

Gill's arrest warrants issued

ISLAMABAD (INP): The district and sessions court in Islamabad issued the arrest warrant for Shahbaz Gill in illegal arms case. The judicial magistrate Waqas Ahmed Raja conducted the hearing of illegal arms case against Shahbaz Gill. The court issued bailable arrest warrant for Gill due to his absence. Gill has also been directed to submit Rs50,000 surety bond to the court and ordered to ensure his appearance in the next hearing.

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ISLAMABAD: Activists of Aurat March holding placards during a rally to mark International Women's Day.

PM urges society's joint support for women's emancipation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has said that the government is committed to ensuring equal and just rights for women in the country by providing them opportunities in all fields of life.

In his message on the International Women's Day, the prime minister said a joint support by the government, civil society and media was crucial in protecting the rights of women in the country. Terming women the 'pride of the nation', he said the country needed their services and skills to progress.

Shehbaz Sharif said the government was taking effective steps for the inclusion of women in the national mainstream and was extending them equal opportunities in all sectors including education and employment. He mentioned in this regard the legislation on women's inheritance, educational scholarships for girls, women's special quota in Punjab Endowment Fund, provision of laptops and ensuring merit in Recruitment as Chief Minister of Punjab. Recently, a 25 percent quota has been reserved for women in the Prime Minister's Youth Loan Scheme, he said.

He felicitated women in Pakistan and across the globe, saying that the Women's Day acknowledged the significant role played by women in society and also in recognition of their services for the evolution of

mankind. The prime minister said the history was witness to the fact that social development was not possible without the key role of womankind.

He said each aspect of a woman, may it be a mother, sister or a daughter was a source of positivity and thus deserved utmost respect from the society. The Prime Minister mentioned that Islam as a religion granted equal rights to women some 1,400 years ago and honoured a mother by laying heaven beneath her feet and regarded a daughter as a blessing of the home.

Islam, he said, focuses on emancipation of women by encouraging them to explore every aspect of life with dignity. Shehbaz Sharif said women in the 21st century were bringing positive change in the society side by side with their male counterparts. He said that it was an encouraging sign that women were leading with examples in all spheres of life, may it be fulfillment of domestic responsibilities or exercising their leadership roles.

From the women icons of the Independence Movement including Mohatma Fatima Jinnah and Begum Raana Liaquat Ali Khan to former prime minister Benazir Bhutto Shaheed and activist Malala Yousufzai, he said their contribution was significant for the country's progress. Shehbaz Sharif expressed satisfaction that the highly capable daughters, mothers and sisters of the nation were engaged in the service of the country in a dignified manner. He

said the entire society needed to actively join hands in further empowering the women and ensuring their protection and just rights.

Shehbaz calls young trailblazer Ayisha Siddiqi a 'hope for bright future': Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said young Pakistani girls, such as human rights and climate change activist Ayisha Siddiqi, were hope for the country's bright future. In his tweet on International Women's Day, he said the young trailblazers were using their talent to make the world a better place.

Ayisha Siddiqi, 24, recently made it to the Time magazine's Women of the Year which acknowledged her efforts in raising her voice for a safe planet. "These girls represent hope and a promise of a bright future," the prime minister said. Siddiqi co-founded Polluters Out, a global youth activist coalition, and helped launch the Fossil Free University, an activism training course. She focused on including the rights of humans and nature in climate law.

She is also working to help set up a youth climate justice fund to correct the imbalance of resources, activists have compared to the fossil fuel industry. PM Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to the country's women for their heroic struggle and incredible contribution to society. "The odds could not have been heavier, but their resolve to navigate through them is what gives us hope in the future," he said.

NAB expands probe into Toshakhana case

ISLAMABAD (INP): Expanding the scope of its ongoing probe in the Toshakhana case against former premier Imran Khan, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) investigation team has reached UAE.

According to media reports, a four-member NAB team headed by Director NAB Rizwan Ahmed reached Dubai to collect crucial information regarding the sale of the precious watch gifted to former PM Imran Khan. The NAB team also visited the residence of the businessman Umar Farooq — who said he had bought the watch. The anti-graft watchdog team also visited the Pakistani embassy in UAE and some shops in regard to probe.

It is pertinent to mention here that the accountability watchdog has also summoned former prime minister Imran Khan in Toshakhana case on March 9. The summons notice — forwarded to Imran Khan — mentioned six valuable watches.

Arrests in Lahore as police, PTI workers come face to face

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Punjab Police have arrested several PTI workers who turned up on Mall Road to participate in the rally the party claims to have been taking out in 'favour of the judiciary'. Police also baton-charged the people after the PTI workers thronged Canal Road and set up a temporary bridge. The road leading to Zaman Park from The Mall was blocked with containers.

The PTI had announced a pro-judiciary rally and gave a call to its workers to gather at chief Imran Khan's Zaman Park residence. Hours earlier, the Punjab government imposed Section 144 in the city for seven days, citing security concerns and warned the PTI workers against taking to the street. A heavy police contingent and water cannons have been moved near Zaman Park.

The imposition of the Section 144 comes as the PTI is set to hold a demonstration in the Punjab capital to show solidarity with

the judiciary following the Supreme Court's verdict regarding holding of elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Additional Chief Secretary Shakeel Ahmed has issued the order, stating: "It has been observed that number of rallies and protests are held therein on daily basis at different places of District Lahore, which not only pose serious security threats but also disrupt traffic and cause inconvenience to public at large. There is also a history of terrorist activities in the rallies/ protests, wherein, a number of police officials and civilians embarrassed shahadat [martyrdom]".

"Hence, in the context of prevailing overall security situation in the wake of recent wave of terrorism & latest threat alerts, it has been necessary to impose section 144 of Cr.P.C. 1898 on holding of all kinds of Assemblies, Gatherings, Sits-in, Rallies, Processions, Demonstrations, Jalsas, Dharnas, Protests and such like other activities across the district Lahore to avert any untoward incident," reads the order.

The additional chief secretary said the order shall come into force with immediate effect and remain in force for seven days. Earlier, the Home Department asked the PTI leaders in Lahore to take extra precaution during the party's rally in Lahore, saying such public gatherings are "not advisable" due to security threats.

The department has also sent a letter to PTI leader Dr Yasmin Rashid. "The leadership of PTI including Chairman PTI is also expected to address the general public/ participants at different places during a rally in Lahore today. It is also expected that a large number of people are likely to attend the said rally," it said. The letter stated that the public gatherings are not advisable due to prevailing security situation of the country. "Furthermore, women march is also going to be held in connection with International Women's Day" which is likely to draw a large number of participants," it said.

relief by the courts as his wounds had been healed, he added. "We respect the courts and their decisions. However, Imran Khan despite being involved in serious crimes of Toshakhana theft, money laundering and treason acts is getting relief." An egoistic 'Fitna Khan', who had been exposed due to vandalism in the court premises, should be brought to justice, he added. The minister said arresting Imran Khan was not a big issue, but the government wanted that he should be convicted by the courts for the crimes he had committed.

Balochistan police leaves for Lahore to arrest Imran

QUETTA (PPI): A team of Balochistan police on Wednesday left for Lahore to arrest Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan in a case related to an inciting speech against state institutions.

The police team will visit Zaman Park with arrest warrants and they are expected to face charged PTI supporters who earlier attempted to bar the Islamabad police from heading to the residence of their party chief.

On Monday, police in the Balochistan capital Quetta lodged a case against the former prime minister at the Bijli Road police station for alleged hate speech against state institutions. In the FIR, the complainant said the Islamabad police reached Zaman Park to arrest the PTI chief but he evaded his arrest and later addressed his workers through a video link in which he incited public against institutions.

The petitioner said Mr Khan hurled baseless allegations against security officers and attempted to create unrest in the country. On Sunday, officers of the capital police arrived at the residence of the former premier in a bid to arrest him after an Islamabad court issued his arrest warrants in the Toshakhana case for avoiding hearings.

In a series of tweets, the police also said Mr Khan was "avoiding" arrest, adding that a police superintendent had gone to the room but the 70-year-old politician was not there. Following the police's attempt to arrest him, Mr Khan addressed PTI workers at his Zaman Park home and said he was being summoned to attend hearings of fake cases, saying his life was under threat. Imran Khan was removed from power in April last year through a no-confidence vote and is facing dozens of cases related to terrorism, corruption and others.

Six terrorists killed in N Waziristan

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The security forces on Wednesday killed six terrorists in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in North Waziristan's Datakhal area, said Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) in a statement.

According to the military's media wing, the killed terrorists remained actively involved in terrorist activities against the security forces and civilians. The forces also recovered weapons and ammunition from the killed terrorists, it said.

"Locals of the area appreciated the security forces' response and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the area," the ISPR added. Last week, security forces gunned down one terrorist during an Intelligence-Based Operation (IBO) in the general area of Mir Ali, North Waziristan district.

During the conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and terrorists. Resultantly, one terrorist was killed. The killed terrorist remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces and the killing of innocent citizens, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) had said.

Imran moves IHC

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan on Wednesday filed a new plea with the Islamabad High Court to seek permission for video link appearance in all the cases registered against him in the federal capital.

Imran Khan in his plea stated that amid security threats he should be allowed to appear in all the cases in the lower courts via video link.

IHC dismisses ATP's plea

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday dismissed a petition filed by Amun Taraqqi Party (ATP) Chairman Muhammad Faiq Shah challenging the permission granted to organisers to hold Aurat March at F-9 Park. IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq declared the plea non-maintainable after hearing the arguments made by the petitioner's counsel Nazakat Hussain Abbasi.

Giving polls date is difficult: KP Governor

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali said on Wednesday that giving the election date in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was tremendously difficult.

Talking to the media, he said there was progress in the session with the Election Commission of Pakistan and the nation would hear the good news regarding the polls, while claiming consensus would be reached with the ECP. KP governor added the situation of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was change with a significant difference in the security situation of the both regions.

Earlier, a team nominated by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in light of the orders of the Supreme Court of Pakistan visited Governor's House and held consultations with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali regarding the fixation of the date for the elections of the provincial assembly in the province.

The team of the Election Commission of Pakistan consisted of Secretary ECP Omar Hameed Khan, Special Secretary Zafar

Punjab Assembly elections on April 30: ECP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan has announced election schedule for general election in Punjab. "Polling for election of Punjab provincial assembly will be held on April 30," the election commission announced.

According to the election schedule, candidates could submit their nomination papers from March 12 to 14, while scrutiny of the papers will be held on March 22. The candidates could withdraw their nomination papers upto April 05 and election symbols to candidates will be allotted on April 06, the ECP announced. It is pertinent to mention here that President Dr Arif Alvi announced April 30 as the date for elections in Punjab. The announcement from President Alvi came minutes after the ECP suggested dates for the election in the province in light of the Supreme Court verdict. President announced the date after considering the dates proposed by the election commission, the President's office tweeted.

Iqbal Hussain and Director General (DG) Law Arshad Khan. Meanwhile, the Governor KP was assisted by Principal Secretary to Governor Hassan Mahmood, Additional Secretary Governor's Secretariat Saiful Islam.

The governor welcomed the team of ECP on arrival at the Governor's House and assured that the decision of the Supreme Court regarding elections in the province would be implemented in letter and spirit and termed the consultative meeting part of the process.

The governor apprised the team of ECP in detail regarding the overall situation including law and order in the province.

After two hours long consultative session, the process for the fixation of the date for general elections in the province has entered into final phases and for final consultation, the governor would visit ECP headquarters in Islamabad next week. Earlier, the secretary Election Commission gave a detailed briefing to Governor KP.

Marriyum flays Imran's 'save judiciary' campaign

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Wednesday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan's "save the judiciary" movement was a slap on the face of the justice system of the country.

In a tweet, the minister termed Imran Khan as a foreign-funded agent and Tosha Khana thief who handed over a \$190 million amount from the national exchequer to an individual and received bribery through Al Qadir Trust. She said that a judicial absconder's campaign was not to save the judiciary but an effort to avoid appearing in

courts to escape arrest.

Taking a jibe at Imran, she said that a brave leader like Nawaz Sharif can save the judiciary, not a cowardly person like Imran Khan. She said instead of hiding behind the "save the judiciary" campaign, Imran should face the law of the land. She said why Imran did not think of saving the judiciary when he used to call Saqib Nisar to obtain the certificate of fake "Sadiq and Amin".

Meanwhile, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb also said that International Women's Day was not only meant for renewal of commitment to protection of women's rights but it was also a day

to recognize their sacrifices, services and loyalties in establishing a civilized society.

In a statement, she paid tributes to the females for their role as mother, sister, daughter and wife and stressed to ensure equal rights for this segment for a prosperous Pakistan. She saluted those parents and teachers who do not discriminate between their daughters and sons and provide them equal opportunities to move forward in life.

"Education of a girl child means development of generations, from a healthy confident daughter comes a healthy, confident and dignified nation" she remarked.

Marchers-police violent clash in Aurat March

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A violent fight broke out outside the Press Club on Wednesday as women and transgender people from various fields gathered for the Aurat March rally, where the police beat attendees with batons and allegedly tried to "stop" the rally. The Aurat March is a rally conducted every year by women across the country on International Women's Day to voice their grievances and celebrate womanhood.

A verbal spat between the participants of the rally and the police occurred after they questioned the large number of transgender people trying to join the rally, the police said, adding that large groups of women were joining the march. Women at the march alleged that the police had "tried hard to stop the rally". During the rally, participants chanted slogans for women's rights and were joined by transgender people, whom the police stopped to question.

Soon there was serious disorder outside the Islamabad Press Club, and the marchers began to raise slogans against the government and the media. Several reporters present at the event voiced concerns over the fact that despite covering the incident peacefully all morning, they had come under the

wraps of the fight. A woman reporter and a cameraman from a local news channel also sustained injuries.

The organisers of the march also shouted slogans against Rehman, who then left the venue. Human rights activist Farzana Bari demands that Rehman take the woman to D Chowk. However, the climate minister said that the IG couldn't give permission. "I spoke to Islamabad IG yesterday regarding the march, but he said it was not possible for him to give permission to go to D Chowk since he feared there might be a clash," she explained.

To this Bari responded: "We want the state to block the path of the 'terrorists' and allow us to march." The marchers further demanded that the Deputy Commissioner and DIG should resign. "It is a pity that the peaceful women's march was a victim of the conflict," Rehman said condemning the violence that broke out.

She maintained that the administration should have decided the route first. Following the spat that broke out, a number of people and organisations have spoken up against the administrations and condemned the brutality. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) tweeted:

"HRCP deplores the use of force by the Islamabad

police against citizens at the Aurat Azadi March. We are also concerned by reports that religious organizations have tried to hinder women from taking part in the march. Women have as much right to peaceful assembly as any citizen."

The Islamabad Police too took to its Twitter handle and wrote: "Islamabad Police stands with the march participants in the struggle and protection of women's rights. IG Islamabad has directed the DIG Operations to ensure the security of Awrat March and Tahuzaf Feminist Rallies." Spokesperson of the Islamabad Capital Police also confirmed that the three officials who hit women with batons have been suspended. "Those responsible are being determined, against whom action will also be taken," he said.

Federal Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman also participated in the rally and strongly condemned the violence that broke out. Taking to her Twitter handle, Rehman said: "Friends from Aurat Azadi March are rightly upset. The Islamabad police had NO business laathi charging a small peaceful procession. It is the women holding laathis that need to be pushed back, not progressive women. Sad to see this happening. Will seek an inquiry."

Sana slams Imran for holding rally

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan on Wednesday slammed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan for bringing out a parallel rally in Lahore which might create a law and order situation on the International Women's Day.

'Aurat March' and 'Haya March' were scheduled in the same vicinity, and Imran Khan's announcement to hold his 'Burger March' was meant to foment tension, he said while addressing a press conference. The minister

said the caretaker Punjab government had imposed Section 144 in the provincial capital to avoid any untoward incident. There were also reports from the institutions concerned that some disturbance might occur.

The PTI leader, he said, had already defamed the country in the world. There was no justification for Imran Khan to hold a rally on the Women's Day, he added. Rana Sanaullah said Imran Khan was evading court appearances by 'displaying his plastered leg', but at the same he was staging big rallies. He should no more be given any



LWMC lodges 5 cases in 30 days over burning garbage

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Waste Management Company got lodged five cases over setting fire to garbage, and imposed fine on 33,000 in last 30 days, during its ongoing 'Safai Nisf Eman' campaign.

It was revealed by LWMC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Babar Sahib Din while chairing a meeting of operation teams at the head office, in which working of anti-smog and zero waste campaign was reviewed. The CEO said that mechanical washing of 1,000-km long roads and manual scraping of 80-km roads were going on daily to prevent smog. The LWMC is determined to provide a clean environment to citizens of Lahore.

He said that 274 union councils of the city were being turned waste-free in a phased manner. Zero-waste activity is going on in 57 union councils. In the last 24 hours, 4,500 tons of garbage including 85 tons of debris was disposed.

Special teams have been deployed at bazaars, markets and historical places for public awareness during the Safai Nisf Eman campaign. Babar Sahib Din also appealed to the public to cooperate with the LWMC workers and play their role in maintaining zero-waste environment around them.

Sahir Ludhianvi was remembered on 102nd birth anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Legendary poet and lyricist Sahir Ludhianvi was remembered on his 102nd birth anniversary here Wednesday for his stirring poetry that resonated deeply with young people, as well as his literary contributions to the film industry. Ludhianvi is considered one of the most prominent poets of the progressive movement and his unique ability to blend romance and protest in his writing helped give a new direction to the movement's poetry. Born in Ludhiana in 1921, Ludhianvi was named Abdul Hai and grew up in his maternal home after his mother separated from his father due to a custody dispute. Ludhianvi attended Malwa Khalsa School, where he developed a passion for poetry, and later enrolled at Government College, Ludhiana.

In 1944, Ludhianvi published his first collection of poetry, "Talkhiyan," which quickly became a bestseller. He later moved to Lahore and became the editor of Adab-e-Latif, a popular literary magazine, as well as other publications. Ludhianvi's friend invited him to write a song for the film "Azadi Ki Rah Par," which led Ludhianvi to move to Bombay to pursue a career as a lyricist.

He eventually found success working with composer SD Burman, and the duo went on to produce many memorable songs for films. Ludhianvi's expansive range of poetic motifs is unmatched, and his political, romantic, psychological, and revolutionary poetry continues to resonate with readers today. Ludhianvi's contributions to literature and the film industry earned him numerous awards, including the Padma Shri in 1971, the Soviet Nehru Award in 1973, and the Filmfare Award for Best Lyricist in 1964 and 1977.

Faisal inaugurated the Dynamic Registry Center

Saqib Mushtaq

BAHAWALPUR: Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi inaugurated the Benazir Income Support Program Dynamic Registry Center in Shujaabad.

At this point, talking to the media representatives, he said that currently more than 8.9 million women are benefiting from the Benazir Kafalaat programme. Taking into account the economic conditions of the people, the Government of Pakistan and Chairman Pakistan People's Party / Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari have increased the quarterly installment of BISP by 25%. Women receive their full amount and also get a receipt.

He said that the entire world has faith in the Benazir Income Support Program, that's why its budget has been increased by 40 billion despite the difficult economic conditions. Talking about the dynamic reg-

istry center, he said that four dynamic registry centers have been established in Multan district where 13 counters are working. On which women can get their new survey done and register their economic change. While at present more than 2 lakh 38 thousand families are being given scholarships under the Benazir Income Support Program in Multan district. Political opponents criticized the BISP programme. However, it has been recognized by the United Nations and other leading international organizations.

The Minister of State also spoke to the beneficiaries who insisted that the number of counters be increased. On receiving the request, he said that soon the number of counters at Shujaabad center will be increased from 2 to 4. On this occasion, he praised the performance of the staff of Benazir Income Support Program and directed them to serve the people as much as possible.



Faryal Talpur strongly condemns the murder of eminent Dr. Dharamdev Rathi

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan People's Party Women's Wing Central President Faryal Talpur has strongly condemned the murder of Hyderabad's renowned skin specialist Dr. Dharamdev Rathi. A messiah was killed on the holi festival, this is a sad incident, Faryal Talpur said that Pakistan People's Party is a representative party of weaker sections, especially the protection of minorities is included in the first points of the manifesto of Pakistan People's Party, Sindh government and Pakistan Peoples Party stands with Dr. Dharamdev Rathi.

He said that the brutal murder of Dr. Dharamdev

Giyan Chand visited the home of slain Dr Rathi

F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: Provincial Minister for Minorities Affairs Giyan Chand Essarani visited the home of slain Dr Dharam Dev Rathi and offered his condolences to bereaved family here at Hyderabad today.

Younger brother of slain Dr Dharam Dev Rathi Doctor Om Parkash Rathi and others were present on the occasion. The Sindh Minister said that special directives had been given

by the PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to ensure justice to slain doctor's family. Mr. Essarani said that Pakistan People's Party and Sindh Government were deeply grieve on the incident of murder of Dr Dharm Dev Rathi. He said that life of great doctor and human was snatched brutally. He assured that Government of Sindh would provide legal team to deceased family so that culprit could be punished accordingly.

Rathi is intolerable, the police has arrested the killer immediately, justice

will be provided to the victim's family and the killer will be brought to justice.

Law Minister chairs committee meeting to identify big state-owned residences

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Wednesday chaired the first meeting of the committee for identification of big state-owned residences.

Addressing the meeting, the minister said the committee was formed in connection with the prime minister's austerity campaign. In the last Federal Cabinet meeting, instructions were given to the committee prepare a list of government residences built on two kanals of land or more, he added.

He said the cabinet had noted that the big government houses were a sign of subjugation and waste of resources.

As per the cabinet's directives, it was decided in the meeting that all the min-

istries and departments should be directed to furnish the details of official residences an area of 1000 yards and more within four days.

The Law Minister said complete and sector wise data should be provided. A comprehensive plan was under consideration to bring the places under suitable use through public-private partnership, which would help reduce the burden on the government. The meeting was attended by Secretary for Housing, Secretary for Law and Justice, Joint Secretary Civil Aviation, Additional Secretary Communications, Additional Secretary Railways, Deputy Secretary Cabinet Division, DG Pak PWD and representatives of the Ministry of Interior.



LAHORE: Haya March on the occasion of Women's day organized by Jamaat e Islamai women wing.

Rally demands abolishing anti-women laws, fixing minimum wage at Rs50,000

KARACHI (PPI): A Mehnatkash Aurat Rally here on Wednesday, on the occasion of International Women's Day demanded to abolish all anti-women laws and fix the minimum wage at Rs50,000 per month.

As per details, a big rally of women workers was arranged by Home Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) led by their central general secretary Zehra Khan. It marched from Fawara Chowk to the Arts Council of Pakistan. Thousands of women workers belonging to different parts of Sindh participated in the rally including women Harris, labourers and office workers. Besides women leaders of political and social parties and transgender also attended the rally, carrying banners and placards inscribed with their slogans and hoisting red flags. They chanted slogans in favor of their demands.

Rally leaders in their speeches said that the capitalist economy has made the women wage slaves. Gender-based discrimination, economic and environmental degradation has hit them hard. They said that the struggle for freedom of women is basically

the part of the war against capitalist dominance.

They said that the ongoing economic crisis in Pakistan has badly affected the women and children. About 20 million women and children have been pushed beneath the poverty line and it is feared that 10 million more women would go beneath the poverty line by the next year. The rulers on the behest of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) has made the policies to reduce the real income of workers by sixty percent. Price hike has increased by forty percent and daily use commodities have already gone beyond the reach of the common man. A huge hike in the prices of petroleum products have made the life of citizens a living hell. Education, healthcare, electricity and gas expenses have been increased from 100 to 300 percent. The State is not discharging its constitutional responsibilities and instead of reducing non-development expenses subsidies for citizens are being ended.

