings will be rolled out in Gilgit Baltistan and Islamabad in the coming months.

UNDP's GLOF-II project operates in 16 valleys of Gilgit Baltistan and 8 valleys in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It empowers communities to identify and manage risks associated with GLOFs and related impacts of climate change, strengthen public services to lower the risk of disasters related to GLOF, and improve community preparedness and disaster response. The project also supports development of sustainable options for livelihoods in project areas, with a particular focus on the participation of women in ensuring food security and livelihoods.

He said that 100 percent utilization of released funds were target and completion of projects within stipulated time was our success. Additional Chief Secretary Saqib Zafar commended the role of administrative secretaries in monitoring the development projects and said that pace and quality of work of every scheme be checked even in far flung remote areas. Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Saqib Zafar said work is ongoing on 2468 projects in South Punjab for which 254 billion rupees have been allocated in the budget.

He said work is in progress on 11 on going mega projects in South Punjab while 9 new mega projects have also been started in the region. He said all the funds amounting to 3400 million rupees issued for the construction of Nishtar 2 have been utilized while 100 percent of funds issued for the Dera Ghazi Khan Institute of Cardiology have also been spent. Similarly, 600 million rupees released for Sheikh Zaid Medical Rahim Yar Khan and 1505 million rupees issued for dualization of from Uch Sharif to Ahmedpur East have also been utilized hundred percent, he added.

While briefing the meeting by P&D department, it was informed that 8 new development projects have been approved. It was informed in the briefing that hundred percent funds released for water supply schemes and Cholistan Development Authority's projects in South Punjab have been utilized.

DPO urged the dignitaries to cooperate with the police in protecting their district from criminals by linking the cameras installed in their offices and shops to the police command and control system through technical staff of police. DPO said that police officers are public servants and no one is allowed to misbehave with citizens and hurt their self-esteem and assured, to take strict departmental action against responsible person.

He said the youth of Chitral are highly capable who are second to none in competitive exams and sports field. In order to make the district rich in natural resources drug free and to protect young generation from the scourge and serious consequences of drugs, a crackdown is going on across the district. DPO Lower Chitral Ikram Ullah Khan said that in order to achieve a crime-free society, the cooperation of scholars, teachers and local elders is imperative. He further added that parents should keep an eye on the daily activities of their children and those who have close contacts with them.

Provide information to the police about drug dealers and other criminals in your areas and also give evidence against them so that the police can succeed in getting the guilty people punished by the honorable court. Due to non-cooperation of the public, the drug peddlers are getting relief and they are soon released on bail and start their nefarious business again.

Reform those who are involved in drug selling and other social evils despite being repeatedly punished, social boycott with those who do not stop so that they could realize the importance of better society, good behavior, social life, humanitarian assistance and other Islamic values. He further added that Police command and control system has been established in order to prevent incidents of theft, especially at night, and to protect life and property of the citizens, where 24-hour police personnel are monitoring the prominent areas of the district through CCTV cameras. Markets and all sort of movements are being monitored which is helpful in taking timely action against criminals.

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Works on uplift projects in S Punjab accelerated

F.P. Report

BAHAWALPUR: Effective monitoring of administrative secretaries has accelerated the completion of development projects. In the current fiscal year, 126 billion rupees have been released to the departments of South Punjab, out of which 101 billion rupees have been spent on projects. The spending rate of the funds released in this way is 80 percent.

A meeting was held under the chairmanship of Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Saqib Zafar to review the progress on development projects which was attended by administrative secretaries of all departments. Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab, while addressing the meeting, issued direction to establish a coordination among all the departments for the timely completion of the projects and said that the department whose funds will lapsed will be made accountable.

He said that 100 percent utilization of released funds were target and completion of projects within stipulated time was our success. Additional Chief Secretary Saqib Zafar commended the role of administrative secretaries in monitoring the development projects and said that pace and quality of work of every scheme be checked even in far flung remote areas. Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Saqib Zafar said work is ongoing on 2468 projects in South Punjab for which 254 billion rupees have been allocated in the budget.

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Digital census begins in Khyber

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Like elsewhere in the country, first ever digital and the 7th census began in Landi Kotal on Wednesday. It is to be stated here that the new election will be held on the basis of new data. Providing details, supervisor Mr Ghaffar Afridi said that the whole area had been divided into 166 blocks and services of 84 well-trained enumerators had been hired to carry out the national cause smoothly.

Security had been provided to the enumerators to avoid any untoward incident, he added and urged the residents to tender their data as future development projects and progress works plan keeping in view the census data. According to the spokesperson of Pakistan Bureau of Statistic (PBS) through a digital portal, introduced on Feb 20, one can submit his, her data while the field operation census initiates on Mar 01, 2023 and will continue till April 01 and the data will be released by April 30.

The digital census is being carried out by the PBS with support of the National Technology Council (NTC), National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), provincial governments as well as the armed forces. The 7th census is the first-ever digital one not only in Pakistan but also in South Asia and for the census, 495 Census Support Centers have been set up



across the country, while 126,000 electronic devices will be used in the process, he added.

Speaking about the funding for the census process, the spokesperson said that the total expenditures had been estimated at Rs34 billion. It's worth mentioning here that previous censuses have been conducted in Pakistan in the years of 1951, 1961, 1972, 1981, 1998 and 2017.

Digital census kicks-off in Mardan: Like other districts across the country, the first digital census has started in Mardan. Deputy Commissioner Captain (ret'd) Abdul Rehman inaugurated the census on Wednesday.

On this occasion, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Engineer Syed Shahzeb, Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance Samiur Rehman, Assistant Commissioner Madam Ayesha Tahir, Saeedur Rehman Divisional Senses Commissioner and the staff of Statistics Institute were also present. the Deputy

Commissioner said that the seventh census has started in the district from today, digital census is being conducted for the first time in the country, all arrangements and preparations related to digital census are complete and the district administration.

It will play its full role in ensuring transparency in the census. Census is an important national objective of which is the main objective of all institutions. Stay in touch with the census teams in your tehsils. The Deputy Commissioner said that 132 supervisors and 883 teams are participating in the census of 1596 blocks will During this period enumerators will go door to door to collect data.

This census is Pakistan's first digital census, field enumerators will collect data digitally from electronic devices. The Deputy Commissioner said that the citizens should fulfill their national responsibility by registering correctly in the census and cooperate with the census staff.

World Civil Defense Day observed in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The world civil defense day was observed also in Lower Dir here on Wednesday. A function in this regard was held at Balambat with the additional deputy commissioner revenue Tariq Ali Khan in the chair.

The Lower Dir civil defense in-charge Shehzad Khan, Timergara tehsil chairman Mufti Irfanud Din, assistant commissioner Tariq Khan and others addressed the function. The speakers said the civil defense volunteers were performing humanitarian activities without any salary.

They lauded their services and said the civil defense had been on the top during any disasters. The

volunteers demanded of the deputy commissioner to hold a meeting with them once in a month for their encouragement and specify a quota in recruitment to the police department and Dir Levis for them. The tehsil chairman Mufti Irfanud Din announced to provide the civil defense team with a boat and a drowning kit. The ADC Tariq Ali said he would talk to the DC about the issues faced by the volunteers.

NA by-election candidates: After the boycott of Jamaat-i-Islami, PML-N, PPP and ANP from the bye-election to the national assembly seat NA-6 Lower Dir, only six candidates are in the running. The election commission of Pakistan local office on

Wednesday issued its revised list of validly candidates including Syed Mahboob Shah of the PTI, Liaquat Khan (independent), Said Alam Shah (a disgruntled PTI activist), Taif Khan of TLP, Muhammad Ayub Khan (a disgruntled activist of ANP and Sajad Ahmad (independent) are now in the field. A total of eight candidates including former MPA Bahadar Khan of the ANP, Rohullah Khan of PML-N, former MPA Muhammad Zamin Khan, Syed Shahid Jan and Hanif Khan of PPP, Bakht Biland Khan (independent), Rasheed Khan (independent) and Arshad Nawaz (independent) withdrew their nomination papers to contest the election scheduled to be held on march, 19.



HYDERABAD: Sindh Minister for Livestock and Fisheries Abdul Bari Pitafi talking to media persons.

Police arrests alleged murderer for killing wife, children

Saqib Mushtaq

LODHRAN: Police has alleged murderer for killing his wife and children while the culprit claimed that it has been committed as a religious practice to obtain purity, on Wednesday. According to details, Electronic Media Association Haripur felicitated on the placement in Haripur and had detailed discussions and suggestions regarding the recent happenings across the district. District Police Officer Haripur talking to the officials and members of Electronic Media Association Haripur said that the police and the media are hand in hand. The positive influence of the media can help in controlling crimes. Measures will be taken to establish peace.

This was claimed by District Police Officer (DPO) Hasam Bin Iqbal in an exclusive conversation with *The Frontier Post* and said that a man named Sagar Abbas moved to Lodhran from Jalalpur Pirwala round about one year ago and bought his house in Gulshan e Madina Colony.

The killer had a wife and four children, in which the wife and three children are no longer in this world, whom Sagar Abbas kept poisoning and killing by mixing poisonous pills in their food.

DPO Hasam Bin Iqbal said that during the investigation, it has come to light that the killer Sagar Abbas had studied religious literature and used to say that my wife and children had reached the Ahlay Bayat and

would return in a few days. A 14-year-old son, who is a student of Class IX, survived in the killer's house.

According to the medical report, after the killer killed his wife and children, the corpses were kept locked in the room for about two weeks and he also sprinkled aromatic powder on the corpses on a daily basis so that no one would know about the stench of the corpses. The local people called the rescue and told that there is a strange smell coming from the house of the murderer Sagar Abbas and the accused is running away from the house.

When SHO Aamir Nadeem Gujjar of Model Police Station Lodhran reached the spot, he informed District Police Officer Hasam bin Iqbal about the seriousness of the situation, upon which the DPO immediately formed an investigation team headed by SDPO Mahar Ishaq Seyal began the investigation by cordoning off the entire area. Hasam bin Iqbal kept issuing

orders over the wireless system again and again, finally after an hour of hard work and dedication, SHO City lodhran Aamir Nadeem and his entire team arrested the killer Sagar Abbas in a dramatic manner and the bodies were sent for post-mortem. DPO Orders have been issued to transfer the deadbodies to district headquarter hospital so that the actual cause and duration of death can be known.

District Police Officer Hasam bin Iqbal further told *The Frontier Post* that the killer has committed Iqbal crime and for further legal action, the criminal should be produced in the local court of Lodhran and the scope of the investigation should be widened by taking permission for physical remand.

Lodhran's civil society and Anjuman e Tajran paid tribute to DPO Hasam bin Iqbal and said that they have made us proud by arresting the murderer of four people within an hour. It is very important to remove such evils from the society so that construc-

tive activities can be fostered.

The criminal accused Sagar Iqbal, saying that my wife and children are alive, their souls will return very soon after meeting the Ahlay Bayat and about a fourteen-year-old son who survived, the criminal said that he was blessed by Hazrat Owais Qarni, I have to sacrifice for Owais Qarni because I have seen all this in my dream. The surviving child was very mentally disturbed and scared and after necessary medical tests he has been sent back home to Jalalpur Pirwala to be in safe hands.

To end the atmosphere of fear in Gulshan Madina Colony Lodhran, District Police Officer Hasam bin Iqbal visited and mingled with the local residents and said that the punishment for such a brutal criminal is death and the Lodhran Police completed the investigation thoroughly. Sagar Abbas must be punished so that such activities are stopped. Model City Police Lodhran has registered a case #

636/23 U/S 302 and expedited the investigation to find out the facts behind the scenes. The case was filed against Razia Bibi, the aunt of the murdered children and the sister of the killer's wife.

Speaking to *The Frontier Post*, Dr. Captain R Muhammad Usman and Lady Dr. Sana Usman, who conducted the post-mortem, said that no marks of any kind of violence were found on the four dead bodies and no cuts were made and no There is a bullet injury. Deaths have been reported by adding poison to the diet, and deaths have occurred at intervals of two to three days. Some samples from the four dead bodies were also sent to the Punjab Forensic Science Agency Lahore for further medical report to know how much poison was administered.

DPO Hasam Bin Iqbal held a meeting with the front desk staff and front desk staff of the district and reviewed the performance of the front desk staff and front desk staff of all the police



stations. DPO Hasam Bin Iqbal said that Muharrar Police Station is the most important unit of police station, including completion of records, Muharrar Police Station is responsible for many issues, play your role.

Earlier, DPO Hasam bin Iqbal opened an open court in the DPO office on a daily basis and issued appropriate orders on the spot regarding the complaints and complaints of the citizens. The people's confidence in the police officers will be restored only with the solution. Cases should be registered and investigated on merit to provide justice.



Iraqi president says country now peaceful, life is returning

BAGHDAD (AP): Nearly 20 years after the overthrow of Saddam Hussein by US-led forces, Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid wants the world to know his country now is at peace, democratic and intent on rebuilding economic life while maintaining a government that serves the whole country and the region.

Rashid told The Associated Press that after overcoming the hardships of the past two decades, Iraq is ready to focus on improving everyday life for its people. Those hardships included years of resistance to foreign troops, violence between Sunnis and Shiites, and attacks by Islamic State group extremists who once controlled large areas, including Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul. "Peace and security is all over the country, and I would be very glad if you will report that and emphasize on that, instead of giving a picture of Iraq ... still (as) a war zone, which a lot of media still do," Rashid said.

While Iraq's major fighting has ended, there have been some recent outbreaks of violence - including on the day of Rashid's election, which came after a yearlong stalemate following the October 2021 election. Ahead of the vote, at least nine rockets targeted Iraq's Parliament inside Baghdad's fortified Green Zone. After Rashid's election, he nominated Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, who formed a government with the backing of a coalition of Iran-backed parties and with promises of improving security and public services. Despite its oil wealth, Iraq's infrastructure remains weak. Private generators fill in for the hours of daily state electricity cuts. Long-promised public transportation projects, including a Baghdad metro, have not come to fruition.

Rashid said this is due to damage as "a result of conflicts and as a result of terror, as a result of a number of years living at war." Government critics say the sputtering electricity supply is also a result of endemic corruption, rooted in the country's sectarian power-sharing system that allows political elites to use patronage networks to consolidate power. Rashid, who spoke at his presidential quarters in Saddam's former palace, also asserted that most Iraqis believe the 2003 invasion of Saddam-ruled Iraq by the United States and its allies was necessary because of the former dic-



tator's brutality.

He said he believes most Iraqis, "including all sections of the society, the Kurds, the Sunni, the Christian, the Shiites, they were all against" Saddam and appreciate that the US and its allies came to "save" Iraq. "Obviously certain things did not work out as we hoped. Nobody expected Daesh (the Islamic State group) and nobody expected car bombs," he said. "It should have been controlled right from the beginning. It should have been studied and planned out right from the beginning. I think the myth was that once Saddam is removed, Iraq becomes heaven." The reality proved more difficult, he said, but it hasn't weakened Iraq's commitment to democracy. "Even if you have conflicts and if we have arguments, it's much better to have a freedom and democracy rather than a dictatorship," he said. However, mass anti-government demonstrations that kicked off in late 2019 were often put down by force. Hundreds of protesters were killed by security forces and state-backed armed groups.

Rashid acknowledged there are still conflicts, but urged Iraqis, particularly the younger generation, to be patient and have faith in the future. "We don't have much choice but to live together ... and let our democratic election take place to represent our values," said Rashid, a veteran Kurdish politician and former water minister after Saddam's ouster. Rashid assumed the presidency in October. Under Iraq's unofficial power-sharing arrangement, the country's president is always a Kurd,

the prime minister a Shiite and the parliament speaker a Sunni. Rashid's job entails helping to maintain a delicate balance among Iraq's various centers of political power and even-keel relations with both the US and Iran, the government's two key - and often opposing - international backers.

The balancing act is reflected in a monument near Baghdad airport. It extolls Iran's Revolutionary Guard commander Qassem Soleimani, who was targeted and killed in a 2020 US airstrike. Improving relations with neighbors including Iran, Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Jordan is a source of strength for Iraq, Rashid said. Arab countries led by Saudi Arabia had for years kept a distance from Iraq, partly because of its ties to Iran. He noted with pride that Iraq hosted a Mideast meeting of senior Arab lawmakers and expressed the country's willingness to continue serving as a mediator in now-stalled talks between regional rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Rashid also promised to take a hard line on corruption. In October, reports emerged that over \$2.5 billion in Iraqi government revenue was embezzled by a network of businesses and officials from the country's tax authority. And in recent months, amid allegations of widespread money laundering used to smuggle dollars to US-sanctioned Iran and Syria, the US has taken measures to tighten Iraq's dollar supply, putting pressure on the currency. "I admit, we did have and we still have some problems with corruption, but the government is very serious (about fighting it)," Rashid said, adding that the government and the central bank are taking measures to regulate transfers out of the country to deter money laundering.

Economically, he said, Iraq is focusing on rebuilding industry and agriculture damaged by years of conflict, and developing its natural gas reserves so as not to be dependent on buying gas from neighboring countries - notably Iran. Despite the currency's devaluation and inflation in recent months, Iraq's prospects are good, he said, buoyed by strong oil production and high global oil prices. "Iraq economically is in a sound position and probably is one of the countries in the world which (does not have) a deficit in our budget," he said.

Thailand hosts thousands of US troops for annual drills

RAYONG, Thailand (Reuters): Thailand and the United States kicked off military exercises involving more than 7,000 personnel and forces from 30 countries, with the annual drills including a component focused on space exercises for the first time. "Cobra Gold", launched in 1982, is one of the world's longest-running multilateral military exercises and the biggest in Southeast Asia, serving as a key platform for Washington to shore up alliances in Asia at a time of increasing competition with China.

