

PPP, PTI, JI, PML-N demand transparent investigation of Commissioner's statement

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and Jamaat-e-Islami have collectively called for an investigation into the statements made by Commissioner Rawalpindi, raising concerns over the integrity of the electoral process.

PML-N's Spokesperson, Maryam Aurangzeb, demanded a thorough investigation into Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chhata's allegations, asserting that accountability should extend to his contacts and activities during the period of the alleged misconduct. Aurangzeb accused the Commissioner of undermining stability in the country.

Leaders from the Tehreek-e-Insaf parliamentary party expressed confidence in PTI's ability to lead the government once more, emphasizing the importance of exercising their electoral rights. PTI's Ali Muhammad Khan reiterated the party's stance on claiming its rightful position.

Senior PPP leader, Sherry Rehman, called for Commissioner Rawalpindi to substantiate his claims with evidence, stressing the urgency of a swift investigation into the serious allegations. Newly elected Member of the National Assembly for the People's Party, Shazia Marri, expressed concern over the events of polling day and emphasized the party's commitment to stability and forming a government.

In response to Commissioner Rawalpindi's statements, Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi, Hafiz Naem-ur-Rehman, urged the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to take notice of the matter and establish a high-level committee to investigate. He highlighted ongoing legal battles and demonstrations as part of their efforts to address electoral concerns. As demands for accountability mount, political parties remain vigilant in their pursuit of fair and transparent elections, seeking to uphold democratic principles in Pakistan.

Rawalpindi division's DROs reject ex-boss' charges, seek ECP inquiry: Newly-appointed Rawalpindi Commissioner Saif Anwar Jappa has rejected the allegations levelled by former commissioner Liaquat Ali Chattha about massive rigging in general elections 2024.

After assuming his office, Saif, in a late-night press conference, claimed that clean and transparent elections were held as per the rules and regulations set by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

The district returning officers (DROs) belonging to Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Chakwal and Attock also joined the press conference to ratify the version of the new commissioner and reject the allegations of the former commissioner.

"We managed the general elections with honesty and performed duties and responsibilities without any pressure," the DROs told the media. All the DROs demanded the chief election commissioner complete probe of the allegations leveled by Chattha.

DROs Chakwal, Jhelum, Attock claimed that all the arrangements were made in transparent manners.

DRO Chakwal Quratul Ain said elections in Chakwal were conducted under the Election Act, and all processes adhered to the oath. She demanded an independent investigation into the allegations.

Similarly, DROs Attock and Jhelum, Rao Atif Raza, and Captain Sami also denied any pressure during the February 8 polls, asserting that the elections in their respective districts were conducted transparently. DRO Talagang Khawar Bashir stated that they conducted transparent elections in Talagang and called for an independent investigation into Chattha's allegations.



THATTA: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addresses a rally in Thatta.

Shehbaz calls for unity for nation's rebuilding

LAHORE (INP): Former prime minister and PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif has said on Sunday that instability in the country will benefit none, and dangers to the country's economy call for concerted efforts to build Pakistan.

Talking to the newly elected independent candidates from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shehbaz said that previously, too, the PML-N governments had saved the country from default, and this time too it would be his priority as the prime minister of the country to do the same. "Those bent upon spreading anarchy in the country are still doing the same thing they had been doing in the past," he said.

PML-N president was of the view that former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and the PML-N supremo Nawaz had always preferred national interests to his own. "What we intend to do is to save the country from crises."

EC announced names of 91 successful candidates in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Election Commission on Sunday announced the names of the successful candidates of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly here.

According to a notification issued by the Election Commission has been released the list of all successful 91 candidates after holding the election on Feb 8, 2024, said the notification. However, the announcement of success of the successful candidates of 8 constituencies of Peshawar could not be issued.

PML-N, PPP fail to reach agreement

LAHORE (INP): Despite holding their third meeting, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) could not come to an agreement on government formation. It was decided during the meeting to prolong the discussions and reconvene on Monday to further deliberate on the matter.

