

TTP operative arrested F.P. Report

KARACHI: Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) and Rangers on Thursday arrested an active operative of banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in a joint operation in Nawal Colony, Karachi. According to CTD officials, the arrested TTP operative identified as Mir Wais was involved in two separate blasts occurred at the FC check post and Data Darbar.



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MNAs-elect take oath in NA session



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The inaugural session of the newly elected National Assembly commenced with Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf in the chair to induct a fresh batch of lawmakers, who started arriving in the Parliament House before the scheduled time.

The newly elected MNAs were administered the oath by the speaker after which they all also signed on the registration rolls. Moreover, the election for the Lower House speaker and deputy speaker will be held tomorrow, March 1.

After the oath, the speaker first asked the candidates for speaker and deputy speaker to sign on the roll of members, which included PML-N Ayaz Sadiq and Awais Leghari. As per the official agenda, the session commenced with a recitation of the naat, the holy Quran and the national anthem.

Following the national anthem, the Sunni Ittehad Council's MNAs-elect gathered in front of the speaker's dais and created a commotion with a strong protest with slogans and chants. As a result, the PML-N members also responded with counter slogans of "Ghari chor (watch thief)" against the PTI and its leadership.

The Sunni Ittehad Council members were carrying posters of Imran Khan, while several leaders, including Barrister Gohar, were clad in masks depicting the former prime minister. On consistent sloganeering by PTI members, the speaker warned they would be evicted from the House.

The National Assembly Secretariat has also issued the procedure for polling for the speaker and deputy speaker, which is set to take place on March 1. In order to avoid any mismanagement, the entry of political workers into parliament has been banned.

Among those arriving early were PML-N leader Khawaja Asif, Kheel Das Kohistani, and PTI-backed independent candidates Omar Ayub, Zartaj Gul and Sher Afzal Marwat. PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, party leader Attaullah Tarar, Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party President Aleem Khan along with party leaders Aun Chaudhry and Munazza Hassan have reached the assembly. Moreover, PPP's Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Hina Rabbani Khar and sister Aseefa Bhutto, Naz Baloch, Sunni Ittehad Council's Ali Muhammad Khan, Zain Qureshi and Shehryar Afridi also reached the assembly, as well as PML-N's Tariq Fazal Chaudhry and Hanif Abbasi. JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman and MQM leader Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and Farooq Sattar are also in attendance.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, MPA Marriyum Aurangzeb and Senator Ishaq Dar are also in Parliament House to attend the assembly session. Speaking to the media, Ayub confirmed that the PTI-

backed independent winners would be taking oaths as MNAs and also raise their voices against the alleged electoral rigging. He also called the inaugural National Assembly session unconstitutional, saying the first members must be elected to the reserved seats in the House.

Zartaj Gul stressed her loyalty towards the PTI, explaining that some political alliances had to be made keeping in view the current circumstances. She expressed gratitude to the Sunni Ittehad Council and MWM, expressing confidence in them. She remarked that she rise her voice in parliament for the public, political prisoners, and the party leadership, adding that she had been solely voted in the name of the PTI.

Moreover, JUI-F's Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri and PML-N Senator Nuzhat Sadiq have stepped down from their respective seats as senators. They tendered their resignations to Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani. Both are set to take oaths as MNAs today. PPP's Yousef Raza Gilani also announced to vacate his Senate seat to take oath as an MNA. "The party will decide what role I will get in the new government," he told the media.

Arriving at the Parliament House, PML-N President and prime minister in waiting, Shehbaz Sharif, called the letter written by the PTI to the International Monetary Fund another anti-national move. "After the cipher, this letter is another proof of the PTI's anti-state interests," he remarked. Shehbaz further insisted that there should be no doubt now that PTI Founder Imran Khan wants destruction of the country. He regretted and condemned the letter written to the IMF. "No Pakistani, despite political differences, will resort to anti-national activities," he asserted.

PML-N leader Hamza Shehbaz remarked that democracy had emerged victorious, while those setting up obstacles in the way have been defeated. He further claimed that the economy is also being set ablaze just like the incidents of May 9, 2023. However, he said these attempts will also fail. PTI leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, reaching the National Assembly, told the media that only those people who have been given a mandate should go to parliament. "Fifth generation rigging has taken place this time," he alleged, stressing that the objective is to strengthen parliament. One should not enter parliament on a stolen mandate, he insisted. Speaking to the media upon his arrival, IPP President Aleem Khan said he would try to meet the people's expectations. "The masses are facing difficulties, we will try to provide them relief. We will try to play our roles for the country's development," he remarked, adding that the PTI had just one provincial assembly and suggested the party work for improving the lives of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Gwadar declared calamity-hit area amid rains

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Gwadar has been declared "calamity-hit" after hours-long torrential rains triggered flash floods and inundated most parts of the port city. Balochistan's interim Information Minister Jan Achakzai announced Thursday.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), Gwadar has received over 183mm of rain in the last two days, crippling daily life and rendering hundreds of people homeless. In a statement, Achakzai said: "Gwadar has been declared calamity-hit due to alarming situation following the recent heavy rainfalls."

He announced that caretaker Balochistan Chief Minister Ali Mardan Domki had approved a summary in this regard. Earlier, the port city continued to receive heavy

showers for the third consecutive day. It is feared that water will head towards the part of the city after flood protection bunds are breached in Nagore.

A rain-producing system entered the country through Balochistan on February 25, under which parts of the province and upper areas received heavy downpours and windstorms.

The rainwater entered houses and shops, driving people out of their shelters. Videos showed the entire coastal town heavily inundated with rainwater gushing down on the roads and vehicles making their way through knee-deep water.

Following the record rainfall, the district administration in Gwadar declared a state of emergency. A day earlier, PDMA Director General (DG) Jahanzaib Khan Ghorezai said rescue

teams were taking part in the relief operations. Ghorezai said that ambulances, modern equipment, and other relief materials were also dispatched. "Clean water and medicines are also being sent to Gwadar," he had added.

Chief Meteorologist Sardar Sarfraz told media Wednesday that the rains in the winter season are not usually intense. He added that the country is affected by heavy spells of rain under the new system. "Gwadar has witnessed unusual rain this time. The city has not received that much rain in the past in these months," said the chief meteorologist.

Speaking about Karachi, Sarfraz said: "Rain is predicted in Karachi from March 1. Meanwhile, torrential rain may occur in some areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and there is a risk of landslides."

Petrol price increases by Rs4.13 per litre

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The outgoing caretaker government Thursday jacked up the price of petrol by Rs4.13 per litre, further impacting the already inflation-stricken masses.

The new petrol price is Rs279.75 per litre, a notification from the Finance Division read, which will remain in place till March 15. The Finance Division mentioned that the price of high-speed diesel has kept unchanged at Rs287.33 per litre.

The prices of petroleum products are revised every 15 days in Pakistan adjusting them to the trend of global oil prices and the rupee's exchange rate to the dollar. The Pakistani rupee has held steady recently.

This was the third consecutive hike by the interim set-up and will be the last by them as an elected prime minister is all set to take office by the end of this week, marking an end to the longest-serving caretaker government.

PM's election to be held on 3rd

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly (NA) Secretariat has announced the schedule for the election of the prime minister's slot. According to details, the newly elected MNAs who took oath on Thursday would be voting for the prime minister's slot on Sunday, March 3.

Earlier, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman told Leaders of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People's Party (PPP), and other allies in the center that his party will not take part in the formation of government, sources said.

PTI delegation meets Fazl

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A PTI delegation visited the residence of JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman to discuss the ongoing political situation in the country.

The PTI delegation included Omer Ayub Khan, Asad Qaiser, Amir Dogar and others. The meeting comes ahead of the crucial elections for the National Assembly speaker, deputy speaker and the prime minister.

Meanwhile, Former federal minister Khawaja Asif has said that the PML-N's doors for communication and negotiation with other political parties are open. He said that PML-N leaders were in contact with the JUI-F leadership and did not want to comment on a "premature situation".

"If their mandate was stolen in KP, then neither we nor PPP stole the mandate [...] If the theft has taken place over there then it was done by PTI," he alleged. "We have never closed the door for possibilities," Asif asserted while speaking to media.

MQM to decide on joining cabinet today

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: MQM-P Deputy Convener Farooq Sattar has said that the party would likely decide on joining the federal cabinet today, media reports.

Talking to media, he said that it would be politically favourable for the party to sit on opposition benches. At the same time, he said that the MQM-P was ready to take some difficult decisions in the larger national interest. To a question, Sattar said that the MQM-P's basic demand was a constitutional amendment to strengthen the local government system, not cabinet portfolios.

COAS lauds anti-terrorism efforts of Pakistan Army

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The 7th Pakistan Army Team Spirit (PATS) Exercise-2024 was concluded at Kharian Garrison with an impressive Closing Ceremony.

General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. The 60 hours rigorous "Patrolling Exercise" aimed at enhancing combat skills through sharing of innovative ideas and experiences by the participants of the forum.

Seven teams from Pakistan Army and fifteen teams from friendly countries including Bahrain, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Morocco, Qatar, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Turkiye participated in the exercise. Azerbaijan, China, Germany, Indonesia, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Myanmar witnessed the exercise as observers.

The exercise was conducted from 25-27 Feb 2024 in the semi mountainous terrain of Punjab. Over the years, the exercise has gained much prominence as a very competitive professional military activity for the friendly countries.

While addressing the ceremony, COAS appreciated the participating teams for their professionalism, physical & mental endurance and high morale displayed during various stages of the exercise. COAS reiterated



displayed mutual learning during such exercises and highlighted that PATS is the right forum, which appropriately combines professional military skills and tactical acumen of all participating soldiers fostering much needed team spirit in the face of evolving character of war. To this effect, Pakistan Army upholds rich soldierly attributes of "character, courage and competence which have amply been

displayed by our men in the face of fight against terrorism".

At the end, COAS gave away individual and team awards to the participants of the exercise. International observers and Defence Attachés of participating countries also attended the ceremony and appreciated its professional conduct. Earlier on arrival, COAS was received by Commander Mangla Corps.

Biden eager for cease fire in Gaza due to politics

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: Karine Jeane Pierre, the Spokesperson of the White House seemed very eager for case fire is Gaza, after seeing one hundred thousand Arab voters voted against President Biden in the primary elections in Michigan State.

Miss Karine while speaking at the press briefing in the White House said that the "President is optimistic" that a ceasefire will take place so that hostages can be released and aid can be delivered to the innocent civilians of Gaza.

Miss Karine also said that there is no policy change on Israel and that the US wants a temporary ceasefire so that the hostages which includes six US citizens can be realized and the near famine like situation can be prevented in

Gaza. It is important to mention here that till recent reports the death toll in Gaza has exceeded over 30,000.

Miss Karine replied more than three times to different journalists that the President wants to see a peace deal and that the President wants to see a two state solution taking place between Palestine and Israel.

The Spokesperson was also asked why the President was running his election campaign ads on TikTok despite having security concerns about it. Miss Karine replied by saying that this question should be asked to the election campaign office of the Democrats Party and that the security concerns were regarding TikTok using geo location data and its usage.

Miss Karine was asked

several questions about the health of President Biden and she said that twenty doctors from Walter Reed Hospital examined the President and that a detailed memo will be released about his health and shared with the media. Miss Karine gave an impression that the President was in absolutely good health to run the country and serve the people. But a few journalists were adamant on asking that if the President is in good health then why is not taking the Cognitive Test.

After seeing the primary elections in Michigan, both the Republicans and the Democrats have started giving more importance to the expatriates voters in America by listening to them, talking about them more and doing minor policy changes.

PTI's Babar takes oath as KP Assembly Speaker

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Babar Saleem Swati on Thursday took oath as the speaker of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly session for Speaker and Deputy Speaker election was presided over by the outgoing Speaker Mushtaq Ghani. Outgoing Speaker

Mushtaq Ghani administered him oath after PTI's nominated candidate Babar Saleem Swati, an MPA from Mansehra, was elected as speaker of KP assembly. Saleem Swati bagged 89 votes whereas Peoples Party's Ihsan Ullah Khan managed to secure 17 votes. Moreover, voting for the deputy speaker of KP assembly is underway. PTI woman member from Chitral Surayya Bibi is contesting for the deputy



speaker office against PTI-P member Arbab Waseem.

Earlier, the newly elected members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly took oath of membership amid ruckus caused by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers in the legislature. The session was delayed for more than an hour due to the ruckus caused by PTI workers. The elected lawmakers also faced difficulty in

entering the Assembly hall. Speaker Mushtaq Ghani administered oaths to the newly elected provincial legislators. It is pertinent to mention here that PTI-backed Sunni Ittehad Council has been the largest parliamentary block in KP Assembly with 91 members, while the JUI have 07, PML-N 05, PPP-04, ANP and PTI-P have one member each in the house.

PML-N's Khaliq elected as Balochistan PA Speaker

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Captain (ret'd) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai on Thursday elected unopposed as Speaker of Balochistan Assembly.

As per details, the session also elected Ghazala Gola as the deputy speaker of Balochistan Assembly unopposed. According to the schedule, the newly-elected speaker Abdul Khaliq Achakzai and deputy speaker Ghazala Gola will take oath of their respective

offices today (Thursday). Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) named as their candidate for the seat of Balochistan Assembly speaker. Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and the party President Shehbaz Sharif earlier named Captain (r) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai as PML-N candidate for the Speaker of Balochistan Assembly after consultation with the party leadership. Earlier, the newly elected MPAs of the Balochistan Assembly took their oaths of membership in

session chaired by the presiding officer Engineer Zamrud Khan.

The 51 members, elected on general seats, who took oath today include members of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) lawmakers who have emerged as the largest parties in the 65-member House. The assembly includes 11 reserved seats for women and three for minorities while the PPP has 11 seats and PML-N has 10 seats.

Prisoner dies in Jail clash F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: A prisoner was killed as a result of a fight between inmates in Adiala Jail Rawalpindi. A tragic incident took place in Adiala Jail Rawalpindi on Thursday where a prisoner was killed as a result of a fight between the prisoners. The prisoner who was killed during the altercation was identified as Ijaz Rabbani, while another prisoner was also injured and identified as Imad Ali.



Suspect of illegal currency exchange held

LAHORE (APP): Federal investigation Agency (FIA) claimed on Thursday to have arrested a man for his alleged involvement in illegal currency exchange.

According to FIA spokesman, on the direction of Lahore Zone Director FIA Sarfarz Virk, under the supervision of Deputy Director Corporate Crime Circle, Sikandar Hayat, a raiding team apprehended Ayaz Afridi from Shah Alam Market and seized Rs 240,000 in cash while incriminating evidence related to hawala/hundi transactions had also been recovered.

Further investigation was underway.

15 dead, 1,359 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least 15 persons were killed and 1,359 others injured in 1,271 road accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours. As many as 604 seriously injured people were shifted to different hospitals, while 755 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams.

The analysis showed that 731 drivers, 44 underage drivers, 185 pedestrians, and 458 passengers were among the victims of road accidents. The statistics show that 249 accidents were reported in Lahore, which affected 275 people, placing the provincial capital at top of the list, followed by Faisalabad with 95 accidents and 97 victims, and at third Multan with 75 accidents and 82 victims. According to the data, 1,090 motorbikes, 86 auto-rickshaws, 136 motorcars, 26 vans, 14 passenger buses, 34 truck and 98 other types of vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in the road accidents.

Cleanliness drive launched

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief Executive Officer Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) Rana Sajid Safdar on Thursday said that a grand cleanliness drive was being launched in the entire district including district Murree on the instructions of the Chief Minister, Punjab Maryam Nawaz under 'Suthra Punjab' project. He said that the RWMC operational staff had started work to make Rawalpindi free from waste.

The CEO said that the RWMC operational staff had been directed to clean the open plots, cemeteries, recreational places, parks, bus stands, major roads, intersections, and other important places across the city. He said strict action would be taken against the negligent staff if found garbage or water standing in any place of the city. Rana said that to make the city green and clean, the workers of the RWMC will clean the city with manual and mechanical sweeping to achieve the target of zero waste. He said that roads would be washed while bushes and weeds would be destroyed in open plots and cemeteries.

The CEO said that the communication and social mobilization teams of RWMC would visit door to door, markets, masjid's and educational institutions and will inform the citizens about the importance and effectiveness of cleanliness.

CM reviews uplift progress of flood-devastated infrastructures

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah presided over a meeting and reviewed the progress made in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of flood-affected infrastructure and directed his team to expedite the ongoing works and pursue donors for funding where it is still pending.

The meeting was held at CM House and was attended by Chief secretary Dr Fakhre Alam, Chairman P&D Shakil Mangejo, Principal Secretary to CM Agha Wasif, Secretary School Education Dr Shireen Narejo, Secretary Health Dr Mansoor, Secretary Irrigation Niaz Abbasi, Secretary Works Nawaz Soho, CEO Peoples Housing Khalid Shaikh, and other officials concerned. Secretary School Education Dr Shireen Narejo briefed the CM that 19,808 schools were damaged in the floods of 2022, of them 7,503 were fully damaged and needed to be reconstructed. Out of 7,503 fully damaged school buildings construction of 2020 was committed by friendly countries like the European Union, China and donor agencies ADB, Federal PSDP and Provincial ADP for Rs 60.972 billion.

She said the Sindh government has started construction of 431 schools for Rs 4.428 billion but the

funds committed by friendly countries are donors agencies were in the pipeline. Some of the projects are in the approval phase. The CM directed the chairman P&D to get approval for the projects from CDWP and other agencies and then pursue for release of funds. He also directed the P&D department to prepare a plan to reconstruct the remaining 5483 fully damaged schools.

The Secretary Health Dr. Mansoor Rizvi told the CM that the 1000 Days - Integrated Health and Population Program has been started for Rs 61,600 million with the help of the World Bank, Islamic Development Bank with a Sindh government share of \$30 million. The project would be completed in 2026-27. He said the project's scope encompasses the refurbishment of 392 dispensaries, including equipment provision. It also involves the reconstruction of 121 Basic Health Units (BHUs), 97 Rural Healthcare Centers (RHCs), and 39 Taluka Headquarters (THQ) Hospitals that have been completely damaged.

Additionally, the project will establish hospital-based blood banks at four DHQ hospitals i.e. Kashmore - Kandhkot, Sujawal, Tando-Allahyar, and Tando Mohammad

Khan. These blood banks will be linked with Regional Blood Centers. The project will also establish diagnostic laboratories at 39 THQ hospitals, 10-bed nurseries at 39 THQ hospitals, and strengthen operation theaters at 39 THQ hospitals, he added.

Dr Mansoor Rizvi said as part of the project, four Regional Training Institutes (RTIs), six Public Health Schools, and schools damaged during floods (identified by plate number 1) will be repaired and rehabilitated. In addition, the project will also provide micro-financing and skill development opportunities to 6,000 women. Moreover, the project aims to place 1,176 community medical workers, 1,960 community health workers, and 392 family welfare workers to help strengthen the local healthcare system.

There will be a total of 16 District headquarters hospitals (DHQs) and 392 General Dispensaries (GDs) operational. Additionally, a proper training program will be developed for healthcare providers, he added.

Sharing the progress the CM was told that a MoU was signed between PPHI and the Program for the operationalization of 50 Dispensaries under PPHI Management. Initially, 50 Dispensaries have been handed over to PPHI.

CM's clean Punjab campaign launched, 4 officials suspended

LAHORE (APP): In response to directives from Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz, the Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) initiated special cleaning activities across the city as part of the 'Suthra Punjab' [Clean Punjab] campaign, besides taking stern action over negligence and suspended four officials.

LWMC Chief Executive Officer Babar Sahib Din conducted surprise visits to various locations and expressed disappointment over the sanitation standards at Shahdara and took strict action against several officials.

Zonal Officer Shafaqat, Zonal Officer Malik Mustafa, Supervisor Muhammad

Ali, and MVI Naseer Amin faced immediate suspension due to their failure to maintain adequate cleanliness standards.

Additionally, a warning was issued to Town Manager Muazam Butt and Town Manager Saad Talal. CEO Babar Sahib Din passed instructions for a 24-hour ultimatum to make Shahdara a zero-waste area. He also praised the workers for their efforts in maintaining excellent cleaning standards at Saeed Park.

He affirmed that the company was committed to ensuring optimal sanitation conditions in both urban and rural regions. He also visited Thokar workshop and checked the attendance of drivers and the working

PR CEO announces plans for train restoration, improvements

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Railways Chief Executive Officer Aamir Baloch said on Thursday that train service would be restored gradually based on resource availability.

During an online live e-Kutchery session, Baloch revealed that a new train timetable was set to be implemented from March 15 while the restoration of Sanddal and Khushhal Khan Khattak Express trains was possible upon available resources. He highlighted ongoing efforts to enhance track conditions in the Main Line Sukkur Division and mentioned plans to increase the number of trains overtime, with improvements expected to reduce engineering restrictions.

Regarding specific routes, Baloch indicated that the decision on restoring Akbar Bugti Express was pending. He assured the public of special Eid trains and improved facilities during the festive season. Furthermore, he noted a decrease in salary delays, attributing it to enhanced revenue generation, with further reduc-

tions anticipated in the future.

In terms of infrastructure, Baloch mentioned the timely completion of a manufacturing project for 230 new coaches, with Chinese collaboration. He underscored the significance of passenger service over personal interests, emphasizing that train seats were meant for passengers, not employees.

Addressing concerns about staff behavior and misuse of railway quarters, Baloch instructed the authorities to investigate complaints thoroughly. He warned of strict action against those found renting out railway quarters to unauthorized individuals, reaffirming that such accommodations were reserved solely for government employees. The CEO also instructed authorities to address complaints regarding staff behavior on Ghouri Express. The press conference, which lasted two hours, received over five thousand comments, reflecting the public's keen interest and engagement in Pakistan Railways' operations and improvements.



LAHORE: An elderly man is decorating printed pictures on the wall to earn a living for children.

PPP leader stresses constitutional limits for institutions' functioning

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) South Punjab President Makhdoom

Ahmed Mahmood has reiterated the party's longstanding stance on the importance of adherence to constitutional limits by all institutions of the country. He emphasised that such adherence was crucial for democracy, economy, federation, and overall stability of the country.

In a recent gathering at Makhdoom House on Thursday, Ahmed Mahmood stressed the significance of politicians understanding and respecting their political boundaries, asserting that the approach could prevent constitutional crisis like those witnessed on May 9. He highlighted the need for mutual respect among politicians, media, judiciary, and other institutions,

stating that resolving personal animosities and ego clashes could contribute to addressing the nation's challenges.

Ahmed Mahmood also shed light on PPP's decision to support the government despite lacking sufficient numbers, attributing the move to perilous state of the country's economy, democracy, stability, and federalism. He clarified that while the Sunni Ittehad Council did not seek PPP's support, the party extended its assistance to ensure smooth formation of its government in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

Acknowledging the roles of various political parties, Ahmed Mahmood expressed gratitude to the Sunni Ittehad Council and the PTI for facilitating uncontested elections of chief ministers in their respective provinces includ-

ing Punjab and Sindh. He also hinted at Shehbaz Sharif's potential uncontested election as prime minister, crediting both parties for their cooperative approach.

Commenting on the challenges faced by democracy, Ahmed Mahmood underscored the importance of acknowledging past mistakes and fostering consensus, citing the Charter of Democracy as a positive precedent, set by the PML-N and the PPP. However, he criticised PTI for its alleged reluctance to admit mistakes and its purported lack of faith in the constitutional framework. The gathering saw the participation of prominent business personalities and party officials, who congratulated Ahmed Mahmood on his recent election success, underscoring PPP's continued relevance in the political landscape of south Punjab.

Farewell given to ex-minister Prof Javed Akram

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Society of Internal Medicine organised a ceremony on Thursday to celebrate 400 days of the former caretaker provincial minister for Health, Social Welfare and Baitul-Mal Professor Dr. Javed Akram.