After the drills were scaled back during the pandemic, nearly 6,000 US troops will take part this year, Admiral John Aquilino, Commander of the United States Indo-Pacific Command, said, the highest number in a decade. Speaking to reporters, Aquilino said: "we will conduct integrated ops across the land, sea, air and cyberspace with our partners." The exercises, which will run until March 10, demonstrate how responding together would help "to preserve a free and open Indo-Pacific, so that all nations can maintain peace, stability and prosperity," he said. Tensions have increased in the region between the United States and China over Beijing's growing assertiveness in the South China Sea and over self-ruled Taiwan.

This year, the drills will include a space exercise for the first time, with a focus on understanding the impact of aerial phenomena such as solar storms on military operations, communication and satellites, a US embassy statement said. Military and civilian space agencies from Thailand, the United States and Japan will take part, it said. Cobra Gold involves 7,394 personnel in total this year from 30 countries, with the seven full participants also including Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia and Indonesia. China, India and Australia are taking part in the humanitarian exercises.

Record number of countries enforced internet blackouts

LONDON (Agencies): A record number of countries have enforced internet shutdowns in 2022 that had a "devastating impact on human lives", a new report has found. The digital rights group Access Now and the #KeepItOn campaign - a coalition of about 70 organizations - documented 187 blackouts following protests, active conflict, examinations, elections and political instability.

These were introduced across 35 countries, the highest number in a single year since the groups began collecting data in 2016, the report said. India emerged as the single "biggest offender" for a fifth consecutive year, with at least 84 internet blackouts in 2022. Setting aside India, last year also saw the highest total number of shutdowns in the rest of the world to date. Ukraine suffered 22 shutdowns imposed by the Russian military during its full-scale invasion, while Iran followed with 18 during mass protests around the country.

Shutdowns in Ethiopia's Tigray region since 2020, and in regions across Myanmar since 2021, were the longest recorded, lasting more than two years. Felicia Anthonio, #KeepItOn campaign manager at Access Now, said authoritarian regimes and democracies disrupted the internet to "fuel their agendas of oppression - manipulating narratives, silencing voices, and ensuring cover for their own acts of violence and abuse". "Secure internet access belongs to all, and we will continue to meet these attacks on human rights with collective defiance," Anthonio said. The report's authors warned the number of shutdowns was rising again after reaching a peak of 213 blackouts in 33 countries in 2019 and then dropping to 159 in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The human toll of conflict-related shutdowns is "immense", the report found, with blackouts hampering international humanitarian efforts and restricting access to life-saving information about troop movements and humanitarian corridors.

Int'l concern as conflict grows in breakaway Somaliland

DUBAI (Agencies): Qatar, Somalia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the United States have expressed concern over fighting around a disputed town in Somalia's northern breakaway region of Somaliland, where at least 34 people were killed in clashes in early February. Tension has risen between Somaliland and local clan forces in Lascanood since the end of last year, and heavy fighting has broken out around the town, which straddles a key trade route and is claimed by both territories.

"The partners expressed concern about the ongoing conflict in and around Lascanood and called on all parties to adhere to the ceasefire, de-escalate, allow unhindered humanitarian access, and engage in constructive and peaceful dialogue," the six countries said in a joint statement released by the US State Department. Fighting around the town erupted in early February after elders in three provinces of Somaliland - including Sool Province, where

Lascanood is located - announced that they wanted to rejoin Somalia and issued a statement pledging support for Somalia's federal government.

Somaliland, a region of 4.5 million people, claimed independence from Somalia in 1991 and has been relatively stable. Somaliland's quest for statehood has gone unrecognised, however, leaving it poor and isolated internationally even though it prints its own currency, issues its own passports and elects its own government. Somaliland authorities announced a ceasefire on February 10, but both sides accused the other of violating it.

Ahmed Mohamed Hassan, director of the main hospital in Lascanood, told the AFP news agency by telephone last week that the medical facility had been bombed. "They have destroyed the electricity system of the hospital, the oxygen system, the blood bank, the office of the human resources and other parts of the hospital building," he told reporters. Local media in Somaliland tweeted a

denial - attributed to the defence ministry - of Somaliland's involvement in attacks on hospitals and schools.

The UN said last week that more than 185,000 people had been uprooted from their homes owing to the clashes, with aid workers struggling to respond to the situation due to inadequate resources. Women and children accounted for an estimated 89 percent of the displaced population, the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in a statement. Many were reportedly seeking shelter under trees or inside schools, which have been forced to shut. In addition to those displaced inside Somaliland, more than 60,000 others have fled to Ethiopia's Somali region to escape the violence, the UN's refugee agency said. UN human rights chief Volker Turk this month called on authorities to conduct a "credible and impartial investigation" into the clashes and warned that they compounded the already fragile humanitarian situation in the region.

Kerry stresses will for Amazon cooperation

BRASILIA (AP): US climate envoy John Kerry concluded his second day of meetings with Brazilian government officials, conveying his commitment to collaborate on preserving the world's largest tropical rainforest - but without detailing specifics. Kerry referred to the Amazon rainforest as test of humanity, and said that without its protection it is impossible to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit), as called for in the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

"There are stakes in what is at risk with the Amazon that are hard for some people to grab on to, but the reality is that this forest is critical to the ability of the world to meet the targets we have set in international meetings," Kerry told reporters afternoon in capital Brasilia. He added that US President Joe Biden "is deeply seized by this issue." A newly reactivated work group of the two nations will present its results on the Amazon,

renewable energies and Indigenous peoples at the April summit of the Group of 20 major economies, Environment Minister Marina Silva said. Kerry and Silva first met, alongside Vice President Geraldo Alckmin and the head of the country's development bank, which administers the nation's Amazon Fund. The fund is an international effort to preserve the rainforest, channeling donations to prevent, monitor and combat deforestation while promoting sustainability.

Speaking to reporters beside Kerry after their meeting, Silva said the US government still needs approval from Congress before it can earmark specific amounts for environmental funding. "It isn't just a signal from the American government, but rather a decision, which is more important. When President Biden says he will collaborate, he will," she said. "Obviously the US has such economic and strategic importance that its collaboration isn't just of a finan-

cial nature, but also political." Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was in Washington earlier this month with his US counterpart. A joint statement issued by both countries said that the US intends to form part of the Amazon Fund, which is majority financed by Norway and also receives support from Germany. Kerry reiterated that pledge after meeting Silva a second time. Kerry also met with Sônia Guajajara, the Indigenous Peoples Minister. She had just returned from the remote corner of the Amazon rainforest where British journalist Dom Phillips and Indigenous expert Bruno Pereira were murdered last year, and where she announced the government was reinforcing its presence. Kerry told reporters that he will return to Brazil next month and visit the Amazon. Silva said a precise destination hasn't been determined - adding that, if he goes to Para state, he will be offered "a good cup of the best açai in the world."

Dozens of forest fires scorch Cuba

CUBA (Agencies): Vast forest fires have continued to blaze across the island nation of Cuba, bearing down toward the province of Santiago de Cuba, home to the country's second largest city. The provincial government announced that a high-intensity fire had been contained near the municipalities of San Luis and Mella, the latter of which saw 250 citizens join efforts in the early hours of the morning to stem the flames.

Since January, officials in Cuba have counted an estimated 80 wildfires across the country, with firefighters, armed forces and park rangers struggling to control the burns. More than 2,000 hectares (4,942 acres) have been consumed across the island, with farms and coffee crops reportedly destroyed in the flames. Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel took to Twitter to recognise the "heroic fight" of those bat-

tling the blazes, praising the workers on the front lines of Holguin province, where a pine forest region called Pinares de Mayarí is on fire.

"The courage and sacrifice of the firefighters, forest guardians and residents who face the fires devouring the beautiful and valuable forests of the eastern region in Pinares de Mayarí is great," Díaz-Canel wrote. Officials on state television have said the fires are spreading across "a wide area, not just one focal point". Some of the hardest-hit provinces include Pinar del Río and Artemisa to the west and Camagüey and Holguín to the east. The fires had previously threatened Cuba's Mensura-Piloto National Park, a sensitive ecological region comprised of 6,046 hectares (14,940 acres), known for its forested mountains and cascading waterfalls.

Cuba's mountainous terrain and ongoing drought

have impeded efforts to stamp out the flames, with officials warning the country could take years to recover from the devastation. The country is in the midst of its worst economic crisis in decades, with the COVID-19 pandemic leading to a precipitous decline in its tourism industry, one of its main economic drivers. In 2020 alone, Cuba's economy shrank by 11 percent, the largest drop since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Under former President Donald Trump, the United States also imposed a campaign of "maximum pressure" on Cuba, ratcheting up sanctions and rescinding policies designed under his predecessor, Barack Obama, to ease tensions between the two countries. Cuba's struggling economy has spurred one of the largest migration crises in the country's history, as well as shortages of food and other basic necessities.

Mexican president rebukes US State Department over protest comments

MEXICO CITY (Reuters): Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador criticized comments by US State Department officials about recent protests in Mexico, accusing the department of meddling in his country's affairs. Tens of thousands of Mexicans took to the streets to protest against measures pushed through this month by Lopez Obrador to shrink the country's independent electoral authority, after the opposition attacked his move as a threat to democ-

racy. State Department officials hailed what they described as the political debate around the electoral overhaul, prompting a terse response from Lopez Obrador, who said the department "always meddles in things that are not its business." State Department spokesperson Ned Price issued a statement saying that a "great debate on electoral reforms" reflected Mexico's "vibrant democracy." "We believe that a well-resourced, independent

electoral system and respect for judicial independence support healthy democracy," Price said.

Lopez Obrador told a news conference the comments from Washington reflected a "bad habit" and were "quite contrary" to messaging from US President Joe Biden. Price's remarks echoed similar comments made about the protests by the US Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Brian Nichols, on Twitter.

32 killed, dozens injured in Greece train crash

ATHENS (Agencies): At least 32 people have been killed and dozens injured after a head-on collision between two trains in Greece. The crash took place outside the central city of Larissa which took place when a passenger train heading from Athens to the northern city of Thessaloniki collided with a cargo train travelling from Thessaloniki.

Some of the passenger carriages exploded in flames from the impact. "We heard a big bang, (it was) 10 nightmarish seconds," said Stergios Minenis, a 28-year-old passenger who jumped to safety from the wreckage. "We were turning over in the wagon until we fell on our sides...then there was panic, cables (everywhere) fire, the fire was immediate, as we were turning over we were being burned, fire

was right and left." Thessaly regional governor Konstantinos Agorastos told SKAI TV that the first four carriages of the passenger train were derailed in the crash, with the first two carriages, which caught fire, "almost completely destroyed".

He said the two trains hurtled towards each other on the same track. "They were travelling at great speed and one (driver) didn't know the other was coming," the governor said. SKAI showed footage of derailed carriages with cargo containers flipped over and crash debris strewn across a nearby road. Rescue workers with high-powered torches were searching through the wreckage for trapped passengers. Some were scouring the surrounding fields for survivors. "We are living through a tragedy. We are

pulling out people alive, injured...there are dead. We are going to be here all night, until we finish, until we find the last person," a volunteer rescue worker told the ERT public broadcaster.

Agorastos said about 250 passengers, some with minor injuries, had been evacuated safely by bus to Thessaloniki about 130 kilometres (80 miles) away. "I've never seen anything like this in my entire life. It's tragic. Five hours later, we are finding bodies," an exhausted rescuer said as he emerged from a carriage. Hospital units used to treat burn victims in the area had been alerted and dozens of ambulances dispatched to the scene.

"There was panic in the carriage, people were screaming," a young man who was evacuated to a nearby bridge told SKAI TV. A passenger named

Lazos told the newspaper Protothema that the experience had been "very shocking". "I wasn't hurt but I was stained with blood from other people who were hurt near me," he said. Rail operator Hellenic Train reported about 350 people had been on the train, which left Athens at about 7.30pm (17:30 GMT). The fire brigade said it was informed of the accident shortly before midnight. An emergency government meeting was organised after the crash and Greek health minister Thanos Plevris has gone to the scene. Greece sold railway operator TRAINOSE to Italy's Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane in 2017 as part of its international bailout programme, in the expectation that hundreds of millions of euros would be invested in rail infrastructure.

A Bali island was full of rubbish

BALI (Agencies): Five years ago, the beaches on Nusa Lembongan, a paradisaal island half an hour's speedboat ride from Bali, were pockmarked with the kind of rubbish that blights large stretches of Indonesia's most famous tourist destination. These days, Nusa Lembongan's shorelines are squeaky clean and its once heavily-polluted river, home to an extensive system of mangroves, is pristine.

The turnaround has been credited in large part to the Lembongan Recycling Centre (LRC), a community-run facility that collects rubbish twice daily from businesses, homes and waste collection points on the island, and then sorts and compacts paper, plastic, metal and glass for sale. Not only has the initiative increased environmental awareness among islanders, but it has also put a literal value on waste, giving residents a financial incentive to clean up their home. "The mangroves were cleaned of metal, including old boat engines and motorbikes, when locals discovered the metal had value,"

Margaret Barry, the Australian founder of the Bali Children's Foundation, a non-profit that helps finance the LRC, told Al Jazeera.

Nusa Lembongan's 8,000 people traditionally eked out a living from fishing and seaweed farming. That started to change about 20 years ago after the island was discovered by surfers and divers from Bali looking for uncrowded waves and coral reefs. While tourism brought economic opportunity to Nusa Lembongan, it also brought vast quantities of inorganic waste. Over time, plastic water bottles, straws and other rubbish were dumped in a supposedly temporary landfill site on the island that was out-of-sight and out-of-mind of tourism, which is concentrated on the coast. Within a decade, the landfill site became a small mountain belching harmful smoke from regular fires - the only way islanders knew how to get rid of the trash.

In 2016, Pilot, an islander who like many Indonesians goes by only

one name, set up a simple sorting station for plastic waste on a plot he owned in the middle of the island. But with limited finances, just a fraction of the waste generated on the island was recycled. In 2017, Putu, a staff member at the sorting station, took over the facility and erected a small building on the site.

The LRC was born the following year when an umbrella group that included social enterprise Bali Hope, community group Friends of Lembongan, and the Bali Children's Foundation, as well as local hotels and restaurants, put up money for machinery and staff. Suddenly, islanders had the option to send tonnes of waste to be recycled, shipped off the island and sold, instead of being burned or added to landfill. "From my observation, when the LRC runs the island is very clean because they collect rubbish twice every day," Oktavianus Agustus Pa Njola, an English teacher on Nusa Lembongan who has taken his students to the plant to learn about recycling, told Al Jazeera.

"When they stop for just one day, rubbish starts to pile up on the side of the road again."

Mitchell Ansiewicz, the owner of Ohana's, a beachside resort on Nusa Lembongan that pays the LRC \$50 per month to take its rubbish, said the initiative's success can be attributed to its collaborative approach. "Nusa Lembongan attracts a lot of divers, surfers and yogis - people who tend to care about the environment, already have recycling ingrained in their vernacular and who want to contribute. Many of them started initiatives over the years, beach clean-ups and so forth," Ansiewicz told Al Jazeera. "For one reason or another - perhaps the right palms weren't greased or locals felt like they were being told what to do - they didn't last or didn't make much of a difference. But with the LRC there's been good participation from the expat and the local community. When the forces come together, capital and labour, it made a monumental difference to the cleanliness of the island."

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Election saga and court’s decree

A five-member bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan announced its reserved verdict on Wednesday in suo moto notice on the delay in holding elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The apex court ordered the government to hold general polls in both provinces within the stipulated time of 90 days. The court declared that the KP Governor was in breach of his constitutional duty and he must announce the date for elections in the province after necessary consultation with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). As governor Punjab had no role in the dissolution of the provincial assembly so the court did not mention his misconduct in this regard. The Supreme Court also directed President Dr. Arif Alvi to consult with the ECP and try to hold elections in Punjab within 90 days. The Supreme Court further directed the Federal Government to make utmost efforts and extend all facilities to the provinces for elections and further asked the government to ensure that the government of every province is carried on in accordance with the provisions of the constitution.

The proposed elections in two provinces were a highly continuous issue for the ruling coalition government and the PTI-led opposition because the dissolution of both assemblies was part of a bigger Scheme regarding future governments in the center and provinces. The election saga had been a persistent dilemma in our national politics over the past decade. The second round of Pakistan's cantankerous politics commenced when PTI Chief refused to accept the results of the previous general election in 2013 and staged a prolonged anti-government campaign along with 126 days of sit-ins in the national capital to resolve the issue of 35 punctures. Whereas, a similar episode was repeated by the PDM coalition, which rejected the results of the 2018 general election and launched a movement to overthrow the PTI government that succeeded through a no-confidence motion in early 2022. The nation witnessed acute political turmoil and suffered the worst economic repercussions of a tenacious political dogfight over the past 10 months.

After the dissolution of both provincial assemblies, the coalition government tried to delay the electoral process for multiple administrative and political reasons while Assemblies undoers tried to regain power in both provinces in the same manner at the earliest. Apparently, both governors toed their parties' policies while President received instructions from Lahore's Zaman park in the making up of the upheaval. Thus, President and the Governors did not maintain the protocol and prestige of their offices and used their positions to further their party politics. Later, warring groups tried to persuade the apex court in their favor through blackmail and character assassination of adjudicators and their counsels, which is a highly condemnable action.

Now the court has issued a clear verdict that should be viewed in a positive sense by the competing groups as state affairs could not be run according to the selfish desires of the political elite. The country can not afford further political instability and disagreement that is poisonous for the already extremely volatile economy. Realistically, both parties failed to deliver to the public. Therefore, politicians must forgive the poor masses and resort to constructive political activity. So, the nation comes out of the current political havoc and moves toward stability and growth.