A joint declaration was issued following the meeting of coordination committees from both parties, held in Islamabad. According to the statement, detailed discussions were conducted on the proposals put forth by each side, resulting in significant progress on various issues.

However, in order to finalize matters, both parties opted to schedule another meeting for Monday to deliberate on further recommendations.

The joint declaration emphasized the shared belief that a robust democratic government is essential for ensuring stability in Pakistan. Representing the PML-N were Ishaq Dar, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Azam Nazir Tarar, and Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan, while the PPP delegation comprised Syed Murad Ali Shah, Qamar Zaman Kaira, Saeed Ghani, Nadeem Afzal Chan, Nawab Sanaullah Zehri, Shuja Khan, and Sardar Bahadur Khan Sehwar.

As the discussions continue, both parties remain committed to forging a path towards a stable and prosperous future for Pakistan through democratic means.

Afghanistan special envoys meet in Doha

DOHA (AFP): National and regional special envoys to Afghanistan convened in Doha on Sunday in the second UN meeting of its kind in less than a year, though it remained unclear whether Taliban authorities would join the closed-session event. The two-day meeting, hosted by the UN secretary general, was due to discuss increasing engagement with Afghanistan and a more coordinated response to the Central Asian nation. In the aftermath of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, the international community has wrestled with its approach to the country's new rulers.

On the first day of the convention in gas-rich Qatar, which hosted the Taliban during years of peace talks with the United States, the Kabul government's participation remained unclear. Though the Afghan foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment on plans to attend, the secretary general of the Norwegian Refugee Council wrote on X, formerly Twitter, that it was "disappointing that the Taliban declined to attend the special envoy meeting".

"We urge all sides to do more to hammer out deals that can benefit the long-suffering Afghan people," Jan Egeland said. The UN had extended an invitation to the Taliban authorities to participate, following their exclusion from the first meeting in May. Organisers pushed to include voices from civil society inside and outside Afghanistan including women and from the media and businesses at the Doha convention. A senior diplomatic source told AFP ahead of the meeting the Taliban government had said it would only attend as the sole representative of Afghanistan at the convention — excluding civil society representatives.

A second demand was that the Taliban government delegation meet with the UN secretary general and be given an opportunity to present its position, the source said on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of discussions. On Saturday, Taliban authorities said they had reiterated their conditions to the United Nations, emphasising that their participation in the UN-convened talks would be "unbeneficial" if those conditions were not met.

The Taliban's government in Kabul has not been officially recognised by any other government since it took power and the administration has imposed a strict interpretation of Islam, with women subjected to laws characterised by the UN as "gender apartheid". Many governments, international organisations and aid agencies cut off or severely scaled back their funding for Afghanistan in response — causing a serious knock to the already struggling economy.

Biden 'confident' on \$60bn Ukraine war aid package vote

(BBC): US President Joe Biden has assured his Ukrainian counterpart that \$60bn in military aid is on its way. The measure still needs to pass a final congressional vote, but Mr Biden told Volodymyr Zelensky that he was confident it would be approved. Mr Zelensky had earlier made an urgent appeal for more weapons to avoid a "catastrophic" situation in Europe.

The US has blamed Ukraine's withdrawal from the battle at Avdiivka on a lack of Congressional support. Taking Avdiivka - a gateway to the Russian-seized Donetsk regional capital in the east - is Russia's first notable gain since they seized nearby Bakhmut in May.

"Ukraine's military was forced to withdraw from Avdiivka after Ukrainian soldiers had to ration ammunition due to dwindling supplies as a result of congressional inaction," a White House statement read. Earlier this week, the US Senate approved a \$95bn (£75bn) foreign aid package - which includes \$60bn for Ukraine - after months of political wrangling. But it still faces an uphill battle in the House of Representatives, where members of the Republican Party are divided on the measure. "Look, the Ukrainian people have fought so bravely and heroically, they've put so much on the line and the idea that now, when they're running out of ammunition, we'd walk away - I find it absurd," Mr Biden told reporters following his call with Mr Zelensky on Saturday.

