

RAWALPINDI (NNI): An Intelligence Based Operation was carried out in general area Rehman Kahul, Chaman to clear a suspected hideout of Terrorists, linked with recent terrorist incidents including planting of improvised explosive devices in Chaman and surrounding areas, the ISPR. As a result of continuous technical Surveillance and Reconnaissance of the area, a location of the Terrorists was identified.

@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

LAHORE (NNI): Ijazul Haq joined Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Former president Ziaul Haq's son met PTI Chief Imran Khan at his battered residence at Zaman Park and discussed politics. Mr Haq announced to contest the upcoming elections on PTI's ticket. Mr Haq had finished second with 72461 votes in the NA-169 Bahawalnagar's 2018 general elections against PML-N's Noorul Hassan with 91763 votes.

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIX

No. 63

Regd. No. 241

Shabaan 27 1444 -- MONDAY, MARCH 20 2023

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

Price. 20

Low income people to be provided Rs 50 per liter subsidy under petroleum package: PM

LAHORE (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said the low-income poor people will be given a subsidy of Rs 50 per liter under the petroleum relief package.

While chairing a review meeting on the relief package here, he said the petroleum relief will be given to low-income consumers who have motorcycles, rickshaws, 800 cc cars and other small cars.

He said the programme of petroleum subsidy would be started soon and a comprehensive strategy

would be formed with the cooperation of relevant departments for effective implementation of the subsidy programme.

He said motorcycles, rickshaws and small cars were used by low-income people and the petroleum subsidy would give relief to the poor.

The government was making effort for all possible help to the poor people despite its economic difficulties, he added.

Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Malik briefed about the strategy for providing petroleum

subsidy to the low-income segment of society. Minister for Finance Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Advisor to PM Ahad Cheema, Special Assistant to PM Tariq Bajwa, Secretary Finance, Secretary Petroleum and high-ranking officials attended the meeting.

PM decides to call allied parties meeting to consider current political situation: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday decided to call a meeting of the allied parties to review the current political situa-

tion on Monday.

PM Shehbaz Sharif will preside over the meeting and consider all political aspects of the situation created after the police clash with former premier Imran Khan's mob in Lahore and Islamabad.

A private news channel's report said the meeting would be held in Islamabad at 2:00 pm. In the meeting bigwigs of all the political parties included in the ruling coalition government will discuss the current political matters and the strategy for the future.



LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on relief package on petroleum products.

Nawaz Sharif, Shehbaz and Maryam discuss 'political situation' in hours-long meeting

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) top leadership, Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz, held a two-hour-long meeting to discuss the country's current political situation. Maryam Nawaz arrived at PML-N president Shehbaz Sharif's residence at Jati Umarh. Party supremo Nawaz Sharif participated in the meeting via video link.

Sources claimed that matters related to country's political and economic situation were discussed during the meeting.

The PML-N leadership also expressed 'serious concern' over 'assault' on Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

During the meeting, Nawaz Sharif

directed PM Shehbaz to ensure 'enforcement of law' at any cost. "We have always respected institutions and the judiciary."

We had always appeared before court whenever summoned," the PML-N supremo said.

Meanwhile, sources claimed that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif took Nawaz and Maryam into confidence over the meeting of allied parties – summoned tomorrow (Monday) at 02:00 pm.

Sources further said that Nawaz Sharif directed the prime minister to make decisions in consultation with the allied parties.

He also issued directives to give preference to party workers who made sacrifices in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa elections. Earlier in March, Pakistan Muslim

League-Nawaz (PML-N) constituted a parliamentary board for provincial assembly elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

PML-N supremo will head the parliamentary board while party's president Shehbaz Sharif will be part of the board.

A 32-member parliamentary board was constituted for Punjab while 30-member board for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

PML-N Senior Vice president Maryam Nawaz, Ahsan Iqbal, Khawaja Asif, Rana Sanaullah, Main Javid Lateef, Khawaja Saad Rafique and Sardar Ayaz Sadiq will be part of the parliamentary board.

PML-N parliamentary board will award party tickets to candidates contesting elections in Punjab and KP.

Govt vows action against PTI workers

LAHORE (NNI): Punjab government has vowed action against supporters of former prime minister Imran Khan for allegedly attacking a police van near his Zaman Park residence in Lahore following a search operation.

A spokesperson of the provincial government said legal action will be taken against miscreants for attacking a team of the elite force and its vehicle on the Canal Road. The police team returning from Gaddafi Stadium after performing duty for the security of the Pakistan Super League's (PSL) final match when their vehicle was intercepted by a group of stick-wielding party workers. Videos posted on social media showed the alleged PTI workers smashing van's windshield, headlights while the driver making efforts to leave the place. Another video shows the vehicle later thrown into the Canal.

Another case lodged against vandalism at judicial complex

ISLAMABAD (NNI): One more case has been lodged against the vandalism at Islamabad's judicial complex in which several Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders were nominated.

Another case was registered against vandalism at the judicial complex at the Golra police station. PTI leaders Azam Swati, Zulfi Bukhari, Atif Khan, Aamir Mughal, Naseem Abbasi, Naseer Junejo, Ali Afzal Sahi and others were nominated in the case. According to the First Information Report (FIR), the accused allegedly attacked and injured police officials. It added that they took away equipment of the Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) including three wireless sets, bomb locator, kit, laptop, X-ray unit and an ammunition box.

The case was filed at the complaint of ASI Special Branch Riazul Haq.

Earlier, Pakistan (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan and other party leaders were booked in a case pertaining to vandalism at the capital's judicial complex during his appearance at the court in the Toshakhana case.

The case was registered at the counter-terrorism department (CTD) police station under various sections of crimes including Section 7 (punishment for acts of terrorism) of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), 1997.

The PTI leaders who were named in FIR include Ali Amin Gandapur, Murad Saeed, Aamir Mehmood Kiani, Asad Qaiser, Shibli Faraz, Asad Umar, Omar Ayub Khan, Ali Nawaz

Awan, Hassaan Niazi and others. According to the FIR, the PTI workers damaged the police check post and the main gate of the judicial complex. "PTI workers were armed with stones which they threw at a checkpoint of the Dhok Kashmirian police station. They also burnt down barriers and tents at the checkpoint," the FIR stated.

It added that PTI leaders set fire to 16 government and police vehicles and four motorcycles in the parking of the JDC. "They also took 9mm pistols, Rs20,000, and a wireless set from the car."

The Judicial Complex of Islamabad on Saturday turned into a battlefield during the appearance of the PTI Chairman before the court in the Toshakhana case.

IK announces power show at Minar-e-Pakistan on Wednesday

LAHORE (NNI): Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan Sunday announced that his party would stage a power show at Minar-e-Pakistan on Wednesday (March 22), calling it a 'referendum' on where the nation stood. The former premier made these remarks while addressing the party workers and supporters a day after clashes erupted at his Zaman Park residence and at Islamabad judicial complex where he appeared before a trial court in the Toshakhana case.

"We will stage a power show at Minar-e-Pakistan on Wednesday, and it will be a referendum on where the nation stands and where the gang of thieves and their handlers stand," Imran Khan said.

The PTI Chairman strongly criticised the police operation at his residence in Lahore's Zaman Park, vowing to take legal action against law enforcers who 'barged into house'.

Imran Khan further said that the entire nation knew that he always respected the law, claiming that 96 cases had been registered against him. "Whenever I leave the house, more cases are registered against

me," he added.

He also accused the coalition government of planning the assassination attempt against him in Wazirabad.

Recalling the incidents of the past couple of weeks, Imran Khan noted that his party decided to initiate its election campaign by holding a rally in Lahore on March 8 after elections in Punjab were announced for April 30. However, he said, on the day of the gathering they started installing containers and imposed Section 144. "How can authorities imposed Section 144 after the announcement of the elections date," he questioned.

The PTI chief said that when the rally started moving towards Zaman Park, police used water cannons and tear gas against PTI workers. Subsequently, he said he decided to call off his rally because he was afraid of chaos.

"They had the plan to kill me or arrest me during his visit to Islamabad to appear before the court day before yesterday. The government and its backers are scared of elections because so far in the last eight months, out of the 37 by-elections, my party has won 30 out of

them," added Imran Khan.

The former prime minister said that the incumbent government is utilizing all tactics to postpone the elections. "The coalition government want to throw me in Balochistan jail so I am unable to hold campaign for the upcoming elections," he claimed.

Speaking of the police operation at Zaman Park, he said that a heavy contingent of police arrived at his Lahore residence over warrants issued by a magistrate. "Rangers arrived in armoured vehicles and jumped over walls," he added.

He said that the police plundered and looted my house in his absence. "Is this the job of the police to loot the valuables of a family?"

Imran Khan said that he was ready to hand himself over to the police but PTI workers stopped him from doing so. "Yesterday, when I left my house, I said my goodbyes to my wife. I knew that I would either be arrested or killed," he noted. The PTI chief further said that when he reached the toll plaza, police closed down the motorway. "They had in mind that once my car leaves, they will close it behind me so that rest of the cars cannot follow," he added.

Iran's President Raisi 'welcomes' invitation by Saudi king: official

TEHRAN (Agencies): Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has "welcomed" an invitation from Saudi Arabia's King Salman to visit the kingdom following the reconciliation deal between the two countries, an Iranian official said on Sunday.

"In a letter to President Raisi ... the king of Saudi Arabia welcomed the deal between the two brotherly countries [and] invited him to Riyadh," tweeted Mohammad Jamshidi, the Iranian president's deputy chief of staff for political affairs, adding that "Raisi welcomed

the invitation".

The two regional heavyweights announced on March 10 a Chinese-brokered deal to restore ties seven years after they were severed.

Riyadh cut relations after Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions in 2016 following the Saudi execution of revered Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr – just one in a series of flashpoints between the two longstanding regional rivals. The deal is expected to see Shia-majority Iran and mainly Sunni Saudi Arabia reopen their embassies and missions within two

months and implement security and economic cooperation deals signed more than 20 years ago. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told reporters on Sunday that the two countries had agreed to hold a meeting between their top diplomats. He added that three locations for the talks had been suggested, without specifying which.

Several Gulf countries followed in Riyadh's footsteps in 2016 and cut off ties with Tehran, though the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait have recently restored ties.

HISTORIC INITIATIVE Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

SPECIAL EXAMINATION



SPECIAL RELAXATIONS

Maximum Age Limit increased to 35 Years

4th Chance Allowed

Eligibility: Minorities Punjab, KP & AJ&K Women KP General Candidate Sindh (Urban & Rural), Balochistan (Rural) & Ex Tribal District

Last Date for Online Application Extended till 21st March, 2023 Don't apply again if you have already applied.



Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of Pakistan

GovtofPakistan
GovernmentofPakistan
www.moib.gov.pk
www.fpsc.gov.pk

Scan this QR Code for more information



PID(1)5793-D/22



Caretaker CM visits free flour distribution points

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday visited a centre, set up at a Model Town area school for distribution of free flour, under the Special Ramadan relief package.

He reviewed verification process of people coming there to get free flour. He inquired from people at the centre about problems being faced by them in getting free flour.

The caretaker CM directed the deputy commissioner to redress complaints of citizens. He ordered for making the process of verification of people swift, so that people would not have to wait for long in queues.

Mohsin Naqvi asserted that it was a noble act and no negligence would be tolerated in that regard.

DC orders transparent disbursement of free flour

LAHORE (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Lahore Rafia Haider Sunday visited various sale points of the city made for distribution of free flour to low income people under special Ramadan package, announced by the government.

The DC inspected distribution process and other arrangements at sale points of Bhatta Chowk, Kahna, Township, and Thokar Niaz Baig during her visit. She instructed the district officers at the sale points to make arrangements for facilitating citizens and ensuring transparent provision of free flour to the needy people.

Rafia Haider said that 40 sale points were established in the provincial capital for distribution of free flour in which transparent distribution would be ensured. Twelve points have been set up in Tehsil Raiwind, 10 in Tehsil City, eight in Model Town, seven in Shalimar and three in Tehsil Cantt. She added that needy persons could know about their eligibility for the free flour by sending their identity card number on SMS 8070. The eligible person would be able to get a total of three 10-kg bags of free flour in a month and a single bag of flour would be given at a time.

IGP inquires after injured cops at Services Hospital

LAHORE, (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar visited Services Hospital here on Sunday and inquired after the policemen who were injured in clashes with activists of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) at Zaman Park during the past few days.

Those who were visited by the IGP included Sub-Inspector Sulaiman Akbar, ASI Naseer and ASI Furqan. The IGP asked doctors about the condition of the injured and the treatment facilities being provided to them.

Dr Usman Anwar said the supervisory officers of the Lahore Police should take special care of welfare and speedy recovery of all personnel injured in Zaman Park.

Governor, Saudi delegation discuss better facilities for Hajj pilgrims

KARACHI (APP): A delegation of Saudi Arabia, which make arrangements for Hajj pilgrims called on the Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori at Governor House here on Sunday.

They discussed the provision of better facilities to Pakistani Hajj pilgrims, investment in the Sindh province, and other issues of mutual interest.

The Governor said that the bilateral

relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were established at people to people level.

He said that the people of Pakistan gave extra-ordinary value to Saudi Arabia due to sacred places.

The Saudi delegation gave assurance to the Governor that the Pakistani Hajj pilgrims would be provided with better facilities.

AFD pledges \$55 mln to support Pakistan's Polio Program

ISLAMABAD (APP): French Development Agency (AFD) has pledged \$55 million to help support Pakistan's Polio Programme operations, in efforts to interrupt poliovirus transmission.

With this the French Development Agency (AFD) has become part of global polio eradication partners with its commitment to filling the funding gap of the Government of Pakistan in its efforts to end polio. A delegation of the AFD and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation met the Special Health Secretary and visited the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) for Polio Eradication.

The meetings were part of the delegation's week-long visit to Pakistan to help support the country in the areas of health and social protection.

During a briefing at the NEOC, the AFD committed to supporting the Pakistan Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI) in immunization activities, disease surveillance, polio campaign monitoring and other technical areas, and filling the funding gap of \$55 million (under the PC-1 for polio eradication, 2022-2026) that the programme needed.

NEOC Coordinator Dr Shahzad Baig emphasized the significance of the polio infrastructure to Pakistan's healthcare. "We are very grateful to the French Government for this support."

"The Pakistan Polio Eradication Programme is a vital part of our healthcare system and investing in polio is an investment in the country's overall health system," he said.

He added, "The polio infrastructure has proven how it can offer the most reliable support for the most challenging of health emergencies, like we saw with the

COVID-19 response, which capitalized on the experiences of polio surveillance teams." The French Development Agency delegation was headed by Agnès Soucat, Director of Health and Social Protection, while the Gates Foundation delegation was led by Jay Wegner, Global Head for Polio Eradication.

The delegation held a meeting with the Country Representatives of WHO and UNICEF and discussed how the polio infrastructure was on the forefront in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent flood response.

After the NEOC meeting, Special Health Secretary Mirza Nasir ud Din Mashhood Ahmad held a debrief at the Ministry of Health and spoke about the impact on Pakistan's health infrastructure after the 2022 floods, which left 2,000 health facilities damaged.

"Despite the challenges of last year, the Government of Pakistan did not waver in its resolve to eradicate polio.

We remain committed to the cause and the multiple vaccination campaigns we have held since the floods are a testament to that commitment," the Health Secretary said.

Ms. Agnes emphasized on strengthening the primary health care system, integrated disease surveillance and response systems and prioritizing preparedness for emerging and re-emerging diseases and future emergencies, including building the capacity of frontline workers for primary health care and other needs.

Ms. Agnes also mentioned how the polio infrastructure is a strength for the country and an opportunity for Pakistan to use it for other health and emergency responses post eradication.

'Guru culture' a lethal form of neo-slavery: Dr Qibla

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) Chairman Dr Qibla Ayaz on Sunday said there was a united stance on the 'guru culture' as it was a lethal form of exploitation and neo-slavery. It was against human rights and it should not be part of any act or rules to be framed for transgender persons, he said this in an exclusive talk with APP.

Besides urging the parents of non-binary gender children to take their ownership, Dr Qibla Ayaz proposed the government to establish rehabilitation centers to bring them in the mainstream of social spectrum. He said according to the health experts, transgender persons could be operated on at every stage of life including childhood, or after attaining the age of adult or youth in the light of modern medical sciences and could be transformed as normal and productive citizens of the society except in a few cases.

Shedding light on the 'Self-perceived identity' in the perspective of Islam, he said it was contrary to the teachings of Shariah and it could be a source of many unexpected issues in the future. However, the provision of self-perceived identity must be abrogated from any act or rules, he added.

He further pointed out that the word transgender was wrongly defined in the Transgender Persons (Rights of Protection) Rules, as it included those per-

sons who did not fall in their category and recommended that the word intersex must be used instead of transgender because it was the umbrella term for the following segment of the society.

By birth non-binary gender persons could analyze their physical status or it could be ascertained by their parents or medical board but it could not be assumed on the basis of self-perceived identity, he added. To a query, he made it clear that the CII was not consulted while enacting the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act 2018.

He said the council had been referred three amendment bills presented by Senator Mohsin Aziz, Senator Mushtaq Ahmed and Senator Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidari and it had recommended amendments in them accordingly.

He said after taking the sense of all stakeholders, the council had reached the conclusion that certain rules were framed in continuation of the Transgender Act and contained several provisions and clauses which were not compatible with Shariah.

He also expressed concerns over the social and legal problems faced by intersex and transgender persons and said the protection and provision of basic human rights of intersex and transgender persons should be ensured through all possible means at every nook and cranny of the country.



KARACHI: People selecting old books on a stall at Saddar area.

Rana stresses role of universities to respond to current challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain on Sunday emphasized the role of universities in developing skills among youth and responding more effectively to the rapidly developing realities and challenges.

The minister was speaking at the inaugural session of the 5th Vice-Chancellors' Forum of Universities in the Islamic World on the theme "Towards Disruptive Technology in a Globalised World" on Sunday.

Over 250 Vice Chancellors, including 40 from 20 OIC countries are participating in the Forum, which is aimed at sharing experiences, pooling resources, fostering collaborations, strengthening networks between universities, and promoting dialogue on the future of higher education in the Islamic World.

The VC Forum 2023 is being jointly organized by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan, Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Islamabad, COMSATS University Islamabad (CU), Islamic World Educational, and Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO), and British Council Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister called upon all Islamic countries to pool resources and expertise to benefit the entire Muslim Ummah.

He said the most important outcome of education is the development of a good moral character.

He highlighted the need to develop a framework for mutual recognition of degrees among OIC member states, which can potentially facilitate greater movement of skilled manpower and increase collaborative research between Islamic countries.

In his video message, President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi highlighted the huge potential of the youth bulge of the country and called for setting a

vision for higher education.

He said the Muslims could not keep pace with adoption of technology, which needs to change on war-footing. He added that in the last 10 years, sectors focusing on natural resources were overtaken by large technological conglomerates like Amazon and Google.

These companies have attracted intellectual capital from the world and raised the need for greater access to quality online education particularly in developing countries.

Dr. Salim M. AlMalik, Director General, ICESCO, while referring to the Holy Quran said that Mankind has been given limited knowledge, yet this little knowledge has caused great disruption such that what is taught in universities is almost redundant by the time students graduate.

He informed the audience that the development of robotics would make 97 million jobs obsolete in the next 10 years, 375 million people would have to switch their jobs, causing immense disruption and increasing the digital divide. Dr. AlMalik also emphasised the need to reconstruct the glorious Islamic heritage in science. Chairman HEC, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed urged the participants to contemplate how the Muslim Ummah can be steered into the right direction. He reminisced the immense contributions of early Muslims, that were fundamental to advances in science and technology being at the root of global development today.

He gave an overview for establishing the platform of VC Forum and how it will help higher education institutions in the Islamic world to collaborate and contribute to socio-economic development.

Dr. Ahmed called for devising tangible initiatives and support of the governments for reshaping the higher education landscape in the Islamic world. In his welcome note, Rector Comsats University Islamabad, Prof.

Dr. Muhammad T. Afzal emphasized the importance of curriculum development and providing equal opportunities to students.

He urged the government to allocate at least 4 percent of the GDP to education only then would the country be able to reverse the current negative trend of brain drain.

He lauded the Government's initiatives for creating internship opportunities for the youth and called for making internships an integral part of the curriculum. He strongly recommended addressing the challenges of access, quality and relevance of teaching and research as well as financial sustainability of universities in the Muslim world.

Advisor to the President of Council of Higher Education, Turkiye, Mustafa Turker Ari informed the audience about the havoc caused by recent earthquakes in Turkiye that has affected 9 percent of the entire student population and how the country was responding by initially resorting to online education, which would gradually lead to hybrid mode. He said that his country laid great emphasis on Techno Parks in view of the strong global competition for creating entrepreneurial opportunities for the youth. Maria Rehman, Country Director, British Council Pakistan talked about reforming the educational system, building partnerships for increasing access to quality learning, which is quite a challenge.

She pointed out the disconnect between universities and industry and the need to bridge this gap. A Memorandum of Understanding between the HEC and the World Business Angels Investment Forum (WBAF) was signed during the opening ceremony. This MoU is expected to enhance the capabilities of entrepreneurs and knowledge-based start-ups by matching them with global investors and providing them with global networking.

Aga Khan University graduates 777 students, celebrates Founder's Day

E.P. Report

KARACHI: The Aga Khan University on Saturday celebrated the graduation of the Class of 2022, its first-ever Founder's Day and the University's 40th anniversary. Simultaneous ceremonies were held in Pakistan, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and broadcast online to an international audience of AKU's friends and supporters. Princess Zahra Aga Khan attended the ceremony in Karachi and shared a message from His Highness the Aga Khan, Founder and Chancellor of the University, Chief Minister of Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah was the Chief Guest.

A total of 777 students graduated from AKU's global campuses with diplomas and degrees in 19 fields, bringing the total number of diplomas and degrees awarded by the University to more than 19,000, including more than 4,500 in East Africa. In Pakistan, the School of Nursing and Midwifery graduated its 5,000th student. Students graduated in nursing, medicine, education and media and communications.

"Graduands, my wish today is that you will know the joy of planting hope in people's lives, of building bridges of understanding, of venturing into the uncharted waters where new knowledge is discovered," His Highness the Aga Khan said. "May your futures be rich in challenges embraced and overcome. May you be bold amid uncertainty, and see your boldness rewarded."

AKU dates its inception from the receipt of its Charter from the Government of Pakistan on March 16, 1983, making this its 40th anniversary week. Founder's Day is a new annual tradition at AKU. On Founder's Day, the University reflects on the vision of His Highness the Aga Khan, celebrates AKU's impact and recognizes all those who are making the founding vision a reality: faculty, staff, donors, volunteers, students, alumni and partners.

Princess Zahra Aga Khan expressed her gratitude to the global University community for the "mag-



nificent gift" of its support for AKU over the past four decades. "As we mark its inaugural Founder's Day, its 40th anniversary and the graduation of the Class of 2022, AKU has never had more to celebrate," she said. "I am deeply, deeply grateful to everyone who has made its journey possible." President Sulaiman Shahabuddin paid tribute to His Highness and "his vision of a university that reconciles loyalty to international standards with service to those in need, that prepares its students to use knowledge to identify and solve problems, that demonstrates that science is the property of no single culture, but of all humanity."