It is puzzling to witness a coalition government that enjoys a comfortable majority in parliament rushing through radical legislation with far-reaching implications for the future of the Israeli democratic system, or taking deliberate measures that inflame relations with the Palestinians, instead of taking time to consider the consequences of its actions before surging ahead.

A closer look reveals that Benjamin Netanyahu and his bunch of anti-democratic merry men and women are in a hurry for a number of reasons. To begin with, many of the leading figures in this government do not only represent ultra-right religious ideology, but are also inexperienced ministers who are behaving like children in a sweet shop who want to grab all the goodies at once. Second, many members of this coalition do not believe that it will last for a full term or even half a term, hence time is of the essence in their project to fundamentally change the balance of power between the different branches of government.

Third, there is very little trust, if any at all, between Prime Minister Netanyahu and some ele-

ments of his coalition, who suspect that he would sack them at the first opportunity. Fourth, the right in Israel has fallen for its own demagogic claims that the left is in control of all the centers of power, including the media and big businesses - no irony here - and with protests gathering momentum they would rather continue to create facts on the ground even if it hastens the fall of the government. And, lastly, they fear that international pressure will become too intense and that others - especially Netanyahu - will buckle and "go soft."

To less trained ears, Netanyahu, at least in terms of content if not style, does not sound very different from the more far-right partners within his Likud party or from the Religious Zionism party. However, there is a marked difference between them and it is already causing some cracks to show in this coalition, which is more about disruption and chaos than reform. These cracks might lead to a serious crisis and even the collapse of the government long before the next general election.

While for Netanyahu, especially at this late stage of his life, populist rhetoric is more of a means to

remain in power than a genuine ideological stance, Itamar Ben-Gvir, Bezalel Smotrich and their supporters like to follow their rhetoric to the letter, come rain or shine. Moreover, unlike the motives of his more ideological friends, for Netanyahu, his planned judicial reform - or judicial coup, to be accurate - is a mixture of political expediency, which would like to see more power handed to the executive branch, and the sheer opportunism of weakening the Supreme Court and the justice system more generally in the hope of disrupting and derailing his ongoing corruption trial.

Their inexperience in dealing with affairs of state, and ignorance of the likely impact of their policies on relations with significant elements of the international community, leaves a significant number of those within the government dangerously unfazed by the negative reactions from abroad to both their proposed overhaul of the judiciary and the deterioration of the situation in the occupied West Bank in the wake of several aggressive interventions.

When a less than

thoughtful minister, Amichai Chikli, rebuffs US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides for his firm request that Netanyahu "pump the brakes" on weakening the judicial system, telling him to "mind his own business," he unnerves the more pragmatic elements in government. Chikli is flexing his muscles to impress his domestic supporters, but conveniently forgets that, like it or loathe it, Israel is indeed America's business, not least because the US assists it with \$3.8 billion a year, provides it with some of the most sophisticated weaponry available, shares important intelligence with it, helps with containing the Iranian threat, and is the country's biggest trading partner.

Hence, it makes very good sense to listen not only to Nides, but also to President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who have already warned Israel against going down this route, as has President Emmanuel Macron of France and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk. Netanyahu, for all his faults, understands the danger of falling out with the international community.

The number of times Netanyahu has had to apologize for or retract irresponsible outbursts by the ultra-right members of his coalition has become a source of embarrassment and distraction. For example, following a terrorist attack outside a synagogue in Jerusalem in January, National Security Minister Ben-Gvir, without any discussion in the security Cabinet, ordered police to prepare for "Operation Defensive Shield 2," referring to one of the largest military operations carried out in the West Bank during the Second Intifada, which resulted in hundreds of people killed, the vast majority of them Palestinians. This idea was immediately rejected by the prime minister and defense minister, but the damage had been done.

When Ben-Gvir lives up to his farcical self, he comes up with wheezes such as ordering the closure of the bakeries where Palestinian prisoners make their own pitta bread or limiting prisoners' showers to four minutes. He deals with the insignificant to garner headlines, but by doing so unsettles a fragile calm in these prisons and fuels anger among Palestinians.

The relatively responsible elements in govern-

ment - and regrettably there are very few - understand that upsetting the progressive forces in Israel, who happen to contribute most to its economy and security, and seeking to inflame the already tense and deteriorating relations with the Palestinians, in the process falling out with the international community, does not serve Israel, even if it might help Netanyahu stay in power and eventually get his trial abandoned.

Cynics would argue that this is all part of Netanyahu's ploy to lure into his government, should he ultimately walk free, the more centrist parties that have vowed not to sit in government with a defendant in a corruption trial. The argument goes that, by forming a coalition with Israel's most extreme anti-democratic, racist, misogynistic, homophobic warmongers, he is using them as a stick to beat those who refuse to share power with him. Netanyahu might remain a cynic to the very last, but no one should fall for his ruses. May the people confine this government of his to a very short chapter in the history books, and resist it by all legal avenues open to them.

Arab News

A global happy birthday to hip hop

Nanjala Nyabola

As the sun sets on another Black History Month, an anniversary of global significance was quietly commemorated in the United States that deserves so much more international recognition. In 2023, hip hop, arguably the greatest US contribution to global contemporary culture, celebrates 50 years of making us put our hands in the air like we just don't care.

The official celebration was fitting for the US: It was marked at the Grammy Awards ceremony with performances by some of the greatest MCs to have contributed to the genre. They appeared in a single performance curated by Questlove, a member of the hip hop collective The Roots. For lovers of the genre, it was an electrifying full-circle moment, given that 34 years ago, Will Smith, aka the Fresh Prince, and DJ Jazzy Jeff won the first ever Grammy for rap but boycotted the awards ceremony after learning that their category would not be televised. At that time, music tastemakers still saw the genre as too provocative and incomprehensible.

Even so, this year's Grammys celebration did not go far enough in acknowledging the tremendous cultural impact hip hop has had on the world. From the streets of New York in the 1970s to the streets of Iran in the 2020s, hip hop has become an unlikely unifier of global, rebellious youth culture. In the US, hip hop was born from the disenfranchisement and violent systemic exclusion

of young Black people in inner cities.

By the time it appeared, Black culture had already invigorated US culture with jazz and rhythm and blues, among other music styles. In the 1950s and 1960s, Detroit, or "Motor City", the cultural hub of Black music, gave Black America through Motown Records a soundtrack of love and resilience in the face of tremendous hardship, definitively proving that Black music was not only unique and exciting; it could also be tremendously profitable. But hip hop wanted nothing to do with the genteel propriety and elaborate choreography of the Motown years. Above all else, hip hop was about anger and freedom. Hip hop was about one person and their microphone - perhaps with a deejay along for the ride - breaking all the rules and taking on the world in the process.

It makes sense, therefore, that today, hip hop is the soundtrack of rebellion and protest all over the world. In Kenya in 2007, the lyrics of Gidi Gidi and Maji Maji's Unwogable, an anthem about showing no fear, was the soundtrack of the failed political revolution. In 2010, Tunisian rapper El General released a song called Rais Lebleb, which became the anthem of the Tunisian uprising and the Arab Spring. Senegal's 2011 Y'en a Marre protests, which prevented Abdoulaye Wade's unconstitutional third term as president, were rooted in the hip hop of musical collective Keur Gui. In Chile, rap was a major part of anti-government protests in 2019 with songs like

Jonas Sanchez's Dictadores Fuera (Dictators Out), decrying the alarming retreat in human rights. In Sudan, Ayman Mao's reggae-infused hip hop became the soundtrack of the 2019 revolution.

In South Sudan, Emmanuel Jal's hip hop is a central part of the younger generation's demand for peace in the face of their elders' intransigence. In Gaza, MC Gaza doesn't just decry the Israeli blockade and occupation but also fights back against local censorship. For young people around the world angry at systemic violence and exclusion, hip hop offers a beat to march to and an outlet for political expression. Hip hop is to music what football - the real one, played with the feet - is to sport. Their global appeal is rooted in their simplicity: They both require very little initial capital from the participant.

As traditional instruments have fallen into disuse in many parts of the world and as instruments like guitars and pianos - not to mention the musical education required to play them - remain out of reach for most people, hip hop emerges as an elegant and accessible solution for the musically inclined. It is global, allowing people to find inspiration using nothing else than an internet connection. It is also a particularly malleable genre of music because it doesn't require any special insider training or knowledge; this appeals to poor and working-class people - and the global majority. The only thing truly

required of putative MCs is a singular belief in their ability to be better than everyone else who steps up, and a commitment to make it so.

This is not to suggest that hip hop imposes itself onto blank cultural canvases. Quite the opposite: It underscores why hip hop more than any other genre of music has such a great claim to be the first truly global genre of music. Consider that if the match is the basic unit of football, then rap battles are the basic unit of hip hop, allowing MCs to show off and sharpen their skills against each other. There are many global traditions of poetry that echo the dynamics of the hip hop battle.

In Sudan, poetry known as hakamat is an age-old tradition involving women taking on men or each other through poetry. Somali people are known as the nation of poets because of a long, rich history of complex oral poetry, and when not narrating odes to camels - the lifeline of desert life - it routinely descends into warm-hearted ribbing. In Kenya, we have mchongoano, which like the former two examples is reminiscent of The Dozens, an identical US game of interactive insult that has roots in the cultural tenacity of enslaved people facing systemic violent erasure.

These global connections reaffirm many cultural links that link Black culture in the US to Africa and beyond, making the genre more culturally portable. Inevitably, subgenres of hip hop have

emerged around the world as young people layer hip hop's raw material over their own cultures and their own circumstances, and they often encounter the same resistance that US hip hop faced in its early years.

Rap remains by far the most popular genre in terms of sales in France, which is the second largest rap market in the world after the US. But because it is the music of the banlieues, it faces stiff resistance from the authorities with even the official French music industry body SNEP calling it "overexposed" and inviting people to spend more money on other genres to diminish its impact. In the United Kingdom, grime and drill have produced their own megastars like Stormzy and Skepta despite the UK government initially investing a great deal of resources in criminalising and policing it.

The same anti-establishment street cred that makes young people the world over fall in love with the genre inspires a backlash from the authorities in those communities. And this backlash does not stop at intimidation. Rap continues to push back against exceptionally harsh treatment before the law in the US, where rap lyrics are still routinely used as evidence in criminal trials.

Elsewhere, hip hop musicians have been arrested, tortured and even executed for inspiring revolt. In Iran, the soundtrack for the latest wave of anti-government protests featured the rap lyrics of Toomaj Salehi, including his song Fal (Omen). He

was arrested in October and his family alleges that he has been tortured. Similarly, in Myanmar, the military junta made an example of hip hop artist Phyo Zeyar Thaw, one of four democracy activists executed in July after being accused of "conspiring to commit terror acts" in the wake of anti-junta protests.

In the US, hip hop is first and foremost Black music. As it continues to eke out a place within that nation's musical mainstream, it stands as a reminder of how much Black America has had to fight to have a voice even while doing more to enhance the country's global standing than just about anyone else. Yet in 2023, US hip hop has undoubtedly lost its political edge, swapping defiant (if routinely misogynistic) lyrics for celebrations of sex and wealth. Jay Z, by many accounts the best English-language rapper alive, is far less likely to give us a primer on the US Constitution's Fourth Amendment protections against involuntary search and seizure as he did in 2004's 99 Problems and more likely to remind us that he is an impossibly wealthy man who can today buy his way out of whatever power throws at him. That is, of course, his well-earned prerogative.

But for the rest of the world, hip hop remains a talisman of youth creativity and revolt - a critical element in the soundtrack for generational resistance. And for that, hip hop deserves a resounding happy birthday from the rest of the world as well.

Aljazeera

EU must reinvent itself for a third time

Jean Pisani-Ferry

THE CTONIC changes in the global system are forcing all countries to redefine their strategic outlooks and growth models. But while changes are affecting every country, the EU faces a far more serious challenge that could put its very existence at risk.

This is not the first time that the EU has found itself at a crossroads. Global crises tend to throw the bloc into an existential spiral that calls into question its priorities, structure and purpose. Whether Europe remains a major global player depends on its response to an unprecedented confluence of emergencies. The most prominent is undoubtedly the war in Ukraine, which has provided a stark reminder that the EU must develop its own security identity to defend its borders.

But other issues are equally pressing. The escalating rivalry between the US and China is redrawing the map of global power. As the world increasingly divides into competing blocs, Europe

must decide whether to align itself entirely with the US or retain a modicum of policy autonomy. On climate change, the EU positioned itself as a global agenda-setter after the US withdrew from the Paris Agreement in 2020. But with the US fully recommitted to the climate fight and investing heavily in clean energy subsidies, Europe must redefine its stance. Will the bloc develop its own version of the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act and embark on a subsidy race with the US and China? Or will it build on its own DNA and respond with trade and competition instruments? European leaders' recent statements suggest they are leaning toward the former. Either way, they must decide in a timely fashion.

Europe has reinvented itself twice before, and this inflection point is significant enough to call for a third reinvention. In the mid-1980s, as stagnant growth and high unemployment led economists and political scientists (particularly on the American right) to coin

the term "eurosclerosis," then-European Commission President Jacques Delors began drawing up plans for an economically integrated continent. Those plans became the single market program and laid the groundwork for the creation of the eurozone. Globalization proved to be another turning point. In the early 2000s, the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown questioned the wisdom of pursuing European integration when the whole world was already rapidly integrating. As Russia and China had entered the global economy and joined the International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization, regional integration seemed passé.

The EU's response to Brown's challenge was to reinvent itself as a shaper of global standards. Over the past 20 years, European policymakers have taken a leading role in designing the rules-based international order, exporting regulatory stan-

dards for accounting, safety, privacy and consumer protection. As The Wall Street Journal put it, the EU became "the world's regulator," using its rule-making as a form of soft power. But this type of soft power works only in a world governed by rules. Harvard's Joseph S. Nye Jr., who introduced the concept in the late 1980s, explained that the difference between hard and soft power is that the former is fungible - meaning transferable from sphere to sphere - whereas the latter is not. In other words, military power can help countries gain economic power and vice versa, but regulatory strength does not translate into military or even economic clout.

That is why the EU must reinvent itself again. In a world where autocrats and their supporters increasingly flout the rules that govern the Western-dominated liberal order, the EU can no longer rely on rules-setting to pursue its strategic goals. It needs a new purpose and identity. To this end, Marco Buti

and Marcello Messeri have come up with a framework that attempts to reconcile the EU's domestic and foreign policy agendas. The EU, they argue, should build on its comparative advantages and focus on delivering European public goods. This concept makes a lot of sense. It is broad enough to apply to defense, security, energy and climate action. It is also compatible with the EU's subsidiarity principle, which holds that decisions should be made by member states whenever sufficient to reach common objectives. It would enable policymakers to switch from centralized tools to local initiatives when needed and could serve as a practical yardstick for deciding what counts as excessive centralization of power. Moreover, citizens could easily understand why some actions fall within the EU's jurisdiction, while others remain the responsibility of member states.

But even if it adopted this framework, the EU would still have some difficult choices to make. The reason why the EU lacks a

common defense policy is not that member states fail to see that they would be better off acting together; it is that they do not trust each other and distrust the EU's institutions even more. Similarly, European countries recognize that a common energy policy is in their collective interest; the reason they have failed to agree on one is that their national priorities differ widely. The EU's recent spree of emergency borrowing to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic offers important insights into the current state of European integration. Instead of being directed toward common initiatives, most of the money that was raised through the emergency program was transferred to individual member states. On balance, the subsidiarity principle would seem to favor endorsing the European public goods approach. But European countries must overcome individual reservations and learn to work together. The road toward a new European model may be mapped out, but it will be long and difficult.

Russia after a year of sanctions

AFTER Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Western countries imposed numerous sanctions against Russian banks and companies, which significantly affected the Russian economy. Yet the economic collapse some expected never came. This allowed President Vladimir Putin to declare confidently at the beginning of this year: "2022 was a challenging year for us, and we managed to get through the risks that emerged ... quite successfully."

Indeed, the Western sanctions did not undermine Russia's economic potential to an extent that the Kremlin would lose the ability to finance its war in Ukraine. The events of 2022 have confirmed that the Russian economy is inefficient but resilient and that the Kremlin is able to mitigate any destabilising effect the economic downturn may have on the political front. The sustainability of the Russian economy is determined by its place in the global division of labour: it stands at the very beginning of technological chains as a supplier of natural resources.

Since the global economy cannot grow without increasing its consumption of natural resources, the demand for Russian raw materials is maintained. This, to a large extent, has protected the Russian economy from the impact of sanctions. In 2021, Russia provided 17.5 percent of oil sold on the world market, 47 percent of palladium, 16.7 percent of nickel, 13 percent of aluminium (not including China), and almost a quarter of potash fertilisers.

Hypothetically, the world economy could give up Russian raw materials, but only at the cost of price hikes and potentially years of recession, which is not in the interests of Western politicians. The United States' attempt to close the access of Russian aluminium to the world market in 2018 led to an instant jump in the price of this metal by 20 percent, which forced the White House to abandon the announced plans.

That is why, in 2022, the West imposed some of the harshest sanctions on Russian export sectors, such as steel, coal and processed wood, where the global economy has spare capacity. The combined share of these raw materials in Russian exports in 2021 was 11.7 percent, so restrictions on sales to Europe did not have a significant impact on Russia's economy at large. However, they did affect significantly the economies of certain regions where these sectors are dominant. For example, in November-December 2022, coal mines in Kemerovo, Russia's core coal production region, were able to sell just 50-60 percent of extracted coal. In Karelia and Arkhangelsk, where there are many woodworking enterprises, industrial production contracted by 15.5 percent and by 19.8 percent respectively. In Lipetsk, it collapsed by 15.4 percent due to a drop in production at the largest Russian steelmaker, Novolipetsk Steel.