Speaking at the ceremony, he said that in order to bring positive change in society, people have to face difficulties. "We should know each other's strengths for the strength of relationship. By the grace of Allah, Dr. Shehla Javed has been awarded a gold medal in Sri Lanka," he added.

The former caretaker minister thanked the Pakistan Society of Internal Medicine for organising the event. He also thanked the media and his staff for supporting him. Punjab Health Department Secretary Ali Jan Khan said: "We learned a lot from Professor Dr Javed Akram." He said the caretaker government of Punjab performed excellent duties.

Nationwide training of Hujjaj continues at tehsil, district levels

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony commenced the first phase of training for intending pilgrims nationwide at the tehsil and district levels.

Launched on February 12, this comprehensive programme is set to continue until March 10, in a bid to equip pilgrims with essential knowledge and skills vital for their pilgrimage journey, informed ministry's spokesperson Muhammad Umar Butt in an exclusive talk with APP. He said the training sessions encompass a wide array of topics crucial for the spiritual and logistical preparedness of pilgrims undertaking the sacred journey of Hajj and Umrah.

Madhu Lal Hussain urs from March 2

LAHORE (APP): The 436th annual three-day urs celebrations of Hazrat Shah Hussain, commonly known as Madhu Lal Hussain, will begin here on Saturday, March 2.

Secretary Auqaf Dr Tahir Raza will inaugurate the urs celebrations by performing traditional chador laying on the grave of the saint. Members of Religious Committee, ulema Mushaikh and a large number of devotees will participate on the occasion. The Auqaf Department has allocated Rs 459,000 for urs grant. Local police and the department made foolproof security arrangements for the visitors.

ADB delegation meets LDA DG

LAHORE (APP): A delegation of Asian Development Bank (ADB) met Lahore Development Authority (LDA) Director General / Lahore Commissioner, Muhammad Ali Randhawa here on Thursday.

The delegation was briefed on various projects in Lahore during the meeting and session.

Briefings were given on road structures, transport systems, and traffic engineering in different parts of the provincial capital. Transport smart mobility, environmental health, and urban-friendly transport systems were also come under discussion during the session. The delegation expressed interest in mega development projects in the provincial capital.

Power of Attorney

Malik Taj (Late) son of Thanidar having CNIC No: 21202-6512676-3, Date of Birth: 12-08-2023 Passport No: BM7596761 resident of Kuki Khel, Sikandar Khel, Jamrud, Ghundi, tehsil Jamrud, District Khyber has died on 09-02-2024 in RTA in Kingdom of Bahrain.

That I being father (CNIC: 37101-5117549-3) of Malik

Taj hereby authorize Mr. Mohammad Ahmad Mubarak Rashed Almanea for arrangement of any kind of compromise with Government of Bahrain or with the person who has been arrested in the accidental death of Late Malik Taj, I, Thanidar the father of Late Malik Taj, have no objection to any kind of step taken in this issue by the attorney.

Executant: Thanidar bearing CNIC: 37101-5117549-3

Witness No1: Siraj Khan bearing CNIC: 37101-6634467-1

Witness No 2: Amin Taj bearing CNIC: 21202-7191867-9



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S. NO.	COURSE TITLE	ELIGIBILITY	NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS						
			KARAK		HANGU		KOHAT		
			M	F	M	F	M	F	
1.	Diploma in Allied Health Science (Pharmacy, Medical, Anesthesia) (2 Years)	Matric with Science or F.Sc	3	3	3	3	2	1	
2.	Diploma in Allied Health Science (Ultrasound, Laboratory) (2 Years)	Matric with Science of F.Sc							
SHORT COURSES			KARAK		HANGU		KOHAT		
3.	Construction Machinery Operating Training Boom Loader, Excavator, Shovel and Dozer etc	Middle or Above Qualification & Age 20-35 years	-	-	15	-	10	-	
4.	E-Commerce (AMAZON, Ali Express, Daraz etc)	HSSC with basic Computer Knowledge	18	8	17	7	17	6	
5.	Chinese Modern Language	Preference will be given to Graduates working with Chinese Companies or pursuing Higher Education in Chinese Universities	2	2	12	8	-	-	
GENERAL CRITERIA									
➤ Candidate NSER-BISP/PMT Score should be less than or equal to 40.									
➤ Only Domicile holders of district Kohat, Hangu & Karak are eligible to apply.									
➤ Construction Machinery Training (Sr. No. 3) is only for District Kohat and Hangu									
Note: HERA-KDDP reserves the right to increase, decrease and drop a course in special and unavoidable situation.									
HOW TO APPLY									
➤ Apply through google form link1 for Diploma Courses: https://forms.gle/3LYt9Ry5xkbBtKD7									
➤ Apply through google form link2 for Short Courses: https://forms.gle/2XGzzqj33g2kbGk98									
➤ In second step download the application Form from HERA website www.herakp.gov.pk download									
➤ Fill the application Form carefully and attach copies of all documents.									
➤ Send the filled application form along with attested copies of the documents through courier / post office to Higher Education Regulatory Authority (HERA), 46/A, Sector B-2, Phase-5, Hayatabad, Peshawar.									
OR									
➤ Submit Form along with attested copies of the documents at									
• Lawaghar Institute of Medical Sciences (LIMS) Chokara, Karak									
• Boston Institute of Allied Health Sciences (BIAHS), Karak									
• National Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS), Kohat									
• Bab-al-Madina Institute of Medical Sciences (BIMS), Hangu									
➤ For assistance or any query regarding scholarships, please feel free to contact HERA									
Official Numbers (091) 9217710, 9217676 during Office Timing and Days: 9:00am to 5:00.									
Applicants who have already submitted their applications to Lawaghar & Boston Institute (Karak), National Institute (Kohat), Bab at Madina (Hangu) need not re-apply through HERA.									
CLOSING DATE									
8th MARCH-2024 (For Health Diplomas)									
& 1st MAY-2024 (For Short Courses)									
INF(P)367/24									



German delegation calls on KP Governor

PESHAWAR (APP): A delegation of Bundesverband mittelständische Wirtschaft (Association of Small and Medium Enterprises Germany) here Thursday called on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali. The delegation, led by country head of the associ-

ation Matthew Shaw, discussed various prospects of investment in merged districts of KP including mining, forests, sports, tourism and human development. The delegation expressed interest to work in collaboration with local business community and added

that the association would provide needed help, training and resources to stakeholders for the purpose. Speaking on the occasion, KP Governor appreciated the visiting guests for extended cooperation and highlighted the mineral sector potential of the

province. He said that merged areas have mineral deposits in abundance that can be exploited with the help of German companies. He said that government would also provide land for the establishment of medical college or hospital under joint venture.



PESHAWAR: Corps Commander Peshawar Lt. Gen. Hasan Azhar Hayat addressing during a youth convention organized for students of North Waziristan.

Khyber district completes preparations for polio Campaign

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber district administration has completed all preparations for a seven-day polio eradication campaign starting from March 3. During the campaign, more than 200,000 children under the age of five will be administered polio drops by 945 polio teams. A meeting of the district committee for the polio eradication campaign was held under the chairmanship of Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Muhammad Hameed in the Deputy Commissioner's Office. Officials from the health department, Deputy Superintendent of Police Hukumat Afridi, the education department, international health organisation, polio, police, and other authorities attended the meeting. In the meeting, polio authorities provided detailed briefings on the comprehensive report of the campaign, security

arrangements for polio teams, awareness activities, reluctant parents, and other related matters. The district administration appeals to the public to cooperate with the health department teams during the polio eradication campaign and ensure that their children receive polio drops so that they can be protected from lifelong disability, and complete eradication of polio from the Khyber district becomes possible.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel inaugurating solarization in Mian Rahim Shah Kakakhel Hostel in UOP.

115 wheelchairs handed over to TransPeshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF) handed over 115 wheelchairs to TransPeshawar to enhance the accessibility for persons with disabilities (PWDs) to Zu Peshawar-the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system of Peshawar. With the Zu Peshawar system currently serving nearly 350,000 passengers daily, including a considerable number with special needs, the provision of standardized wheelchairs will make a remarkable impact. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Al Khidmat Foundation Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (AKF KP) Region and TransPeshawar, outlining mutual commitments to support vulnerable groups. The MoU includes provisions for AKF to provide wheelchairs at BRT stations, offer assistance during emergencies, provide free medical treatment for BRT employees suffering from thalassemia, and provide care to children of deceased BRT employees through their Orphan Care Program. TransPeshawar will assist in increasing visibility of Al Khidmat's humanitarian activities and extend facilitation for corporate

social responsibility (CSR) activities. The Green Campus Shuttle Service, an initiative by Pakistan Everbright Development Organization (PEDO) was also inaugurated at the event. This visionary endeavour entails the deployment of 50 hybrid-electric vehicles to facilitate transportation within the university campus. The service will initially commence with five vehicles and will increase to fifty by the end of this year. The event underscored the paramount importance of mobility for persons with disabilities (PWDs), women, children, and other vulnerable segments of society. In a statement, CEO TransPeshawar expressed thanks to Al Khidmat Foundation and PEDO for their invaluable contributions towards fostering accessibility and inclusivity within the city's transit infrastructure. Dr. Tariq Usman Saeed said, "TransPeshawar is dedicated to ensuring inclusive transportation for vulnerable segments like PWDs and women. The donation of 115 international standard wheelchairs by Al Khidmat Foundation will provide PWDs with seamless accessibility on

BRT system. Oftentimes, individuals with disabilities encounter challenges navigating through fare gates and bus doors with non-standardized wheelchairs. The introduction of these international standard wheelchairs will undoubtedly alleviate such hurdles, ensuring a smoother and more inclusive transit experience for all." Dr Tariq added that the Green Campus Shuttle service initiative by PEDO will serve to provide a safer and more convenient mode of transportation within the campus to PWDs and women. We believe in fostering a more inclusive society by removing barriers to mobility and accessibility, ultimately improving the quality of life for all members of our community." He added, that joint efforts like these, toward inclusivity have a significant impact, benefiting both organizations and communities alike. While the Zu Bicycle Sharing System has been instrumental in providing last-mile connectivity for students and commuters in the University Campus area, it fell short in adequately catering to specially-abled individuals and women.

Pak Army organizes Youth Convention

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pak Army has arranged Youth Convention for students of North Waziristan in Corps Commander Peshawar attended the occasion as Chief Guest, on Thursday. Corps Commander Peshawar Lieutenant General Hassan Azhar Hayat argued the students for countering propaganda against nation and the country on social media platforms. He added that it can encounter with indigenous culture, history and customs. The students were briefed regarding regional situations, challenges, sustainable peace and development in the area. The students appreciated Pak Army efforts for achieving sustainable peace in the region. The students also appreciated Pak Army efforts for education, welfare and sustainable development and peace in the tribal belt.

Rescue officer shot dead in City

PESHAWAR (INP): Unidentified assailants shot dead a Rescue 1122 officer in Peshawar's suburban area of Chamkani on Thursday. According to police, the Rescue official died on the spot while the unknown attackers escaped from the scene. Police after registration of first information report started further investigation and shifted the dead body to nearby hospital.

Power shutdown notified

PESHAWAR (APP): Pesco authorities have notified power shutdown in areas of Warsak and Shakhi Chasma due to maintenance work. According to Pesco, power supply will remain suspended from Warsak Power House on March 1, 2 and 3 from 9 AM to 6 PM, resultantly consumer of 132 KV Warsak, Peshawar Cantt, Regi Model Town, Shahi Bagh and Sakhi Chashma grid connected feeders will face inconvenience.

Cloudy in most districts, rain likely

PESHAWAR (APP): There is a possibility of heavy rains from Thursday to Saturday with cloudy weather in most districts across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, an official of the Meteorological Department told APP here on Thursday. On March 01 and 02, there is a risk of flooding in the rainy and local rivers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir and Galiat with heavy rain from March 1-2 along with snowfall in Galiat, Naran, Kaghan, Dir, Swat, Chitral, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Astoor, Hunza, Neelam valley, Bagh, Poonch and Haveli may cause closure of communication roads. Chitral, Dir, Swat, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur, Kohistan, Shangla, heavy rain with thundershower and heavy snowfall in mountains as well predicted. Meanwhile, hailstorms are also expected at a few places, the official of the Meteorology Department said. The weather in the upper districts of the province is forecast to be very cold and partly cloudy, Meteorological Department officials disclosed.



PESHAWAR: German delegation of Association for Small Medium Enterprises (BVMW) meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali at Governor's House.

PDA launches tree plantation campaign

PESHAWAR (APP): The Director General (DG) Peshawar Development Authority (PDA), Captain (Retd) Khalid Mehmood launched a tree plantation campaign here on Thursday. Under the campaign PDA in collaboration with IMSciences University will plant saplings at Hayatabad Township and Regi Model Town (RMT). Officials of the authority Director IM Sciences Professor Dr. Usman Ghani and was also present at the launching ceremony. Around 200 guava and pine saplings were planted in Phase 7 Hayatabad. Speaking at the occasion, DG PDA Captain (Retd) Khalid Mehmood said that the aim of launching the campaign is to contribute to environmental sustainability and reduction in the environmental pollution.

He said that in the coming days the campaign will be accelerated and intensified. He said that various plants species including fruit and flower trees would be planted in Peshawar. In first phase, he said plantation has been made in Hayatabad and RMT while in the second phase, fifteen different points of Peshawar have been identified where different types of saplings will be planted. He said that for the success of the campaign and social welfare organizations have extended full support to the campaign. He said that the support of civil society and other social organizations is essential, saying no campaign could succeed without their cooperation. Director General PDA Captain (Retd) Khalid Mehmood invited the general public to participate voluntarily for the success



of the campaign to combat climate change.

District oversight committee holds monthly meeting for jail facilities

PESHAWAR (APP): The District Oversight Committee for Central Jail/Human Rights Committee in Peshawar convened a monthly meeting on Thursday to discuss and implement facilities for prisoners in jails. Under the direction of Deputy Commissioner

Afaq Wazir, the meeting, chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner Sanya Safi, saw the participation of Deputy Superintendent Central Jail Syed Akhtar Hussain Shah, Assistant Superintendent Jail Fariad Khan, and all committee members. The Additional Deputy

Commissioner reviewed the implementation of decisions from the previous meeting. During the session, committee members discussed the performance of their departments regarding jail services. The Deputy Superintendent Jail addressed issues related to inmates and facilities.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner directed officers to ensure the provision of medicines, sewerage cleaning, kitchen cleanliness, sermons by renowned scholars, availability of teachers (male and female), and all necessary facilities for prisoners.

CRA-N in collaboration with KP govt held opening ceremony

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Community Resilience Activity-North (CRA-N) in collaboration with government of KP organized an Opening Ceremony of the project "Better Response Mechanism for KP Planning & Development Department (P&DD) in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) & Management (DRM) at Peshawar. The purpose of this initiative is to conduct capacity building workshops to Strengthen KP's DRR and DRM Response Mechanism. The event brings together key stakeholders, including members of Planning & Development Department, Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), District Disaster Management Unit (DDMU) and other relevant departments involved in DRR and DRM programming in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The opening ceremony, attended by 26 officials from P&DD, International Development Section (IDS), PDMA, DDMU, Agriculture, Irrigation, Information and Media representatives. CRA-North in collabora-



tion with the P&DD and IDS) plan to engage in a SWOT Analysis, and then utilize these findings to design programming to strengthen the capacity of the IDS, P&DD, PDMA, DDMU's and relevant stakeholders engaged in emergency response. The SWOT analysis will be based upon an extensive literature review of existing documentation including assessments, relevant frameworks, policies and plans, project completion reports, interviews, Focus Group Discussion (FGDs), and any other form of knowledge sharing that may be beneficial. The Analysis once conducted will be vetted by consultations with the P&DD and relevant stakeholders. Mr. Sheryar Mehmood, Assistant Chief IDS, stated on the occasion that CRA-North's interventions are highly commendable in strengthening the government's capacity. He not only acknowledged the praiseworthy efforts of the Community Resilience Activity North (CRA-North) but also emphasized the importance of enhancing the capacity of relevant stakeholders in disaster response and planning mechanisms. At the end of the ceremony the participants acknowledged the efforts taken by CRA-N in KP for the resilience activities.

Condolence reference organized

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: President KP Traders Association office bearers organized a condolence reference and Quran recitation for the martyrdom of SP Rural Ijaz Khan and other martyrs who were martyred in the tragic terrorist accident in Katlang. President Traders Association Mujibur Rehman along with office bearers of various markets including Shaukatullah Hamdard, Zafar Minhas, Nisar Khalil, Aftab Ahmad, Naseeruddin Hashemi, Aziz Khan, Fazl Hayat Khan, Sheikh Islam, Haji Fazal Karim, Wahid Khan, Ibrahim Khan and others were also present. Mujibur said that in KP, only the police are targeted by unknown militants and paid great tribute to the bravery of Shaheed Ijaz Khan. He added the vacuum created by his death has been filled by no one. The brave, fearless and intrepid soldiers who protect the borders without caring about their lives, he stated. Traders said that Shaheed Ijaz Khan by sacrificing his life to eradicate terrorism from the earth, he gave a clear example and history, which will live in the hearts of the people for centuries and his sacrifice will certainly not be forgotten.



PESHAWAR: Chief Traffic Police Dr. Zahid Ullah presenting Commendation Certificate to PRO CTP Peshawar Shahab Khan on his exemplary performance.



In brief

Blood donation camp arranged F.P. Report

CHAKDARA: The Directorate of Students Societies, University of Malakand in collaboration with Fatimid Foundation Peshawar & Blood Chain Pakistan, Malakand Chapter organized a blood donation camp at the varsity campus. The University spokesman said around 121 Students from various teaching departments of University of Malakand donated blood in the camp. VC UoM Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad, Prof Dr Jamil Ahmad, Dean Faculty of IT & Deputy Director, Students Societies Jamil Anwar Abbasi highly acknowledged the efforts of student organizers saying that blood donation is a noble cause to save the lives of patients suffering from thalassemia. Administrator Fatimid Foundation Peshawar and Sr. camp coordinator Amjad thankful to VC Jamil and blood chain heroes and all students of university of Malakand.

Three of family killed, 2 injured

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): Three members of a family were killed and two others injured when a car plunged into canal on Hafizabad Road Motorway. According to details, the accident took place in village Chapa Minara where a private car with five family members on board skidded off road and plunged into canal. The divers of rescue teams reached the scene of accident and started rescue efforts. Three family members died in the accident while two others injured were rescued and shifted to hospital.

Girl burnt to death, 3 scorched

FEROZEWALA (INP): A girl was burnt to death while three family members were scorched when a house caught fire here in the wee hours of Thursday, rescue sources said. According to details, fire initiated due to electric short circuit engulfed a house located in Iqbal Town of Ferozewala district Sheikhupura. Four family members were scorched due to fire before it could be extinguished. Rescue teams shifted the scorched people to hospital where a girl succumbed to her wounds while condition of three others was also stated to be critical. The police collective the evidences and after registering a case have started investigations.

Fake bottled water units sealed

PAKPATTAN (INP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has sealed two fake bottled water units and recovered 1,215 bottles of so-called mineral water while carrying out raids in Pakpattan, here on Thursday. The PFA director general led the operation in Arif Wala. The teams inspected two water units and found it involved in producing fake bottled water in the market. The PFA said that drinking contaminated water was filled in the non-food grade bottles and supplied in the market. Both the water units have been sealed, while cases have been registered against their owners. Separately, the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) seized a huge quantity of fake drinks in Multan. As per details, the Punjab food authority caught a unit producing fake drinks in the name of a famous brand from Multan. The PFA officials said that around 500-litre unhealthy syrup, 300-litre fake drinks and a loaded rickshaw were confiscated. An FIR was registered against the owner of the beverages plant at Mumtazabad police station.



BANNU: Police officials and civilians offering funeral prayer of Shaheed Constable Mir Sali Khan.

DPO directs crackdown against outlaws

F.P. Report

ATTOCK: District Police Officer (DPO) Attock Sardar Ghias Gul Khan on Thursday while presiding over the Crime Control Committee meeting has reiterated all the field officers of district Police to accelerate the crackdown against the gangsters of heinous crimes include target killers, robbers, dacoits, drugs pushing, car, motorbike lifters, specially murder cases under investigation and arresting the criminals of category A without further loss of time.

Among the crime control meeting was also attended by SP Investigation Wing, all police circle officers, SHO's of 14 police stations and investigation officers of the Police Department. On this occasion, a detailed briefing on crime ratio was also made to the DPO who reviewed the over all progress of the Attock Police with particular

reference to bring the proclaimed offenders of category-A, car lifters, killers, bandits and other street criminals to book.

DPO directed to ensure protection of life and properties of the people being their first prime responsibility besides launching effective patrolling duties in their jurisdictions. He also advised all the office officers to eradicate the theft dacoities, theft cases minimizing the sense of insecurity among the people. Strict action is being taken against those involved in drug peddling, gambling, running prostitution dens, possessing illegal arms and violating traffic rules, he added.

The District Police Officer further said that police will never allow any evil elements to disturb the peace and law and order and strict legal action will be taken against such elements. He directed all the officers to ensure zero tol-

erance for protection of lives, properties and honors of the citizens being their priority to avoid any untoward incidence within the sensitive inter provincial bordering territory of the district.

According to the vision of IG Punjab, the success of all the projects started in terms of modern policing and smart working is subject to courteous treatment and prompt response to the people. On the directions of IG Police Punjab and RPO Rawalpindi, efforts are being made to root out crime and no lenient view is being taken in this context.

Therefore all police officers should future improve service delivery by ensuring uniform enforcement of the law. He has said that police are utilising all available resources for maintenance of law and order across the district and ensuring security of people, he added.

Condolence reference in honor of martyred SP held

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Under the auspices of Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry condolence reference and Quranic recitation were organized for the soul of SP Rural Ijaz Khan who was martyred in the tragic terrorist accident in Tehsil Katling.

Mardan Chamber of Commerce & Industry President Zahir Shah, Senior Vice President Shah Riaz, Members of the Executive Committee, General Secretary of the Central Organization of Traders Waqar Ali Badshah, presidents and general secretaries of various markets and eminent scholars including Maulana Tajul Amin Jabal, Qari Niaz Ali and Maulana Aqeel Ansari and others participated.

MCCI President Zahir Shah while paying great tribute to the bravery of Shaheed Ejaz Khan said that no one can fill the void created by his death.

Due to such brave, fearless and intrepid youths who guard the borders without caring for their lives, the peace and order situation is maintained in the region and we are living a peaceful and peaceful life. He said that Shaheed Ejaz Khan gave a bright example and history by sacrificing his life to eradicate terrorism from region, which will live in the hearts

of the people for centuries and surely his sacrifice will not go in vain.

In the condolence reference, the Quran was recited for the speedy recovery of the injured policemen, the repose of the soul of the martyred Ejaz Khan. Finally, for country's development, security, survival, making the cradle of peace and from all kinds of calamities special prayers were offered for escape.

Commissioner plant saplings: Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai has emphasized the need to plant more trees and maintain them regularly in the context of climate change and it's devastating effects. He was talking after handing over 30,000 saplings of different varieties provided by Pakistan Tobacco Company to Assistant Commissioners for planting in their respective tehsils.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Mardan Saeedullah Jan, Additional Assistant Commissioners Khaula Haqdar and PTC Regional Manager Leaf, Kifayat Khan, Manager External Jamal Khan and other relevant officials were also present on this occasion. While giving a briefing to Commissioner Mardan on this occasion, PTC officials said that their organization is providing lakhs of different types of

plants to farmers and government institutions to improve the environment. He said that a total of 21 lakh saplings will be distributed in Mardan, Swabi, Mansehra and Buner this year.

Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai while appreciating the plantation initiative of PTC directed the Assistant Commissioners to ensure the planting and maintenance of these trees in their respective tehsils. He said that in the context of climate change, plantation and regular maintenance of planted trees is the need of the hour and all institutions including the Forest Department should fulfill their responsibilities in this regard. On this occasion, he also inaugurated the plantation campaign by planting saplings in the lawn of the Commissioner's office.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai assumed the additional charge of the post Chairman Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Mardan. Secretary of the Board met the Commissioner Mardan Division and briefed him on various issues of the Board. Commissioner Mardan directed him to bring transparency in all board matters and solve the problems of students immediately.

780 liter illegal fuel seized in D I Khan

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: The district police have recovered 780 liters of illicit fuel during ongoing crackdown against illegal fuel agencies, said a police spokesman on Thursday.

He said the crackdown was launched against illegal fuel agencies across the district following the directions of District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani. He said a team of Daraban police station led by SDPO Daraban Circle Malik Anees ul Hasan along with SHO Abdul Ghaffar Khan recovered 13 canes containing around 780 liters of Iranian diesel. The police also arrested accused Rozi Khan son of Umar Hayat, a resi-

dent of Kulachi and registered a case against him. The DPO said the indiscriminate legal actions would be continued against the business of illegal fuel across the district.

DC for early construction of flyovers in Dera city: Deputy Commissioner Mansoor Arshad Khan has underlined the need to start construction work of flyovers at the earliest to overcome the traffic congestion in the city.

Chairing a meeting here, the deputy commissioner said that two flyovers were being constructed in the city including one at Tank Adda and the other at Sabzi Mandi where snarl-ups had become a routine matter. Thus, he directed the

authorities concerned to take solid measures to immediately commence construction work on the projects which were expected to improve traffic flow, ultimately benefiting residents.

He said that the district administration was committed to extending relief and improving the living standard of citizens and in this regard, all possible measures would be taken. He urged all line departments to ensure better coordination and effective implementation of the projects. He also highlighted the importance of traffic management during the construction phase to minimize disruptions and ensure the safety of commuters.

Prices will be keep under controlled in Ramadan

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Additional Assistant Commissioner (AAC), Landi Kotal vowed that an effective price checking mechanism will be adopted to provide relief to the believers in the month of Ramadan.

Addressing on the "Meet the Press" program initiated for controlling prices of edibles on arrival of Ramzan, held in Landi Kotal press club district Khyber on Thursday AAC Rameez Ali Shah said that on the arrival of the holy month, price committees will be formulated on district and tehsil levels to check prices of essential commodities.

It will be compulsory on the local shopkeepers to follow a list of the prices of edibles and daily usage goods, publicised by the district administration and those found violating it will be dealt with as per law, he remarked. The tehsil administrator urged the local traders to avoid charging extra- rates in the month of Ramadan and stressed upon the masses to join hands with them to work for batterment of tribesmen.

He also assured that crackdown would be initiated against encroachers to clean various streets of the Landi Kotal bazaar for the convenience of pedestrians. Earlier, neighborhood chairman Haji Sher attracted attention of the participants to the problem being faced by the people on eve of the Fasting while former President of Anjuman-e-Tajran, Landi Kotal also spoke on the occasion. Sellers of poultry, beef, bakery, vegetables and sellers of other food items retailers vowed that they would grant maximum relief to the believers and would decrease the margin of their profits for the best interest of the masses.

ILF hails Nauman commitment

Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: Insaf Layers Forum (ILF) Nowshera chapter appreciated divisional president Nauman-Ul-Haq Kakakhel advocate supreme court of Pakistan services for PTI during challenging period.

ILF claimed that Nauman Kakakhel advocate as a divisional president committed to uphold the rule of law across the country. ILF also appreciated his participation in all conventions and arranging convention regarding Rule of Law in Nowshera. He also released hundreds of PTI workers from jail on bail, despite all the pressures as well as presiding intra party election. ILF continued that Nauman Kakakhel fight for PTI benefits. He also participated in the campaign campaign for PTI backed independent candidates during the general election.

Issues faced by Dir women to be resolved on priority bases

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Pakistan Tahreek Insaf leader from Lower Dir district, Nusrat Begum, has said that in the newly formed provincial government, no effort will be spared to provide facilities to the women of backward districts like Dir. Talking to local journalists at Talash here on Thursday she said that she along with other party workers met the nominated chief minister Ali Amin Gandapur at Peshawar the other day.

She said that she informed the PTI nominee for the CM slot about the role of Dir women in the Feb 8 general elections. She said that the majority of women voters had voted for the PTI and now it was the turn of her party to resolve genuine issues

faced by Dir women. She said that more than 120,000 women this time had taken part in voting only in the Lower Dir district.

Ms Nusrat Begum, who contested for the National Assembly seat as an independent candidate in the 2013 general elections, said that the nominated chief minister was apprised about the problems of women in backward areas. She said that the Chief Minister-designate Ali Amin Gandapur promised to designate important responsibilities to her in the Lower Dir district and said that the problems of the people of backward districts, especially women, would be solved on priority basis.

Power outage flayed: Residents and businessmen have complained the prolonged and unscheduled power outage had paralyzed life in the district as

the duration had exceeded over 15 hours a day causing miseries to local people. Talking to local journalists at Timergara the traders led by president of Anjuman I Tajiran Timergara Haji Anwarud Din said the prolonged and unscheduled power outage had paralyzed routine life in the city and its surroundings.

They said the business community had been the worst affected class. They said that several meetings in this regard were held with the PESCO officials but to no avail. The traders complained that there had been no schedule of power outage and the consumers knew nothing when the power supply was to be restored. They threatened to bring people onto the roads if the duration of power load shedding was not reduced soon.

Kids administered anti-polio drops

FAISALABAD (INP): During the ongoing anti-polio drive in the district, about 291,584 children up to five years of age were administered anti-polio drops on the third day.

Overall 786,018 children have so far been administered anti-polio vaccine during the last three days of the campaign in the district. This was told during a meeting of the Polio Eradication Committee, held with Deputy Commissioner Abdullah Nanyar Sheikh in the chair on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the Environment Protection Agency on Thursday channeled 18 smoke-emitting vehicles in Faisalabad.

According to Deputy Director Johar Abbas, the EPA teams collected Rs 20,000 fine from owners of vehicles. The teams also

imposed Rs 100,000 fine on a sizing unit for polluting the environment, which was located in Yousaf Chowk, Sargodha Road, in addition to registration of a case against the owner.

Man shot dead: A 40-year-old man was shot dead by unidentified armed persons in the limits of Factory Area Police, here on Thursday.

Police said the deceased was identified as Muhammad Ali, son of Muhammad Ibrahim, a resident of Chak No 66-JB, Dhandra, Jhang Road. A police team shifted the body to mortuary for autopsy and collected forensic evidence from the crime scene. Police have registered a first information report and started investigation into the incident.

Woman poisons husband to death over

domestic disputes: A woman poisoned her husband to death over domestic disputes in Chak 570 GB of Faisalabad, police said on Thursday. According to details, Manzooran Bibi informed police that her son Nasir got married to Nazia Bibi and started living with in-laws after wedding.

The woman said that in-laws telephoned her that Nasir had died when she reached there, body of her son had turned blue. The police investigated Nazia Bibi and her parents but they refused of having any information regarding reasons of death. However, postmortem report proved that Nasir was poisoned to death after which police registered a case against Nazia Bibi, her parents and started investigations.



SEHWAN: Sindh Governor, Kamran Tessori talking to media persons at the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar.

AIG opens Special Branch office at Hafizabad

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Additional Inspector General (AIG) Special Branch Punjab Zulfiqar Hameed visited Hafizabad and inaugurated newly constructed district office of Special Branch in the premises of District Complex Hafizabad.

Regional Officer Special Branch Gujranwala Region Muhammad Qaisar Mushtaq, Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad, DPO Faisal Gulzar, District Officer Special Branch Hafizabad Muhammad Asif Chatha and other officers of law enforcement agencies were also present on the occasion.

AIG lauded construction of Special Branch Office at District Complex, as a result of which, coordination with other departments would improve and performance of the SB would be improved. He inspected the building and expressed his satisfaction over standard of material used for construction of the office.

Admn commits facilitation of traders: Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad has said that district administration taking all possible measures to provide maximum opportunities to business community for starting new business and boosting economic activities in the district so

that not only new jobs opportunities could be created for youth but also improve national economy.

She expressed these views while handing over permits to applicants who desire to install new patrol pumps in the district. ADCG Hamad Ullah, was also present on the occasion.

DC said that all application submitted to District Patrol Pumps Committee were being processed sharply so that investor could launched new business as soon as possible. She gave away permits to Aftab Ahmad and Akhtar Hussain for installing new patrol pumps.

Measles outbreak kills minor, affects 15 others

F.P. Report

THATTA: A five-year old child lost his life while 15 others have been affected by measles outbreak in village Saleh Muhammad Burfat near Jungsahbi town of district Thatta, on Thursday.

According to credible sources measles outbreak has affected several children in remotes areas of Thatta and Sujawal so far. Officials of District Health Department said that

teams have been sent in the villages from where the cases were reported to evaluate the actual figure.

However coastal areas of Sujawal district also have been largely affected by the flare-up of measles. When, The Frontier Post approached District Health Officer Sujawal Dr Hanif Memon to inquire about the measures taken to prevent the spread of Measles, He said that teams have been formed to visit the affected areas.

"We have constituted survey and vaccination teams visiting the affected areas regularly", He mentioned and added that a delegation of World Health Organisation had also visited the villages where measles cases had been reported. The survey teams had been conducting awareness sessions in the areas affected by the outbreak; he said. The chief of district health department linked lack of awareness, unhygienic conditions and poor nutrition to rapid spread of measles.



Navalny's funeral set for today in Moscow



MOSCOW (AFP): Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's funeral will be held on Friday (today) in a Moscow church, two weeks after his sudden death in an Arctic prison, his allies announced. Authorities resisted handing Navalny's body to his family for eight days, in what his team said was an attempt to "cover up" official involvement in his death and prevent a public burial.

His widow Yulia Navalnaya said she feared her husband's funeral could be disrupted by arrests. "I'm not sure yet whether it will be peaceful or whether the police will arrest those who have come to say goodbye to my husband," Navalnaya told the European Parliament. Navalny's team said in a social media post that a funeral service would be held at the Mother of God Quench My Sorrows church in Maryino on March 1 at 2.00pm (1100 GMT). "Come in advance," the post said. The burial of the opposition leader, who had embraced Christianity, is set to take place at the Borisov cemetery, a short walk from the banks of the river Moskva.

Finding a church willing to host the service was difficult, the team said, as the Kremlin was afraid a public funeral could turn into a show of support for Navalny. "We started to look for a church and a hall for March 1. Everywhere they refused to give us anything. In some places we were told it was forbidden," said exiled ally Ivan Zhdanov. Other allies said places refused after hearing Navalny's name. "Alexei needs to be buried... To have a chance to say goodbye, better to come in advance," he added. But a civil ceremony allowing the general public to pay their respects to the body -- common in Russia -- has not been allowed.

"Two people are to blame for the fact that we have no place for a civil memorial service and farewell to Alexei: (Russian President) Vladimir Putin and (Moscow Mayor) Sergei Sobyanin," Navalnaya said on X. She added the family "did not want a special treatment -- just to give people the chance to say goodbye." Navalny died on February 16 in one of Russia's toughest prisons in northern Siberia, where he was serving a 19-year sentence on charges widely seen as political retribution for his opposition. Russian authorities said Navalny died of "natural causes" but his team and some Western leaders have accused Putin of being directly responsible for his death. Details of the funeral and how many mourners will be allowed to attend are unclear, and there was no immediate response from Russian officials. Authorities had threatened to bury him on the prison grounds where he died unless his family agreed to a private ceremony, his team previously said. Putin, who famously never referred to the opposition leader by name, has so far remained silent on Navalny's death. Authorities have however cracked down on public gatherings in memory of Navalny, detaining hundreds for laying flowers at memorials and other acts of protest. Dozens have already been handed prison sentences, including 154 in Saint Petersburg alone. The opposition leader shot to prominence through his anti-corruption campaigning, exposing what he said was rampant corruption at the top of Putin's administration.

He was arrested in January 2021 when he returned to Russia after being treated in Germany for a poisoning attack he suffered while campaigning against Putin in Siberia months earlier.

Tuvalu reaffirms Taiwan ties, plans to revise pact

BANGKOK: Tuvalu's new government has committed to continued diplomatic ties with Taiwan instead of switching to China, and said it plans to revise a defence and migration agreement struck with Australia. Prime Minister Feleti Teo and his seven cabinet ministers, who won office following a general election last month, made the commitments in a statement of priorities after being sworn in.

"The new government wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the long-term and lasting special relationship between Tuvalu and the Republic of China, Taiwan," the statement said. "It intends to reassess options that would strengthen and lift it to a more durable, lasting, and mutually beneficial relationship."

Tuvalu, a Pacific Islands nation of about 11,200 people, is one of only 12 countries that have official diplomatic ties with Taiwan, a self-governed democracy that China claims as its own territory. The China-Taiwan issue was heightened during Tuvalu's election campaign when a senior lawmaker floated the idea that the country's new government could review its ties with

Taipei. In Beijing, Chinese Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning urged Tuvalu to switch diplomatic recognition to China. "We call on a handful of countries that still keep the so-called relationship with the Taiwan region to stand on the right side of history and make the right decision that truly serves their long-term interest," she said. Nauru, Tuvalu's neighbour, cut ties with Taiwan last month and switched to China, which had promised the country more development help. Teo's government, in its statement of priorities, also pledged to revisit a landmark pact signed with Canberra in November that offered Tuvalu citizens a climate refuge in Australia. The treaty is yet to be ratified.

The new government said it supports the "broad principles and objectives" of the bilateral security pact, but acknowledged an "absence of transparency and consultations" behind the treaty. It said it wants to renegotiate the deal with a focus on "safeguarding the integrity of the sovereignty of Tuvalu". Tuvalu's low-lying atolls make it particularly vulnerable to global warming. Two of the country's nine coral islands have

already largely disappeared under the waves, and climate scientists fear the entire archipelago will be uninhabitable within the next 80 years. In the treaty, Australia offered Tuvaluan a lifeline to help residents escape the rising seas and increased storms brought by climate change. Australia would initially allow up to 280 Tuvaluan to come to Australia each year. The treaty also commits Australia to help Tuvalu in response to major natural disasters, pandemics and military aggression.

In return, Australia would gain the contentious veto power that is seen as an attempt to prevent a Chinese military foothold in Tuvalu. A spokesperson for Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs said Canberra "stands ready to engage with Prime Minister Teo and his government on the priorities they have outlined". The United States and Australia, its influential ally in the region, have been rapidly building bridges with Pacific island nations in response to China signing a security pact with the Solomon Islands in 2022 that raised the prospects of a Chinese naval base being established in the South Pacific. — Aljazeera

June elections proposed during Senegal dialogue

DAKAR: A national dialogue panel in Senegal has proposed holding elections in early June, the first such proposal since President Macky Sall attempted to push the February 25 elections till December. In early February, Sall, who is serving his second term and has said he would not run again, announced the postponement of the elections. But Senegal's highest election authority, the Constitutional Council, rejected that move and ordered the government to set a new election date as soon as possible.

The panel sat as part of a

two-day national dialogue that Sall called earlier this week, aiming at fostering trust among the candidates and the population. Civil, political, and religious leaders attended, but almost all of the candidates on the ballot refused to participate. The panel proposed holding the vote on June 2. Sall has said he will step down by April 2, which is the end of his current term, but it is unclear who will take over if elections are not held before that. A member of the dialogue panel, Ndiawar Paye, told the Reuters news agency that it would recommend Sall remain in office until his suc-

cessor is sworn in.

The delay of the vote has sparked deadly protests across Senegal, often seen as a rare stable democracy in a region rife with coups. Security forces have killed at least three people and injured dozens of others. The panel called for the Constitutional Council to review decisions that blocked candidates including Karim Wade, an opposition leader and son of former President Abdoulaye Wade, from the ballot. The election authority disqualified the younger Wade because he previously held dual citizenship. — Aljazeera

One killed at anti-govt protest in Syria

DAMASCUS: At least one person has died of gunshot wounds sustained in an anti-government protest against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in the southern province of Sweida, according to local news outlets and monitoring groups. Suwayda24, a local news website run by citizen journalists, reported that a 52-year-old man succumbed to his wounds after security forces guarding a government building shot at nearby protesters.

The local news outlet added that the spiritual head of the Druze sect, Sheikh Hikmat Al-Hijri, met with protesters and said the man was a "martyr". A local media source and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) confirmed the fatality. SOHR said dozens of people were chanting anti-government slogans in front of a recently reopened state office building that deals with citizen affairs, such as outstanding military service.

"Pro-government forces fired into the air to disperse the crowd, wounding two protesters, one of whom later died," said the Britain-based monitor. According to the SOHR and Suwayda24, local religious authorities urged all sides to "keep the demonstrations peaceful". The death of the 52-year-old was the first one reported that was linked to the demonstrations that swept across Druze-majority Sweida last year due to harsh economic conditions and rising inflation levels that saw the end of fuel subsidies, as well as latent anti-Assad sentiment. In August, high petrol prices initially sparked massive protests across the province, which had primarily been spared the violence that ravaged much of Syria when al-Assad's brutal crackdown on anti-government protesters sparked a full-blown war in 2011 and resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Syrians, and the displacement of millions of others. The protesters in Sweida quickly turned their criticism to al-Assad and have demanded political changes. Across the province, scores of local branches of the ruling Baath party were forced shut by protesters tearing down posters of the president and his father in a rare show of defiance. The Syrian government continues to attack opposition-controlled areas in north-west Syria, with the backing of Russia and Iran. — Aljazeera

Journalists call for access to Gaza

NEW YORK: More than 50 international broadcast journalists have signed an open letter to Egyptian and Israeli authorities to call for "free and unfettered access to Gaza for all foreign media". Correspondents and presenters from the main broadcasting outlets in the United States and United Kingdom, including Sky News's foreign reporter Alex Crawford and BBC international editor Jeremy Bowen, joined the call to demand access to the Gaza Strip.

In the letter, the journalists called on the governments to allow them access to the enclave through the Rafah crossing, which connects Gaza and Egypt. "We urge the governments of Israel and Egypt to allow free and unfettered access to Gaza for all foreign media," the letter read. "We call on the government of Israel to openly state its permission for international journalists to operate in Gaza and for the Egyptian authorities to allow international journalists access to the Rafah Crossing." Since the war began, only a handful of foreign journalists have been allowed access to Gaza, mostly by being "embedded" with the Israeli army. In a separate editorial for Sky News laying out the case for journalists to be allowed into Gaza, Crawford explained that the few journalists who have been allowed in were not allowed to speak with Palestinians during the tours.

"This clearly has monumental limitations. We should all question why this is still happening nearly five months on into the most intense bombardment seen in decades, and how that affects understanding of what is going on inside," Crawford wrote. — Aljazeera

Will Russia try to annex Moldova's breakaway region?

BUCHAREST: Alexandru Flenchea's phone has been ringing non-stop since last week. "I cannot tell you how many phone calls I have received in the last two days from both the press and just acquaintances," Flenchea told Al Jazeera, by phone. People keep asking him whether it is safe to stay in Moldova. "It is just insane," he said. Flenchea heads the Initiative 4 Peace Association in Chisinau, Moldova's capital.

He has been fielding calls since Ghenadie Ciorba - an opposition figure in Transnistria - recently reportedly suggested that separatists may call for a referendum on the region's annexation to Russia. The call Ciorba touted did not quite come at a rare special congress in the narrow strip of land that is internationally recognised as Moldovan territory but backed by Russia. But the "congress of deputies of all levels" in the separatist region's capital did pass a resolution seeking Moscow's support in staving off an apparent economic crisis, which they blamed on Moldova. "There is social and economic pressure on Transnistria, which contradicts European principles and approaches to the protection of human rights and free trade," the resolution said. Transnistria has been under the control of separatist authorities since 1992, and is home to about 470,000 people. Moldovan authorities have dismissed its demand as a propaganda move and downplayed the recent events, saying there is no risk of escalation. Meeting took place just a day before Russian President Vladimir Putin's annual address to the Russian Federal Assembly. Wedged between Moldova and Ukraine, Transnistria is not recognised by any member of the United Nations as an independent entity.

About 1,500 Russian troops are stationed in the strip, which is home to ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, and Moldovans. "People from Transnistria have their own passport that is not valid anywhere," said 36-year-old Cristina Afinogenova, who is originally from Transnistria and currently living in Chisinau. As a

result, "many obtain secondary documents", she added. Most Transnistrians have Moldovan passports, while some have Russian and Ukrainian papers. Afinogenova, who was six when the region declared independence, recalled discussions "particularly about language", arguing "whether the Moldovan language lacked prestige" or "if Russian was considered cool". The conflict over Transnistria in 1989 was over "the language issue", according to Anatoli Dirun, head of the Tiraspol School of Public Studies; Tiraspol is the region's capital. Transnistria was part of what was known as the Moldavian Republic within the Soviet Union. However, with the proclamation of perestroika, the political and financial reform movement launched by Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev, the growth of national movements began in many Soviet republics. "Moldova was no exception," Dirun said. Then, the Moldova parliament in 1990 decided that the only state language in the republic would be Moldavian in the Latin script. Transnistria, historically under the sovereignty of the Russian Empire, which had just joined Bessarabia (Moldova) in 1940, "did not agree with this decision", Dirun added. "After their demands were ignored, the population of Transnistria organised a large-scale strike", he explained. The war in Ukraine has polarised opinion on both sides of the Dniester River. Dirun believes that since 2014, amid the Donbas conflict and Russian annexation of Crimea, "Ukraine has seriously changed its attitude towards Transnistria, considering the Russian troops stationed there as a threat to its national security." After February 2022, following Russia's invasion of its neighbour, Ukraine closed its border with Transnistria. "Tiraspol has found itself sandwiched between Chisinau and Kyiv," said Dirun. The Russian aggression in Ukraine has also impacted negotiations, said a Moldova government spokesperson of a department focused on reintegration policies. "[It] is currently [impossible] to hold meetings since

two of its very important actors, Ukraine and Russia, cannot sit at the same table to negotiate," said the spokesperson.

According to Afinogenova, there are children and parents in Transnistria "who have different views [regarding the war in Ukraine] and stopped meeting and speaking with each other". The closure of the border with Ukraine, combined with a Moldovan decision to tax goods imported into the separatist region, has skyrocketed prices of basic products, said Afinogenova, whose parents and relatives live in Transnistria. According to Dirun, the war has rocked Transnistria's economy "but also forced the leadership of Transnistria to take a more restrained position" and "not demonstrate its pro-Russian views". The war in neighbouring Ukraine has also made Transnistria "an even greater ground for disinformation campaigns", said Anastasia Pociumban, a research fellow at the Center for Order and Governance at the German Council on Foreign Relations. Another challenge "has been related to the supply of electricity", Pociumban added.

Moldova was once one of the European nations most dependent on Russian energy. By 2023, it became independent of Russian gas, but it continues to rely on electricity sourced from the breakaway region of Transnistria. Pociumban argued that "Moldova's previously full dependency on Russian and gas and electricity from Transnistria was used as a vulnerability for Russia's blackmailing".

On the other bank of the Dniester River, in Moldova, "this war has [also] polarised the population even more", said Alexandru Flenchea. However, "if there's one thing that all Moldovans have in common, it is that almost all of us don't want war," he added. Moldova was officially granted candidate status by the European Union in June 2022, a process the bloc still believes in. "Moldova's European future cannot be held hostage by the conflict," Peter Stano, EU spokesperson, told Al Jazeera. — Aljazeera

Six children die of malnutrition in Gaza hospitals

GAZA: Six children have died from dehydration and malnutrition at hospitals in northern Gaza, the Health Ministry in the besieged Palestinian territory has said, as the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the besieged enclave worsens.