'Gaza truce 'not promising' as Israel rejects calls to spare Rafah

GAZA STRIP (AFP/APP): Mediator Qatar acknowledged on Saturday that prospects for a new pause in Israel's war with Hamas were "not really promising" as Israel rejected appeals to hold off on a threatened assault on the Gaza city of Rafah.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that foreign countries calling on Israel to spare the city, where 1.4 million Palestinians have sought refuge, were effectively telling the country to "lose the war".

Truce efforts intensified this week as Qatar and fellow mediators Egypt and the United States scrambled to secure a ceasefire before Israeli troops enter Rafah, the last major population centre in Gaza untouched by Israeli ground troops.

Despite a direct appeal from US President Joe Biden earlier this week, Netanyahu insisted the operation would go ahead regardless of whether a hostage release deal was agreed with Hamas. "Even if we achieve it, we will enter Rafah," he said at a televised news conference Saturday.

Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani, who met with negotiators from both Israel and Hamas this week, said efforts for a ceasefire had been complicated by the insistence of "a lot of countries" that any new truce involve further releases of hostages.

"The pattern in the last few days is not really very promising," he said at the Munich Security Conference.

His assessment came as Hamas threatened to suspend its involvement

"I find it unethical, I find it just contrary to everything we are as a country", he added. "So I'm going to fight until we get them the ammunition they need and the capacity they need to defend themselves."

The Ukrainian president also urged US lawmakers to approve the financial package. "I am glad that I can count on the full support of the American president," he posted on Telegram. Mr Zelensky has been in Germany, where he made an urgent appeal for more weapons to avoid a "catastrophic" situation in Europe.

"Keeping Ukraine in the artificial deficits of weapons, particularly in deficit of artillery and long-range capabilities allows Putin to adapt to the current intensity of the war," he told an international conference in Munich. "Ukrainians have proven that we can force Russia to retreat," he said. "We can get our land back."

"Do not ask Ukraine when the war will end. Ask yourself, why is Putin still able to continue it?"

Ukraine is critically dependent on weapons supplies from the US and other Western allies to keep fighting Russia - a much bigger military force with an abundance of artillery ammunition. UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron said help for Ukraine from the UK, the EU and the US would make a "real difference" to the fight against Russia. Speaking to the BBC, Ukrainian MP Oleksiy Goncharenko said that he felt let down by the American leadership. "If you can't count on

your partner, because America was saying you can count on us, we will be with Ukraine as long as it takes, and where are those words now?" he said.

"We're dying every day." Avdiivka has been engulfed in fierce fighting for months and has been a battlefield town since 2014, when Russian-backed fighters seized large swathes of the eastern Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

The fall of Avdiivka marks the biggest change on the more than 1,000km-long (620-mile) front line since Russian troops seized the nearby town of Bakhmut in May 2023. The head of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, Denis Pushilin, welcomed Russia's territorial gain. "The Russian city of Avdiivka, one of the oldest settlements in Donbas, today returned home to Russia," he said in a video posted on Telegram. "On behalf of all residents of Donbas, I sincerely thank Russian military personnel, our army, our president, for the fact that the Donetsk People's Republic continues to be liberated."

Announcing the decision to withdraw early on Saturday, head of the Ukrainian armed forces Gen Oleksandr Syrskyi said he acted "to avoid encirclement and preserve the lives and health of service personnel". "Our soldiers performed their military duty with dignity, did everything possible to destroy the best Russian military units, inflicted significant losses on the enemy in terms of manpower and equipment," he said.

and electricity in Nasser Hospital in Gaza's main southern city of Khan Yunis, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. Israel has for weeks concentrated its military operations in Khan Yunis, the hometown of Hamas's Gaza leader Yahya Sinwar, the alleged architect of the October 7 attack that triggered the war.

Intense fighting has raged around Nasser Hospital -- one of the territory's last major medical facilities that remains operational.

The Israeli military said troops entered the hospital on Thursday, acting on what it said was "credible intelligence" that hostages had been held there. It later acknowledged it found no firm evidence that they had.