Western sanctions related to the oil industry targeted revenues rather than production. As a result, Russian oil production increased by 2 percent in 2022. On February 5, an EU ban on the import of refined petroleum products from Russia came into effect, but there is no evidence yet that it has impacted the Russian economy. Since the beginning of 2023, production of gasoline and diesel fuel climbed by 7 percent compared with the previous year which could in part be the result of increased demand from

the Russian army. The decline in exports of gas to Europe - which is not so much sanctions-related but a consequence of Putin's "freeze and split" strategy for Europe - has had a more significant impact, with production falling by 18-20 percent. If the situation does not change, gas production may shrink by an additional 7-8 percent in 2023.

The impact of the sanctions on the Russian economy was significant but it was not as severe as some expected. It contracted by 2.1 percent in 2022 - much less than the predictions of 5-6 percent made in the spring. The fall in GDP was cushioned by the high oil and gas prices which brought in windfall profits. Revenues from hydrocarbon production and exports increased by 28 percent compared with 2021, and high inflation in the first half of 2022 led to an increase

The manufacturing industry in the Kaluga and Kaliningrad regions, where such plants were concentrated, shrunk by 20 percent.

When considering the drop in industrial production and services, we should take into account the fact that throughout the past year, many foreign companies sold their assets to Russian businesses. This process, especially if we are talking about large production facilities, takes several months and requires the consent of the Russian government. During this time, current activities may stop, but after the transaction is legally formalised, the companies can resume their work. This means that to a certain extent, the economic decline reflected in shrinking gross domestic product (GDP) for 2022 may be partially compensated in 2023.

The Russian government was

A more severe blow to the Russian economy came from the "moral sanctions" - the voluntary withdrawal of foreign companies from Russia. The most significant effect was the shutdown of automobile plants, which belonged to international companies. As a result, the production of new cars in Russia fell threefold, and sales - by 59 percent. The manufacturing industry in the Kaluga and Kaliningrad regions, where such plants were concentrated, shrunk by 20 percent. When considering the drop in industrial production and services, we should take into account the fact that throughout the past year, many foreign companies sold their assets to Russian businesses. This process, especially if we are talking about large production facilities, takes several months and requires the consent of the Russian government. During this time, current activities may stop, but after the transaction is legally formalised, the companies can resume their work.

in nominal revenues from taxes.

Financial sanctions, such as the freeze on the accounts and assets of the central bank and commercial banks, and the restriction on payments and access to capital markets, had the most immediate impact on the economy. In the spring of 2022, it took just a week for inflation in Russia to accelerate to more than two percent per week and for the dollar to appreciate by 60 percent to the rouble. The Russian financial authorities were able to mitigate this initial fallout by imposing restrictions on current and capital transactions and refusing to convert the rouble, thus strengthening the exchange rate and suppressing inflation.

However, the gradual build-up of pressure on the balance of payments associated with restrictions on trade in Russian hydrocarbons led to a fall in the current account balance and a weakening of the rouble by more than 20 percent in the second half of the year. A more severe blow to the Russian economy came from the "moral sanctions" - the voluntary withdrawal of foreign companies from Russia. The most significant effect was the shutdown of automobile plants, which belonged to international companies. As a result, the production of new cars in Russia fell threefold, and sales - by 59 percent.

also able to mitigate the effect of the sanctions on the general population by increasing spending. Public expenditure went up by 32 percent of the planned budget for 2022 or \$113bn. About half of the additional budget was directed to the military, but much of the rest was spent on new social programmes, including additional indexation of pensions, increased benefits for families with children, deferment of payroll tax payments, etc.

The Russian government was able to cover the extra expenditure from the fiscal reserve accumulated in previous years, the National Wealth Fund (NWF). At the beginning of 2022, the liquid part of it amounted to \$113.5bn or 7.3 percent of GDP. The entire budget deficit for 2022, which equalled 3.3 trillion roubles (\$50bn), was financed from it. It is likely that in 2023, the fiscal reserve - which now has fallen to 4.6 percent of GDP or \$87bn - will be used to cover the budget deficit again. The pressure on the Russian government budget will inevitably increase in the coming years because the sluggish economy will not be able to generate enough revenues. As a result, the fiscal reserve may disappear completely by 2025-26, but that will not lead to a budgetary crisis. The overall

Russian public debt is below 20 percent of GDP which allows the government to borrow from the domestic market.

It seems that the past year of sanctions and economic downturn is continuing a trend of stagnation in the Russian economy rather than starting a new one. In the first eight years of Putin's presidency (2000-2008), the Russian economy grew at an average rate of 7 percent annually as a result of the economic reforms of the 1990s, high oil prices and extensive foreign borrowing.

By contrast, between 2012 and 2021, the Russian economy grew on average by 1.4 percent. This slow growth had a lot to do with Putin's authoritarian approach to political and economic decision-making after he returned to the presidency in 2012. While cracking down on political competition, he also dismantled the progressive system of arbitration courts, which had provided a much higher level of legal protection for businesses. Putin also launched a massive programme to rearm the military at the expense of investment in human capital development.

After the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the unleashing of the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine, sanctions were imposed against Russia limiting many companies' access to modern technology. The research and development sector was also undermined, especially by criminal cases launched against Russian scientists, who were accused of treason. These factors severely worsened the business climate in the country and diminished economic growth. In the short term, the Kremlin will do its best to cushion the Russian population from the effects of the economic crisis.

It is already looking to compensate for falling revenues from slumping oil and gas prices (down 43 percent for October 2022 - January 2023 compared with January-March 2022) by introducing changes to oil tax rates. Putin also declared he wants Russian businesses to contribute voluntary payments to the budget to boost its revenues. This additional revenue will be used to finance not only the Russian army but also the families of regular and mobilised soldiers. Other social benefits and programmes will also be maintained.

This will ensure that when the time comes for the presidential elections in March 2024, a considerable amount of the population would not mind seeing Putin re-elected with 70-75 percent of the votes. In the longer term, the Russian economy is still unlikely to experience a collapse. That is because even the most onerous sanctions have a limited effect. Iran is a good example of that. The country has been under US sanctions since 1987, but its GDP grew by 3.3 percent on average between 1990 and 2020.

Like Iran, Russia will gradually lag behind the global economy and it will not achieve more than 1.5-2 percent annual growth. In the long term, the sanctions will have severe consequences for the technological development of the Russian economy. For ordinary Russians, this would mean a gradual decline in the quality of goods on store shelves and the inaccessibility of services that were customary until the war. Economic stagnation, however, is unlikely to lead to social or political unrest. The decline of the standard of living will be very slow and uneven, while the repression of dissidents and the political opposition will grow, making the cost of protest very high.



Hate is alive in Canada - and is growing

Andrew Mitrovica

WHEN the sickening attack was over, Mohamed Abu Marzouk's skull had been fractured more than 10 times. Moments earlier, Abu Marzouk, his wife and two young daughters had settled in their car and were about to head home after enjoying a summer's day picnic with family and friends in Mississauga, Ontario, west of Toronto.

Just then, two men walked by. "F***ing Arab people! Terrorists," the pair shouted. "You didn't see us?" They kicked the car. Abu Marzouk got out. He tried talking to the angry strangers. That's when the onslaught began. First, they punched Abu Marzouk. He fell. They kicked his head - again and again. A friend attempted, in vain, to stop the beating. He was beaten, too. Abu Marzouk's wife, Diane Attar, pleaded with the assailants. "Please don't touch him, please don't hurt my husband. I have two little girls, please don't hurt my husband," she said.

They kept kicking. Attar spotted a police cruiser nearby. She flagged it down for help. Attar began to pray. As she cradled her husband, the louts kicked her too. The couple's children cried, worried that their father was dead. By now, blood was everywhere, spilling like an open faucet from Abu Marzouk's ears and pooling around his shattered head. Soon, he would fall into a coma.

Later, surgeons removed part of Abu Marzouk's skull to try to staunch the potentially lethal bleeding and pressure building inside his brain and head. He survived. The thugs were arrested and charged. Attar told the CBC that the sudden, unprovoked horror her family had suffered in July 2018 was proof that "hate is alive" in Canada. Indeed, it is. Last year, a federal study found that hate crimes targeting Muslims in Canada had jumped by 71 percent in 2021. The number of recorded attacks grew from 84 incidents in 2020 to 144 in 2021.

The figures, however appalling, only tell part of the unsettling story. The study failed to address two stubborn questions. What accounts for the disturbing spike in the hate-motivated crimes Muslim Canadians have had to endure? And why do the Canadian police, prosecutors and courts appear to deal with Muslim victims of hate less seriously than attacks on other religious groups? I think the answer to the first question informs the answer to the second.

Despite the happy pretence that Canada is an accepting place, Muslim Canadians are still largely treated as the "other" by suspicious journalists and politicians who exploit and leverage their sinister "doubts" into an audience or votes. This is a subtle, almost polite, form of Islamophobia whose cynical aim is to raise spurious questions about their loyalty to the maple leaf. Then there are, of course, the blunt, overt examples of Islamophobia that reinforce the calumny that despite calling Canada home, the country's Muslims will always be considered fanatical outsiders. It was not that long ago when the former prime minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, was the proud architect of a "snitch line" that encouraged "old-stock Canadians" to inform on Muslim Canadians engaged in what

How Justice Dawson arrived at this bizarre reasoning is - to put it charitably - unclear. But it confirms the troubling truth that when Muslim Canadians are the casualties of hate and terror, the police, prosecutors and courts are often reluctant to regard them as casualties of hate and terror. Unsurprisingly, the same double standard prevailed even after an avowed white supremacist assassinated six worshippers in a Quebec City mosque in 2017.

At the time, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau he and his odious government labelled "barbaric cultural practices". The province of Quebec followed predictable suit by passing Bill 21 which, in the convenient name of "secularism", banned public servants from wearing hijabs and other religious symbols. Doubt and suspicion of Muslim Canadians - encouraged and stoked by the careless and irresponsible - have translated into harassment and violence. In the wake of Bill 21, Muslim women living and working in Quebec have

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reported being spat on, called "a dirty immigrant", having their hijabs ripped off, and being nearly run down by a pick-up truck driven by, I gather, a tolerant Quebec secularist.

Canada is becoming a dangerous place for Muslims and the police, courts and politicians are, it seems, loath to admit either that fact or their own culpability. Initially, the two bigots who booted Abu Marzouk's head like a soccer ball and called him a "f***ing Arab" and a "terrorist" escaped being charged with a hate crime. Eventually, police concluded that the ambush had been "hate-motivated". That not-so-curious hesitancy turned into stunning incredulity after a judge ruled recently that while the pair were guilty of assault, he was not convinced that they had intended to kill Abu Marzouk. So, he acquitted them of attempted murder.

This, in spite of the testimony of a police officer who told the court that the attack was "the most gruesome event" he had ever witnessed. The officer also testified that he drew his firearm because he thought the kicking "might kill" Abu Marzouk and that the attackers had refused his repeated commands to "get on the ground", the CBC reported. Finally, and perhaps most outrageously, while Justice Fletcher Dawson acknowledged that the assault was likely motivated by hate, he believed it to be "anti-Arab, not anti-Muslim".

described the premeditated massacre as a "despicable act of terror" and the provincial police investigated it "as a terrorist act". Not so, according to the Crown prosecutor who opted to charge the attacker with first-degree murder rather than any terrorism-related offences.

"Pursuing terrorism charges...would have sent an important reassurance that Muslims are seen as equal victims of terror," Ihsaan Gardee, the then-executive director of the National Council of Canadian Muslims, said in a statement. That message was sent belatedly in the wake of the murder of four members of the Afzaal family who were cut down like bowling pins by a terrorist in a truck while out on an evening walk in London, Ontario in 2021.

The accused terrorist has been charged with four counts of first-degree murder, one count of attempted murder and associated terrorism charges. Meanwhile, Mohammed Abu Marzouk welcomed Justice Dawson's qualified findings of guilt. He said the pain and scars on his mind, soul and body will always linger. "The pain will stay, nothing will erase it," he told reporters gathered outside a courthouse in late January, a large scar still prominent on the back of his head. "I still encourage every Canadian to stand against hate because Canada has no place for hate," Abu Marzouk said. Unfortunately, for far too many Canadians, it does.

Why Americans like to see tycoons running for president

VIVEK Ramaswamy announced last week that he is running for the Republican Party's nomination for president. Ramaswamy has no government experience; instead, he touts his business experience as a key credential. While he is very unlikely to win the nomination, his candidacy highlights the appeal to many voters of a businessperson running for president. Ramaswamy is the US-born child of Indian immigrants. He earned a fortune by founding biotech company Roivant Sciences. Last year, he started an asset management firm that is designed to compete with companies that promote environmental, social and governance analysis in investment decisions. In recent years, he has become a political commentator, appearing on Fox News and writing two books that oppose liberal "identity politics."

Ramaswamy lacks name recognition. He is more likely seeking to boost his personal brand and position himself for other political positions than to be seriously hoping to win the 2024 nomination. However, he is not the first businessperson who has sought to use business experience as a springboard to the presidency. Both the Republican and Democratic parties have nominated people with business experience for the presidency in the past, but it is more common within the Republican Party and some third parties. Since the Second World War, the Republican Party has nominated four candidates who had substantial business experience: Donald Trump, Mitt Romney, George W. Bush and

Kerry Boyd Anderson

George H.W. Bush. The Democratic Party nominated two men with significant business experience: Jimmy Carter (a successful farmer and businessman) and Harry Truman (an unsuccessful businessman). It is far more common for the parties to appoint nominees whose primary career experience is in the military, law or government.

Presidential nominees with business backgrounds often offer government experience as well. Romney, George W. Bush and Carter served as state governors before running for president. George H.W. Bush added extensive diplomatic, political and government experience to his business credentials before pursuing the presidency. Truman served as a judge and a member of Congress before becoming vice president and then president.

Except for Trump and Romney, all of these men had also served in the military. Trump is the only major party nominee, at least since 1945, to jump from business to the White House without first gaining any political or government experience. Many Republicans and some independent voters saw his lack of government experience as an advantage. He was not part of "the swamp," the disparaging term that many conservative commentators use to refer to Washington. He was an "outsider" who promised to do things differently, which was a huge part of his appeal in 2016.

There are other reasons why a business-minded candidate for president appeals to many Americans. The idea of the American dream remains strong

for many voters, who often assume that most wealthy businesspeople earned their wealth because they were smart and hard-working. Many Americans - especially Republicans - share an aversion to government and bureaucracy. "The private sector could do it better than government" is a common sentiment among Republicans. In 2016, many Republicans and independents expressed hope that a businessman like Trump might manage government better than the "politicians."

The tendency to assume that businesses function better than government is deeply ingrained in the American psyche, but it is declining. While many Republicans remain staunchly pro-business, others are increasingly willing to challenge large corporations. For example, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' recent steps to impose more government control over Disney runs directly counter to the common Republican belief that businesses could run things better than government. However, many Republicans praise DeSantis for punishing Disney for the company's "woke" positions, including its criticism of a Florida law to limit teaching about sexual and gender identity.

Polling shows that Americans still have high levels of respect for self-made businesspeople, small business owners and entrepreneurs, but far less for large corporations and their executives. However, entrepreneurs often struggle, even in business, to transition from startup culture to managing a large, established company. For similar reasons, they might

struggle to manage the institution of the federal government. Furthermore, many businesspeople are not entirely self-made. For example, Trump benefited greatly from an inheritance and his wealthy father's connections and financing, but this did not hurt his reputation with voters who liked his business experience.

Few men have jumped from business to the White House, so the historical record offers few examples to assess whether businesspeople are likely to make successful presidents. However, history suggests that they are not. Several of the most successful businessmen to have become president are often ranked among the least effective presidents in history, including Warren G. Harding, Herbert Hoover and Carter. Since the Civil War, the presidents who make the top rankings in two different surveys - Teddy Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower - had little business experience, except for Truman, who was unsuccessful in business but is frequently ranked among the best presidents.

Wealthy businesspeople such as Ramaswamy have some advantages in running for president. They can appeal to Americans' pro-business sentiments. They can use their own wealth to fund their campaigns, as Ross Perot did in an independent campaign in 1992. Furthermore, running for president requires a lot of self-confidence - maybe arrogance - and many leading businesspeople have that in spades. However, they must also run against a history that suggests that they will find it difficult to gain a nomination or to run the government.

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.



PESHAWAR: A man buying jaggery known as “Gurr” from shop at Peepal Mandi.

CPI inflation increases to 31.5%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased to 31.5 per cent on year-on-year (YoY) basis in February 2023 as compared to the corresponding month of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Wednesday.

On month-on-month basis, it increased to 4.3 in February 2023 as compared to an increase of 2.9% in the previous month (January 2022).

On a year-on-year basis, the top few food commodities that witnessed an increase in prices in February as compared to the corresponding month of last year included onions (416.74%), chicken (96.86%), eggs (78.73%), rice (77.81%), wheat flour (55.92%), gram whole (64.93%), pulse moong (56.43), pulse gram (55.99%), mustard oil (48.11%), pulse mash (50.77%), fresh fruits (45.17%), cooking oil (50.66%), milk fresh (31.99%), vegetable ghee (45.89%), fish (21.49%),

pulse masoor (27.76%), meat (20.82%), fresh vegetables (11.60%), potatoes (22.42%) and cigarettes (59.20%).

The non-food commodities that witnessed an increase during the period on a year on year basis included textbooks (74.13%), transport services (33.13%), motor vehicle accessories (37.04%), motor vehicles (38.774%), marriage hall charges (25.50%), stationary (61.37), construction input items (38.51%), medical test (17.90%), and liquefied hydrocarbons (48.37%).