They said that amid this economic crisis, forced sacking of workers from factories and workplaces are

affecting most the women workers. For millions of women workers, earning opportunities in formal and informal sector are diminishing fast. In industrial sector, particularly textile and garment sector, hundreds of thousands of women are working as salaried slaves. Ninety five percent of these women workers are deprived of the basic rights of permanent employment, minimum wage, weekly holiday, social security and pension. There is no equal wages for equal work. Sexual harassment is common. Not only in factories and workplaces but in every section of society women have been facing an environment of suffocation. International brands and their local suppliers are openly violating the labour laws. Women workers are, however, an easy target of this cruel process.

The speakers said that regressive thoughts and tribal and feudal traditions of society are not ready to accept women as equal citizen. Anti-women ideologies are being promoted and woman is not safe from home to grave. However, women and particularly women workers, have

played a pivotal role in social and political revolution against these anti-women discriminations and the day of March 8 is also the symbol of this great struggle of women workers.

Like whole world in Pakistan also the women have played a leading role in economic, political and social fields. The history of democracy, economic, political and human rights struggle of this country would be incomplete without the names of Fatima Jinnah, Tahira Mazhar Ali, Comrade Shanta Bukhari, Mai Bakhtawar, Benazir Bhutto, Nusrat Bhutto, Kalsoom Nawaz, Naseem Wali Khan and Asima Jahangir and such other great characters.

They said that the narrative of the Pakistani state has also strength the century's long anti-women biases. These official policies are continuously repressing women, exploited classes, enslaved nations, religious minorities and transgender and promoting undemocratic and anti-society elements. As a result of these policies, the incidents of torture on women, children and transgender, gang-rape and honor killings are on the rise.

PAC urges politicians not to criticize national institutions

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on Wednesday urged the politicians and other individuals not to criticize and mock the national institutions for personal motives and advantages.

PAC Chairman Noor Alam Khan, chairing the meeting, said the parliamentarians in United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA) never ever level allegations and criticize their supreme institutions. He urged the politicians belonging to various political parties to contribute their services to promote and project soft image of the country internationally.

The chairman further directed that nobody should blame and criticize the country's supreme institutions. "The PAC has written a letter to relevant authorities of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) to brief about the matter in the upcoming meeting," he added.

The PAC directed the authorities concerned of the Culture Division to hold a workshop to educate their staffers about rules and regulations for smooth functioning of official business. The PAC reviewed the audit paras of 2020-21 and 2021-22 of Culture Division and directed the

authorities to take proper permission from the Finance Division for purchasing the vehicles.

Felicitating women members of the PAC on the International Women's Day, Noor Alam Khan said immense legislation had been done through Parliament regarding the rights of women. The PAC meeting was attended by MNAs Nuzhat Pathan, Shahid Akhar Ali, Dr Malik Mukhtar Ahmed, Chaudhry Muhammad Barjees Tahir, Khursheed Ahmed Junejo, Sheikh Rohale Asghar, Sardar Riaz Mehmood Khan Mazari, Senators Mushahid Hussain Sayed and Saleem Mandviwalla.

SIU arrests four-member gang of robbers

KARACHI (APP): The Special Investigation Unit (SIU) of Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) Karachi Police on Wednesday claimed to have arrested an alleged gang of robbers involved in snatching cash from people outside banks and ATMs and other street crimes in different areas.

Accused identified as Muhammad Waqas, Imran Rafiq Alvi, Shah Nawaz and Murtaza were arrested on a tip-off from Gulistan Jauhar area of the city, according to SSP SIU.

The notorious gang was involved in snatching cash from citizens outside banks and ATMs at gunpoint and encounters with police to escape the arrest. Four pistol rounds and two motorcycles were recovered from their possession.

During initial interrogation, the arrested revealed that they had been arrested by different police stations and SIU



ISLAMABAD: Begum Samina Arif Alvi viewing the handiworks and crafts of women artisans, at an event to commemorate International Women's Day.

INVITATION TO BID

Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) the largest Exploration & Production listed Company of Pakistan invites Sealed Bids from eligible firms/persons licensed by the Pakistan Engineering Council in the relevant category of following work(s) duly registered with Federal/Provincial Income Tax & Sales Tax Departments and who are on Active Taxpayers List of the Federal Board of Revenue, as per Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Rule:

Sr. #	Tender Enquiry No.	DESCRIPTION	Bid Bond (Pak Rs.)	PEC Category	Bidding Procedure	Schedule Time for Completion of Project	Bid Submission Date & Time	Bid Opening Date & Time
1-	C&ESS/ F.T/2023/ 22	"Civil works required for Wali Power Generation Project along with Hard standing at Wali Plant, District F.R Lakki Marwat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province."	790,000/-	C-5 and Above	Single Stage One Envelope	100 Calendar Days	25-03-2023 at 11:30 Hrs	25-03-2023 at 12:00 Hrs

2. The Master Set of Tender Document containing Annexure(s), SOR/TOR, detailed terms & conditions, Tender Notice and procedure for submission of bids are available on OGDCL web site for the interested bidders which can be viewed and downloaded from www.ogdcl.com under the title bar of Tenders/Tenders Download without any cost.

3. The bids/offers, prepared in accordance with the instructions in the bidding documents, must reach at the address mentioned below on or before the date and time mentioned above and the same will be opened as per above mentioned schedule above against each Tender. Bidders are requested to contact **Party Chief, Engineering Field Party No.03 (EFP-III)** at Phone # **0300-5550946** for any further queries/information.

4. This advertisement is also available on PPRA website at www.ppra.org.pk and OGDCL website at www.ogdcl.com.

OFFICE OF THE PARTY CHIEF
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 Near Sadqal Oil Field & Shah Petroleum, Fateh Jang
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Tributes paid to female workers on frontline of public health

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The government and independent voices paid glorious tributes and praise the contribution of women workers in every sphere of life including public health here Wednesday at an event held in connection with International Women Day in a local hotel.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali and Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Imdadullah Bosal chaired the event organized by Provincial Emergency Operations Center in collaboration with its national office.

Secretary Health KP, Attaur Rehman, Additional Secretary Health (polio)/ Coordinator EOC, Asif Rahim, Deputy Coordinator EOC Zeeshan Khan, former parliamentarians Ms Samar Bilour, Miss. Rabia Basri, National Team Leader Polio Programme, Hamish Young, Provincial Team Leads WHO, UNICEF, national and provincial

team leads N Stop, Technical Focal Person EOC, Provincial Ombuds-person, Rakhshanda Naz, Deputy Chief KP Child Protection and Welfare Commission, Muhammad Ejaz Khan, President Public Health Association KP Chapter, Dr. Saima Abid and female health workers from Community Based Vaccination (CBV) programme were present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali thanked the organizers for arranging the event to commemorate International Women's Day, a day dedicated to honoring the contributions of women to society and recognizing the progress made towards gender equality.

He said that it is a day to reflect on the struggles and triumphs of women throughout history and to renew our commitment to creating a more just and equitable society for all.

As Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, I am proud to say that

our province is making significant strides towards ensuring safe and secure environment for all particularly women. "We have taken important steps to empower women and girls in all aspects of their lives. We have also made strides in improving women's access to healthcare", he said.

Moreover, he went on to add that in addition, we have taken steps to ensure that women have a voice in our political system and our government has reserved seats for women in local and provincial government.

He said that we have also worked to increase the participation of women in political parties and leadership positions that helped to ensure that women's voices are heard and that their perspectives are considered during policy making.

As the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, I acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of female frontline workers who are tirelessly working for the socioeconomic uplift of the province.

We fully appreciate the fact that women face unique challenges on daily basis while at work and the Government is fully committed to give an atmosphere of convenience to working women in all walks of life. It is also imperative that our society acknowledges, respects, and supports their contributions at all levels.

Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Imdadullah Bosal said that we fully appreciate and acknowledge the role of female in every sector of life and added that investing in women's education, health and economic empowerment can lead to improvement in socioeconomic indices and subsequently develop a stronger nation".

He said that we are working towards enhancing investment in these areas to strengthen the women workforce and further improve their skills and capabilities.

"My sincerest thanks to our female workers who have been working to

protect the children of Pakistan for decades", he said adding that Women's contributions have been critical to the progress made in polio eradication in Pakistan.

National Team Lead UNICEF Polio Eradication, Hamish Young lauded the role of female frontline workers in polio eradication and other healthcare services braving all odds and wished all the women a very happy day.

Earlier, the panel members acknowledged that women are often the primary caregivers and decision-makers when it comes to their children's health. As such, their participation and empowerment are essential to the success of the polio eradication.

They highlighted the significance of the Women's Day and using this opportunity to recognize the tireless efforts of women in overall public health sector

Additional Secretary Health KP (Polio)/Coordinator EOC, Asif

Rahim thanked the Governor KP, Chief Secretary KP, distinguished guests for taking time out of their busy schedule to participate in the event.

He said that in KP region, the polio programme has deployed over 20000 female workers in the polio programme adding that in 2014- 15, the CBV strategy was initiated in the polio core reservoir districts to enhance the quality of campaigns and to reach chronically missed children through the deployment of full-time frontline workers including KP region.

EOC Coordinator stated that the community-based vaccinators mostly women were equipped with knowledge and tools to access and vaccinate hard-to-reach children and build community trust in areas with chronically suboptimal performance during campaigns.

He concluded the event with a vote of thanks and wished all the female a very happy women's day.

Govt taking steps to provide relief to people during month of Ramzan

PESHAWAR (APP): The Standing Committee of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker cabinet was Wednesday informed that government is taking steps to provide relief to people during month of Ramzan and ensure availability of edible items on cheap rates in markets.

The meeting was chaired by Caretaker Minister for

Food, Fazal Elahi and attended by caretaker minister, Sawal Nazir, CM's aide, Himayatullah, secretary food, Abid Wazir and concerned officials of finance department.

Chairing the meeting, Fazal Elahi told that government is utilizing resources to provide relief to people and facilitate them during Ramzan.

He told that Rs. 35 billion was being spent on distribution of subsidized flour to people.

He said that Ramzan food package is also under consideration and added that Prime Minister would soon announce food package for month of Ramzan.

He also directed officials to ensure transparency id distribution of flour.

City Police arrest two drug peddlers

PESHAWAR (APP): Capital City Police Peshawar arrested two notorious drug peddlers during a crack-down against narcotics and ice drugs on Wednesday.

On a tip, SHO Police Station Rehman Baba, Asif Ali Khan along with police personnel conducted raids against drug peddlers in the suburban localities and arrested two accused.

The arrested accused have been identified as Abubakar alias Dada son of Saifullah and Imran son of Mukhtiar. The accused hails from different localities of the district. Police have also recovered two kilograms of hashish and half kilogram of ice drug from their possession. Both accused have confessed to peddling ice and other narcotics.

Police have registered cases against both accused and further investigations were in progress.

UoP teachers, staff strike continues

PESHAWAR (APP): The strike of teachers and other staff of the University of Peshawar (UoP) on Wednesday continued in the wake of killing of an ex-employee of the varsity allegedly by a security guard in the campus premises.

The teachers and employees boycotted educational activities as well as the official matters and demanded dismissal of the Vice Chancellor and holding of a judicial inquiry into the murder of Saqlain Bangash.

They also demanded an operation to clear the university campus free from weapons and drugs, besides conducting the psychological examination and qualification of security guards.

The protesters warned to continue the strike until their demands are met.



8-3-2023 ---R Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan chairing a meeting of Health Department. 8.3.23

KP govt to ensure fortification of flour, cooking oil: Fazal Elahi

PESHAWAR (APP): KP Caretaker Minister for Food, Fazal Elahi has said that the provincial government has approved the Food Fortification Bill, which would be implemented soon to ensure compulsory fortification of flour, cooking oil and ghee in the province.

He was addressing a function regarding fortification of oil, ghee and flour here in a local hotel, the other day, said an official handout issued on Wednesday.

The function was organized under the auspices of KP Food Safety & Halal Food Authority (KP FS-HFA) in collaboration with Nutrition International. Besides, the officials of KP FS & HFA, the representatives of Ghee Mills Association, departments of food, health, Planning & Development (P&D) and others concerned national and international organizations also attended.

The caretaker minister said that a large number of

children in our country are facing the shortage of food, saying federal and provincial governments are taking steps to overcome the deficiency of food and especially of vitamins and iron.

He said that good and balanced nutrition is essential for the health of children. He said food fortification is being made compulsory by various countries while 125 are also fortifying salt with iodine.

He said that projects like food fortification are of

high importance as it provides the opportunity for the capacity building of public sector departments and industries.

The caretaker minister commended the Nutrition International in food fortification programme and urged flour milling and cooking oil industry to come forward and extend support to the government in filling vitamins deficiency and on behalf of the province assured them all possible cooperation.

‘Women playing a vital role in development

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A function in connection with International Women Day was held in the Broadcasting House of Radio Pakistan Peshawar this afternoon.

Addressing the function, Station Director Radio Pakistan Peshawar Syeda Iffat Jabbar said women are playing a vital role in development and prosperity of the country.

She said women are working shoulder to shoulder with men in all sectors in the society.

Syeda Iffat Jabbar said

Radio Pakistan is providing an equal platform to females to promote their struggles and performance in all fields.

The Station Director said the latest technologies are being implemented in Radio Pakistan to enhance its outreach. A dialogue session was also held on the occasion where women belonging to various fields shared their experiences and role for formation of constructive society.

They stressed the need for imparting modern education and training to women to effectively tackle the chal-

enges of the present era.

Speaking on the occasion, other lady speakers lauded the efforts of Radio Pakistan Peshawar for highlighting the women's role and promotion of cultural activities across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Women belonging to different walks of life including students, doctors, teachers, social activists, broadcasters and staff of Radio Pakistan attended the function.

Later, the Station Director also distributed certificates among the participants. A cake was also cut on the occasion.



PESHAWAR: IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan talking with members of CTJF at Central Police Office. — F.P. photo

Mayor announces provision of furniture to municipal colleges

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali Wednesday announced to provide furniture to three municipal colleges of the city and said that efforts would be made to improve facilities for students in educational institutions.

He was addressing a ceremony

held in Municipal College Shahi Bagh to start provision of needed furniture in municipal colleges. The ceremony was also attended by Director Administration, Muhammad Awais and former Nazim, Razauallah Chagarmati.

Speaking on the occasion, city nazim said that budget allocation for education would be increased to facilitate students that are assets of our nation.

He said that in importance of education cannot be undermined in current era of development and

Ministers directed speeding up work

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Provincial Ministers Haji Manzoor Afridi and Advocate Sawal Nazir have directed the municipal authorities of Khyber district to speed up work on drinking water and sanitation schemes in the district. In this regard, the Excise Minister Haji Manzoor

Khan Afridi especially called on the KP Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Sawal Nazir Advocate at his office LG Secretariat Peshawar and mentioned the problems faced by the people of Khyber regarding clean drinking water and sanitation facilities. Following this, the Local Government Minister summoned the

concerned municipal officers to his office who briefed the ministers on the projects of beautification, water supply and hygiene in Khyber district.

The Minister LG directed to accelerate the work on these ongoing schemes and its completion should be ensured as soon as possible so that the people there can benefit from them in the

ensuing summer and the fruits of these development projects worth billions of rupees can reach the people in time. The officials of the municipal administration of Khyber assured to complete all the ongoing schemes on emergency basis and also invited Haji Manzoor Afridi for inauguration of some under-completed projects sooner.

Two dead

PESHAWAR (APP): Two labourers died in an alleged chemical triggered explosion in a match factory here in Industrial Estate on Wednesday. On receiving information, medical teams of the Rescue 1122 rushed to the venue of the incident and after provision of first-aid, shifted the injured to the hospital where they succumbed to their injuries.

The factory was closed for the last ten years and the explosion occurred during its cleaning, which resulted in the partial collapse of its roof.



PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Minister for Communication Muhammad Ali Shah meeting with Caretaker Minister for Information Barrister Feroz Jamal Kakakhel. Secretary Information Arshad Khan also present on occasion.

Peshawarites breathing unhealthy air

Ishaq Khan

PESHAWAR: The historical Peshawar city was once known as 'City of Flowers' but now the city with the population of more than 2 million, the Peshawarites are breathing the unhealthy polluted air in the capital city of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as the PM2.5 value in air crosses the dangerous level set by KP Environment Protection Agency (EPA).

Hameed Khan, 64 a retired government officer, said that it is becoming difficult to travel in the city as with every passing day the pollution is increasing and causing problems for those who are already struggling with different sicknesses.

Khan said that he is a heart patient and the doctor advised him to take a regular walk to maintain his health; however the recent increase in pollution in Peshawar is affecting more

than benefitting.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over 6000 cities in 117 countries are now monitoring air quality and almost the entire global population (99%) breathes air that exceeds WHO air quality limits. The people living in these cities are still breathing unhealthy levels of fine particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide.

WHO claimed that air pollution kills around 7 million people in the world every year and adding 9 in 10 people breathe air containing high levels of unhealthy particulates.

The UN health agency report further revealed that breathing fine particulate matter known as PM2.5 can worsen the chronic lung diseases, lead to higher rates of breast cancer, cause earlier onset of neurological diseases like Alzheimer's and Parkinson's and increase

heart attacks and stroke.

Air pollution is taking 22000 lives of Pakistanis every year and causing health issues to thousands others in different parts of the country.

Dr Muhammad Nafees, Head of the Department of Environment at University of Peshawar, said that air pollution is the most dangerous form of pollution because we cannot limit the air to certain areas or individuals as everyone needs air and it can move freely everywhere.

Nafees claimed that the air pollution has reduced 2 to 3 years of age of Pakistanis because of its hazardous nature to human health.

He added that in 2018 the Pakistan Air Quality Initiative declared Peshawar as the fifth most polluted city which is a clear sign that the pollution are on the rise in the provincial capital.

While answering to a question regarding the major causes of pollution, Nafees said several reasons are responsible for air pollution including industrialization, brick factories, others but the traffic contributes more than 50% to pollution in this historical city.

He explained that the traffic-related air pollution (TRAP) is a mixture of gases and particles that include many different chemicals such as Nitrogen dioxide (NO2), Particulate matter (PM), Black carbon (BC), Ultrafine particles (UFP), Carbon monoxide (CO), Benzene and other volatile organic compounds (VOCs), Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) from cars, buses and trucks. TRAP includes emissions from exhaust, evaporation of fuel, and tire and brake wear.

Nafees advised that the government needs to create and open the link roads in

the city that will also help to manage the traffic flow because congestion increases travel costs and reduces accessibility by increasing travel times and congestion can also cause substantial adverse effects, such as an increase in noise pollution, driver stress, decreased mental satisfaction and also on economic growth of any city.

Jan Said, 55 years old rikshaw driver told The Frontier Post that he is consuming around eight litres of petrol every day and is aware that the condition of the rikshaw is one of the reasons for air pollution.

"I don't have any other option to earn the daily bread for my children, if the government or any other organization provides us any alternative then who wants to drive this old rikshaw", he said.

Muhammad Irshad, Chief Analyst and Deputy Director of Environment

Protection Agency (EPA) Laboratory, confirmed that the city's traffic is the main contributor to Peshawar's air pollution, adding if we can manage the traffic flow in the right way then maximum problems of pollution can be solved in the provincial capital.

The study showed emissions from the transport sector are responsible for contributing 58.6 percent in Peshawar air pollution following the industry, waste burning, dust, brick factories and others, he informed.

EPA's Chief Analyst explained that there are five major air pollutants including Particulate matter (PM2.5), Ozone (O3), Nitrogen dioxide (NO2), Carbon monoxide (CO) and Sulphur dioxide (SO2), however in the recent days PM2.5 value is the major component of worry in Peshawar's air as its existence in air crosses the dan-

gerous level, exceeding 6 to 8 times standard set by the EPA, it is a non-filterable matter.

"The short-term standard (24-hour or daily average) is 35 micrograms per cubic meter of air (µg/m3) however in Peshawar it reached the 220 levels in some parts of Peshawar which is very high", Irshad said.

Answering to question regarding the EPA role in controlling the air pollution, Irshad said we are continuously doing inspection of industries, brick factories, crush machines and other sources of pollution in city and if they were not following the required standard of EPA then they have to face fine in the form of penalty and in some cases we sealed the factories for ignoring the standard, however to maintain the check and balance on traffic in this regard is not in our mandate.

While contacting the



In brief

Release of property sought F.P. Report

PABBI: A resident of Nizampur namely Zarb Din requested Chief Justice Pakistan along with other competent authorities release his purchased land from residents of Garhu area of Nowshera and demanded stern actions against culprits involved in grabbing the land, on Wednesday. This he requested while talking to media personnel and claimed that he has purchased 285 Kanal land in 2020 in the presence of Jirga comprised of Shad Muhammad and Yar Muhammad along with 40 other elders of Garhu village. He added that all accesses and paths have been closed by land grabbers to the purchased property. The residents claimed that Shad Muhammad and Yar Muhammad has turned blind eyes toward the grabbing. He added that several applications were made before Assistant Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner in this regard but to no veil.

Police bust gang of thieves F.P. Report

MIR ALI: North Waziristan Police busted a four-member gang of motorcycle thieves and recovered four stolen bikes from their possession on Wednesday. Crackdown against motorcycles' thieves was taken after the notice of District Police Officer (DPO), Saleem Riaz over the growing incidents of motorcycle theft in the jurisdiction of Police Station Miran Shah. A special team headed by Station House Officer (SHO) Miran Shah, Laiq Marjan was constituted to arrest culprits involved in such incidents. The team incharge after day-night hectic efforts succeeded in the arrest of the four-member gang and recovered four stolen motorcycles from their possession. The alleged accused have confessed to several incidents and the recovery of more motorcycles is expected in light of their revelations.

131 criminals arrested

SARGODHA (INP): Police claimed to have arrested 131 criminals, including 75 court absconders, in the district during the last month. According to a police report issued here on Wednesday, 168 cases were registered against illegal weapon holders. Police also registered 136 cases against drug pushers, 38 cases against accused for kite flying, 12 cases were filed against gamblers, 15 cases were registered under the Sound System Act and 39 cases were registered under Temporary Residency Act. Police also claimed to have busted six criminal gangs during the last month. Police also recovered eight Kalashnikovs, 23 rifles, 30 guns, 104 pistols, 1,451 rounds, 34-kg hashish and 5,224 liters of liquor.

Fire destroys 300 shops

GUJRANWALA (INP): At least 300 shops were gutted when fire broke out in Lunda Bazaar near Sheranwala Bagh in Gujranwala. The reason behind the eruption of the fire is yet to be ascertained. Eight fire tenders of Rescue 1122 managed to extinguish the fire after two hours hectic efforts. The cloth and other commodities were reduced to ashes in the intense blaze. However, Rescue officials said the fire at Landa Bazar has been brought under control, and the cooling process was underway. The cloth and other commodities were reduced to ashes in the intense blaze.



LOWER DIR: Students busy to solve their papers as annual examination from grade 5th to 8th began in Dir gov't schools. — F.P. photo

Symposium on emerging trends in advanced materials held

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Department of Physics, Kohat University of Science & Technology (KUST) arranged a two-days conference, titled "National Conference on Emerging Trends in Advanced Materials" held, on Wednesday.