Two children died at al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, the ministry said. Earlier it reported that four children died at the Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza, while seven others remained in critical condition. "We ask international agencies to intervene immediately to avert a humanitarian catastrophe in northern Gaza," Health Ministry spokesperson Ashraf al-Qudra said in a statement, as Israel's attacks on Gaza continue.

"The international community is facing a moral and humanitarian test to stop the genocide in Gaza," Kamal Adwan Hospital's Director Ahmed al-Kahlout said that the hospital had gone out of service due to a lack of fuel to run its generators. Al-Awda Hospital in Jabalia also went out of service for the same reason. In a video posted on Instagram and verified by Al Jazeera's Sanad verification unit, journalist Ebrahim Musalam shows an infant on a bed inside

the pediatric department at Kamal Adwan Hospital, as power comes in and out. Musalam said the children in the department are suffering from malnutrition and a lack of infant formula, and that necessary devices have stopped working due to the constant power outages as a result of fuel shortages.

Palestinian group Hamas said that the closure of Kamal Adwan Hospital would exacerbate the health and humanitarian crisis in Northern Gaza, which is already teetering on the brink of famine as Israel continues to block or disrupt aid missions there. Israel said a convoy of 31 trucks carrying food had entered northern Gaza. The Israeli military office that oversees Palestinian civilian affairs, the Coordination of Government Activity in the Territories (COGAT), also said nearly 20 other trucks entered the north. These were the first major aid deliveries in a month to the devastated, isolated area, where the United Nations has warned of worsening starvation. Israel has held up the entry of aid into Gaza for weeks, with Israeli protesters taking part in demonstrations calling for no aid to be allowed into the territory, even as hunger and disease spread.

UN officials say Israel's months-long war, which has killed nearly 30,000 people in Gaza, has also pushed a quarter of the population of 2.3 million to the brink of famine. Project Hope, a humanitarian group operating a clinic in Deir el-Balah in central Gaza, has said that 21 per cent of the pregnant women and 11 percent of the children under the age of five it has treated in the last three weeks are suffering from malnutrition.

"People have reported eating nothing but white bread as fruit, vegetables, and other nutrient-dense foods are nearly impossible to find or too expensive," Project Hope said. In a joint communique, Qatar and France stressed their opposition to an Israeli military offensive on Rafah in southern Gaza and underlined their "rejection of the killing and starvation suffered by the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip". They called for the opening of all crossings into Gaza, including in the north, "to allow for humanitarian actors to resume their activities and notably the delivery of food supply and pledged jointly \$20m effort in support of the Palestinian population". Jan Egeland, secretary-general of the Norwegian

Refugee Council, also said Israel must allow aid trucks into Gaza in order to address the dire humanitarian crisis. "Hundreds of aid trucks wait in line to cross into Gaza at the Rafah and Kerem Shalom [Karem Abu Salem] crossings to a starving civilian population," Egeland said in a social media post, with a video showing scores of aid trucks lined up.

"There has not been a single day we have gotten the needed 500 trucks across. The system is broken and Israel could fix it for the sake of the innocent." Medical aid group Doctors Without Borders, also known as Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), has meanwhile said that medical workers are struggling to serve hundreds of thousands of displaced people in Gaza who are living in dire conditions with nowhere to go. "Healthcare has been attacked, it's collapsing. The whole system is collapsing. We are working from tents trying to do what we can. We treat the wounded. With the displacements, people's wounds have been infected. And I'm not even talking about the mental wounds. People are desperate. They don't know anymore what to do," MSF's Meinie Nicolai said. — Aljazeera

Zelenskyy seeks support, arms at Albania summit of Balkan nations

TIRANA: President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has tried to drum up Balkan support for his vision of peace in Ukraine and has promoted the idea of joint arms production at a two-day summit of Southeast European countries. The meeting was held in the Albanian capital, Tirana, as Kyiv is trying to improve its defensive capabilities to beat back Russian forces at a time of faltering US support a little more than two years into Russia's full-scale invasion.

"We are interested in co-production with you and all our partners," Zelenskyy told delegations from Albania, Serbia, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia and Moldova in his opening remarks at the summit. "There are about 500 defence companies operating in Ukraine. Each of them adds strength, but it is not enough to win [against

Russian President Vladimir] Putin. We see the problems with the supply of ammunition, which affects the situation on the battlefield." Zelenskyy proposed organising a Ukrainian-Balkans defence forum in Kyiv or a Balkan capital to nurture arms cooperation, repeating similar initiatives conducted last year with British and US weapons companies.

Albania, North Macedonia and Montenegro are NATO members, have joined Western sanctions against Russia, and sent arms and equipment to Ukraine.

There are significant arms industries in parts of the Balkans, especially Serbia and Croatia, a legacy of the former Yugoslavia. Longtime Moscow ally Serbia has not imposed sanctions, and neither Belgrade nor Kyiv recognise the independence of Kosovo, Serbia's former predominantly Albanian southern province, which

backs Ukraine and is seeking European Union and NATO membership. Zelenskyy said he had invited all Balkan leaders to take part in a summit of partners and allies in Switzerland this spring that would discuss his vision of peace, which entails a Russian military withdrawal from all Ukrainian territory.

That diplomatic initiative - based on what is known as Zelenskyy's "peace formula" - does not involve Russia and has been dismissed by Moscow as a non-starter. Zelenskyy said he met Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama for talks and the two leaders had signed an Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation. "This document will contribute to the development of cooperation and strengthening of Ukraine's position in the Balkan region," Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram messenger. His chief of staff,

Andriy Yermak, said: "They also spoke about Ukraine's defence needs and the possibility of joint weapons production." Zelenskyy said at a news conference later that every time weapons supplies to Ukraine are delayed, it is a "gift" to Putin, an apparent allusion to the months-long impasse in the US Congress over providing more military aid to Kyiv. Zelenskyy, who was in Saudi Arabia for talks, is also due to meet the leaders of Serbia, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Montenegro at the summit. Thirteen countries are attending the summit along with officials from the EU and other international institutions.

"A pivotal moment for fostering bilateral ties, and standing in solidarity with Ukraine in its heroic fight against Russia's aggression," Albanian Foreign Minister Igli Hasani wrote on X shortly after Zelenskyy's arrival. — Aljazeera

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IMF's role in the politics

THE Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has recently sent a letter to the International Monetary Fund requesting the global lender to factor in the country's political stability in any further bailout talks with the Pakistan government. The letter has been addressed to the IMF Managing Director, wherein, the PTI spokesperson Raoof Hasan stated that the February 8 general elections were subjected to widespread intervention and fraud in the counting of votes and compilation of results. Given the policies and principles the IMF stands for, there should be no doubt that the abuse of power by a small number of public officeholders to impose their agenda on Pakistan's populace as aforesaid, and thus to ensure their continuing personal gain, would not be promoted or upheld by the IMF. Moreover, it said not just the PTI, but several other political parties in Pakistan, along with several Western governments, Commonwealth observers, local civil society organizations, and international print and electronic media, have called for an independent probe into claims of intervention and electoral fraud. The party called upon the IMF to give effect to the guidelines adopted by it concerning good governance as well as conditionalities that must be satisfied before the grant of a finance facility that is to burden the people of Pakistan with further debt. An audit of at least thirty percent of the national and provincial assemblies' seats should be ensured, which can be accomplished in merely two weeks.

Pakistan's internal politics and political dogfight has now spread out of the country, reaching into the global arena from Washington, Brussels, and London to Makkah and Medina. The opposition's anti-government sloganeering during the Hujj rituals and leg-pulling at the European Union and the IMF is something uncommon in today's Pakistan. Interestingly, other nations and the global community as well, became aware of the newest trends and traditions of the Country's politics, wherein Pakistani leaders often invited them for the Umpire or mediator role. Historically, political wrestling at the global forums might benefited any political party or leader in the past but surely such kind of civic work seriously undermined the country's prestige and impaired the national image at the global level.

Although, the European Union, the United States, Canada, and other Western governments uphold democracy, human rights, and the rule of the law during their dealing with foreign countries yet the IMF, the World Bank, and other global financial institutions deal with the incumbent governments, follow their business rules and have their due diligence criteria that is more governance and fiscal management related than political. Hence, the PTI's persuasion of a foreign entity into domestic politics is unlikely to produce the desired results as the global community is well versed in Pakistan's domestic political landscapes and the years-long political tussle between two warring factions in the country.

The PTI has asked the IMF to play a political or arbitrator role in the domestic politics of the country before the global institution engages with the sitting government which came through a months-long legitimate electoral process, duly notified by the country's election regulator, testified by the parliament and lawmakers. Previously, the Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf has successfully exploited the IMF's deal with the Shehbaz-led PDM government when the Punjab and KP governments refused to cooperate with the center by not upholding their financial responsibility concerning the Pakistan IMF accord and currently it demanded direct intervention from the Washington based global creditor. Presently, a cash-strapped Pakistan is struggling hard to stabilize its economy after securing a \$3 billion standby arrangement from the IMF, amid record inflation, rupee devaluation, and shrinking foreign reserves, whilst political groups aimed at satisfying their rivalry through biding on a highly fragile economy. In the role of opposition, it might be a good idea to chase the government, however in treasury, it is no less than sedition to play with the economy. The PTI has stroked the ball in the IMF's court, the IMF board would define the future trends of the Country's politics.

Issue of missing persons

CARETAKER Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday appeared before the Islamabad High Court in compliance with the court orders in the case of Baloch missing persons. During the court proceedings, PM Kakar claimed that the government was working in line with the constitution and the law. The Prime Minister Kakar told the court that being a Baloch, he has more knowledge about the situation where people face armed resistance in the province. According to him, Balochistan had been facing terrorism problem for decades and the activities of non-state elements were reported in Balochistan. Kakar stressed that the issue is dire and needs to be addressed on an urgent basis.

Balochistan grapples with a multifaceted conflict fueled by foreign powers that has been made worse by the religious and sectarian violence in the past decades. The Baloch ethnic insurgents had been fighting against the government to achieve greater autonomy or even secession from the country. Historically, Balochistan has been the soft target for anti-Pakistan forces because of its peculiar geographical location and demography, political issues and smear separatist insurgency that had been at a low bawl throughout the past five decades but it got an uptick after the killing of former Baloch leader Nawab Akbar Bugti during a security operation in 2006. The construction of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) further complicated the issue and brought the province in the centre stage of the ongoing rivalry between major powers. Meanwhile, Pakistan staunch enemy, India and Afghan Intelligence used Baloch rebels as proxy against the state of Pakistan.

The issue of Baloch missing persons and enforced disappearances is a serious and longstanding problem that is often linked with the state's counterinsurgency operation. The state institutions termed it a perceived strategy of Baloch insurgent groups which they use as a tactic to defame state institutions during their illegal self-exile in neighbouring countries including Iran, Afghanistan and even India, which has appeared as the biggest sponsor and financier of Baloch insurgency in recent years. In fact, the government and the LEAs must record and make public the arrest of Baloch miscreants after necessary investigation, so the state's enemies fail in their attempts to discredit and defame Pakistan.

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Tolerance in UK at an all-time low - and not only because of Gaza

Mohamed Chebaro

SOME in the UK believe the war in Gaza has rocked the country's political system, revealing a further gulf between politicians and their people. Many are of the opinion that the conflict has whipped up sentiment across the board that has metamorphosed into growing levels of Islamophobia and anti-semitism, endangering social cohesion in the country. Others believe the chaos in the British Parliament last week ahead of several votes on support for a ceasefire in Gaza was of a kind never before witnessed in Westminster.

The war in Gaza might be the most direct cause for all of the above right now, but one must not be so hasty to blame it alone for the rise in Islamophobia and antisemitism, or for the many parliamentary sessions and votes that have descended into chaos. In the past few years especially, we have seen extreme sentiments expressed both inside and outside of Parliament; for example, between pro- and anti-Brexit campaigners or during the many sessions that aimed to hold former Prime Minister Boris Johnson to account after he lied to Parliament about parties held at 10 Downing Street during the pandemic, in contravention of his government's own COVID-19 restrictions.

Two events last week fueled further anger among politicians from various parties and increased the polarization between them and the people they govern. The first was the tension over whether or not Parliament should officially call for a ceasefire in Gaza and the exact language to use. Speaker Lindsay Hoyle broke with the usual parliamentary procedures because of what he described as "absolutely frightening" threats made against lawmakers. The second event was also related to Gaza. The Conservative government of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak suspended an MP and former vice chairman of the party, Lee Anderson, after he refused to apologize for saying that Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, a member of the opposition Labour Party, was under the control of Islamists.

Anderson cited as evidence of this Khan's alleged

leniency in relation to the policing of pro-Palestinian marches that have taken place in London week after week during the conflict in Gaza, and especially after participants last Wednesday projected slogans onto Elizabeth Tower at Westminster, the structure that houses Big Ben. They included the phrase "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free," which critics often wrongly

handed and sober approach, in favor of divisive political maneuvering and electioneering that has only played into the hands of extreme voices on all sides.

A recent report by a monitoring group said that incidents of anti-Muslim hate in the UK have more than tripled since Oct. 7. The organization, Tell MAMA, recorded 2,010 such incidents in the four months following the

A recent report by a monitoring group said that incidents of anti-Muslim hate in the UK have more than tripled since Oct. 7. The organization, Tell MAMA, recorded 2,010 such incidents in the four months following the attacks by Hamas on Israel that sparked the Israeli war on Gaza. These figures include reported incidents of abusive behavior, threats, assaults, vandalism, discrimination, hate speech and anti-Muslim literature.

interpret as a call for the elimination of the state of Israel. Without using the word "Islamophobic," Sunak repeatedly condemned Anderson's comments as unacceptable and wrong, and confirmed that he had been suspended from the Conservative Party. However, the prime minister also said there was an emerging pattern of incidents that "should not be tolerated." These, he said, included legitimate protests hijacked by extremists to promote and glorify terrorism, and violent verbal and physical threats to elected representatives.

In Sunak's words "this explosion in prejudice and antisemitism since the Hamas terrorist attacks on Oct. 7 are as unacceptable as they are un-British." One could not agree more with him on that. But whether he likes it or not, many believe that his government's policies since Oct. 7 have not only failed to calm matters but have exacerbated them. Some official comments and statements have fueled communal tensions, further stoking Islamophobic and antisemitic attitudes in the country.

This is a direct result of a failure to apply an even-

foreign policy stance (but that is a topic for another discussion). However, it is safe to say that Islamophobia, anti-semitism, toxic race relations and issues and tensions related to the UK's national identity predate the war in Gaza and other conflicts. British governments have long grappled with how to cure Britain of such ills when they have emerged at various times in a society that, in general, prides itself on its ethnic and religious mix, under the umbrella of multiculturalism, upholds personal freedoms above all and encourages the peaceful expression of differing opinions. In other words, the kind of values that many believe are the source of the British success story. The question we have to ask now is whether tolerance is in retreat in Britain. The short answer is, sadly, yes. This is especially true when it seems that a majority of those at the forefront of public life in the UK, such as politicians and other figures, hold views that border on toxicity.

Anderson is not alone on his headline-grabbing journey. For a long time, the ruling Conservative Party and its leaders have been in denial about anti-Muslim hate in the country. The fact they are still in denial about the current manifestations of the problem only points to the situation getting worse. Some years ago, Johnson wrote that Muslim women who wear a veil look "ridiculous," like "letter boxes" or "bank robbers."

A former interior minister in a Conservative government claimed that the entire country was under Islamist rule and implied that British Muslims who protest against the war in Gaza are antisemitic. The list could go on. What is certain, sadly, is that Islamophobia, like anti-semitism, has continued to simmer beneath the surface in British society, only to emerge forcefully whenever divisive trends take control of the national discourse.

In the UK, a nation of many diverse communities and minority groups, this could easily become an incendiary situation. It must be carefully handled by everyone, on all sides, for the sake of the common good, social cohesion and the stability of the country.

Egypt's concerns regarding potential storming of Rafah

Dr. Abdellatif El-Menawy

THE threat of a possible Israeli military action targeting Rafah, a city adjacent to the Egyptian border, not only puts approximately 1 million displaced Palestinians at risk but also poses a danger to Egypt itself.

Cairo has repeatedly voiced its opposition to this Israeli measure, highlighting its potentially dangerous consequences for the Palestinian issue and the entire region.

Concerns have escalated over the possibility of more displaced people gathering near the Egyptian border, particularly in light of leaked plans from certain Israeli institutions suggesting the evacuation of the entire Gaza Strip as a solution to the crisis. Egypt has vehemently rejected such plans, fearing they would result in permanent displacement and a de facto liquidation of the Palestinian cause. It has stressed the necessity of a two-state solution, establishing an independent Palestinian state along the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Israel's threat of a ground attack on Rafah followed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's announcement of a plan for Israel to regain security control of the area around the Rafah border crossing with Egypt. Cairo denied any discussions with the US and Israel regarding this matter, while expressing grave concerns over any Israeli attempt to advance toward the Salah Al-Din Axis, also known as the Philadelphi Corridor. This would severely strain Egyptian-Israeli relations despite the long-standing peace treaty between the two nations.

Unofficial sources in Egypt have confirmed that an Israeli military invasion of Rafah would violate the terms of the peace agreement and its attached protocol. This agreement stipulates the presence of a limited Israeli military force in the so-called Area D, with observers from the UN. However, any attempt by Israel to move toward the Salah Al-Din Axis would be considered a breach. While the peace agreement has endured for a considerable period, certain provisions have been modified in response to changing circumstances. For instance, in 2021, Egypt and Israel announced the reinforcement of the Egyptian military presence in Area C to combat terrorist threats in North Sinai.

Any attempt by Israel to equate the invasion of Rafah with counterterrorism efforts in Sinai would be illogical. The attack on Rafah aims to alter its geographical and demographic landscape, unlike Egypt's military operations against terrorist organizations, which aim to protect its territory without altering it. Egypt's rejection of an attack on Rafah aligns with increasing warnings from the international and Arab communities about the potential catastrophic consequences if Israel follows through with its threat to invade the city.

Cairo is unwilling to settle for mere symbolic

gestures if its national security and territorial integrity are at risk or if the Palestinian cause is undermined. Militarily, Egypt has significantly fortified its borders with Gaza by creating a 5-km buffer zone and constructing concrete walls both above and below ground. These actions are in accordance with a 2016 agreement with Israel to bolster forces in Area C of the Sinai Peninsula, particularly along the border with Israel, amid ongoing extremist insurgency threats. Diplomatically, Egypt has presented a united front, employing a comprehensive array of diplomatic maneuvers and measures to safeguard its security interests. It has actively pursued a political course that rejects Israel's proposal to invade Rafah, garnering support from Arab and Islamic nations, while also rallying international backing to dissuade Tel Aviv from its military plans. Even EU countries have publicly denounced any potential military operations in Rafah.

Egypt has recourse to international law and positions, leveraging entities like the UN and its secretary-general to denounce Israel's actions and assert the illegitimacy of its control over Rafah. Furthermore, Egypt could opt to suspend certain bilateral agreements with Tel Aviv, including the landmark peace accord, as a response to perceived violations, which would inflict significant losses on Israel and undermine regional peace efforts. Alternatively, Egypt might withdraw from its mediation role between Israel and Palestine, complicating Israel's efforts to negotiate the release of captives and jeopardizing trade agreements like the Qualified Industrial Zones pact.

While public criticism between Egypt and Israel is rare, Egyptian officials have rebuked statements made by Israeli figures, such as Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who attempted to blame Cairo for attacks on Israel. Egypt's historical significance in the peace process cannot be overstated, as it was the first Arab nation to formally recognize Israel in 1979 and subsequently signed the peace treaty that led to Israel's return of the Sinai Peninsula. However, recent tensions, including reports of Egypt threatening to void the peace treaty if Israel were to invade Rafah, underscore the precarious nature of their relationship and the potential for escalation.

Reflecting on past crises, Egypt remains wary of the repercussions of a potential influx of Palestinian refugees reminiscent of the 2008 border crisis, when hundreds breached the Egypt-Gaza border after Israel's wall was breached. Such a scenario could strain Egypt's resources and exacerbate regional tensions. Urging restraint and rational dialogue, Egypt hopes to avert a full-blown crisis and mitigate the risks posed by escalating tensions in the region.

Arab News

G7 chair Italy assumes new importance in West

Andrew Hammond

PRIOR to becoming Italian prime minister in 2022, there were widespread reservations in the West about Giorgia Meloni's suitability for high office. However, her foreign policy actions so far, including her strong support for Ukraine, have surpassed initial expectations in key Western capitals.

The latest indication of this will come on Friday with Meloni's trip to North America to see US President Joe Biden and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, partly in her capacity as chair of the G7 in 2024. She will get a warm welcome in both Washington and Toronto, despite her previous spats with Trudeau. Top of the billing is Meloni's White House meeting. She has built up a good relationship with Biden, who initially had significant concerns about her far-right political roots.

She has more than surpassed his expectations with her strong support for

Ukraine, despite Italian public opinion being more sympathetic to Russia than much of the rest of Europe. The US president is also aware that, within Rome, anti-establishment political parties like The League - which forms part of the government coalition - had, prior to the Ukraine conflict, sought a reevaluation of Italy's relationship with Moscow, including calling for the lifting of pre-2022 EU sanctions. However, on Saturday, the second anniversary of the start of Russia's invasion, Meloni chaired the first meeting this year of the G7 leaders. This meeting confirmed their strong unity in support of Kyiv, as well as their determination to continue providing Ukraine with assistance and to strengthen sanctions against Moscow and any entities that allow sanctions to be circumvented.

Meloni also declared that one priority of this year's G7 will be "working on the reconstruction of Ukraine as a way to bet on a future of

peace, freedom and Euro-Atlantic prosperity for this nation." Moreover, she asked that the Russian authorities shed light on the circumstances surrounding the death of Alexei Navalny, while condemning the repression of political dissidents in Russia. Beyond Ukraine, Meloni has also moved to terminate Rome's membership of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. Italy's 2019 decision to join this huge infrastructure scheme sent shock waves across the Western world, as it became the first (and so far only) member to sign up under the administration of then-Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte. This produced a strong rebuke from the Trump administration, with Garrett Marquis, the US National Security Council spokesman at the time, asserting that there was "no need for the Italian government to lend legitimacy to China's infrastructure vanity project."

The rationale for U-turning on this issue is not just related to Western security. In addition, there is little evidence that Italy has economically benefited from the deal. Over the last four years, Italian exports to China have risen only modestly, to about 16.4 billion (\$17.7 billion dollars) in 2022 from a baseline of 13 billion in 2019. While Italy is not always seen as a top-tier global power, the reason Biden cares so much about the Rome-Washington relationship is the former's continued systemic importance in Europe and the wider West. This includes its chairing of the G7 during this critical year, with the conflict in Ukraine still underway and key elections taking place in multiple nations, including Russia, the US and the UK.

Italy's structural importance in the West is also illustrated by the fact that it is the

third-largest eurozone economy and it poses perhaps the biggest threat to the single currency area's future. This is because the country has the second biggest debt load in the eurozone at well over 100 percent of gross domestic product and its banking sector is under significant stress, with massive underperforming loans. In Canada, the agenda is economic as well as strategic. Italy and the 27 EU member states in general see in the vast North American country a huge partnership opportunity to help them diversify supply chains, especially on natural resources and green technologies, in the wake of the Ukraine war.

Hence the importance of the new Green Alliance, which also helps with the European goal of diversifying from the Chinese and Russian economies. Canada is one of the key Western allies that the EU would like to build stronger green economy supply chains with,

including critical raw materials, to help ensure the secure and sustainable supply of materials for Europe's industry. So, the attractiveness of Canada to the EU on the green front goes well beyond its hydrogen capabilities. There are also plans for much greater cooperation in areas like carbon pricing and trading. In the example of carbon pricing, both Canada and the EU have a shared interest in rolling out carbon markets internationally. Europe has announced it will become a partner of Trudeau's Global Carbon Pricing Challenge, which seeks to increase the explicit carbon pricing coverage of global emissions to 60 percent by 2030.