"It is thanks to his singular devotion to making that vision a reality, no matter the obstacles, that we are here today," President Shahabuddin said.

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, the Chief Guest of the ceremony, said, "I am glad to be able to take this opportunity to thank the members of the AKU community who came to the aid of their fellow citizens in their hour of need, whether as volunteers or as donors. The fact that so many AKU students participated in the University's flood response speaks highly of them and of the education that they have received here."

AKU's 40th year will see the launch of several new academic programmes. In Pakistan, classes will begin at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. In East Africa, the University will begin offering a six-

year Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery and a four-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing. In Kampala, Uganda, the University is building a new campus that will include a University Hospital and academic centre. In his message, His Highness the Aga Khan traced AKU's 40-year journey from 1983 to the present, calling AKU a source of hope and expressing pride in its achievements and confidence in its future.

"Today, as in 1983, the future of the University lies in the hands of its leaders, faculty, staff, and supporters," His Highness said. "Together, all of us are the custodians of the founding vision. Our history gives us every reason to believe that so long as we remain true to that vision, AKU's light - the light depicted in the University's seal - will grow ever brighter, helping to illuminate the path to a better future for the people it serves." In his valedictory speech, Mian Arsam Haroon urged his classmates to "transform into action the knowledge you have received in the halls of this university and honor the commitment of the village that raised you." The Chief Guest in Tanzania was Ambassador Manfred Fanti, Head of the European Union Delegation to Tanzania and to the East African Community. In Uganda, the Chief Guest was Ms Cornelia Penzel, KfW Country Director for Uganda. In Kenya, the Chief Guest was Dr Beatrice Muganda Inyangala, Principal Secretary, State Department for Higher Education and Research.

Security forces announced a series of events and activities

E.P. Report

KURRAM: Security forces in Kurram have announced a series of events and activities to commemorate Pakistan Resolution Day. This week-long celebration will honor the contributions and sacrifices made by leaders and participants of the Pakistan Movement while promoting a sense of nationalism among the people of Pakistan.

The events planned for this week include a range of competitions and activities designed to engage and inspire students. These include a Students Debate Competition in both Urdu and English, a Students National Songs Competition, and a Students Painting Competition. In addition, there will be a Cricket Semis/Final as part of the Dogar Winter Sports Festival, a Peace March, a Flag Hoisting Ceremony at APS Dogar, and a Tech Skills Development trainees certificate award ceremony.

One of the first events to be held was the English Debate Competition,

which took place today. The competition included students from APS Dogar, GHS Dogar, Green Hills School Dogar, GHS Dargai, and GPS Tari Tang Schools. A total of 20 student speakers participated in the competition, which was attended by 300 teachers and students.

The efforts of the security forces to organize these events have been widely appreciated at all levels. By

celebrating Pakistan Resolution Day in this manner, the security forces hope to foster a sense of pride and patriotism among the people of Pakistan, while also honoring the sacrifices and contributions made by those who fought for Pakistan's independence. This week-long celebration is an important opportunity to come together as a nation and celebrate our shared history and values.



Educ tour for students to promote eco-tourism and cultural preservation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) organized an informational tour for students of Government Post Graduate College Timergarah, providing them with a unique opportunity to explore the rich history and natural beauty of the province. The tour included visit to Takhti-Bhai, a UNESCO World Heritage Site renowned for its historical artifacts, and the scenic Khanpur Dam, a popular tourist attraction. A group of nearly 50 students from different classes of Government Post Graduate College Timergarah had the pleasure to participate

in the tour. The tour was supervised by the staff including the principal of Government Post Graduate College Timergarah, Minister Akbar, Associate Professor Ghulam Zahid Jan, Lecturers Kaleemullah, Mukhtiar Hassan, Ihtesham ul Haq, Mohammad Rahim, Deputy Manager Media, KPCTA Mohammad Saad, Professional Tour Guide Mohammad Saeed Khan and other officials from KPCTA. The students were provided with detailed information on the historical artifacts of Takhti-i-Bhai by the research officer Ehsan Javid Tanoli, who shared his expertise on the site's

rich cultural heritage. The students were amazed by the site's magnificent architecture, which dates back to the Gandhara period and showcases the influence of ancient Greek and Buddhist styles. After exploring Takhti-i-Bhai, the students went to the Khanpur Dam. On their arrival at the dam, the students marveled at the dam's crystal-clear waters, surrounded by lush green hills and picturesque landscapes. As part of the tour, the students actively participated in a cleanliness campaign to preserve the natural beauty of the province's tourist sites and promote eco-tourism.

The campaign mainly focused on the Khanpur Dam site and aimed to raise awareness among tourists and students alike about the importance of preserving tourist attractions. The tour provided the students with a unique opportunity to learn about the history and natural beauty of their province while also promoting eco-tourism and cultural preservation. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority hopes to organize similar tours in the future, providing students with unforgettable experiences that foster a love for their cultural heritage and the natural world.

Man shoots dead angry wife, kid, sister-in-law

PESHAWAR (INP): Two women and an infant died while two people suffered injuries when a man opened indiscriminate fire at angry wife over a domestic row in Pakkha Ghulam area in the limits of Shahpur Police Station in Peshawar on Sunday. According to details, tired of daily domestic disputes, a woman left her husband's home and went to her mother's home along with their children. Her husband was irate over this. He went to his in-laws' house out of rage and started firing indiscriminately. Resultantly, his wife, sister-in-law and a little child died on the spot, while two persons were wounded and later rushed to Lady Reading Hospital for medical assistance. The accused, however, managed to escape after committing the crime.

DC launches olive plantation, grafting drive

PESHAWAR (APP): The Deputy Commissioner Kohat, Dr Azmatullah Wazir along with District Director Agriculture Kohat, inaugurated olive plantation and grafting at Darra Adam Khel. A large number of local elders also attended the ceremony. Speaking on the occasion, DC Kohat, Dr Azmatullah Wazir said that global warming has become a big challenge for the salvation of humanity, which is causing climate change and temperature of the earth is growing with each passing day. He said that the only way out to control the current situation is the planting of maximum trees and creating awareness amongst the masses about their protection to save the country from environmental pollution and make it clean, green and beautiful.

KP TEVTA inaugurates polytechnic institute

PESHAWAR (APP): The Managing Director (MD) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA), Engineer Abdul Ghafar Khan inaugurated Government Polytechnic Institute at Balach Chitral, the other day, said a press release issued here on Sunday. The institute was inaugurated in the building of Government Technical & Vocational Training Centre, which has been upgraded to the level of Government Polytechnic Institute. The centre was imparting technical and vocational skills at Chitral. Prof. Engineer Abdul Ghaffar, Managing Director of Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority was chief guest on this occasion. Principal of Technical and Vocational Training

Centre Rahmat Karim, Principal of Vocational Center for Women Mrs. Sun Rose, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Lower Chitral, Mohammad Ali Khan and others were also present. Principal Rehmat Karim thanked MD for his arrival and up-gradation of the centre. He said that there was only one technical institution in Chitral which has been imparting technical education to the youth for the last twenty five years. But it was not fulfilling requirements and called for its further up-gradation. Chairman of Institute Management Committee, Engineer Sardar Ayub also thanked MD for fulfilling his promise of upgrading it. He said that the foundation stone of this technical education institution was laid in 1996. Five basic courses including diesel auto

mechanic, computer, tailoring, woodwork, electrical electrician, furniture technician, computer know-how are being taught here in the centre. He said that one hundred and eighty students getting technical education from the institution annually and earning livelihood for their families. Addressing the inaugural ceremony, the Managing Director TEVTA Engineer Abdul Ghaffar said that most of our youth remained unemployed after getting contemporary education. He emphasized on the youth that today's era is era of the information technology and they should learn technical and vocational skills to meet the requirement of the modern era. He said that the foundation stone of the institute where-in dressmaking and DAE will be taught up to the three-year diploma level.

Health experts demand on banning HTPs

PESHAWAR (APP): A local Not-For-Profit Organization Blue Veins and Lady Reading Hospital (LRH), the largest tertiary healthcare facility that caters to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, jointly organized a provincial seminar on "Emerging Use of Newer Tobacco & Nicotine Products including Heated Tobacco Products (HTPs), impact on public health, and required response in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa." A seminar was held here on Sunday aimed to highlight the public health impacts associated with the emergence of newer nicotine and tobacco products. The seminar was attended by healthcare professionals, researchers, policymakers, and representatives from various organizations and Government Departments. Speakers at the seminar included experts in the field

of tobacco control and public health. They presented the latest research findings on the harmful effects of heated tobacco products and discussed the potential risks to users and non-users. The speakers and participants of the seminar demanded an immediate ban and regulations on the usage and marketing of Velo, vapes, HTPs, and other smokeless tobacco products for the best interest of public health in the province. The seminar also highlighted the importance of implementing policies and regulations that restrict the use and marketing of heated tobacco products. Participants agreed that further research is needed to fully understand the long-term health effects of these products and that the Health authorities should not rely on the facts & research provided by Tobacco Industry.

Dr. Sumaira Bakhtiyar Assistant Professor Family Medicine, Dr. Shumaila, Resident Pulmonologist, Dr. Nudrat Gul Physical Therapist, Dr. Shehryar Khan PGR Cardiologist, Dr. Laila Noushad Psychiatry Department LRH, Dr. Sufyan Khaliq Assistant Professor and Dr. Waseem Janjua, Tobacco Control Expert, SDPI made presentations and deliberations. Additional Deputy Commissioner Human Rights and Relief Muhammad Imran Khan and Additional Assistant Commissioner General Misbah Waheed said, "Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is committed to stopping the illicit trade and sale of cigarettes and other tobacco items. As a society, we need to be vigilant about the marketing tactics used by the tobacco industry to promote these new products."



PESHAWAR: Members of Filed Officers Association chanting slogans in favour of their rights during a protest.

Under Section 144, gatherings banned

PESHAWAR (APP): District administrations in various districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have clamped section 144 to ban gathering of five or more persons for a period from March 18 to March 23, 2023. According to an official handout, the restrictions have been imposed in the provincial capital, Bannu, Mardan, Karak, Kohat, Chitral, Kurram, Dir Lower, Dir Upper, Abbottabad, Malakand, Swat and Lakki Marwat. The notifications have been issued while keeping in view the recently issued security alert about possible terrorism. It said that the ban on gatherings has been imposed to protect the precious lives and maintain law and order in the concerned districts and could be further extended. In case of violation of the Section 144 of the Criminal Procedural Code (Cr.PC), the violators will face action under Section 188 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC).

Ex-candidate of Tehsil Pishtakhara joins JUI-F

PESHAWAR (APP): Former Independent candidate of Tehsil Pishtakhara Ghulam Rasool on Sunday announced of joining JUI-F along with his colleagues and reposed confidence in Maulana Atta Ul Haq Darwish, the notable of the area. Speaking on this occasion, Chairman Tehsil Haroon Safat welcomed those who joined JUI-F. They said that the popularity of JUI is increasing day by day because of the people's attachment with Maulana Atta-ul-Haq Darwish and other party leadership. JUI-F Provincial General Secretary Maulana Ataul Haque Dawish also welcomed all those for joining JUI-F.

WB to provide \$90m to KP for prevention of non communicable diseases

PESHAWAR (APP): The World Bank would provide about \$ 90 million to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government for control and prevention of non communicable diseases in the province. Dr Javed Sattar, Coordinator Health Sector Reforms KP told APP that KP government was working on a mega project for control and prevention of non-communicable diseases, and preparation of its PC-I was in final stage. He said World Bank has pledged to provide about USD 90 million for the project, which would be completed in five years in the province. DHQs and THQs hospitals were being strengthened in terms of equipment, infrastructure, labs and staff in 32 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with financial assistance of Asian Development Bank (ADB), he said. He added that out of

USD 100 million committed amount by ADB, USD 25 million has been so far received for the project that would be completed by 2026. Dr Sattar said five members' primary healthcare management committees for THQs and hospitals management committees at DHQs with representatives of doctors, LG representatives, civil society member and technicians were formed for speedy and transparent utilization of funds and financially supporting poor patients suffering from chronic diseases. The KP government would spend Rs2 billion on strengthening and running of BHUs and primary healthcare centres through private sector in 15 districts and Rs1.5 billion on maternal and newborn's health and allied services. Besides Insulin for Life and Cancer Protection Programs', the KP government has identified 56 sites

in merged tribal districts for establishment of new hospitals, basic health units and rural health centres. Feasibility study of the project costing Rs12,440 million completed besides allocation of Rs3,900 million for it under Accelerated Implementation Program (AIP) 2022-23 and practical work on it would soon start. Hepatitis, HIVs and AIDs control programs were made regular part of the budget while paraplegic centre at Bakakhel Bannu was being constructed with an estimated cost of Rs900 million for facilitation of spinal cord and orthopedics patients of merged areas. Rs1.1 billion would be spent on purchase of medicines for provision of free treatment to chronic diseases' patients including cancers, adding the KP Government has already approved Rs3.1 billion for three years for anti cancer program.

Residents demanded stern actions against robbers

F.P. Report PESHAWAR: The increasing incidents of theft, robbery and extortion in the limits of Pahari Pora police station have forced people to migrate. Incidents of stealing mobile phones have become a daily routine. The door far from the front has been opened and they have entered inside the house and started committing crimes. Yesterday, unknown thieves snatched valuable mobile phone from the son of senior journalist, Furqan Asad in Paharipora. However no accused has been arrested yet, the newly appointed SHO seems helpless against the criminal elements, which has caused a wave of concern among the people living in police station limits. In a conversation with

the media, the local elders said that despite the city patrolling, Ababil squad and police mobile patrols, taking valuable mobile phones, cash and other essential items from people at gunpoint is a question mark on the performance of the police. All criminals, especially thieves and dacoits, are known along

with their whereabouts. In case of theft from police officers or other VIPs, the police does not delay an hour in recovering the stolen goods from them. The resident demanding immediate action of the matter from the authorities and SHO Paharipora to recover mobile phone of senior journalist son.

Police recovered trader's Rs.2.5m from gang

PESHAWAR (INP): The officials of the Faghirabad Police Station, in a successful operation, arrested a gang and recovered Rs.1.5 million of a trader's money snatched over a gunpoint recently, said SP Dr. Umar in a media talk here on Sunday. He disclosed that three member gangs involved in street crime incidents, including the alleged leader of the gang Imran, belong to Afghanistan. SP Dr. Umar said that the three gang members identified as Mursalin, Saifullah and Imran. "We have also recovered the looted money of a trader and the weapons from the possession of the alleged accused," SP Dr. Umar said.

Unlocking KP's gemstones, marble potential imperative for economic uplift

PESHAWAR (APP): Noor Muhammad (45), a progressive marble miner of Warsak Road, Peshawar was busy like a honeybee in cutting raw marble slabs of different varieties before loading them in a truck parked in his factory for the customers of the Nowshera district. Enjoying the national song of 'Dil Dil Pakistan' through the radio at his workplace on Warsak Road, a hub of marble factories in Peshawar, the motivated miner, who slept at his factory, awake early in the morning to support his two assistants in starting of machines for cutting of raw-marble slabs to fulfil the orders placed by the customers. Hailing from Ghalani tehsil of the district of Mohmand, Noor Muhammad who was facing great financial hardship before his fortune turned around after venturing into the marble and granite business, said "I was passing through anxiety and depression after failing to find a job in the public sector." However, he said that his family financially support-

ed him by establishing a small-scale business. "No one can understand the pain of a married unemployed person other than me. Had my father not sold a piece of land for setting up my marble business then today I may have become a stigma for my family." Terming the marble and granite business highly profitable, Noor Muhammad said that any person having basic know-how and Rs 2 million could earn from Rs 4 to 5 million a year. "An investor needs at least three machines for cutting the raw marble, its sizing and then polishing, adding it cost him Rs180,000, Rs 140,000 and Rs 160,000 for each machine respectively." Due to the arrival of the summer season, he said that most people demand Ziarat super white marble of the Mohmand district owing to its unique shine, durability, and coldness, adding the demands of white, grey and red-white marble of Mohmand, Swat and Buner districts increased due to boom in the construction industry. The miner said that

demands for Mohmand and Buner marbles have increased manifolds not only in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but also in other provinces, Afghanistan and the Middle East due to its durability and affordable prices. Noor mentioned the waste of this resource due to traditional modes of exploration and use of local machinery besides unskilled labourers, adding this precious wealth could be saved if the industry is extended technical and financial support in the adaptation of modern techniques and import of modern machinery. Tariq Khan, a marble buyer in the Nowshera district, told APP at Warsak Road's factory that prices of white marble were sky-high and beyond the purchasing power of the poor and lower middle class. "It is a worldwide phenomenon that when there is a bulk sale, the price descends. But, we do otherwise and increase prices when there is bulk demand. So, we directly need a pricing mechanism," he added. "I have bought pieces of broken marble due to its

low prices compared to the feet or above sizes," he said and demanded regulation of prices in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where over 1,000 marble units were operating mostly on a self-help basis. According to the KP Board of Investment and Trade (KP-BIT), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has an estimated potential of 14 trillion tons a year of marble, limestone, dolomite, soapstone, silica and other mineral resources, 70 million carats of gemstones, 1.10 billion bbls of oil reserves, 7.5 million tons a year production of maize, wheat, sugarcane and tobacco. According to the Economic Survey of Pakistan, Pakistan had produced 8,813,025 metric tons (MT) of marble in 2017-18, 7,990,473 MT in 2018-19, 7,700,855 MT 2019-20 and 478,100 MT in 2021-22 (March-July) while the country marble exports were recorded as \$31,030 in 2016, \$28,166 in 2017, \$26,403 in 2018, \$25,377 in 2019, \$17,204 in 2020 and \$24,679 in 2021. The annual exports of gemstones of Pakistan remained per year

about USD 3.7 billion. Hayatur Rehman, Director of Mines and Mineral Department KP said that an exploration of emerald gemstones' lease of Rs510 million for Swat has been granted besides another mine lease for Shangla. He said that Rs 7 billion in revenue was collected last year from the mines and mineral sector and this revenue could be increased by Rs20 billion per year if modern technology were used in marble, granite and gemstones excavation. The government has introduced Mining Cadastre Portal to bring investors one step closer to the mineral resources of the province, he said adding the portal provides an e-government platform for all stakeholders to engage directly with the department and ensure international standards of transparency and improve the ease of doing business. Jalal Khan, senior planning officer of the mines and mineral department said that to date, 3000 online lease applications on the portal were received

from interested parties. "We charged Rs60,000 per lease from the contract awarding party who was providing up to 600 acres of land for excavation," he said, adding the project cost about Rs156 million. "We started the mapping of the potential mines and mineral sites in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with the assistance of the Geological Survey of Pakistan (GSP)." The mapping of 5,000 square kilometres areas in KP including Chitral and 600 sq km areas in Orakzai and Kurram districts were completed. On the basis of GSP's survey, the exploration of minerals would be started," he said, adding the project would be completed with an estimated cost of Rs397 million. Besides the establishment of a gemstone laboratory and technical training and certification Center in the province, he said the government was strengthening KP's mineral testing laboratories for which modern equipment and machinery would be exported with an estimated cost of Rs93 million to save the precious marble and gemstones'

wealth. He said a mineral complex would be established at Hayatabad industrial estate Peshawar where one-window facilities and consultancy services would be provided to investors. He said the land would be purchased for the establishment of offices of the department in mineral-rich Chitral, Dir, Manshera, DI Khan and Swabi, adding 350 cases were registered against illegal miners. About future projects, Jalal Khan said that an exploratory study of lithium metal in Chitral besides other metallic minerals would be conducted and studies in this regard were also started. The projects included 'exploration of decorative stones' in Mohmand, Bajaur and Khyber, exploration of metallic minerals including gold, silver, manganese, iron and chromite, development of rare metallic mines, coal, marbles, platinum, silver and gold reservoirs in Orakzai and strengthening of Project Management Unit (PMU) were completed besides infrastructure development of clusters of

mining, the establishment of mineral check-posts and establishment of Mines Safety and Mechanized Mining Centres. Javed Khattak, Chief Executive Officer, KP Economic Zones Development and Management Company said that Mohmand Marble City was being constructed on 350 acres of land. A similar marble city is also being constructed in Buner district to facilitate 200 marble and allied industrial units besides creating jobs at local level. He said over 28 units have already started production in Marble City Risalpur while 20 and 70 percent portions of Rashakai and Nowshera SEZ respectively were earmarked for marble and mines industrial units. Work on Jaloza and Rashakai economic zones were accelerated to bolster marble exports. Besides relocation of marble units of Warsak Road to the nearest industrial zones to counter air pollution, he said that Salt and Gypsum City would be established in Karak to promote gemstones in the province.



In brief

DC introduces water schemes

DIR LOWER (APP): Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower Iftikhar Ahmad Sunday introduced two water supply schemes and soon water to the respective consumers would be started from the water tank. This was stated by Executive Engr. P&E Division Sardar Khalid while briefing the Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower Iftikhar Ahmad. He said all efforts would be taken to ensure the proper distribution of water to the consumers through these two water schemes. Deputy Commissioner on complaints of the general public inspected the schemes and formally opened two water schemes which will store water in a safety Tank before its distribution to the consumers.

People protest against pollution

DI KHAN (INP): Citizens staged an interesting protest on Sunday here against pollution in River Indus. Pakistan's main artery of freshwater, mighty Indus, is getting polluted with sewerage water in Dera Ismail Khan. Environment conscious citizens of the city, participating in protest, dancing on drumbeat reached to the bank of the river and showered flower petals over the Indus water. Speakers talking on the occasion said that sewerage drains have been built to the river, to dispose of the wastewater in the Indus River. The sewerage water also polluting subsoil water and harming the freshwater species, they complained.

Three drown into water tank

MITHI (INP): A woman and two minor boys fell into an underground water tank and drowned when its roof suddenly caved in at a house in Modoor village near Kaloi town. Villagers said that the victims identified as Ms Nehra, 60, Adnan, 4, and Abdul Hafeez, 5, had died well before their relatives and neighbours could have come to their rescue. They were distantly related to each other and were among the guests who had gathered in the house to congratulate the house owner, their common relative, on performing umrah. The bodies were taken out by the villagers and brought to their native areas for burial.

Little missing boy found dead

RAIWIND (INP): The body of a 2-year-old boy, who was abducted and killed, recovered from a pond in Aminpura, a suburb of Raiwind near Lahore, police said on Sunday. The infant, later identified as Abu Bakar, was found dead in a nearby pond six hours after going missing. The child's family lodged a missing complaint at Raiwind City Police Station, but they registered the kidnapping case soon after the body of the child was recovered. According to deceased's family, abductors used to harass deceased's sisters. Later, his family filed a complaint against them. Consequently, the abductors harbored a grudge.

Tree plantation drive launched

NAWABSHAH (APP): The Forest Department Shaheed Benazirabad on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Shehryar Gul Memon has launched a tree plantation campaign in order to make the atmosphere green and environment-friendly. The forest department would plant trees from Bilawal Chowk to Qalandari Morre, Zardari House Road, from Bushehri Road to NS Filling Station, SSP Chowk and other locations of Nawabshah city.

Health system to be strengthened: CS

QUETTA (APP): The Health Department, Government of Balochistan, in collaboration with UKHSA, NIH and Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination, organized a three-day workshop for 29 newly appointed District Surveillance Officers.