The CPI inflation Urban, increased to 28.8% on year-on-year basis in Feb 2023 as compared to an increase of 24.4% in the previous month and 12.20% in Feb 2022. On month-on-month basis, it increased to 4.5% in Feb 2023 as compared to an increase of 2.4% in the previous month and an increase of 0.9% in February 2022.

CPI inflation Rural, increased to 35.6% on year-on-year basis in Feb 2023 as compared to an increase

of 32.3% in the previous month and 13.3% in Feb 2022. On month-on-month basis, it increased to 4.0% in Feb 2023 as compared to an increase of 3.6% in the previous month and an increase of 1.5% in February 2022.

Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) inflation on year-on-year increased to 33.6% in Feb 2023 as compared to an increase of 300.5% a month earlier and 18.7% in Feb 2022. On MoM basis, it increased by 3.7% in Feb 2023 as compared to an increase of 1.3% a month earlier and an increase of 1.3% in Feb 2022.

Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation on year-on-year basis increased to 36.4% in Feb 2023 as compared to an increase of 28.5% a month earlier and an increase of 23.6% in February 2022.

On month-on-month basis, it increased by 8.2% in Feb 2023 as compared to an increase of 1.8 a month earlier and an increase of 0.19% in corresponding month of last year i.e. February 2022.

Gold prices increase by Rs2,700 to Rs197,100

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs2,800 and was sold at Rs197,100 on Wednesday against its sale at Rs194,400 the previous day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs2,315 to Rs168,981 from Rs166,666 whereas the price of ten gram 22 karat gold increased to Rs154,900 from Rs152,777 respectively.

The price of per tola and ten-gram silver remained constant at Rs2,080 and Rs1,783.26 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by US\$27 to \$1,837 from US\$1,810, the association reported.

Oil prices increased

ANKARA (APP): Oil prices rebounded on Wednesday after better-than-expected industrial data from China, the world's largest oil-importing country, while looming demand issues, including a build in US crude oil inventories and growing fears of further US interest rate hikes, weighed on prices.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$84.08 per barrel at 10.09 a.m. local time, up 0.75% from the closing price of \$83.45 a barrel in the previous trading session.

At the same time, American benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$77.67 per barrel, a 0.80% increase after the previous session closed at \$77.05 a barrel.

China's National Bureau of Statistics released much-anticipated data on Tuesday, revealing that Chinese industry activity increased significantly in February. The official manufacturing purchasing managers' index increased to 52.6, signaling further expansion in the world's second-largest, oil-consuming country.

The data, which raised positive oil market sentiment and encouraged crude oil purchases, was the highest reading since April 2012, when it reached 53.5.

Exerting pressure on rebounding demand and oil prices, the American Petroleum Institute announced late Tuesday its estimate of a rise of nearly 6.5 million barrels in US crude oil inventories, relative to the market expectation of a 440,000-barrel increase.

The US EIA data on oil stocks will be announced later on Wednesday, and if the increase in stock levels is confirmed, prices are expected to decline.

Asian shares rise

TOKYO (APP): Asian shares were higher Wednesday. The Shanghai Composite added 28 points to 3,308.53. South Korean markets were closed for a national holiday.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 picked up 0.3% to 27,523.17. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 edged up 0.1% to 7,263.10. In energy trading, benchmark US crude added 48 cents to \$77.53 in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

Brent crude, the international pricing standard, rose \$0.52 to \$83.97 a barrel.

100-index of PSX loses 97 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) lost 97.60 percent on Wednesday, a slight negative change of 0.24 per cent, closing at 40,412.77 points against 40,510.37 points the previous day.

A total of 167,399,748 shares were traded during the day as compared to 126,319,112 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs9,282 billion against Rs5,648 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 320 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 110 of them recorded gains and

178 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 32 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 20,211,767 shares at Rs1.31 per share; Hub Power Co. with 7,963,118 shares at Rs70.48 per share, and Maple Leaf with 7,500,828 shares at Rs24.22 per share.

Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum increase of Rs498.00 per share price, closing at Rs22,998.00, whereas the runner-up was Nestle Pakistan with an Rs224.00 rise in its per share price to Rs2,464.00.

Premium Tex witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs42.82 per share closing at Rs528.18; followed by Sanofi-Aventis with Rs39.00 decline to close at Rs681.00.

Rupee plunges by Rs4.61 against dollar: The Pakistan rupee depreciated by Rs4.61 against the dollar in the interbank trading on Wednesday and closed at Rs266.11 against the previous day's closing of Rs261.50.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs267 and Rs269.6

respectively. The price of Euro increased by Rs5.82 and closed at Rs283.08 against the last day's closing of Rs277.22, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen gained 04 paise to close at Rs1.95, whereas an increase of Rs6.69 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs321.52 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs314.83.

The exchange rates of Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal increased by Rs1.26 and Rs1.23 to close at Rs72.45 and Rs70.90 respectively.

IMC's impactful CSR initiatives recognized at NFEH Awards 2023

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Indus Motor Company (IMC) added another win to its growing number of accolades, with the Corporate Social Responsibility Award for Community Development & Services, at the 15th Annual Corporate Social Responsibility Awards 2023, hosted by the National Forum of Environment & Health (NFEH), in Islamabad. Mr. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Planning & Development Minister, presented the award to IMC's Syed Saqib Abbas, Regional Manager-North.

For the seventh year running, IMC has been winning this award which is a recognition of the company's vision and significant contributions towards creating an inclusive society that targets education, adult and child health, nutrition, the welfare of the differently-abled, promotion of sports, environmental conservation, and road safety.

Expressing himself, Chief Executive IMC, Ali Asghar Jamali, said, "There's greater awareness about social responsibility today and many companies are doing some great work that gets to be showcased at platforms such as the NFEH, which is laudable. We are proud of our CSR



contributions and thank the NFEH for this recognition."

He further said, "Under Toyota's transformational vision 'Move Your World', we endeavor to do our part in building a society that leaves no one behind. We firmly believe that every initiative we take has the potential to create a ripple effect and make a lasting impact on society. Our CSR program, Concern Beyond Cars, is rooted in this belief, and it has been uplifting to witness the tangible positive changes it has brought to the lives of

individuals and communities. As we move forward, we remain committed to using our resources to make a meaningful difference in the world and build a better future for all."

As a signatory to the United Nations Global Compact, IMC is aligned with the Global Goals. The Toyota Environmental Challenge 2050 serves as a guide to move towards a society where people, cars, and nature can coexist harmoniously. IMC is committed to doing its part in achieving a more sustainable society.

Forming alliances is an important part of IMC's CSR initiatives which include the flagship Toyota Goth Education Program run in tandem with TCF, free food distribution, and medical camps with Saylani Welfare Trust, the Childhood Blindness Prevention Program with Al Ibrahim Eye Hospital, and mental health camps with Karwan e Hayat, to name a few. With Ramadan approaching, IMC is gearing up to mobilize its teams to distribute free food rations to communities in need.

‘Pakistan must cultivate business ties with African countries’

FAISALABAD (APP): Zambian Chambers President Chabuka Jerome Kawesha Africa is poised to emerge as a new global economic destination and Pakistan must contemplate cultivating viable and sustained business relations with the potential African countries.

During his visit to the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he urged the local business community to explore untapped potential and sneak deep into the African markets which are still considered as virgin lands.

Chabuka said that Zambia is a centrally located country and a principal seat of African free trade zone. It comprises 26 regional countries where vast business opportunities are waiting for dynamic entrepreneurs.

He said that by settling down in Zambia, investors could have easy access to the entire region. He further said that raw material is available in abundance for

manufacturing and value addition and investors could set up any type of industry to earn hefty profit.

He suggested that Pakistani investors should deal with their counterparts through the Zambia chamber to avoid cheating or fraudulent dealings.

Responding to a question of Engineer Asim Munir, he said that currently visitors should get a visa of every country separately but we are actively considering to issue a collective visa like Schengen countries.

Ms Chisebuka, a female member of the delegation, said that she was running a manufacturing unit of sugar and alcohol and she intended to purchase machinery for its expansion.

Muckey Dean Butt a Pakistani origin businessman settled in Zambia said that his family was shifted to Zambia many decades ago and now he was interested to attract maximum Pakistani businesspeople to that country.

He expressed satisfaction over low-and-order situation and said that Zambia was safe for investors.

FCCI Vice President Haji Muhammad Aslam Bhatti welcomed the delegation and said that direct contacts between the business communities of the two countries are imperative to enhance trade and industrial relations. He said "we should prefer such projects which could benefit both countries".

Muhammad Azhar Chaudhry said Murad Baseer, Pakistani ambassador in Zimbabwe, had been making serious efforts to promote business linkages with African markets and upon his special request, a delegation of Zambia was visiting Faisalabad. Baseer assured that he would himself monitor the trade agreements between Pakistani and African businesspeople so that the quantum of export could be doubled as early as possible.

Azhar Chaudhry said

that Pakistan could export agricultural machinery, pharmaceutical and textile products in addition to organic seeds to the African countries.

He said that the Zambian delegation had actually participated in the Engineering & Healthcare Show- 2023 in Lahore.

"It was organised by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) to link the business communities of the two countries," he said and added that only Shahzad Pump Faisalabad had established its stall at the show and thus most of potential exporters missed the golden chance to enter into the African markets.

Engineer Ahmad Hassan presented a set of books published by the R&D department of the FCCI. Haji Gulzar Ahmad, Mian Muhammad Tayyab, Nadeem Ahmad and other members also participated in the meeting.

Court Notice

In the Court of Saima Ehsan Civil Judge II/Allaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Case No.16/1.

Institution 17/1/2023. Date of hearing, 3/3/2023. Atif Khan VS Department of Education. Notice to no.1. Chairman Board of Intermediate & Secondary Education Saidu Sharif Swat. 2. Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 3/3/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Stocks win boost as China data spurs recovery hopes

LONDON (AFP/APP): Stock markets rose on Wednesday as data showed decade-high Chinese factory activity last month after leaders began reopening the economy from years of zero-Covid measures.

Oil prices fell despite the China figures pointing to a pick-up in demand from the world's biggest importer of the commodity.

The euro rallied on expectations that the European Central Bank would keep hiking interest rates as inflation in the eurozone remains elevated.

On the corporate front, pan-European stock market operator Euronext said it had withdrawn a non-binding offer to buy Allfunds, a British firm that provides services to fund managers.

Euronext gave no details for the decision concerning the proposed cash-share transaction worth 5.5 billion euros (\$5.8 billion).

The forecast-busting reading on China's manufacturing -- the highest since 2012 -- reinforced the view that the world's second-biggest economy would bounce back strongly from last year's slow growth, as businesses start up and people travel again.

It provided also a much-needed boost for stock markets after a tumultuous month that wiped out much of January's gains as traders came around to the idea that central banks would need to lift interest rates higher for longer as they struggle to bring inflation under control.

While there were "significant seasonal and event factors" behind the latest data, the "overall trend still points to a solid recovery at the beginning of 2023", said Zhou Hao of Guotai Junan International.

Eyes are on a high-level meeting in Beijing where officials will set their annual economic growth target and lay out plans to achieve it, including thanks to possible stimulus measures.

The government's goal "should be in the range of 5.5-6 percent", said Iris Pang at ING.

"This will not be easy for the government to achieve even though China is gradually recovering. The challenge will come from the weakening external market, which could affect exports and manufacturing activity related to exports."

Hong Kong's stock market led gains, piling on more than four per cent in its best performance since early December.

The surge came after it fell for the previous six trading days, and was fuelled by a rally in heavy-weight tech firms including Tencent and Alibaba.

Tokyo, Shanghai, Singapore, Manila, Bangkok, Mumbai, Taipei and Jakarta were also in the green but Wellington and Sydney edged down.

London, Paris and Frankfurt rose solidly nearing the halfway stage.

While there is a lighter mood on trading floors, the prospect of rising interest rates continues to cast a shadow, keeping any equities rally in check.

That is causing angst over the outlook for the economy and company profits -- particularly tech firms that rely on borrowing -- leading to warnings from analysts.

All three main indices on Wall Street fell Tuesday, partially weighed by news that US consumer confidence unexpectedly fell in February on rising prices and worries for the outlook.



In brief

Salaar sets Guinness World Record

ISLAMABAD (APP): A six-year-old Pakistani martial artist, Salaar Mehsood has set a Guinness World Record by doing the most cartwheels in 30 seconds. "Salaar did 26 one-handed cartwheels in 30 seconds and broke the previous record of 25," Pakistan's renowned martial artist Irfan Mehsood told APP on Wednesday. Salaar is a student of Irfan, who is the holder of 60 Guinness World Records. Irfan has broken various records including the most push-ups (fingertips, carrying a 60 lb pack) in one minute, most step-ups in one minute (carrying a 100 lb pack), and the longest time in a reverse abdominal plank position carrying a 100 lb pack. Irfan said he was also the only athlete to break world records using 80 to 100 pounds of weight. "I'm the only Pakistani athlete to break most of India's world records. I have so far broken records of nine countries, including India, USA, UK, France, Philippines, Iraq, Egypt, Italy, and Spain," he said.

Malan ton leads England

MIRPUR (Agencies): David Malan scored a battling century to lead England to a hard-fought three-wicket win over Bangladesh in the first of three one-day internationals. The left-hander's fourth ODI ton held the tourists' chase together as they overhauled Bangladesh's 209 all out with eight balls to spare. On a pitch offering assistance to seamers and spinners alike, wickets fell at regular intervals in the chase. But Malan hit the winning boundary to put England ahead in the series. Earlier, Bangladesh had made a strong start to their innings after opting to bat first before being pegged back, with six England bowlers sharing the wickets. Chris Woakes took the first before Adil Rashid, Jofra Archer, Mark Wood and Moen Ali took two wickets apiece, and debutant Will Jacks also chipped in. The home batters largely struggled in the low-scoring contest with Najmul Hossain Shanto's 58 from 82 balls the only other score over 50 in the match. The sides will stay in Mirpur for Friday's second ODI as they continue to build towards the autumn's World Cup in India.

Just Fontaine dies

PARIS (Agencies): Just Fontaine, legendary French footballer and the all-time top scorer in a single World Cup finals with 13 goals, has died aged 89, his family told AFP on Wednesday. Fontaine achieved the record in the 1958 finals in Sweden where France reached the semi-finals for the first time in their history, losing to Pele's Brazil. Part of a wonderful attacking trident at that World Cup alongside Roger Piantoni and Raymond Kopa, Fontaine might never have gone to Sweden at all. Only injuries to fellow forwards Thadee Cisowski and his Reims teammate Rene Bliard saw him make the squad and then the starting line-up. Fontaine also won four French league titles, one with Nice and three with the great Reims side of the post-war era. He played in the Reims team that lost to the Real Madrid of Alfredo di Stefano, Ferenc Puskas and Raymond Kopa in the 1959 European Cup final. Fontaine was then forced to retire in 1962 at the age of just 28 after he suffered a double leg fracture.



RAWALPINDI: A view of cricket match played between Peshawar Zalmi and Karachi kings teams during PSL 8 T20 cricket match at Pindi Cricket Stadium.

Bismah Maroof steps down as Pakistan captain

LAHORE (APP): Bismah Maroof has stepped down as Pakistan women's national team captain but will remain available for selection as a player, the Pakistan Cricket Board announced here on Tuesday. Bismah was named as Pakistan's all-format captain in September 2017 and has had the best win/loss ratio amongst all the regular players to lead the country in One-Day Internationals (1,000) and T20 Internationals (0.843). Under her leadership, the ODI team played 34 matches and won 16, while the T20I side won 27 of 62 matches. Bismah Maroof said : "It has been an honour for me to captain my country and I feel fortunate to have

led an incredible and hard-working bunch of cricketers. It has been one exciting ride, which has been full of highs and lows, but, at the end of the day, I will always be thankful to Almighty for providing me this opportunity. "With the new ICC Women's Championship cycle in its initial stages and the 2024 T20 World Cup more than a year away, I think this is the right time for me to step down and help so we have a smooth transition. "I am looking forward to continuing to play as a player and playing my role for the team." PCB Management Committee Chair, Najam Sethi said: "I congratulate and thank Bismah Maroof for her services as the captain of the national

women's side. "Bismah has been an inspiration for millions of girls and has been a catalyst for a positive change. With her immense dedication and hard work, she has shown that women can continue to follow their passions and dreams. "She has always put her country before herself and that is underscored by how she has offered to help in smoothening the leadership transition ahead of an exciting and jam-packed season. I am sure her presence in the Pakistan dressing room will continue to be a source of inspiration to our young cricketers and she will continue to serve Pakistan with honour and pride as she has been doing since she was a teenager. Bismah's replacement will be announced in due course.

GDC Naguman Intra-College Sports festival ends

PESHAWAR (APP): The Intra-College Sports Festival for the intermediate students of the Government Degree College Naguman Peshawar concluded here on Wednesday. The final day of the sports festival featured a tug of war competition, wherein teams from various disciplines of the college actively took part. Teams from various disciplines of the college took part in cricket, table tennis and football competitions. The sports festival provided an opportunity to the youngsters to showcase their talent in various sports. In football, First Year (Arts) faculty stood first after defeating First Year (Pre-Medical) faculty 1-0, while faculty of 2nd Year (Arts) took third position. In Cricket, the Second Year (Arts) faculty clinched the victory after defeating the First Year (Computer Science) faculty in a nail biting finish. Second year (Pre-Engineering) faculty won table tennis title after defeating First Year (Arts) team.