The event was inaugurated by the Vice Chancellor of University of Science & Technology, Prof Dr Sardar Khan, Kohat accompanied by the Registrar, Dean Faculty of Physical and Numerical Sciences, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, and other section heads. More than 200 researchers from different universities, colleges and institutes participated in the conference. Experts in different fields presented their recent



results with great enthusiasm and interest.

The Vice Chancellor appreciated the event and offered congratulations to the Chief Organizer, Dr Abdullah Yar, Associate Professor, Department of Physics, Kohat University of Science & Technology for organizing such a successful scientific event.

The event was ended with closing ceremony in which shields, certificates and prizes among the best poster presenter were distributed. This conference will be a milestone in bridging links between Department of Physics, Kohat University of Science & Technology and other institutions of the country.

Anti-India demos in AJK on Women's Day

MUZAFFARABAD (INP): Anti-India demonstrations and other programs were held in Muzaffarabad and other areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir on the occasion of the International Women's Day, today.

A protest demonstration was staged in Muzaffarabad under the aegis of Pasban-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir to draw the attention of international community towards the deteriorating situation in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). A large number of people, mostly women, gathered at Burhan Wani Chowk and staged a sit-in protest. Holding banners and placards, they chanted slogans against India and in favour of Kashmir's freedom from Indian illegal occupation. The women and girls participating in the sit-in were raising slogans, "Stop the persecution of Kashmiri women" and "India - leave Jammu and Kashmir".

Speakers on the occasion, said despite the claims of protection, restoration and success of women's

rights to the world, hundreds of thousands of Kashmiri women are still facing the worst oppression in history. "Millions of Kashmiri women are forced to live in the shadow of terror and brutality," they said. They added that India is violating all human and feminine rights of Kashmiri women by military force under the guise of so-called democracy.

The speakers said human rights organizations should play their role for the release of Aasiya Andrabi, Naheeda Nasreen, Fehmeeda Sofi and other women lodged in the jails of India and IIOJK. They also said that the United Nations should take action against Indian troops involved in rape of Kashmiri women in Kunanposhpora, Shopian double rape and murder and other such incidents.

The anti-India sit-in was led by Pasban-e-Hurriyat women wing officials Mehnaz Qureshi, Riffat Farooq, Umm-e-Sara, Iqra Usman, Warda Manzoor along with Chairman Uzair Ahmad Ghazali, Vice

Chairman Usman Ali Hashim, Shaikat Javed Mir and others. Meanwhile, a program was organized in Muzaffarabad by Tehreek Shabab-ul-Muslimeen Jammu and Kashmir Students' Wing to express solidarity with the oppressed women of IIOJK. The program was presided over by the patron of the Muhajireen Youth Union, Sardar Ishtiaq Liaquat Awan, while the special guest was the MD Kashmir Education, Raja Gulzarin Azad.

It was led by Chairman Tehreek Shabab-ul-Muslimeen Jammu and Kashmir Students' Wing, Riaz Ahmed Awan. In addition to women, Faizullah Durrani, Zubair Khan Durrani, Shahid Iqbal, Arshad Awan, Imtiaz Awan and a large number of young people participated. Addressing the ceremony, the speakers paid rich tribute to the sacrifices made by Kashmiri women in the Kashmir freedom movement. They appealed to the UN to fulfill its promises made to the Kashmiris.

Martyr cop laid to rest in D I Khan

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: The funeral prayers of police constable Gul Faraz, who was martyred by terrorists during census duty at Graha Mustan in the limits of police station Daraban, were performed with full official honors at Ijaz Shaheed Police Lines Dera, on Wednesday.

Provincial Minister in charge Abdul Halim Qasoria, Regional Police Officer Dera Abdul Ghafoor Afridi, Station Commander Brigadier Rashid Khan, Deputy Commissioner Dera Arshad Majeed, DPO Dera Abdul Rauf Qaisrani, SSP CTD Dera, SP Investigation Dera, S.P. Other top police officers including PFRP Dera Region participated in this occasion, the Chak and Hay Choband squad of the police offered a salute, after the funeral prayer.

Provincial Minister in charge Abdul Halim Qasoria, Regional Police Officer Dera Abdul Ghafoor Afridi, Brigadier Rashid Khan and DPO Dera Abdul Rauf Qaisrani placed flowers on the body of the martyr. Spread the veil. On this occasion, Regional Police Officer Dera Abdul Ghafoor Afridi paid tribute to the martyr and said that the blood of the martyr will not go in vain. The morale of the Dera Range Police is high. Inshallah, the terrorists involved in the incident will be exposed and brought to justice as soon as possible.

Action against hoarders demanded F.P. Report

SAKHAKOT: The hoarders and black-sheep of the business community has created artificial price-hike as well as shortage of edible items in wake of Ramadan.

According to details, the edible items including prices of beans, pulses and vegetables as well as fruit by traders in Dargai bazaar. However, competent authorities including administration and food department has turned blind eyes towards the violators.

The residents claimed that hoarders have supports from within government departments which had compelled public for starvation. The residents argued competent authorities to take stern actions against hoarders and traders involved artificial shortage of edible items.

23 water schemes dysfunctional out of 25 facilities

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Al-Khidmat Foundation district president Hafeezullah Khaksar told local journalists at Timergara that 23 out of 25 government water supply schemes were dysfunctional in the Lal Qila sub division. He complained the residents faced great difficulties in fetching clean drinking water while the public health engineering department had been doing nothing to make the schemes functional.

The president said the water supply schemes at Mirgam, Zaimdara, Kas Korona, Machinabad, Manial, Golt, Kas Topseen, Taran, Bishgram, Satara etc., were dysfunctional for a long period. He said that most of the government schemes were lying in dilapidated condition that needed government attention.

He said the government had spent millions of rupees on those projects while the concerned staff had been getting their salaries regularly without any services. He demanded the government and high ups of the concerned department to take notice of the problem and resolve it soon so that the residents could get drinking water easily.

As many as 50 students graduated from seminary: A total of 50 male and female students graduated from a religious seminary at Saligram Rabat were awarded with certificates during a Khatam e Bukhari Sharif function held at the seminary.

The central chief of the Tanzeem e Naujawan Ahnaf Mufti Nadeem Mahmoodi was chief guest on the occasion. The function was addressed also by former MPA Maulana Muhammad Idrees, head of the seminary Haji Nisar Ahmad, JUI-F activist Maulana Nabi Shah and others. The speakers said the west had inflicted a war against the Islamic civilization through various media platforms and wanted to defame ulema, religious seminaries and its students one way or the other.

They said the seminaries were fighting its battle of its survival and dignity. They said the role of religious clerics during the war of independence could not be ignored. They said the religious seminaries and its teachers and students had always played an important role whenever the country was faced with difficult times. The speakers asked the students and youth to ensure positive use of the

media and be active in guiding the new generation on the right path.

Education review meeting held: The Lower Dir deputy commissioner Iftikhar Ahmad directed the district education officers male and female to provide teaching staff to the government schools which were in need. He was chairing a meeting on the overall education system at his office.

The additional deputy commissioner Abdul Wali Khan, deputy district education officer Mahboobullah, assistant district education officer planning and development Haroon Khan, assistant programmer Aleem ul Haq and others were in attendance. The district monitoring officer (DMO) education Tariq Jamal briefed the meeting regarding the overall education indicators.

DC also directed the education officers to hold a meeting with the communication and works department regarding the under-construction schools' building and send him a detailed report. He said that teachers working in the second shift had payment issues and the concerned officers were directed to contact the district accounts' office in that regard.

Admn finalizes arrangement for Jashn-e-Baharan

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: District administration has finalised all arrangement to celebrate 'Jashn-e-Baharan' (Spring Festival) and opening ceremony is being held at Municipal Stadium Hafizabad. Deputy Commissioner will inaugurate the spring festival. The first day, horse dance, tent pegging, gymnastic, pets show and others event will be held.

Deputy Commissioner said that spring festival is being held to provide recreational opportunities to people and promoting healthy activities among youth so that the youth could save from social evils and to demonstrate their hidden abilities. He said that this festival would continue till 15, March and sports competitions, flowers exhibition, 'Mahfil Mushaira' and other attractive events would be held in this connection.

Meanwhile, District Administration and Local Government have started 15-days 'Safai Nisif Eman Hay' campaign in the district on the directions of the Punjab government to ensure cleanliness and to keep environment pleasant in the district. A walk was taken out from Jinnah Chowk Gujranwala Road led by the DC Umer Farooq Warraich for creating awareness among people

about importance to keep atmosphere green and clean.

ADCR Imtiaz Ali Baig, AC Munawar Hussain, CEO Municipal Committee Abid Qayyum Qazi and other citizens participated the walk. DC said that during 'Safai Nasif Eman Hay' Camping, not only cleanliness would improved but promotion of tree plantation, removal of encroachments and renovation of public places were also part of this campaign. He said that all officers of government departments including district administration, Municipal Committees education were engaged to make the campaign successful.

DC appealed the traders, media persons, civil society to play their vital role for making the atmosphere clean, green and pleasant. He directed the CEO Education Wazir Ahmad Agha to deliver special lectures to students in the schools in connection with 'Safai Nasif Eman Hay' Campaign.

Pakistani student secure 1st position in global competition: A student of Hafizabad Muhammad Shafay Ishtiq son of prominent educationist and Assistant Education Officer Ishtiaq Nazir won first position in 19th International Kangaroo Capitation arranged by the Australian Government.

As many as 8815 students participated across the country in the competition and 221 students belong to district Hafizabad. Chief Executive Officer Wazir Ahmad Agha, DEO (SE) Mian Abdul Majeed, DEO (W) Madam Talat Mehmood, DDEO Nargis Arif and other social, literary, teacher's community congratulated the Muhammad Shafay and his father Ishtiaq Nazir for winning Gold Medal to grab first position in the competition.

As many as 600 guava sapling planted within one minute: District administration and Forest Department have set a new record to plant more than 600 guava saplings within one minute in connection with Tree Plantation Campaign. DC Umer Farooq Warraich inaugurated the tree plantation campaign to plant guava sapling in district complex. AC Munawar Hussain, Law expert and ex-president district bar Malik Nazakat Ali Phulrwan, District Nagran Dawat-e-Islami Muhammad Waseem Attari, forest assistant Qamar Kabobo, students of seminaries and their teachers participated the tree plantation. DC said on the occasion that tree plantation was pivotal to overcome challenges of climate change and elimination of pollution as well as to refine natural beauty in urban and rural areas.

WSSCM signs MOU with NADRA for payment of bills

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A Memory of Understanding (MOU) has been signed between Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM) and NADRA E-Sahulat regarding payment of bills.

Chief Financial Officer Naveed Akhtar and Assistant Director Arbab Amjad Khan

signed the MoU. Assistant Manager Revenue and Billing Muhammad Sohail and Assistant Director PSD Mohsin Kamal were also present on the occasion.

Under this agreement, the customers of wsscm can pay their bill through Nadra E-Sahulat application. While speaking on the occasion Chief Financial Officer Naveed Akhtar said that due

to this agreement the revenue will be increased and customers will also get rid of going to bank and standing in long queues. WSSCM is providing best facilities to the citizens of Mardan at door step. If the citizens pay their bills in time, the company will assure uninterrupted supply of safe drinking water and sanitation services, he added.



QUETTA: Maulana Wali Muhammad Turabi addressing a press conference.



Thursday, March 09, 2023

Turks look to history and foresee rebirth of ancient Antakya from ruins

ANTAKYA (Reuters): Remnants of ancient Abrahamic history were destroyed when an earthquake flattened much of Antakya in southern Turkey last month, but many hope the city can rise from the rubble as it has done over centuries of disasters and conquests. Established by the Seleucid Empire in 300 BC, Antakya, formerly Antioch, has been home to Jews, Christians and Muslims and destroyed or heavily damaged several times as it changed hands between Greeks, Romans, Arabs and Ottomans.

Much of the rescue effort after the Feb. 6 earthquakes focused on the modern, residential side of Antakya, where thousands were caught in their sleep and crushed or trapped under the rubble. In total, nearly 52,000 people were killed in Turkey and Syria. On the opposite bank of the Orontes River, in the old town once popular with tourists, mosques and churches lie ruined. Rescue efforts in the area, populated with businesses rather than homes, were sparse, while security forces kept guard against looters at every corner.

Abdullah Kurdo, a business student and the manager of a hotel near the destroyed Antioch Greek Orthodox Church, was sifting through the rubble to salvage what he could of Antakya's culture. So far he had found an issue of Hatay Magazine, celebrating life in Turkey's southernmost province, from the 1970s. "The rubble in this area is not only made up of concrete piles, rocks and roof tiles - the culture of Hatay lies underneath," he said.

"What we learn from our elders is that Hatay witnessed seven earthquakes in its history but it was reborn from its ashes. We believe that Hatay will be reborn from its ashes again." The entrance to the courtyard of the church, rebuilt after an earthquake in 1872, can now only be accessed from a side street by climbing over a mound of debris.

The bell tower lies on its side, with clothes placed on top for earthquake victims to take. From the courtyard, the entrance to the church is barely recognisable, the door hidden behind rubble and a cross lying on its side amid the debris. The floor is also covered by rubble from the collapsed roof, while several paintings of Jesus and the saints hang slanted and covered in dust and mud on the walls. Others lie among the debris.



The Habib-i Najjar Mosque, said to be the first mosque in the Anatolia peninsula, dates back to the Roman Empire, when it is believed there was a pagan temple in its place. A church built in its place was turned into a mosque and then back to a church, a pattern repeating itself several times. It was last rebuilt by the Ottoman Empire in the 1800s after an earthquake. The minaret collapsed in last month's disaster and only a small section of the dome above the pulpit can be seen behind the rubble of the front wall that fell into the courtyard, while other walls appear intact.

The Ulu Camii (Grand Mosque), dating back to the 18th century, collapsed, while the minaret of the Sarimiye Mosque, built in the 16th century, has toppled. Other historical buildings, including the governor's office, were also destroyed. Kurdo recalled how people of different religions co-existed in the city. "We always lived together, we grew up together," he said. "We believe we will lift up Hatay again as one power." Among the victims of the Feb. 6 earthquake were Saul Cenudioglu, leader of the Jewish community in Antakya, and his wife, Tuna Cenudioglu. The Antioch Synagogue is still standing but there are cracks in the walls and debris everywhere, said Rabbi Mendy Chitrik, chairman of the Alliance of Rabbis in Islamic States.

Antakya has been home to Jews for more than 2,300 years but the community had shrunk to fewer than 20 in recent years. "However small it

was, it had a very big part in the heart of the city," Chitrik said. "The heart of Antakya always showed this coexistence, tolerance. It was quite amazing to see this real connection between different traditions, cultures, ethnic backgrounds."

The rabbi said he came to Antakya after the earthquakes to check on the Jewish community and take them to Istanbul. Entering the synagogue felt like "2,500 years of history had come to a close", Chitrik said. But he rescued ancient Torah scrolls dating back hundreds of years to keep until the synagogue is rebuilt.

"We were taking the Torahs and the last Jews out of the city. The Torahs will go back, the synagogue will be reopened. Once again there will be Jewish life in Antakya," he said. Olcay Aydemir, an architect and restoration expert, said the region had experienced earthquakes over thousands of years and restoration efforts had to be sensitive.

"These structures rise from their ashes," she said. "These rocks should not be thrown away. The ones that can be re-used need to be re-used." The structures that were still partly standing, such as the Habib-i Najjar Mosque, needed to be strengthened, Aydemir said, adding that every collapsed structure had to be examined individually to learn from the past and apply the lessons to the future. "The last earthquake was bigger than expected. But it brought with it important data that could inform us about structures' weaknesses and reasons for their collapse," she said.

White House may restart detention of migrants

WASHINGTON (Reuters): The White House is considering restarting the detention of migrant families caught crossing the US-Mexico border, four current and former US officials told Reuters, which would reverse a move to end the practice. The Biden administration also is weighing reviving immigration arrests of migrant families within the United States who have been ordered deported, two of the officials said.

"It's all on the table," said one of the officials, all of whom requested anonymity to discuss internal deliberations. The Biden administration is exploring options as it prepares for a possible rise in border crossings with COVID-19 restrictions blocking migrants expected to lift on May 11. President Joe Biden, a Democrat who took office in 2021, pledged to reverse the more restrictive immigration policies of Republican former President Donald Trump but has embraced some of his measures as border arrests soared to record levels. A US Department of Homeland Security spokesperson said that no final decisions had been made and that "the administration will continue to prioritize safe, orderly, and humane processing of migrants."

The New York Times first reported the possible restart of family detention. The Biden administration has discussed using two Texas detention centers that previously housed families, three of the US officials said. A separate Biden official, when asked about reviving family detention in those two centers, said that idea was no longer under consideration. The Biden administration said in a February 2022 memo that it was repurposing family detention centers to hold only adults, a major shift away from Trump's push to expand such detention. Neha Desai, who represents migrant children in a decades-long lawsuit that governs conditions for their detention, criticized the possible detention restart. "Even in conditions that actually meet minimum standards of health and safety, there is absolutely no humane way to detain families," she said.

Lithuania wants permanent German brigade

PABRADE TRAINING GROUND, Lithuania (Reuters): A decision on a permanent deployment of a German brigade to Lithuania will be "up to NATO", German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said in response to calls by Vilnius for a larger NATO presence in the country. "This is not down to who wants what - or who wants to provide what - but rather up to NATO," Pistorius told reporters at the drills of hundreds of German troops in Lithuania.

Since 2017, Germany has led an international battalion with some 1,500 troops in Lithuania as part of a NATO effort to deter Russia from attacking the Baltic region, seen as one of the weakest spots in the alliance's eastern flank. Berlin also has a brigade of some 3,000 to 5,000 troops on standby in Germany, which it says could be deployed to Lithuania within 10 days if needed. But Lithuania wants the brigade to be deployed on its soil, on a permanent basis, Defence Minister Arvydas Anuskas said. "The defence strategy of the Baltic states cannot rely only on reinforcements. It has to also rely on trustworthy in-place capabilities. Our geography demands it," he told reporters after meeting Pistorius.

There have been concerns, however, that any permanent deployments would be costly and deprive NATO of the flexibility to freely move troops to other locations along its eastern flank. Pistorius said NATO still had to present its so-called regional plans, documents that will spell out the alliance's adapted defence planning in reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and which are expected to be submitted in the coming weeks. The issue will be discussed at the NATO summit in Vilnius in July, Pistorius said.

Iran arrests school poisoning suspects as cases top 5,000

TEHRAN (AFP): Iran announced it had made the first arrests in a spate of mystery poisonings of schoolgirls that has affected more than 5,000 pupils since late November. Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had called for the perpetrators of the "unforgivable crime" to be tracked down "without mercy" as public anger mounts.

The interior ministry said in a statement "a number of people" suspected of manufacturing hazardous substances had been arrested in six provinces, including a pupil's parent. Iran's deputy interior minister, Majid Mirahmadi, told state television that the "intelligence agencies" had made several arrests, "and the relevant agencies are conducting a full investigation". Scores of Iranian schools have been hit by poisonings since late November, with pupils suffering symptoms ranging from shortness of breath to nausea and vertigo after reporting "unpleasant" odours on school premises. Some have been treated in hospital.

"Twenty-five (out of 31) provinces and approximately 230 schools have been affected, and more than 5,000 schoolgirls and boys poisoned," Mo h a m m a d - H a s s a n A s a f a r i, a member of the parliamentary fact-finding committee, told the ISNA news agency. "Various tests are being carried out to

identify the type and cause of the poisonings. So far, no specific information has been obtained regarding the type of poison used." The mystery poisonings have triggered a wave of anger and demands for action from the authorities.

According to the interior ministry statement, arrests had been made in Khuzestan, West Azerbaijan, Fars, Kermanshah, Khorasan and Alborz provinces. One of those arrested had allegedly used their child to insert the "irritant" into the school, and then recorded videos of sick students which were sent to "hostile media" to "create fear... and close schools", the statement said. It added three suspects have criminal records "including involvement in the recent riots", a term used by the Iranian authorities to describe the protests sparked by Mahsa Amini's death in custody. Amini, 22, had been arrested over an alleged violation of strict dress rules for women and died on September 16.

President Ebrahim Raisi tasked the interior and intelligence ministries last week with providing continuous updates on the poisoning cases, dubbing them "the enemy's conspiracy to create fear and despair" among the people. "In less than five percent of the students transferred to hospital, irritant materials were found which led

to their ill-health," the interior ministry said. "Fortunately, so far, no toxic or dangerous substances have been found in any of the students transferred to medical centres."

Deputy health minister Saeed Karimi said symptoms included "respiratory irritation, stomach ache, weakness and lethargy". "These inhaled irritants may not necessarily be a gas but may be in the form of a powder or paste or even a liquid, which when poured over a heater or vaporised by heat can cause complications," he added. The latest case -- reported by the ISNA news agency -- involved 40 pupils, all of them female, in the restive southeastern city of Zahedan. The White House called for a "credible independent investigation" into the poisonings.

The first cases were reported in Iran's Shiite clerical capital of Qom in late November, a month after the Amini protests that later spread to universities and schools. Tehran prosecutor Ali Salehi warned "those who spread lies and rumours" about the poisonings that "they will be dealt with decisively and legally," the judiciary's Mizan Online website reported. "In the past week, court cases and charges have been filed against the managers of the Hammihan, Rouyad 24 and Shargh media, as well as several individuals," Salehi added.

Senator tells UK organ harvesting trial of scam fears

ABUJA (AFP): Nigeria's former deputy senate president on trial in London for allegedly plotting to harvest a street trader's kidney for his sick daughter told the court he feared he was being "scammed". Ike Ekweremadu, 60, his wife Beatrice, 56, daughter Sonia, 25, and a doctor, Obinna Obeta, 50, are accused of conspiring to exploit the man for his body part.

Lawyers for the four previously told the trial at London's central criminal court, also known as the Old Bailey, the alleged victim was acting "altruistically". The kidney was allegedly intended for Sonia, who remains on dialysis with a renal condition, in return for up to £7,000 (\$8,430) and the promise of a new life in Britain for the 21-year-old trader. Giving evidence in his defence, Ike Ekweremadu was asked about an invoice for £8,000 he received via his brother Diwe from a consultant doctor.

Defence lawyer Martin Hicks asked: "Why not at this stage say we are being scammed Dr Obeta, end of, stop?" "My daughter's life was on the line so if

we stop we will be putting my daughter's life in danger. So we just keep moving," Ekweremadu replied. "Everybody was obviously taking advantage of my daughter's ill health," he added. Ike Ekweremadu is a senator for the opposition Peoples Democratic Party for Enugu state in southeast Nigeria. He has been held in custody in the UK since his arrest. His wife and daughter are on conditional bail.

In Britain, it is legal to donate a kidney, but not for reward. Prosecutors say regardless of whether the Lagos street trader gave his consent, a crime was committed by the wealthy Nigerians. The accuser -- who cannot be named -- is said to have gone to UK police after finally refusing to consent to the procedure, following preliminary tests at a north London hospital in February 2022. A consultant doctor at the London hospital said the young man had "limited understanding" of why he was there and was "visibly relieved" on being told the transplant would not go ahead, prosecutor Hugh Davies said.

Ike Ekweremadu told

the court Sonia was doing a masters degree at Newcastle University when she started experiencing "swollen limbs" in December 2019. She was later diagnosed with a "kidney issue", which caused her "distress", and withdrew from her studies after she "collapsed" in class. Ekweremadu said his daughter's deteriorating condition was "scary", adding: "Medicines she was getting (were) not essentially working, so her situation was getting worse." The prosecutor earlier said the young man had been coached to give false answers to doctors at the British hospital, and Sonia was "singing from the same hymn sheet" to create a fake family history linking the pair as cousins.