The power was cut and the generators stopped after the raid, leading to the deaths of six patients due to a lack of oxygen, according to Gaza's health ministry. A witness, who declined to be named for safety reasons, told AFP the Israeli forces had shot "at anyone who moved inside the hospital".

The Gaza war began with Hamas's October 7 attack which resulted in the deaths of about 1,160 people in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of Israeli official figures. Militants also took about 250 people hostage, 130 of whom are still in Gaza, including 30 who are presumed dead, according to Israeli figures. Israel's retaliatory assault on Gaza has killed at least 28,858 people, mostly women and children, according to the territory's health ministry.

Malik Ahmad asks govt to check elements spreading hatred

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz leader Malik Ahmad Khan on Sunday alleged that activists of a party were inciting hate on the pattern of May 9 incident, which was a black day in the country's history.

Addressing a press conference at PML-N secretariat here, he requested the caretaker government to

preempt the situation and stop elements which were spreading hatred.

He said that if the Rawalpindi commissioner had an evidence in support of his allegations, he would have produced that until now. He claimed that the commissioner was a "non-party" to the electoral process.

PML-N leader Attaullah

Tarar said that social media was used for developing fake narrative, adding that the PTI backed candidates should accept their defeat. The PML-N had accepted its defeat with dignity and Khawaja Saad Rafique congratulated Latif Khosa on his victory in elections, he added.

Azma Bukhari also spoke on the occasion.

PPP leader regrets ongoing protest after elections

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan People's Party Deputy General Secretary for Central Punjab Usman Malik Sunday condemned the ongoing campaign for seeking victory in the resignation of commissioner Rawalpindi, labeling it as a futile endeavor to cause chaos and unrest in country.

In a statement issued here on Sunday, he emphasised that true intentions of those orchestrating these disturbances would soon be unveiled to the public eye. Furthermore, Malik revealed that both the PPP

and the PML-N are on the brink of finalizing a strategic formula aimed at establishing stable governments in key regions including the center, Punjab and Balochistan, within the next 24 to 48 hours. He urged independent group to reconsider their strategies, citing their failure to form a government in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

Addressing concerns over electoral results, Malik acknowledged the PPP's reservations but affirmed their commitment to preserving political and

economic stability of the nation. He accused the disruptive group of rampant allegations of rigging while refusing to acknowledge their own victory, warning that unless they alter their obstinate stance, no political party will engage with them.

The statement underscored the PPP's stance on maintaining stability amidst political turbulence, while also signaling potential collaborations with the PML-N to ensure governance efficiency across various regions of Pakistan.

Free medical, eye camp organised at Press Club

LAHORE (APP): The governing body of Lahore Press Club on Sunday organised a free medical and eye camp for the club members and their families with the support of Life Hospital, the Health Foundation and "Transparent Hands".

The members and their families were examined by the specialist doctors, who provided medicines, eye glasses, and optical.

In the medical and eye camp, Life Hospital Joint Secretary Nisar Ahmed Sehgal, Member Governing Body Aamir Haq, Marketing Manager Muhammad Zeeshan Siddiqui, Dr. Inamullah, Dr. Houria Gynecologist Collegian, Dr. Sajid Senior Medical Officer, Dr. Hafeez General Physician, Dr. Amna Medical Officer, Dr.

Afzal A Sheikh Consultant Eye Surgeon, Dr. Ayesha, Dr. Khizr, Dr. Hira attended and examined the patients coming to the camp.

Registration of disabled persons was done by Labard. Journalists and their families participated in large numbers in the free medical and eye camp and appreciated the initiative of the governing body for successful organisation of the medical camp. According to the advice of the doctors, the patients were given eye glasses, medicines and wheels Chairs for the disabled were provided.

Lahore Press Club President Arshad Ansari said that the elected governing body is devoted to the service of the members and their families, adding we are maintaining our previous traditions by

arranging programmes that benefit the members and their families.