Chief Secretary Balochistan Abdul Aziz Al Uqaili was the Chief Guest at the occasion while Secretary Health Saleh Muhammad Nasar, Director General Health Services Dr. Noor Muhammad Qazi, Provincial Emergency Operations Center Coordinator Syed Zahid Shah, Director Public Health Balochistan Dr. Khalid Qambrani, Head of Provincial Office WHO Dr. Asfand Sherani, Provincial Coordinator Preventive Programs Dr. Aamir Raisani, Deputy Country lead UKHSA Dr. Asif Baitani, and Consultant to Secretary Health Dr. Ababgar Baloch, Senior Planning Officer Dr. Shahkoh Mengal among others participated. In-charge PDSRU Dr. Aabad Khan Achakzai moderated the event.

Speaking at the workshop, Chief Secretary Balochistan Abdul Aziz Uqaili said that the health system will be strengthened through the deployment of these surveillance officers to each District of Balochistan.

Secretary Health, Saleh Muhammad Nasar said that with the support of Jon Snow Institute, 29 doctors from Balochistan were sent to Karachi on scholarship to obtain a two-year public health degree.

He said that in addition to disease surveillance and response, the surveillance officers will also monitor the employees working in hospitals at the District level. They will be facilitated in their activities by their respective DHOs.

Addressing the workshop, DG Health Services Balochistan Dr. Noor Muhammad Qazi said that an integrated and organized surveillance system for timely prevention of diseases is a need of the day.

PEOC Coordinator Syed Zahid Shah said that the EOC will collaborate with partner organizations in training of surveillance

officers and for logistic support.

The Chief of Section P&DD Arif Achakzai, DHO Loralai Dr. Nasir Shaikh, Provincial Surveillance Officer (WHO) Dr. Jahanzeb Khan and Dr. Jawad Khan (WHO-EPI Balochistan), Zeeshan Baig (UKHSA), Deputy Provincial Coordinator DHIS Program Dr. Jahandad Kasi, Deputy Program Manager TB Control Program Dr. Sher Afgan Raisani, and Deputy Director M&E Provincial Health Directorate Dr. Rabia Baloch were trainers at the event, presenting different core competencies pertaining to Surveillance and Monitoring.

In the closing ceremony, Additional Secretary Health Department Hafeezullah Uyghor said that Surveillance Officers are now members of the District Health Committee and through the Committee, they will provide technical support on all health issues of the district.

At the end of the workshop, certificates were distributed to all the participants.

Torrents sweep away 10 in Balochistan

QUETTA (INP): At least 10 people were swept away by a torrent in the Awaran and Zhob areas of Balochistan as the Meteorological Department forecast more rains in the province on Sunday.

The Met office forecast strong winds, rain with thunder and hail at few places in Quetta, Musakhel, Ziarat, Kalat, Sibi, Nasirabad and Lasbela in the next 24 hours.

Earlier on Saturday, The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) officials said that eight members of a family were

among 10 people swept away by the torrents after heavy rain.

PDMA officials said torrential rains, which started on Friday evening, caused flash floods.

They said eight members of the family, including three women, two children, and three men, were way to Kalat from Awaran by a vehicle. They were washed away as they tried to go across a stream near Jhao.

According to PDMA, levies and Awaran administration personnel rushed to the scene and recovered

seven bodies and shifted them to a nearby hospital from where they were dispatched to their native town Surab. Search for the one body continued till night.

In the other incident, two men and their 10 goats were washed away in Zhob.

According to officials, they were shepherds and were grazing their goats when caught in heavy rain. The body of Muhammad Shafiq, 60, was found in the hilly area of Sombaza, close to the Pak-Afghan border, while Masood Khan, 16, was still missing.



HUNZA: Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani being briefed officials during his visit to Hasigawah Memorial Public School.

Five killed, 2 injured in different incidents

FAISALABAD (APP): Five people were killed while two others sustained injuries in separate incidents in various parts of the district during the last 24 hours.

Rescue-1122 spokesman said here on Sunday that a mini truck loaded with vegetables turned turtle and fell into a canal near Chamrail Jhall, Samundri due to over-speeding.

As a result, truck driver Amir Pervaiz (25), resident of Mian Channu died on the spot while two other suffered injuries. Rescue-1122 shifted two vegetable dealers including Wasim Wazir (24) and Jaffar Hussain (25) to hospital in a critical condition.

In another incident, a

shopkeeper Shehbaz Irshad (28), resident of Danial Town Malkhanwala was shot dead by robbers when he tried to overpower one of the bandits during a robbery bid.

While 18-year-old Sheraz Naveed, resident of Chak No.74-JB Thikriwala was killed by his rivals during a scuffle.

Similarly, 55-year-old unknown pedestrian was killed when a rashly driven van hit him on Canal Road near Kashmir Bridge.

Whereas, unknown motorcyclists shot dead a brick kiln worker Rehan Riaz (20) in Chak No. 5 Gariyana Kamalpur Sargodha Road and fled the scene.

The police took all bod-

ies into custody and started investigation.

31 shopkeepers fined for profiteering

Price control magistrates imposed a total fine of Rs 204,000 on 31 shopkeepers for profiteering, besides sealing two shops on violation of price control act in different parts of the city during the last 24 hours.

A spokesman for the local administration said here on Sunday the magistrates checked various shops in different markets and bazaars of Faisalabad and found 31 shopkeepers involved in overcharging and profiteering and imposed fine.

The magistrates also sealed 2 shops on sheer violation of price control act.

Organizers appreciated on holding festival

MULTAN (APP): The Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Capt (Retd) Saqib Zafar has appreciated the organizers on successfully holding of "South Punjab Literary and Cultural Festival".

In a statement issued on Sunday, Saqib Zafar said that living nations never forget their history, civilization and traditions. Culture

is the soul of nations and living nations always keep their historical and cultural heritage alive. Personalities associated with literature and culture are the assets of this cultural region of south Punjab, he said and added that the aim of organizing these literary and cultural events was to enlighten the new generations about the rich literature and culture of

South Punjab.

He said that the officers come and go but the old traditions always prevail. He expressed the hope that the traditions of holding literary events would be maintained in the future also. He thanked the officials and other persons associated with art and literature for their cooperation in organizing the event.



SWAT: Additional Deputy Commissioner Swat Sohail Ahmad chairing a meeting regarding distribution of free flour.

Commissioner urges parents to focus on moral training of children

D.I.KHAN (APP): Commissioner Dera Nisar Ahmad Khan has urged upon the parents to focus on the moral and religious training of their children as they were our future.

He stated this while addressing the prize distribution ceremony of a private school here as a chief guest.

He said the teachers pay attention to students during school timings and during the rest of the time it was the responsibility of parents to take care of their children. They should keep an eye on their children's movements.

During the ceremony, the commissioner also distributed prizes among the students who performed outstandingly in the final exams of the school.

Thieves involved in copper wires thefts busted

THATTA (INP): Jherruck police busted a gang involved in the thefts of costly copper wires and other implements of wind power projects installed in Jhimpir and Jungshahi areas.

DSP Qadir Khaskheli and SHO Nek Mohammad Khoso told a press conference at SSP office that in a recent action, the police nabbed the gang involved in the theft of expensive cables of Jhimpir Wind Power Project in Palari Goth.

The officials said the gang members were identified as Jawed Palari, Murad Palari and Nadeem Khushal Palari and police also recovered cash amounting to Rs1.5 million and a Corolla car from them. They had stolen cables of a transmission line tower installed on Jan 12, they said.

The SHO disclosed that the thieves stole copper wires, angles, braces, nuts and bolts from four wind power projects, Indus Wind Power Plant, China Harbour Wind Power Company, Boston Wind Power and Artistic Wind Power in Jungshahi area.

Abducted group of dhol players recovered

GHOTKI (INP): Local police in an operation in Katcha area recovered nine persons abducted by a gang of dacoits on Sunday.

"Nine abductees recovered from Andar Sundrani in Katcha area were residents of Chinniot and members of a dhol players group," police said. "They were called on the pretext of performing in a wedding function in Ghotki 23 days ago and taken as hostage," local officials said.

"The abductors had demanded heavy ransom for release of the hostages," according to the police spokesman.

"The gang of bandits escaped from the scene leaving hostages behind," after an exchange of fire with police," police said.

The riverine forests in Sindh and southern belt of Punjab have historically remained a hotbed of bandit gangs involved in kidnappings for ransom and other crimes on both banks of the Indus River.

Tractors, excavator seized in river's protection operation

Shafiullah

MINGORA: On the direction of Deputy Commissioner Swat Irfanullah Khan Wazir, the district administration of Swat, conducted a midnight operation to curb illegal gravel mining and anti-environmental activities along the banks of the Swat river, in which arrests were made and vehicles seized.

A midnight operation was conducted in Tehsil

Babuzai, Kabal and Brikot. During the operation, seven tractors and one excavator were seized for involvement in illegal digging in the area of Tehsil Kabal. Similarly, a search operation was conducted in the Ghaligai area of Tehsil Barikot under the supervision of SHO Ghaligai in which no illegal activity was found. Areas of Tehsil Babuzai were also thoroughly inspected throughout the night in which no

illegal activity was seen while in the Fizagat area the NHA team is engaged in the construction of Fizagat Road as per rules.

It is to be mentioned here that the High Court had taken notice of the illegal activities for the protection of the river due to which stringent measures including Section 144 have been enforced across the district to protect the natural beauty and flow of the river.

Six outlaws held; arms, drugs recovered

D.I.KHAN (APP): The district police have arrested six accused and recovered drugs, weapons, and ammunition from their possession during an ongoing crackdown against anti-social elements.

According to a police spokesman, the police have intensified actions against criminals following the directions of District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisarani.

A team of Parao Police station led by its SHO Gulsher Khan, during routine patrolling, arrested accused Muhammad Rizwan son of Sher Zaman resident of Basti Dhandla,

and recovered 560 grams of hashish from him. Besides, the Parao police arrested another accused Muhammad Tufail son of Ahmad Bakhsh resident of Basti Dhandla and recovered a 12-bore rifle along with eight cartridges.

Similarly, a team of Shaheed Nawab Police Station led by SHO Aslam Khan, during snap checking, arrested accused Bakht Ameer son of Ghulam Muhammad resident of Wandha Budh, and recovered over one-kilogram of hashish from his possession. In another action, the Shaheed Nawab police arrested accused Rahmat

Ullah son of Faiz Ullah resident of Mohallah Shadikhel, Panyala along with 45 gram hashish.

Likewise, Chaudhwan Police led by SHO Mukhtiar Ahmad arrested accused Umar Khan son of Inam Babar resident of Chaudhwan and recovered 450-gram of hashish from him. While in another action, the Chaudhwan police arrested absconder Karam Khan son of Yar Khan resident of Sakoota who was wanted to police in a theft case.

The cases have been registered against all the arrested accused in concerned police stations.

DIG directs SSPs to make arrangements

HYDERABAD (APP): The Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Hyderabad Peer Muhammad Shah has directed all the 9 Senior Superintendents of Police (SSP) in Hyderabad Police Range to make proper arrangements on the occasion of Pakistan Day which will be celebrated on March 23.

The police spokesman informed here on Sunday that the DIG had asked the SSPs to make foolproof security arrangements in view of the incidents of terrorism.

According to him, the DIG sought police deployment at all the prominent locations, celebratory events and rallies, railway stations, bus terminals,

important government buildings, and commercial areas.

The DIG also asked the police officers to ensure a smooth flow of traffic.

2 suspected outlaws held in injured condition

Two suspected outlaws have been arrested in injured condition after separate encounters in the limits of Makki Shah and Fort police stations.

The police spokesman informed here on Sunday that the Makki Shah police were engaged in an exchange of fire by some suspects near Sheedi graveyard.

One of the suspects, identified as Faisal Shaikh alias Badshah sustained a gunshot to his leg and was

arrested but his accomplices escaped, he added.

He told that Shaikh was shifted to Liaquat University Hospital (LUH) for surgery.

According to the spokesman, the police were checking the criminal background of the injured suspect, if any.

He claimed that the police recovered a weapon from Shaikh's possession.

Meanwhile, he said the Fort police also arrested a suspected robber Nadeem Qureshi in injured condition after an encounter on Tulsi Das road. He added that 2 associates of Qureshi escaped from the spot.

Qureshi was also shifted to LUH for surgery.

Body conduct interview for five public varsities

QUETTA (APP): The search committee on Sunday conducted the interviews of the candidates for the position of Vice-Chancellors for five public sector universities of Balochistan.

The search committee includes Dr. Asma Haider Dr. Bika Ram, Dr. Dost Mohammad while Secretary Higher Education Hafiz Abdul Majid and Principal Secretary to the Governor are also members of the search committee.

The Search Committee will select the Vice-Chancellors on the basis of merit and competence

It merits mentioning here that for the first time in the history of the province, the appointment of Vice Chancellor is being implemented through a search committee consisting of education experts.

"Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo has a clear directive to ensure merit in educational institutions," handouts issued by CM Secretariat said.

On the other hand, students, teachers and educational and public circles welcome the government's initiative

100 MW additional electricity project for Gwadar completes

A project launched to supply an additional 100 MW of electricity from Iran to meet the current and future electricity needs of Gwadar has been completed, the CM Secretariat said.

A handout issued here on Sunday said that the current electricity requirement of Gwadar is 130 megawatt which could not be met with the existing resources.

An agreement, in this connection, was signed with Iran for the supply of 100 megawatts of additional electricity. To implement the project, a 138 km long transmission line was laid from Iran border to Gwadar.

Handout further read that FWO ensured installation of 58 km transmission line from Iran border to Jiwani grid station and 80 km from Jiwani to Gwadar grid station in record time.

This important project will ensure an uninterrupted power supply to the domestic and industrial consumers of Gwadar.

Illegal chopping of trees detected in Loralai

An illegal cutting of trees was found in the Loralai district of Balochistan, forest department officials said on Sunday.



New pension protests in France ahead of crucial votes

PARIS (AFP/APP): France faced another day of protests Sunday against a bitterly contested pension reform rammed through by President Emmanuel Macron's government, a day before crucial no-confidence votes in parliament.

After weeks of peaceful strikes and marches against raising the official retirement age from 62 to 64, police on Saturday closed the Place de la Concorde opposite parliament for demonstrations following two successive nights of clashes.

Some individual lawmakers were targeted, with Eric Ciotti -- chief of the conservative Republicans party expected not to back the no-confidence motions -- finding early Sunday that his constituency office had been pelted with rocks overnight. "The killers who did this want to put pressure on my vote on Monday," Ciotti wrote on Twitter, posting pictures showing smashed windows and threatening graffiti.

More than 80 people were arrested at a 4,000-strong Paris demonstration Saturday where some set rubbish bins on fire, destroyed bus stops and erected improvised barricades.

And 15 more were held in Lyon after police said "groups of violent individuals" triggered clashes.

Other demonstrations in cities around France passed off peacefully, with hundreds turning out in the Mediterranean port city Marseille.

"What do we have left apart from

continuing to demonstrate?" said Romain Morizot, a 33-year-old telecoms engineer, at the Marseille protest.

After the government used a constitutional provision to bypass a parliamentary vote on pension reform, "now that will stoke social tensions everywhere," Morizot added.

"We'll keep going, we don't have a choice". Away from the streets of major cities, the hard-left CGT union said Saturday that workers would shut down France's largest oil refinery in Normandy, warning that two more could follow on Monday.

So far, strikers had only prevented fuel deliveries from leaving refineries but not completely halted operations.

Industrial action has also halted rubbish collection in much of Paris, with around 10,000 tonnes of waste now on the streets as the government forces some binmen back to work.

A ninth day of wider strikes and protests is planned for Thursday.

People close to Macron told AFP that the president was "of course following developments" on the ground.

Alongside raising the headline retirement age, Macron's reform also increases the number of years people must pay into the system to receive a full pension.

The government says its changes are needed to avoid crippling deficits in the coming decades linked to France's aging population.

But opponents say the law places

an unfair burden on low earners, women and people doing physically wearing jobs, and polls have consistently showed majorities opposed to the changes. A survey of 2,000 people published in the Journal du Dimanche weekly on Sunday gave Macron an approval rating of 28 percent, its lowest since 2019's mass "yellow vests" demonstrations against a new fuel tax. After Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne used Article 49.3 of the constitution to pass the law without a vote in the lower house National Assembly, opponents' last hope to block the reform is to topple the government in one of Monday's no-confidence votes.

Labour Minister Olivier Dussopt told the JDD that "it's not an admission of failure, but it's heart-breaking" to have used the nuclear option to pass the reform.

The pensions changes were "too important to take the risk of playing Russian roulette," he added, after weeks of concessions to the Republicans -- long in favour of raising the retirement age -- failed to bring enough conservative MPs on board to secure a majority.

Few lawmakers in the fractious Republicans group are expected to vote against the government in Monday's no-confidence motions, brought by a small group of centrist MPs and the far-right National Rally.

Ciotti said he didn't want to "add chaos to chaos".

Traffic deaths jump as new year travel rush begins in Iran: media

TEHRAN (Xinhua/APP): Car crashes have killed scores of people and injured thousands in three days in Iran as the new year travel rush begins, the official news agency IRNA reported Saturday.

From Wednesday to Friday, 125 people were killed in 111 car crashes, and 2,895 others were injured in 1,171 road accidents, Ahmad Shirani, head of the Iranian Traffic Information and Control Center, was quoted by IRNA as saying.

Shirani said the casualties were "very concerning," calling on people to be more careful in intercity trips during the celebrations of Nowruz, the Iranian new year, which starts on March 21 this year. The highest number of road accidents occurred in the provinces of Khorasan Razavi, Tehran, Fars, Kerman and Isfahan, mainly due to reckless driving, speeding, and drowsy driving, Shirani added. Intercity travels often see a surge during the Nowruz holidays in Iran, raising the likelihood and occurrence of road accidents.

Nigeria elections 2023

ABUJA (BBC): Votes are being counted in Nigeria a day after violence and delays marred the governor and states assembly elections in some parts of the country. A few states, including Lagos, are allowing voting for a second day. Some 800 candidates are contesting the influential governor and state assembly seats.

The poll comes three weeks after a contentious presidential election which the opposition allege was rigged in favour of the winner Bola Tinubu.

The former governor of Lagos, who was the ruling party candidate, won 37% of the vote but Atiku Abubakar and Peter Obi, the second and third-placed candidates, vowed to go to court to challenge the result. While admitting there had been challenges running the 25 February poll, Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission has dismissed allegations of bias.

The two opposition candidates have until 31 March to file a petition challenging the presidential results. Saturday's elections were conducted in 28 of Nigeria's 36 states which were not affected by electoral disputes in previous votes. Despite the police imposing several security measures including restrictions on vehicle movements, numerous incidents were reported on Saturday in Lagos where some polling stations were attacked by gangs who also snatched ballot papers. The highly contested elections have led to ethnic tension among supporters of the main candidates, with some sharing online how they were prevented from voting because of their identity or party affiliation.

At least 12 killed as strong quake jolts Ecuador and Peru

LIMA (AFP/APP): At least 12 people were killed, one was wounded and buildings were damaged in a powerful earthquake that shook Peru and Ecuador earlier Saturday, Ecuador's presidency said.

Destroyed buildings, crushed vehicles and debris could be seen in cities such as Machala in Ecuador, as rescue officials rushed to lend aid and fearful residents gathered in the streets. The quake, which the United States Geological Survey (USGS) put at a magnitude 6.8 and a depth of nearly 41 miles

(66 kilometers), struck at 12:12 local time (1712 GMT). Its epicenter was 52 miles (85 kilometers) northeast of the Peruvian city of Zarumilla, near the border with Ecuador, the National Seismological Center of Peru reported. "So far, 12 deaths are reported (11 in the province of El Oro and one in the province of Azuay)," Ecuador's presidency said in a tweet.

Ecuador's President Guillermo Lasso urged people to remain "calm and to be informed through official channels" about

damage to buildings in a message on Twitter.

According to Quito's Risk Management Office, the facade of a house collapsed on a vehicle and left "a deceased person" in the city of Cuenca in the south.

Nearby, in the province of El Oro, three people were reported dead when a tower toppled and fatally crushed them. It was not immediately clear where the other deaths took place.

The tremor was strongly felt in cities such as Guayaquil, Quito, Manabi and Manta, social media reports said.

Britain defends Rwanda asylum plan as 'compassionate'

KIGALI (AFP/APP): Britain's interior minister defended a controversial plan to deport asylum seekers arriving in the UK to Rwanda during a visit there Saturday, when she inspected the centres where they will be held.

"Many countries around the world are grappling with unprecedented numbers of illegal migrants," said Suella Braverman.

The agreement between Britain and Rwanda "will lead the way in finding a solution which is both humanitarian and compassionate and also fair and balanced", she added.

Braverman was speaking after a visit to the Bwiza estate where the centre for the resettled migrants is being built, and declared herself "incredibly impressed" with what she had seen. She spoke to journalists at a news conference attended by Rwanda's Foreign Minister Vincent Biruta, who also defended the agreement signed between the two countries.

"This will not only help dismantle criminal human-smuggling networks, but also save lives," he said. The UK's conservative government has made tackling illegal immigration a priority, and it was a key promise as the country left the European Union. It is seeking to outlaw asylum claims by all illegal arrivals and transfer them to "safe" third countries, such as Rwanda, in a bid to stop thousands of migrants from crossing the Channel on small boats. More than 45,000 migrants arrived on the shores of southeast England on small boats in 2022 -- a 60-percent annual increase on a perilous route that has been used by more people every year since 2018.

Britain's government, which is trailing in opinion polls, has been striving for years to tackle the crossings. It had hoped the threat of a one-way ticket to Rwanda, where migrants would remain if accepted for asylum, would deter the cross-Channel journeys. But that plan, announced by the then prime minister

disrupting criminal human-smuggling networks, but also save lives," he said.

The UK's conservative government has made tackling illegal immigration a priority, and it was a key promise as the country left the European Union.

It is seeking to outlaw asylum claims by all illegal arrivals and transfer them to "safe" third countries, such as Rwanda, in a bid to stop thousands of migrants from crossing the Channel on small boats.

More than 45,000 migrants arrived on the shores of southeast England on small boats in 2022 -- a 60-percent annual increase on a perilous route that has been used by more people every year since 2018.

Britain's government, which is trailing in opinion polls, has been striving for years to tackle the crossings. It had hoped the threat of a one-way ticket to Rwanda, where migrants would remain if accepted for asylum, would deter the cross-Channel journeys.

But that plan, announced by the then prime minister

Boris Johnson last year, was blocked at the last minute by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which is separate to the EU.

The government scheme is still mired in appeals in the High Court in London. To date, no deportation flights to Rwanda have taken place.

Rights groups accuse Rwanda -- ruled with an iron fist by President Paul Kagame since the end of the 1994 genocide that killed around 800,000 people -- of cracking down on free speech and opposition.

In Britain on Saturday, thousands of people took to the streets of cities including London, Glasgow and Cardiff to demonstrate against the plan.

Protesters in the British capital carried signs reading "no human being is illegal" and "Safe passage, not Rwanda".

Some British media including the BBC and The Guardian newspaper were not invited to cover the interior minister's visit to Rwanda.