Meloni's important trip therefore has a significant economic dimension, but it will be strategic issues that dominate. Top of the list will be Ukraine amid growing Western concern about the course of the conflict, especially following recent Russian battlefield gains.

Neither Russia nor the West know how this war will end

Anna Arutunyan

WITH Switzerland due to play host to a Ukraine peace summit by the summer, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is placing high hopes it will "strengthen" his country. But with Russia's war against Ukraine in its third year, another summit is unlikely to offer a breakthrough - not just because Moscow will not be present, but more importantly because neither side has a clear vision of what a victory now means or how to achieve it.

Much continues to be assumed about Russian President Vladimir Putin's intentions to fully subjugate Ukraine - but while he'd take it if he could get it, the Kremlin is keeping its objectives as nebulous as they were when it started its "special military operation" two years ago. "There will be peace when we achieve our goals," Putin said in December, "the denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine, its neutral status." This means everything and nothing, and can be spun to mean whatever the Kremlin wants.

Western policymakers would be wiser to make judgements about the Kremlin's intentions based more on its actions than its words. Russia's war machine, while in a better position than a year ago, is hardly capable of taking Kyiv as it tried to do in the beginning of the war, and since mid-2022 it has focused on territorial gains in the east. After announcing the illegal annexation of Ukraine's Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia and Kherson regions in September 2022, Moscow has largely stuck to trying to capture the entirety of those regions. As for what it does if that ever happens, Moscow is signaling a far more aggressive posture to the West than it has the intent or capability to carry out, testing just how much it can get away with.

"The special military operation began as an operation against Ukraine, over time it took the form of a war against the collective West," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said recently. It is doing so in part because the plans and intentions of Ukraine's Western allies are so vague. Are the US, EU and UK offering Ukraine limited aid to defend its territory (as they seem to be actually doing) or are they indeed waging a proxy war to "defeat" Putin's Russia (as they seem to be saying)?

Just as the Kremlin is doing, Ukraine's Western allies are signaling their resolve to "defeat" Russia without actually articulating what that defeat means. Far from keeping the Kremlin on its toes, this strategic ambiguity actually makes Western powers look weak from Moscow's vantage point - over-promising to compensate for a lack of political will. This became glaringly obvious at the Munich Security Conference, where one policymaker's description summed up the substance of the West's Ukraine strategy: "Lots of words, no concrete commitments."

One reason for this is that over the last year, Ukraine's stated goal of victory - recapturing all the occupied Ukrainian territories, including Crimea, under Russian control for nearly a decade now - looks increasingly unrealistic. The military support Ukraine's allies are willing and capable of offering stops precisely where Ukraine's most pressing shortages lie: manpower. Despite French President Emmanuel Macron's recent grandstanding comments about "not excluding" sending troops to Ukraine, NATO powers are not seriously considering this destructive and escalatory step, and rightly so.

But in Ukraine, the issue still

stands. "The most immediate problem in every unit is lack of people," a Ukrainian company commander said recently, echoing mounting recognition on Ukraine's front lines of just how dire the problem has become. Indeed, Zelensky sacked his commander in chief, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, last month amid controversy over the suggestions that up to 500,000 more soldiers might be needed if Ukraine's goals were to be achieved. The proposal was both financially and politically unfeasible, so Zelensky dismissed the general and launched a "reset" of the military command, but without either expanding the army or scaling down his goals.

There is another problem: It's one thing to push Russian forces back to their positions before February 24, 2024 - however difficult that may be two years into the war - but it's quite another to dislodge de facto Russian administrations from territories in Donetsk, Luhansk and Crimea that they have occupied for a decade. But Ukraine's Western allies are failing to reckon with these realities and, amid growing reluctance by right-wing parties in the US and Europe to shoulder the costs, are resorting instead to triumphalist rhetoric.

A recent white paper from the Estonian Ministry of Defense pledged to "defeat Russia's imperialist theory of victory" but failed to define exactly what that entailed. Allies of former US President Donald Trump who oppose the aid package that has stalled in the US Congress may be wrong to think that \$60 billion won't "change the reality on the battlefield" - more weapons can and will help Ukraine hold their defense and perhaps regain more territory. But it will hardly guarantee the "fate of the free world" or "save democracy as we know it" as some

US lawmakers claimed in supporting the bill.

The trouble is, while more weapons and aid will help Ukraine defend itself, there can be no guarantees that a country of some 37 million people can ultimately defeat an adversary of more than 140 million. Airily suggesting that this is inevitable misleads Ukraine, sows mistrust among Western taxpayers, and signals weakness to Russia. Although there is scope to tighten the sanctions already in place, they will not force some rapid change in Kremlin policy, and as Western countries begin to run down their own stocks of weapons and ammunition, there is also a limit to how much extra military aid can be provided.

Law and justice may say that Ukraine deserves to liberate the occupied territories, but pragmatism suggests this may be a bloody or even unachievable goal. Western allies need to start recognizing their limited resources, or at least the limits to what they can or will offer Ukraine. This will mean being honest about defining what can practically be achieved. It is all very well declaring that the only acceptable goal is Putin's absolute "defeat." But when political and economic constraints limit the resources the West is prepared to deploy, continuing to insist on it may well back Kyiv into a corner, forcing it to choose between peace and a forever war in pursuit of an unclear notion of "victory."

However unpalatable and unfair, the best plausible victory may require not just amped-up military support for Ukraine, including serious security guarantees, but some recognition that Kyiv may have to abandon some of its goals, whether through promises of neutrality - or, as hard a pill as this is to swallow - some of the occupied territories.

Israel, ICJ and movement for a principled and just world order

Erin McCandless

SOUTH Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) is shaking the foundations of the rules-based international order. The increasing number of state and non-state actors voicing their support for this case, and Palestinian liberation in general, is signalling the emergence of a movement for a more principled, fair and just international order.

Indeed, states, regional bodies, international institutions and civil society organisations across the world are taking a stand against Israel's war on Gaza, and its Western allies' seemingly unconditional support for it. Demands are focussed on an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and a permanent and just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - a solution that considers the context of Israel's decades-long occupation of Palestinian territory and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

In the process, the moral, institutional and legal foundations for a more just and principled rules-based order are being built - one where acts of aggression are not overlooked, and international humanitarian law applies equally to everyone. The fragility of the current rules-based order was apparent long before the attack on Gaza.

With powerful permanent members routinely vetoing United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions according to their national interests and preferences, the international community has been struggling to take collective action to uphold humanitarian law, protect vulnerable communities and punish rogue actors. In a system built on asymmetrical and unjust colonial foundations, where financial, political and legal institutions have inherent shortcomings, selective adherence to international law has long caused dispute among nations. The UN itself cited the double standards in the application of certain rights as a threat to global security in its New Agenda for Peace, in July 2023 - months before the beginning of the latest attack on Gaza.

Israel's war on Gaza, and the world's response to it, however, have highlighted these existing shortcomings and sped up the system breakdown that was already under way. The global community's radically different response to Russia's international humanitarian law violations in Ukraine and those of Israel in Gaza made it apparent that under the current rules-based order, all human life is not valued equally.

Several Western countries' swift defunding of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on the basis of unsubstantiated Israeli claims that a handful of agency staff participated in Hamas's October 7 attack added weight to the growing criticism of the system. South Africa's case at the ICJ, which condemns Israel's war on Gaza as illegal and immoral, and suggests it amounts to genocide, has emerged as a powerful articulation of the Global South's ever-growing revolt against the hypocrisy and lack of consistency of the current rules-based order.

Meanwhile, steps are also being taken at the intergovernmental level to expose the current inconsistencies in the application of international law, and achieve a new, more just and principled rules-based order. While the US vetoes on UNSC resolutions calling for a ceasefire in Gaza are making collective action at this level impossible, the ICJ is currently considering a UN General Assembly initiative on the legal consequences of Israel's continuing occupation of Palestinian territory, requested with a majority vote in December 2022. After proceedings began earlier this month, a record 51 countries presented arguments on controversial Israeli policies in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and occupied East Jerusalem - with only two of these (the US and Hungary) defending the legality of the occupation. It's the largest number of parties to participate in any single ICJ case since the UN's top court was established in 1945. The court's opinion, which is

expected to be delivered before the end of the year, will not be binding on the Security Council or Israel. However, it could apply pressure on Israel and its staunchest ally, the United States, to conform to international law. Key regional blocs have also strongly condemned current and past Israeli actions and policies as violations of international humanitarian law and are demanding justice and equality for all peoples in the international arena. The 120-member Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has called out Israel's altering of the physical and demographic landscape of Palestine through settlement expansion and reinstated its commitment to defending its "longstanding, common and principled positions" on Palestine to end colonialism and occupation. The G77 (representing some 80 percent of the world's population) has stressed the need "to bring an end to the Israeli

continue providing military aid to Israel amidst its war on Gaza, and won. The court ordered the government to stop supplying F-35 fighter jet parts to Israel, citing a "clear risk of serious violations of international law". These court cases and others like them are serving as a warning to national governments that their disregard for international law can have consequences at home. They also demonstrate civil society's determination to bring humanitarian values and principles to the forefront of international relations.

In the meantime, the impact of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement has also been growing as a form of civil resistance to Israeli occupation. Across the Arab world, and globally, academic associations, unions, churches, local city councils and private investors have begun divesting from and cut ties with Israel in support of the BDS movement's goals. The cultural boycott of

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occupation that began in June 1967 and to address and resolve the root causes of this ongoing injustice, in accordance with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions". The BRICS countries have also condemned Israel's actions in Gaza and called for a ceasefire. Meanwhile, the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) voiced their support for South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the ICJ and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has strongly condemned Israeli aggression in Gaza, affirming its solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Civil society across the world has also been making demands and voicing aspirations for a more just and principled rules-based order through protests, boycotts, legal challenges and other nonviolent actions since the beginning of Israel's war on Gaza. In the first three weeks following Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel and the consequent Israeli assault on Gaza, some 3,700 pro-Palestinian protests took place around the world - in contrast, there were just over 520 pro-Israel protests in the same period. The pro-Palestine protests have continued with increasing force since, with most participants demanding an immediate ceasefire, an end to Israeli occupation and accountability for many Western governments' unconditional support for Israel's war on Gaza.

National courts have also become a venue for civil society to expose their government's complicity in Israel's war on Gaza, and the double standards that have come to define the global order. In the US state of California, for example, Palestinian Americans launched a federal case against the Biden administration accusing it of being complicit in the Gaza genocide and demanding that it stop supporting the Israeli military. The court eventually dismissed the case as being outside its jurisdiction but still ruled that Israel's military campaign in Gaza "plausibly" amounts to genocide, and called on the leaders of the US to examine "the results of their unflagging support of the military siege against the Palestinians in Gaza".

In the Netherlands, a group of NGOs including Oxfam challenged at a national court the Dutch government's decision to

Israel is also growing, with many global celebrities cancelling scheduled performances in Israel. There is also a push to keep Israel out of international cultural events, such as Eurovision.

As the war on the Palestinian people, described by international law professor Richard Falk as "the most transparent genocide in all of human history", is televised, a global movement for change is being mobilised - a movement for justice and equal treatment of all peoples under international law. Tragically for Palestinians, and all of humanity, there is still significant resistance to the clear demands being made by this movement. Against the ICJ's preliminary orders to prevent genocidal acts, Israel is still conducting airstrikes and blocking the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza. Ignoring the mounting global support for a ceasefire in Gaza, including from a majority of US voters, the Biden administration is still blocking UNSC resolutions calling for an end to hostilities. Despite the ICJ's preliminary ruling that Israel is plausibly committing genocide in Gaza, the US and a number of Western states continue to provide military, political and diplomatic support to their ally.

These immense challenges do not mean that the movement for a new, more just and principled rules-based order is not going to succeed. The movement has far-reaching roots and converging long-term goals. Achieving them will likely come through a non-linear but transformative process of social change. If the trends we are currently observing in courts, on the streets, at the UNGA and elsewhere continue, Israel and its allies will eventually be forced to back down and align their actions with international law. The growing support for the Palestinian cause across the world will bring the two sides on a more equal footing, and pave the way for an inclusive and fair political settlement that could address the root causes of the decades-old conflict and deliver long-term peace. Such an achievement, and precedent, will cement foundations for a more principled and just rules-based order - one that protects the vulnerable from extreme acts of aggression and holds all countries equally accountable to international law.

Aljazeera

We must help Ukraine now or fight costlier wars later

Mark T. Esper

AS Russia resurges in Ukraine and proxy fights expand across the Middle East, one critical question weighs heavily in everyone's minds: Is the United States still a credible ally willing to lead the free world? Whether Congress chooses to provide the continued financial support Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan desperately need will go a long way toward answering this question. And make no mistake, it is not just our allies who are wondering. Our adversaries are paying close attention as well.

For the past few months, Congress has been locked in a stalemate over approving this funding. Meanwhile, our partners' need for this assistance continues to grow, particularly in Ukraine where soldiers are rationing ammunition due to dangerously low stockpiles and civilian neighborhoods are requiring more air defense systems to protect against indiscriminate Russian barrages. Without renewed US support, the arms pipeline to Ukraine will continue to dwindle over the coming months, directly impacting what happens on the battlefield. The recent loss of the eastern Ukrainian city of Avdiivka in the face of a nonstop Russian onslaught has been blamed in part on an inadequate supply of Western artillery rounds. With the scale and scope of this scarcity increasing with each passing month, we could see city after city fall into Russian President Vladimir Putin's hands as Washington's dysfunction continues. This additional aid is not a matter of charity. In the case of Ukraine, over 60% of the military assistance Congress allotted since the beginning of the war is benefiting the US economy. Funds approved to arm Ukraine are helping replenish American weapons stockpiles and build new

systems, which in turn has delivered a major cash infusion to plants and workers in more than 30 states. It also has had a salutary impact on the revitalization of the US defense industrial base, which is especially important as we prepare for the greater threat that Communist China presents.

Republicans are right to raise concerns about the nation's debt and deficits. Both are exorbitant and unsustainable. But these important fiscal matters should not trump national security, nor should they force officials to choose one regional problem over another or even over border security. At the end of the day, it furthers America's own security interests and values to help our democratic partners defend themselves against the world's autocracies. We are far better off in a world where Ukraine successfully repels the Russian invasion, Israel dismantles the Iranian-backed Hamas terrorists and Taiwan deters a Chinese attack than we would be living with the alternatives. If we fail to provide continued support, the negative ramifications will be significant. For one, it would cause our allies around the world to doubt America's leadership and resolve. We are already seeing considerable concern from international partners as we waver on Ukraine. It is true that our NATO partners need to do much more, beginning with meeting their decade-old commitment to spend 2% of their GDP on defense, and our southern border needs to be secured too, but neither of these are sufficient reasons to starve Kyiv of much-needed US weapons and other materiel.

It is also true that this war could last for many more years, requiring US and other Western support for just as long. While President Joe Biden

did a respectable job rallying NATO to Ukraine's defense two years ago, history will judge his skittish reluctance to provide Kyiv the weapons it needed when it needed them, time and time again, as a major reason why Ukraine's counteroffensive failed and why this war will drag on. These are still not worthy reasons, though, to deny the brave people of Ukraine the arms they need to push the Russians back, exhausting Moscow in the process and possibly leading to a resolution that favors Kyiv. It is not just our European allies who are watching with apprehension. As China continues to threaten the Indo-Pacific, key partners such as Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines are closely monitoring whether Washington will fail Kyiv. If the United States is unwilling to help Ukraine beat back a Russian invasion that does not require the commitment of US forces, how can Taiwan trust we will come to their aid if China moves against them - an act of aggression that could require a much greater investment of American treasure and potentially involve our troops as well?

Failing to approve additional funding only emboldens our adversaries. It is no longer credible to suggest we can treat China, Russia and Iran as disconnected threats. This authoritarian axis has been working in a coordinated manner with the goal of undermining American leadership and dismantling international rules and norms. Each is watching closely to see how the US responds to their attacks and provocations. How effectively (or not) we counter one will absolutely inform the calculus of the others. Just as America's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan emboldened Russia to invade its neighbor,

walking away now from Ukraine will further incentivize aggression from this authoritarian axis. If Putin is successful in Ukraine, there is little evidence to suggest he will be content to stop there, which increases the chances the United States and NATO could eventually get drawn into a direct confrontation with Russia. Some of our allies are physically fortifying their borders for such a future.

A short distance away in the Middle East, Iran and its proxies are likely to further destabilize the region. Absent bolder action from Washington, this will put our close ally Israel and US forces under even more pressure. And if Chinese leader Xi Jinping believes American resolve will easily crumble as we increasingly look inward, the odds of Chinese military action against Taiwan will only increase as he may calculate that even a stalemate would eventually turn in China's favor. Both our allies and adversaries are connecting the dots, even if certain American officials are unable or unwilling to do so. We cannot leave any doubt about our credibility as an ally or the strength of our resolve, and we must not abandon our partners on the front lines of this fight. Politics must be set aside, and politicians who spurn allies, coddle autocrats and argue for American retrenchment should be ignored. While engaging abroad, deterring conflict and helping friends defeat aggression is the right thing to do, it is also admittedly expensive; however, the consequences of not doing so are far, far greater in the long run. Leadership is a heavy cross to bear, indeed, but the benefits of doing so - especially in the face of clear threats - will always outweigh the costs and favor the United States.

CNN

Mandatory conscription signals Myanmar junta's desperation

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

MYANMAR, once a nation brimming with hope for democracy, finds itself mired in the throes of conflict, despair and authoritarian rule. This month's announcement that a 2010 law for mandatory conscription into the nation's military will now be enforced stands as a stark testament to the desperation of the junta in the face of mounting rebellion.

As rebels seize territory and challenge the regime's grip on power, it is becoming increasingly evident that it is teetering on the brink of defeat. The decision to enforce mandatory conscription underscores the military government's acknowledgment of its dwindling control over the country. As rebels capture swaths of territory and challenge military strongholds, the regime is resorting to drastic measures in an effort to shore up its ranks. Conscription reflects not strength but rather the regime's profound weakness and inability to quell the rising tide of dissent.

According to the 2010 law, which had not been enforced until now, men between the ages of 18 and 35 and women between the ages of 18 and 27 are required to serve in the military for up to two years. Specialists, such as doctors, up to the age of 45 must serve for three years. State media announced on Saturday that the period of service can be extended to a maximum of five years during the ongoing state of emergency. For years, the military in Myanmar has

wielded unchecked power, suppressed voices of opposition and perpetuated a culture of fear and repression. However, the resilience of the nation's people and their unwavering commitment to democracy have shattered the illusion of invincibility that once surrounded the junta. As protests have erupted across the country and rebel forces have gained ground, the regime's stranglehold on power has begun to unravel.

Since the end of October, against all odds, ethnic armies and pro-democracy fighters have successfully captured more than 400 Burmese army bases and about 30 towns. The junta is facing an unprecedented threat. On Jan. 31, the eve of the third anniversary of the coup d'etat in which the military seized power, the regime further extended the state of emergency for another six months. The success of the rebels has accelerated as ethnic armed organizations advocating for autonomy along Myanmar's borders have joined forces with anti-coup factions in a conflict that has escalated to levels unprecedented in the country's history.

The resistance forces are united not only in opposition to a shared adversary but by a collective aspiration to dismantle the military-controlled political structure and establish a federal democracy that respects the rights of its ethnic minorities to self-determination. The specter of

defeat now looms large over the junta, casting a shadow of uncertainty over Myanmar's future. With each passing day, the rebels grow stronger, emboldened by the support of ordinary citizens and fueled by a justic desire for freedom and justice. Meanwhile, the military finds itself increasingly isolated, clinging to power through sheer force and intimidation.

Even the military-installed president, Myint Swe, a former general, has sounded the alarm, warning of the country's perilous descent into chaos and disintegration. His dire pronouncements serve as a sobering reminder of the junta's precarious position and the existential threat posed to it by the burgeoning rebellion. As the conflict escalates and any prospect of reconciliation fades, Myanmar stands on a precipice, teetering between the forces of tyranny and the promise of democracy.

The failure of the regime to address the root causes of unrest and inequality has only exacerbated the crisis, pushing Myanmar to the brink of civil war. The imposition of mandatory conscription is not a solution but rather a desperate attempt to cling to power in the face of overwhelming opposition. By compelling young people to take up arms against their fellow citizens, the junta is sowing the seeds of further discord and division, deepening the fissures that

threaten to tear Myanmar apart. In the face of mounting repression and violence, the international community must stand in solidarity with the nation's people, offering support and assistance as they strive to reclaim their democratic rights.

Targeted sanctions and diplomatic pressure can help to further isolate the junta and compel it to heed the demands of the people. Moreover, efforts to mediate a peaceful resolution to the conflict must be redoubled, with a focus on fostering dialogue and reconciliation among all parties. Ultimately, the fate of Myanmar rests in the hands of its people, who have shown remarkable courage and resilience in the face of adversity. As they continue to defy the forces of tyranny and oppression, they offer a beacon of hope for a brighter, more democratic future. The road ahead is fraught with uncertainty and peril but the spirit of freedom and justice that animates the people of the country cannot be extinguished. In their struggle for democracy, they inspire us all to stand up and speak out against injustice, wherever it may arise.

As the junta struggles to reclaim lost territory and maintain its grip on power, it risks plunging Myanmar deeper into turmoil and chaos. The international community must stand in solidarity with the people of the country as they strive to realize their aspirations for democracy and human rights. The time for action is now, before it is too late.



PSX stay bullish, gains 875 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 875.07 points, a positive change of 1.37 percent, closing at 64,578.52 points against 63,703.45 points the previous trading day.

A total of 424,043,562 shares valuing Rs17.053 billion were traded during the day as compared to 461,390,885 shares valuing Rs 16.000 billion the last day.

Some 364 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 188 of them recorded gains and 161 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 15 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 54,958,235 shares at Rs.4.90 per share, Hascol Petrol with

31,867,000 shares at Rs 8.01 per share, and Kohinoor Spinning with 19,820,000 shares at Rs 4.69 per share.

Pakistan Services Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 52.18 per share price, closing at Rs 792.18, whereas the runner-up was Millat Tractors Limited with a Rs 42.27 rise in its per share price to Rs 605.90.

Bata Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 33.00 per share closing at Rs 1,667.00, followed by Reliance Cotton Spinning Mills Limited with Rs 31.45 decline to close at Rs460.55.

Rupee stands at break-even point against Dollar

Pakistani rupee witnessed no change against the US Dollar in the inter-bank trading on Thursday

and closed at the previous day's closing rate of Rs 279.11.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.3 and Rs 282.2, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 30 paise to close at Rs 302.41 against the last day's closing of Rs 302.11, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen gained 01 paise to close at Rs186, whereas a decrease of 06 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 353.24 compared to the last closing of Rs 353.30.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal remained unchanged to close at Rs 75.99 and Rs 74.42 respec-

tively.

Gold rates up by Rs.900 per tola to Rs 215,700

The price of per tola 24 karat gold increased by Rs900 and was sold at Rs 215,700 on Thursday compared to its sale at Rs 214,800 on the last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs772 to Rs184,928 from Rs184,156 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs169,517 from Rs168,810, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten-gram silver remained constant at Rs2,570 and Rs2,203.36 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$09 to \$2,057 from \$2,048, the Association reported.



ISLAMABAD: Representatives of OGDCL and ISGS exchanging documents after signing MoU.

Sindh Bank announces results

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Board of Directors of Sindh Bank convened on February 22, 2024, to assess and approve the annual audited accounts for the period ending December 31, 2023.

In the financial year, the Bank recorded a profit before tax of Rs 657 million, with a consistent growth trajectory throughout the year. This was backed by record quarterly profits, contrasting with a loss before tax of Rs. 2,269 million reported same period last year in 2022.

Profit after tax amounted to Rs 2.16 billion compared to post tax loss of Rs. Rs.1.38 billion last year, with earnings per share reported at Rs 0.72 compared to loss per share of Rs(0.54) in last year same period.