In the most thrilling tug of war battle, First Year (Arts) won the trophy, while First Year (Pre-Medical) were runners-up. Prof. Mushtaq-ur-Rehman, Principal of Government Degree College Naguman Peshawar, was the chief guest on this occasion at the closing and prize distribution ceremony. Professor Wisal Jameel, Professor Arif Bacheel, Professor Muhammad Siyar, Professor Hamid Khan Safi, Professor Fahim Ahsan, Professor Farooq Ahmad khan, Professor Muhammad Anis and others were present. Prof. Mushtaq-ur-Rehman distributed trophies, certificates and cash prizes among the winning and runners-up teams at the closing ceremony of the three-day Annual Sports Gala. The college principal praised the efforts of Professor Muhammad Anis for organizing such a wonderful event. He further said that the students really enjoyed it and had so much fun.

Peshawar Zalmi go from 2 for 3 to 197 for 5 and beat Karachi Kings

RAWALPINDI (Cricinfo): Peshawar Zalmi went from one extreme to the other, slumping to 2 for 3 in the first 2.2 overs and then smashing 195 for 2 in the remaining 17.4 to seal a comfortable victory over Karachi Kings in Rawalpindi. It all began what seems like a very long time ago with Mohammad Amir sprinkling some of his magic dust, removing Babar Azam and Mohammad Haris in the very first over. Nineteen-year old Haseebullah Khan, on PSL debut, walked into an innings crying out for help and proceeded to soothe it. A member of Pakistan's most recent Under-19 World Cup squad announced himself with a 29-ball fifty, in which five

of his first 11 scoring shots were boundaries. Some of this carnage could have been mitigated had Akif Javed been able to hold onto a simple catch in the sixth over when Haseebullah only had 12 to his name but c'est la vie. Karachi's dream start turned into a full on nightmare when Rovman Powell joined in on the fun, scoring 64 off just 34 balls as Karachi. He hit six fours and four sixes during his stay; basically, he was able to hit a boundary once every three or four balls. Sixty-five runs - 33% of the total - came off the last four overs bowled by Javed (14+21), Amir (12) and Aamer Yamin (18). Somewhere in the middle of all that, Tom Kohler-Cadmore helped himself to a half-century as well.

Karachi did begin their chase well with Matthew Wade moving to 37 off 26 by the end of the Powerplay. He'd benefited from two lives even at that early stage of the innings - once when he was on 1 (caught behind but not reviewed) and later when he was on 19 (dropped). Karachi would've hoped that those were signs of their luck changing but it was not to be. They went from 40 for 0 to 95 for 5 as Mujeeb-ur-Rahman and Azmatullah Omarzai seized control through the middle overs picking up a combined 5 for 56 from their full quota. Imad Wasim (57 not out off 30 balls) threatened something special but even after hitting five fours in an over his side went into the last one needing 37 runs and that typically isn't possible in a cricket match.

Man City stroll into FA Cup quarters, Leicester crash out

LONDON (AFP/APP): Phil Foden struck twice as Manchester City eased into the FA Cup quarter-finals with a 3-0 win against Bristol City, while 2021 winners Leicester suffered a shock 2-1 defeat against second-tier Blackburn on Tuesday. Pep Guardiola's side were never in danger of a giant-killing in the fifth-round tie at Ashton Gate thanks to Foden's brace and a late strike from Kevin De Bruyne. Guardiola saluted the impact of England forward Foden, who is starting to recapture his peak form after an inconsistent season. "His career was always up, up, up. This season he struggled a bit and was a bit down. But now he's back for the best bit of the season," Guardiola said. "His impact has been amazing. Football pays off when you work like he does." City will hope for another

boost on Wednesday when Premier League leaders Arsenal, two points ahead of the champions, face Everton in their game in hand. "We're still alive in three competitions. We'll see what happens in the future," Guardiola said. City took a seventh-minute lead when Riyad Mahrez crossed to the far post, where Foden fired into the roof of the net. Foden doubled City's lead after 74 minutes as Julian Alvarez flicked towards Foden, who produced another clinical finish past Max O'Leary. De Bruyne got the visitors' third from long-range in the 81st minute to ensure the smoothest of nights for the six-time FA Cup winners. Leicester were booed off after Blackburn ended the Foxes' bid to reach a second FA Cup final in three seasons. Brendan Rodgers led Leicester to the club's first

ever FA Cup triumph in 2021, but Rovers punished woeful defending from the Premier League side to shatter their hopes of emulating that run. With Leicester 14th in the top-flight, just three points above the relegation zone, Rodgers made six changes to the side beaten by Arsenal at the weekend and paid the price for his gamble. "If there's anyone to blame it's me. I made the changes and sadly it didn't work," Rodgers said. "We brought four players into the starting line up who won the FA Cup a couple of seasons ago. But they were better than us and we have to worry about that." Rovers, into the last eight for the first time since 2015, took the lead when Tyrhys Dolan curled home from the edge of the area in the 33rd minute. Sammie Szmodics made it 2-0 seven minutes after the break following good work by Sam Gallagher.

Pak athletes shine in Asian Ju-Jitsu C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan athletes have exhibited their potential at the 7th Asian Ju-Jitsu Championship 2023, held at Bangkok, Thailand from February 25 -28 under the aegis of Ju-Jitsu Asian Union (JJAU). According to General Secretary Pakistan Ju-Jitsu Federation (PJJF) Tariq Ali, there were a total of 581 entries from 30 countries in the mega event. But Pakistan fielded only three athletes due to paucity of funds. Pakistan's Isra Waseem and Kainat Arif won silver medal in duo women category, while Dilawer Khan Sannan and Isra Waseem took 5th position in the duo mix category. "The PJJF has also received an award for the best third national federation in the duo category in

Asia", Tariq told APP. "We extend heartiest congratulations to our highly talented athletes on their accomplishment. They have raised the country's flag high at the international forum and made the nation proud," he added. He said the hard work and training had finally paid off as the ju-jitsukas had proven their mettle to win the medals. He also appreciated the hard work and commitment of PJJF coaches who trained the players and enhanced their skills, enabling them to excel at the international level. "Our players outclassed the best Asian sides in these categories and the credit for that also goes to their coaches." He also thanked Pakistan sports board for arranging training camp for the athletes at its Karachi

Centre as it proved helpful for them to better prepare for the event. He said that India made 30 entries in the championship, whereas Kazakhstan and Thailand made 70 and 55 entries respectively. "They had all the possible facilities as compared to our athletes. But still our athletes demonstrated their class, which is quite incredible," he added. Pakistan have been a dominant force in jiu-jitsu as they remain Asian champions from 2006 to 2017. Tariq said that sport disciplines and athletes, who bring medals and laurels for the country should be encouraged and backed. "Provision of better facilities and infrastructure will see our athletes shining at all international events," he reckoned.



INDORE: Usman Khawaja of Australia hits out during day one of the Third Test match in the series between India and Australia at Holkare Cricket Stadium.

Australia in control after India all out for 109

INDORE (Agencies): Fourteen wickets fell on the first day as Australia took control of the third Test against India in Indore. The hosts lost nine wickets to spin and were bowled out for 109 in 33.2 overs, with Matthew Kuhnemann claiming his first five-wicket Test haul. In reply Australia reached 156-4 - a lead of 47 - with opener Usman Khawaja making 60 before becoming one of spinner Ravindra Jadeja's four wickets. India lead the four-Test series 2-0 after big wins in Delhi and Nagpur. They know a 3-1 series win or better will secure their place in June's World Test Championship final at The Oval, while Australia need to at least draw one of the games to seal their place. India's total was their fourth-lowest at home in the past 15

years and contained four single-digit scores. Nathan Lyon took three wickets for Australia, and Todd Murphy the other, before Mohammed Siraj was run out to end the innings just after lunch. Australia lost Travis Head early, who was promoted to open after David Warner was ruled out of the match with concussion and a fractured elbow. Khawaja and Marnus Labuschagne (31) put on 96 for the second wicket, before Jadeja removed both and Steve Smith, who is captaining the side with Pat Cummins in Australia with his ill mother, in the final session. "I tried to score when I saw a scoring opportunity and respected the good ball when it came," Khawaja told BT Sport. "It was nice to build a partnership with Marnus, the start was the

toughest time to bat against the new ball because it was inconsistent. The partnership blunted them a bit, but it's not an easy wicket. "It felt pretty tough the whole time I was out there and I don't expect it to get any better." Meanwhile, India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin has overtaken England seamer James Anderson to become the number-one ranked bowler in the world. Anderson, 40, ended Cummins' four-year reign last week but drops to second despite taking three wickets in England's one-run defeat by New Zealand in Wellington on Tuesday. Ashwin, who first topped the rankings in 2015, took six wickets in India's six-wicket win in the second Test, including the key wickets of Smith and Labuschagne in the same over in the first innings.



In brief

ANF recovers 239 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) recovered 239 kg narcotics in six operations and arrested five accused allegedly involved in drug smuggling, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He said ANF conducted a raid near Khuzdar Highway Karachi Road and recovered 170.4 kg charras besides netting two accused. In another raid conducted near the Chaman check post, 3.8 kg morphine and over two kg Ice drug was recovered. He informed that in the third operation at Islamabad International Airport, 38 grams of charras was recovered from the possession of a Manchester-bound passenger resident of Gujrat. In an operation at Multan International Airport, 144 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of two Bahrain-bound passengers, residents of Haripur and Attock, going on flight no GF-789. He informed separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

Police conduct crackdown

RAWALPINDI (APP): On the directives of City Police Officer CPO Syed Khalid Mahmood Hamdani, Rawalpindi police are conducting a crackdown against the kite flyers after their identification through videos. According to a police spokesman, Race Course police held an accused Muhammad Tayyab after tracing him through videos who involved in kite flying. Police have also recovered Kalashnikov and bullets from his possession. Rawalpindi Police while using videos clips, launched a crackdown against kite flying and aerial firing. City Police Officer CPO Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani said that kite sellers, kite flyers will not escape from the grip of the law as they endanger the lives of citizens.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday 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 am to 02:00 pm, Rawalpindi City Circle, Bajinal Feeder, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Islamabad Feed Mill, Jatha Hathial, Pind Jhatla, Lab-II, Lab-I, Reliance Waving Mill, Bhall, Jarar Camp, Chahan, Chauntra, Rajjari, Chakri, SPD, SPF Feeders and surrounding areas.

PNCA to hold solo show

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) is all set to unveil a fantastic new solo exhibition "Art from the Heart", by Naela Chohan who uses the medium of visual arts to counter narratives against Islam, Pakistan and women in general by Muslim women in particular here on March 7. Ms. Chohan is one of the Pakistani women artist who dedicated herself to gender inequality issues. The artist is deeply inspired by Mrs. Samina Alvi, First lady of Pakistan's commitment to creating awareness about breast cancer which is serious issue globally, therefore Naela Chohan intends to have one of her painting on the particular issue auctioned with all the proceedings from the auction going towards charity.



ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Prime minister on Kashmir affairs and GB Qamar Zaman Kaira in the meeting with Chief minister GB Mohammad Khalid Khurshid Khan in Federal Capital.

Railways asks provincial govts to hand over its land

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Railways has asked the provincial governments to hand over its commercial, residential, and agricultural land to help to boost revenue of the department.

"In this regard, the Ministry of Railways had already written a letter to provincial governments urging them to give possession of the land as it was the property of the Railways," an official in the Ministry told APP.

Pakistan Railways' major portion of around 9,986 acres of land worth billion of rupees were found under illegal occupation of private, individual and different government departments across the country, he added.

The official said that as many as 3,287 acres land were occupied in Punjab, 832 acres under encroachment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,180

acres in Sindh, and 687 acres of land were occupied in Balochistan.

However, he said Pakistan Railways had retrieved as many as 986 acres of its land worth million of rupees during various anti-encroachment operations across the country from the land grabbers.

"Around 484 acres retrieved in Punjab, 141 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 335 acres in Sindh and only 26 acres in Balochistan," he added.

He said about 3,287 acres in Punjab, 832 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,180 acres in Sindh, and 687 acres of land in Balochistan had been encroached by various parties. The official said Pakistan Railways had also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grabbers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals,

groups, and even business organizations that were using it for residential, commercial, and agricultural purposes for decades.

"The encroachment operation will be launched with the assistance of Railway Police and district administrations of the relevant provincial governments," he added.

He said the government was taking several steps to retrieve encroached land from the land grabbers, including a detailed survey being carried out to identify the encroached land, occupied by the individuals and under illegal occupation by various government departments. The official said Pakistan Railways owned 167,690 acres of land across the country, of which 90,326-acre was in Punjab, 39,428-acre in Sindh, 28,228-acre in Balochistan, and 9,708-acre in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Hostels of QAU evacuated

ISLAMABAD (APP): The administration of Quaid-e-Azam University (QAU) has got vacated the hostels of the institution with the help of the police.

The university administration and parents thanked Minister of Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan and the Islamabad Capital Police for their timely action.

Minister for Interior said that politics will not be allowed in educational institutions and any kind of disruption in educational matters will not be tolerated. He said the atmosphere of educational institutions will be made conducive to research as well as creative matters and violent incidents will be discouraged.

A case has also been registered against the miscreants at the request of the university administration, Islamabad Capital Police's counter-extremism unit is also in contact with other educational institutions and visiting there.

A special police force will be deployed in educational institutions so that safe educational activities can be ensured there.

Hunza Cultural festival on March 4

ISLAMABAD (APP): Hunza Cultural Forum (HCF) will hold a colorful cultural festival featuring music, dances, food, awards, film festival, arts and crafts showcase here on March 4 at Jinnah Sports Complex. The two-day festival will announce the awards for "High Achievers and Contributors" in categories of Education, Innovation and Creativity, Arts and Culture, Sports and Fitness, Socio Economic Contribution and Entrepreneurship.

Hunza Cultural and Development Forum is an indigenous platform that strives towards the sustainability and revival of Hunza Culture and Heritage. The festival focuses on promoting cultural heritage, arts and crafts, lifestyle and tourism of Hunza to the culture and fun lovers to highlight various aspects of life in Hunza valley and preserve the indigenous folk heritage. The event offers a unique opportunity to the members of Hunza Community, where they can interact socially and professionally, practice and promote heritage and culture, share concepts and ideas and network.

All problems of GB to be addressed on priority basis: Kaira

ISLAMABAD (APP): Advisor to the Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira, and the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Khalid Khurshid discussed the constitutional issues of Gilgit-Baltistan and the plan of mutual consultation regarding the determination and supply of wheat price.

According to a statement issued on Wednesday, a detailed exchange was held during the meeting about the security situation in Gilgit-Baltistan, development projects, budget issues, and wheat supply.

Qamar Zaman Kaira said he had met the Prime Minister regarding salaries, development projects, and wheat supply in Gilgit-Baltistan.

He said he will continue to solve the problems of Gilgit-Baltistan regardless of any political affiliation.

He said the whole country was facing problems due to the prevailing economic crisis, however, relevant forums would be approached to solve the economic problems of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Last year, Kaira added, the budgets of all the provinces were cut, but the annual budget of Gilgit-Baltistan was maintained.

In the meeting, wheat supply and prices were also discussed in detail. It was also agreed upon to set up a plan of action regarding wheat price determination and supply with mutual consultation of all political parties. Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Khalid Khurshid said budget problems were faced with reference to PSDP projects, ADP projects, and salaries. "Reforms are being introduced in the fields of education, health, and agriculture."

Over 31 portals, 15 mobile applications developed by NITB

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Information Technology Board (NITB) is playing an active role in implementing e-governance programs and during the last 4 years, the NITB developed and launched more than 31 portals and over 15 mobile applications. An official of IT said that under the paperless track program, NITB ensured the implementation of e-office in 40 ministries and over 100 departments.

He said Ignite's eight incubation centers have created an entrepreneurial vibe in the country which is helping in establishing new startups in almost every sector. He said start-ups of the National Incubation Centers established in the country, received an investment of \$20 million from various sources last year.

Under the National Freelance Training Program initiated and funded by the Ministry of IT, as many as 20 training centres were established across the country. As many 8,647 graduates, he said, were trained through international standard IT courses, and these students contributed to the country's economy by earning \$23 million through freelancing after training. During the year 2022, around 1,638 new IT companies got registered with Pakistan Software Export Board, while 761 call centres and 1463 freelancers were also registered with the PSEB. He said that about 33

million people registered themselves for freelancing courses under the DG Skills Programs of Ignite, which is 75% more than the target. By June 2022, the freelancers trained with DG Skills have earned a whopping \$290 million, adding to the country's foreign exchange reserve.

Replying to a question, he said, foreign direct investment in the telecom sector had exceeded 1.2 billion dollars. While the Telecom revenue was Rs 605 billion in August 2018, which reached Rs 694 billion by December 2022 with an increase of Rs 89 billion, he added.

He said, "The total volume of the telecom industry has reached 16.9 billion million dollars."

Ministry renovates 2,093 houses, flats in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Works Department (PWD), Ministry of Housing and Works has upgraded and renovated as many as 2,093 houses and flats in various sectors of Islamabad, during the last five years. "The PWD has carried out EM works of as many as 1,114 flats and houses, while civil work is executed on around 979 of different categories, an official in the ministry told APP.

The official said the ministry owned as many as 5,253 houses and flats of categories-I to categories-V located in various sectors in the federal capital.

To a question, he said the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was responsible for the maintenance and renovation of Pak Secretariat, Islamabad, therefore, no fund had been spent on ministry's renovation.

He said the Finance Division had already slashed the budget while making allocations. Hence, no funds had been surrendered to Finance Division, and all the funds allocated during 2021-22 in relevant heads were utilized by the general section, he added. The official said the PWD had started sending notices to the allottees of government accommodation in Sector I-9/4 about payment of electric meter bills for water motors installed at residential blocks. He said the Finance Division had allocated funds for payment of utilities in the relevant heads of accounts of the users while utility bills of the residential accommodation, including hostels, rest houses and judicial residences should be paid by the users.