Kenya police ban cost-of-living protest by opposition

NAIROBI (AFP/APP): Kenya's police on Sunday banned the opposition from holding a protest over inflation, saying requests for the demonstrations were filed too late, but organisers vowed to go ahead with the rallies.

Raila Odinga, leader of the Azimio la Umoja party, had called for Monday's demonstration in Nairobi over soaring inflation, which in February reached 9.2 percent year-on-year in the East African nation.

Odinga also claims that last year's tight presidential election was "stolen" from him, denouncing the government of President

William Ruto as "illegitimate".

Nairobi police chief Adamson Bungei said on Sunday that police received requests to hold two demonstrations only late on Saturday and early on Sunday, when normally three days' notice is required for public rallies.

"For public safety, neither has been granted," he said at a press conference in the capital.

Organisers had planned to march near the State House, the presidential palace.

"I want to underline some areas such as State House where we have

heard people planning to invade or visit is covered by the laws of Kenya that it is a restricted area for unauthorised persons," Bungei said.

But Odinga vowed that the gathering would go ahead.

"I want Kenyans to come out in large numbers and show the displeasure of what is happening in our country," he told his supporters Sunday. Ruto for his part warned that "you are not going to threaten us with ultimatums and chaos and impunity."

"We will not allow that," he said, calling on

Odinga to act in a "legal and constitutional manner."

According to official results from the August presidential vote, Odinga lost to Ruto by around 233,000 votes, one of the closest margins in the country's history.

Odinga, who was running for the fifth time to lead the country, rejected the results, calling them fraudulent.

The Supreme Court has dismissed his appeals, with its judges giving a unanimous judgement in favour of Ruto, finding there was no evidence for Odinga's accusations.

Prosecuting Donald Trump would be politically motivated, say Republicans

NEW YORK (BBC): Prosecuting Donald Trump would be a politically motivated move by his opponents, senior Republicans say. On Saturday, the former US president said his arrest could happen next week, based on media reports.

But Democrats have said no-one is above the law and accused Mr Trump of recklessly stoking political divisions. The case focuses on alleged hush money paid on Mr Trump's behalf by his lawyer to porn star Stormy Daniels ahead of the 2016 presidential election.

The 76-year-old is also the subject of several other separate inquiries, although he has not yet been charged in any and denies wrongdoing. Mr Trump has pledged to continue his campaign to become the Republican nominee in the 2024 presidential election, even if he is indicted.

It is not yet known if he is going to be criminally charged or even, beyond

the most basic details, what any indictment might contain. Former US vice-president Mike Pence and the most senior Republican in the US Congress, Kevin McCarthy, have both spoken out against any criminal prosecution.

Speaking to US network ABC News, Mr Pence said Manhattan district attorney Alvin Bragg, who is a Democrat, was carrying out a "politically charged prosecution" against Mr Trump.

"I'm taken back at the idea of indicting a former president of the United States, at a time when there's a crime wave in New York City," Mr Pence said. "The fact that the Manhattan DA [district attorney] thinks that indicting President Trump is his top priority, I think is, just tells you everything you need to know about the radical left in this country," he told the broadcaster.

In his statement on Saturday Mr Trump called for mass protests from sup-

porters and accused Mr Bragg's office of "illegal leaks" to journalists.

Asked about the call for protests, Mr Pence said that US citizens have a "constitutional right to peaceably assemble" - but also said any action must take place "peacefully and in a lawful manner". Speaker of the US House of Representatives Kevin McCarthy called the investigation "an outrageous abuse of power by a radical DA". In a tweet, he also promised to investigate whether federal money was being used to interfere in elections "with politically motivated prosecutions".

Democrats accused Mr Trump of stirring up political divisions with his claims. Speaking to ABC News, Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren said "no-one is above the law" even if they happen to have been president and any investigation must be "allowed to go forward appropriately".

"There's no reason to protest this. This is the law

operating as it should without fear or favour for anyone," she said.

Mr McCarthy's predecessor as House Speaker, Nancy Pelosi, echoed Ms Warren's sentiments - adding that Mr Trump's remarks were "reckless" and designed to "keep himself in the news and to foment unrest among his supporters". "He cannot hide from his violations of the law, disrespect for our elections and incitements to violence. Rightfully, our legal system will decide how to hold him accountable," she wrote on Twitter.

The Stormy Daniels case centres on how Mr Trump reimbursed his lawyer Michael Cohen after he paid Ms Daniels \$130,000 before the 2016 US election. The record for the payment reimbursing Mr Cohen says it was for "legal fees". Prosecutors could conclude this amounts to Mr Trump falsifying business records, which is a misdemeanour offence in New York.

Boris Johnson: Ex-PM to reveal evidence in his defence over Partygate

LONDON (BBC): Boris Johnson will publish evidence in his defence ahead of a grilling by MPs him over whether he misled Parliament about Covid rule-breaking parties.

The former prime minister faces a crucial televised evidence session in front of the Commons Privileges Committee on Wednesday.

The committee is yet to publish its final verdict - but its initial update earlier this month said Mr Johnson may have misled Parliament multiple times. Mr Johnson denies misleading MPs.

Wednesday's session, which could last up to five

hours, will be a key chance for Mr Johnson to persuade the seven cross-party MPs who make up the committee that he did not mislead MPs in December 2021.

That would include when he told the Commons that he had "been repeatedly assured since these allegations emerged that there was no party and that no Covid rules were broken".

Sources close to Mr Johnson say he will publish a "compelling dossier" that will provide evidence and arguments that he did not knowingly mislead parliament. If he fails to convince the committee and is found guilty, he could be suspended

from the Commons, and even faces a recall petition, which would trigger a by-election, if that suspension is for more than 10 days.

Crucially, though, MPs would have to approve any sanction on Mr Johnson.

In May last year, an inquiry by senior civil servant Sue Gray found widespread rule-breaking had taken place, and Mr Johnson was among 83 people fined by police for attending law-breaking events. The Sunday Times, Observer and Sunday Telegraph report that Mr Johnson's "dossier" will include advice he claims he was given at the time by No

10 aides, advising him that Covid rules were not broken. The Sunday Times quotes one source saying the messages show "in black and white" that what Mr Johnson told Parliament was what he had been advised to say by officials and his No 10 team, claiming he was forced to rely on advice because he was not at some of the events.

Cabinet minister Oliver Dowden - who served in Mr Johnson's government - told the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg on Sunday programme he expected the former prime minister to "put forward a robust defence of his conduct".

WELLINGTON (BBC): Last month, Cyclone Gabrielle smashed into New Zealand's North Island - killing 11 people and displacing at least 10,000 more. It's triggered a national debate about climate change and whether vulnerable homes should be rebuilt or written off. "I don't want to go back there," said Amy Bowkett.

The mother of two lived in the Hawkes Bay area, one of the regions worst hit by Cyclone Gabrielle. When the Category 3 storm hit with wind speeds of up to 159km/h (99mph), her home was completely destroyed.

Along with 50 of her neighbours she spent a terrifying 48 hours trapped without power, water or phone signal.

Eventually she was able to make a call and a friend organised a helicopter rescue from a neighbour's backyard. "I feel like if we get flooded a third time, it would be our fault," she told the BBC from her mother's home in the nearby city of Napier. "Unless we put our house on stilts, I'd be terrified every time it rained."

She's not alone in fearing to return. Many of the victims of New Zealand's recent floods lost all of their possessions in the disaster and believe the area their homes are built on has become too dangerous for them to go back.

The damage caused by the cyclone is forecast to cost NZD\$13.5bn (\$8.4bn; £6.9bn), similar to the financial impact of the Christchurch earth-

quake in 2011 - the costliest natural disaster in New Zealand's history. Last month's event prompted a nationwide state of emergency that only ended on Tuesday.

Cyclone Gabrielle also struck within weeks of unprecedented flooding in New Zealand's biggest city, Auckland, when an entire summer's worth of rain fell in a single day.

New Zealand's climate change minister, James Shaw, attributed the scale of the disaster to climate change, exacerbated by global temperature increases.

"There will be people who say it's too soon to talk about these things... but we are standing in it right now. This is a climate change-related event," he said in a speech to parliament last month. Speaking to the BBC, Mr Shaw said that while many homeowners have taken out a "total replacement" insurance policy, which compensates them if their house is destroyed or made uninhabitable, it only covers the cost of the property - not the value of the land it's built on.

This means people feel "they have to rebuild on the current land and of course, they're really frightened", he added. The country is likely to experience more extreme rainfall events and regional cyclones are likely to become more frequent by 2100, according to New Zealand's National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research. During warm months days are already hotter, drier and windier, increasing the risk of bushfires.

Some 55,000 homes in Auckland are prone to flooding, according to government data. Another 76,000 homes across the country are in coastal areas, vulnerable to erosion and sea level rise.

"[When] people are sleeping with lifejackets by the door, you know it's bad," said displaced West Auckland resident Morgan Allen. "The anxiety has reached peak levels."

Alongside a group of dozens of Auckland flood victims, Morgan has launched a campaign calling on the government to buy out their homes and turn the high-risk areas into parks or nature reserves. The audio engineer says some of his neighbours spent a year rebuilding their homes only to lose everything again in January. Morgan blames climate change for recent events, but also tightly packed housing developments - where rows of homes have been built on concrete, replacing single homes on grass areas.

"Our city has lost a huge amount of capacity to sponge up all of this water." He said this had increased the flood risk for homes built near valleys and wetlands. Consequently, in the days after the cyclone and the Auckland floods, the government announced a NZD\$300m (\$185m) package for affected regions. It also introduced new Severe Weather Emergency legislation, designed to help rural landowners fix their properties and rebuild, without the usual red tape.

The Frontier Post

JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at
Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,
Peshawar.

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

“USA and Canada Toll Free Number 415-3704551

Judiciary, a Sole Hope of the Nation

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb furiously criticized the judiciary and held it responsible for the weakness of the writ of the state. According to the Minister, the Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has turned itself into an armed group and petrol bombs were recovered from the residence of the PTI’s Chief which the miscreants kept throwing on the police during the recent Police-Protestors standoff in Lahore’s Zaman Park. She accused Imran Khan of considering himself above the law and playing with national interests, making conspiracies, and violating the rule of the law and the constitution. Marriyum Aurangzeb questioned whether the justice system was afraid of terrorists and petrol bombs, as a hooligan, a scoundrel comes to court with a violent crowd and he gets a bundle relief package from the court. According to her, one person cannot be allowed to attack the judiciary with a mob and get relief through aggression.

The state of Pakistan is passing through a very sensitive and critical phase of its history as the nation faces a radical social, ethnic, and political division that is deepening every other day because of the selfish politics of its leaders and the weakness of national institutions. Over the years, hypernationalism and rigid politics continuously added to already existing inter-party, intersect, and communal biases in society. Meanwhile, warring political groups have ever tried to influence the government institutions in their favor through political coercion, and misuse of authority that created a sense of fear among the government servants including the Police, judiciary, and civil administration that ultimately undermine the writ of the state and true spirit of the rule of the law. An infelicitous trend has developed in our national politics in recent months that warring political groups are used to reject the court’s verdict which does not suit their interests and try to snub the judiciary for its ruling. Similarly, political parties are used to laud adjudicators’ remarks and the court’s decisions that suit their politics. Thus, this selective behavior and biased politics badly undermined the functioning of national institutions during this era of highly polarized and hybrid social media and corporate journalism.

A series of recent events is highly condemnable, particularly the incidents at Zaman Parks, followed by a Police raid at Imran Khan’s residence while PTI’s Chief appearance at the courts along with a crowd of gangsters cum political workers are neither appraisable for the government nor for the opposition/ PTI. This was neither the legacy of a pro-public democratic government nor a civilized self-claimed nation reformer, rather the world commonly sees such events in gangs-controlled Haiti, and the Republic of Congo.

As for as the assertion of the government leader is concerned, the maintenance of the law and writ of the state is the responsibility of the executive and the government should not involve the judiciary in political matters and never seek an apology from the court in this regard. Meanwhile, the accused opposition leader must not create a law and order situation for the government and not harass the judges by the demonstration of political muscles and the support of an aggressive crowd. At the same time, the judges must maintain the respect, sanctity, and esteem of their valued institution with courage and conduct. The judges, lawyers, and their associates must ensure the provision of fearless and unprejudiced justice to the public in all cases even though an accused is an influential person or a powerful entity. Presently, the nation has high hopes for the judiciary to act as per the constitution without being influenced by either side, the treasury or the opposition. In the present scenario, only the judiciary can sail the country out of the current political crisis through the timely, fearless, and impartial delivery of justice, so this nation comes out of pre-vailing chaos and uncertainty.

20 years on from US-led invasion, Iraq still matters

Sir John Jenkins

Mesopotamia has always been a place where imperial fantasies go to die — and are just as perpetually reborn. As it happens, this year is not only the 20th anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq, on Sunday to be exact. It is also the 2,354th anniversary of the defeat of the Achaemenids by Alexander the Great at the Battle of Gaugamela; the 2,076th anniversary of the defeat and death of the Roman Triumvir Marcus Licinius Crassus at the hands of the Parthians at the Battle of Carrhae; the 1,660th anniversary of the defeat and death outside Samarra of the Roman Emperor Julian at the hands of the Sassanians; the 879th anniversary of the collapse of the Crusader state of Edessa at the hands of Nuruddin Al-Zengi; and the 106th anniversary of the capture of Baghdad from the Ottomans by Gen. Stanley Maude, on March 11 to be exact.

Over the past month or so, there has been a deluge of commentary on the aftermath of 2003. I have read most of them. And I have now just finished reading perhaps the most startling of them all — an article in The Interpreter by Paul Bremer, the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, appointed by President George W. Bush in 2003, entitled, “What Went Right in Iraq.” It is a list of what Bremer believes to have been his and the CPA’s great achievements. It is only a pity, I suppose, that we lack similar reflections from Darius, Crassus, Julian, Count Joscelyn or Enver Pasha.

I am not going to relitigate the actions of the CPA, such as the way in which the Iraqi armed forces and police were disbanded, the de-Baathification decree and its implementation, the efforts to establish advanced financial and other institutions, the drafting of a constitution so full of holes you could drive a coach and horses through it, the hasty recruiting of thousands of Americans and others — with only the haziest notion of where and

what Iraq was — to staff the CPA, and the basic policy confusion in Washington and London about what could realistically be accomplished with the tools to hand.

I was not there then; I was in Jerusalem instead, dealing with an entirely different set of challenges. And in any case, the ground has been thoroughly covered by the reporting of the Congressional Budget Office and Research Service, the Departments of State and Defense in the US, the Chilcot Report in the UK (the terms of reference for which I helped draw up and to whose deliberations I contributed), and a vast library of detailed and sometimes excellent books written by journalists, academics and other observers.

My direct involvement with Iraq dates from 2007, when I became director for the Middle East and North Africa in the Foreign Office in London, through my time as ambassador in

Baghdad, to 2011. Four years. But there has not been a moment since 2011 when I have not reflected on the lessons we should have learned.

The fundamental problem with Bremer’s claims is not that they are untrue. It is that they are irrelevant to what has happened to Iraq since 2003. And they ignore history. Saddam Hussein was a savage dictator, with a brutal and grotesquely entitled family, who relied on kinship, tribal and minority religious groups for support in the face of widespread fear. There were reasons why he launched an attack on Ayatollah Khomeini’s Iran in 1980. But he and his generals badly mismanaged the war. And his invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 — designed to compensate for imagined Iraqi financial losses — was another spectacular misjudgment.

The international community compounded that misjudgment after his defeat both by allowing his

army to take its revenge on the Shiites of the south and — for a time — on the Kurds of the north, but also by failing to agree through the UN how to manage Saddam’s inevitable and foolish defiance. That led to one of the longest and most damaging sanctions regimes of modern times, the impoverishment of large slices of Iraqi society and the corruption and criminalization of Iraq’s economy — and indeed parts of the UN. Saddam could have avoided all of this simply by complying with the terms of successive UN Security Council resolutions. He refused to do so, just as he refused to admit that he had no weapons of mass destruction in the run-up to 2003.

This was folly. But it was also folly to believe that an Iraqi social fabric that had been ripped apart by Saddam and by sanctions could simply be stitched back together again by military force, provincial reconstruction teams — often with little local knowledge — and the edicts of imperial procon-

suls. On May 1, 2003, President Bush famously declared

“Mission Accomplished.” That was folly too. What followed was a vicious civil war, as a result of which Iran, which had originally been intimidated by the US show of force, emerged as the ultimate victor.

The irony is that a plurality of Iraqis in early 2003 had, in varying degrees, welcomed the US-led military intervention. They wanted something better — and they certainly wanted an end to the socially destructive isolation in which they had lived for more than a decade. Even in 2010, the year that Nouri Al-Maliki stole the elections from Ayad Allawi, with US acquiescence, there was still a chance to salvage something from the wreckage. But having arrived in Iraq proclaiming the virtues of democracy, when Iraqis actually voted for change, the US decided that change was too risky. So much for liberal pieties.

(Continued Page-7)

The Saudi-Iran deal is an opportunity to bring stability

Nadim Shehadi

The 20th anniversary of the Iraq invasion has been overshadowed by the revelation of a Chinese-brokered Saudi-Iranian rapprochement. In hindsight, the Chinese role is a logical outcome of the need to fill the vacuum of US withdrawal from the region post-Iraq. It is also an opportunity for a revitalized GCC role with Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and Oman cooperating to bring stability to the region.

The details of the deal are not important. “The making of a treaty is the treaty itself,” according to Cardinal Wolsey who was King Henry VIII’s chief adviser. It does not matter what the terms are. Ultimately it is the goodwill that matters, not the terms. When the goodwill that brought the parties together runs out, the treaty is broken, whatever the terms say.

Timing is relevant in that it comes when Iran is at its weakest internally with continuing protests and Saudi Arabia possibly at its strongest. The region also deserves a break from the ups and downs it has witnessed since the Iraq invasion. There is a window here represented by the period when the goodwill will last, but it will not last forever.

GCC states, while bound by cooperation agreements, have also evolved in separate ways over the past 20 years. The result is that they have different contacts and alliances in the various conflicts of the region. When they were in competition, their interventions made the situation worse. But if they cooperate then the fact that they are in touch with opposing sides in places such as Yemen, Libya, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt and Iraq will give them an advantage in helping resolve the problems often complicated by an

Iranian role. They must not waste the opportunity that the agreement provides and must act while the goodwill is still there.

In the meantime, geopolitical experts are going wild analyzing the global significance of the deal, the winners and the losers:

All parties involved in the Saudi-Iran agreement have found a way of declaring it a victory, except the Americans who were caught by surprise and must be working hard to find a positive angle. In 2003, the US invaded Iraq ostensibly to fix the region, then it changed its mind and left it in the lurch. In the best of all interpretations, the invasion did pull the region out of stagnation at a time when it looked like the descendants of Saddam Hussein, together with those of Muammar Qaddafi, Bashar Assad and Ben Ali, were going to rule forever. The fall of the statue of Saddam Hussein broke the myth of the power of dictatorships and inspired other movements in the region, culminating in what became known as the Arab Spring. Iraq itself looked like it was about to see better days after the successful “surge” of 2007-08 when the US announced a new way forward and brought in more troops who collaborated with Sunni tribal leaders to oust Al-Qaeda from Iraq. At the time, in 2009-2010, international organizations wrote glowing reports that Arab regimes had understood the message and were reforming. The regimes may have fooled the bureaucrats at the UN, the EU, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund but they did not fool their own people. Revolts against dictatorships rose in Tunisia, Libya and Syria and for a short while it did look like we were heading toward a brighter future with freedom and democracy.

China’s new and unexpected role as a mediator in the Middle East and its rise to rival the US as a power broker; also the calculations and strategies of Saudi Arabia and Iran and the various possible scenarios. It is a useful exercise but there are too many uncertainties — the outcome of the Ukraine war, what looks like another global financial banking crisis in the making, and the result of the protests in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon against the Iranian regime and its

proxy militias.

All parties involved in the Saudi-Iran agreement have found a way of declaring it a victory, except the Americans who were caught by surprise and must be working hard to find a

torships and inspired other movements in the region, culminating in what became known as the Arab Spring. Iraq itself looked like it was about to see better days after the successful

“surge” of 2007-08 when the US announced a new way forward and brought in more troops who collaborated with Sunni tribal leaders to oust Al-Qaeda from Iraq. At the time, in 2009-2010, international organizations wrote glowing reports that Arab regimes had understood the message and were reforming. The regimes may have fooled the bureaucrats at the UN, the EU, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund but they did not fool their own people.

positive angle. In 2003, the US invaded Iraq ostensibly to fix the region, then it changed its mind and left it in the lurch. In the best of all interpretations, the invasion did pull the region out of stagnation at a time when it looked like the descendants of Saddam Hussein, together with those of Muammar Qaddafi, Bashar Assad and Ben Ali, were going to rule forever.

The fall of the statue of Saddam Hussein broke the myth of the power of dicta-

the US announced a new way forward and brought in more troops who collaborated with Sunni tribal leaders to oust Al-Qaeda from Iraq.

At the time, in 2009-2010, international organizations wrote glowing reports that Arab regimes had understood the message and were reforming. The regimes may have fooled the bureaucrats at the UN, the EU, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund but they did not fool their own people.

Revolts against dictatorships rose in Tunisia, Libya and Syria and for a short while it did look like we were heading toward a brighter future with freedom and democracy.

Then it dawned on us that the US had changed its mind; it was as much of an

ignored, resulting in the destruction and starvation of cities and millions of refugees. Syria was sacrificed for a nuclear deal with Iran. We heard justifications such as “why should we be the policeman of the world” or “well, let’s not forget that America has done some really bad things” and “we only make things worse” or “we make peace with enemies not with friends” or “we are focused on Daesh.” Syria’s descent into hell destabilized the whole region and the ripple effects disrupted the EU with the resulting refugee crisis.

Except for a short interlude during the Donald Trump presidency, the US under Obama and Joe Biden has been mostly blind to Iran’s interventions in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen. We heard explanations that the Houthis, Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad or the various militias in Iraq were local organizations with a local agenda and could not be reduced to proxies of Iran. Then there was the September 2019 drone and missile attacks on Saudi Aramco facilities in Abqaiq and Khurais; the January 2022 attacks on the UAE’s Mussafah oil refinery barely noticed by Washington.

If the Iraq war resulted in the US pulling away from its role as a superpower in the region, it took the Ukraine war and the Iranian protests, with parallels drawn with Russia and Iran’s role in Syria, to again disrupt America’s soul-searching moment and hopefully lead to a review of its relations with its allies. In the meantime, and until the US decides again who its friends and enemies are, and shakes itself out from the trauma of its Iraq invasion, seeking Chinese help and guarantees seems to be the best option.

The cherry blossoms are back, but is Tokyo?

Gearoid Reidy

Tokyoites are getting back into a pre-COVID-19 tradition.

This month sees the return of hanami, the cherry-blossom viewing parties that are part of a tradition dating back to the Heian Period of 1,200 years ago, before being cruelly interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Each spring heralds the spectacular-but-short-lived bloom of the flowers that coincides with the end of Japan’s fiscal and school years, and becomes a time of partings, new beginnings — and an excuse for raucous drinking parties beneath the petals.