Sindh Bank witnessed substantial growth in deposits, trade business and new accounts opened during the year. Following a consistent business and revamping trajectory, the Bank has made a significant come back in almost all the areas of the business as well as enabling operations. The bank has successfully accomplished its restructuring and rescheduling settlements through management of its Non-Performing portfolio. The deposits surged to a record level of Rs 223 billion, total assets crossing a level of Rs 300 billion. The Bank's Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) has been recorded at 16.21 per cent by December 31, 2023. Risk Rating has also improved as well. The bank is destined to cater the SME segment across the country and has introduced newer products like Solar Power Financing, Trade business volume increased to Rs 125 billion compared to the 40 billion in last year, while the number of accounts reached a notable increase of 42.23 per cent over the previous year.

The bank's branch network spans 330 on-line branches spread across 169 cities/towns across Pakistan which includes 14 dedicated Islamic Banking branches offering a diverse range of market-based Shariah Compliant products and services. Sindh Bank remains committed to supporting multi-sectoral ventures in health, education and community welfare fostering financial inclusion, gender diversity, healthcare and educational initiatives.

FCCI emerges as 1st E-chamber

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) has emerged as the first E-chamber of the country by starting a 24/7 online digitalise service to issue new as well as renewal of the existing memberships.

Acting President FCCI Dr Sajjad Arshad renewed the first membership of his firm through this facility while Vice President FCCI Hajji Muhammad Aslam Bhalli was also present during the inaugural ceremony.

Dr Sajjad Arshad termed E-chamber a revolutionary step taken by the FCCI to digitise its system and facilitate its members who could avail from FCCI services without visiting the chamber. "They could also make online payments," he said and added that arrangements were underway to offer other services to its valued members.

OGDCL and ISGS sign MoU

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) and Inter State Gas Systems (Private) Limited (ISGS) have agreed to collaborate for the development of the Strategic Underground Gas Storage (SUGS) Project to address the challenge of surplus gas management in Pakistan.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between OGDCL and ISGS on Thursday at the OGDCL House in

Islamabad. The parties will evaluate potential opportunities in developing SUGS at OGDCL fields to enhance the country's energy infrastructure and ensure efficient utilization of gas resources.

The SUGS Project is a critical initiative designed to establish storage facilities for surplus gas, particularly during off-peak seasons when demand is low relative to supply in the Pakistani market. Through the SUGS Project, OGDCL and ISGS aim to mitigate these challenges

by creating storage capacity and facilitating gas swapping arrangements with other stakeholders in the industry on commercial basis.

Subject to technical and commercial feasibility, project involves the development of withdrawal wells, compressors, and connecting pipelines and construction of storage facilities capable of accommodating up to 15 billion cubic feet (BCF) of gas, equivalent to five cargoes, sufficient for a period of two months.

ICCI team visits POF to explore trade opportunities

ISLAMABAD (INP): Led by President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, a delegation of the chamber on Thursday visited the Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) and held a meeting with Chairman POF Lt. Gen. Syed Tahir Hameed Shah to explore business opportunities for the private sector in the defense industry.

Chairman POF, Lt. Gen. Syed Tahir Hameed Shah briefed the ICCI delegation about the role of Pakistan Ordnance Factories, which was the country's premier defense production organization. He said that besides meeting the defense needs of the country, POF exports its products to several countries around the world. He said that POF imports many parts and equipment to produce its finished products and said that POF would welcome local vendors who can supply it with parts and equipment according to the required standards.

The Chairman said that POF was the largest defense industrial complex comprising 14 ordnance

factories and three commercial subsidiaries. He said that the surplus products of POF were sold in the civil market and the standards of POF products were not less than any international company. He said that good care was taken in maintaining the standards of all products of POF and its subsidiaries. He said that the business community should explore prospects of joint ventures in various projects of defense industries operating under the umbrella of POF.

Speaking on the occasion, ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari lauded the role of POF in making the defense of the country stronger. He said that POF was playing a key role in moving towards self-sufficiency and in meeting the growing demands of our defense sector and civilian security agencies, which was a source of pride for us.

He lauded the efforts of POF for capturing foreign markets by improving its efficiency, adopting quality financial management practices, and digitizing its processes to transform itself into a self-sustainable

and progressive defense-industrial complex.

Ahsan Zafar assured that the business community was ready to provide all possible support and cooperation to POF in its objectives and goals. He said that the ICCI has established a display center on its premises and was ready to provide space in that facility to POF for displaying its products. He discussed the prospects of private sector collaboration with POF on a public-private partnership basis.

Former President and Secretary General UBG Pakistan, Zafar Bakhtawari said that defense exports are not only an important source of earning foreign exchange, but they also help in improving Pakistan's relations with other countries. He stressed that Pakistan should focus on SAARC, ECO and D-8 countries for promoting defense exports.

Maqsood Tabish, Sheikh Muhammad Ejaz, Ch. Muhammad Ali, Faseeh Ullah Khan, Ameer Hamza, Khalid Chaudhry, Saif ur Rehman Khan, Ms. Fatima Hassan, and others were in the delegation.

60 years of excellence celebrated by Millat Tractors



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Millat Tractor Ltd, the leading manufacturer of Agricultural Tractors, Farm Machinery & Power Generators in Pakistan, celebrated its 60 years of Excellence and success as the country's largest tractor selling company since 1964.

At this auspicious occasion the Chairman Millat Group, Mr. Sikandar Mustafa Khan paid rich tributes to its founding father Mr. Rana Khuda Dad, its Board of Directors, past & present employees, management and workers who had the vision of accelerating MTL towards

the path of localization and tapping global markets with its wide range of products.

The CEO MTL Mr. Raheel Asghar congratulated all its stakeholders, partners and employees for their invaluable contributions and prayed that MTL continues to strengthen and serve the economy of Pakistan.

At this special occasion, the company released its "Millat Anthem Song" expressing its enthusiasm and association with the farmers, their struggle to provide and the dedication of its workforce. This video anthem song depicted diversity, vibrancy and patriotic emotions of the

company towards the motherland.

On this historic milestone, honoring the needs of the farming community, the company launched 02 new tractor models as a gift for the farmers introducing its Deluxe series with MF-260 Deluxe and MF-385 Deluxe, which are a work of art in terms of Power, Safety, Comfort and Reliability and will help further to uplift economic progress in the country.

Industry stalwarts and guests praised the services of Millat Tractors Ltd towards the prosperity of Pakistan's professionally skilled workforce and its farming community.

USAP-CMA team of ICAO lauds PCAA for notable achievements



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The USAP-CMA Audit Team from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has completed its assessment of Pakistan's aviation security systems. Today, a briefing was held at the headquarters of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), where the team, consisting of four

members, provided an overview of the full-scale audit conducted on Pakistan's aviation industry security systems.

During the debriefing session, Mr. Oscar Rubio Annibal, the team leader, congratulated the Director General (DG) of CAA on the significant improvements made, particularly following the recent enact-

ment of the CAA Act 2023 legislation.

The team was pleased to see that CAA not only surpassed the new 2023 ICAO benchmark effortlessly, but also came close to achieving the ICAO goals set for 2030.

During the assessment, the audit team primarily focused on evaluating the CAA Aviation Security Directorate for a duration of five days.

Subsequently, for the following four days, they examined the implementation of security protocols in various aviation security areas at Jinnah International Airport, including the airport itself, the Airport Security Force (ASF), domestic and international airlines, cargo companies, ground handling companies, catering companies, and more.

Additionally, the team visited the Passport Office and received a briefing, and expressed their satisfaction with what they observed. They also interacted with the FIA immigration staff and reviewed their procedures. This comprehensive assessment took place after 2019, which was not a full-scale audit.

The ICAO USAP CMA Audit Team expressed their deep appreciation for the warm and welcoming hospitality they experienced in Pakistan. At the conclusion of the briefing, the DG CAA presented the audit team with CAA souvenirs.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships namely, Marathopolis, Blue Cecil, Xin Hai Tong 29, Chemtrans Baltic and Chemroad Aqua scheduled to load/offload Containers, Corn, Coal and Chemicals, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Grain Terminal, Oil Terminal and Engro Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Al-Fuwairit, Star Sino and African Baza carrying Containers LNG, Palm oil and Coal also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the last 24 hours.

A total of eleven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two shops, Marathopolis and MSC London left the port on today morning and three more ships, Chemroad Aqua, Sunny Bay and Clemenet Schulte are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Court Notice

In the Court of Samina Sehar Civil Judge XIII. JFC- II Bannu. Suit No. 129/FC Institution No. 04.09.2023 Next date of hearing 09-03-2024 case title. Mst. Mehnaza Bibi vs Rasool Zaman etc. Notice to Rasool Zaman S/o Ahmad Zaman R/o Mirdal kala Tehsil and District Bannu. Presently address: Manfouhah Al Jadidah Riyadh Saudi Arabia. Mobile # 0096659529872. Whereas in the above case titled the service of above defendant(s) is not possible through ordinary means, therefore, you defendant(s) is/are informed through this publication that on 09-03-2024 at 8.00 AM. You has/have to appear before this court either personally or through attorney or through counsel to pursue the suit noted above, otherwise, ex-parte proceeding will be initiated against you.

1st ever mega event to be held in Khuzdar

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) dedicated to promote growth of Engineering Education for which PEC Pakistan Development Committee Convener Engr. Mir Masood Rashid inviting at the 6th Engineering CAPSTONE EXPO.

FAISALABAD (FYDP: Final Year Design Projects Exhibition) and 2nd in Balochistan region. ENGR Muhammad Najeeb Haroon Chairman PEC (Ex-MNA) will be the chief guest.

1st ever Mega event at Khuzdar, this CAPSTONE will be held on Saturday 2nd March 2024 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Balochistan University of Engineering and Technology Khuzdar.

In this expo 4 universities are participating with 79 shortlisted projects for showcasing out of which 9 projects funded by PEC. In

this CAPSTONE Engineering Universities will showcase their Engineering students' projects that pertain to market/industry, where industries being invited to participate and select projects as per their business need.

CAPSTONE is the PEC initiative 1st time in Pakistan by PEC Pakistan Development Committee. Project selection criteria: All projects commercially viable and sustainable: 1) Leading Entrepreneur; 2) Industry/business relevant; 3) Social/Civic impact; and 4) Innovation. This opportunity being granted by PEC which is free and being organized to help our Engineers gain more market exposure as well as be able to network with world-class manufacturers of different varieties of engineering products.

Engineering students will know the need of the

industry and how markets are working and seeking Engineering solutions to industrial problems. FYDP's will be given media projection at industrial and governmental platform as per present needs of the country (preferably solutions to Industrial and societal problem), and for facilitating talent & growth opportunities of Young Engineers. Market compatible projects being sponsored by PEC.

Pakistan Engineering Council is a national apex regulatory body constituted through an enactment of the Parliament (PEC Act 1976) to regulate the engineering profession. The Council as per its Act has also special mandate to act as a "Think Tank to the Federal Government" to aid in all matters pertaining to engineering profession and policies required for the socio-economic development of the country.

SKMT launches Zakat collection campaign

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Shaukat Khanum Memorial Trust (SKMT) has launched its Zakat collection campaign this year with the theme "Their Lives Depend On It," which aims to highlight the vital role philanthropy plays in supporting treatment of cancer for all patients, especially children. On this occasion, Dr Faisal Sultan, CEO of SKMT said that a cancer diagnosis brings multiple challenges, including emotional and financial costs associated with treatment. He explained, "At our hospitals in Lahore and Peshawar, we provide all-encompassing care to our patients, including physical and psychological support. Over

the last 29 years, support of generous donors has enabled SKMT to provide quality treatment to deserving cancer patients, irrespective of their ability to pay."

Dr Faisal Sultan also commented on the impact of charity given to SKMT last year. "In 2023, the generous support of people enabled us to provide free of charge treatment worth Rs. 13 billion to over 75 percent of our cancer patients. The proportion of Zakat in this was over fifty percent, which shows that Zakat plays a crucial role in funding treatment of needy cancer patients and it is not enough in itself to cover the costs of direct patient care. Zakat is utilised on the treatment of eligible patients only based on a consistent and fair methodology.

Shaukat Khanum Memorial Trust is also independently certified for Shariah compliance, confirming that the framework we follow for collection, utilisation, and management of Zakat funds is in line with Islamic principles. The entire amount collected in the form of Zakat is completely exhausted in providing direct patient care within the same year. During the ongoing economic situation, more people are expected to need financially supported treatment. In these circumstances, your support can play a crucial role in saving lives. We hope that Pakistanis from around the world will give their Zakat to Shaukat Khanum Hospitals for patients fighting cancer because their lives depend on it!"



In brief

Punjab Handball League from today

SARGODHA (APP): The Talent Hunt Youth Sports League, under the supervision of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, would organise the Punjab Handball Provincial League matches from Friday, March 1. The league matches would continue till March 5 at the University of Sargodha, and feature regional handball teams from across the province. The opening ceremony would take place at the District Sports Gymnasium in Sargodha, with Sargodha University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr. Qaiser Abbas as the chief guest. According to the event organising secretary, Mahr Ahmad Khan Haral, who's sports director at the University of Sargodha, the competition would be held under a league system. The top performing players would be selected for two teams by Pakistan's certified international level technical officials/ selectors, and the teams would represent Punjab in the National Handball League, he added.

Iyer, Ishan lose central contracts

MUMBAI (Cricinfo): The top tier of the BCCI's annual central contracts has remained unchanged, with Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah and Ravindra Jadeja in the A+ category. But Shreyas Iyer and Ishan Kishan were not part of the list of 30 contracted players for the 2023-24 season - the list has been expanded from last season's 26. Iyer, who was one of the key performers in India's run to the World Cup final last November, lost his Grade B contract despite fulfilling the minimum criteria set by the board in terms of matches played. Since last October, when the latest contract period started (it runs from October 1, 2023, to September 30, 2024), Iyer played four Tests, 12 ODIs and two T20Is. Two of those Tests were the first two of the ongoing series against England, where he struggled for form and was left out for the remainder of the series. Not long after that, Iyer informed the Mumbai Cricket Association that he had been suffering from back spasms, and would not be available for the Ranji Trophy quarter-final against Baroda. Since then, though, Iyer has made himself available and is part of Mumbai's squad for the semi-final against Tamil Nadu on March 2. Kishan had a Grade C contract last year.

Juventus midfielder 'shocked'

LONDON (BBC): Juventus midfielder Paul Pogba says he is "sad, shocked and heartbroken" after being banned from football for four years for a doping offence. The France international, 30, was provisionally suspended in September after a drugs test found elevated levels of testosterone in his system. "Everything I have built in my professional career has been taken away from me," he said in a statement. The former Manchester United player added he would appeal. Pogba was randomly tested after Juventus' first match of the season on 20 August. The positive test was confirmed by Italy's national anti-doping tribunal in a second sample in October, and the anti-doping prosecutor's office requested a four-year suspension. Juventus told the BBC they received notification from the anti-doping tribunal on Thursday morning.

Rutherford blitz ensures Quetta snatch last-ball win over Karachi

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): West Indian batter Sherfane Rutherford handed Quetta Gladiators their fourth victory of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 2024 tournament on Thursday, smashing a fiery half-century as the Gladiators edged out Karachi Kings, the home side, in a last-ball thriller. Batting first, the Kings were considerably troubled by the Gladiators' bowling line-up. Spinner Abrar Ahmed returned figures of 3/31 while Usman Tariq and Akeal Hosein finished with figures of 2/16 and 2/34 respectively. James Vince top-scored for the Kings, scoring 37 runs from 25 balls while all-rounder Anwar Ali

contributed with an impressive 25 runs from 14 balls. The Kings finished with a score of 165-8 from their 20 overs. "Purple Force breathe.. we have won the thrilling encounter," the Gladiators wrote on social media platform X after securing the win. The Gladiators had a strong start to their batting, with opener Jason Roy scoring 53 runs from 31 balls while left-handed Saud Shakeel scored 24 runs from 20 balls. Middle order batters Khawaja Nafay, former skipper Sarfaraz Ahmed and Gladiators skipper Rilee Rossouw fell in quick succession, all failing to score in the double digits.

However, an 80-run stand between Rutherford and Hosein proved to be fatal for the Kings, who lost to Quetta by five wickets in the end. Rutherford scored 58 runs from 31 balls, smashing six sixes and a four at a strike rate of 187.10. Hosein, on the other hand, scored 22 runs from 17 balls. For the Kings, Hasan Ali and Zahid Mahmood were the best bowlers, returning figures of 2/39 and 2/17 respectively. The Gladiators remain at number two on the PSL points table, with four wins from their five matches so far. The Kings remain at the number five spot with only two wins from their five matches in this year's PSL.

Jason Roy, Dawid Malan, Amy Jones in Hundred 2024 draft

LONDON (Cricinfo): Jason Roy, Dawid Malan and Amy Jones are among the England players who will on the block in next month's draft for the 2024 Hundred, after player retentions for the eight teams were confirmed. Roy was one of the most high-profile names among those released, having helped Oval Invincibles to win the men's competition last year. Roy averaged 17.11 with a strike rate of 128.33 and his expected involvement in Major League Cricket - which will clash with the Hundred in 2024 - is likely to have been a factor. Invincibles also opted not to retain two of their overseas players, Sunil Narine and Heinrich Klaasen, both of whom featured in the first edition of MLC. There will, however, be an overlap of talent at the Hundred and MLC, with Rashid Khan (Trent Rockets), Finn Allen (Southern Brave), Haris Rauf (Welsh Fire), Adam Zampa and Spencer Johnson (both Oval Invincibles) all retained for this summer despite their involvement in the US, and other names likely to appear in the final draft list, which will be confirmed on Monday. Malan and Tom Kohler-Cadmore were among the

top earners at Trent Rockets but both will go back into the pool, as will Tom Banton, who was not retained by Northern Superchargers. Ollie Pope, who has an ECB red-ball central contract, was not retained by Welsh Fire. In the women's competition, where the three highest pay bands have received a significant boost, there will be seven spots to fill in the top £50,000 bracket. Jones, England's first-choice wicketkeeper, was let go by Birmingham Phoenix, while the retirements of Katherine Sciver-Brunt and Anya Shrubsole have opened up spaces at Rockets and Southern Brave respectively. Ellyse Perry, Sophie Devine (both Phoenix), Marizanne Kapp (Invincibles), Phoebe Litchfield (Superchargers), Hayley Matthews and Shabnim Ismail (both Fire) are among the overseas players who will be coming back. In all, 137 players have been retained - men's teams could retain up to 10 players, women's teams eight - with 75 spots to be filled via the draft on the March 20. Northern Superchargers, who finished last in 2023, will have the first pick in the men's draft, with Birmingham Phoenix starting things off in the women's. Teams will each have

one Right-to-Match card at their disposal, allowing them to re-sign a player who was in their squad last year, as long as they match the salary band of the rival team bidding in the draft. The Hundred will get going on July 23 with a double-header at The Oval and run for four weeks, with the finals to be held at Lord's on August 18. Retained players Birmingham Phoenix Women: Sophie Devine, Ellyse Perry, Issy Wong, Emily Arlott, Hannah Baker, Sterre Kalis, Charis Pavely Birmingham Phoenix Men: Chris Woakes, Liam Livingstone, Moeen Ali, Ben Duckett, Benny Howell, Adam Milne, Jamie Smith, Will Smeed, Tom Helm, Jacob Bethell London Spirit Women: Heather Knight, Grace Harris, Danielle Gibson, Charlie Dean, Sarah Glenn, Georgia Redmayne, Sophie Munro, Tara Norris London Spirit Men: Zak Crawley, Nathan Ellis, Dan Lawrence, Dan Worrall, Liam Dawson, Adam Rossington, Olly Stone, Matt Critchley, Daniel Bell-Drummond Manchester Originals Women: Sophie Ecclestone, Laura Wolvaardt, Emma Lamb, Mahika Gaur, Fi Morris, Kathryn Bryce, Elly Threlkeld, Liberty Heap

Sindh Police wins over NYP in T-20 cricket match

KARACHI (APP): The Karachi Academy on Thursday hosted a riveting T-20 cricket match between the Sindh Police and the New York Police (NYP) teams. IGP Sindh Riffat Mukhtar Raja, was the chief guest on the occasion. Opting to bat first after winning the toss, the NYP team set a target of 87 runs, showcasing their batting prowess. However, the early players of the Sindh Police team displayed exceptional skill and determination, successfully

chasing down the target in just 13 overs, clinching a well-deserved victory. IGP Sindh lauded the players for their remarkable performance, rewarding them with cash prizes and commendation certificates in recognition of their outstanding contributions both in batting and bowling. Moreover, a special commemorative shield was presented to the visiting New York Police Cricket Team as a token of appreciation from the Sindh Police. Reflecting on the signifi-

cance of sports in enhancing physical and mental well-being, Raja emphasized the vital role sports play in fostering overall fitness and resilience. The event witnessed the presence of various dignitaries including Joint DG Intelligence Bureau Azad Khan, DIGPs from West, East, and South, SSP East, and several other police officials, underscoring the importance of such sporting initiatives in promoting healthy competition within law enforcement agencies.

Lahore Garrison University wins HEC All Pakistan Inter-Varsity Tug of War tournament

PESHAWAR (APP): The All Pakistan Inter-Varsity Tug-of-War tournament concluded here, with Lahore Garrison University emerging as the Champion. In a thrilling final match, Lahore Garrison University defeated the University of Central Punjab by 2-1 to clinch the title. The prestigious event, organized by Islamia College University Peshawar under the patronage of the Pakistan Higher Education Commission (HEC), saw intense competition from universities across the country. A total of 12 Universities team from across the country took part. The closing ceremony, attended by Malik Abdul Latif, Director of North West Hospital Hayatabad

as chief guest, was marked by presenting the trophies and cash prizes to the standout athletes. Director Admission Islamia College, Amir Izhar, along with Firdous Khan, Naveed Ahmed, and Mohammad Nawaz, were also present to witness the culmination of the tournament. Expressing his support for sports activities in educational institutions, Malik Abdul Latif emphasized the importance of sports in fostering mental and physical well-being among students. He commended the efforts of HEC in promoting sports activities nationwide, highlighting the positive impact of sports in nurturing a healthy and disciplined youth. In his address, Malik Abdul Latif lauded the

sportsmanship and discipline exhibited by the participating teams, emphasizing the role of universities in producing athletes who bring honor to their institutions and the nation. He also acknowledged the meticulous arrangements made by Islamia College Director of Sports, Ali Hoti, in ensuring the success of the event. The tournament not only showcased the talent and competitive spirit of the participating universities but also underscored the significance of sports in shaping the character and well-being of the youth. As the athletes and officials departed for their respective cities, they left behind a legacy of sportsmanship and camaraderie that will continue to inspire future generations.



KARACHI: Quetta Gladiators batter Saud Shakeel plays a shot during the Pakistan Super League (PSL 9) Twenty20 cricket match between Karachi Kings and Quetta Gladiators at the National Cricket Stadium.

Cristiano banned for gesture to fans after 'Messi' chants

RIYADH (BBC): Al-Nassr forward Cristiano Ronaldo has been banned for one match for "provoking fans" following the Saudi Pro League win over Al-Shabab. Al Shabab supporters chanted "Messi" - Ronaldo's long-term rival Lionel Messi - after Sunday's 3-2 defeat in Riyadh. Portugal captain Ronaldo, 39, cupped his hand to his ear and made a gesture to the fans. He has also been fined 30,000 Saudi Riyals (£6,300) by the Saudi Arabian Football Federation (SAFF).

The SAFF disciplinary and ethics committee said Ronaldo cannot appeal against the decision. Ronaldo opened the scoring from the penalty spot, but Al-Shabab twice came from behind before Talisca scored an 87th-minute winner.

Ronaldo joined Al-Nassr on a free transfer from Manchester United in December 2022 for reportedly the biggest football salary in history.