Education and enforcement campaign of traffic police in full swing

ISLAMABAD (APP): The campaign of Islamabad Traffic Police to educate road users and ensure the implementation of traffic laws is in full swing.

The main objective of this road safety campaign is to ensure the safety of people while road users are being educated about traffic rules. Following directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, Chief Traffic Officer Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer has constituted special teams to educate road users, control

violations on various roads and ensure smooth flow of traffic in the city.

During this campaign, action is being ensured against underage bikers, rash drivers and those violating traffic rules. Under the supervision of Chief Traffic Officer Islamabad, zonal DSPs are ensuring strict action against those violating traffic rules.

Pamphlets and leaflets are being distributed to create awareness among citizens while various police are educating people about road safety rules.

Parents are also requested to fulfill their responsibility, while also abiding by the law and forbidding the minor children to drive a car or motorbike. He added that the purpose of such a campaign was aimed to protect the precious lives of citizens. Chief Traffic Officer has appealed to the parents to demonstrate responsibility by not allowing their young children to ride bikes or cars to avoid accidents. He said that the purpose of the operation was aimed to protect precious lives.



ISLAMABAD: UN Women Delegation led by Country Representative Sharmela Rassool called on Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf at Parliament House.

Sanjrani stresses greater coordination to speed up development projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Wednesday emphasised the need for greater coordination among stakeholders to speed up the development process of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Talking to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali, he said the role of the Senate was to promote national cohesion and harmony. Senate provides equal representation to all the provinces. Senate was striving hard

to bring less developed areas at par with the developed areas.

Both the dignitaries discussed public welfare measures and other issues. Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani informed the Governor about the upcoming golden jubilee celebrations of the Senate and said that considering the economic situation of the country, it has been decided that the celebrations would remain simple. The Chairman said that the Golden Jubilee of the

Senate was a historic occasion and it would help us to highlight the importance of promoting national unity.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali thanked Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani and emphasized enhancing coordinated support. The governor said that with the cooperation of the federation, measures were being taken to improve the quality of life of the people and development projects in the entire province, especially in the merged districts.

Meeting health needs of married women crucial to save lives

ISLAMABAD (APP): There is a need for comprehensive and multi-faceted strategies to improve access to reproductive healthcare services for young mothers and their families. The low social status of women and lack of family planning information and services contribute to the reproductive health challenges for women, especially adolescent mothers, stressed the experts while addressing the members of the Media Coalition, comprised of media personnel from all provinces representing all major media outlets of Pakistan, press release issued by the Population Council said on Wednesday.

Media Coalition of Population Council highlights health and family planning issues besides the cross-sectoral impact of rapid population growth periodically to raise awareness and hold governments accountable for service delivery of family planning and information.

The Population Council, in collaboration with UNFPA, organized the Media Coalition Meeting to mark the forthcoming International Women's Day in which media personnel were briefed on the reproductive health needs of young women in Pakistan.

The meeting highlighted youth, in particular, at the risk of experiencing poor reproductive health in Pakistan, which is associated with adverse consequences such as early childbearing and parenthood, pregnancy complications, and maternal death and disability. The meeting also drew a comparison between the reproductive health of adolescents in Pakistan and other regional countries. The role of the media in highlighting this issue was also discussed at length during the meeting.

Dr. Ali Mir, Senior Director of Programs,

at the Population Council urged stressed the elimination of early marriages by utilizing existing media and communications networks and encouraged journalists to play an active role in this regard. He also said, "Reaching out to young couples with accurate, reliable and credible information on reproductive health, pre-marital counselling on family planning and greater investments in education and employment opportunities for young couples particularly young married women are very much needed." Briefing the media, Ikram ul Ahad, Senior Communication Officer at the Population Council presented new estimates produced jointly by the Guttmacher Institute and the Population Council, which reveal critical gaps in reproductive health services for young married women of reproductive age (15-19) in Pakistan. Findings show that simultaneously expanding both modern contraceptive services and maternal care would not only maximize benefits to women but would also be an efficient use of funds. Currently, 397,000 young women (15-19) give birth in Pakistan, and more than half of them make fewer than the recommended four antenatal care visits, and 126,000 do not deliver in a health facility.

The most common causes of maternal deaths among young mothers in Pakistan are hypertension, followed by unsafe abortion. Mr. Ahad also presented comparative data on family planning, health and women empowerment indicators of regional countries which showed Pakistan's lacklustre performance against most of the indicators. If all needs of contraceptive, maternal, and newborn health-care, and abortion cares for young Pakistani mothers were met, unintended pregnancies would be reduced from 221,000 to 62,000 per year.

UK to invest in mines sector

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Mines and Petroleum, Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar met with Derian Hashen a UK investor, in Kabul. The two sides discussed investments in various sectors, mainly in the mining sector of Afghanistan, said the Ministry in a statement. The UK investor Mr. Derian Hashen ask to invest in Afghanistan's mines, which was welcomed by the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum of Afghanistan and promised all kinds of cooperation, said the Ministry.

Needy families received aid

SAMANGAN (Agencies): The World Food Programme (WFP) distributed cash assistance to over 10,000 poor and drought-affected families in the city of Aybak, the center of Samangan province of Afghanistan on Wednesday. The Provincial Head of Economy Department of Samangan province of Afghanistan, Abdul Rehman Qadri, told this news agency that from 10,550 needy families each received 6,400 Afghanis in cash.

Restrictions on Afghan women discussed

UNITED NATIONS (TOLONews): The representatives of several countries at the meeting of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva expressed concerns over the existing restrictions on Afghan women and girls. Hala Mazyad Al-Tuwaijri, the president of the Saudi Human Rights Commission, at the UN Human Rights Council, said Saudi Arabia calls on Kabul to rescind its decisions so women can "fully enjoy their rights without discrimination." German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said that Germany will make sure to continue to help all Afghans who "need water, who need food, who need medicine." "We know that our efforts will not change the brutal violation of Afghan's women's rights... But it matters. It matters to every

single woman who is not allowed to go outside," she said. "It matters to every single child who wants to go to school." UN special rapporteur for Afghan human rights, Richard Bennett, in a report expressed concerns over the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. Bennett said that the recent edicts of the Afghan caretaker government affected the humanitarian delivery and economy of the country. He said that the economy experienced a further dramatic decline of around 30-35 percent in 2021-2022. The deputy foreign minister of Turkey, Mehmet Kemal Bozay, said that the international community must not allow the situation in Afghanistan to deteriorate "even further." "We remind the interim government that recent

limitations on women such as those on the right to education are not human," he said. However, the deputy spokesman for the Islamic Emirate, Bilal Karimi said that the rights of women are ensured in an Islamic structure. "Regarding the internal issues of our country, the Islamic Emirate adjusts itself based on the Islamic laws and based on the notions of the people of Afghanistan and no country should be worried about it," he said. This comes as the permanent mission of Afghanistan in Geneva said on Twitter that the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, Hissein Ibrahim Taha, spoke in Geneva and, reiterated the OIC's condemnation of Kabul's edicts banning women from education and work, saying: "It is against our religion."

Ministry cancels paperwork

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Finance said that a form for the transfer of fruit and vegetables has been canceled. The spokesman of this ministry pledged to provide more facilities for traders in the country's customs areas. "Fruit and vegetables spoil soon and face traders with big economic issues, said Ahmad Wali Haqmal, spokesman of the Finance Ministry. "It's good to work for Afghanistan exports as has been done by the customs department," said Mohammad Younus Momand, the acting head of the chamber of commerce and investment. Meanwhile, some traders said that the cancellation of this form will increase the ease of transit for fruit and vegetables and prevent their spoiling. "With this decision of the Finance Ministry we can transfer our produce without any form to other provinces," said Zalmai Azimi, a trader. Earlier the Ministry of Finance of the Islamic Emirate provided numbers saying that in eleven months, the Islamic Emirate's revenue from customs had reached 100 billion afghani.

IE diplomats restart activities

KABUL (TOLONews): Diplomats of the Islamic Emirate restarted official activities in Afghanistan's consulate in Istanbul on Monday, a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. The deputy spokesman of the Foreign Ministry said that efforts are underway to provide consular services as well as diplomatic services. "The Foreign Ministry clarifies that, the diplomats of the foreign ministry in Istanbul of Turkey resumed their work officially," said Zia Ahmad Takal, deputy spokesman for the Foreign Ministry. "They want to bring changes just to strengthen the government of the Islamic Emirate," said Wali Frozan, a political analyst. The former diplomats believe that transferring embassies to the caretaker government of Afghanistan will be effective in improving the world's relations with Afghanistan. "Transferring the embassies or consulates of Iran and Turkey... means the strengthening of relations and it also means the unannounced recognition of the Islamic Emirate," said Aziz Maarij, a former diplomat. "Another reason that these missions have been handed over (to the Islamic Emirate) is the secret relations of the diplomats with the Islamic Emirate during the time of the former government," said Fahim Kohdamani, a former diplomat. Fazal Mohammad Haqqani, a former diplomat of the Islamic Emirate, took responsibility of the Afghanistan embassy in Tehran.

Youth Affairs Dept sign agreement with varsities



KABUL (TOLONews): An agreement signed between the youth affairs department of the Ministry of Information and Culture and 40 private universities in Kabul. The Deputy of Youth in the Ministry of Information and Culture said that according to the agreement, a place to stay will be provided for one thousand low income young people. Deputy Mohammad Yunus Rashid said that the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is committed

to the development of youth and always supports employment and training programs for youth. "Afghanistan youth need education because Afghanistan's future is related to them; if our youth are educated, Afghanistan will have a bright future," said Mohammad Yunus Rashid. Meanwhile, private university officials said that they will provide education for youth and added that recent restrictions on female students have creat-

ed challenges. "The recent restriction on education by Islamic Emirate has caused some universities to delay their activities," said Ziaullah Shafiq, an official at Mili University. "We call on Islamic Emirate to provide more facilities so universities can continue their activities," said Sher Ali Zarifi, head of the Dawat University. Meanwhile, some Kabul residents welcomed this work of the youth affairs

department. "We asked the Islamic Emirate to provide more facilities, so people don't flee to other countries," said Jawed, a Kabul resident. "In order to raise the level of our education, they should make the academic departments strong," said Sayedullah, a Kabul resident. The youth affairs department in the ceremony said they will try to create work opportunities for educated youth.

Vendors complain of drop in sales

KABUL (TOLONews): Some sellers of saplings and flowers in Kabul are worried about the drop in their sales, saying that people cannot buy the saplings and flowers they need due to economic problems. "Our customers were more last year but this year we just have 10 customers a day," said Farhad, a seller. "There was a time when there was no room in this shop and we didn't even have time to eat bread and drink tea," said Abdul Mobin, a seller. Meanwhile, some other

sellers of saplings and flowers said that the selling price has decreased. "In the previous government, the price was high but now the prices have decreased because lots of the people have left the country," said Abdul Sami, a seller. A number of Kabul residents said that planting saplings plays an important role in improving the environment. "One benefit is that it's good for the environment and it doesn't allow the environment to be polluted," said Abdul Sabir, a seller.

Meanwhile, Kabul municipality wanted the residents of the capital to participate in adding to the greenery of Kabul. "If one resident plants a tree, and preserves and takes care of it, waters it, this itself is a charity," said Habib Rahman Mansor, a Municipality employee. Last week, the nationwide campaign to plant saplings started in Kabul and some other provinces, and it is expected that 600,000 saplings will be planted in Kabul in the coming year.

Transport Dept's annual revenue increased



JALALABAD (Agencies): Departments of transportation traffic of Nangarhar province shared their annual report about their achievement in a media conference on Wednesday. The provincial traffic department chief, Qari Mohammad Javad Sheirzad said that his department distributed driving licenses to 5,720 people and vehicle licenses to 744 people from which 8,964,269 Afghanis collected in revenue this

solar year. According to unofficial figures, there are about 100,000 vehicles in the province, he said. He added that 40 people died and 102 people were injured in 85 traffic accidents in the province in the outgoing solar year. On the other hand, Mufti Mohammad Zaman Mozamil said, transportation department chief of Nangarhar said that since the establishment of Islamic Emirate, all opera-

tions of the Torkham terminal have been handed over to the department of transportation, a move that helped to reduce traffic congestion in Torkham port. He said that the they collected 53 million Afghani revenue this year compared to 35 million Afghanis collected last year. He said that the department is continuously working to standardize the transportation system of the province.

Unemployment caused by climate change encourages militancy

KABUL (Pajhwok): Scientists and experts have long warned against the destructive impacts of climate change and urged that the phenomenon could lead to militancy, unemployment and other social and security challenges in parts of the world. According to a report in the National Observer some experts say in some countries that connection is playing out in a disturbing way as people displaced or jobless by climate-related disasters in fragile states and war zones are driven to join militias, insurgencies or criminal organizations just to survive. "I lost my income because of the drought, so I joined the armed group and fought for them to earn money," said Norullah, who lives in

Afghanistan and whose name has been changed for fear of retribution. "This is not what I wanted. Our family is farmers, but in the past few years, we couldn't grow enough crops from our land and couldn't earn enough income. There was no other job opportunity and joining the armed was the only option I had." When the armed group paid soldiers as much as \$300 a month, American magazine WIRED reported. That was an irresistible sum, considering the average Afghan's annual income was only \$390 a year. Stories like Norullah's are common and contributed to the armed group fight, said Seddiq Seddiqi, Afghanistan's former deputy minister of the interior who now lives in Canada.

"Persistent droughts, population displacement because of the drought, poverty and livelihood insecurity were the main drivers to Afghanistan's conflict and contributed to the recruitment of young people into armed militancy and insurgency," said Seddiqi. "Climate change in Afghanistan played a significant role in causing an existential threat to national security, and acted as a risk multiplier contribution to the fragility of the governance and the functions of the legitimate state at the national level." Afghanistan is ranked sixth in the world for countries most impacted by climate change and one of the least prepared against climate shocks, according to the 2021 Global Climate Risk

Index. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) says Afghanistan is in the grip of one of the worst droughts and food shortage crises in decades. "Severe drought has hit more than 80 per cent of the country, crippling food production and forcing people from their land. Nearly 700,000 people have been internally displaced in 2021, joining some 3.5 million people already forced from their homes throughout the country," the IFRC website reads. Note: This story was produced in partnership with Journalists for Human Rights for the Afghan Journalists-in-Residence program funded by the Meta Journalism Project.

All elements of Doha agreement to be implemented: Annas Haqani

KABUL (Khaama Press): Annas Haqqani, a senior Taliban member says that Doha Agreement paved the way to end a prolonged war in Afghanistan, so other elements of the peace deal should be implemented as well. Shahabuddin Delawar, the Minister of Mines and Petroleum of the Islamic Emirate has said that con-

trary to the Doha Agreement, the United States acts against Afghanistan's political sovereignty by violating the country's airspace. Minister Delawar reiterated that the Taliban interim government has implemented all elements of the peace agreement, and so should America remain faithful to its commitments. Furthermore, Mullah Abdul Ghani Bradar, Taliban's Deputy Prime Minister, who signed the agreement with the United States, emphasized on engaging with the world, while addressing in a gathering which commemorated the third anniversary of the Doha peace agreement.

Mullah Bradar stated that the Taliban group is fully committed to engaging with the international community, and so should others show their genuine intentions in this regard. Taliban's Deputy Prime Minister criticized the US for illegally freezing the assets of Afghanistan Central Bank, and not allowing the International Community to engage with the Taliban group. Following nine rounds of discussions, negotiators signed a peace agreement in February 2020 that addresses cease-fire, withdrawal of foreign forces, intra-Afghan negotiations and counterterrorism assur-

ances. This comes as many Afghan politicians and political analysts describe the Doha Agreement between the Taliban and the US, as the main reason for the collapse of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Contrary to the Taliban members' claims, the humanitarian aid organizations and foreign governments accuse the group of violating human rights – the rights of women and girls to work, learn, and appear in public places. The de facto authorities of Afghanistan are also accused of discriminating against religious minorities, political parties, and ethnic groups.

IEA asks ICRC to cooperat in transferring bodies

KABUL (Agencies): The country's Foreign Ministry, in statement asked the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) to cooperate in searching and transporting the bodies of those Afghans who recently drowned in Italian waters. Sharing condolences to the families of a number of Afghans who lost their lives in the wreck ship at the coast of Italy, the country's Foreign Ministry for asked cooperation of the International Committee of the Red Cross, in searching and transporting the bodies of Afghans. "We regretfully learned that nearly eight Afghan nationals, including women and children, who were traveling by sea from Turkey to Italy in a wooden boat, have died as a result of their boat sinking. The Islamic Emirate prays for forgiveness for the martyrs and patience for their families and relatives, added to the statement.

Japan donates \$30m to support children

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) announced that Japan has donated \$30.5 to support children's education, health, and nutrition in Afghanistan and Myanmar. Karin Hulshof – Deputy Executive Director Partnerships of UNICEF said on Twitter regarding the \$30.5 assistance from Japan, and Tokyo's continuous support for vulnerable children in Afghanistan and Myanmar. Ms. Hulshof further added that universal health coverage will provide every child in the rejoin and beyond so that no child experiences health insecurity among other issues. Prior to this, the government of Japan had donated more than \$106 million as

part of humanitarian projects and to meet the necessary requirements of the people of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Japan's Embassy in Kabul said that Tokyo has donated \$335 to Afghanistan since the Islamic Emirate seized power in August 2021. The United Nations had described Afghanistan as the worst place for children in its earlier reports – adding that more than 14 million Afghan children were in desperate need of humanitarian aid in the war-torn country in 2022. Furthermore, clean water, food, shelter, healthcare services, and mental health therapy is an essential need for children who have been affected by elements of economic instabil-

ity, hunger, and poverty. Japan remains a friendly country and has ejected millions of dollars to support children's education, health, and other developmental programs in Afghanistan over the past two decades. Tokyo reopened its embassy in Kabul months after the Taliban overtook Kabul, and continued delivering life-saving humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan during these difficult times. In the meantime, Japan maintains close ties with the Afghan interim government and has repeatedly called on Afghanistan's de facto authorities to lift the gender-based restrictions barring women and girls from education and word.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi administering oath from Fauzia Waqar as Federal Ombudsperson for Protection against Harassment at workplace.