This will be the first year since the coronavirus first surfaced in Wuhan that authorities aren’t cautioning against holding such celebrations. Three years ago, as millions across the globe bedded into lockdowns, hanami parties were (unfairly) blamed for seeding the virus and causing the state of emergency that rocked the economy the

following month. While such revelry was officially discouraged, with COVID-19 yet to really hit Japan, some still felt free to enjoy themselves.

Tokyo soon became much more cautious toward the virus — so much so that authorities continued to discourage hanami, a largely outdoor activity, last year, tapping off picnic areas in parks across the city. The nation’s wariness, which has helped keep deaths from the pandemic low even without a lockdown, is still on display in the masses who choose to continue masking, even after the government finally dropped recommendations on face coverings.

Mask-wearing may change gradually. But other aspects of the capital might not return. One of the most palpable is that Tokyo is going to bed a little earlier these days: Data show footfall in the busiest nightlife districts remains down nearly 50% from the pre-

COVID-19 norm, even as other areas have largely recovered. The last trains on the extensive (but not 24-hour) subway and train network, run 30 minutes earlier than before the pandemic, as more head straight back from the office or work from home.

Tokyoites are easing off the famed hard-drinking nightlife: While the food and beverage industry as a whole has recovered past its 2019 levels, much of that is on the back of take-out and fast food; sales at bars and izakaya restaurants in January across the country were still down 42% from the same month in 2019.

“The Japanese are a very cautious people and some are avoiding staying out too late or getting rowdy,” Mitsuo Kaku, the chairman of the Tokyo Center for Infectious Disease Control and Prevention, said. “Unless there’s a medicine

developed you can take as soon as you get COVID-19, things might still stay like this.”

From taxi drivers to travel writers, many have lamented this shift. But it’s not due just to the pandemic — attitudes are changing too. Gen Z workers, already less likely to drink than their elders, say they have little desire to join in after-work parties once considered mandatory. Some 40% of employees say they don’t want to take part in such events with their bosses or company seniors, and when such gatherings happen, they’re increasingly in smaller groups.

COVID-19 has amplified trends that were already emerging before the pandemic. For decades, the central government has been trying to convince people to spend less time at the office and more with their families. The Work Style Reform Bill passed in

2018 limited overtime for many professions to 45 hours a month — and added powerful penalties to encourage employers to obey.

That was already impacting how late people stayed out; the pandemic, coming so soon after, may have sealed those lifestyle changes in a way that decades of nudging could not.

The country’s hard-work-at-all-costs culture, which served it so well in the post-war boom, is being worn down, too. For one of the most under-slept countries in the world, that might not be all bad. One survey found that people in their 20s and early 30s are getting 10% more sleep than the same age group a decade ago. Work from home will also help push what was already an increase in people actually taking their paid work leave.

Of course, the changes COVID-19 has wrought

aren’t all desirable. Fewer people staying out late hurts the bottom line in the service sector, already suffering from the effects of inflation. Many businesses will go under. With fewer commuters, train lines may have to review their profitability.

And not every change has been voluntary: Some places, including hospitals, have banned employees from socializing outside of work, a move which hasn’t been sustainable over the last three years, even if it helped reduce clusters among the vulnerable.

Tokyo might now be less interesting to the 2 a.m. tourist — but its residents may exit COVID-19 in some ways better off than when they went in. A less breakneck city might be an easier one to live in. The ephemeral, fluid nature of life is what the cherry blossoms represent — the coming revelry is a good chance for residents to think about such changes.

UK foreign policy needs a strategy, not slogans

Former Conservative Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd asserted in the 1990s that the UK had been able to “punch above its weight” in the post-war era, despite it no longer being a great power. That statement may have been true during much of the decades since, too, but is under increasing scrutiny in the 2020s.

That is part of the reason why the UK government released this week a refreshed foreign policy strategy for the “new” era of international relations heralded by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. There are multiple developments to welcome in the document. However, it does not answer a number of growing questions concerning capability gaps that weaken UK national defense and undermine the UK’s NATO contribution.

To be fair to the Rishi Sunak government, many of these questions have plagued previous Conservative administrations over the past 13 years. In 2016, for instance, Gen. Sir Richard Shirreff, who had been the UK’s top commander in NATO, said that London’s failure to act more prominently on the world stage has helped turned the nation into a “bit player” with “nobody taking any notice of (then-Prime Minister David Cameron risking) foreign policy irrelevance.”

Looking back further in history, the challenges faced by Conservative governments in the 2010s and 2020s indicate that more than six decades after former US Secretary of State Dean Acheson famously said that the UK had lost an empire but not yet found a new world role, policy is in drift again. So the issue of UK grand strategy is a pressing, important one in 2023, and not just because of Russia’s Ukraine invasion.

Acheson made his remarks around the time of London’s first application to join the then-European Community in 1962. In the more than half century that followed, the nation did find a new post-empire role, with a strong, influential international voice, powered through twin alliances with Europe and the US.

However, challenges are now mounting again. Moreover, the UK government mantra of “Global Britain” is more of a slogan rather than a meaningful strategy for the UK’s future. For years, multiple UK governments have failed to articulate a grand strategy, offering instead policies, plans and political

Andrew Hammond

foreign policy “drift.” With the Ukraine war a potential hinge-point in world affairs, there is an urgent need for greater strategic clarity with several key areas of focus.

As the refreshed document released this week indicates, a top priority

how productive the UK’s post-Brexit relationship will now be with Brussels and the EU-27, especially with the agreement of the new Northern Ireland protocol. While this and the UK’s 2019 EU withdrawal deal, and the 2020 UK-EU Trade and Cooperation agreement, have given some definition to future

makers harbor concerns about the UK’s enduring value to Washington now that it can no longer play as effectively the role of what Tony Blair called the “bridge” between Europe and the US.

One of the biggest questions is how much emphasis to put on geographies such as the Asia-Pacific region versus redoubling of the Euro-Atlantic posture following Russia’s invasion. As the review highlights, NATO, the EU and Europe as a geopolitical space will be granted central places given that the UK’s No. 1 strategic aim remains the prosperity, stability and security of the continent which, as Winston Churchill said, is where the UK’s political “weather comes from.”

Second, the UK has evolved in the post-war period into a European regional power. This is not to deny that London remains a very significant player on the world stage, as a permanent member of key forums such as the UN Security Council, which wields considerable military, economic and soft power to boot.

One of the mistakes pro-Europeans made in the 2016 Brexit referendum was a failure to better connect a sense of the UK’s importance and uniqueness to its continued membership of the EU, which can amplify these strengths. Moreover, arguments that the UK should behave more like an “ordinary” nation overlook its history as a world power, and politicians who talk down one’s country often suffer a public backlash.

At the same time, some have overplayed the UK’s strengths, significant as these remain. Talk of the UK unlocking a new era of global trade in the 2020s has been muted by the reality of the UK’s bargaining power in a world shaped by global economic superpowers including the US and China.

Ultimately, these are not just a burning issue for the UK, but also for the rest of the world. For a UK that no longer punches so strongly on the international stage is also less able to bolster international security and economic prosperity at a time when, in the 2020s, both remain fragile.



COVID-19 still poses a clear and present danger

William A. Haseltine

We have made extraordinary progress in our fight against the COVID-19 pandemic since the dark days of 2020. Yet, in many ways, we are back to square one. Public health precautions are virtually nonexistent in most parts of the world, and the current vaccines and drugs can neither prevent nor even effectively treat infections in broad swaths of the population.

Make no mistake: COVID-19 still poses a clear and present danger. Research shows that two or more COVID-19 re-infections doubles the risk for death, blood clots and lung damage, among other negative health outcomes. The risk of cardiovascular events has been found to increase by 4.5 percent for up to 12 months after an infection, regardless of age, race, sex, obesity, smoking or other factors.

Nearly one in five Americans are reporting long COVID symptoms, and recent research estimates that as many as 4 million people with the condition are unable to work. The long-term social and economic impact of continual re-infections cannot be underestimated.

Although the mRNA vaccines have done an excellent job of reducing hospitalizations and deaths, questions remain regarding waning immunity, and public uptake has decreased with each new booster. A mere 18 percent of Americans over the age of 18 have received the bivalent booster.

Moreover, no authorized monoclonal antibody treatments are currently available, and the preventative drug Evusheld has been rendered ineffective. More than 17,000 immunocompromised Americans and other high-risk people thus have been left vulnerable to

severe disease and high mortality rates. While Paxlovid has proven to be a powerful tool against death and hospitalization, it can have potentially negative interactions with many common medications, such as statins and blood thinners.

Paxlovid also must be taken within the first few days of an infection to be most effective. Owing to this limitation, as well as concerns about viral rebound and confusion about eligibility, uptake has been low, even among high-risk populations. In 2022, fewer than one-third of Americans over 80 who contracted COVID-19 ended up taking Paxlovid. This is very worrying, considering that those over 80 make up a significant proportion of COVID-related deaths.

But all hope is not lost, because we have a successful blueprint to follow. HIV was once a death sentence, but patients nowadays can live almost unaffected by the virus, and the impact on life expectancy is relatively minimal. We owe this progress not to a successful vaccine but rather to a wide range of prophylactic and therapeutic antiviral drugs. More than 30 drugs are currently approved for the prevention and treatment of HIV, some of which provide durable protection for up to six months with a single injection.

We can use the hard-won lessons from the fight against HIV to combat SARS-CoV-2 drug resistance, thereby creating an insurance policy against future mutated variants. To that end, we must vastly expand our search for highly active, safe, long-lasting antiviral drugs, while also deepening our understanding of the cellular, molecular and biochemical fea-

tures of SARS-CoV-2.

Unlike previous waves of the pandemic, which were driven by a single ominous variant, current and future waves will be driven by multiple subvariants of omicron. Each new subvariant accumulates mutations in similar parts of the receptor-binding domain (a critical spot in the spike protein where virus-blocking antibodies dock), enhancing the virus’s immune-dodging capabilities. We therefore need to focus on new groups of antibodies that can circumvent future omicron variants by binding at alternative sites that rarely mutate. Not only could these antibodies neutralize all SARS-CoV-2 variants; they also would help us fight related coronaviruses such as MERS and SARS-CoV-1.

We should be taking advantage of advances in artificial-intelligence antibody modeling to reduce the time spent during the antibody identification process. Why sort through millions of B-cell receptor sequences manually when a software program can greatly expedite that work? While there is some research and development underway on broadly neutralizing antibodies, these typically have a lower affinity for SARS-CoV-2. Fortunately, in a recent study using an AI pipeline, researchers demonstrated a nearly 20-fold increased affinity to an existing drug. Similar successes could be replicated to develop treatments for COVID-19.

The pandemic is not over, and millions of people remain at risk. Only by accelerating and consistently funding research into these alternative drug-development avenues will we find our way out of the COVID-19 crisis once and for all.

Discourse on Libya remains fixated on the lethal and the lucrative

Even after 12 years, discourse on Libya remains fixated on the lethal and the lucrative — sidelining the role that the North African country’s finance and banking sector plays in perpetuating, even exacerbating, dysfunction mostly stemming from its discordant politics.

Entrenched political elites share a disinterest and, at times, outright hostility, toward reforming the entire sector as a state-rebuilding priority since the root cause of almost all lack of progress — political, economic, security, or otherwise — in Libya remains financial opacity and corruption. Thus, even entities such as the country’s own central bank end up incinervizing a woeful status quo instead of fulfilling its mandate to ensure Libyans retain access to public services and uninterrupted flow of goods to preserve what is left of Libya’s economic integrity.

Even prior to the post-2011 political instability, Libya’s financial sector was not sufficiently developed nor fully exorcised from the crippling legacy of decades of economic centralization. The enduring dominance of oil revenues underwrote a highly centralized economy that sourced liquidity from state-owned banks (where the central bank was the principal shareholder), to finance public projects with depositor funds. There was little incentive to modernize banking, bolster the financial sector and adopt better risk-management strategies. Unsurprisingly, the pre-2011 attempt to decentralize the economy, following sanctions relief and declining oil prices, was doomed from the start given severely limited non-bank financing, private property and no capi-

tal markets.

On one hand, these attempts at opening up the economy did open the floodgates for alternative financing such as the launching of a stock market and the introduction of private banking. Yet, by the time Libyans took to the streets in a preamble to the fall of Muammar Qaddafi, the country’s finance sector remained weak, disorganized and atrophied by the inherent structural weaknesses of decades of centralization. As a result, any window-dressing reforms were never going to upend a finance sector heavily influenced by poorly run state banks with no competition, in addition to being well-insulated by the central bank.

The Libyan central bank dominates national finance as a majority shareholder in state-owned banks, despite also being the regulator of the banking sector, presenting obvious conflict-of-interest issues. These range from granting generous credit terms benefitting the well-connected to insulating public banks from the consequences of reckless financial decisions via potential forbearance. In a nutshell, being both a principal banker to the state and to the Libyan public is reminiscent of a Qaddafi-era centralization that continues to resist reforms, hiding behind a political crisis to excuse weakening levels of financial inclusion and intermediation.

However, resisting reforms to the Qaddafi-era rentierism, Libya’s central bank continues to fund the conflict-economy as well as underwrite a generous subsidy system that also invites corruption, abuse and other types of malfeasance. Nonetheless, it is an extremely vital situation in a fragile country on the

Hafed Al-Ghwel

verge of slipping back into episodes of sporadic violence and mass unrest as both economic and political grievances mount.

The specter of renewed violence in this climate of deepening fragmentation is especially worrisome since it weighs heavily on Libya’s financial and economic development, potentially creating new challenges or worsening existing ones. Libya’s financial sector, as troubled as it is, remains the sole mechanism by which the state keeps a disordered conflict-economy functioning — even to the point of avoiding shutting down unprofitable operations lest they increase the country’s many jobless.

In a population of nearly 7 million with a labor force of just under 3 million, nearly one in five Libyans — half of its youth and a quarter of its women — are out of work. Despite this sobering statistic, Libya’s overall economy has surprisingly resisted total collapse on the back of a strong petrochemical industry and a services sector dominated by financial services that contribute roughly 77 percent and 21 percent to GDP, respectively.

Yet, Libyan firms are still struggling to access financing for rebuilding and resuming their operations, while an elevated risk environment makes an underdeveloped financial sector less likely to extend lines of credit.

It is even worse for the 667,000 refugees and migrants who are typically excluded from the formal sector. Limited access to financial services means they have trouble formally transacting in the economy, exposing them to significant risks, impacting their ability to plan adequately and even invest

their earnings to safeguard their futures. Surprisingly, two thirds of Libyans are “banked” — i.e., they hold an account at a financial institution, compared to under 50 percent in the wider Arab region, but most accounts are merely used to receive wages with very little to nothing left over for financial intermediation.

Meanwhile, the dual roles the central bank plays as both regulator and banker makes it difficult to urge banks it owns to offer cheap financing to maintain adequate liquidity levels, while also ensuring they remain solvent. The end result is a very conservative, risk-averse financial environment that harms rather than helps Libya’s private sector — hamstrung by disrupted operations, income losses, collapsed supply chains and a very volatile Libyan dinar. Elsewhere, persistent instability and the lack of unified monetary policy also bottlenecks any initiatives of the central bank to make funding available for critical development projects, underscoring how political struggles continue to undermine Libya’s post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction.

Strangely enough, the international community has yet to move away from mere statements expressing “concern” and doing nothing else to deal with the Achilles’ heel of Libya’s transition, which remains an inscrutable, unaccountable and semi-sovereign central bank. It, much like the state oil parastatal, falls low on a totem crowded by rival governments, enterprising external actors, a rogue legislature, militia groups and a seemingly disoriented UN mission, no one can deny the centrality of Libya’s financial sector in maintaining control by facilitating the flow of

money from oil revenues into the hands of dubious beneficiaries. The central bank’s expansive footprint within the financial sector as well as the wider economy also enables it to turn its counterparties into willing advocates and defenders of the status quo in exchange for generous compensation or avoiding scrutiny.

The cursory attention Libya’s financial sector receives from actors that claim to have a stake in resolving its now 12-year-long quandary is perhaps due to the fact it is the only portal through which foreign entities can interact with and conduct business in Libya. Foreign actors such as Turkiye, Russia, the US and the EU have vested interests in how the Libyan finance sector operates, and that it continues to do so despite the political impasse, which destroys any impetus to promote and safeguard its integrity.

Even with warring factions, parallel government(s) infiltrated by hybrid actors or an oil crescent crisscrossed by fortified trenches manned by armed foreign fighters and mercenaries — the money must still flow. In addition, companies from overseas owed money by various Libyan entities are unlikely to back any push for transparency, accountability and crucial reforms to dislodge the sector from its antiquated role as it risks the recovery of those debts or any back payments.

Libya will, for now, remain crippled by a finance sector more inclined to subvert calls for its reform, aided by a disinterested coalition of major actors that are loath to devise something better — of course, in parallel with ongoing peace-building, security and reunification processes.

(Continued from Page-6)

This has, of course, had a damaging impact on the region. Whatever the virtues of successive Iraqi prime ministers (and virtue is often lacking), they do not govern the country. Hidden half out of sight, Iran and its ideological allies do. The corruption of sanctions has been replaced by the exploitative and extractive corruption of its neighbors, Iran and Syria. And the new Iraqi elites — often strangers to their own country in 2003 — control the only instruments that matter: the bureaucracy and the army. If a new conflict with Iran happens, they will drag Iraq, like Lebanon, into it.

It has also had a massively damaging impact on Western politics. The cumulative loss of confidence in the inevitability of progression has caused a dramatic loss of faith in governments everywhere, notably in the US and the UK, but in practice more widely. Iraq was not the only cause: the financial crisis of 2007/8, the rise of China, the consequences of unchecked migration and the explosion of social

media have all contributed. But the high hopes of the millennium, with the end of the Balkan Wars and the apparently inexorable global diffusion of social liberalism, have given way to a much darker mood. The catastrophe of Iraq is exhibit No. 1 for those who claim that governments should never be trusted.

Perhaps in the long run we shall see this simply as a welcome return to realism and a salutary humility about the possibility of shaping the world in our own image.

Recent developments in the Gulf show that regional governments are beginning to make their own arrangements for security in the face of Western uncertainty.

If we hold our nerve, there is still much that we can do together. For Iraq is not yet so far gone that it cannot recover. There is deep resentment among many Iraqis about the way in which Iran has instrumentalized their weakness. And Iraqis also know that their country, whatever its origins, remains central to the region as a whole. Mesopotamia is where the Arab, Persian and Turkish worlds meet. It is a gate-

way to the Indian Ocean and to Transcaucasia. All the great Abrahamic faiths belong there. It is the desert and the sown, the shrine cities of the south and the mountains of the north, all watered by the great river systems of the Tigris and the Euphrates.

The distinguished Iraqi social scientist Ali Al-Wardi wrote of the duality of Iraqi identity. It is now more like a plurality. And that makes Iraq special. But it needs support. Reintegrating Iraq into the wider Arab world, where it belongs, needs to take account of — and celebrate — that plurality. And it will take time and patience.

If others wish to loot Iraq and supply weapons to their proxies, those with Iraq’s best interests at heart should instead build schools, hospitals, clinics, power plants and businesses. Make people’s lives better, not worse. It will take decades. But it will be worth it. And that is the only way to give Iraq back its independence and its position as the keystone of regional security.

After all, there has always been a reason that empires fought over Mesopotamia. It matters.

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.



ICCI urge for reducing interest rate to revive economic activities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Sunday urged the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to make significant cut in interest rate to revive the businesses and economy of the country.

He said that the 20 per cent benchmark interest rate in is highest, which is a major hurdle in promoting trade and industrial activities in the country.

He said that the interest rate in China is 3.65%, Bangladesh 6%, India 6.5% but in Pakistan it is 20%, which is highest.

He urged the need for reducing interest rate to provide level playing field to Pakistani businesses to compete with regional competitors for exports.

He said this while addressing a dinner reception hosted in honor of Sardar Tahir Mahmood, President, Islamabad Estate Agents Association.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that the hike in interest rate has made the credit cost unaffordable for the private sector due to which business and investment activities are badly suffering.

He urged the government to address the concerns of the business community on high interest rate and high taxes on the construction sector to ease their problems.

Speaking at the occasion, Sardar Tahir, President, of Islamabad Estate Agents Association said that the construction industry is the backbone of the economy as its growth boosts the

business activities of over 70 allied industries. However, the construction industry is in big trouble these days due to high interest rate, higher taxes and devaluation of the rupee.

He urged Finance Minister Ishaq Dar to hold a meeting with the business community of the construction industry to listen to their genuine issues and take urgent remedial measures to revive the economy.

Zafar Bakhawari, former President ICCI said that Pakistan is facing a serious issue of foreign exchange reserves due to which imports are banned and said that the best option for Pakistan to improve forex reserves is to boost exports on an urgent basis.

He said that for this purpose, it is essential that the

government should promote ease of doing business by, reducing the cost of doing business.

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, former President ICCI said that the government's policy of increasing interest rate to control inflation has failed, adding that instead of controlling inflation, high interest rate would lead to rapid de-industrialization causing more slowdown in GDP growth.

He urged the SBP to reconsider its monetary policy and reduce the interest rate to make it affordable for businesses.

Muhammad Ejaz Abbasi former President ICCI, Zahid Rafiq Secretary General Islamabad Estate Agents Association and others also spoke at the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: People purchasing dates in connection with upcoming Ramadan ul Mubarak from weekly Sunday Bazaar.

Carpet manufacturers demand speedy measures to boost exports

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMAEA) has stressed the need for taking more effective and speedy measures to enhance overall exports volume and revenue of Pakistan.

Talking to the media here Sunday, Association's Senior Vice Chairman Usman Ashraf said that until the economy was based on exports, Pakistan's prosperity hinged on transforming the economy

on export base for which economic and other relevant policies would have to be re-formulated in consultation with stakeholders. There was also a dire need to remove unnecessary obstacles and reduce the cost of agricultural and industrial production to ensure an export-led economy.

He suggested that in order to increase country's exports, a study report of regional and other countries should be prepared, and export promotion responsi-

bilities should be assigned to Pakistani embassies by giving commercial attachés formal export targets, and their performance should also be assessed.

He said there were pavilions of different countries on the supermarkets established at the major airports of the world where their products were displayed and Pakistan also follow such business promotion strategies, and also make a better use of social media tools to help increase

Pakistan's exports. A system should be evolved under one roof for all exporters where fresh graduates could also market Pakistani products as well as conduct research studies to get aware of the trends of different countries, he added.

Usman Ashraf said that Pakistan directly needed to reorganise its export structure that would definitely ensure speedy economic development and its people's prosperity.

PIAF seeks serious measures as Pakistan exports continue to drop

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Raising grave concern over the continued falling trend of Pakistan exports the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) on Saturday said that the country's textile exports dipped for the fifth consecutive month as shipments dropped by almost 30% year-on-year to \$1.20 billion in Feb 2023, indicating that the government has failed to win the confidence of the business community due to continued rupee depreciation and uncertainty.

PIAF Chairman Faheem ur Rehman Saigol, quoting the latest figures, stated that the overall exports during July-February 2022-23 totalled \$18.678 billion against \$20.57 billion during the corresponding period of last year, showing a decrease of 9.21 percent while the exports in Feb 2023 were \$2.19 billion compared to \$2.24 billion of Jan 2023 showing a decrease of 2.36 percent and by 22.69 percent respectively.