President Arshad Ansari, Vice President Amjad Usmani, Secretary Zahid Abid, members of the governing body Imran Sheikh, Rana Shahzad, Abid Hussain and Syed Badr Saeed were present at the closing ceremony of the medical and eye camp.

At the end of the camp, President Arshad Ansari presented commemorative shields and certificates to the doctors and paramedical staff on behalf of the Press Club, appreciating the efforts of Senior Vice President Shiraz Hasnat, member Governing Body Imran Sheikh and the in-charge of Free Medical & Eye Camp Muhammad Zeeshan Siddiqui for the excellent organisation camp.

600 teachers, 10,000 students imparted family planning training

LAHORE (APP): Director General Population Welfare Department Saman Roy said on Sunday that 600 teachers and more than 10,000 students have been provided high-level training related to family planning and reproductive health in 30 educational institutions in Punjab province.

She said that the Punjab Population Innovation Fund (PIPF) in Punjab province is based on improving family planning resources and reducing population growth through its use. She expressed these views while addressing a meeting held here in the committee room.

In meeting, a target has been set to reach 55,000 youths and married couples

in the three districts of Attock, Khushab, and Lodhran districts for providing family planning, gender equality information, and services.

Through this programme, providing free access to quality family planning services to the people of the province and institutionalising quality of care in family planning services. The PPIF delivery system and awareness among the people and focusing on providing better health-related facilities.

She said that in this connection, coordination of family planning service providers is also being improved through the World Bank programme. Roy said that the Department of

Population Welfare Punjab is currently implementing several initiatives that will strengthen its capacity as a whole and the expected results of the strategy will be to create a healthy and productive environment for the promotion of family planning in the province.

It will help in formation. Director General Population Welfare Department Saman Roy said that the Punjab Population Welfare Department is providing access to quality information to the youth, adding thanks to modern means of communication, and quick awareness of the changing needs of the youth with the help of educational programs.

13 more children die of pneumonia in Punjab

LAHORE (INP): Pneumonia claimed the lives of 13 more children in various districts of Punjab in 24 hours, health department report said on Sunday.

According to the report, dry cold weather has resulted in surge in pneumonia cases and 622 more cases patients were detected in a single day. In Lahore, 131 patients were diagnosed with pneumonia in which one child died.

The report further stated that the total number of pneumonia cases in Lahore was 6190, while in Punjab, more than 28809 cases have been reported, while the total number of children who died of pneumonia has climbed to 392.

Medical experts say that children under the age of two years were at the highest risk of pneumonia. They urged the citizens to protect children from the deadly disease by following precautions in urban dry winter.

LESCO recovery team attacked in Gawalmandi

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) recovery team was attacked and injured by a defaulter on Chamberlain Road of Gawalmandi Sub-Division, according to the company's spokesman here Sunday.

He explained that the team was on duty to recover long-pending dues from dead defaulters in the area when the accused attacked the LESCO team with an iron rod; however, the accused was arrested by the police and a case has also been registered against him. The LESCO has also disconnected the electricity connection of the accused.

Storytelling session on Lahore history

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Walled Cities and Heritage Areas Authority (PWCHAA) organised a storytelling session titled 'Dastan Goi' on the history of Lahore at Barkat Ali Islamia Hall, Mochi Gate, here on Sunday.

Badar Khan, who is a famous Dastan Go of Pakistan, shed light on the history of the city of Lahore and narrated various events and historical traditions related to the city of Lahore.

Barkat Ali Islamia Hall, which was built in 1888, long before the creation of Pakistan, all important political leaders used to deliver speeches there. The Punjab Walled Cities and Heritage Areas Authority completed its renovation work in the year 2023 and after its beautification, started organising various programmes here, said a spokesperson for the authority.

The purpose of organising the event was to inform the residents of the city about importance of the city and the old historical buildings in the city so that they could know the historical importance of buildings like Barkat Ali Islamia Hall in the city.

PWCHAA Director General Kamran Lashari said such events were needed to revive the history and Dastan Goi is one of the forgotten traditions, which must be introduced to our young generation.