Erdogan indicates elections to be in May

ISTANBUL (Agencies): President Tayyip Erdogan indicated on Wednesday that elections will be held on May 14, sticking to his previous plan for the vote with a date just over three months after a devastating earthquake killed more than 45,000 people in Türkiye.

"This nation will do what is necessary on May 14, God willing," Erdogan said in a speech to lawmakers from his ruling AK Party in parliament, in an apparent reference to elections seen as representing his biggest-ever political challenge. There had been conflicting signals over the likely timing of the presidential and parliamentary elections since last month's earthquake, with some suggesting they could be postponed until later in the year or could be held as scheduled on June 18.

Before the disaster, Erdogan's popularity had been eroded in recent years by soaring inflation and a slump in the lira which hit living standards, although some opinion polls in recent months had shown signs of a pick-up in his support. Erdogan has faced a wave of criticism over his government's handling of the deadliest quake in the nation's modern history. But he defended Ankara's response on Wednesday, saying it had been caught up in "a storm of earthquakes". "We will build better buildings in place of those which collapsed. We will win hearts and we will unroll a new future in front of our people," he said in a speech accompanied by a video showing all the state had done in response to the disaster.

Erdogan, aiming to extend his rule into a third decade, had previously said he was bringing the votes forward to May to avoid holidays in June. Doubts have been expressed over election authorities' ability to make logistical arrangements for those affected in the quake zone, home to some 14 million people, to vote. Election officials are vis-

iting the region this week to prepare a report on its preparedness.

Erdogan rose to power 20 years ago as Türkiye grappled with a severe economic crisis in 2001 and chronic corruption that crippled institutions. The coalition of that time had faced accusations of mishandling a devastating 1999 earthquake. Now he also must contend with criticism over the response to the quake in a region that traditionally backed him. He took 55 per cent of the vote in the 10 quake hit-provinces in a 2018 presidential election and his party and its partners won the same level of support in a parliamentary election. Some Turks in one of the areas worst hit by the quake voiced disappointment on Wednesday at the state response to the disaster, which they said had a negative impact on people's views of the government.

"Everyone here votes for the AKP instinctively. But help arrived here very late. People are having second thoughts," said a market owner in the town of Narli, 20 kilometres from the first quake's epicentre. "I don't believe the opposition is up to the task either. But we need fundamental change," said 70-year-old farmer Mehmet from the village of Igdeli. Earlier on Wednesday, the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) said the death toll in Türkiye had risen to 45,089, bringing the total toll including Syria to about 51,000. The quake also injured 108,000 people in Türkiye.

Ankara faces a huge challenge in repairing the immense destruction caused by the earthquake and subsequent powerful tremors, which left millions sheltering in tents or seeking to move to other cities. Erdogan has pledged to rebuild homes within a year but it will be many months before thousands can swap tents or containers and queues for food handouts for permanent housing.

PM orders new passport counters in NADRA centres

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed to set up counters of passport issuing officers at the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) centres to facilitate the applicants.

The prime minister in this regard asked NADRA and the Directorate General of Immigration and Passports to share their resources to materialize the collaboration. Chairing a meeting on hassle-free access to passports and computerized national identity cards (CNICs), he said the step would not only facilitate the general public but also reduce the burden on national exchequer.

Shehbaz Sharif directed that all the previously approved new passport

offices would be set up as counters at the NADRA centres. He also instructed to increase the number of mobile vans of NADRA to provide doorstep service to CNIC applicants. For the renewal of CNICs, the meeting was informed that NADRA was set to launch a new mobile phone application for consumers. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, Education Minister Rana Tanvir Hussain, Chairman NADRA, the Director General Immigration and Passports and senior officials attended the meeting.

Solar panels be installed at capital's public buildings within 7 weeks: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed for the installation of solar-powered panels at government

buildings in the capital within seven weeks. He said the step would reduce reliance on imported fuel besides generating environment-friendly electricity.

Chairing a review meeting on the progress of solar project, the prime minister directed the authorities to complete the installation of solar projects on emergency basis. The meeting was informed that 496 solar panels would be installed in Islamabad, 340 in big cities including Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad and Quetta, and 1,255 panels at other public buildings.

Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, the federal ministers including Khwaja Asif, Ishaq Dar, PM's Adviser Ahad Khan Cheema, PM's Special Assistant Jahanzeb Khan and relevant officials, attended the meeting.

IHC suspends de-notification of three PTI MNAs

ISLAMABAD (INP): In another immediate relief to the PTI, the Islamabad High Court on Wednesday suspended NA Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf's notification regarding the acceptance of PTI MNAs' resignations from Islamabad.

Issuing the interim order on petitions filed by Asad Umar, Ali Nawaz Awan and Raja Khurram Nawaz, the IHC also suspended the process of by-elections in the petitioners' constituencies. IHC judge heard a petition filed by 3 PTI MNAs including former finance minister Asad Umar, Ali Nawaz Awan, and Khurram Nawaz, challenging two notifications – one issued by the National Assembly speaker through which their resignations were accepted and the second of ECP in which they had been de-notified.

In the petition, they stated

that on 11-04-2022, en-masse letters were obtained by PTI from 123 members of the National Assembly, including the petitioners, and submitted accordingly.

"The resignations were forwarded to ECP on 28.07.2022 in terms of Rule 43 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly 2007, whereupon ECP, vide notification dated 29.07.2022, de-notified those eleven MNAs. In doing so the Speaker did not follow the requirements of Article 64 as laid down by the Superior Courts of Pakistan, for acceptance of resignations," maintained the petitioners. The IHC decision comes days after the Lahore High Court (LHC) suspended the order of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) that denotified the party's lawmakers elected from Punjab.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had announced resignations from the National Assembly on April 11 last year, minutes before the election of Shehbaz Sharif as the new prime minister. After the suspension of de-notification order of three more PTI MNAs, the by-polls will be held on 18 NA seats on March 16. The by-polls will be held in the following constituencies: NA-04 Swat-III, NA-17 Haripur-I, NA-18 Swabi-I, NA-25 Nowshera-I, NA-26 Nowshera-II, NA-32 Kohatm NA-38 D I Khan-I, NA-43 Khyber-I, NA-241 Korangi Karachi-III, NA-242 Karachi East-I, NA-243 Karachi East-II, NA-244 Karachi East-III, NA-247 Karachi South-II, NA-250 Karachi West-III, NA-252 Karachi West-V, NA-254 Karachi Central-II, NA-256 Karachi Central-IV, NA-265 Quetta-II.

Imran's comical 'Jail Bharo' show ends in fiasco

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb Wednesday said the comic show – 'Jail Bharo' (court arrest) campaign – of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan, had proved to be a complete fiasco.

The movement would, in fact, start with Imran Khan being jailed for the crimes he had committed while in government, she said in a post on her Twitter handle, tagging a tweet of the PTI chief announcing to end his party's court arrest drive.

She recalled that (as prime minister) it was Imran Khan's responsibility to safeguard the Constitution, but he forced the president, and the National Assembly speaker and deputy speaker to violate the Constitution on the pretext of a 'foreign conspiracy', which was a total lie. "It will be a mockery of the Constitution and law if 'the foreign agent, Tosha Khana thief and violator of the Constitution, were not brought to justice,'" she said.

Govt not to challenge SC verdict on polls

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government on Wednesday decided not to file a review plea against the Supreme Court (SC) verdict regarding elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within 90 days.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a meeting of PML-N leaders in which the party president decided not to challenge the apex court verdict. PM Sharif also consulted party supreme Nawaz Sharif on the SC verdict in the suo motu notice.

Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar and Attorney General for Pakistan Shehzad Ata Elahi briefed the meeting that the SC gave a 4-3 verdict and disposed of the petitions. The prime minister agreed with the party's legal team that advised against challenging the apex court verdict. It was suggested that instead of the Supreme Court, the decisions of the high courts will be awaited. The PM will also establish contact with heads of the coalition parties on the SC verdict, and discuss the further course of action.

The PML-N legal team devised a strategy and decided to wait for the verdict of the Lahore High Court (LHC) on the general elections in the two provinces. The Election Commission of Pakistan and the Punjab governor had moved the high court against an order of a single bench regarding fixation of date for holding elections in Punjab.

President phones families of martyrs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi expressed his condolences over the telephone to the families of the martyrs of the attack in North Waziristan.

Sepoy Afzal Khan and Sepoy Imranullah were martyred on February 26 in North Waziristan. The President expressed his condolences over the phone to Sepoy Afzal Khan's father and Sepoy Imranullah's brother.

Maryam asks workers to identify culprits responsible for country's economic woes

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz on Tuesday asked her party workers to start preparations for elections, enhance interaction with people and apprise them about characters who were responsible for inflation and economic destruction of the country.

Presiding over a meeting of Party's youth and social media wing in Sahiwal, she said the youth was the precious asset of the country. PML-N has always provided youth the opportunities to progress. PML-N would play a historic role in driving the country out of the crisis.

In the meeting, the organizational structure of the youth wing was reviewed while consultations were held on the expansion of the youth wing. Maryam Nawaz said that the youth must understand the difference between truth and lies. She said that providing education and training to the youth was the key to the development of Pakistan as Muslim League (N) has given books and laptops to the youth for this purpose.

She further said that former prime minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif had initiated a youth program and Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif had further extended this project. Maryam Nawaz said that the increasing participation of women and youth organizations in party conventions was a real change, adding that the workers had to play an important and historical role to drive the country out of the crisis.

LHC to hear contempt plea against Maryam on 6th

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court's (LHC) Justice Shujaat Ali Khan on Wednesday fixed the hearing of a contempt plea against PML-N chief organizer Maryam Nawaz for March 6.

Justice Khan heard the plea seeking contempt proceedings against the PML-N senior vice president over allegedly making contemptuous remarks during her speech at a party convention in Sargodha. The high court sought from the petitioner, Advocate Rana Shahid, past verdicts as to how this contempt of court petition could be heard. The petitioner sought time to present the previous verdicts, which the LHC granted, and set March 6 for the next hearing. The LHC clubbed numerous petitions against Maryam's speech for hearing on March 6. At the outset of the proceedings, the petitioner shed light on the contemptuous remarks made by Ms Nawaz during her speech.

Meanwhile, a district and sessions court on Wednesday summoned Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior vice president and chief organizer Maryam Nawaz in the contempt case filed over scandalous remarks against judges of the Supreme Court. Additional Sessions Judge Muntaz Solangi has directed Maryam Nawaz on March 10. He has also summoned SSP Sukkur and Federal Investigation Authority (FIA) officers in the case. The petition was filed by the PTI district Sukkur president Zaheer Babar, alleging that the PML-N stalwart had defamed the institutions.

Addressing a workers' convention in Sargodha last week, the PML-N chief organizer had expressed reservations over some of the judges of the top court's nine-member bench formed to take up the suo motu notice on delay in Punjab and KP polls. A day earlier, former Attorney General of Pakistan Anwar Mansoor Khan wrote a letter to Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial, seeking action against Maryam Nawaz for "scandalising courts and personalised criticism of judges". The senior advocate, in his letter, referred to a speech made by the PML-N leader on Feb 23 in Sargodha where she came hard on the former serving judges of the Supreme Court for allegedly conspiring against his father Nawaz Sharif.

crisis.

During the meeting, the office bearers of PML-N Sahiwal also presented suggestions to strengthen the youth wing. Pakistan Muslim League

Nawaz (PML-N)'s Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz instructed the party workers to start preparations for the elections and increase public contact in this regard.

PTI to begin election campaign from 4th: Imran

LAHORE (Agencies): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan Wednesday announced his party will begin its election campaign on March 4 and end its 'Jail Bharo Tehreek (court arrest movement)' following the Supreme Court's decision on Wednesday.

"After the verdict, we ended 'Jail Bharo' movement. We are starting the election campaign on Saturday," the PTI chief said during an address via video link from Lahore. The party's decision came after the Supreme Court, in a split verdict, ruled that elections for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab assemblies should be held within 90 days.

In the verdict, the apex court noted that there are "different aspects and requirements" for holding polls but ruled that one thing that was "absolutely crucial is the timeframe" for the polls. It added that Constitution envisages two periods for holding polls — 60 days in case the assembly is dissolved after its term is completed and 90 days in case the assembly is dissolved before the expiry of its term.

"Now, we will not let them [ruling parties] run away from the elections. The reason why they're running away from polls is because people are not with them," the PTI chief said referring to the Pakistan Democratic Movement

(PDM) — a coalition of nine parties. The ousted prime minister, whose government was sent home after a no-confidence motion in April last year, said the PDM-led "government feels threatened" by the polls.

Khan added that since his government's removal, his party has won 30 by-polls out of 37. He further shared his fears that the elections might not eventually take place due to the atmosphere in the country. Lauding the top court's decision, he said: "The Supreme Court has ruled for upholding the rule of law. Had such decisions been made earlier, Pakistan would have been the most prosperous country." Extending his support to the country's top court, Khan said that "the nation stands with you for rule of law".

Taking to Twitter earlier, Imran Khan also welcomed the Supreme Court's judgement. "We welcome the SC judgement. It was responsibility of SC to uphold Constitution & they have valiantly done that through their judgement. It is an assertion of Rule of Law in Pak," he wrote. The former prime minister said that all the five judges have asserted not delaying elections more than 90 days.

Slamming Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar for his views on the verdict, the PTI chief said: "The law minister's statement on the

Supreme Court verdict is shameful." While commenting on the judgement in the election date suo motu case, Tarar had said he believed that the petitions had been rejected by a 4-3 majority. He had added that when the case was first heard on February 23, "Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Yahya Afridi had clearly stated that these are not maintainable." "Yesterday, I was summoned to Islamabad," said Khan while referring to his appearance before multiple Islamabad courts on Tuesday in connection with the different cases filed against him. The deposed premier received bail from two courts and another issued non-bailable arrest warrants for him. He also managed to secure interim bail from the Islamabad High Court (IHC) in another case. He said a total of 74 cases had been made against him.

"The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) protested outside the ECP during our tenure, how many cases of terrorism did we file against them?" he lamented. "Numerous cases have been filed against me while I'm sitting at home." He further censured the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for bringing his "opponents to power". Khan also listed the cases against various leaders of the PML-N and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP).

MQM-P's demand accepted

ISLAMABAD (INP): The federal government has accepted the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan's (MQM-P) demand, seeking an extension in deadline for registration of families in the digital census through "self-enumeration."

The demand was accepted after a delegation of Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) met Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz

Sharif today. Sources told media that the government accepted the party's demand to extend deadline for self-enumeration by at least 10 days. The meeting also decided that every single flat will be marked instead of main entrance of multi-storey buildings. Sources further claimed that PM Shehbaz – while accepted the demands – directed authorities concerned to issue a formal order in this regard.

During the meeting, the MQM-P delegation expressed serious concern over rising inflation in the country. They also discussed country's overall political situation and concerns regarding the implementation of agreements. Party's convener Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui also expressed reservations over the non-fulfilment of agreement signed with Pakistan People's Party (PPP).



ISLAMABAD: Former Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad along with PTI's leaders talking to media persons outside Supreme Court.

COAS visits HQs Engineers Division Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (PPI): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir Wednesday visited Headquarters Engineers Division, Rawalpindi, said a statement issued by Inter Services Public Relations. COAS was briefed in detail regarding efforts carried out by Pak Army Urban Search and Rescue Team (US&RT) during Türkiye and Syria Earthquake.

COAS met and interacted with the rescue team members and appreciated their professionalism and commendable work done during rescue efforts in the earthquake. COAS highlighted the importance of our enduring strategic relations with Türkiye and Syria and need to assist, particularly in times of crises.

ECP summons meeting after SC verdict

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has summoned an 'important meeting' to mull over the Supreme Court (SC) verdict the ordered election body to hold elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa within 90 days. Sources said the ECP meeting would review the SC verdict on Punjab and KP elections.

The Supreme Court, in a 3-2 verdict, ruled on Wednesday that elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab should be held within 90 days. CJP Justice Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar supported the verdict, while Justice Jamal Mandokhail and Justice Mansoor Ali Shah opposed the admissibility of the suo moto notice and dissented from the majority verdict.

Justice Shah and Justice Mandokhail in their dissenting notes agreed with the position of Justice Yahya Afridi and Justice Athar Minallah. "The matter was already being heard in the high courts, Supreme Court cannot take suo moto notice on the undertrial cases in the high courts." The short verdict stated that the ECP failed in discharging its role in the election. The announcement of the election date in KP is the responsibility of the provincial governor, while the president has the authority as per law and constitution to fix the election date in Punjab.

The verdict further stated a consultation to fix the date of elections in Punjab, if they are not possible on April 9, the date announced by the president. Last week, the apex court took suo motu notice of the delay in holding polls in Punjab and KP. In the notice, CJP Bandial said that the SC bench would consider who is eligible to issue the date for polls, the constitutional responsibility of Centre and provinces, and who will fulfil the constitutional responsibility of conducting elections and when.