La Liga chief says he hopes ManU United forward stays in Spain

MANCHESTER (BBC): La Liga president Javier Tebas says he hopes Manchester United's on-loan forward Mason Greenwood stays in Spanish football when his current spell with Getafe is over. Greenwood joined Getafe on deadline day in September after Manchester United reversed an initial plan to keep the striker at the club following an internal investigation into his conduct that was triggered by the collapse of a legal case against him. At the time, United said they felt it was better for Greenwood to play elsewhere and strongly hinted the England forward would never play for them again. Henry dismissed Smith

PCB announces composition of Board of Governors

LAHORE (PPI): The PCB announces the composition of Board of Governors (BoG) in accordance with Paragraph 10 of the PCB Constitution 2014. The Board of Governors now stands as follows: 1. Mustafa Ramday (PCB Patron's nominee) 2. Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi (PCB Patron's nominee) 3. Sajjad Ali Khokhar,

President Regional Cricket Association AJK 4. Zafarullah Jadal, President Regional Cricket Association Dera Murad Jamali 5. Tanveer Ahmed, President Regional Cricket Association Larkana 6. MTariq Sarwar, President Regional Cricket Association Bahawalpur 7. Representative of Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL)

8. Representative of State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) 9. Representative of Ghani Glass Limited 10. Representative of Pakistan Television Corporation (PTV) 11. Secretary to the Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination, or any other officer nominated by him as an ex-officio member (Non-voting member)

Australian Cameron's century takes team to 279-9 in 1st test against New Zealand

WELLINGTON (INP): Century scored by Australian Cameron Green took his team to 279-9 against New Zealand on openingday of the first test here at Basin Reserve. Earlier, four wickets of Australia fell for only 89 runs after which Cameron was put into bat with rescue mission who supported the team along with Mitchell Marsh, who scored 40. Cameron Green 24, brought up three figures with his 16th four in the final over to end unbeaten on 103 with Josh Hazlewood yet to score. "Obviously it feels really good, mainly with where we were as a team," Green said. "It was a pretty tough wicket out there ... someone just needed to bat through so glad it was me. Was nice to stick it out, and hopefully put a semi-competitive total on the board."

Green, batting at number four, fought back after New Zealand seamer Matt Henry took the key wickets of Steve Smith, Usman Khawaja and Marsh to end with 4-43 on a green pitch. Henry induced him to

for 31 before lunch, bowled Khawaja for 33 after the break then snagged Marsh and Nathan Lyon, for five. Scott Kuggeleijn, restored to the side, also grabbed two wickets, removing out-of-form Marnus Labuschagne for one and Alex Carey for 10. Black Caps rising star Will O'Rourke, who took nine wickets on his debut this month, bagged two more in the shape of Travis Head (1) and Mitchell Starc (9). Green said the wicket would still offer plenty for the Australian quick bowlers on Friday. Follow us on our Official WhatsApp channel Marsh and Green offered the main resistance with a 67-run partnership off 77 balls. After winning the toss, Tim Southee and New Zealand's pace bowlers were frustrated by Smith and Khawaja as they put on 61 before Henry got the breakthrough. Smith, promoted to open for the second Test in a row after the retirement of David Warner, lasted 71 deliveries, crunching four boundaries. Henry induced him to

play back to a delivery that nipped and took the edge, with wicketkeeper Tom Blundell collecting a sharp diving catch in front of first slip. Labuschagne departed after a defensive knock, getting a thick outside edge to Daryl Mitchell at slip off Kuggeleijn, with Khawaja and Head following in quick succession. Henry's inswinger took out the stump of Khawaja before Head went after O'Rourke but clipped the ball to Blundell. Marsh crashed six fours and a six before Henry struck again straight after tea, with Australia's Twenty20 skipper attempting a pull shot that landed in Blundell's gloves. Carey departed for 10 before O'Rourke had Starc caught at second slip. Pat Cummins was trapped lbw by spinner Rachin Ravindra with Henry taking his fourth when Lyon was also caught behind. New Zealand are looking for a first Test victory over Australia since 2011 and came into the two-match series on the back of a 2-0 sweep against South Africa this month.

Gayle hopes T20 World Cup can help cricket crack US market

LONDON (AFP/APP): Former West Indies star Chris Gayle hopes the T20 World Cup will help cricket crack the lucrative American sports market and lift the game onto a new global level. The Twenty20 showpiece, which starts on June 1, is being jointly hosted by the United States and Gayle's native West Indies, where big crowds are expected. But it will be the first major international cricket tournament staged in the United States, with a sell-out crowd expected for the clash between arch-rivals India and Pakistan at a temporary 34,000-seat venue in Long Island, New York. Gayle believes the success of last year's inaugural Major League Cricket, a US-based T20 franchise competition, has given the game a foothold in America. "The ICC (International Cricket Council) has been trying to get cricket on a global scale within the USA," Gayle told AFP in an interview marking 100 days to go until the start of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024. "India v Pakistan is in New York, I'm sure it's going to be phenomenal. "They (the USA) had a T20 tournament last year and it was a success. It's a big market, we just have to hope it will be a success within the United States." West Indies have pedigree in limited-overs cricket, winning the first two men's one-day international World Cups in 1975 and 1979, but they failed even to qualify for last

year's 50-over tournament in India. "We missed out on the 50-over World Cup so this will be something fantastic for the guys to actually play for something," said Gayle, speaking via video call from Barbados. "We just want to be in the (June 29) final here in Barbados. Anything is possible when you make it to the final." "I'm excited for the people, to actually see a bit of cricket," added big-hitting opener Gayle, who in 2007 became the first batsman to score a T20 international century. The 44-year-old, a member of the West Indies teams that became T20 world champions in 2012 and 2016, said the current side had enough "options and experience" to relieve holders England of their title, even though they are a lowly seventh in the world rankings. The West Indies lost their recent ODI series in Australia 3-0 and went down 2-1 in the T20 series but they drew the Test series 1-1 as an under-strength team won a thriller in Brisbane by just eight runs against the reigning world champions in the five-day format. It was the first time West Indies -- who dominated Test cricket in the 1980s and 1990s -- had won a Test in Australia since 1997 and Gayle said it was huge achievement for the side. "The adrenaline, the excitement, to beat Australia (in a Test) after so many years, you know I've been a part of that struggle as well as a captain in Australia.

"To be able to get that win, in that fantastic manner as well, is something superb. "To see the likes of (batting great) Brian Lara when he was actually doing the (television) commentary, how excited he was, we saw (former batsman) Carl Hooper shed tears as well." One pressing issue for global cricket chiefs is that top players no longer need to play internationals to make a living in an era of worldwide franchise competitions. Former West Indies captain Jason Holder missed the Test series in Australia to play T20 cricket in the United Arab Emirates instead. Gayle, one of the original globe-trotting T20 "guns for hire", who had several run-ins with Caribbean cricket chiefs over availability, said it was down to administrators to rebalance the schedule. "I'm in favour always of the players making their earnings, it's their livelihood, it's their job," he said. "Cricket is actually a big business, so we can't beat down on a player to choose a franchise over his particular country, because there's no loyalty from both sides. "There's just too much cricket and it takes away a bit from international cricket, unless there's two big teams playing. They just need to structure it a bit better to make sure both teams are competitive when they are going against each other at international level."



In brief

ANF recovers 81 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover 81 kg drugs and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that 35 grams weed was recovered from a parcel sent from UK at GPO Multan. 175 kg crystal heroin was recovered from Sabi Road Quetta area while 3 kg hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up near Hassanabad Attock. In the fourth operation, 2 kg heroin was recovered from the possession of an accused arrested near Eastern Bypass Quetta. 1 kg Ice was recovered from an accused near Lakpas Toll Plaza Mustang. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

14 drug peddlers netted

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) teams arrested 14 members of drug peddler gangs and recovered 2,095 gram heroin, 3,962 gram hashish, 60 liters liquor and 18 gram Ice from their possession. A public relations officer said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Meanwhile, the Kohsar, Margalla, Noon, Khanna, Koral, Kirpa, Humak, Phulgran, Nilore, Shahzad Town and Bani Gala police stations team arrested 14 drug peddlers and recovered 2,095 gram heroin, 3,962 gram hashish, 60 liters liquor and 18 gram Ice from their possession. Cases have been registered against the accused and further investigation is underway. Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in drug peddling activities. He emphasized that Islamabad Capital Police will not leave any stone unturned to curb the menace of drugs. "No one would be allowed to play with the precious lives of our young generation" he added.

10 outlaws held, weapons seized

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) apprehended 10 outlaws including two professional beggars from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession. In response to the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified its crackdown against the criminal elements to eliminate crime from the city, said a statement issued by a public relations officer on Thursday. Meanwhile, the Secretariat police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Sarwar, and recovered one 30-bore pistol from his possession. The Kohsar police team arrested three accused namely Saeed, Hafeez Ullah, and Aurangzeb. The police recovered two pistols and one dagger from the possession of the accused. Likewise, the Tarnol police team arrested an accused namely Basit involved in illegally selling petrol. The Khanna police team arrested two accused namely Ehsan and Noor Ullah and recovered two 30 bore pistols from their possession.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor displaying nests to attract customers at his roadside setup at H-9 in the Federal Capital.

Govt to utilize all available resources for polio-free country: Shahzad Baig

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Coordinator for Pakistan's Polio Programme, Dr Shahzad Baig said the government is determined to make the country polio-free very soon through effective vaccination to every child throughout the country. Talking to a private news channel, he said that the polio eradication campaign is a part of the efforts of the government towards complete eradication of the polio. He requested all parents to allow polio teams to administer polio drops to their children, adding that we are confident that we together with our people and international partners will achieve our target goals of making a safer, healthier and polio-free Pakistan for our children.

He said that polio has no cure, only the vaccine can provide lifelong protection. "I urge parents and caregivers to realize how important this vaccine is for their children's health and make sure that they open their doors to vaccinators and get children immunized", he added.

Pakistan has made incredible progress against polio, and we are working hard every day to make the country polio-free, he mentioned. "Polio eradication is and will remain a top priority for the Government of Pakistan," he said.

The Health Ministry has conducted the second nationwide polio vaccination of the year to vaccinate more than 45.8 million children under five across the nation to protect them from paralytic

polio, adding, which will successfully continue until March 9.

Polio workers are visiting door to door to administer anti-polio drops to children below the age of five, he added.

Replying to a question, he said that 99% we overcome the burden of Polio disease in the country with continuous polio drives.

He said more than four lakh polio teams working in the field, adding that Dera Ismail and Banu, Quetta, Chaman and Peshawar are the main risky areas where environmental samples were being identified.

He said that at the same time, Afghanistan and Pakistan had initiated this present polio drive to eliminate the virus, adding that citizens asked to cooperate with polio teams.

Ahsan stresses national unity, consensus building

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday emphasized the responsibility of politicians to foster progress through empathy and reconciliation. Talking to PTV news channel, Ahsan said that rather than dwelling on past grievances, Ahsan advocates for healing and unity, stressing the importance of national interest and consensus-building.

Acknowledging the forthcoming government's challenges, he underscores the party's sincere intentions to address the country's issues and prioritize the welfare of future generations. He admitted a gap between the old and new generations' political approaches, and he acknowledged the need to match the younger generation's aspirations.

He was determined to steer the party towards alignment with contemporary challenges, ensuring effective leadership and relevance in the changing political landscape.

Excise staff sets up mobile van at Trail 3 for vehicle services

ISLAMABAD (APP): The ICT's Excise Department is offering convenient access to essential administrative tasks for vehicle owners through its mobile van which is stationed at Trail 3 on Thursday. At the behest of the Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, the excise staff will be stationed at Trail 3 parking from 3 to 5 pm, offering services for vehicle registration, transfer, and token tax payment, said the ICT spokesman, Dr Abdullah Tabassum.

This initiative aims to provide convenient access to essential administrative tasks for vehicle owners in the area, he said. In addition to these services, the ICT spokesman said this mobile service unit offers a range of important documents and permits, including Domicile and Birth Certificates, Power of Attorney, International Driving Permits, and Fuel Permits for both domestic and commercial use, alongside Motor Vehicle Registration. By bringing these services directly to the community at Trail 3 parking, residents can save time and effort in completing necessary bureaucratic procedures.

CM directs authorities to complete Rwp Ring Road project by December

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief Minister (CM) Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif here on Thursday visited Rawalpindi Ring Road and directed the authorities to complete the project by December.

NESPAK and FWO officials briefed the chief minister on the progress of Rawalpindi Ring Road Project at Tehraiya site. The CM was briefed that the project started in September 2023 and all the construction work would be completed by February 2025.

All the structures on the way of 38.3 kms long Ring Road Project had been removed for speedy construction work while removal of the utility services in the right of the way was underway.

24 percent work on Rawalpindi Ring Road project has been completed.

Five interchanges, 11 overpasses, bridges on 2 rivers, 6 canals and a railway bridge would be constructed under the project while 15 subways and 53 small bridges would be constructed on the Rawalpindi Ring Road.

A rest area would be constructed on the Ring Road.

The project was indispensable for ease of transportation of the citizens, Maryam

Nawaz said adding, industrial zones would also be built on the project.

The CM said that the project would be a game changer for Rawalpindi, adding creation of the industrial zones would provide employment opportunities to the local people. Two years were fixed for the completion of the project and all-out efforts would be made to complete it before the deadline, the CM said.

The completion of the most important public welfare project should not be delayed, she directed.

The work on the ring road project was going on day and night and it would be completed before the stipulated time frame, Maryam Nawaz informed.

Swift construction work would be ensured on Ring Road Project and there would be no compromise on the quality, she added. She instructed that Rawalpindi Ring Road interchanges should be named after the respective villages. Former Senator Pervaiz Rasheed, Members of Assembly Marriyum Aurangzeb, Uzmi Bukhari, Sania Ashiq, Chief Secretary, concerned secretaries, Commissioner Rawalpindi Division and other officials were also present on the occasion.

Pakistan Institute of Education to announce NAT results today

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Institute of Education (PIE), the apex research institution and think-tank of the Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training, will announce results of the National Achievement Test (NAT) on March 1.

The NAT is a sample-based assessment that is administered to students in grades 4 and 8 in public schools across all provinces and territories of the countries. This year's NAT results are particularly important as they are the first to be conducted since the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on education. The results will provide valuable insights into the learning outcomes of students during this period.

PIE Director General Dr Muhammad Shahid Soroya and Georgina Glasby,

Assessment Manager from the Cambridge Assessment will present the NAT 2023 results along with their recommendations for improving outcomes.

The NAT, conducted once every two years, assesses students in a range of subjects, including languages, mathematics and science. In addition to students, the NAT also assesses the teachers' content knowledge, and conducts perception surveys of students, their parents, teachers and head teachers to ensure that PIE is able to analyse the learning environment and not just the academic performance of students.

Prior to the launch event, Director General PIE Dr. Muhammad Shahid Soroya said that the primary purpose of the NAT was to provide a national-level picture of

Pakistan's education system. NAT would assess the academic performance of students and identify gaps in the education system, Soroya added.

He further added that NAT would inform the improvement of education policies and programs.

It is worth mentioning here that the NAT results will be a valuable resource for the government, education experts, parents, and students. They can be used to inform and guide efforts to improve the quality of education in Pakistan. The information can be used to identify areas of weakness in the education system and take specific steps to address them. The NAT 2023 will be formally launched by the Federal Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry.

NUST to arrange mega event 'Women in Climate Action-Celebrating Resilience'

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in collaboration with GIZ Pakistan, Gender Intersectionality and Climate Change (GICC) is arranging a mega event titled "Women in Climate Action - Celebrating Resilience" on the occasion of International Women's Day on March 08.

This empowering event will be organized at a local hotel to recognize and applaud the significant contributions of women in climate action, emphasizing their leadership, innovation, and impact on creating sustainable and climate-resilient communities. The researchers, climate heroes, academia, and individuals from the development sector have been called to participate in the event featuring panel discussions, success stories, stalls showcasing women-led initiatives, and art and photo exhibitions. According to an official of NUST, the event would feature an insightful panel discussion, a successful storytelling session, an articles writing competition, and an art and photo exhibition in addition to project and product exhibits.

The insightful panel discussion will be aimed at providing a comprehensive under-

standing of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities women face within the realm of climate action. The success storytelling session will highlight the women doing notable work in climate action and give them a platform to narrate their stories and experiences and the hardships they have faced in their tremendous efforts.

The art and photo exhibition will feature captivating visuals of women from various backgrounds, cultures, and professions, the display will highlight the collective power they harness in addressing climate challenges. The project and product exhibits will feature dedicated stalls of the projects and products by women-led initiatives, related to environmental sustainability and climate action giving women a platform to accentuate their efforts.

The article writing competition, being arranged in collaboration with the GICC is aimed at stimulating thoughtful discourse on the intersectionality of gender and climate resilience.

All voices of Pakistan have been invited to become part of its efforts to amplify the importance of Women in Climate Action by participating in an 'Article Writing Competition'.

RDA issues notice to owner of illegal housing scheme

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of the Director General (DG), Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa has issued notice to a private illegal housing scheme namely Olive Dale Farm Houses at Mouza Jatli, Mandra-Chakwal Road Rawalpindi.

According to RDA spokesman, the Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate issued notice to Anas Bilal, the owner of Olive Dale Farm Houses.

He said the DG had also directed the Director MP&TE that action should be taken against illegal advertisements and marketing and FIR would also be lodged against the owner of the illegal housing scheme. The sponsors of illegal housing scheme had also been warned to stop the marketing of their unapproved and illegal housing scheme and contact RDA for getting NOC/approval of the scheme as per law, otherwise, strict legal action would be taken against the violators. He said that on the

directions of the DG, the public was advised not to invest in illegal and unauthorized housing schemes and check their status on RDA website www.rda.gop.pk.

The spokesman said that the owners and sponsors of illegal housing schemes were misleading the public through advertisements. The Planning Wing RDA had also requested the Cyber Crime Wing, FIA to take legal action against the illegal and misleading advertisements of illegal housing schemes.

ICP's Safe City technical monitoring team carried out effective operations in 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): In response to the special directives of Islamabad Capital Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) was actively engaged in ensuring the protection of life and property of the citizens in Islamabad.

A public relations officer on Thursday said that, the Safe City technical monitoring team carried out effective monitoring and identified 18 wanted accused including 13 police offenders, 03 court absconders, and 02 highly wanted accused involved in police cases.

Moreover, the accused were found residing in private hotels within Islamabad's premises, using bus terminals, residing as tenants, or entering Islamabad through any other means. Upon observing their movements, their profiles were included, and relevant police stations were informed, leading to their immediate arrests. The ICCPO said that the establish-

ment of the Safe City Command and Control Center aims not only to reduce the crime rate in the city but also to provide better facilities to the citizens.

The Safe City Command and Control Center, where suspicious activities are monitored, employs useful software such as E-Challan, effective traffic management, data analytics, facial recognition of criminals, automatic number plate readers (ANPR), and Hotel Eye to reduce the crime rate. He further stated that Hotel Eye software keeps an eye on every individual residing in hotels, hostels, and shelter homes in the city. Islamabad Capital Police is continuously engaged in ensuring the protection of life and property of the citizens, he added.

"The citizens can report any suspicious individuals or activities to Islamabad Capital Police's helpline "Pucar-15" or through the "ICT-15" app.

PTA escalates crackdown on illegal issuance of SIMs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office Rawalpindi, in collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Wing, successfully conducted three raids targeting franchisees of a mobile phone company and an illegal SIM registration vendor in Hasan

Abdal, Wah, and Rawalpindi, respectively. The sale channels were found to be involved in illegal issuance of SIMs, said a news release.

During the raid, 3550 pre-active SIMs, 3 BVS devices, 748 silicon thumbs, 11 thousand digital fingerprints, and a printer were confiscated.

Three individuals were

apprehended on the premises by the FIA team, and FIRs have been filed against them. Currently, the FIA is conducting a thorough investigation into the matter. Prior to these raids, PTA had filed a complaint with the FIA based on information related to the illegal issuance of SIMs by these sales channels.



ISLAMABAD: Students of Model College for girls F7/2 performing tableau during intercollegiate Drama competition.

2 Uruzgan families reconcile

TRINKOT (Pajhwok): A 12-year old feud between two families in the Chori district of Uruzgan has been resolved through the reconciliation of religious scholars and local officials, an official said. Mawlawi Abdul Ahad Amin, deputy head of the Borders and Tribal Affairs Department, head told Pajhwok Afghan News the feud started 12-year ago in the Awliya locality of Chori district between the Abdul Majeed and Khudi Nazar families over a piece of land.

UK donates £1 million

KABUL (Ariana News): The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (OCHA) has announced that Britain has donated 1 million pounds, equivalent to US\$1.3 million, to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (OCHA) thanked Britain for this help on X Thursday. Earlier, Britain donated more than \$36 million to Afghanistan.

World can still reach a common understanding with IEA: Anas Haqqani

KABUL (Ariana news): Anas Haqqani, a prominent member of the Islamic Emirate, said Thursday, on the occasion of the 4th anniversary of the signing of the Doha Agreement, that this day in 2020 was the day of recognizing the freedom, independence and dignity of Afghans and added that the world can still reach a common understanding with IEA based on “political realities”.

Haqqani said Thursday in a post on X: “There is still time for the Intl. community to implement the remaining provisions of the Doha Agreement as the contents of the Agreement don’t fall under the ‘passage of time’ rule. The world can still reach to a common understanding with IEA based on “political realities”.

“The day of the signing of the Doha Agreement is the day of recognizing the



freedom, independence and dignity of Afghans. The signing of the agreement by the occupier was an acknowledgment that the Islamic Emirate is a liberation movement and inheritor of this land,” he added.

Haqqani stated: “The hard negotiations of this agreement & the tolerance of many violations by the opposite side after the signing showed that the Islamic Emirate not only has a spe-

cial capacity in the field of combat, but also demonstrated a deep political understanding & strategic patience.”

He also stated that it has been four and a half years since the negotiations and the Islamic system has been in power for two and a half years and that the IEA is standing firm on its promises that “no harm will happen from our soil to others, but only benefit.”

‘Women’s media work to be banned if faces not covered’

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Afghanistan Journalists Center reports that the Minister of Virtue and Vice for the Taliban has issued a warning that if female reporters do not cover their faces on television, women’s work in the media may be prohibited.

Expressing concern, the center has called for the cancellation of this Taliban decree.

The Afghanistan Journalists Center stated on Wednesday that Mohammad Khalid Hanafi, the Taliban’s Minister of Virtue and Vice, raised this issue in a meeting with media representatives in Kabul.

Afghan Minister of Virtue and Vice Mohammad Khalid Hanafi warned that if women do not cover their faces when appearing on television or in visual interviews, Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada, the Taliban supreme leader may completely ban women’s activities in the media.

The Journalists Center said that this meeting took place on Tuesday with the presence of officials and media representatives at a hotel in Kabul.

The Afghanistan Journalists Center, while warning of the possibility of issuing a directive banning women’s work in the media, urged the Taliban to cancel its new media guidelines and allow journalists and media outlets to continue their activities by public media laws.

This comes that some media representatives informed this center that Abdul Ghafoor Farooq, the spokesperson for the Taliban’s Ministry of Virtue and vice, recommended to media representatives to observe employees, especially women, wearing a “black covering with only their eyes visible.”

Afghan Minister of Virtue and Vice Mohammad Khalid Hanafi also urged media officials to refrain from interviewing women whose faces are visible or who are not wearing masks.

Kabir: IE seeks good relations with neighbors



KABUL (TOLONews): The Deputy PM for Political Affairs considers the role of scholars crucial in improving relations between Kabul and Islamabad. “Mawlawi Sahib told this delegation that the Islamic Emirate wants good relations with all its neighboring countries and that there is no threat to any country from Afghan soil.”

According to the statement of the Arg, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir also said in this meeting that the Islamic Emirate does not allow anyone to engage in destructive activities in the country.