SIALKOT: Former Minister Defence Khawaja Asif, addressing media persons at his residence at cantt. —APP Photo

Gala dinner hosted to celebrate Pak-China friendship, bilateral relations with Turkey

KARACHI (APP):K H A Business and International Relations hosted a dinner in honor of the Consul General of China, Yang Yundong, and the Consul General of Turkey, Cemal Sangu, to celebrate Pak-China friendship marking the completion of 73 years of diplomatic relations and also to celebrate the New Year of China.

A cake-cutting ceremony was held during the event.

Among the attendees were the President of K.H.A Business and International Relations, CEO Kafeel Hussain Group, renowned architect Kafeel Hussain, Consul General of Oman Engineer Sami Al Khanjari, Consul General of Indonesia Dr. June Kuncoro Hadiningrat, Consul General of Malaysia Herman Hardynata Ahmad, Consul General of Japan Hattori Masaru, Diplomats from Qatar, UAE and Indonesia, President Pakistan Tax Bar Association Anwar Kashif Mumtaz, President Karachi Business Forum and Think Tank Rashid Ahmed Siddiqui, along with other prominent business personalities and dignitaries of the city.

Addressing the gathering, the President of K.H.A Business and International Relations, CEO Kafeel Hussain Group, Kafeel Hussain stated that Pakistan is keen on enhancing relations with countries worldwide. He emphasized the strong fraternal ties between Pakistan, China, and Turkey, and highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen them further.

He highlighted the vast opportunities for business and investment in Pakistan and expressed called for investment in the country while facilitating businessmen from both China and Turkey with information about incentives and other facilities available in Pakistan.

Kafeel Hussain further mentioned the potential benefits of collaboration among all Asian countries in boosting the economy, which could lead to more pleasant relations between Pakistan and other nations. Consul General Yang Yundong mentioned that the Pak-China friendship is exemplary, citing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a vital

contributor to both countries' economies. He also noted the increase in exports under the Belt and Road Initiative, which is highly promising.

Yang Yundong expressed confidence that Pak-China friendship will continue to set an example for all nations globally and both countries will continue to play their part in strengthening the economy through collaboration. Consul General Cemal Sangu stated that Turkey and Pakistan have deep-rooted and extensive trade, diplomatic, cultural, and economic relations, which can be further improved for mutual benefits.

Sangu emphasized Turkey's ongoing collaboration with Pakistan in various sectors, benefiting both countries' economies. He also highlighted the importance of robust economic policies to improve Pakistan's economy, which can lead to increased exports.

Turkish CG reiterated Turkey's commitment to enhancing relations with Pakistan and other Muslim countries for mutual prosperity.

Empowered women – elevating nation, beaming with pride

LAHORE (APP): Experts on Sunday said that women's multidimensional empowerment in society is central to realising their rights and enabling them to equally participate in businesses, scientific, social sports and entrepreneur, control over productive resources and economic decision-making.

From risky summits to space while representing Pakistan in global media, making themselves heard worldwide, these equipped women during last two years have been standing historic.

In recent outgoing years the empowered Pakistani women have displayed their best potential in every sphere of life, achieving for the country, by breaking barriers and achieving numerous 'firsts' in their respective fields, APP observed.

To a great surprise, Naila Kiani, renowned mountaineer and the first Pakistani woman, who climbed 10 peaks above 8,000 metres last year. She also became the only Pakistani to ascend seven peaks above 8,000m in six months.

Likewise, Samina Baig attained the feat of becoming the first Pakistani women to summit the world's ninth-highest peak, the 8,125m-tall Nanga Parbat. Pakistan's women cricketers also excelled

during the year 2023, while making history by registering their maiden win over New Zealand not just in the first T20 International but also in the one-day format.

Earlier, in the same year wicketkeeper-batter Muneeba Ali became the first Pakistani woman to score a T20I century and only the sixth to score one in a T20 World Cup.

Pakistani women in the walk of social or performing arts, did not shy away from exhibiting their love for modern arts and media either as they set new records.