The Ekweremadus and the doctor are accused of conspiracy to arrange the travel of another person with a view to exploitation, under UK legislation on modern slavery. Obeta allegedly managed the process in Nigeria, having himself undergone a kidney transplant in Britain with an organ donated by a "cousin" in 2021, the court was previously told.

US bans entry to Syria security agent

BEIRUT (AP): The US State Department banned entry into the US of a Syrian intelligence member who appeared in a video leaked last year showing him fatally shooting people during the country's 12-year conflict. The ban against Amjad Yousef, a member of Syria's notorious Military Intelligence Branch 227, includes his wife and immediate members of his family, the State Department said in a statement.

Yousef was one of several Syrian security agents who appeared in the video in which dozens of blindfolded, bound men were shot and thrown into a trench. The decision came a week before Syria's conflict enters its 13th year. The war has killed nearly half a million people and left large parts of the country destroyed. "As a result of today's action, Yousef, as well as his wife, Anan Wasouf, and their immediate family members, are ineligible for entry into the United States," the State Department said.

The 6-minute-43-second video clip stamped with the

date April 16, 2013, shows intelligence members with a line of around 40 prisoners in an abandoned building in Tadamon, a suburb of Damascus near the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk. For much of the war, the district was a front line between government forces and opposition fighters. The prisoners are blindfolded, with their arms tied behind their backs. One after another, the Branch 227 gunmen stand them at the edge of a trench outside the building filled with old tires, then push or kick the men in, shooting them as they fall. In a cruel game, the agents tell some of the prisoners that they are going to pass through a sniper's alley and that they should run. The men tumble onto the bodies of those who went before them. As bodies pile up in the trench, some still move, and the gunmen shoot into the pile.

Then the gunmen set the bodies on fire, presumably to erase evidence of the massacre. The State Department said Yousef, a warrant officer in the Syrian security services, was involved in "gross viola-

tions of human rights" for his involvement in the killing of 41 unarmed civilians. The statement said the US calls on President Bashar Assad's government "to cease all violations and abuses of human rights, including but not limited to extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and torture."

It said the footage of the killings in Tadamon and ongoing atrocities in Syria "serves as a sobering reminder for why countries should not normalize relations with the Assad regime absent enduring progress towards a political resolution." Following the Feb. 6, earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria killing more than 50,000 people, including about 6,000 in Syria, some Arab foreign ministers made rare visits to Damascus and met Assad for the first time since the conflict began in March 2011. Calls have been rising in recent months for Syria's return to the Arab League. Syria was expelled from the 22-member organization and boycotted by its neighbors after its uprising-turned-conflict broke out.

2 of four Americans kidnapped by gunmen in Mexico found dead

MATAMOROS, Mexico (Reuters): Two of four Americans kidnapped by gunmen just after they drove into northeastern Mexico have been found dead, US and Mexican officials said, in a grim reminder of the lawlessness plaguing parts of the border region. The survivors and the two bodies were discovered by Mexican security forces in a wood cabin southeast of the border city of Matamoros, said Americo Villarreal, governor of Tamaulipas, the state the four crossed into from Texas.

Authorities were still investigating how the two Americans died, and one Mexican official said the most likely explanation for the group's abduction was a case of mistaken identity. One of the two surviving Americans suffered a gunshot wound to his leg that was not life-threatening, while the other, a woman, was not injured, Villarreal told a news conference. A Mexican woman, 33, also died during the kidnapping ordeal, apparently from a stray bullet, he said.

A 24-year-old man guarding them at the cabin was arrested at the scene. Before they were found, the

four had been moved to a succession of locations in the area, including a local clinic in a bid to throw law enforcement off the trail, Villarreal said. "We're very sorry to have this happen in our country and we send our condolences to the families of the victims, their friends, to the people of the United States," President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador told an earlier news conference. Mexican officials handed the survivors to US officials at the border, and the two bodies were to follow in the next few hours, Villarreal said. The US State Department confirmed two Americans had returned to the United States.

Mexican officials pledged to work with the US to find the perpetrators, but the incident threw a harsh spotlight on gang violence in Mexico and sparked angry reactions from some US lawmakers critical of Mexican efforts to fight crime. The four Americans were in a white minivan when they entered Matamoros. Gunmen fired at them soon afterwards and then forced them into another vehicle, officials said. A video circulating on social media purportedly of

the kidnapping showed a woman being walked towards a white pickup truck by a group of men with body armor and guns. She was forced into the back before the men dragged in two prone figures.

Tamaulipas is one of Mexico's most gang-ravaged states and has long been plagued by the kidnapping of migrants. ABC News named the four Americans as Shaeed Woodard, Zindell Brown, Latavia McGee and Eric James Williams. A Tamaulipas official identified the last two as the survivors. Williams was receiving treatment in hospital in Brownsville, Texas, across the border from Matamoros, the official said. US Republicans, in particular, have been pushing for the US government to take a tougher line on organized crime south of the border amid rising overdose deaths caused by fentanyl, a synthetic opioid trafficked by Mexican cartels.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said it was time to "put Mexico on notice," advocated introducing legislation to classify some Mexican drug car-

tels as "foreign terrorist groups", and set the stage to use military force if necessary. "I would tell the Mexican government if you don't clean up your act, we're going to clean it up for you," he told Fox News. White House spokesman John Kirby condemned the incident in Tamaulipas. "Attacks on US citizens are unacceptable, no matter where," he told a news briefing.

Tamaulipas Attorney General Irving Barrios told the conference with Villarreal that the Gulf Cartel was known to operate in the area but stopped short of explicitly blaming it. Barrios said the Americans were likely mistaken for somebody else when abducted but noted authorities were still pursuing several lines of investigation. Tamaulipas officials said McGee was traveling with the group to Mexico to get cosmetic surgery. Mexican President Lopez Obrador vowed to bring the killers to justice. But he lashed out at what he cast as "tabloid" coverage of the incident and accused the media of not giving the same attention to killings of Mexicans in the United States.

Two strong earthquakes rock southern Philippines

MANILA (AFP): Two strong earthquakes jolted the southern Philippines, authorities said, with the second damaging buildings and forcing the evacuation of hundreds of villagers from their homes. A 6.0-magnitude quake struck at about 2:00 pm (0600 GMT), a few kilometres from Maragusan municipality in the mountainous gold-mining province of Davao de Oro on Mindanao island, the US Geological Survey said.

Local authorities said there were no reports of casualties or significant damage. But a shallower second quake, measuring 5.6 magnitude, hit nearly three hours later in the neighbouring municipality of New Bataan, triggering the collapse of some houses. New Bataan disaster officer Lynne Dolloalasa said nearly 300 people were

forced to leave their homes in Andap village, where "a number of houses collapsed". About 100 people inside a shopping mall in Tagum city, in the adjacent province of Davao del Norte, were hit by falling glasses and plates as they fled the building, said Jay Suaybaguio, the provincial information officer.

"I was in the third floor buying office supplies when the quake suddenly struck," Suaybaguio told AFP. "When we reached the first floor we saw broken bottles of wine and condiments. The lights went out but emergency lights turned on, helping us to find our way." Photos posted on the Facebook page of the Davao del Norte disaster agency showed collapsed ceiling sections inside another Tagum shopping mall, which it attributed to "the series of earthquake

incidents". The Davao del Norte government suspended work and classes and Wednesday to allow for inspections of public buildings and infrastructure to ensure public safety.

The first quake lasted about 30 seconds and was followed by aftershocks, said Corporal Stephanie Clemen, a police officer in Tagum, about 40 kilometres (25 miles) from Maragusan. "We immediately went under our desks and when the ground stopped shaking we went straight outside," Clemen told AFP. "We are still outside because a moderate aftershock just hit." While the quake did not appear to have destroyed anything, Clemen said, it was strong enough to "cause fear". Quakes are a daily occurrence in the Philippines, which sits along the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seis-

mic and volcanic activity that stretches from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin.

Most of the earthquakes are too weak to be felt by humans, but strong and destructive ones come at random with no technology available to predict when and where they will happen. The nation's civil defence office regularly holds drills simulating earthquakes along active fault lines. The last major quake was in the northern Philippines in October. The 6.4-magnitude earthquake hit the mountain town of Dolores in Abra province, injuring several people, damaging buildings and cutting power to most of the region. A 7.0-magnitude quake in mountainous Abra last July triggered landslides and ground fissures, killing 11 people and injuring several hundred.

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Public rating and legal issues

A recent survey by Gallop Pakistan has revealed that the PTI Chairman Imran Khan has been positively rated among 61 percent of Pakistanis, whereas only 36 percent have a good opinion about PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari. According to the Public Pulse Report of the most reputed opinion poll, Imran received a positive rating from 61% and 37 percent of the population marked him negatively. Meanwhile, province-wise rating stood at 29% from Punjab, 28% from Sindh, and 14% from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the highest amongst the provinces for any politician. On the other hand, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was rated negatively by 65% of Pakistanis with 32% positive approval. As for Foreign Minister and PPP Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, 36% of participants rated the PPP chairman positively while 57 percent expressed a pessimistic opinion about him.

Being a cricket star with a philanthropic background, the PTI Chairman has ever received the utmost public support from across all spectrums of Pakistani society in the past years. Historically, educated youth and civil society wholeheartedly supported Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for its ever-needed anti-corruption campaign, across-the-board accountability, rule of law, and enforcement of merit and transparency in government affairs and public life. Interestingly, the civil and military establishment also supported Imran Khan out of way and managed things to comprehend the longstanding dream of a third-party and middle-class government that free the nation from British colonial laws and the feudal system in the country.

Unfortunately, the long-awaited PTI government could not realize its economic and social manifesto during its three-and-a-half years of rule in the country, however, the PTI Supremo remained successful in securing public support for his party by branding PDM's no-confidence motion as a foreign-sponsored regime change conspiracy against his government. Later, Dar's narrow-sighted economic policies sunk the PML-N-led PDM government and supported Imran's narrative, which has emerged as the sole alternative to the multiparty ruling alliance in the country. At the same time, PTI's sugary economic policies including massive subsidies and the Sehat Plus Health card have attracted immense public ratings even though those subsidies severely hurt financial stability, derailed the IMF's program, and caused serious economic challenges for the country.

Interestingly, PTI's top leadership failed to adopt a balanced, more mature, and measured political legacy and rather demonstrated an egoistic and combative political approach that often ended up in recurrent U-Turns and caused embarrassment for the party and its supporters. Although, recent public polls are in favor of the PTI Chief, however, Imran Khan's persistent avoidance of justice and no show up in the courts in multiple cases badly Tarnished his image in the public and damaged the party's narrative.

Presently, political wrestling and legal battle are continuing between 11 member Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) and Pakistan Tahreek-e- Insaf (PTI) as numerous cases of alleged corruption, electoral disqualification, and money laundering of the former Prime Minister are under trial in the courts. The PTI has tried to resolve legal issues through political tactics, and public pressures that undermined the integrity and sanctity of the judiciary.

Social media campaigns and show of street power in legal issues is unnecessary and counterproductive, therefore, PTI's Chief must adopt a meticulous policy to safely sail through this crucial period because any misstep in legal matters could undo all opinion polls and public rating in no time.

World must get tough on divisive Israeli government

Yossi Mekelberg

In a dry manner characteristic of British diplomatic tradition, UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly replied to concerns raised by his country's politicians about developments in Israel by stating that: "The UK government has not engaged Itamar Ben-Gvir in his role as minister of national security, and we have no current plans to do so."

On the face of it, it does not sound like much of a radical change in British dealings with the state of Israel, but it might be just a small crack in what have been, up to now, extremely solid relations between the two. And it might be a cue for other countries with diplomatic, military and economic relations with Israel to distance themselves from at least certain members of the current government and its harmful policies.

The new Israeli government has already managed to deepen the divisions inside Israel, prompting hundreds of thousands to take to the streets in protest and alienating some of its closest foreign allies. What stands out about the slight, though important, shift in

British policy is that this is an unprecedented warning to the Israeli government that the UK is not prepared to engage with those elements that are clearly anti-democratic and which are leading the moves to further entrench the occupation and impose collective punishment and violence on the Palestinians. Cleverly's clarification of his government's position provided only an incomplete answer to a letter from a group of UK parliamentarians who wrote to him toward the end of 2022, when Israel's coalition government under the sway of the far right was formed, to "express our grave concern about the annexationist policies of the incoming government of Israel."

Naturally, much attention is being paid to the two chief pyromaniacs, Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich. The latter, who is also a defense minister, called for the Palestinian town of Huwara to be "erased" altogether following the events of last month. But this coalition government as a whole is even worse than the sum of its parts. To not engage with Ben-Gvir,

considering his criminal and tuggish past and reprehensible antidemocratic and supremacist attitude, is almost self-explanatory, and it could be expected that other countries will follow suit. Cleverly may not have explicitly endorsed the MPs' observation that "the incoming government of Israel (is) building on the policies of its predecessors which have produced a one-state reality:

Effectively, Israel controls the lives of Palestinians throughout the occupied Palestinian territory." But for all intents and purposes, by publicly referring to a key member of this government with immense influence on developments on both sides of the Green Line, he has clearly accepted the basic tenets of the letter.

Notwithstanding the important fact that, for the first time in a long time, the British government is indicating its disapproval of Israel's policies toward the Palestinians, the question is whether it will go further than this. As the security situation in the West Bank is deteriorating, especially

for Palestinians, the UK could be expected to apply the same logic to others who are as culpable for depriving millions of Palestinians of their basic rights for more than 55 years. Moreover, will other countries who care for both Israeli democracy and improving the lives of Palestinians, not only in the West Bank but also in Gaza, not to mention the avoidance of widespread violence and bloodshed, be prepared to add their voices and take tangible measures to convey a similar message to the Israeli government? Thus far, the international community is taking a very tentative approach. To an extent, this derives from the fact that there are other issues higher up on the global agenda. Countries also prefer to take time before passing judgment and forming a policy toward the new realities created by this government. There is also a perceptual difficulty in terms of harshly responding to the behavior of a government that was elected democratically. However, as much as these are understandable consid-

erations, they cannot justify inaction when the first step taken by a democratically elected government is a judicial coup in order to harm that democratic system, and whose major reasoning for this is to ensure free rein for expanding the illegal settlements, legalization of the outposts, and depriving millions of Palestinians of their human, political and civil rights.

For now, the British foreign secretary has reiterated there will be no change when it comes to bilateral relations with Israel and working closely with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. However, this differentiation might quickly prove to be artificial and unsustainable. At the end of the day, the UK government is fully aware that there is collective responsibility and, while for a short time it can signal its displeasure with the vile and damaging policies and actions of Religious Zionism and its leaders, it will also have to reevaluate its relations with the one who heads this government, Netanyahu. After all, Netanyahu's administration has already decided to legalize nine outposts, not

only in violation of international law, but despite widespread condemnation by some of its closest friends in the international community. This was quickly followed by the pogrom launched by Israeli settlers against the town of Huwara, during which they torched homes and vehicles in a horrific act of vandalism that Israel's security forces failed to prevent. Police violence is also increasingly being used against Israelis who protest the damage being done to their democracy. If this does not stop, do not be surprised if right-wing elements or even the police themselves, considering the incitements against the pro-democracy protesters, use firearms against them. Should this happen, responsibility will lie entirely with the government.

It is not too late to stop the madness that is taking place in Israel and in Palestine, but doing so will take much more than not engaging with Ben-Gvir. The international community has the power and influence to do so if it acts swiftly and with a clear and united voice.

Arab News

Israel boycott bans are threatening our First Amendment rights

Tariq Kenney-Shawa

AFTER days of deadlock that saw far-right Republicans hold governance hostage in their effort to spoil Kevin McCarthy's bid to be elected speaker, the US House of Representatives is finally back in session. Republicans, who gained control of the House during the 2022 midterm elections, kicked off the new year by voting to launch an investigation into President Joe Biden's so-called "weaponization" of the federal government. In doing so, the GOP made its agenda clear: to be a thorn in the administration's side at all times, whatever the cost to progress and democracy.

Yet, while we will likely see partisan deadlock on most issues until the next election cycle, there will be one area of bipartisan activity that will continue unabated: the united effort to shield Israel from accountability for war crimes and human rights violations against the Palestinian people. In particular, legislators and interest groups on both sides of the political spectrum have been stepping up their efforts to target those using their First Amendment rights to condemn the Israeli military occupation or demand that the Israeli regime adheres to international law.

In recent years, dozens of states adopted legislation designed to punish individuals and companies that refuse to do business in occupied Palestine or with those who profit from Israel's military occupation. For example, in 2017, the state of Texas only provided hurricane

disaster relief funds to those who promised they would not boycott Israel. In 2018, Bahia Amawi, a child speech pathologist in Texas, was fired for refusing to make a similar pledge. That year, the Arkansas Times, a local newspaper based in Little Rock, sued the state of Arkansas after a public university withdrew an advertising contract. Why? Because the newspaper did not renounce its constitutionally protected right to boycott Israel. While federal courts have struck down most of these laws for blatantly violating the First Amendment, the case of the Arkansas Times was different. The Eighth Circuit Court ruled against the Arkansas Times in July 2022, stripping the newspaper of its right to boycott Israel. Earlier this month, the Supreme Court announced its decision not to review, at least for now, the constitutionality of Arkansas' anti-boycott law.

The issue, however, is far from over. The anti-boycott laws springing up in different jurisdictions across the US will be reviewed by the Supreme Court sooner or later, and that review will have far-reaching implications for all of us, including those who do not support boycotts of Israel. Indeed, if we permit criticism of Israel to be an exception to our First Amendment rights, many more exceptions will follow. Already, several states have introduced "copycat" anti-boycott laws that aim to criminalise boycotts of the fossil fuel and firearms industries. The anti-boycott laws constitute an all-out assault on our right as

Americans to protest without government interference or harassment.

From the 1773 boycott of British tea that helped spark the American Revolutionary War to the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott against racial segregation, boycotts have long been a popular and effective tool for bringing about political change in the US. The tactic has also been wielded against injustice abroad. Boycotts proved instrumental in bringing an end to the apartheid regime in South Africa, and are now being leveraged at a massive scale against Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine. However, many continue to exhibit a selective intolerance for the right to boycott when it is used to hold Israel accountable for its many crimes, from subjecting millions of Palestinians to an apartheid regime and building illegal settlements on stolen land, to targeting journalists, health workers and even children. Some of the most vociferous proponents of efforts to roll back our right to protest against Israel's human rights violations are conservative lawmakers and interest groups. One of the most prominent of these groups is the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which drafts legislation for state and federal governments. Alongside its attempts to shield Israel from American boycotts, ALEC also targets public education funding, LGBTQ+ rights, and climate activism, while defending the "Stand Your Ground"

laws, bans on Critical Race Theory, and the Supreme Court's June 2022 reversal of Roe v Wade. As the case of ALEC demonstrates, in the US, attempting to stifle criticism of Israel is a favourite conservative pastime which goes hand in hand with efforts to embolden white supremacy, roll back reproductive and LGBTQ+ rights, and weaken the tenets of a healthy democracy.

However, it would be unfair to give conservatives full credit for the near-complete protection from criticism Israel appears to enjoy in the United States. After all, the push to exempt Israel from the same standards of accountability to which other states are subjected has long been a truly bipartisan effort. In 2016, for example, New York's former governor, Democrat Andrew Cuomo, blacklisted businesses that he said were boycotting Israel. In August 2022, Dan Rosenthal, a Democratic member of the New York State Assembly, urged the state's attorney general to probe alleged anti-Israel bias in multibillion-dollar investment firm Morningstar for daring to inform investors of Israel's human rights violations through its environmental and social governance (ESG) rating system. This January, Reps. Bob Menendez and Ritchie Torres, who had both publicly condemned boycotts against Israel in the past, were among several Democrats to join the likes of Mitch McConnell, Kevin McCarthy, and other Republicans in reit-

erating their unequivocal commitment to supporting Israel at the latest AIPAC conference. Not only are these Democrats willing to do away with liberal values like free speech and the right to boycott when directed at Israel, but they are also willing to do so hand in hand with conservative Republicans who are attacking a host of rights Democrats claim to defend.

With US citizens' right to boycott already under threat, our right to protest against injustice wherever it rears its head will inevitably come next. This is especially critical in the face of Israel's new extremist government, which has been open about its far-right agenda. Indeed, as they find themselves increasingly unable to defend the apartheid state's unlawful actions, supporters of Israel are shutting down debate before it can start by labelling anyone who dares criticise Israeli government policy as anti-Semitic. They are also trying to codify these smears into law. In 2019, Donald Trump signed an executive order that redefined anti-Semitism, conflating it with legitimate criticism of Israel. Since the order was signed, there has been an uptick in federal complaints and punitive measures against those advocating for Palestinian rights.

Now, with the 118th Congress back in session and the GOP in control of the House, the stage is set for a renewed campaign to not only criminalise boycotts of Israel, but punish anyone who musters up the courage to call out Israeli human rights violations. After finally achiev-

ing his dream of the speakership, Kevin McCarthy now has the opportunity to reintroduce additional federal anti-boycott laws beyond those he helped pass in 2019. He can also make good on his promise to snuff out Israel's vocal critics. Earlier this month, Republicans led by McCarthy voted to kick Rep. Ilhan Omar out of the House Foreign Affairs Committee in response to her outspoken criticism of Israel's apartheid policies and use of US military aid to harm Palestinian civilians. Other critics of Israel are likely to experience similar treatment in the coming weeks and months. Now we, as Democrats, will have to decide whether we will take a stand to defend efforts to call out injustice or continue to allow Israel to be absolved of the very human rights standards and democratic ideals we claim to hold dear.

While public opinion has shifted over recent years with a growing share of Americans expressing sympathy for Palestinians and their struggle for an end to Israeli occupation and apartheid, official US policy has failed to reflect the electorate's changing stances. Despite increasing calls to condition the unrivalled amount of financial and military support the US provides to Israel every year, bipartisan support for the so-called "special relationship" has left these calls unanswered. House Republicans have already signalled their intention to step up their efforts to shield Israel from accountability, even if it comes at the expense of free speech or the right to boycott - and Democrats might not stop them.

Western allies take note: if you want to beat Putin in Ukraine, target his wicked little helper in Belarus

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya

LAST week, residents of Machulishchy were intrigued as soldiers and police swarmed across their small town on the edge of Minsk, the capital of Belarus. Cordons and checkpoints were hastily erected for miles around the local airbase, which has played host to Russia's forces during its abominable war against Ukraine.

It was clear to anyone out and about on that frosty winter morning that Belarusian security services - known as the KGB - were panicking. The Belarusian people, who are disgusted at their government's support for the Kremlin's illegal invasion of Ukraine, had struck a symbolic blow right at the heart of Russia's military.

Our anti-war partisans had flown two drones over the former Soviet airbase and dropped bombs on an A-50U surveillance aircraft, a £275m Russian spy plane used to pinpoint targets inside Ukraine. The Beriev

A-50, which uses a long-range radar detection system to track up to 60 targets at a time, was severely damaged. Unfortunately for the Belarusian KGB, the heroic resistance fighters who made a mockery of Russian military might managed to escape the checkpoints. They are now safely outside the country.