The Deputy PM for Political Affairs considers the role of scholars crucial in improving relations between Kabul and Islamabad. “Mawlawi Sahib told this delegation that the Islamic Emirate wants good relations with all its neighboring countries and that there is no threat to any country from Afghan soil,” said Hamdullah Fitrat, the deputy spokesman of the Islamic Emirate.

According to Hamdullah Fitrat, Hamid Ul Haq also emphasized greater cooperation between Kabul and Islamabad in this meeting.

He added that the Pakistani delegation in the meeting stated that the peoples of both countries share Islamic, cultural, and social values and that political relations between Kabul and Islamabad should not only focus on economic cooperation but also expand to benefit the people of both countries.

Meanwhile, some political analysts said good relations and positive interactions between Afghanistan and Pakistan are important.

“We care about Pakistan and Pakistan cares about us, and this is possible when there are good rela-

tions and continued trade between the two countries. However, Pakistan has never fulfilled its promises and commitments, “Amanullah Hotaki, a political analyst, told TOLONews.

“The important thing is that these two countries have goodwill towards each other so that positive results can be achieved,” said Sayed Akbar Agha, a political analyst.

According to the deputy spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, Hamid Ul Haq said the blocked assets of Afghanistan by countries is a “unilateral and cruel action,” in the meeting.

IEA tean discusses transit facilitations



KABUL (BNA): A technical delegation from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, led by Mohammad Ullah Bakhtyar, the Head of International Transit at the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, has embarked on a journey to Iran.

The delegation met with Hassan Kazemi Qomi, the Special Envoy of the Iranian President for Afghanistan, officials from the Chabahar Free Zone, maritime affairs

experts, and local authorities in Iran’s Sistan Baluchestan province.

As per a statement from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the meeting revolved around discussions and negotiations concerning facilitations, benefits, and special discounts for high-value transit goods via the Chabahar route in Afghanistan.

Key topics included cost reduction for transportation

from Chabahar to shared ports, an increase in ship traffic and refrigerated container numbers on this route, long-term identification and leasing of land for container loading and unloading at the Chabahar port, definitive identification and sale of land for transit goods storage and logistics center, and the identification and sale of land for Afghan traders in the Chabahar Free Trade Zone Industrial Park.

Kabul asks Richard Bennett not to ignore realities of Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate asked the UN special rapporteur for Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, to mention the current achievements in Afghanistan in his new report.

The spokesman for the Islamic Emirate, Zabihullah Mujahid, said that the human rights situation in Afghanistan is not the way it is reported by institutions. “We want that in such reports, current realities should be considered; progress, achievements and problems, should be balanced and correct information should be published,” Mujahid said.

This comes as UN spe-

cial rapporteur for Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, is expected to present his new report on the human rights situation in Afghanistan at the 55th Regular Session of the UN Human Rights Council on Thursday, 29 February.

Meanwhile, Heather Barr, director of the Women’s Rights Division at HRW expressed her concerns over the human rights situation in Afghanistan.

“We look forward to the special rapporteur’s briefing at the human rights council tomorrow because we are confident that he will provide an accurate picture to the council of just

how serious and worsening the human rights situation is in Afghanistan, especially for women and girls... we see that the Taliban leadership appears to have no end in sight when it comes particularly to their attack on the rights of women and girls, even though women and girls have already been stripped of most of their rights, right to education, right to free movement, right to employment, right to freedom of association, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, the right to be part of public life, to participate in political process, all of these are gone,” Barr

said.

“In Afghan society, the subject of human rights violations is controversial. Unfortunately, the lack of work and education opportunities for girls and women, as well as the lack of work opportunities for the youth of Afghanistan, are very concerning,” Hadith Shamal, a women’s rights activist told TOLONews.

Previously, the UN special rapporteur for Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, had expressed his concern at the general assembly of the UN about the deterioration of the human rights situation.

Kabul reacts to Russian Defense Minister’s remarks on Daesh

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate in reaction to the remarks of Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, alleging an increase of Daesh fighters in Afghanistan, asked Moscow to refrain from making such statements.

The spokesman for the Islamic Emirate, Zabihullah Mujahid, said that such words will cause a strain in the relations between Kabul and Moscow.

Mujahid pledged to all countries that Afghanistan’s soil will not be used against any country.

“The situation in the region remains complex. The greatest threat comes

not voice their opinions in this manner because it damages the peaceful and secure atmosphere we have. It even damages Afghanistan’s relations with Central Asia. Talking should never occur when there is no reason for it,” the spokesman said.

Earlier, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu at a Defence Ministry Board Session said that the situation in the region “remains complex. The greatest threat comes from the territory of Afghanistan.”

“If Russia is telling the truth, it should exchange

intelligence information with the Afghan government to manage this program,” said Mohammad Zalmay Afghanyar, a military analyst.

Previous, Nikolay Patrushev, Secretary of the Security Council of Russia said at the sixth annual meeting of security council secretaries on Afghanistan in Kyrgyzstan’s capital of Bishkek that “the West’s geopolitical schemes encompass Afghanistan with over 20 terrorist organizations, fielding over 23,000 militants, now based in the country.”

However, the Islamic Emirate denied his claim.

Muttaqi affirms unwavering dedication to initiate TAPI project

KABUL (BNA): The Acting Foreign Minister, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, has affirmed the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’s unwavering commitment to the initiation of the TAPI project.

Hafez Zia Ahmad Takal, the Deputy Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, announced on his social media handle that Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi had a productive meeting with Batyr Amanov, the Vice President in charge of Oil and Gas Affairs. The discussion centered around the TAPI project and the prospect of transferring liquefied gas to Afghanistan.

Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi expressed satisfaction that the recent visit of the Turkmenistan Foreign Minister to Herat has accelerated the practical initiation of the TAPI project on Afghan soil. He reiterated the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’s dedication to the definite commencement of the TAPI project.

Mawlawi Muttaqi conveyed optimism that the initial phase of the gas



pipeline to Herat would soon commence and reach completion. He further highlighted that Herat, being a prosperous province, could transform into a promising market for Turkmenistan’s gas with the arrival of the TAPI project.

Batyr Amanov, the Deputy of the Council of Ministers of Turkmenistan in Oil and Gas Affairs, emphasized that energy transfer, particularly the TAPI project, holds special priority for the Turkmenistan government.

He also underscored the

significance of extending the TAPI project to the Herat province for his government.

Amanov commended the Afghan government’s efforts in the TAPI project and acknowledged the commitment and efforts of the Islamic Emirate as noteworthy. He expressed hope for the swift finalization of negotiations related to the TAPI project, leading to the completion of the TAPI pipeline project on Afghan soil.

In a previous engagement, Mawlawi Amir Khan

Muttaqi, the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, discussed bilateral relations during his visit to Turkmenistan with the country’s Foreign Minister.

The discussions included enhancing Afghanistan’s diplomatic presence in Ashgabat, initiating the practical work of the TAPI project on Afghan soil, increasing electricity imports from Turkmenistan to Herat, reviving the lapis lazuli road, expanding the railway, and potential investments by Turkmenistan.

Ex-White House official calls for revisiting Doha Accord with Taliban

KABUL (Khaama Press): Lisa Curtis, a former White House official, says Washington should set aside the Doha agreement and pursue new avenues of “conditional engagement” with the Taliban.

Curtis, who was a senior policy advisor in the Trump administration at the time of the Doha agreement signing in February 2020, played a role in US policy towards Afghanistan.

In an interview with Afghanistan International, she described the Doha agreement as “very weak,” arguing that it favored the Taliban.

She stated that the Doha agreement had been “very much in favor of the Taliban,” even refraining from asking the group to sever its ties with terrorist organizations.

According to her, the

Doha agreement merely required the Taliban to refrain from allowing terrorists to attack against US interests. She asserts that this agreement has emboldened the Taliban, labeling it as “very weak.”

Lisa Curtis stated: “On the fourth anniversary of the Doha agreement, I believe it’s time to set it aside and find new ways to engage with the Taliban, conditional engagement that puts pressure on them

to respect the rights of women and girls.”

This former White House official emphasized that the Doha agreement did not secure US security interests in Afghanistan and the region, and terrorist threats in Afghanistan have intensified.

Ms. Curtis said that the ISIS-Khorasan branch is a global threat, as well as the resurgence of the Taliban in Pakistan and some Middle Eastern terrorist groups in

Afghanistan, are becoming stronger. This former White House official stated that America is “not safer” after signing the Doha agreement and is not in a better position.

She emphasized that the international community is not taking sufficient actions to hold the Taliban accountable for their behaviors.

The Doha agreement was signed between the US and the Taliban on February 29, 2020.

FM engages in constructive dialogue with national leader

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, recently held a meeting with Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the Chairman of

the People’s Council of Turkmenistan, in Ashgabat.

Hafez Zia Ahmad Takal, the Deputy Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, shared on his social media handle that during the meeting, Mawlawi Amir

Khan Muttaqi briefed Berdimuhamedov about the security, stability, and new opportunities for investment and transit in Afghanistan. He expressed gratitude for Berdimuhamedov’s special attention towards expanding

positive cooperation and relations with Afghanistan.

Muttaqi noted that the two countries have made significant progress in various fields. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov expressed complete confidence

in the Afghanistan region and emphasized the importance of transferring gas and electricity to Afghanistan. He also mentioned efforts towards the extension of the railway line.

Berdimuhamedov

regarded the upcoming exhibition of Afghanistan’s assets in Ashgabat as significant and historical, emphasizing optimal utilization by both sides. He pledged to facilitate trade in various sectors with Afgh-

anistan. Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, who has traveled to Turkmenistan, has so far held meetings with several high-ranking officials of the country to discuss expanding bilateral cooperation.



KHEWRA: President Dr. Arif Alvi being briefed about salt mining during his visit to salt mine.

Provision of reserve seats to SIC PHC orders ECP to submit reply

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Waqar Ahmad ordered Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for submission of reply regarding provision of Reserved Seats at both provincial assemblies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab as well as in National Assembly to Sunni Ittihad Council (SIC) within seven days, on Thursday.

The writ plea stated that majority of lawmakers were elected independently with the support of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and joined SIC after the elections. The writ filed by Shah Faisal Ottomankhel advocate on behalf of Azmat Ullah Afridi for provision of reserved seats to SIC.

Election Commission didn't grant reserved seats for Minority and Women to SIC after PTI backed independent lawmakers which will put women's representation at the stake, the plea stated.

The parliament (national/provincial assembly) should be completed after inclusion of reserved members (minority and women representative) as per

Articles 51 and 106 of the Constitution of Pakistan, the writ pleaded. Neither provincial assembly nor Senate of Pakistan session can be summoned without completion of parliament (inclusion of minority and women representatives).

It is Public Interest Litigation (PIL), depriving SIC from reserved seats will jeopardize women's representation in the assemblies as PTI backed independent candidates elected in general elections. ECP must grant reserved seats to SIC as it is biggest party in the country especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after the joining of PTI backed elected lawmakers which will ensure redressal women's deprivation and representation, the writ pleaded.

PHC should order ECP for provision of reserved seats to SIC as per their ratio on general seats while the High Court had ordered ECP for submission of reply within seven days and adjourned further hearing. It is worthy to mention that PTI had approached PHC for provision of reserved seats but the plea was withdrawing due to technical and legal issues.

LG power curtaining case: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court

(PHC) comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Syed Arshad Ali ordered fixation of writ plea against curtaining powers of Local Governments institution after formation new provincial government, on Thursday.

The counsel Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate argued that provincial government amended LG Act in 2022 which had curtailed the powers of local government representatives with immediate effect without jurisdiction despite the petitioners were elected under LG Act 2019.

The amended in LG Act shouldn't be implemented on sitting local government representatives and the amendments will have to be affect for new setup, the counsel argued. He requested to sit-aside 2022 amendments as the changes will be applicable for new LG members.

The counsel Babar Khan Yousafzai advocate argued that detail arguments were concluded on 15th December 2023 in this regard. However, PHC observed that the new government will submit their reply and Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will argue the case on next date while adjourned further hearing fortnight.

Gohar elected unopposed as PTI chairman

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: After the nullification of its previous intra-party polls by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), senior lawyer and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) central leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has once again been elevated to the chairmanship without facing any contest within the party.

The party's PM-designate Omar Ayub Khan has also been elected unopposed as the Imran-founded party's central general secretary, as per the party's declaration issued on Thursday.

Dr Yasmin Rashid, Ali Amin Gandapur, and Haleem Adil Sheikh were also among the party leaders who were elected unopposed for the position of the party's presidents for Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh, respectively — as no candidate came forward to contest them. The former ruling party will organise the intra-party poll in Quetta for the Balochistan president's post. Additionally, it also read that the final results will be formally announced on March 3.

The war in Ukraine has triggered the worst crisis in Moscow's relations with the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Putin has previously spoken of the dangers of a direct confrontation between Nato and Russia, but his nuclear warning on Thursday was one of his most explicit. Addressing lawmakers and other members of the country's elite, Putin, 71, repeated his accusation that the West was bent on weakening Russia, and he suggested Western leaders did not understand how dangerous their meddling could be in what he cast as Russia's internal affairs.

He prefaced his nuclear warning with a specific reference to an idea, floated by French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday, of European Nato members sending ground troops to Ukraine — a suggestion that was quickly rejected by the United States, Germany, Britain and others. “(Western nations) must realise that we also have weapons that can hit targets on their territory. All this really threatens a conflict with the use of nuclear weapons and the

Polio officer abducted by dacoits

F.P. Report

SHIKARPUR: Dacoits gang in Shikarpur has abducted a polio officer and demanded the police to set free their comrades if they want the polio officer back on Thursday.

The dacoits posted a video on social media of anti-polio worker Naem Ahmed Bapar who was abducted from Katcha area of Shikarpur's Naparkot police station's limits. According to victim's family, the abductors belonged to Nasirani tribe. The gang in the video demanded of Shikarpur police to first release their men and women if they want safe return of the anti-polio worker.

The family of the abducted worker has staged a protest demonstration for the early recovery of the victim. Police, however, seemed helpless in the region as activities of dacoits were increasing day by day.

Meanwhile, another dacoits gang in Katcha area of Ghotki, near Sukkur abducted two youth after an online trap offering cars at cheap rates. The youth were reported to be the residents of Murree area. Dacoits, after sharing the videos of victims held in chains, were demanding Rs20 million in ransom from their families. The father of the victims registered an FIR against unknown dacoits in Sukkur police station.

Gilani quits from senate

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Seasoned politician and former Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani has resigned from his Senate seat. This move comes amidst speculation about his potential appointment as the Chairman of the Senate, a position he narrowly missed securing in 2021.

Gilani formally submitted his resignation to Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani, who subsequently accepted it and issued an official notification. This development coincides with Gilani's recent oath as a Member of the National Assembly, fueling speculation about his future political trajectory.

Gaza health authorities say Israeli fire kills 104 waiting for aid

CAIRO (Reuters): Health authorities in Gaza said on Thursday Israeli fire on people waiting for aid near Gaza City had killed 104 Palestinians and wounded 280, with one hospital saying it had received 10 bodies and dozens of injured patients.

A spokesperson for Israel's military said there was no knowledge of shelling at that location. The military later said dozens of people were hurt as a result of pushing and trampling when aid trucks arrived in northern Gaza. An Israeli source said troops opened fire at “several people” in the crowd who posed a threat to them.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' office said he “condemned the ugly massacre conducted by the Israeli occupation army this morning against the people who waited for the aid trucks at the Nabulsi roundabout.” Gaza Health Ministry spokesperson Ashraf Al-Qidra said the incident took place at Al-Nabusi roundabout west of Gaza City in the northern part of the enclave.

Medical teams were unable to cope with the volume and severity of injuries from dozens of wounded people who arrived at Al-Shifa hospital, Qidra said. The head of Kamal Adwan hospital in Gaza City, Hussam Abu Safeyah, said it had received 10 dead bodies and dozens of wounded patients from the incident west of the city. “We don't know how many there are in other hospitals,” Safeyah told Reuters by phone. Hamas warned in a statement that the incident could lead to the failure of

talks aimed at a deal on a truce and hostage release.

“The negotiations conducted by the movement's leadership are not an open process at the expense of the blood of our people,” it said, referring to Thursday's deaths and saying Israel would be responsible for any failure of the talks.

The war in Gaza began when Hamas sent fighters into Israel on Oct. 7, killing around 1,200 people and seizing 253 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. Gaza health authorities say 30,000 people have been confirmed killed in the enclave since then, with thousands of others believed buried under rubble. Videos posted on social media showed trucks carrying many dead bodies. Reuters verified the location of one video to Al-Nabulsi roundabout that showed several men who were motionless, as well as several wounded people.

Another video, which Reuters was unable to verify, showed bloodstained people being carried in a truck, medics treating people on a hospital floor, and bodies being wrapped in shrouds. “We don't want aid like this. We don't want aid and bullets together. There are many martyrs,” one man was saying in a video. Referring to the incident, an Israeli military spokesperson said: “There is no knowledge of Israeli shelling in the area.”

Meanwhile, Israel is reviewing possible curbs on access to Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem over the upcoming Ramadan fasting month, a government spokesperson said after

media reports that the far-right minister for police might be overruled on the issue. Al Aqsa, Israel's third-holiest shrine, is a focus of Palestinian statehood hopes. The site is also revered by Jews as vestige of their two ancient temples. Israeli controls on access have often stoked political friction, especially during Ramadan.

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir said last week there would be a quota for members of Israel's 18 percent Muslim minority who wish to take part in peace prayers at Al Aqsa. That would compound the clamp-down Israel has already placed on Palestinians since the Hamas' cross-border rampage from the Gaza Strip on Oct. 7, codenamed “Al Aqsa Flood,” which triggered the ongoing Gaza war.

But Israel's top-rated Channel 12 TV reported on Wednesday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would overrule Ben-Gvir. “The specific issue of prayer on the Temple Mount, in Al Aqsa, is currently still under discussion by the cabinet,” government spokesperson Avi Hyman said in a briefing on Thursday. He added that a final decision would take security and public health, as well as the freedom of worship, into account. A Ben-Gvir spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment. On Wednesday, Ben-Gvir posted on X that any attempt to override his authority would amount to a “capitulation to terror,” and urged Netanyahu to deny the Channel 12 report.

Putin warns West of risk of nuclear war

MOSCOW (Reuters): President Vladimir Putin told Western countries on Thursday they risked provoking a nuclear war if they sent troops to fight in Ukraine, warning that Moscow had the weapons to strike targets in the West.

The war in Ukraine has triggered the worst crisis in Moscow's relations with the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Putin has previously spoken of the dangers of a direct confrontation between Nato and Russia, but his nuclear warning on Thursday was one of his most explicit. Addressing lawmakers and other members of the country's elite, Putin, 71, repeated his accusation that the West was bent on weakening Russia, and he suggested Western leaders did not understand how dangerous their meddling could be in what he cast as Russia's internal affairs.

He prefaced his nuclear warning with a specific reference to an idea, floated by French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday, of European Nato members sending ground troops to Ukraine — a suggestion that was quickly rejected by the United States, Germany, Britain and others. “(Western nations) must realise that we also have weapons that can hit targets on their territory. All this really threatens a conflict with the use of nuclear weapons and the

destruction of civilisation. Don't they get that?!” said Putin.

Speaking ahead of a March 15-17 presidential election when he is certain to be re-elected for another six-year term, he lauded what he said was Russia's vastly modernised nuclear arsenal, the largest in the world. “Strategic nuclear forces are in a state of full readiness,” he said, noting that new-generation hyper-sonic nuclear weapons he first spoke about in 2018 had either been deployed or were at a stage where development and testing were being completed.

Visibly angry, Putin suggested Western politicians recall the fate of those like Nazi Germany's Adolf Hitler and France's Napoleon Bonaparte who had unsuccessfully invaded Russia in the past. “But now the consequences will be far more tragic,” said Putin. “They think it (war) is a cartoon,” he said, accusing Western politicians of forgetting what real war meant because they had not faced the same security challenges as Russians had in the last three decades.

Russian forces now had the initiative on the battlefield in Ukraine and were advancing in several places, Putin said. Russia must also boost the troops it has deployed along its western borders with the European Union after

Finland and Sweden decided to join the Nato military alliance, he added. The veteran Kremlin leader dismissed Western suggestions that Russian forces might go beyond Ukraine and attack European countries as “nonsense.”

He also said Moscow would not repeat the mistake of the Soviet Union and allow the West to “drag” it into an arms race that would eat up too much of its budget. “Therefore, our task is to develop the defence-industrial complex in such a way as to increase the scientific, technological and industrial potential of the country,” he said.

Putin said Moscow was open to discussions on nuclear strategic stability with the United States but suggested that Washington had no genuine interest in such talks and was more focused on making false claims about Moscow's alleged aims. “Recently there have been more and more unsubstantiated accusations against Russia, for example, that we are allegedly going to deploy nuclear weapons in space. Such innuendo... is a ploy to draw us into negotiations on their terms, which are favourable only to the United States,” he said. “...On the eve of the US presidential election, they simply want to show their citizens and everyone else that they still rule the world,” Putin added.

ECP appoints five Presiding officers for presidential elections

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has appointed five Presiding officers to conduct election to the office of President of Pakistan, in Islamabad and four provincial capitals.

According to Spokesperson of the ECP, these officers will receive nomination papers from candidates and chair meetings of the Parliament at the Parliament House, Islamabad, and the Provincial Assembly of the respective province during the scheduled polling for the Presidential Election. According to the notification, the Chief Justice of the Islamabad High Court will oversee the elections in the Senate and National Assembly in Islamabad.

A Member of the Election Commission of Pakistan, Election Commission-1, will supervise polling in the Provincial Assembly of Punjab. The Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court will supervise the Presidential Elections in the Provincial Assembly of Sindh. Similarly, the Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court will supervise the polls in the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Chief Justice of the Balochistan High Court will conduct the presidential polls in the Provincial Assembly in Quetta.

Three dead in firing

F.P. Report

KARACHI: At least three dead in firing occurred in Shah Latif Town, Saleh Muhammad Goth area of Karachi. As per details, the police officials said that three victims were taken to hospital where they succumbed to their injuries.

The police spokesperson said that the firing occurred at two separate places, and further investigation is underway. In a horrific incident, father and his 2-year-old daughter killed in firing at Chamrha Chowrangi near Korangi Karachi.

As per details, police officials said that 2-year-old Anum was going on motorcycle with her father Tahir when they got injured in firing. Later it was reported that both daughter and her father succumbed to injuries and declared dead.

Police officials are conducting an investigation to find out if it was a snatching incident or a planned murder. So far more than 30 bullet shells have been recovered from the spot of incident. In a tragic unfolding, two people were killed after a water tanker ran over a motorcycle in Karachi's Nazimabad area on Sunday evening.



BEIRUT: Residents and rescuers searching through the rubble of a building destroyed by Israeli strikes in southern Lebanese village of Kafra.

Letter to IMF proof Imran wants country's destruction: Shehbaz

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PML-N President and prime minister in waiting, Shehbaz Sharif, has called the letter written by the PTI to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) another anti-national move of the party. “After the cipher, this letter is another proof of the PTI's anti-state interests,” he remarked while arriving at the Parliament House for the inaugural National Assembly session on

Thursday morning. Shehbaz further insisted that there should be no doubt now that PTI Founder Imran Khan wants the destruction of the country. He regretted and condemned the letter written to the IMF. “No Pakistani, despite political differences, will resort to anti-national activities,” he asserted.

PML-N leader Hamza Shehbaz remarked that democracy had emerged victorious, while those set-

ting up obstacles in the way have been defeated. He further claimed that the economy is also being set ablaze just like the incidents of May 9, 2023. However, he said these attempts will also fail. The inaugural session of the newly elected National Assembly was set to convene at 10am on Thursday to induct a fresh batch of lawmakers, who started arriving in the Parliament House before the scheduled time.