The PIAF Chairman pointed out that administrative measures to curb imports, leading to raw material shortage for the industry and resultantly lower production, were the main reason for the plunge while the slowdown in global demand amid monetary tightening was another reason, he said.

Faheem Saigol said that Pakistan has remained a potential market for foreign investors, who still have plans to make fresh investment in the country, but they have continued to wait

for the return of economic stability. He highlighted uncertainty in the rupee-dollar parity as one of the major concerns of foreign investors. He said a slowdown in the economy had badly impacted business confidence. It is must for the authorities concerned to first create an enabling environment for the local businessmen desiring to make new investment.

Data shows that textile exports came in at \$1.2 billion in February, down 11% month-on-month (MoM) however, in rupee terms, exports came in at Rs315 billion, up by 2% MoM.

Value-added textile exports decreased by 13% MoM to \$812 million mainly due to lower shipments of readymade garments and knitwear, which declined by 13% and 18% MoM respectively, he said. Towels and bed wear exports decreased by 8% and 7% MoM respectively, according to Malik. Basic textile exports registered a decline of 8% MoM to \$214 million in February 2023. In terms of volume, knitwear, towels and bed wear shipments decreased by 16%, 10% and 9% MoM respectively, whereas exports of readymade garments increased by 15% MoM. According to data, among basic textiles, cotton yarn exports were down by 22% MoM whereas cotton cloth shipments were up 11% MoM. Pakistan's value-added segment declined on a YoY basis by 26%, 34% and 28% in the categories of bed wear, knitwear and readymade garments respectively. Textile exports declined

mainly due to import restrictions, resulting in unavailability of raw material, coupled with global recession which kept textile demand subdued, he said. Besides domestic issues, there are global reasons as well for the decline in exports that have also impacted other countries.

In the first eight months of current financial year (8MFY23), Pakistan recorded textile exports of \$11.22 billion, down by 11% YoY, while in rupee terms, they were up by 19% YoY, while exports of basic and value-added textile declined by 21% and 9% YoY respectively.

Demand from major markets, such as the US and Europe, was the key concern among textile exporters, he said. Furthermore, the recent hike in electricity tariffs will pose a challenge to the sector.

On a year-on-year basis, cotton yarn exports registered 56.65 per cent negative growth, while on a MoM basis, it registered 18.09 per cent growth.

Rice exports declined by 12.09 per cent during the first eight months of 2022-23 and remained \$1.354 billion compared to \$1.540 billion during the same period of the last fiscal year.

LSMI production goes up by 1.48 per cent

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

However, according to the provisional quantum indices of LSMI for January 2023 released by the PBS, on a year-on-year (YoY) basis, the big industry production went down 7.90 per cent in January 2023 when compared with January 2022. Overall the LSMI showed a decline of 4.40 per cent during July-January 2022-23 when compared with the same period of last year.

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

The production in July-January 2022-23 as compared to the same period of the corresponding year has increased in wearing apparel (44.47%), leather products (4.98%), furniture (73.80%), and other manufacturing (48.26%). The provisional quantum indices of LSMI for January 2023 with the base year 2015-16 have been developed based on the latest data supplied by the source agencies, including the Oil Companies Advisory Committee, Ministry of Industries and Production, Ministry of Commerce and Provincial Bureaux of Statistics (BoS).

Inauguration Ceremony of Otsuka Pakistan's Nutraceutical Plant held



F.P. Report

HUB, Baluchistan: Otsuka Pakistan Limited, a leading Japan-based multinational pharmaceutical company, arranged the inauguration ceremony of its Nutraceutical plant.

Otsuka Pakistan's Nutraceutical plant is a state-of-the-art facility that will manufacture high-

quality dietary supplements for local and international markets.

The plant is equipped with the latest technologies and international quality standards.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Mr. Koichi Okada, Company Director said, "We are committed to provide the people of Pakistan with high-

quality, safe, and effective nutraceutical products that can help them lead a healthy and active life. This plant is a testament to our commitment to the people of Pakistan, and we are proud to be contributing to the country's economic growth."

On this occasion Mr. Hanif Sattar-CEO Otsuka Pakistan was also present.

Trade diplomacy with US think-tanks under way

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Business Forum (PBF), with the support of overseas Pakistanis, has started trade diplomacy with American economic think-tanks and chambers of commerce to strengthen economic ties between the two countries.

PBF Vice President Attiq Akram Chaudhry told APP on Sunday that in this regard, the forum had also appointed a focal person for the US markets as Pakistan needed more strong trade relations with the US. "We believe that a robust trade relationship between the United States and Pakistan is more important than ever to bolster Pakistan's economic stability as it recovers from the devastating floods, besides guiding the American business com-

munity towards trade and investment opportunities in Pakistan," he added.

Attiq Akram Chaudhry said the US had long been Pakistan's largest export market with potential for further growth, adding that US business community also believed that Pakistan-US economic relations could be expanded further particularly in the field of energy, agricultural equipment and products, franchising, retail trade, information and communications technology products and services.

PBF Vice President mentioned that US companies and their local affiliates were among Pakistan's largest employers, with roughly 80 US companies directly employing more than 120,000 Pakistanis, and US corporations, in

their investment plans, had announced more than US \$1.5 billion for Pakistan since 2019. Similarly, Pakistan was also committed to easing the regulatory regime and making it easier for businesses to operate in the country.

He added that US was Pakistan's largest trading partner and export destination with a US \$12 billion bilateral trade volume. In 2022, Pakistan exported goods worth over US \$5.9 billion to America while bringing in more than US \$3.17 billion worth of products from the US.

He urged the US Pakistan Business Council (USPBC) to organise a comprehensive delegation to Pakistan for foster joint ventures and mutual trade interests.

CBOT agricultural futures close mixed

CHICAGO (APP): Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) agricultural futures closed mixed in the past week as risk off is the theme of the markets until there is clarity and confidence in the US and EU banking systems, Chicago-based research company AgResource noted in a weekly roundup.

The US central bank is likely to hit the pause button and see if anything else breaks following Wednesday's rate decision. AgResource holds that this should offer stability to commodities by late next week.

CBOT corn futures ended higher. China's demand for 2 million metric tons of US corn allowed the CBOT recovery. Importantly, the price break improved processing margins and US corn's export position in the world market.

A build-in stock is probable in 2023, but this cannot be determined in the marketplace until both acreage and early summer weather are known.

A warmer or drier pattern is needed across the Central US beginning in April. Sales will only be recommended on recoveries. Spot cash supplies are tight, and farmers have paused their sales.

US wheat futures rallied 30 to 40 cents this week as the market reconciles deeply oversold technical conditions and a new North Hemisphere growing season. The ongoing US Plains drought and the uncertainty regarding the duration of the Black Sea export corridor lent fundamental support.

Exporter stocks are expected to tighten again in 2023 to 2024 even assuming normal weather, and the broad uptrend line established in 2018 is projected to hold.

Wheat futures above 8.00 US dollars require Russian yield loss, but a range of 6.80 to 8.00 dollars is most likely through-out 2023. End user coverage is advised on 10-15 cent breaks. Sales are advised only on recoveries. Initial upside is pegged at 7.20 dollars for May wheat, with support below 6.90 dollars.

Economy facing challenges of low growth, falling reserve, high inflation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel on Sunday, stressing the need for putting the economy on a sustainable growth trajectory by providing incentives to the industry, lamented that the economy is facing multiple challenges of falling exports, high inflation, low growth and declining foreign reserves, with fiscal accounts under immense pressure on account of heavy interest payments.

FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said that the drop shows the government would find it difficult to achieve the industrial

growth and export target, leading to more pressure on foreign exchange reserves of the country.

He asked the government to address the underlying structural vulnerabilities through smooth energy supply at competitive rates, as country's overall export proceeds continued to shrink for the fifth consecutive month in a row.

Quoting the data, he pointed out 1.7 billion dollars decline in remittances during the first half of the current year compared to the same period the year before (a decline of 11.1 percent), exports declined by 6.6 billion dollars (6.8 percent decline), foreign direct investment dipped by 654 million dollars (58 percent decline), portfolio investment plummeted

from negative 45.5 to negative 1032 million dollars, Public Sector Development Program decreased by 122 billion rupees (48.4 percent) and credit to private sector from 1043.1 to 703.6 million rupees which contributed to a decline in Nov 2021 Large Scale Manufacturing Sector growth of 6 percent to negative 5.50 percent in the comparable period this year.

Consumer Price Index rose from 12.3 in 2021-22 to 24.5 2022-23, while PSX index declined by 2.8 percent, market capitalization in rupees by 8.8 percent and in dollars by a whopping 28.8 percent.

Rising prices of wheat are the key factors responsible for affecting the general price level. International commodity

prices are showing a downward trend on a YoY basis and its impact will ultimately be transmitted into domestic prices with some lags after adjusting the currency devaluation. While the government kept the administered prices at their current level to stabilize the overall prices but post floods persistent shortfall of essential crops is preventing inflation to settle down.

He observed that the drop in textile and clothing exports is gaining momentum over the past five months owing to multiple factors including high energy costs, stuck-up refunds and a slump in global demands despite the massive depreciation of the rupee. He believes that one of the main reasons behind

falling exports was the exchange rate instability. The discontinuation of duty drawbacks on local taxes and levies by the government has also created liquidity issues for the export sector.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the government has increased the gas and electricity tariffs and, at the same time, also the subsidy has been phased out, which will further increase the cost of production.

Month on month increases in consumer prices may be countered by a further mean reverting international commodity prices and some exchange rate stability due to decreased pace of depreciation. The overall money supply growth remains compatible with a return to

low and stable inflation.

But the outlook of M2 is broadly dependent on fiscal accounts which are under immense pressure on account of heavy interest payments and rehabilitation spending. Nonetheless, the first five months of CFY have ended with some developments; containing fiscal deficit and surplus in primary balance due to effective fiscal management. The State Bank of Pakistan is also enacting a contractionary monetary policy to contain inflationary pressure. However, a larger portion of volatility in the current price level is explained by supply-side factors.

As imports fell more than the decline in exports, the trade balance of goods and services improved.

Exports are constrained by domestic production issues related to the slowdown of demand in the main export markets and high domestic production costs.

Imports are currently constrained by sluggish domestic demand and administrative measures to protect the official foreign reserves level.

Since no immediate reversal of these developments is envisaged, the trade balance may further stabilize or further improve somewhat in the upcoming months.

The textile exports remained weak mainly due to the demand and supply challenges being faced by the sector. Global recession, which reduced the purchasing power in key export markets, also result-

ed in lower bookings of orders, he added. Inventory piled up at large global retailers, while gas shortages and increased costs of working capital in the country also played a role in the decline, he said. He stated that a major enhancement in exports requires huge and wide structural reforms, urging the government to take business community on board, who are the real stakeholders in preparing policies to enhance exports, which is prerequisite for economic growth.

As part of the agreement with the IMF, the government has announced discontinuing subsidies on energy for the export sector. The piling of containers at ports is also contributing to the decline in exports.



In brief

Atletico Madrid thump Valencia 3-0

MADRID (INP): Antoine Griezmann, Yannick Carrasco and Thomas Lemar scored goals to give Atletico Madrid a commanding 3-0 win over Valencia on Saturday and extend their unbeaten run in La Liga to 10 games. The home side at Metropolitan Stadium dominated the opponents completely and registered its third consecutive win in the Spanish League. Griezmann opened the scoring in the first half, slotting home from a close range before Carrose doubled the lead after the break. Substitute Lemar wrapped up Atletico's win in the 67th minute, finishing eloquently from Alvaro Morata's cross as Diego Simeone's side produced another contest on high note. Following the victory, Atletico jumped to 51 points and strengthened their claim on third place in the standing, six points ahead of fourth-placed Real Sociedad, who face Elche on Sunday. However, Valencia are left on the edge of the relegation zone, equal on 26 points with Almeria and Getafe. Earlier, Celta Vigo breezed past Espanyol 3-1 as goals from Gabri Viegas, Iago Aspas and Carles Perez took the side to 10th place. Almeria held Cadiz to a 1-1 draw after Gonzalo Merelo scored the equalizer on a penalty deep into the stoppage time.

New Zealand close on series sweep

WELLINGTON (Agencies): New Zealand maintained their dominance over Sri Lanka in the second Test on Sunday, enforcing a follow-on and setting up the likelihood of a series clean sweep with two days to play. The tourists reached 113-2 in their second innings at stumps on day three but still trailed by 303 runs at Wellington's Basin Reserve. They need a massive turnaround to avoid defeat after being skittled out for 164 in their first innings in response to the Black Caps' 580-4 declared. Starting off with a deficit of 416 runs, they showed more fight in their second turn at bat. Captain Dimuth Karunaratne posted his second half-century of the day before being dismissed by counterpart Tim Southee for 51, caught in the deep after fellow-opener Oshada Fernando had been removed cheaply. Kusal Mendis was at the crease on 50 and Angelo Mathews unbeaten on one off 40 balls, with the pair seeing off the last 11.5 overs in stoic fashion. Sri Lanka's best hopes of saving the Test could rest with the weather. Rain is forecast for the final day, meaning they could force a stalemate if they can successfully bat through Monday, when cold, blustery conditions are expected and may make life uncomfortable for New Zealand in the field. The tourists' slim hope of winning to square the two-match series was effectively ended by a slew of rash shots which derailed their first innings. The tail succumbed rapidly during a chaotic second session, with the last six wickets tumbling for 50 runs in the space of 15.1 overs despite the wicket playing relatively true. Only three batters reached double figures in the first innings, including Karunaratne, who was the ninth man out for 89. The gritty opener had looked to be digging the visitors out of a deep hole when he and Dinesh Chandimal put on 80 for the fifth wicket after the loss of two wickets in the day's opening half-hour reduced them to 34-4.



VISAKHAPATNAM: Australian and Indian players shake hands at the end of the second one-day international cricket match between India and Australia.

Shaheen named PSL 2023 team captain

LAHORE (INP): Lahore Qalandars' skipper Shaheen Shah Afridi was appointed as captain of the Team of Pakistan Super League (PSL) 2023 by an independent panel headed by technical committee chairman Haroon Rashid. The panel also included commentators Bazi Khan, Daren Ganga, Nick Knight and Sana Mir as members. While selecting the side, the independent panel considered a number of T20 cricket aspects, including consistency, impact on the side and overall game, and best possible team combination so that this team can take on any T20 side on any given day at any venue in any conditions.

Afridi inspired Qalandars to finish on top of the points table with seven wins, then helped his

side to bounce back from a Multan Sultans drubbing in the qualifier by overcoming Peshawar Zalmi in Eliminator 2, and, finally slapped a 15-ball 44 not-out and took four for 51 to not only walk away with the player of the final award but also guided his side to their second successive PSL title. This is the fourth successive year Afridi has made it to the exclusive side since the PSL teams' concept which was introduced in 2019.

The side also includes Sultans' players Abbas Afridi and Ihsanullah, who won the Emerging and Player of PSL 8 awards, respectively. Like the Multan duo, it is also the first time for Mohammad Harris and Azam Khan to be selected for the team of the tournament. Overall, the side includes five play-

ers from losing finalists Sultans, two players each from Qalandars and Zalmi, and one player each from Islamabad United and Karachi Kings.

Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam have been selected as openers, with Harris, Rilee Rossouw, Azam and Kieron Pollard forming a formidable middle order. Imad Wasim, who has been picked in the Team of PSL for the first time, comes in as an all-rounder, followed by wrist spinner Rashid Khan and three fast bowlers in Afridi, Ihsanullah and Abbas. This is the fourth time in five years Babar has been selected as an opener, though the first time was with his partner Rizwan, who himself has been chosen in the team of the tournament for the third successive time.

Alcaraz, Medvedev to clash in Indian Wells final

INDIAN WELLS (AP): Carlos Alcaraz defeated Jannik Sinner 7-6 (4), 6-3 on Saturday to advance to the BNP Paribas Open final against Daniil Medvedev.

Medvedev beat Frances Tiafoe 7-5, 7-6 (4) on his eighth match point for his 19th consecutive match victory of the year. Alcaraz needs to win the title Sunday to regain the No. 1 ranking in the world from Novak Djokovic. The Serb, a five-time champion in Indian Wells, withdrew before the tournament began after he wasn't allowed to enter the U.S. because he is unvaccinated against COVID-19.

Alcaraz and the 11th-seeded Sinner had split their four previous meetings, with Alcaraz winning both matches on hard courts. "Jannik is a great player, and he pushes me to improve and makes me play at a high level," Alcaraz said. "I'm really happy with the level that I played, and the way that I overcome the problem, I saved one set point in the first set."

Alcaraz never faced a break point against Sinner, who only made 48% of his first serves and 19 of 36 points on serve in the second set. He trailed 3-0 in the second set. "I didn't serve well today, which made the biggest difference," Sinner said. "The baseline rallies I felt okay, I had my chances, especially first set. But he played the important points better than me today, so he deserved to win."

Alcaraz had 28 winners and 14 unforced errors, Medvedev, the fifth seed, has dominated Tiafoe, winning all five of their career meetings, including 12 of 13 sets in the process. But the 14th-seeded American put up a valiant fight, saving seven match points in the second set before succumbing.

Starc five-for and Marsh-Head stand sink India for 1-1

VISAKHAPATNAM (AP) : Mitchell Starc led an Australian fast-bowling demolition of India as the visitors won the second ODI by 10 wickets to level the three-match series on Sunday.

Starc took 5-53 in eight overs, his ninth ODI five-wicket haul, as India was bowled out for 117 runs in 26 overs. Sean Abbott took 3-23 in six overs while Nathan Ellis picked up 2-13 in five. In reply, openers Travis Head and Mitchell Marsh smacked Indian bowling to all parts of the ground as Australia won in a canter.

It scored 121 runs in 11 overs to completely dominate the game, with Marsh hitting 66 not out off 36 balls. It was India's heaviest ODI defeat in terms of balls remaining as Australia won with 39 overs (234 balls) to spare. The three-match series is now level 1-1, after India won the first ODI in Mumbai by five wickets.

Put in to bat in bowling friendly conditions, India made a poor start. Shubman Gill was out caught for a duck in Starc's first over. Rohit Sharma (13) and Virat Kohli added 29 runs for the second wicket, the most for an Indian pair on the day before the collapse began in earnest. Starc had

Sharma caught at slip in the fifth over, and then trapped Suryakumar Yadav lbw for a golden duck.

He also trapped Lokesh Rahul for nine runs leaving India down to 48-4. In the next over, Abbott removed Hardik Pandya for one run with the score reading 49-5 in 9.2 overs. Kohli top-scored with 31 runs off 35 balls and added 22 runs with Ravindra Jadeja, who scored 16 off 39 balls.

That slowed the fall of wickets as India crossed the 50-run mark. However, any chance of an Indian revival was negated when Ellis trapped Kohli lbw in the 16th over. Jadeja added another 20 runs with Axar Patel to edge closer to the 100-run mark, before falling to Ellis. Abbott helped mop up the tail, while Starc returned to complete his fiver, bowling Mohammed Siraj for a duck.

In between, Patel smacked two sixes to help India past 100, albeit that didn't spare the hosts' embarrassment. He scored 29 not out off 29 balls, including a four and two sixes even as India was bowled out for its lowest total against Australia at home. Its previous lowest score was 148 at Vadodara in 2007.

It was Starc's ninth five-wicket haul in 109 ODI

innings, the joint-most for an Australian bowler along with Brett Lee (217 innings). He is also joint-third with Shahid Afridi (Pakistan) on the all-time five-for list, with only Pakistan's Waqar Younis (13) and Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan (10) ahead of him.

He was named player of the match for his efforts. "My rhythm has been good of late. I bowled a little fuller than other guys. Both the pitches in this series have helped seamers. My role is to attack the stumps and bring every form of dismissal into play," he said. In reply, Australia wasted little time in finishing things off. It raced to the finish line in just 11 overs as India gave up any hope of a fight back.

Marsh continued his Mumbai form, smashing six sixes and six fours. He reached his half-century off 28 balls. At the other end, Head hit 10 fours to reach 50 off 29 balls, finishing unbeaten on 51 runs off 30 balls.

Their 100-run stand came off only 53 balls as the Sunday crowd was forced to endure a lop-sided game resulting in a dominant Australian win. The third ODI will be played in Chennai on Wednesday.

Wasim Akram hopes to see cricket 'evolve' in Saudi Arabia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Wasim Akram, former Pakistan captain and a legendary pacer, has said that Saudi Arabia could form its proper cricket team as the Kingdom regularly hosted tournaments, adding he wishes to see the game "evolve" in the Gulf nation.

Akram made his first-ever trip to the Saudi capital of Riyadh in February this year where he held a meeting with the chairman of the Saudi Arabia Cricket Federation (SACF), Prince Saud bin Mishal, to discuss the future of the sport in the Kingdom.

In an interview with Arab News, Akram spoke about the emerging cricket talent in Saudi Arabia, saying though he did not get a chance to witness Saudi cricketers, he would like to visit the Kingdom again. "I would love to go and see the talent, and I am sure,

they can form a proper cricket team, where they can actually beat the associate countries," the former pacer said. "But for that, they have got to have domestic regular leagues, and that too, like I said earlier, on turf pitches. That's very important for Saudi cricket to evolve."

Akram's visit followed the recent strengthening of cricket ties between the two countries.

AHC-PCB host Girls' Cricket Cup

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Australian High Commission (AHC) and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) with the support of Serena Hotels hosted the 7th AHC-PCB Girls' Cricket Cup at Diamond Cricket Ground Islamabad on Sunday.

Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan Neil Hawkins congratulated the girls and the schools on their participation and welcomed the continued support of the PCB and Serena Hotels for the annual AHC-PCB Girls' Cricket Cup.

"The Australian High Commission has been sponsoring girls' cricket in Pakistan since May 2016 to promote gender equality through sport. We began with a single annual tournament in Islamabad but have since expanded to Lahore and Karachi," Hawkins said. "Our countries share a passion for cricket. It's more

than just a game - it's a powerful tool for people-to-people connects, for social change. By supporting events like the Girls' Cricket Cup, we're promoting equality, opportunity, and hope. Every time these girls hit a boundary or make a catch, they are taking a step towards greater empowerment," Mr Hawkins added.

The girls attended an eight-day coaching clinic in the lead-up to the competition, conducted by PCB first class cricket coaches, led by head coach Wasim Yousufi, Manager Game Development Aisha Jalil and Head of Pakistan Women's Cricket Tania Mallick.

Hawkins said that the Australian High Commission was pleased to support the initiative during the Pakistan Super League, in which Australian players, including Australian female cricketer Tess Flintoff, was participating.

"It's an exciting time for cricket fans in both Australia and Pakistan. A shared love of cricket is one of the many bonds that bring our countries together," he added.

Aziz Boolani, CEO Serena Hotels, said, "This is the seventh year for Serena Hotels to be a part of this tournament. Cricket is a passion in Pakistan for men as well as women. We at Serena Hotels have been actively supporting and sponsoring all sports, including women's sports. We truly believe in gender empowerment, which can only be realised if opportunities are provided for women to explore their true potential."

The AHC-PCB Girls' Cup Islamabad involved teams from four schools: Mashal Model School Bari Imam, SOS Children's Village H-11, Islamabad Model School for Girls - F-6/1 and Islamabad Model School for Girls I-9/1 Islamabad.