Doubtless Alexander Lukashenko, Belarus's tyrannical dictator and solitary Kremlin ally, would have had an uncomfortable discussion when he next took a phone call from Vladimir Putin. Lukashenko will be particularly nervous as he owes his position to the Russian president. I beat him in the general election of 2020, before he stole it back with the help of the secret police and Putin. The Russian president sent propagandists, financial support and, eventually, tanks in a bid to prop up his old Soviet ally - then forced him to pay his debts by enlisting support for the catastrophic invasion

of Ukraine 18 months later. The vast majority of my people are horrified at what is happening in Ukraine. The attack on the Russian spy plane is not the first example of resistance. Cyber-partisans have performed a series of audacious hacks on Belarusian state databases. Resistance fighters have blown up transport networks in an attempt to constrict the supply of Russian arms into Ukraine. And hundreds of Belarusians have enlisted to fight the Russian aggressor on Ukrainian territory itself. As long as Lukashenko barks like a Russian lapdog, the Ukrainian struggle for freedom will be tougher. There will be no secure Ukraine without a free Belarus. Lukashenko's invitation for Russian troops to perform a hybrid occupation of Belarus has placed my country at the centre of the crisis in eastern Europe. Yet it remains part of the solution. Overthrowing

Lukashenko would accelerate victory for Ukraine.

Today, I am meeting Leo Docherty, the UK's Europe minister, and Lindsay Hoyle, the speaker of the House of Commons, to discuss how we can bring about a peaceful and democratic revolution inside Belarus. I am grateful for the support of the UK thus far. The UK has led the way in imposing sanctions against the tyrant and his cronies. But it could go further. We need more monetary and secondary sanctions targeting the state economy that fuels Lukashenko's KGB intelligence agency and Putin's war machine.

Karim Khan now wields enormous influence as the chief prosecutor at the international criminal court (ICC) at The Hague. He has correctly identified the abhorrent war crimes perpetrated by Russian armed forces in Ukraine, including attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure. But Khan needs to

glance across to Belarus next door. Lukashenko is also a state sponsor of terrorism. The UK and the west need to fully grasp this point. We still pick up misguided signals from some allied nations that wish to believe Lukashenko is a man they can do business with. Some still like to think of him as a potential honest broker who, through no fault of his own, is trapped as a prisoner of geography and unwilling hostage of Putin. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The west needs to stop falling for his lies and understand that Lukashenko consciously desires Belarus to be a vassal state of Russia. Most Belarusians are quintessentially European, and wish to live peacefully in a democracy. They want Russian troops to be withdrawn from Ukraine and from Belarus immediately. They recognise that Lukashenko is a war criminal and hope that he will eventually face justice at the ICC. The UK and the west

need to throw their wholehearted support behind these key strategic objectives. I am not pretending it will be straightforward. Tyranny is like cancer, it cannot be tackled easily. Lukashenko and Putin won't feel troubled by half-baked measures from the west.

Belarusians understand this, which is why my people continue to take extraordinary risks to show the west that they are worth fighting for. On the anniversary of the Ukrainian invasion last month, activists in Minsk managed to avoid the KGB and briefly raise a huge Ukrainian flag at the top of a high-rise building in Minsk. The message that accompanied the poignant image as it was broadcast on resistance Telegram channels said: "Belarusians raised Ukraine's flag in Minsk to mark their solidarity with the Ukrainian people. Long Live Belarus! Glory to Ukraine!" It could not be any clearer.

Peru’s protests are a fight for democracy

José Carlos Agüero

EVER since Peruvian President Pedro Castillo's failed power grab exactly three months ago, protests have been roiling the country almost every single day. The international press has had a difficult time grasping what has really been happening here. Was it the work of Castillo supporters? Impoverished people from rural areas demanding social rights?

The international press was not alone. Peru's new president, Dina Boluarte, herself did not understand the motives behind the protests against her. "Protesting why? It's unclear what they ask for," she said. To Boluarte, it would be easy if they asked for water, work, roads, hospitals. Instead they seemed to have a political agenda? For her, there was only one possible explanation: it was the work of malign hidden forces - national, or even foreign. There was, however, no mystery at all. The unrest was not a simple factional struggle, nor accumulations of long-repressed social demands; it was the expression of deep political frustration and fatigue with an entrenched and rotten political system. Protesters were demanding the end of a discredited government in both the executive and legislative branches.

No resolution seems in sight. But it's a crisis worth studying closely by democracies everywhere; it shows just how bad democratic decay can get when politics is contaminated by a dangerous authoritarian ideology. And it shows the determination a people can muster when things have gone too far. Led by the poorest and most marginalized inhabitants of the interior of the country, Peruvian citizens of all walks of life have taken to the streets and are risking their lives for a democracy they see threatened by the very institutions that should embody it. It is a fight for democracy, against a cast of deeply discredited politicians and the ideology and constitutional order that keeps them in power.

Although many factors have contributed to it, the current crisis of Peruvian democracy is the result of more than three decades of entrenchment by a political ideology known as "Fujimorismo." The movement got its start in 1990, when Alberto Fujimori won the presidential election, defeating the novelist and Nobel laureate Mario Vargas Llosa. Fujimori presented himself as an outsider who was seeking to replace the battered traditional parties during one of the country's most crisis-ridden historical periods. Peru was fighting the Maoist terrorist group Shining Path even as the country faced bankruptcy. Hyperinflation was ravaging the economy, measuring at 7,482 percent the year Fujimori triumphed.

Fujimori rolled out a package of neoliberal reforms, which included the privatization of companies and public assets, a tightening of monetary policy, a return to an export-led model that concentrated wealth among cartels, and the end of state participation in private activity. At the same time, he doubled down on a counterinsurgency strategy against the Shining Path. In the face of strong political opposition in the legislature, Fujimori dissolved Congress and the judiciary in 1992 and assumed all power with support from the armed forces. To give his self-coup legitimacy, he encouraged the approval of a new constitution in 1993, which further limited the role of the state in the economy and reduced the legislature to a single

chamber. Most fatefully for what was to come, he gave both the executive branch and the legislature the power to destroy each other: Congress could now remove the president by a qualified majority vote, and the president could dissolve Congress if it rejects his appointments twice.

The much-touted "economic miracle" brought monetary stability, inflation that has remained below 6 percent since 1999, and an average annual growth of gross domestic product above 4 percent between 1993 and 2020. But it did not eliminate the gray economy (which likely stands at more than 70 percent today). And it has failed to address other lingering grievances. Peru ranks 84th in the world in terms of human development. The top-line growth figures obscure that Fujimorismo left the country in a precarious position - a position that was greatly exacerbated by a catastrophic handling of the covid-19 pandemic. Today, more than half of the population lacks access to enough food, according to figures from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. But it was in politics that Fujimori's legacy was particularly toxic. He guaranteed impunity for crimes committed by the armed forces. He violated his own constitution by illegally reelecting himself for a second time in 2000. After massive demonstrations against him and the dissemination of videos showing how his government had corrupted officials, businesspeople, military personnel, journalists and opposition members, he resigned but was removed by Congress. He sought refuge in Japan until he was arrested, extradited and tried for crimes against humanity and corruption during a trip to Chile. In 2009, he became the first civilian president in the world to be tried and convicted of human rights violations by a national court and has been in prison since.

But his trial did not bring closure, nor did it set Peru on a better path. Five presidents that followed Fujimori were accused of corruption during or after their term. One was removed from office, one resigned just before Congress could remove him and one died by suicide when the police were about to arrest him. Fujimorismo, the political movement that claims to be the heir of the imprisoned leader, has had a prominent role in these crises. Defeated in 2011 and 2016, Keiko Fujimori, Alberto's daughter, saw her followers try each time to deny the legitimacy of the elections. When this didn't work, legislators sought to remove whoever occupied the presidency. In the last decade, Fujimorismo has become some sort of anti-political force that refuses to make compromises in its quest for power. It has come to stand for defending the macroeconomic status quo. It continues to draw its support from parts of society that nostalgically remember the lost authoritarian order.

With social expectations destroyed by this long process of political decay and degradation, none of the 18 candidates in the 2021 presidential election received more than 19 percent of the votes cast in the first round. In the second round, the election was polarized between Castillo, a teacher from the interior of the country who was running from the left, and Keiko Fujimori who had recently been arrested on corruption charges and had promised to

release her father if elected. The Fujimoristas proclaimed that their campaign was a crusade to save the republic from "terrorism" and "backwardness," fueling fear and racism among the middle- and upper-class population - especially in Lima, the capital. The ultraconservative businessman and now mayor of Lima, Rafael López Aliaga, an ally of Keiko Fujimori and admirer of Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro, mocked Castillo for his poor oratorical skills - exploiting a racist trope among Lima's denizens directed at speakers of indigenous languages, for whom Spanish is a second language.

Defeated by only 44,058 votes, the Fujimoristas refused to recognize the results. They attempted to annul the election through legal and disinformation campaigns. They did not succeed in overturning the presidential vote, but they did gain minority control of a Congress fragmented between 13 factions. And they immediately started to scheme to remove Castillo for being unfit for the office - a charge that Castillo was to unfortunately thoroughly confirm during his catastrophic tenure. Plagued by corruption cases involving even members of his family, and with more than 80 different ministers entering and leaving his cabinet in less than two years, Castillo failed to be the left-wing redeemer he had promised to be; he ended up as a traditional Peruvian politician whose only distinction was his social origin, coming from outside of the elite. After two failed attempts to remove him, and as Congress was preparing a third for his ouster, on Dec. 7 of last year, Castillo attempted a self-coup similar to Fujimori's thirty years earlier. But, without military or economic power to support him, he ended up in prison. He was replaced by his vice president, Dina Boluarte, just a few hours later. It seemed like just another of the many presidential crises that had plagued the country, usually forgotten once a new one took its place.

However, the new president made two decisions that ignited popular outrage. The first was to leave open the possibility of staying in office until 2026, ignoring a growing majority sentiment that was demanding a clean slate - "let them all go." And the second was her virtual power-sharing pact with Congress, a very unapopular institution in the country, making her the representative of a triumphant Fujimorismo before a disgusted public. Just before the self-coup, Congress had desisted from investigating Boluarte herself for alleged violations to the constitution and tending to particular interests; in turn, Boluarte had declined to join the president's last cabinet. For many voters, this implicated her in a plot to get rid of Castillo. Then the protests began. In a few weeks, violent strikes and road blockades spread to 18 of the 25 regions in the country, initially calling just for early elections. The government responded with violence. A national state of emergency was declared, curfews were imposed in some cities and the military was sent to assist the police in some areas. Security forces used firearms, heavy vehicles and helicopters. Arbitrary detentions and raids became commonplace. In just 10 days, the police fired nine tons of tear gas grenades, nearly emptying their reserves.

The initial crackdown resulted in at least 49 deaths - 48 civilians and 1 policeman, according to offi-

cial statistics - and more than 1,800 injuries in less than three months. Hundreds have been arrested. Among the dead, most were young rural workers, seven of them minors. Forensic analyses show that at least in 30 cases, death was caused by impact of firearms projectiles, mostly in the chest or head. On a single day, at least 17 people were killed in the Puno region. Boluarte declared that this police work was "immaculate."

The state's violence galvanized a much broader swath of protesters. Scores of people from all over the country, especially from southern Andean, Quechua and Aymara regions, came to the capital, for them the symbol of centralism and abuse of power. Thousands of people traveled from their towns in Puno, Cusco, Ayacucho, Apurímac or Madre de Dios - some more than 20 hours by bus - to participate in the "battle for Lima." To this day, many are still there. They are demanding the resignation of the president, early elections, the closure of Congress and perhaps even the end of Fujimori's constitution. Boluarte has labeled these protests as vandalistic and terrorist but has largely failed in her campaign to demonize them. By the end of January, at least 60 percent of the national population considered the protests justified, and support for constitutional reform increased from 47 percent in May 2022 to almost 70 percent today.

Possibly motivated by this collapse in domestic support and international criticism, or by an instinct for self-preservation, Boluarte made a U-turn and demanded that Congress approve early elections to be held this year. Congress rejected the proposal and did not make any decision about the advancement of elections. Boluarte has pointed out that she can't do anything more. Many Peruvians interpret this as a game intended for neither to leave. The country is currently at an impasse. But regardless of its final outcome, the crisis is likely to end up becoming a pivotal moment in the remaking of Peruvian citizenship, and Peruvian democracy.

In Peru, there are people aged 70 or 80, who have lived their entire lives under the quasi-feudal servitude of large estates, or gamonalas. Not being able to read, they were denied the right to vote until 1980. They have faced violence and repression when fighting for land rights. They have survived hyperinflation, a cholera epidemic, terrorism, dictatorship, racism, hunger, at least two transitions to democracy, a poorly handled pandemic that killed about 220,000 people. (Peru had the highest covid mortality rate in the world.) Add on top of that a nearly permanent political crisis, with six presidents cycling through in the past six years. These people are from the regions with the highest poverty levels. But more importantly, they are from the regions where Fujimoristas attempted to annul votes after the Castillo election. The protesters who are marching on the streets represent a return of politics as a positive force in public life - a movement to reform a society that has for far too long excluded them as second-class citizens. As a woman said during a protest: "We might be cholos [mestizos, descendants of indigenous population], we might be ignorant, they will say we don't have capacity, but my vote counts the same." They, more than anyone, are fighting to retain the last shred of democracy they still have left.

The Washington Post



Videos of police brutality can perpetuate Black trauma

IT has been two months since Tyre Nichols, a 29-year-old Black American, was brutally beaten by police officers in Memphis, Tennessee and succumbed to his injuries three days later. After the five police officers involved were arrested and charged with murder, protests over his death subsided and the media moved on.

But many of us are still reeling from seeing yet another episode of deadly anti-Black racism. Like previous violent deaths of Black people in the United States, this one was also accompanied by the release of graphic footage which was circulated widely by news outlets and on social media well beyond US borders.

The videos made their way to my UK and Ugandan WhatsApp groups - and none of them had a trigger warning. Unfortunately, some of these groups had my teenage nieces and nephews in them and I know that those videos generated palpable distress. Their parents and I, their uncle, were unable to protect them. This reminded me of my own anguish when in 2016, a colleague shared with me without warning the video of Philando Castile being shot dead by a police officer after a traffic stop. It brought tears to my eyes and amplified the fear that both me and my partner already harboured - that as a Black man, I too could be pulled over and shot while driving alone at night. That eventually accelerated our decision to leave the US.

It is important to acknowledge that footage of anti-Black violence and police brutality has helped galvanise the public in the US and beyond to take action on deadly anti-Black racism. It has sparked protests and public campaigns to pressure the sometimes reluctant authorities to take action. Indeed, videos - whether from body

Serufusa Sekidde

cameras, surveillance equipment or mobile phones - can be a powerful tool to counter official attempts to cover up crime scenes and dodge responsibility and can constitute an important piece of evidence in court proceedings. But the fact that American society needs to see this level of pain and suffering to begin to care tells us something about its state of affairs. To my knowledge, no other minority group has had to produce as much footage of abuse and brutality to prove that it faces a spectacular level of racism and discrimination that need to be urgently addressed.

And Black communities are forced to do so at a great cost, as the way such videos are handled is incredibly damaging to both Black Americans and Black people beyond US borders. It creates or exacerbates anxiety for many Black individuals who already suffer from intergenerational trauma. Many Black people instinctively place themselves in the position of the victim - a process which author and academic Allissa Richardson has warned can have grave repercussions. "There has been a huge spike in suicides, among, especially, African American men and boys. You have to wonder whether it is because of this mediated violence we see now," she says.

And there is already scientific evidence that violent footage can have a severe psychological effect on viewers. A 2017 study found that about 20 percent of people who watch graphic videos are significantly affected by them, with some individuals experiencing negative stress reactions, anxiety, and even post-traumatic stress disorder. What is more, videos of violent Black deaths objectify the victims. They are reduced to their deaths, to Black bodies that are subjected to racist violence and abuse.

And to the American and global public, they easily remain just faceless victims of racism who are stripped of their dignity and lived experiences. This effectively perpetuates the racist tropes that kill Black people.

There is a growing recognition of this dehumanisation within the Black community in the US and before the release of the brutal footage of Nichols's death, there were attempts to counter it. Videos celebrating his life were posted on social media, some showing him enjoying skateboarding. Others spread his wonderful photography, which posthumously is also being featured at art events and on billboards across the country. Indeed, Nichols was a talented young man, full of dreams and energy, before becoming a victim of police brutality. He should be remembered through the joyous life he chose to live, not the violent death he suffered.

As we try to overcome the pain of collectively witnessing yet another brutal death of a Black person caught on camera and circulated widely, we need to reconsider how such footage is handled in the future. Videos and images of Black people's deaths should not be carelessly displayed and shared. The media needs to uphold ethical standards in handling such sensitive material and commit to humanising the victims, reporting on their lives and preserving their dignity. The general public should also be made aware of the traumatising and degrading effect spreading such footage can have without care for the feelings of other Black people. We, as individuals, also hold responsibility not to perpetuate the dehumanisation of victims of police brutality and racism. We need to honour Black lives, their joy and excellence.

Aljazeera

Macron has realised he needs Sunak

FROM the start, Emmanuel Macron looked benignly on Rishi Sunak. After Theresa "Matron" May, Boris "Buffoon" Johnson and Liz "The jury's still out" Truss, the French president felt the British political circus had finally coughed up someone who seemed sane, responsible, dependable - someone like him, in fact.

It had been all very enjoyable, he felt, when Brexit tied the UK into knots; but perhaps the time had come to do business with No 10 again. After all, Macron, with six years on the job, might give his British junior a few pointers. The two met at COP27 in Egypt last November, barely two weeks after Rishi's accession, and by all accounts things went well. Weeks later, they were swapping tweets on the World Cup, where France defeated England in the quarter finals. Fast-forward four months, and Macron is in serious trouble. He's managed to unite against him the CFDT (reformist) and CGT (communist) unions over his botched pensions reform. Tuesday was the sixth day of general strike in a month, with CGT leaders vowing to "bring the economy to its knees", the kind of brutal

Anne-Elisabeth Moutet

language not heard in France since the 1990s. Abroad, France is mistrusted by most of Europe over its wobbly stand on Ukraine. (Ukraine "must win", Macron says, but Russia mustn't be "humiliated"). The actual humiliation is in fact France's in Africa, where a combination of tone-deafness and lack of grand strategy has lost the very former French colonies which French presidents took too long for granted.

Since last summer, Mali and Burkina Faso's new rulers have kicked out the French army, to be replaced by Wagner Group units; and there are hostile noises coming from Niger and Chad. In the Ivory Coast, Gabon, Mali, Chad, Central African Republic, Burkina Faso and more, France, and especially one Macron, are seen as patronising, dismissive of local concerns and arrogant. Russian propaganda is increasingly replacing France 24 and Radio France International, the French state broadcasters, which have been banned outright in Mali. Macron didn't help his case last week during a trip to Angola, Congo and Gabon that had been billed as heralding a "new, humbler

approach" to the continent. He managed, during a press conference, to lecture President Tshisekedi in Kinshasa on his alleged failings: "Since 1994 you have not been able to restore the sovereignty of your country, whether in military, security, or administrative terms. That's the reality, and you should not look for blame outside."

No wonder that Friday's French-British summit in Paris seems, played right, like a lifebuoy. The French did notice that the supposedly insoluble Northern Ireland problem seemed to have been solved by the new PM, with a combination of politeness, earnestness, and practical sense. From here, he looks civil, conciliatory and full of goodwill. As a country with over 3,000 miles of land borders, the French don't look at migrant small boats with the same urgency as Britain, but they have understood the need for Sunak to get a deal that moves enough to make a difference. Will it solve everything? Probably not, is the current Paris wisdom, but "even Meloni can't fix it in Italy". Still, Macron is aware that the Overton window over migrants has moved Right-wards all over Europe, so what Sunak is attempting might not lose him support in France.

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Mexico tragedy reveals reality

Jill Filipovic

IT'S like the opening scene of a bad action movie - or, for the people involved, a horror story: On Friday, four Americans were kidnapped by armed men, likely members of a cartel, in northeastern Mexico. It was apparently a case of mistaken identity, with the kidnappers believing that the Americans were Haitian drug smugglers. The four Americans, identified as Latavia "Tay" Washington McGee, Zindell Brown, Shaed Woodard and a man called Eric were reportedly in the border town of Matamoros, in the state of Tamaulipas, Mexico for a medical procedure for McGee. According to the FBI, the gunmen fired at them, and then the Americans were "placed in a vehicle and taken from the scene by armed men," the FBI said.

Authorities say that two of the victims have been found dead, and two survivors - one severely injured - have been located at what appears to be a medical clinic in the border city of Matamoros, US officials told CNN. So much about this story has yet to be known, but the State Department has a "Level 4: Do Not Travel" warning out for Tamaulipas, "due to crime and kidnapping." That said, Matamoros is just across the border from the Rio Grande valley in the US; nearly five million people cross the bridge between Matamoros and Brownsville, Texas every year.

The tragic fates of these victims also spotlights the reality that hundreds of thousands of Americans travel abroad every year for medical care, many of them to Mexico, for everything from root canals to in vitro fertilization to cosmetic procedures, which are often cheaper south of the border. And the

broad criminalization of abortion across the American south has also sent women over the border to Mexico seeking safe abortion care. The existence of "medical tourism" says something quite damning about the cost and limitations of American healthcare.

It's also not clear how many Americans actually read, let alone heed, the State Department's travel warnings - especially to a neighboring country that is also a popular tourist destination. It's easy to blame the victim here. But the four Americans who were kidnapped were doing what a great many other US citizens do every day without incident. What they were doing, though - moving through an area dominated by cartels and awash in the violence those cartels cause - is something that often costs innocent Mexicans their lives. And indeed, one innocent Mexican bystander was killed in the shootout that accompanied this awful kidnapping.

Tamaulipas has an astoundingly high murder rate, and even that is likely underreported. The cartels have a habit of disappearing people so that they go uncounted, and murdering any journalists or law enforcement who might want to so much as get a body count. Corruption is rife, and reining in the cartels has proven to be nearly impossible. In Tamaulipas alone, there are thousands of Mexicans who are simply missing. The Americans who travel to Mexican beaches for spring break or to enjoy the culinary and cultural delights of Mexico City, Oaxaca, and so many other corners of an extraordinary country, typically have the privilege of leaving - and

despite this truly awful and tragic kidnapping, most Americans do leave Mexico unharmed. That privilege is not on offer for the millions of people across Mexico and several similarly dangerous nations in Central America who don't hold a US passport.

For many of those people - who, like you and I and the families of the four kidnapped Americans only want to keep themselves and their loved ones safe - Matamoros has been a prison, a place where asylum-seekers have been kept just over the river from the United States, and where they have faced pervasive violence: Kidnappings, extortion, murder. At the same time as Americans have turned our eyes toward our fellow citizens and their ordeal, President Joe Biden is said to be considering a return to the Trump administration's draconian anti-immigrant policies, which would allow for the detention of migrants who entered the US without proper documentation, followed by their swift expulsion.

Another Biden proposal would make it nearly impossible for the vast majority of asylum-seekers to qualify for safe harbor in the United States. Meanwhile, the same cartels terrorizing their fellow citizens are enriching themselves through drug production and smuggling, making money off of - and fueling - the crisis of addiction in the United States. They maintain their power through violence enabled by America, arming themselves to the teeth with guns procured thanks to America's lax gun laws: a great many guns used in Mexican crimes came from the



SCCI calls for tapping rich mineral resources to bring economic stability

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) president Muhammad Ishaq underscored the need of tapping rich mineral resources and potentials to bring economic stability, prosperity and development in the country. Speaking during an inland study visit of participants of the 36th Mid-career Management Course (MCMC), of National Institute of Management Islamabad here, spearheaded by the NIM Islamabad Directing Staff Ms Seemi A Khan at the chamber's house on Wednesday, Ishaq stressed the need of revamping business and trade related institutions.

Besides, he called for bringing change in relevant laws. He also stressed the need for framing policies through proper consultation with the business community.

Ishaq informed SCCI has chalked out a holistic

roadmap for attracting investment in the country. He demanded pragmatic steps to broaden the existing tax-base by bringing new people under the tax-net and bringing a reduced taxes ratio.

He emphasized that sustainable policies are essential to overcome the present economic crisis.

Apart from SCCI vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, former presidents Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Sherbaz Bilour, former senior vice president Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, ex-vice president Abdul Jalil Jan, members of the SCCI's executive committee Ghulam Hussain, S Minhajuddin, Naem Qasmi, Laal Badshah, Munawar Khurshid and Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ihsanullah, Fazal e Wahid, Rashid Iqbal Siddique, Ishtiaq Ahmad, a large number of traders, industrialists and exporters were present during the meeting.

Muhammad Ishaq in his

detailed presentation briefed the senior officers regarding various projects being initiated under his leadership, especially 2.0 project, industries-academia linkages, skill-training sessions, advancement and other key initiatives for welfare and resolution of the business community.

He went on to say that SCCI is playing a role as a bridge between government institutions and the business community. He said concerted efforts are afoot to attract investment and industrialization in the province.

Ishaq heaped praise on Law enforcement agencies for bringing improvement in security situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said peace and stability is crucial for promotion of trade and economic activities. He demanded of the government to take proactive steps for transfer of technology.

He highlighted the investment-driven sectors

and potentials of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly mine, mineral, marble, tourism, information technology etc.

The SCCI chief said ongoing political instability was behind the current economic turmoil in the country. He raised the question: "How the economy be put on the right track when the government institutions don't consult with the business community?"

Expressing grave concern over rising power tariff, Ishaq demanded the electricity to industries to be ensured on wheeling charges to boost up industrialisation in the province.

Ishaq also complained that SCCI proposals didn't make part of the budget. He said the business community has faced enormous difficulties owing to enforcement of unilateral policies.

He said such policies are becoming a cause of a gulf between relevant government bodies and the traders' community.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar during a meeting with Managing Director Fauji Fertilizer Bin Qasim Limited Arif ur Rehman.

Stock Exchange's 100-index gains 24 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) gained 24.24 points on Wednesday, a slight positive change of 0.06 per cent, closing at 41,358.93 points against 41,334.69 points the previous day.

A total of 162,884,970 shares were traded during the day as compared to 160,102,018 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs6,333 billion against Rs5,338 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 335 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 148 of them recorded gains and 164 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 23 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Hascol Petrol with 14,417,000 shares at Rs5.57 per share; Telecard Limited with 7,946,000 shares at Rs6.84 per share and WorldCall Telecom with 7,812,797

shares at Rs1.27 per share. Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum increase of Rs230.00 per share price, closing at Rs5,495.00, whereas the runner-up was Rafhan Maize with an Rs204.00 rise in its per share price to Rs7,715.00.

Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs1,284.03 per share closing at Rs19,527.55; followed by Pak Services with Rs164.43 decline to close at Rs2,027.97.

Rupee sheds Rs1.26 against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan rupee weakened by Rs1.26 against the dollar in the interbank trading on Wednesday and closed at Rs279.12 against the previous day's closing of Rs277.86.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs278.2 and Rs281

respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs2.94 and closed at Rs294.19 against the last day's closing of Rs297.13, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen decreased by 02 paisa to close at Rs2.02, whereas a decrease of Rs5.13 was

witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs329.97 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs335.10.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal decreased by 34 paisa and 32 paisa to close at Rs75.99 and Rs74.35 respectively.

Sports Goods Association Chairman meets LCCI Chief

SIALKOT (APP): Pakistan Sports Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PSGMEA) Chairman Arshad Latif Butt met Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry President Kashif Anwar at the LCCI, and discussed research and development, international exhibitions and exchange of delegations, exchange of information and data of members and matters of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) development and e-commerce.

According to Mohsin Masood, secretary general PSGMEA, the two sides agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) regarding some of agreed upon points. PSGMEA Chairman Arshad Latif Butt said that he would make all-out efforts to solve problems being confronted by the value-added sector.

Hashoo Group celebrates International Women's Day

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: On Wednesday, Hashoo Group joined the world in celebrating International Women's Day (IWD), a global day that honours women's achievements, raises awareness about women's rights, and advocates for gender equality.

This year's theme for IWD is embracing equity and moving beyond equal opportunities, which aims to build a truly equal and just future for all. Hashoo Group is committed to promoting gender equality and creating an inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to achieve their full potential.

To celebrate IWD, Hashoo Hotels hosted a beautiful celebration surrounded by purple decorations. The half-day event included launching two extraordinary campaigns in honour of the IWD. The 'Pearl-Lady' programme was launched across all Pearl-Continental Hotels nationwide. The aim of 'Pearl-Lady' programme is to provide a safe and secure environment for the solo



female traveller while providing them with the utmost comfort and luxury. The second campaign, Women@Hashoo, was aimed at the female workforce of Hashoo Group. The goal is to help women have more accessibility in their careers and lives while encouraging more women to join in and become part of the Hashoo Team.

Mr. Murtaza Hashwani, while speaking on occasion, highlighted the importance of women in general. He said, "When you educate a son, you educate an individual, but when educating a

daughter, you educate the whole generation; the whole community prospers". He also admired the positive contribution of women towards Hashoo Group. "This diversity has made us who we are. We take pride at the fact that Hashoo Group is one of the organizations in Pakistan that has key positions filled by women and are taking important decisions, a prime example of true leadership. Going forward, our intention is to recruit an equal proportion of male and female staff for our upcoming hotels.", he added.

Hashoo Hotels believes in breaking stereotypes, promoting gender balance, and increasing women's workforce. They remain committed to advancing gender equality and empowering women to thrive in all aspects of their lives. The Group employs more than 4,000 staff across Pakistan and is committed to including more women in their workforce by reshaping policies and offering more facilities within the workspace to facilitate women joining and staying in the workforce.

Asia tracks Wall Street losses after Powell's rate hike warning

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Markets sank Wednesday, the dollar held big gains and oil struggled to recover from hefty losses after Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell opened the door to a quicker pace of interest rate hikes as officials battle to tame inflation.

In much-anticipated testimony to US lawmakers, Powell dealt a hammer blow to traders who had held faint hopes that the central bank could pause its tightening campaign soon and give a much-needed boost to equities.

A string of data in recent weeks has indicated the world's top economy remained in rude health, including strong employment, consumer spending, factory activity and inflation figures.

"The latest economic data have come in stronger than expected, which suggests that the ultimate level of interest rates is likely to

be higher than previously anticipated," Powell told the Senate Banking Committee. "If the totality of the data were to indicate that faster tightening was warranted, we would be prepared to increase the pace of rate hikes."

He said officials would "stay the course until the job is done".

Inflation is currently running above six percent and while that is down from multi-decade peaks seen last year, it is still well above the bank's target of two percent.

Investors are now betting on the Fed to lift rates 50 basis points at its next meeting later this month, twice as much as its last meeting.

It hiked by half a point in December following four straight 75-point increases. Powell's comments were more hawkish than expected, and Neil Wilson at Markets.com said: "For

now the market is hearing the 'higher-for-longer' message loud and clear and doesn't see the Fed being dissuaded."

And Kellie Wood, at Schroders, added: "A six percent terminal rate is not out of the question now."

Rates are currently sitting at 4.5-4.75 percent.

The prospect of borrowing costs going even higher has ramped up fears of a recession. Two-year Treasury yields are now more than a percentage higher than those for 10-year Treasuries for the first time since 1981, which is seen as a flashing light for a possible contraction.

All three main indexes on Wall Street closed deep in the red, and most of Asia followed suit.

Hong Kong shed more than two percent, while Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei, Mumbai, Bangkok, Wellington and Jakarta were also well

down. However, Tokyo ended slightly higher as exporters won support from a weaker yen.

The Japanese unit tumbled against the dollar Tuesday, along with other major currencies in the wake of Powell's testimony.

And the greenback maintained its strength in Asian business. It was at multi-month highs against the Japanese unit as well as the pound and euro.

The elevated dollar was also depressing crude, which is priced in the US unit, making it more expensive for customers using other currencies.

Both main contracts sank more than three percent Tuesday, and were barely moved Wednesday.

Powell is due to speak again later in the day, while traders will now be focused on the release of February jobs data on Friday.

SNGPL celebrates Int'l Women's Day

F.P. Report

KARACHI: An event was organized at the SNGPL Head Office to mark International Women's Day. Chairperson Board of Directors Roohi Raees Khan was chief guest of the event.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairperson Board of Directors Roohi Raees Khan said that women are seen engaged in all walks of life today but still a lot needs to be done to protect rights of women.

She further said that men and women need to work together to create conducive environment in the society.

Roohi Raees Khan added that Sui Northern has been implementing strict



policy regarding workplace harassment and efforts are being made for further improvement in order to enable female employees lodge any complaint without any hesitation.

She stressed that women must not seek any relief

rather they should work hard to prove themselves.

At the end of event, Chairperson Board Roohi Raees Khan along with female employees cut cake. The event was attended by female employees of the company in large numbers.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

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

Meanwhile, three more ships, Clemens Schulte, Sea Journey and LGNC Doha carrying containers, wheat and LNG also arrived at the outer anchorage of the port on Wednesday morning.

A total of seven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships Maersk Pittsburg and SC Hongkong left the Port on Wednesday morning, while three more ships, Adventure, Asphalt Alliance and Clemens Schulte, are expected to sail later today. A cargo volume of 107,184 tonnes, comprising 63,865 tonnes of imports cargo and 43,319 tonnes of export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 4,137 containers (1929 TEUs imports and 2,208 TEUs export) was handled at the port during the last 24 hours.

There are eight ships at the outer anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, 6 ships, including Haj Mohammad, LNGC Doha, Clemens Schulte, Dejima and Dolphin 03 scheduled to load/offload cement, containers, wheat, LNG, and another container ship EM Astoria are expected to take berths as MW1, QICT, FAP, LCT and EETL on Wednesday.

USC completes preparation

ISLAMABAD (APP): In order to provide maximum relief to the poor masses across the country, the Utility Stores Corporation (USC) has completed all the preparation work for the Ramadan relief package.

The USC spokesperson on Wednesday said that an ample supply of all subsidized food items has been ensured so that the public does not face any kind of problem, said a press release issued here.

The corporation is providing special subsidy on basic food items under the Prime Minister's Relief Package and these subsidy includes flour, sugar, ghee, rice and pulses.

The recent wave of inflation, uncertainty in general market prices, non-availability of dollars and increase in general sales tax have led to price revisions by USC suppliers, he added.

There is no change in prices for customers registered under the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) adding that ghee is being available at Rs 300 per kg, sugar at Rs 70 per kg, while a 10 kg bag of flour at Rs 400 per kg.

Ghee will be available for general consumers at Rs 490 per kg after the price hike. It should be noted that despite the increase, the prices of the items available at the utility stores are very low compared to the general market.

ICCI for women empowerment

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Wednesday celebrated the International Women's Day to highlight the role of women in the economic development of the country.

Honorary President ICCI Parveen Khan Durrani, chaired the event and the theme of the event was "Empowered Women – Progressive Nation", said a press release issued here.

She was made Honorary President of ICCI for one day in commensurate with the importance of International Women's Day.

Speaking at the occasion, Parveen Khan Durrani said that women

account for half of our total population but only 20 percent of them are participating in the formal economy, which shows that Pakistan is not utilizing the talent of 80 percent women to promote its formal economy.

She stressed that the government should take strong measures to bring them into the mainstream of economy for their empowerment that would ensure the sustainable economic growth of the country.

She said that empowered women would pave the way for progressive nation and stressed that the government should take steps for their economic empowerment.

She said that the women have good potential to start businesses and emphasized that the government should announce special incentives for them in the upcoming budget to increase their financial inclusion for inclusive growth of the country.

Former Senior Vice President ICCI Fatma Azim, Nasira Ali and others also spoke at the occasion and stressed for creating a better ecosystem for women.

They stressed the need of providing women equal opportunities in all fields of life so that they could play a more effective role in the economic development of the country.

Tokyo shares close higher despite Powell comments

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo shares closed higher for a fourth straight day on Tuesday, supported by a weaker yen, despite US Fed chair Jerome Powell hinting at fresh rate hikes to fight inflation.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index climbed 0.48 percent, or 135.03 points, to end at 28,444.19, while the broader Topix index rose 0.30 percent, or 6.23 points, to 2,051.21.

The market was dominated by the news that Federal Reserve chair Powell told US lawmakers the central bank "would be prepared to increase the pace of the rate hikes" if warranted after a run of strong economic data.

His comment triggered selloffs on major markets Tuesday.

But in Tokyo, "a weaker yen supported export-related shares and expectations of a resumption of the Chinese economy led to a rally in related issues", IwaiCosmo Securities said.

The dollar stood at 137.70 yen, compared with 137.13 yen seen in New

York and 135.94 yen in Tokyo on Monday.

Global investors are also turning their focus back to US indicators, such as non-farm payroll data due Friday.

Shortly before the opening bell, the finance ministry said Japan's current account deficit in January was 1.98 trillion yen (\$14.4 billion).

Japan's exports grew 3.4 percent, while the value of imports surged 22.3 percent due largely to the rising cost of energy for resource-

poor Japan, the ministry said.

Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing jumped 1.81 percent to 29,485 yen, while chip-linked Advantest gained 1.07 percent to 11,290 yen. Sony Group rose 0.58 percent to 12,060 yen.

Nissan plunged 3.53 percent to 545.7 yen after rating agency S&P downgraded the company by a notch to BB+. The risk evaluator said that "a strong recovery in Nissan Motor's profitability and global auto sales are unlikely".

Chinese yuan weakens to 6.9525 against US Dollar

BEIJING (APP): The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, weakened 369 pips to 6.9525 against the US dollar Wednesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System.

In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

The central parity rate of the yuan against the US dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.



In brief

Diplomatic Football League

ISLAMABAD (APP): The quarterfinals of the RBS Diplomatic Football League Season 6 would be played here at the Islamabad Club Futsal Ground on March 11. The RBS diplomatic Football League Season 6 has entered into the knockout stages with eight diplomatic teams. The league started in December last year in which 13 teams participated with their Ambassadors, Diplomats, local staff and students representing more than 26 nationalities. After playing, the league matches only eight teams Brazil RBS United, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Iran, Russia, Thailand, Islamabad Club and AAA United qualified for the knockout stages. The last five teams on the bottom of the table were Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Indonesia and UK United. The knockout quarterfinal matches would be played on March 11 while the final on March 18 here at Islamabad Club Futsal Ground. The League was being organized by Mubasher Sanjrani, a League founder who is also a former International Football and Futsal player of the Pakistan national team. He is a member of the Senate Committee on Pakistan Football Development.

Women's Tug-of-war competition

PESHAWAR (APP): A thrilling women's tug-of-war competition in connection with 'International Women's Day' was held at Peace School and College Charsadda on Wednesday. A total of eight different teams participated in the competition. In the first semi-final, Red Star defeated North Star by 2-0 while in the second semi-final, Galaxy Star defeated the Blue Star team by 2-1 and qualified for the final. In the final, Red Star defeated the Galaxy Star team by 2-1 and won the trophy. Finally, the special guest gave trophies, cash prizes, and certificates to the position holders' team. He also thanked Taj Muhammad Khan, President Tug of War Association for organizing the best event and hoped for the continuation of such events in the future as well. Prof. Shamsul Munir, Shireen, Coordinator, Sports Incharge Nausheen, Provincial Tug of War Association representative Taj Muhammad, officials Ejaz Muhammad, Atiqur Rehman, Uzair Muhammad Ali, Ikramullah, and other personalities were present at the event.

Sports Gala of inmates begins

KARAK (APP): The three days sports gala was started at Karak Jail, District Karak under the aegis of District Sports Officer Karak here Wednesday. Talking to APP, Regional Sports Officer Karak Amir Zahid Shah said that the sports festival was organized for inmates of Karak Jail. Deputy Commissioner Karak was chief guest on the occasion and distributed prizes among the position holders. In his address, the DC appreciated the efforts of Regional Sports Officer Karak and said that it was very essential for the prisoners to take active part. He said that the law and order situation was improving in the province with each passing day and added that similar sports events would be arranged in other prisons of the province as well.

Jason Roy smashes PSL record 145* to keep Gladiators' hopes alive

RAWALPINDI (Monitoring Desk): It all descended into a fog of boundaries, and nothing seemed to make sense. The upshot of 483 runs, 54 fours and 21 sixes was that Quetta Gladiators move one step closer to mounting an astonishing comeback and booking a place in the last four for the first time since 2019.

Babar Azam's eighth T20 century saw Peshawar Zalmi post their highest score, setting Gladiators 241 to win. But Jason Roy set to the task like a man possessed, blitzing an unbeaten 145 off 63 balls to ultimately canter to victory with ten balls to spare. It broke Colin Ingram's record for the highest individual score in PSL history, and the third-highest T20 chase of all time. More importantly, it keeps Gladiators alive in the PSL this season, one win away from likely qualification.

Gladiators looked punch-drunk when the first innings ended after a haphazard bowling and fielding performance, combined with a masterclass from Babar and Saim Ayub looked to have broken their spirits. But they came out having a go on a surface not even the most accomplished power-hitters could have dreamt of preparing, and immediately got

off to a flyer. Martin Gupthill's brief cameo - 21 off eight - set the tone, but Roy was only just getting warmed up.

Fresh off a stint with his national side in Bangladesh, he picked up in Rawalpindi where he'd left off in Mirpur. A blow-by-blow account of the frenzy wouldn't quite do justice to the fluid, liquid nature of the innings, one six morphing into the next, one over blending into the other. For Zalmi's bowlers, it began to look like a fever dream as one big over followed another, and the bowlers took turns to front up and cop a hiding. Each of the first eight overs saw at least two boundaries scored, and by this time, Gladiators had got themselves to 118 for one, having knocked off half the target with 12 overs still to spare.

There were supporting acts from the other end, but Roy demanded attention, and gobbled up all of it. Will Smeed and Mohammad Hafeez were adept in their own right, denying Zalmi breathing room at the other end as the asking rate steadily came down. After a pair of relatively quiet overs around the halfway mark, any hopes Zalmi harboured of making inroads were blown away around the 16th over, when six successive balls straddling two

overs went for boundaries, effectively sealing Zalmi's fate. Mohammed Hafeez, who has battled personal trauma over the last 24 hours, was magnificently composed, his 18-ball 41 one of the finest T20 cameos of this season.

But ultimately, it had to be Roy who would have the last laugh. It was a caressed drive over mid-off that went all the way for the final six of a manic game that overwhelmed a dazed Zalmi, meaning their route through to the playoffs suddenly leaves them with no margin for error.

All of that will ultimately swallow up what was a phenomenal batting performance from Zalmi themselves, particularly their openers. After Ayub was dropped by Naseem Shah early off Hasnain, the two blasted their way through the powerplay, amassing 67 in six overs. But they carried on as if the fielding restrictions hadn't been eased, and Gladiators had no response to the onslaught coming their way.

By the 10th over, the 100-partnership had been reached, and both players had scored half-centuries. But on the day, Babar wasn't simply accumulating, he was matching Ayub's strike rate toe-to-toe. They



Jason Roy acknowledges the crowd after reaching three figures.

brought up only the second 150-run stand in PSL history - Babar was involved in the first one, too, with Sharjeel Khan at Karachi Kings - and when Ayub fell for a 34-ball 74, Zalmi had pushed past 160.

There was a slight deceleration

as Babar approached three figures, but once he got there, he let out a yelp of delight. The shackles were off the innings once more, against a Gladiators side who were dropping catches and committing misfields like they were going out of

style. Thirty-three runs came off the last two overs as Zalmi piled on the misery, and by the halfway stage, they looked to have sealed their spot in the last four, as well as Gladiators' fate. Roy, and a majestic Gladiators, had other ideas.

Colin Munro praises Faheem for his top knock



ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad United batter Colin Munro has lauded all-rounder Faheem Ashraf for his top knock against Multan Sultans in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 8 game, saying he was a genuine all-rounder.

Ashraf was once again the finisher for Islamabad United as his quick-fire half-century helped the home side to a nail-biting two-wicket win over Multan Sultans late Tuesday. Faheem struck three boundaries and a maximum in the final over of the match as Islamabad United became the first team in HBL Pakistan Super League to score 18 off the last over to win a match.

"It is always nice to win but it's not easy chasing

200. The wicket was nice and flat good for batting. Faheem is a wonderful player. He has been getting opportunities in the past.

But he's in serious form, he's bowling well and is an important part of the team. He is a genuine all-rounder. His knock was very mature which put us in a position to get 18 off the last over," he said in a presser after the game.

Replying to a question, he said he doesn't like to look at his performances too much, as long as the team was winning. "It's always nice to contribute and at the moment I'm batting well and sticking to my strengths. Hopefully, I can score more and get us in the top two and see what happens in the final."

He said it was always good to be in the franchise, where you can come and play your natural game. "Islamabad United has given me the opportunity to learn as a leader and to be a coach on the side, as well."

To another question, he said Shadab Khan was a proper batter. "As a captain, he's calm and collected in the field and really cares about the team. He is a genuine all-rounder." Multan Sultan's pacer Anwar Ali said there was a lot of competition in cricket and death overs were difficult.

"Islamabad played better and got the result. Every ground is our home ground and we played well but our opposition played better."

To a question, he said Quetta Gladiators was a good side but couldn't make the combination.

He said the best Playing XI was decided after seeing the opposition, but he tries to contribute whenever gets the opportunity. "We played good cricket but I think we are lagging in fielding and we need to improve it," he said and also lauded Ihsanullah for his bowling and hoped for his good career.

Pak U14 players selected for ITF/ATF South Asia team

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani 14 & Under players Hamza Roman and Abubakar Talha have been selected for the ITF/ATF 14&U South Asia/South East Asia & East Asia team, which will participate in the finals of ITF Asia 14 & under Development Championships 2023 to be held from April 4 to 14 in Bhubaneshwar, India.

The players were selected based on their exceptional performance in the ITF/ATF 14&U Development Championships Regional Qualifying event for South Asia/South East Asia & East Asia Regional Qualifying event, which was recently held in Bangladesh, said a press release. The boys won one single title out of two each and were finalists in the other, and they won both the doubles titles.

The President of PTF Senator Salim Saifullah Khan and the PTF Management felicitated the players and expressed the hope that they would bring further laurels for the country in the upcoming event in India.

Murray expects Russians to play at Wimbledon

LONDON (Agencies): Andy Murray says he expects Wimbledon will allow Russians and Belarusians to compete this summer and he will "not be going nuts if that is the case".

The British former world number one donated more than £500,000 of his 2022 prize money to help Ukrainian children affected by the Russian invasion.

He has previously said he was "not supportive" of last year's ban. And he expressed similar sentiments with an announcement about this year's championships approaching.

"It's a really difficult one and I do feel for the players who weren't able to play last year - but I also understand the situa-

tion and why it's really hard for Wimbledon to make a call on it as well," Murray told BBC Sport.