BN Polo clinch National Open Polo trophy

LAHORE (APP): BN Polo defeated Master Paints/Cables by 12-6 in the final of National Open Polo Championship for Quaid-e-Azam Gold Cup 2023, here at the crowded Lahore Polo Club on Sunday.

Hamza Mawaz Khan emerged as hero of the main final as he fired in five fabulous goals while he was ably supported by foreign players Tito Ruiz Guinazu and Elena Venot, who contributed with two and three goals respectively while Babar Naseem converted one goal. For Master Paints/Newage Cables, Simon Prado hammered a hat-trick while Juan Cruz Greguol banged in a brace and Raja Temur Nadeem scored one goal.

BN Polo were off to flying start in the grand finale as they thrashed in three goals two by Hamza and one by Tito Ruiz to take a 3-0 lead while Master Paints/Newage's Simon Prado converted one before the end of the first chukker to make it 1-3. Prado added one more in his team's tally in the beginning of the second chukker to further reduce the

margin to 2-3. But BN bounced back well by banging in a brace one each by Hamza and Tito Ruiz to stretch their lead to 5-2.

The third chukker began with a field goal by Raja Temur that helped MP/Newage make it 3-5 but BN Polo converted two back-to-back goals through Hamza and Babar to enhance their lead to 7-3. The highly-charged fourth chukker saw BN Polo cracked a quartet two by Elena and one each by Tito and Hamza to gain a healthy 11-3 lead while MP/Newage scored three goals two by Greguol and one by Prado to reduce the deficit to 6-11.

In the fifth and decisive chukker, BN Polo struck the only goal through Elena Venot to win the historic event by 12-6.

Earlier in the Subsidiary Final, Team FG Polo outpaced DS Polo by 10-6. For FG Polo, Juan Ambroggio emerged as top scorer with a contribution of five goals while Abbas Mukhtar struck a hat-trick and Ramiro Zavaleta banged in a brace. For DS Polo, Javier

Gurrero thrashed in three goals while Hissam Ali Hyder scored two and Bilal Haye hit one goal.

The chief guest of the final was Chairman Pakistan Polo Association Lt Gen Khalid Zia while Club President Umar Sadiq, Directors of Century Ventures Pvt. Ltd. Ayaz Lakhani, Kamran Afzal, Wasim Mazhar, Nazia Wasim, Secretary of PPA Lt Col Ayaz Mahmood, LPC executive committee members, players, their families and a large number of spectators were also present on the occasion.

In the end, the chief guest distributed prizes among the winners, runners-up and top performers and also honoured the organizers and club staff. Ibrahim Sultan was awarded in -2 to 0 category, Basel Faisal Khokhar in 0 to 2 category and Agha Musa Ali Khan in 2 to 4 category while the most valuable pakistani player of the season award was handed over to Hamza Mawaz Khan and the best foreign player of the tournament to Tito Ruiz Guinazu.

LONDON (Agencies): Manchester United reached the Women's FA Cup semi-finals for the first time after beating Championship side Lewes.

United took an early lead through a Rhian Cleverly own goal before Vilde Boe Risa doubled their advantage after the break.

Lewes kept pushing and Emily Kraft pulled a goal back with a fine lifted finish over United keeper Mary Earps. But the visitors sealed their progress late on when substitute Nikita Parris prodded home a third. It had looked as if United might run away with it when Lewes defender Cleverly tucked an Alessia Russo effort past her own goalkeeper after only eight minutes.

But the hosts kept up a high work-rate and came close to an equaliser, with Natalie Johnson's close-range effort blocked by a last-ditch Maria Thorisdottir tackle.

The Women's Super League side asserted themselves after the break, with Martha Thomas twice denied by Lewes keeper Sophie Whitehouse, before Boe Risa nodded home a pinpoint Ona Batlle delivery to double United's lead. Kraft took advantage of



a poor Earps clearance in the 73rd minute to lift the ball over the England shot-stopper and give the hosts a glimmer of hope. But United put the game to bed in the 89th minute, when Parris charged through the Lewes defence before poking an effort into the far corner from a tight angle.

United's silverware quest continues

United have been much improved under Marc Skinner this season and are in contention for silverware in both the WSL and the FA Cup. Skinner will be hoping to guide the Red Devils to their first major trophy and

they took a step closer with their victory at the Dripping Pan. United are currently two points behind Chelsea in the league having played a game more, so the cup could offer their best chance of success this season.

And Sunday's display will have provided some belief as they worked hard to overcome well-organised opponents. Battle was one of United's brightest attacking sparks with her runs down the right and the Spaniard, who turned provider for two of the goals, could be crucial if they are to realise their trophy ambitions.

But this performance did display some areas for concern. The absence of winger Leah Galton from Skinner's side left them lacking impetus in the final third at times, while Russo was also regularly left isolated up front.

The Red Devils may still be a work in progress but reaching the FA Cup last four for the first time in their history is an important milestone for the club nevertheless.

United will find out their semi-final opponents in Tuesday's draw, which takes place on Morning Live on BBC One.



In brief

2-week training program

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) launched a two-week national tour guides training program to train 1000 trainees across the country. "The PTDC in collaboration of Sustainable Tourism Foundation Pakistan (STFP), College of Tourism and Hotel Management (COTHM), Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATO), Department of Tourist Services (DTS), and PUM will conduct a series of training workshops," said a press release issued by PTDC. The two-week standard level extensive training program would provide massive opportunities and expertise to the trainees to get knowledge and guidance as how to compete in the field of tourism in the country. The first training workshop started at Islamabad on Saturday in which 25 participants from different parts of the country participated. International and national trainers and experts of tourism are conducting the training workshops. The PTDC is developing the tourism sector as a national priority in a sustainable and acceptable manner, taking full advantage of regional and international trends so that it can significantly contribute to the improved quality of life in Pakistan whilst promoting the country's cultural and natural heritage.

Children immunized against Polio

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 900,000 children under five years of age were vaccinated against the Polio virus during a week-long campaign, which began in all tehsils of the district, including Rawalpindi Municipal Corporation and Cantonments areas, on March 13. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of District Health Authority, Dr Ansar Ishaq, told APP that drive concluded on March 19 was extended for two more days due to the rains in the district and the campaign would continue till March 21. He said the extension's purpose for two more days was to reach thousands of children who remained unattended or whose parents refused to administer polio drops during the campaign, adding that the department wants to cover the maximum number of children in the ongoing special anti-polio campaign. Incharge Anti Polio drive of the district, Ch Muhammad Hussain, informed that around 3,723 polio teams, including 3,272 mobile teams, 289 fixed points, 214 Union council medical officers, and 765 area incharges, were participating in the drive to complete the task of vaccinating over 947,000 children in the district.

IRSA releases 82,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 82,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 64,100 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1426.00 feet and was 28.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 22,000 cusecs while outflow as 33,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1096.45 feet, which was 46.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 20,800 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 44,900, 30,600, 28,100 and 9,000 cusecs respectively.



ISLAMABAD: Commissioner Noor ul amin Mengal visits weekly Sunday bazar at Peshawar Mor.

Commissioner inaugurates 'Jashn-e-Baharan Mela'

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chhatta here on Sunday inaugurated 'Jashn-e-Baharan Mela' (Spring festival) and a flower exhibition which was started by organizing a marathon race. According to a PHA spokesperson, a colorful spring festival organized by Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Rawalpindi would continue for three days at Allama Iqbal Park. Flower Show, Musical Show, Circus, open air theater, Punjabi Cultural Stall, food Festival, fireworks, candle light show and 'Rangoli' competitions would be special features of the festival while the venue has been decorated beautifully with colorful lights, she said.

She informed that the Authority had finalized all the arrangements to provide the best entertainment facilities to the citizens.

Various sports competi-

tions would also be part of the program while the marathon race which was organized on Sunday started from Liaquat Bagh Sports Complex at 9 am and concluded at Allama Iqbal Park, she told.

Special prizes would also be distributed among the position holders who would show outstanding performance in different competitions, she informed and added, the event was organized to increase public interest in such programs. 30 senior citizens, 352 open category and 89 under-16 youth participated in the marathon race.

Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chhatta and Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema attended the event as special guests.

The Commissioner and the DC distributed prizes among the athletes who secured prominent positions in the race.

Liaquat Ali Chhatta said that different sports and entertainment events would be part of the three-day spring festival.

The participation of families in Pakistan Super League matches held in Rawalpindi showed that it is a sports city.

The under-16 players covered the distance in 16 minutes while the players in the open category covered the distance in about 15.5 minutes.

Director Marathon Race Ijaz Ahmed informed that the race track was five kilometers long from Liaquat Sports Complex to Shahbaz Sharif Sports Complex.

In Senior Citizens' category, Waris Masih got first position, Sarfaraz Khalid got second position and Eric Joseph got third position. Mohammad Akhtar won the first position, Sohail Ahmed stood second and Israr Khizer bagged third position in the open category.

Admin to distribute 1447,775 free flour bags among deserving people

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district administration would distribute 1447,775 free flour bags among poor and deserving people. According to a Commissioner Office spokesman, on the directives of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chhatta, the administration had finalized all the arrangements and set up free flour distribution points.

He informed that 100,000 flour bags would be distributed on daily basis. In this regard, 232 trucking points had been established across the district. Free flour bags would be distributed among the deserving people as per the instructions of the Punjab Government, he said.

Display of the price lists would be ensured at all shops and the representatives of Anjuman-e-Tajran would also be taken

onboard, he said.

He further informed that the Commissioner had directed the authorities concerned to resolve all revenue matters including 'Gardawari', Jamabandi and 'Khewat' on a priority basis.

Strict action would be taken against the 'Naib Tehsildars', found negligent particularly in any revenue matter including Gardawari, Jamabandi and Khewat, he added.

All Assistant Commissioners had been instructed to play an active role in improving the system, he said and informed that the Assistant Commissioners would create special whatsapp groups for 'Numberdars' so that the revenue matters could be improved.

The Commissioner had also instructed the officers concerned to continue strict action against kite sellers, makers and flyers.

The Marriage Act would also be implemented strictly, the commissioner said adding, the marriage halls violating the rules should be sealed and imposed heavy fines.

Proper security would be provided to the personnel of the ongoing census in the district, he said.

All the officers concerned were also directed to play their active role to beautify G.T. Road, he added.

The Commissioner had directed the health department that all health facilities should be provided at the primary health centers.

The Commissioner also instructed the authorities to ensure plantation of 16,000 saplings in colleges.

The beautification work in all the schools would also be accelerated and special attention would be given to the education of children.

FGEHA allocates 1,188 category-I plots in Park Road Housing Scheme for employees

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Government Housing Authority (FGEHA) has allocated around 1,188 category-I plots in Park Road Housing Scheme, Islamabad for allotment to federal government employees as per the approved layout plan.

"As per the decision of the 142nd meeting of the executive committee of the authority, a 3.5 per cent quota was further segregated into constitutional serving (2.5 per cent), constitutional retired (0.5 per cent) and constitutional widows (0.5 per cent) categories with the criteria "age-wise seniority" and "length of service" respectively," said a document available with APP. It said a number of plots to be allotted as per the above-approved quota reserved in the Park Road Housing Scheme for the registered members of constitutional bodies/quota.

The bodies included in the said quota were the Supreme Court of Pakistan, Islamabad High Court, Federal Shariat Court, Election Commission of Pakistan, Senate Secretariat, National Assembly Secretariat, Islamic Ideological Council, Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat and Federal Tax Ombudsman Office, the document

said. The allotment in Park Road Housing Scheme would be made under age-wise seniority to above mentioned constitutional bodies registered in membership Drive-II.

There is no specific membership for Park Road Housing Scheme. However, applicants registered under Membership Drive-II on age-wise seniority will be considered for allotment, it added.

The document said the first right of allotment had been reserved in Sector F-14/F-15 for remaining registered members and they would be accommodated in Park Road Housing Scheme as per available plots. It said the number of applications received in constitutional quota which become eligible for allotment of Category-I plot upon graduation from Category II along with their details.

Since there was litigation in F-14/F-15, it said the quota was still to be finalized, adding after clearance of litigation and finalization of the layout plan of F-14/F-15, the allotment to the employees of constitutional bodies in the Park Road Housing Scheme would be made accordingly as per the approved quota policy.

BISP reaches over 247,000 children

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

The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) intervention of Benazir Nashonuma was designed in August 2020 to increase the uptake of Health and Nutrition services of its beneficiaries. The primary objectives of the program were to prevent stunting in children under two years of age, improve weight gain of pregnant women during pregnancy, reduce anaemia and micronutrient deficiencies, and prevent low birth weight.

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

2,000 per quarter per PLW and boy child and PKR 2,500/- per quarter per girl child of BISP beneficiary families. In return, mothers must commit to attending regular antenatal health checks and awareness sessions during pregnancy, consuming specialized nutritious food (SNF), and taking their children for immunization and regular health checks.

According to the statistics, Pakistan's high rates of malnutrition (40.2% stunting, 28.9% underweight, and 17.7% wasting) are indicative of an ongoing child nutrition crisis. Such levels of malnutrition rank Pakistan as the second-highest burden country in the region. The first 1,000 days of a child's life are a window of opportunity to lay a strong foundation for later achievements. This timeframe is a period of enormous change characterized by a high degree of plasticity in the child's neurological development. Investments in the early years of life are the foundation of human capital, and human capital is a key driver of economic development in the modern economy.

Pakistan Monument major attraction for tourists

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Monument is a major source of attraction for foreign dignitaries and domestic tourists at large due to its architectural beauty located at west viewpoint of the Shakarparian hills.

Talking to APP, Haroon Waheed, a resident of G-6, said he along with his family visited a Pakistan Monument and enjoyed a lot by visiting Pakistan Monument's museum that reflecting and representing magnificent and rich cultural heritage and history of the country.

He said Pakistan Monument had designed and constructed in a very unique style, adding that the architec-

tural marvel commemorates the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the country and symbolizes the patriotism of the Pakistani people.

"The Monument's cleanliness and location besides Shakarparian hills is a source of inspiration for visitors and they love to visit the historical site to refresh their memories regarding Pakistan history and historical perspective," he said. Amna Ali, a resident of Lahore, said the lovely winter season and peaceful atmosphere is also a key factor for our trip to enjoy the day. She apprised that security arrangement was laudable and commendable.

She said there is a dire need to further improve and modernize the cleanliness system and availability of other facilities as well. "People belonging to every segment of society are visiting the Pakistan Monument." Amna further said that its unique design and the scenic location has made it one of the most famous monuments of the country and making it one of the top places to visit in Islamabad and Rawalpindi twin cities. It is pertinent to mention here, the idea to create a national monument in Islamabad was first proposed by former President Pervez Musharraf.

Govt flexing muscles to manage power supply in summer

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government is mulling multi-pronged strategy to cope with upcoming power shortage issue during summer despite economic turmoil and rising fuel prices following International Monetary Fund demands.

Since uninterrupted power supply is considered as crucial for development of industrial, agricultural and domestic sectors, its smooth supply to domestic consumers is equally important.

Therefore, the present government is vigorously pursuing the arrangements to overcome load-shedding in coming summer and provide respite to industry and common consumers in scorching heat.

Rising fuel prices and new energy situation after Ukraine war also necessitated Pakistan to utilize its indigenous resources like hydel, solar, wind and Thar coal as it has already announced not to build any new power projects depending on imported coal and ensure 60 percent of its power through local sources by 2030.

"We are taking pragmatic steps to overpower load-shedding by focusing on generation, transmission and energy conservation to provide maximum relief to people," stated Minister for Power Division Khurram Dastgir. "The present government has already added 1,980 MW cheap electricity to the system from Thar coal reserves in just 10 months besides 720 MW and 1100 MW from Karot Hydropower and K-3 Nuclear Power Plants," he added. Khurram Dastgir said the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) govern-

ment led by the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had successfully added over 10,000 MW electricity to national grid through China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects during 2013 to 2018.

"Efforts of the then PML-N government, had not only controlled load-shedding but also surplus power was available in the system," he remarked. "But, criminal negligence of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government had delayed number of projects draggins the country to darkness once again."

He informed that total power generation from Thar coal stood at 2640 MW with formal commissioning of 1320 MW Shanghai Electric Thar Coal Project under the CPEC.

"Another 330 MW Thar Nova Thar coal project has already been synchronized in February that would help reduce load-shedding in summer and cut the power tariff."

Khurram said there were 175 billion tons coal reserves at Thar that were sufficient to generate 100,000 MW electricity. Moreover, Bolan-Gawadar Transmission Line has also been completed to import 100 MW electricity from Iran. "This project is expected to address power shortage issues in Gawadar as the transmission line would start working in mid of March."

Regarding 6,000 MW PM's solar energy project, he said the request for proposals to set up first 600 MW solar project at Muzaffargarh has been sought and open bidding for it would be held on

April 17. "These indigenous power projects would help address energy issues and reduction in power tariff." He said over 150,000 industrial and commercial consumers were being shifted to Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) System by June to control power pilferage by ensuring round-the-clock monitoring of meters.

The minister informed that bidding process for installing 1-4MW Solar Micro-Grid stations in rural areas is also on cards as the government has already waived sales tax and duties on the purchase of solar panels. "Easy loans were also being disbursed among the people for installing solar panels on minimum interest rate."

As the Prime Minister has already inaugurated 1,100 MW K-3 nuclear power plant in Karachi (KANUP) completed with the assistance from China, the government has also embarked on number of initiatives like cutting short the business time, replacement of inefficient electricity equipments, solarization, reduce energy consumption at the government buildings, awareness campaigns and approval of Conservation Policy.

An overview of the measures reveal that solarization of the government entities would save 300 to 500 MW per month, massively slashing the fuel import bill.

Under the National Energy Conservation Plan, judicious utilization of energy would be ensured and early closure of restaurants, hotels, and markets and production of incandescent light bulbs and ineffi-

cient electricity fans would help the government save around Rs62 billion annually. Production of inefficient electricity fans will be stopped from 1st July as they alone consume 12,000MW electricity. Additional duties would be levied on production of such fans to save Rs15 billion. Moreover, stopping production of incandescent light bulbs from 1st February is also helping out the government by saving Rs22 billion.

Usage of streetlights is also being curtailed to 50%, hoping to save Rs 92 billion while all government institutions will install efficient devices to save electricity.

Around 30% reduction in electricity consumption at the government institutions has also been announced while the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority would ensure energy saving campaign through TV and radio channels.

The government has also released Rs 48.560 billion for different projects of National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC) and Pakistan Electric Supply Company (PEPCO) under annual Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) during the eight months of the current fiscal year 2022-23.

According to the Planning Commission, the government had allocated Rs 42.983 billion for various NTDC/PEPCO projects with Rs 20.773 billion foreign aid component. A sum of Rs 42.566 billion has been spent so far on various projects with Rs 35.120 billion disbursed under foreign aid component till December 2022.



ISLAMABAD: Farhat Ullah Babar addressing during Book launching ceremony Titled "Mera Zamana Meri Kahani" written by Mahpara Safdar, organized by Shaheed Bhutto Foundation & IJCOP at SZABIST.

7 held for producing drugs

GHOR (Agencies): Security officers discovered and destroyed a drug-producing factory during an intelligence operation in the capital of Ghor. Police spokesman of Ghor province said that security forces arrested seven people in connection to producing narcotics during operation in the province. He said that 50 kilograms of drugs and an amount of materials used in drug production seized from the detainees. The detainees will be taken to the justice department for following their cases.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Shabaan 27, 1444 — Monday, March 20, 2023

Poppy farms eradicated

LAGHMAN (Agencies): The counter-narcotics officers of Laghman Police say that they have eradicated poppy farms on 25 acres of land in the Alishang district of the province. Qari Idris, director of the Counter-Narcotics Department of Laghman province, says that a poppy farm on 25 acres of land have been destroyed in different areas of the Alishang district of the province. Hundreds of acres of poppy planted in Alishang, Dawlat Shah and Badpash eradicated earlier.

Kabul, Tehran to sign trade and transportation pact

KABUL (TOLOnews): Islamic Emirate officials said Afghanistan and Iran will soon sign a commerce and transit agreement.

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce said on its website that the head of the ministry discussed this agreement in a meeting with the Minister of Industry of Iran.

“They should reduce the costs so that we can make goods available to consumers at lower and better price and have better business. Customs services should be provided at the two nations’ customs offices twenty-four hours a day,” said Ahmad Saeed Siddiqi, deputy of the Herat

Chamber of Commerce and Investment. The Chamber of Commerce and Investment asked the officials of Islamic Emirate and Iran to reduce customs fees.

Some Iranian businessmen also underlined the expansion of commerce and the cooperation of the two nations in the creation of facilities for businessmen.

“Given the good authority that the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of the two countries have, the meetings held by the ministers of the two countries can make things easier, and the opening of Iran’s commercial center in Kabul is a step toward this,” said Samana Abdullahi, the

director of the Iran-Afghanistan Trade Center.

“The trade center also has a priority in the area of transferring technical science and bringing the infrastructure needed by Afghanistan in various industries, such as agriculture, the construction industry, food, and medical equipment,” said Hossein Azari, CEO of the Iran-Afghanistan Trade Center.

According to data from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the yearly worth of exports and imports between Afghanistan and Iran is two billion dollars, and attempts are being made to raise this figure to ten billion.

Customs duty on primary food items shrunk by 70 per cent

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Finance said that based on the decision of leadership of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the customs duty on basic food items in the country has been reduced by 50 to 70 percent this year.

As result of this decision the customs duty has been reduced to the value of 6.7 million Afghanis this year, the ministry said.

To prevent the increase in the prices of basic food items (flour, wheat, cooking oil, rice, sugar...) in the country, the customs duty on basic food items has been reduced 50 to 70 percent, the Ministry added.

During 11 months of the fiscal year 1401 a discount worth 6.7 billion Afghanis has been dedicated, according to the Ministry.

The Ministry of Finance, reduced in customs duty on basic food items, for the first time in the history of Afghanistan’s customs, where 100 billion Afghanis were collected from the country’s customs in the 11 months of the current financial year.

DAB to auctions another 16m USD

KABUL (Agencies): Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) said Saturday that it will put in auction 16 million US dollars as part of efforts to keep the local currency afghani stable by Monday.

The Central Bank has asked eligible banks and money changer services to participate in the tender, adding that the winners of the auction are obliged to settle their accounts by the end of the day.

Partial settlement of transactions is not allowed and the winners of the auction are obliged to deliver the money owed to Da Afghanistan Bank in cash once, within a certain time, the bank added.

A day back, the central bank auctioned 16 million US dollars to further strengthen the value of the Afghani currency. The exchange rate of one US dollar has been announced at 87.10 afghani.

Mortar mine blast kills two children

LOGAR (Khaama Press): Two children were killed, and two others were injured after a mortar mine from previous wars exploded in Afghanistan’s eastern Logar province.

A group of children were playing with a toy-like object they had found in the Altamor neighbourhood of Pul-i-Alam city, the provincial capital of Logar, when it abruptly detonated, killing two them instantly and injuring two others, according to the news agency. In a similar incident, four children were injured in the southern province of Afghanistan Kandahar last week.

Since 1988, about 46,868 Afghan civilians have been killed or injured due to landmines and other explosive remains of war.