"My understanding is that they are going to be allowed to play and I'm not going to be going nuts if that is the case. "But if Wimbledon went down another route I would be understanding of that."

Last year's Wimbledon was stripped of ranking points as a result of the ban and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) was fined £1.4m by the ATP and WTA for excluding players from the preceding tour events.

Murray was speaking at Indian Wells, where he is preparing to play Tomas Etcheverry of Argentina in the first round on Thursday.

If Murray reaches the

third round he could face compatriots Dan Evans or Jack Draper, who might come up against each other in the second round.

"To be honest, I don't really care that much," Murray said, with a big smile on his face.

"Obviously I can see why it's interesting. And if Evo plays against Jack I'll be interested in the match.

"But I'm not particularly bothered by it and for me it's not going to impact me until the third round. I need to get there and this is not always a tournament where I have played amazing."

Murray has not been past the third round in the Californian desert since 2015, but did reach his first ATP final of the year in Doha 10 days ago.

WPL auction changed our sport forever: Alyssa

MUMBAI (AFP): Australia's Alyssa Healy said Wednesday that the Women's Premier League will inspire more Indian girls to take up the sport, with the Twenty20 tournament already a game-changer in its inaugural edition.

The WPL has earned India's wealthy cricket board around \$700 million in franchise and media rights, making it the second-most lucrative domestic women's sport competition globally after US professional basketball.

Some players will earn more during the three-week tournament than they normally get in an entire year after India batter Smriti Mandhana went to Royal Challengers Bangalore for \$410,000 in last month's auction.

"The Women's Premier League auction changed our sport forever. With the amount of money floating around, how could it not?," Healy, a wicketkeeper-batter, wrote in her column for Cricket Australia on International Women's Day.

"I can't believe the opportunities that now exist for us to make a living playing cricket around the world. I'm here in Mumbai for the WPL, I played in The Hundred over in the UK and a women's tournament has just been launched in Pakistan. How good is that?"

Healy captains the UP Warriorz franchise, which got the Australian for \$85,000.

"Chatting with some of the Indian players, they say that it takes young players coming into their squad a while to feel like they belong at international level," said Healy, a multiple World Cup winner and Commonwealth Games gold medalist.

Raducanu pulls out of event before Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS (Agencies): Emma Raducanu has pulled out of a charity exhibition event before her opening match at Indian Wells.

The 20-year-old British number one was due to play mixed doubles with Cameron Norrie at the Eisenhower Cup. Raducanu also did not practice on Tuesday, though she is hoping to on Wednesday. The 2021 US Open champion will then decide whether she is able to take on Danka Kovinic of Montenegro in the Indian Wells first round on Thursday.

Raducanu missed last week's WTA tournament in Texas because of tonsillitis and has not played since the Australian Open in January. She has spoken of being especially protective of her body this year after retiring from four matches last season.

Wolvaardt, Nida star in Super Women's eight-wicket victory

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: A sparkling half-century by South Africa's Laura Wolvaardt and an all-round performance by Nida Dar helped Super Women defeat Amazons by eight wickets in the Women's League exhibition match to go one-up at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on Wednesday.

Wolvaardt scored 53 not out and Nida Dar followed her three for 25 with the ball with 23 not out with the bat as the two batters put on 68 runs for the unbroken third wicket to help Super Women achieve the 132-run target with more than four overs to spare. Wolvaardt belted a six to reach her half-century and also take her side home. Her 36-ball knock also included six fours, while Nida scored almost run-a-ball 23 with a four.

In pursuit of a 133-run target, opener Muneeba Ali and Chamari Athapaththu put on 39 runs for the first wicket before the latter departed after scoring a rapid 23 from 13 balls with four fours and a six. Muneeba then added 31 runs for the second wicket with Wolvaardt before joining Athapaththu in the dressing room after scoring a 27-ball 33 with six fours.

Nashra Sundhu and Anam Amin took a wicket each, conceding 18 and 23 runs, respectively.

Earlier, Amazons, electing to bat first, were off to a



flying start of 46 in 5.3 overs before they lost their way and ended up at 132 for nine - thanks to a 35-ball 38 by top-scorer Aliya Riaz. The Pakistan all-rounder hit three fours and a six before she was smartly run-out by Chamari Athapaththu from extra-cover when the Sri Lanka captain had one stump to aim.

England duo of Tammy Beaumont and Danni Wyatt equally struck eight fours between them as they matched each other stroke by stroke. The partnership ended when Beaumont's 18-ball 24 innings was ended by Syeda Masooma Zahra. Three balls later, Wyatt fell to a good reflex action catch by Sadia Iqbal off Nida Dar as Amazons slipped from 46-0 to 49-2.

The dismissal of the two openers opened floodgates from both ends as the Amazons failed to overcome a disciplined and accurate bowling by the Super Women and continued to lose wickets at regular intervals. Maia Bouchier (18 off 15) and Fatima Sana (13 off 10) were the only middle-order batters who helped their side to reach 132 for nine.

For Super Women, Nida was as effective, economical and successful as ever when she returned figures of three for 25, while Tuba Hasan also impressed with figures of two for 18. Syeda Masooma Zahra, Umm-e-Hani and Lea Tahuhu picked up one wicket apiece.

The second match of the three-match series be

played on Friday and will start at 2pm. This match will be followed by the Peshawar Zalmi-Multan Sultans fixture in the HBL PSL 8 and will commence at 7pm. Tickets for the men's match will be valid for the women's fixture.

Scores in brief: 1st match - Super Women beat Amazons by eight wickets.

Amazons 132-9, 20 overs (Aliya Riaz 38, Tammy Beaumont 24, Danni Wyatt 22, Maia Bouchier 18, Fatima Sana 13; Nida Dar 3-25, Tuba Hassan 2-18) Super Women 138-2, 15.5 overs (Laura Wolvaardt 53 not out, Muneeba Ali 33, Nida Dar 23 not out, Chamari Athapaththu 23) Player of the match - Nida Dar (Super Women).

England break ticket sales record for Women's Ashes

LONDON (Agencies): The 2023 Women's Ashes has broken the ticket sales record for England women's fixtures, with 55,000 tickets already sold.

With 100 days to go, the series has already sold more tickets than for all of England's games in 2022.

All games in the women's multi-format series are to be played at Test match grounds for the first time. The series starts with a five-day Test match at Trent Bridge, Nottingham on Thursday, 22 June.

England will be attempting to regain the Ashes after Australia won the last series in 2021-22. Australia also won the last series that was played in England in

2019, when the total attendance was 32,281.

But 2023 marks the first year that the men's and women's Ashes are being played alongside one another on a joint platform and without any fixture clashes. "It's really exciting, and a big crowd makes such a difference," said England all-rounder Nat Sciver-Brunt.

"The prospect of playing in front of a full Lord's or Edgbaston is pretty cool, it's what you grow up watching. We want to play in front of the biggest crowds we can and hopefully put on a show for them." The series consists of one Test match followed by three one-day interna-

tionals and three T20s, which are to be played at Edgbaston, the Kia Oval and Lord's.

The T20 at Edgbaston has already sold 14,000 tickets and looks set to break the previous attendance record of 15,000 for a single fixture, when England played India at Lord's in 2022.

Women's Ashes schedule 2023
Test match: 22-26 June, Trent Bridge, Nottingham
1st T20: 1 July, Edgbaston, Birmingham
2nd T20: 5 July, The Kia Oval
3rd T20: 8 July, Lord's
1st ODI: 12 July, Bristol
2nd ODI: 6 July, The Ageas Bowl, Southampton
3rd ODI: 18 July, Taunton.



In brief

Women Day at Lok Virsa

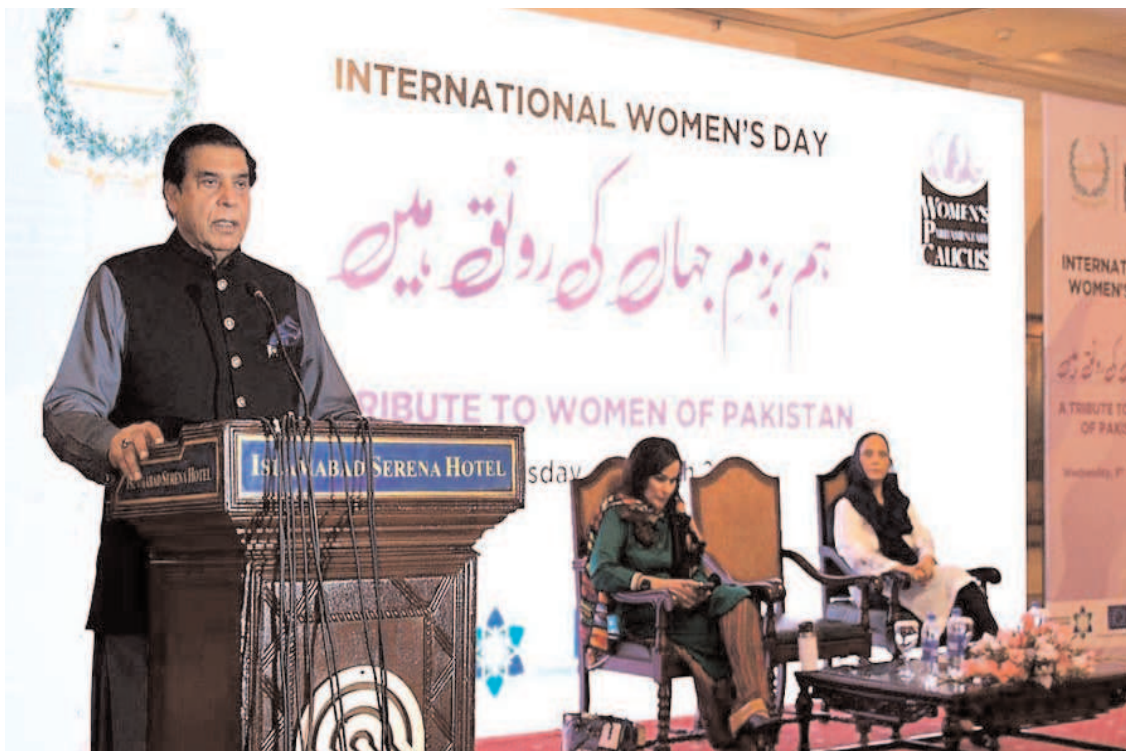
ISLAMABAD (APP): National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage Lok Virsa, here, Wednesday celebrated International Women Day in a colorful ceremony at Heritage Museum. Major features of the event included demonstration of work by female master artisans in various specialized craft fields like Kashmiri embroidery, Hazara embroidery, doll making, stone carving, truck art, decoration work, basketry work, calligraphy, motikari, etc., and a live folk music show to pay tribute to well-known female folk artists was held at Heritage Museum. International Women Day is celebrated throughout the world on March 8th as a focal point in the women's rights movement, bringing attention to raise awareness for women's equality and positive change in the society. The event 'Tribute to Women Artists' focused on promoting Pakistan's indigenous folk heritage and highlighting contributions of eminent master artisans and folk artists in the development of the society. Ms. Fareena Nazhar, Secretary, National Heritage and Culture Division was the chief guest on the occasion. On arrival, the Secretary was warmly received by Bilal Ahmed, Executive Director Lok Virsa. She witnessed the exhibition of folk crafts by the female master artisans.

Qadir hands over 26 vehicles to officials

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel on Wednesday handed over 26 equipped vehicles to the officials of provincial Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI). Addressing the ceremony, arranged by Federal Directorate of Immunization in collaboration with the UNICEF, Abdul Qadir Patel said that all possible measures had been adopted to improve immunization program. He said that the government was making sincere efforts to make positive changes in health sector to ensure provision of quality healthcare services to the people. The minister said that there were 18 mobile workshop vehicles and eight logistic trucks to support provincial EPI program, adding that these vehicles would be helpful in ongoing immunization program in flood-hit areas. He said that the government was working on a task to increase the immunization coverage up to 100 percent. The federal and provincial governments are committed to make improvements in vaccination program, he added.

Police conduct raid on Sheeha Center

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have raided a 'Sheeha Centre' on Wednesday in the jurisdiction of the Airport area and arrested six accused besides recovering arms and weapons from their possession. The police spokesman informed that on a tip-off, Airport Police carried out an operation and arrested six accused identified as Adeel, Muawiz Zulfiqar, Umeed, Asad, Saad and Jameel. The police team recovered 'Huqqas' and other smoking items from their possession. Police have registered separate cases against them and started investigation. It is to be mentioned here that Anti-smoking drive has been launched in the city to ensure implementation of anti-smoking law, 2002.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raza Pervaz Ashraf addressing the participants of International Women's Day celebration organized by Women Parliamentary Caucus.

Thousand of Kahsmiri women paying heavy price for Indian siege: Mishal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mishal Malik, wife of Jailed Kashmiri leader Yasin Malik on Wednesday lamented that India was committing worst state terrorism and violence against millions of Kashmiri innocent Women including young girls in the Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

She expressed these words on the occasion of International Women's day being celebrated today across the world including Pakistan. Talking to a private news channel, she said women's suffering had been doubled in IIOJK due to the consequences of the latest India offensive, as they

have been enduring hard and complicated living conditions. She said that besides sexual violence, the Kashmiri women had been suffering psychological and physical horrors at the hands of brutal Indian troops. "Day by day, conditions of Kashmiri women in IIOJK are going from bad to worse," she added.

She said that the aim of international women's day is to raise awareness about the sufferings of Kashmiri widows and half-widows. "The world must not forget the trauma Kashmiri widows and half-widows are enduring.

She urged the world must raise its voice over the

plight of Kashmiri half-widows whose husbands have disappeared in the custody of Indian troops.

Thousands of women have lost their husbands, brothers and sons as they were martyred or subjected to custodial disappearance by Indian troops, she mentioned. Million of Kashmiri women from around the world marked International Women's Day, but the occasion was not a bitter moment as in the lives of thousands of Kashmiri women in India's worst state oppression and violence against women, Mishal Malik, wife of Jailed Kashmiri leader Yasin Malik lamented.

ANF recovers over 97 kg drugs in four operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) recovered over 97 kg drugs while conducting four operations and arrested two accused including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed that ANF foiled a bid to smuggle drugs from Quetta to Punjab and recovered 50 kg charras from the possession of a drug smuggler resident of Faisalabad.

In another operation at Port Qasim, ANF recovered 43 kg charras and one kg Ice drug booked for Dubai. The drugs were concealed tactfully in machinery.

The spokesman informed that in the third operation, a raid was conducted in Faisal Town Lahore and ANF managed to net a female drug trafficker resident of Toba Tek Singh on recovery of 3.6 kg Ice drug. In the fourth operation, ANF recovered 150 grams of weed from a parcel booked for America at International Mail Office, Sialkot. Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process, he added.

ICTP issues 11,457 fine tickets

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Traffic Police issued 11,457 fine tickets to vehicles and bikes during the ongoing year for having fancy or non-pattern number plates.

According to a police spokesperson, the ICTP has intensified action against vehicles having fancy and non-pattern number plates while the crackdown is also being made against those vendors preparing such number plates.

He said that a total of 11,457 vehicles and bikes have been fined for violating traffic rules and using fancy or non-pattern number plates. The purpose of this campaign is to maintain law and order as well as effective security. He urged the motorists to display the number plates issued by Excise and Taxation Office and also keep with them their driving licenses and vehicle documents.

A police spokesperson said that special squads have been constituted to take action against those using unauthorized number plates.

Samina Alvi for women's inclusion in decision-making, equal jobs opportunities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Begum Samina Alvi, wife of President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday terming talented women the 'future of Pakistan' said their inclusion in decision-making and equal job opportunities was crucial for the country's progress.

Speaking here at an event to mark 'International Women's Day', she said the day serves as an important opportunity to reflect on the challenges that stand in the way of women's rights.

Samina Alvi said women being the country's fifty percent population still had a long way to go in terms of their inclusion and empowerment.

"Pakistan can only progress with the participation of women in all fields of life, particularly in trade, business, FinTech, digitalization, and finance," she said.

She emphasized programmes by national and international agencies to set up micro-enterprises, women's chambers, and industrial academia linkages.

According to Global Gender Gap Index Report 2022, she said, Pakistan ranked low in economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, and health and survival, but was placed higher in political empowerment.

She quoted the country's founder Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah as saying that "No nation can rise to the height of glory unless your women are side by side with you."

Despite a number of challenges, she said, women in Pakistan always showed strength of character and resilience.

She mentioned several iconic women that broke barriers and shattered stereotypes including the UN Human Rights Award winner Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan, the youngest Microsoft Certified Professional Arfa Karim at nine, Pakistan Air Force's first woman pilot Mariam Mukhtar, a

visually-impaired diplomat at the United Nations Saima Saleem, mountaineer Samina Baig who scaled seven peaks, and Shamim Akhtar, a woman truck driver. Begum Alvi said Pakistan was taking concrete steps to provide women equal opportunities to excel.

In this regard, she highlighted the National Policy for the Development and Empowerment of Women, a National Action Plan on Human Rights, Gender Equality Policy Frameworks, and Women's Empowerment Packages.

She also outlined several steps taken under the patronage of President Dr Arif Alvi and herself in the social sector, especially on breast cancer awareness, financial inclusion of women, persons with disabilities, and issues related to mental health. Former Federal Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment Kashmala Tariq called the need for raising a strong voice against harassment and exclusion of women to help them mainstream in decision-making bodies. She recalled that during her tenure as Ombudsperson, she effectively raised awareness about harassment which witnessed a significant increase in the registration of cases from five to 5,000 per month.

She stressed economic emancipation and equal opportunities for women to overcome domestic violence.

Former President of Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries Naima Ansari said educating and investing in young women was important for their progress in all fields. Ayla Majid, South Asia's first woman vice president of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), spoke about promoting the role of women in governance.

Begum Samina Alvi along with other women cut a cake in celebration of International Women's Day.

Amin asks Imran Khan to stop spreading chaos & anarchy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin Ul Haque on Wednesday said former Prime Minister Imran Khan was spreading chaos and anarchy in the country to achieve his political motives.

"The general election will be held in time and you will get a chance to prove your popularity. Just stop it for now and let the people of Pakistan live peacefully... enough is enough Khan Sahib," the minister said while taking exception to the PTI leadership's behavior especially after the removal of its government in April 2022.

Addressing a news conference, Amin said Imran Khan should show some patience and consult genuine workers of the Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) before taking any decision. Imran Khan was confused and unable to take any decision and due to this confusion, the future of entire country was at stake, he added. He said Imran Khan needed to adopt a clear and categorical policy so that the political and democratic process in the country could move forward. The country had already been facing political and economic crises and that too was due to wrong economic policies pursued by the PTI government during its previous tenure.

The minister said Imran Khan came into power with a promise to provide 5 million houses and 10 million jobs to the masses, but he failed to do so during his four-year government tenure which was marred by corruption and economic turmoil.

He said the country's aviation industry bore billions of rupee losses just due to one statement of Imran Khan's cabinet members on the floor of house regarding the pilots. Wheat and sugar crises were among the other blunders of Imran Khan's government which failed to provide relief to the masses especially in Karachi. Imran Khan did not spend a single day in Karachi from where his party secured 14 seats in the last general election, he said, adding nothing substantial relief was given to the masses during the PTI's government tenure.

He said Imran Khan took u-turn on his almost every stance whether it was related to the regime change conspiracy, en mass resignations of PTI members or court the arrest movement announced by Imran Khan.

Education, financial independence keys to empower women in society

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-N Member Provincial Assembly Hina Parvez Butt on Wednesday on the occasion of 'International Women's Day' stressed quality education and financial independence which are the main keys to empowering women in society.

Talking to the PTV news channel, Hina Parvaiz while paying tributes to Pakistani women, said that they proved their mettle in every field of life. She said that all-out efforts were being made to

provide equal opportunities to women. She said Islam and the constitution of Pakistan negated all discrimination against women, adding that it was essential to provide resources and support to women entrepreneurs and business owners to make them financially independent. The entire society needs to work collectively to ensure more empowerment, protection and fair rights for women, she added. She said youngsters especially girls were blessed with capabil-

ities and determined to serve the nation, adding, "the youth is our asset and we are formulating comprehensive policies and programs for them."

While appreciating the role of women she said that despite all odds and social taboos, women were serving in every sector including politics. "PML-N government reaffirm its commitment to ensuring women a secure and enabling environment to play their rightful role in our nation's development," she added.

‘NADRA’ playing pivotal role to empower women in digital age: Chairman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman National Database and Registration Authority, Tariq Malik Wednesday said that NADRA was playing a pivotal role to empower Pakistani women in the digital age by ensuring their social, economic and political rights and by providing them with computerised national identity cards (CNIC). "Nadra is the only organisation that has provided equal opportunities to the women to get higher seats and be a part of the organisation", he said while talking to the PTV news.

A number of initiatives have been taken for social, political and economic empowerment of women, he said, adding, the government is determined to mainstream women's issues in its policies.

"CNIC has been made mandatory to get registered in voters list and vote casting, he said, adding, women's right to vote can only be ensured by having a copy of CNIC." He highlighted that with public awareness Nadra was providing technical advice about gender equality and empowerment of women.

He said Nadra had set up 19 women-only centres and 222 mobile registration vans across the country, adding, women drivers, security guards and female staff were being appointed in NADRA offices.

He said 97% population was being reg-

istered in a short span of time, adding, a 121 million voter list has been finalised countrywide.

He said Nadra was sending female-only mobile units to register women in selected districts of KPK, Balochistan, Chaman and many others to end cultural barriers.

Chairman said that soon after taking over charge as Nadra chairman, he established a separate Inclusive Registration Department (IRD) headed by women and female biker service for carrying out processes of CNIC renewal and modification at the doorsteps of applicants.

NADRA women's biker service is a great facility and its network should be spread throughout the country, he said.

Replying to a question, he said Nadra continued to maintain the proportion of females in its employees and women were working at more than 97pc of its registration offices.

Talking about the Single mother policy, he said NADRA has also issued many computerized national identity Card (CNIC) to a woman who does not know where her father is and was raised by a single parent, adding he said we have introduced a policy earlier this year to allow single mothers to get their children registered without asking them to submit documents of the other parent.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Abdul Qadir Patel handing over the ceremonial keys of the technical immunization Vehicles to the provincial team leads from all provinces and federating units.

Group of robbers arrested

KABUL (Agencies): The Police Commander of Afghan Capital City, Kabul, on Wednesday said that their officers arrested a group of robbers in the 10th police district. The Kabul police headquarters on Wednesday in a statement said that the police of Kabul City Police arrested a group of five robbers. The statement further state that the detainees were charged with robbing gold and money from a house in Kabul city of Afghanistan.

More houses to be bulid

KABUL (Agencies): The foundation stone of 50 more houses for earthquake victims were laid in Gyan Paktika district with the financial support of "CWSA" organization in the district. The provincial head of Natural Disasters Management of Paktika told this new agency that the construction of 50 houses, each of which will have two rooms, and a kitchen, will be done with the financial support of the Asia Social Services Foundation.

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

UN calls on IEA to end restrictions on rights of women, girls

KABUL (Khaama Press): On International Women's Day, the United Nations in Afghanistan once more called on the country's de facto authorities to remove the gender-based restrictions on the fundamental rights of Afghan women and girls.

March 8, marks International Women's Day throughout the world – and is featured to appreciate women's achievements in social, political, cultural, and other walks of life.

Whereas in Afghanistan, women and girls have been barred from their basic natural rights to attend education, work, and the public environment.