“Before August 2021, the average number of casualties was about 160 people per month. Since August 2021, the reporting pipelines for casualties have been disrupted. Only 188 new casualties have been reported during 2022 compared to 1,144 for the previous year,” according to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS).

About 98% of the casualties reported in 2021 were due to unexploded bomb fragments, while more than 79% were children in the same year.

Many people, primarily children, are killed and injured yearly in explosions caused by unexploded bombs left over from the four decades of wars and civil conflicts, making Afghanistan one of the most mine-contaminated countries in the world.

Muttaqi, Qomi discuss Afghanistan’s economic and political situation



KABUL (Khaama Press): Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi met with Iran’s Ambassador to Kabul Hassan Kazemi Qomi and discussed the country’s economic and political situation.

The foreign ministry in a statement said the two sides emphasized boosting economic relations and mutual relations between the two countries.

Minister Muttaqi thanked Iran for returning the

Afghan prisoners, the statement said. It is believed that the remaining Afghan detainees in Iran’s prisons will be transferred to Afghanistan in a timely manner.

Hafiz Zia Ahmad Takal, a spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said in a tweet that Qomi mentioned that Tehran is committed to further strengthening ties with Afghanistan.

Qomi said Iran is ready to import Afghan products and fruits at a reasonable

price and to cooperate widely with Afghan farmers in the agriculture sector.

Following the official handover of the Afghan Embassy in Tehran to the Taliban on February 26, several senior members of the group have traveled to Iran and discussed stocks of issues including the challenges of Afghan migrants, the issue of Afghan prisoners, and the expansion of trade relations between the two countries.

Since the return of the Taliban to power, Iran has maintained close ties with the de facto authorities. Besides, handing over the Afghan Embassy to the Taliban regime, which has not been recognized by Iran, the Islamic has shown interest in investing in different sectors in Afghanistan.

Iran is the third country after Pakistan and Russia to allow Taliban representatives to take charge of the Afghan Embassy in Iran.

Ministry of Vice, Virtue says govt not against women’s rights

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Vice and Virtue said that some groups are attempting to portray the current government as an enemy of women’s rights and girls’ education.

In a meeting with Iran’s ambassador to Kabul, Hassan Kazemi Qomi, Mohammad Khaled Hanafi, the acting minister of vice and virtue, discussed relations between the two countries and the situation of Afghan immigrants in Iran.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Vice and

Virtue, Akif Muhajir, said that the Islamic Emirate is committed to upholding women’s rights in accordance with the Sharia law.

“Some groups are attempting to portray us as enemies of women’s rights and education with their propaganda, despite the fact that Islam is the only religion to explicitly state that women have rights and are part of humanity. We are committed to upholding all the rights of women, in accordance with the Sharia laws,” Muhajir added.

Meanwhile, a number of

female students criticized the closure of secondary schools and universities in the country and asked the Islamic Emirate to reopen schools and universities for women and girls.

“I ask the Islamic Emirate to reopen schools and universities for women and girls. We are worried about our fate and future,” Halima, a student told TOLOnews.

“Educational centers should not be closed to us. We ask the Islamic Emirate not to play with our future,” said Sadaf, another student.

“Schools and universities should reopen as quickly as possible, and women should be permitted to work in order to end the current situation in Afghanistan,” said Fazl Hadi Wazin, a university lecturer.

According to the Ministry of Vice and Virtue, Iran’s envoy to Kabul said the issue of women’s rights in Afghanistan is an internal issue, and that Iran would not interfere in Afghanistan’s matters. The Islamic Emirate should address this issue properly, he said.

IEA officials’ sons barred from working for govt administrations



KABUL (Khaama Press): The Administrative Office of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has issued a decree attributed to the group’s Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada, stating that sons of those IEA officials working in government administrations based on personal connections have been fired.

The decree was announced on Saturday, March 18, stating that the officials of the ministries, departments, and administrations should refrain from recruiting employees based on family and personal ties.

As per the new verdict, all government officials

who employed one or more sons at the same institution they are working for, are fired effective from the date of this announcement and should be replaced with new employees.

Typically, the recruitment process in government administrations is executed based on the decrees issued by Hebatullah Akhundzada or other Taliban senior members. The hiring process is not done based on meritocracy or a transparent procedure under the Taliban regime.

Following the return of the Taliban to power, they dismissed most of the professional employees of

government offices and replaced them with their own members. This comes as most of the Taliban members lack modern education and professional qualifications – they have studied at religious schools and madrasas instead.

Meanwhile, the group’s supreme leader has banned the cultivation of cannabis plants and emphasized that hereafter no one is allowed to cultivate cannabis on their land.

Normally, the cannabis plant is cultivated and kept in semi-tropical regions of the country, and its seeds are used in producing drugs domestically.

50% of media outlets in Afghanistan closed

KABUL (TOLOnews): Afghanistan National Journalists Union (ANJU) in a report on Saturday said that after the establishment of the Islamic Emirate, 53% of journalists lost their employment and 50% of the media outlets were closed over many reasons, particularly financial issues.

The report is published on the occasion of National Journalist’s Day in Afghanistan.

“Most media employees have left Afghanistan. The media community is facing several problems. It faces economic difficulties, and restrictions have been placed on the media’s activities in Afghanistan. Besides this, the suspension or closure of the protective laws of the media community is a big challenge,” said Masroor Lutfi, a member of (ANJU).

Several journalists expressed concerns about the lack of information access and economic difficulties on National Journalists’ Day. Journalists asked the Islamic Emirate to address their challenges, especially in the area of access to information.

“Twenty-seven of Hoot, the Journalist’s Day, is celebrated when the lack of information access continues to be considered a difficulty and this community is still dealing with major economic issues,” said Raqib Fayaz, a journalist.

“We ask government officials and related officials to pay serious attention to the problems of journalists and ensure their safety,” said Mustafa Shahriar, a journalist.

But the Ministry of Information and Culture said that it is committed to upholding journalists’ rights and that efforts are made to increase facilities available to them.

“We continue our cooperation with the media and journalists, and our effort in the future is to create facilities for all journalists,” said the deputy minister of information and culture for publications, Hayatullah Muhajir Farahi.

Previously, the Ministry of Information and Culture said that the law on the right to access information, with a few adjustments, had been sent to the Islamic Emirate’s leadership and would be implemented following their approval, but there has been no update on this.

Earlier, IEA Spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed the operation.

Operations against Daesh comes at a time when officials in Balkh recently claimed the killing of eight rebels and kidnappers, but the families of deceased individuals claimed that the victims were innocent and worked with a construction company.

Four Kalashnikovs and some equipment were also recovered during the raids.

Five Daesh militants killed in operations

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): Five Daesh militants killed in operations in Mazar-i-Sharif, the capital of northern Balkh province were Tajikistan and Uzbekistan nationals, an official said.

Balkh Police Spokesperson Mohammad Asif Wazir told Pajhwok Afghan News three Daesh — ‘Khawarej’ — hideouts

were destroyed during intelligence based operation in Mazar-i-Sharif’s 5th, 8th and 10th Police Districts on Friday night.

He said five ‘Khawarej’ who are Tajikistan and Uzbekistan nationals were killed during the operations.

Four Kalashnikovs and some equipment were also recovered during the raids.

Minister Delawar meets Afghan businessmen living in Pakistan

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Mines and Petroleum Minister of Afghanistan Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar met with some Afghan businessmen living in Pakistan in his office.

According to the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum of Afghanistan’s statement, during a meeting the two sides, on the investment situation in Afghanistan, attraction of investors in mining projects in Afghanistan and the mineral resources of Afghanistan.



Kabul reacts to UNSC resolution on Afghanistan’s situation

KABUL (TOLOnews): In response to the new UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution concerning the call for an “independent assessment to address the challenges in Afghanistan,” the Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the current government would cooperate with it if the assessment is aimed at fostering cooperation.

Mujahid said the assessment should not be for producing propaganda against the system and based on false information. “We hope that the assessment is for cooperation with the Afghan people and the system, not for producing propaganda against the system and based on false information,” Mujahid said.

The UN Security Council has issued a resolution based on which the challenges in Afghanistan will be assessed independently.

According to the UAE ambassador to the UN, Lana Zaki Nusseibeh, a delegation will independently assess Afghanistan’s situation in terms of security, terrorism, drug production, social concerns, improving governance, and upholding the rule of law based on this resolution.

The UN Secretary-General is asked in the resolution put out by Japan and the United Arab Emirates, to conduct an independent assessment that provides recommendations for an integrated and coherent approach to the Afghan situation among different actors in the international community.

“If the international community adopts a committed approach toward Afghanistan, I can say that we will witness a new chapter in the approach of the international community toward Afghanistan,” said university lecturer Sayed Jawad Sajadi.

“The assessment of the UN will show that unfortunately in Afghanistan, girls do not have access to education and women’s work is

restricted, poverty has increased and people are thinking about emigration. All of this should be corrected,” said Tariq Farhadi, a political analyst.

On Thursday, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted two resolutions concerning the situation in Afghanistan. The first resolution was the renewal of the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the second resolution requests that the Secretary-General conduct an independent assessment that provides recommendations for an integrated and coherent approach among different actors in the international community in order to address the current challenges facing Afghanistan.

restricted, poverty has increased and people are thinking about emigration. All of this should be corrected,” said Tariq Farhadi, a political analyst.

On Thursday, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted two resolutions concerning the situation in Afghanistan. The first resolution was the renewal of the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the second resolution requests that the Secretary-General conduct an independent assessment that provides recommendations for an integrated and coherent approach among different actors in the international community in order to address the current challenges facing Afghanistan.

Trained terrorists staying in Zaman Park, not political workers: Maryam

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz Sharif termed the people giving security to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan at Zaman Park are trained terrorists who have been recruited from banned outfits. The PML-N Vice President in her tweet on Sunday expressed her concerns over the recent violent incidents in Zaman Park and stressed the importance of not ignoring them. She said the people protecting Imran Khan are not political workers.

She said in the tweet, "Watching the videos closely, it's hard to ignore the truth - these are NOT political workers." Furthermore, she also accused Imran Khan of supporting banned organizations.

According to the PML-N leader, the

perpetrators of these violent acts were highly trained terrorists and miscreants.

Maryam alleged that Imran Khan has a history of supporting such outfits and that some of the people involved in the recent violent incidents in Zaman Park were recruited from these banned groups.

Emphasizing the crucial role of the state essential to play in ensuring the safety and security of its citizens, Maryam stressed that it was essential for the government to take prompt and effective action before it is too late.

She called for a proactive approach by the state in addressing these issues, rather than waiting for them to escalate further.

The PML-N leader also said, "The evidence speaks for itself. The state must act before it's too late."

Ch Sarwar elected as PML-Q Punjab president, Ch Shafay as general secretary

LAHORE (NNI): Former Punjab governor Chaudhry Sarwar and Chaudhry Shafay Hussain have been elected as Pakistan Muslim League-Q Punjab president and general secretary respectively. Both were elected unopposed during a joint meeting of the central and provincial general councils of PML-Q held in Islamabad on Sunday.

The meeting was presided over by Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain while party leaders from all four provinces including Tariq Bashir Cheema, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Mrs. Farrukh Khan, Tariq Hassan, Rizwan Sadiq, Dillfraz Khan participated in the moot.

The Provincial Council elected Chaudhry Sarwar as the President of Punjab and Chaudhry Shafi Hussain as the General Secretary. Provincial Intra Party Election Commission Chairman Mustafa Malik announced that Chaudhry Sarwar and Chaudhry Shafi Hussain were elected unopposed. It was decided in the meeting that Ch Sarwar will also be the central chief organizer of the party.

Chaudhry Salik Hussain was elected as the central senior vice president while Mustafa Malik was elected as the central information secretary. The Central General Council also elected a hundred and fifty members of the Central Working Committee.

Speaking on the occasion, Ch Shujaat Hussain said that the country cannot afford the politics of vandalism so all the politicians should pour water on a burning fire. "The government should start a national dialogue and be ready to go to the disgruntled national leaders." He said that the solution to the problems lies with the politicians, let all the forces come together and think of Pakistan.

'The Memon community has con-



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Marriyum Aurangzeb addressing a press conference at Model Town.

Businessmen backbone of country's economy: Arif Alvi

KARACHI (NNI): President Dr. Arif Alvi has dubbed businessmen as backbone of the economy and leading contributor to the economic progress and prosperity of Pakistan.

He made these remarks while addressing a ceremony of Memon Community organized by the All Pakistan Memon Federation in Karachi. The President while appreciating the contributions of Memon community to the economy of Pakistan said hundreds of educational institutes and hospitals are being run by them.

'The Memon community has con-

tributed tremendously to the economy of Pakistan.

Hundreds of educational institutes and hospitals are being run by the community," President Dr Arif Alvi said in his address. The President further said, business, social work and charity were the identification of the Memon community, but more efforts were required to strengthen the poor people of the country.

"Neighboring countries are making progress very fast due to diligent policies and good governance, but unfortunately, Pakistan is lagging behind in this regard." He lamented

that 2.2 million children were out of school in Pakistan despite the fact the provinces were spending almost 25 per cent of their budget for education.

"We need to bring these out of school children into education system," he added.

Earlier, Dr. Arif Alvi distributed the mementos among the Heroes of the Memon Community and urged more contributions from them for resolving the problems in Pakistan.

The President of the APMF Shabir Haroon, former President APMF Hanif Motlani and others also addressed at the ceremony.

Egypt hosts Israeli-Palestinian talks in push for pre-Ramazan calm

Egypt hosts Israeli and Palestinian officials on Sunday in the resort city of Sharm el-Sheikh in a US and Jordanian-backed effort to calm a surge of violence in the West Bank ahead of the holy month of Ramadan.

The five-way meeting follows a Feb 26 US-brokered summit in Jordan, the first of its kind in years, that secured Israeli and Palestinian pledges to de-escalate but was challenged by factions on both sides and failed to halt violence on the ground.

The meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh "aims to support dialogue between the Palestinian and Israeli sides to work to stop unilateral actions and escalation, and break the existing cycle of violence and achieve calm", a statement from Egypt's

foreign ministry said. This could "facilitate the creation of a climate suitable for the resumption of the peace process", it added. The Palestinians aim to establish an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital — territories Israel captured in a 1967 war. But peace talks have been stalled since 2014 and Palestinians say Jewish settlement expansion has undermined the chances of a viable state being established.

In previous years, clashes have erupted between Israeli police and Palestinians around Jerusalem's Al Aqsa mosque at the height of Ramadan, which coincides this year with Judaism's Passover and Christian Easter.

One man wounded in 'shooting incident' in West Bank flashpoint: A Palestinian gunman opened fire on Sunday on an Israeli couple in their car, wounding the man, in a West Bank town where a similar shooting last month prompted Israeli settlers to go on a violent rampage. Israeli officials said the wounded Israeli and soldiers at the scene returned fire, wounding the gunman, who was pursued by troops and captured. The incident occurred as Israeli and Palestinian officials held U.S.-backed talks in Egypt aimed at calming months of violence. It took place in Huwara, where last month a gunman from the Hamas Islamist militant group opened fire on a car killing two Israeli settlers, also coinciding with a day when Israeli and Palestinian officials held de-escalation talks.

India launches mercenary cyber-attacks on Khalistan Referendum voting in Australia

BRISBANE (APP): More than 11,000 Sikhs took part in the second phase of Khalistan Referendum voting at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre amid a massive wave of Indian cyber security mercenary attacks on the electronic voting machines. There was a disruption in the voting thrice as the electronic online voting system came under a massive cyber security attack by suspected Indian hackers.

The first attack was launched – and the system shut down – within 30 minutes of the start of the voting. The system was restored within 30 minutes. For the second and third cyber-attacks, the system was restored within 20 minutes each time.

Pro-Khalistan secessionist group Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), which organised the referendum voting, said it suspected that the Indian state-backed hackers were involved in the planned attack. The SFJ said this was not the

first time that the Indian state had done so as similar attempts have been made during previous voting phases across Europe. It said there was evidence available that the Indian govt was involved in cyber-attacks against the Sikhs. Large banners in support of Khalistan and Sikhs rights hung outside the Exhibition centre reading "Khalistan Referendum, Punjab, Shimla Capital" and "Khalistan Referendum, Secession of Punjab from India". The March 19 "Battlefield - Brisbane" Khalistan Referendum Voting Centre was dedicated to Shaheed Bhairi Harmeet Singh Bhaowal and Shaheed Bibi Baljinder Kaur who were bombed to death along with their nine months old son Pavitar Singh on December 05, 1992, by the Indian Police forces in Haryana.

The SFJ had organised the second phase of referendum in the Australian city of Brisbane after the first phase of

voting in Melbourne at the end of January this year which saw a massive turnout of over 50,000 Sikhs. The third phase and last leg of the Australian phase is set to take place in Sydney in June this year.

The SFJ has organised the voting under the supervision of Punjab Referendum Commission (PRC) voting on the Question of "Should Indian Governed Punjab Be An Independent Country?". The SFJ's General Counsel and New York based attorney Gurpatwant Singh Pannun said that Australian Sikhs have responded robustly to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts to stop Khalistan Referendum voting in Australian cities.

Pannun commented: "The global Khalistan Referendum voting is setting the countdown for the final battle for liberation of Punjab from the Indian occupation."

Closing ceremony of 1st Chief of the Naval Staff International Sailing Regatta 2023

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Closing ceremony of 1st Chief of the Naval Staff International Sailing Regatta 2023 was held at Karachi. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi graced the ceremony as Chief Guest.

International sailors from Australia, Bahrain, Egypt, Malaysia, Oman, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand along with participants from Pakistan took part in the event. The five days long event comprised races in Laser Standard, Laser 4.7 and Windsurfing categories. A total of twelve races were

held in each category.

While addressing the audience, Chief of the Naval Staff appreciated the participants and congratulated the winners for their achievements in various categories. He added that Pakistan Navy will continue to organize National and International level sailing events with an aim to promote Sailing and provide a platform for promising national players who possess ability to reach glory of excellence.

Later, Chief Guest gave away the prizes to winners and runners ups of different categories. In Laser Standard, Khairulnizam

Mohd Afendy from Malaysia secured first position and Asri Bin Azman from Malaysia stood the runner-up. In Laser 4.7 category, Noppassorn Khunboonjan from Thailand stood first and Issac Goh from Singapore got 2nd position. Whereas, in Windsurfing category Raja Qaasim Abbas from Pakistan clinched the 1st position and Muhammad Izzuddin from Malaysia secured 2nd position.

The ceremony was attended by a large number of dignitaries from armed forces, foreign embassies and civil organizations.



Imran not a politician, but 'terrorist'; Zaman Park 'bunker of terrorists': Marriyum

LAHORE (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Sunday said that Imran Khan was not a politician but a "terrorist", his Zaman Park residence was a bunker of terrorists and a laboratory for petrol bombs.

Addressing a press conference, here, the information minister said that if the writ of the state, judiciary and police would be challenged, the civil war would erupt in the country.

Marriyum Aurangzeb said the police job was to provide protection to the courts which were the guardian of justice. "If the courts compromise the police writ, then there will be a civil war in this country and every street of this country will have its own law." If Imran was allowed to flout the law, gangs, hooligans and terrorists would emerge from every street and attack courts

and police, she said. "If you think that by giving protection and this concession to a 'Ladla' there will be rule of law in this country, then you are wrong," the minister said.

Marriyum said the courts have been summoning a person since August 23 last year but he did not appear and when the court ordered to arrest and produce the person, he instigated his followers to attack the judiciary. It has never happened in the history of the country that a criminal was summoned in court and was provided with the facility to make attendance from his car.

Imran Khan who ruled and dominated this country for four years had put all political opponents in death cells to settle political scores. He did not even spare sisters and daughters of political opponents and also got them arrested even from hospital beds. Imran during his mis-

rule destroyed the national economy, made the people unemployed and deprived them of two timely meals.

During PTI rule, she said prices of edible items like flour and sugar, cooking oil and electricity and gas tariffs skyrocketed which hit the common man badly. The minister alleged that this person had gone mad after losing power, and now from a political terrorist, he had become a terrorist attacking the state institutions. She said when the PDM government came to power last year, it had the power and authority to arrest Imran Khan but did not want Imran to allow him to play the victim card.

She said that Imran Khan was booked in corruption cases, Toshakhana gifts theft, Tyrian White paternity case as law had taken its course without any interference from the present government.

The minister said as Imran had no answer to the allegations against him, he had set the country on fire through arson and attacking the police. Imran Khan used to say that his life was in danger, he was sick, he was an elderly person and could not appear in court. She said Imran also alleged that the government will kill him after arrest, gave that reason for not appearing in court.

The police were only following court orders, but PTI goons attacked the police and burnt police vans she said. "Yesterday it was proved that claim of Imran Khan's threat to life is bogus and if he is sick, there is a plan to kill him, then what happened yesterday," she questioned. The minister said Imran Khan was a liar, "terrorist and cowardly person and the public saw everything yesterday that this cowardly foreign agent did not want to appear before the court".

MARIUPOL (Agencies): Russian President Vladimir Putin has paid a surprise visit to Mariupol, a Ukrainian port captured by Russia after its forces pounded much of it to ruins.

An official video shows Mr Putin driving a car through streets at night and speaking to people. The Kremlin says it happened late on Saturday.

It is believed to be his first trip to a newly-occupied Ukrainian territory.

Mariupol's exiled mayor told BBC News that Mr Putin was a "criminal" who had "returned to the scene of the crime". "He has come in person to see what he has done," Vadym Boychenko said. "He's come to see what he will be punished for."

Other exiled Ukrainian city officials said Mr Putin had visited at night so he would not see the destroyed city in daylight. Tass news agency

says he travelled to Mariupol by helicopter. In the video he is in the car with Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Marat Khusnullin, who explains how the city is being rebuilt.

The Kremlin has said the decision to drive round the city was made spontaneously by the Russian leader. Putin also appears to visit the Philharmonic Hall, which was used to stage trials of defenders of the Azovstal iron and steel plant, a huge industrial complex where Ukrainian troops held out before eventually surrendering.

The Russian leader is also reported to have met top military commanders in Rostov-on-Don, a Russian city just east of Mariupol.

Mariupol has been under Russian occupation for more than 10 months after being devastated in one of the longest and bloodiest

battles of the conflict. Ukraine says more than 20,000 people were killed there. UN analysis estimates that 90% of the buildings were damaged and around 350,000 people were forced to leave, out of a pre-war population of about 500,000.

A group of locals have told the BBC that Russia is conducting an expensive campaign to rebuild the city and win over the hearts and minds of its people. The purpose is to assimilate Mariupol and make it Russia's own. Russian authorities say 300,000 people are now living there.

The fighting saw Russia strike a Mariupol theatre where hundreds of civilians were sheltering. The building collapsed, and at least 300 are believed to have died there. Ukraine and human rights groups say the attack amounted to a war

crime. It is among incidents for which Mr Putin and his regime could be held legally responsible, the United Nations has said.

The International Criminal Court said on Friday it had issued a warrant for the arrest of Mr Putin over involving the illegal deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia. It means he could now be arrested if he sets foot in any of the court's 123 member states.

On Saturday Mr Putin made an unannounced visit to Crimea, to mark the ninth anniversary of Russia's annexation of the territory from Ukraine.

He visited a new Russian arts school, a children's summer camp and future cultural projects, such as the New Russia museum and museum of Christianity. Russian state media reported.