Since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021, the ruling regime has issued a series of decrees adversely affecting Afghan women and girls by being trapped in their homes. These gender-based restrictions have barred women and girls to access education, working, or participat-

ing in public life, which can be considered human rights violations.

"Afghanistan under the Taliban remains the most repressive country in the world regarding women's rights, and it has been distressing to witness their methodical, deliberate, and systematic efforts to push Afghan women and girls out of the public sphere," said Roza Otunbayeva, Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and head of the



United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Otunbayeva further added, "confining half of the country's population to their homes in one of the world's largest humanitarian and economic crises is a colossal act of national self-harm. It will further isolate Afghanistan from its own citizens and from the rest of the world."

In September 2021, the de facto authorities suspended girls' secondary education, and in December

2022, the Taliban's Ministry of Higher Education suspended university education for women. Taliban authorities have repeatedly said the issue of girls' education is a temporary ban and will be resolved in a timely manner, however, no progress has been visible yet.

"Afghan women have shown incredible courage and resilience in the face of their ongoing and systematic erasure," said Alison Davidian, Special Representative for UN Women in

Afghanistan.

In the wake of the new academic year, universities and educational institutions reopened on March 6, 2023, in Afghanistan, but only for male students, which prompted massive reactions from the international community and the people of Afghanistan. The repressive policies of the ruling regime against women and girls continue with no prospect, and no hope to change for the better in the near future.

‘Afghan women and girls erased from public life’

KABUL (TOLONews): The UN Secretary General António Guterres said that women and girls "are erased from public life" in Afghanistan.

Guterres made the remarks at a session of the Commission on the Status of Women conference.

"The session of the Commission on the Status of Women is one of the important ... events at the United Nations. And it takes on even greater significance at a time while human rights are being threatened and violated around the world. Progress of over one decade is vanishing before our eyes. In Afghanistan women and girls are erased from public life," he said.

This comes as the US special envoy Rina Amiri at a meeting which was held in New York on the situation of women, expressed concerns about the situation of human rights and the rights of women.

"This is the message that I have taken in every meeting that I have had with the international community and with the Taliban. And I think that is a message that we all should be carrying and that this is something

that we should continue to advocate," she said.

"The continuation of these policies will further deteriorate the socioeconomic situation in Afghanistan and will hamper efforts by the people of Afghanistan in achieving self-reliance, sustainable development goals and ultimately peace and sustainable development," said the Chargé d'Affaires of the Afghanistan Permanent Mission to the UN, Naseer Ahmad Faiq.

The deputy spokesman for the Islamic Emirate, Bilal Karimi, denied the "concerns" regarding the human rights situation, saying that the rights of all Afghans are preserved within an Islamic structure.

"The Islamic Emirate as a responsible government ensures the rights of all citizens of the country and takes steps based on beliefs and Islamic values. No side should be concerned in this regard," he said.

This comes as a number of female students in the capital city of Balkh held a gathering and called on the caretaker government to reopen the doors of schools and universities for girls and women.

EU delivers 100 tonnes of medical aid to Afghanistan



KABUL (TOLONews): The European Union delivered close to 100 tonnes of life-saving medical supplies and equipment to Afghanistan through the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge flight on Wednesday.

The medical supplies and equipment are delivered to help the most vulnerable segments of the people in Afghanistan, as the country already feels a shortage of medical supplies, doctors, healthcare employees, and decent healthcare services.

"The European Union continues to support the people of Afghanistan. Today's

Humanitarian Air Bridge flight delivers additional vital medicines and medical items that will benefit the Afghan people. The EU Humanitarian Air Bridge helps the United Nations and humanitarian NGOs to keep operating in the country and represents a lifeline to those in need of medical treatment", Raffaella Iodice, EU Chargée d'Affaires, said.

Since the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021, this is the 27th cargo flight Afghanistan receives from the EU. Indeed, the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge flights enable donor countries and partners to

send life-saving supplies to the people of Afghanistan rather efficiently.

The EU Humanitarian Air Bridge flight operations are conducted under the European Humanitarian Response Capacity (EHRC). These flights help to fill critical gaps in the EU's humanitarian and emergency response in different parts of the world.

Meanwhile, the EU reopened its political office in Kabul months after the Taliban's return to power, exclusively aimed at facilitating humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan. EU representatives have

repeatedly called on Afghanistan's de facto regime to remove the bans restricting women's rights to education and work.

As an ally and partner, the EU has contributed quite a lot to the people of Afghanistan over the past two decades, and after the late regime change in the war-torn country, following the developments in the context of Afghanistan, the EU has said it will not support any armed conflict in the country but supports the revival of the intra-Afghan talks that would result in bringing sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

EU sanctions two Islamic Emirate acting ministers

KABUL (TOLONews): The European Council announced on Tuesday it has sanctioned nine individuals and three entities under its Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, including two acting ministers from Afghanistan.

According to the European Union (EU) Council, two acting "Taliban" ministers-- for Higher Education, Neda Mohammad Nadim and for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, Mohammad Khalid Hanafi--who are "behind the decrees banning women from higher education and gender-segregated practices in public spaces," are among the nine sanctioned individuals.

"The listed individuals and entities will now be subject to an asset freeze in the European Union (EU). In addition, listed individuals will be subject to a travel ban to the EU. Moreover, persons and entities in the European Union (EU) will be prohibited from making funds available, either

directly or indirectly, to those listed," the European Union (EU) said in a statement.

The decision announced by the Ministry of Higher Education last year to ban female students from going to universities has faced strong reactions from the international community.

Meanwhile, speaking at a graduation ceremony on Tuesday, Nadim said that the closure of the universities is not permanent.

"There is a certain issue that all the media is focusing on. That is the issue of female education. In this regard, since the start, there has been no word about a ban but it was a temporary decision," he said.

Without naming a particular side, Nadim said that there are individuals who "don't consider the situation and condition of Afghanistan, but rather focus on their wishes and recommendations—about why the (universities) have been closed-- and this harms the mindset of the people."

Work program against food starts in Panjshir



PANJSHIR (Agencies): Work program against food started in Panjshir said local officials of the province.

The provincial head of Rural Rehabilitation and Development of Panjshir said, that this project will be financed by the World Bank and the Afghanistan Reconstruction Fund and

will be implemented by partner organizations.

The project was conducted to provide short-term livelihood opportunities in rural and urban areas, and with the start of this program, work opportunities for hundreds of residents of Panjshir province were provided.

New hospital for treatment of addicted opened



FARYAB (Agencies): A 20-bed hospital for the treatment of women and children addicted to drugs in Faryab opened said the Ministry of Public Health. Dr. Ajab Khan Hamidi, the head of public health in

Faryab, said that this hospital was built from the budget of the public health department of this province, which will create many facilities for the treatment of women and children addicted to drugs.

Ghori Cement production doubled

BAGHLAN (Agencies): Local Baghlan officials say that Ghori cement factory production has doubled.

The factory produces 600 tons of cement every 24 hours, while in the past, this figure was 300 tons, according to the local officials of the province.

The financial and administrative deputy of Ghori cement factories in Baghlan, Abdul Wakil Qaumi said that "Earlier, Ghori cement factory produced 300 tons of cement in 24 hours, adding that currently, with the investment and installation of a new machine, the factory produces 600 tons in 24 hours."

He said, adding that if the problem in the construction of vehicles and lack of electricity is addressed in both Ghori cement factories, the factory will be able to produce 800 tons of cement in 24 hours a day.

The provincial head of the Baghlan Economy department, Abdul Mateen Akhundzada said that new machines for the Ghori cement factory were purchased from China and Iran

for 18 million Afghanis. 6% of all cement in Afghanistan is produced in these factories.

Barring of women from university ‘not permanent’, says Nadim

KABUL (TOLONews): The Minister of Higher Education, Neda Mohammad Nadim, said that the closing of universities for female students is a temporary decision and not permanent.

Speaking at a graduation ceremony, the acting minister also stressed that the Islamic Emirate is committed to the rights of all citizens.

"There is a certain issue that all the media is focusing on. That is the issue of female education. In this regard, since the start, there has been no word about a ban, but it was a temporary decision," he said. Nadim said that there has been no



drop in female instructors and directors' salaries.

"Currently, all of our female instructors and directors are receiving their salaries. There has been no

drop in payment of their salaries," he said.

Nadim said the people should not bring up the demands which are against Islamic law and Afghan

culture.

Addressing the same ceremony, the acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, Khalil Rahman Haqqani, speaking about the responsibility of legal professionals, said that judges should make their decisions with caution.

"The judges should not come under pressure from anyone and should make their decisions courageously, and should not give in under pressure," he said.

The acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation ensured that the Islamic Emirate is committed to strengthening the educational sector in the country.

62 enmities turned into friendships in a year

FARAH (Pajhwok): Thanks to mediation and efforts of government officials and tribal elders, 62 enmities were turned into friendship in western Farah province during the past one year, an official said.

Vice and Virtue department director Maulvi Abdul Majeed Samim told Pajhwok Afghan News that 62 feuds were resolved during the past one year with the help of tribal jirgas and provincial government officials.

He said there were up to 20 rivalries which had claimed many lives. "But Alhamdulillah (Thanks God), we were able to establish an atmosphere of brotherhood between these people."

Samim also said during the past one week alone, they resolved two enmities

that had claimed eight lives. "Last week, we solved two blood feuds. In one of the cases, the rival families agreed to end their 21-year-old enmity which had claimed six lives on both sides."

Some of the families who ended their enmities and reconciled were grateful to the government and tribal elders.

Haji Nimatullah, a resident of Bakwa district, who had enmity with another family since last 21 years and has now reconciled with his former foes, said he was grateful to the elders for their efforts to end their enmity.

He said 21 years ago, his dispute with Khair Mohammad's family led to enmity and six people from both sides were killed during the period.

"Life in enmity is hard and unexciting, but life in peace is honorable and pleasant," he said, requesting all people to avoid enmities and live in peace.

Similarly, his former foe, Dur Mohammad, was also happy with the tribal jirga's decision and said that enmity was a misfortune.

Dur Mohammad said he spent 21 years in enmity and now he was happy that he had reconciled with the opposite side and now the two families lived in an atmosphere of brotherhood.

"Our enmity started 21 years ago and during this period, three people from each side were killed. Fortunately, we reconciled last week with the mediation of the provincial officials and the Qaumi Jirga."

He said due to the enmity he moved his family to

Karachi, Pakistan, and lived there for 12 years. He said all his family members were happy and reconciled.

Religious scholars also urged people to end their enmities and live in an atmosphere of peace and brotherhood.

Maulvi Muhammad Sadiq Tariq said Allah had described all Muslims as brothers and had ordered them to live in peace and brotherhood.

He added: "People and tribes should take inspiration from the government that pardoned all after returning to power, so people should also forgive each other and live with each other in an atmosphere of peace."

Another religious scholar, Mullah Abdul Hameed, also said: "Muslims should choose the path of peace instead of violence. It is a

wise move that dozens of disputes have been resolved through the mediation of government officials and tribal elders."

Sakhi Jan Jamali, a tribal elder and mediator from Bakwa district, said they had always tried for peaceful life of people and would continue their efforts to resolve disputes with cooperation of other leaders and scholars.

He said if a small issue was not resolved on time, it could lead to a prolonged dispute, so every member of the society had the responsibility to resolve petty disputes among families.

He added the country could no longer afford wars and enmities and everyone should make efforts to maintain peace and stability.

Mohammad Yunus Sapand, a civil society activist, also said trivial

issues often led to big quarrels and disputes in society, therefore all people should try to resolve them as early as possible.

He said was peace and security was the most important condition for development and all people should pay attention to this point.

Ahmad Khan, a resident of Farah city, said enmity between two people in a village disturbed the lives of all villagers and had a negative effect on the society. He asked the government and tribal leaders to make more efforts to end hostilities.

Farah information and culture director Maulvi Abdul Hai Sabawon also said it was a good culture of Afghans that they respected the decisions of religious scholars and tribal elders and solved their problems through their intervention.

USD in cash to Kabul.

Da Afghanistan Bank greeted the humanitarian aid of the international community and called for more cooperation.

The bank received the entry of currencies into the country through principled and legal ways.

DAB called for better banking relations in other financial and banking sectors with Afghanistan.

According to reports, this is the 61st aid package that reaches Kabul in the form of cash and is delivered to one of the commercial banks in the country since the beginning of the process. On Tuesday, a package of 40 million USD of humanitarian aid arrived in Kabul and was transferred to one of the country's commercial banks.

Over 2 billion US dollars of humanitarian aid has reached the country, since the beginning of the process so far.

The EU delivered close to 100 tonnes of life-saving medical supplies and equipment to Afghanistan through the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge flight on Wednesday.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the Women Leaders Awards ceremony in connection with International Women's Day.

Suspension of LG: PHC brushhoff ECP notification

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Rooh-ul-Amin and Justice Syed Arshad Ali has ordered restoration of Local Governments (LG) in both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab while brushhoff Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) notification for suspending LG councils in wake of provincial elections, on Wednesday.

During hearing Advocate General Amir Javeed, Deputy Attorney General Sana Ullah, court's assistants Qazi Jawad Ihsanullah, Barrister Mudassir Amir along with counsel for petitioners including Babar Khan Yousafzai, Nauman Kakakhel, Ali Zaman and Malik Shahbaz Advocates appeared before court.

Deputy Attorney General Sana Ullah informed that ECP has issued the notification regarding suspension of LG members under Article 220 of Constitution to ensure fair and transparent elections. He added that it is not suspended for first time because in 2013 and will be also suspended once again in wake of upcoming general election to ensure transparency in polling.

In the meantime, Justice Rooh-ul-Amin observed that LG members will be suspended again and again while remarked that is members national and provincial assemblies were suspended during local government elections? Are only LG members will be suspended, Justice Rooh-ul-Amin inquired?

However, federation's representative argued that members national and provincial assemblies didn't suspended during LG election while Justice Rooh-ul-Amin remarked that may LG members will be suspend for whole year and added that they are public representative. He added that ECP can also ensure transparent elections by other means.

Court's assistant Barrister Mudassir Amir and Qazi Jawad Ihsan Ullah referred to several decisions while stated that no one can be deprive from vote and added that LG councils are established under Article 121 while the ECP notification is against the law.

ECP didn't evoked grounds for suspension of LG members in the said issued notification while declaring base for their suspension is necessary, Court's assistants argued. They added that LG system is established as per constitution while the members shouldn't be suspended in such manner without any reason.

Holding free, fair and transparent election is responsibility of ECP while Qazi Jawad Ihsan Ullah argued that election commission responsible for holding transparent election and cannot suspend LG members because it is established under provincial legislation because law has providing legal protection to LG system.

The divisional bench of PHC comprising of Justice Rooh-ul-Amin and Justice Syed Arshad Ali has brushhoff ECP notification while ordered restoration of LG councils in both Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces.

Maryam demands court martial of Faiz Hameed

LAHORE (INP): PML-N senior vice president Maryam Nawaz has demanded the court martial of former DG ISI Lieutenant General (Lt Gen) Retired Faiz Hameed.

Talking to media persons, Maryam Nawaz alleged that Faiz Hameed had played role in toppling the PML-N government for two years and backing PTI chief Imran Khan's government which brought destruction to the country.

She said that Faiz Hameed must see his court martial for his unconstitutional role and exemplary punishment should be given to him. Maryam Nawaz also declared chief justice Saqib Nisar 'the biggest criminal of the nation'. She alleged that Saqib Nisar had imposed a 'characterless person' on the nation. The PML-N chief organiser claimed that the nation cannot see development and prosperity without witnessing the exemplary punishments of such characters. Maryam added that Nisar's statement indicated that he is still active. She said that the nation knows about his [Saqib Nisar] deeds regardless of how many lies he would tell everyone.

PEMRA imposes ban on coverage of PTI rallies

LAHORE (INP): PEMRA on Wednesday imposed banned on coverage of the PTI rally. PEMRA issued a notification on Wednesday [March 08] and imposed a ban on the PTI election rallies on all satellite TV channels with immediate effects.

In this regard, PTI vice president Fawad Chaudhry stated on his social media platform that, "Media has been banned to cover police brutality on protestors, Punjab is under East India Company and Mohsin Naqvi new Gen Dair of Punjab."

President calls for greater role of women in economic, social spheres

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi called for a greater role of women in economic, political and social spheres to utilize their potential for ensuring further progress and prosperity of Pakistan.

Speaking at a Women Leaders Awards ceremony organized by a television channel here in connection with International Women's Day, he said women should work outside of their homes and society should provide them with appropriate opportunities to excel in their respective fields. Men should take it upon themselves to address the concerns of women regarding harassment at workplaces, he remarked.

Dr Alvi said Pakistan lagged behind other countries in terms of gender parity and practical steps were needed to bridge the gap between men and women in terms of social and economic inclusion. He shared the example of Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah whose sister Fatima Jinnah stood shoulder to shoulder with him during the movement for the creation of Pakistan.

"We cannot afford to keep women confined to the homes if we want to make economic progress," he emphasized adding countries like China made phenomenal progress by making women part of the economic endeavours. The President said Islam

gave rights to women including her right to inheritance many centuries back, at a time when there was no concept of these rights in other societies. In the western world, women were given these basic rights just in the last century, he pointed out. He cited the example of Hazrat Khadija ((RA), the wife of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who was a businesswoman in her own right.

The male-dominated business class should encourage their female family members to become part of economic ventures, he advised. The President said banks had made available loans for women who should be guided and mentored so that they could avail these loans from financial institutions and start their own businesses. He said it was unfortunate that the majority of women in our country were deprived of the right of inheritance despite the teachings of Islam, he noted.

Talking about girls' education, he said more than 20 million children in Pakistan were out of school whereas countries like India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka had achieved almost hundred percent enrollment at the primary level. In Pakistan, the enrollment of children in primary schools was at 68 percent, he apprised. The President said the initiatives of social protections like Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) contributed to the social and economic

empowerment of women.

The programme was a success because women were made direct beneficiaries as money was put in their hands and they were given responsibility to take decisions for the financial betterment of their families, he added. He said the process of digitization was helping women to work from the security of their homes.

He said Pakistan took a significant step when it gave representation to women in Parliament, adding more such proactive steps were needed to increase participation of women. Talking about the issue of increasing population, he said there were nine million unwanted pregnancies in the country every year and the issue could be tackled by making women aware about the availability of long-term contraceptives. He said the awards were recognition of women who contributed to the betterment of society in diverse social and economic spheres.

Begum Samina Alvi, wife of President Dr Alvi also spoke on the occasion and highlighted different initiatives taken for the empowerment and welfare of vulnerable sections of society especially women and children. President Hum Network Sultana Siddiqui in her remarks told about the annual event of awarding women leaders for their contributions and achievements.

KP CM directs implementation of dengue action plan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan has directed the Health Department to ensure strict implementation of the proposed dengue action plan in order to prevent the possible outbreak of dengue virus during the current season.

He further directed all the relevant departments and entities to fulfill their responsibilities in an effective manner for the purpose. He issued these directives while chairing a meeting of health department held here the other day, said an official handout issued here on Wednesday.

Advisor to Chief Minister for Health Dr. Abid Jameel, Chief Secretary Imdadullah Bosal, Principal Secretary to CM Amjad Ali Khan, Administrative Secretaries of Health and other relevant departments attended the meeting. The chair was briefed in details about the institutional reforms, administrative affairs, and implementations of development projects, status of available funds and other related matters of the health department. The caretaker Chief Minister further directed the concerned authorities to take concrete measures to con-

tain Leishmania and other infectious diseases as well. He urged authorities concerned to pay special attention to improve service delivery in the health sector in the merged areas so as to ensure provision of healthcare facilities at their door steps.

Similarly, the Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan directed for pragmatic steps to improve service delivery in the health services delivery outlets of peripheries of the settled districts with the aim to ensure treatment facilities to people at local level and minimize patients flow to tertiary healthcare facilities. The Caretaker Chief Minister has termed health as a prioritized sector of the caretaker government and directed the finance department to ensure the timely provision of required funds for the purchase of emergency medicines and other essential procurements in hospitals.

Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan also directed them to ensure timely completion of due for completion projects in the health sector adding that required funds should be provided on priority basis for the purpose. He further directed the concerned quarters to

complete the ongoing inquiry regarding payments to hospitals working under the public private partnership and made it clear that the process should not affect services delivery in those hospitals and patients should not face any inconvenience.

Matters related to Sehat Card Programme and Medical Teaching Institutions (MTIs) were also discussed in the meeting, however it was decided that a separate meeting would be convened to further streamline matters of MTIs and Sihat Card scheme. The Chief Minister has termed Sehat Card Programme as a good initiative of public welfare and said that the entire process of health card would be made transparent and more effective so that maximum benefits of this program could reach to the people.

Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan made it clear that all the decisions would be taken to this effect purely on merit and in the best public interest adding that there is no room for any political consideration in this regard. He remarked that the caretaker government is totally impartial and all its decisions would be public-welfare oriented.

Resilient Pakistan to sail through challenges: FM

NEW YORK (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said the Pakistan nation, with the resilience and determination, would effectively overcome the current challenges including the economic crisis.

"Pakistan has seen tough times in the past and fought them bravely. This time too, the nation will overcome the difficult situation," he told reporters here in New York. Bilawal arrived in New York Tuesday morning to begin a 5-day visit during which he will preside over a conference on 'Women in Islam', which is set to take place Wednesday on the sidelines of the 67th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of

Women (CSW). The foreign minister said Pakistan from the platform of Council of Foreign Ministers is hosting an event on Islamophobia to shun negative perceptions regarding the human rights, particularly of women and minorities. Islam, he said, is the religion which grants rights to women and promotes their emancipation in all fields of life.

Asked about the pro-women approach of his party, he termed women as the strength of Pakistan Peoples Party who championed the rights of the women of the country. Earlier, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari welcomed the adoption

of national action plans by more than 90 countries around the world, which have empowered women and girls and helped them respond to violence and conflict. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari joined others in voicing concern that women and girls continue to be the primary victims of crimes and conflict. Expressing disappointment over restrictions imposed on women in Afghanistan including their right to access work and education at all levels and urging their reversal, he said the most egregious hypocrisies and crimes occur in foreign occupations and places where the right to self-determination is violated.

Thousands protest in Greece over train crash

ATHENS (Agencies): Tens of thousands of people marched in Greece on Wednesday to protest over the country's deadliest train disaster on record, as workers staged a nationwide, day-long walkout.

The crash on Feb 28 killed 57 people and has stirred public outrage over the crumbling state of the rail network. Striking workers say years of neglect, underinvestment and understaffing — a legacy of Greece's decade-long debt crisis — are to blame. More than 40,000 people, among them transport workers, students and teachers, marched in central

Athens chanting "Murderers!" and "We are all in the same carriage". A group of protesters clashed with police, who fired tear gas at the crowd.

Thousands also took to the streets in Greece's second-biggest city of Thessaloniki, where a group of protesters hurled stones at a government building. The protests coincided with a 24-hour strike called by workers of different sectors, which disrupted travel across the country. Many of the around 350 people aboard an intercity passenger train that collided head-on with a freight train while travelling on the same

track were university students heading north to Thessaloniki from Athens.

The disaster has sparked protests across Greece over the past week. "Message me when you get there," a placard in Athens read, echoing what has become one of the protest slogans. "You feel angry because the government did nothing for all of those kids. The public transport is a mess," said 19-year-old Nikomathi Vathi. "We're going to be here until things change," said another student, Vaggelis Somarakis. "We are the youth of this country and we're not going to stop."

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