Arooj Aftab last year performed at ceremony of Grammy Awards 2023 in Los Angeles, US—and became the first Pakistani to win the prestigious Grammy Award, she also became the first artist from the country to perform at the Grammys. Oscar-winner Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy was announced as the director for the latest Star Wars film, making her the first woman and person of colour to direct a film in the franchise.

Shifting focus to a different category among the 'firsts', women and minorities in Pakistan made significant endeavors, toward achieving parity with men.

Justice Musarrat Hilali took oath as Peshawar High Court chief justice on April

In February 2023, and similarly the Lahore High Court Bar Association got its first woman secretary since its inception in 1893 following Sabahat Rizvi's election.

In September last year, the Supreme Court of Pakistan got its first female registrar after sworn-in Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa appointed Additional District and Sessions Judge Okara, Jazeela Aslam, to the role.

The next month, girls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP), Swat, played the "first-ever" women's cricket match in the Kabal tehsil despite facing restrictions and roadblocks.

Last year, a newly unveiled was figure of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto became the first of a Pakistani personality at Madame Tussauds' museum in Dubai.

Describing the Pakistani diaspora abroad got representation as British-Pakistani diplomat Fouzia Younis recently became the first British Muslim to be appointed the consul general to Toronto.

Likewise, in October, Namira Salim made history by becoming the first Pakistani to reach space.

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan activist Tahira Habib told APP that now, as the world

changes from conventional to digital mode, imparting them training on the latest techniques can also have a trickle-down effect on our younger generation making it healthier, more sensible and more productive for a secure future.

The World Bank, in its report "Women, Business and the Law" has acknowledged internationally this priority, that the heart of the policies of all important institutions including the active participation of women.

Presenting an index covering the potential of around 190 economies and structured around the life cycle of working women, the World Bank, in the overall count, has awarded Pakistan a 55.6 score out of 100. However, in terms of laws affecting women's decisions to work, Pakistan secures a perfect score of 100.

In this connection the Punjab government has taken a number of initiatives for legal and economic empowerment of women," said a spokesperson for the Punjab government. "Punjab Women Development Department had embarked on initiatives like women employment, entrepreneurship, decision-making, property ownership, education and vocational training," he added.

Power supply suspension schedule for Feb 19

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has issued power supply suspension schedule for Monday, February 19, as the company has to embark on necessary maintenance and repair work on transmission lines.

According to the company's spokesman here on Sunday, electricity supply would remain suspended from 9 am to 2 pm on Monday on the following feeders: Feeders from Allama Iqbal Town Grid: Clifton Colony, Ayubiyah, Attabad Grid Feeders from Ali Pepper, Batapur Grid Feeders from Data Park, Mandianwala, Wagah, Bhati Grid Feeders: Rashid Road, Urdu Bazar, Ganj Bakhsh, Bhogewal Feeders from Grid: Bhagatpura, Sadiq, Bachiki Feeders from Grid: F7, Bind Road Feeders from Grid: Fazal Colony, Pedro Road, Shirakot, Hanjarwal, Chinar Bagh Feeders from Grid: Kadiyal, Feeders from Chochak

Grid: Lukho Der, Bazida, Khola, Chohang Feeders from Grid: Angora, Khanpur, Choonian Grid Feeders: Nowshera, Jamsher 2, Jandwala, Mohammadipora, Old Changa Manga, Defense Phase 5 Feeders from Grid: Haji Park , Babu Mehr Town, Divalpur Feeders from Grid: Godara, Probanabad, Kandy, Mehtab Walarao Ajmal, Allahabad Feeders from Grid: Pakhoki, Sarsir, Feeders from MCO Grid: Abubakar, Al Fateh Steel, Al Fateh Textile, Ayan Plastics, Dahinga, Din Colony, Farooq Steel, Hafeez Industry, Innovative Biscuit, International Industry, Kot Abdul Malik 2, Madina Glass, New Age Cable, Reneal Synthetic, Sarina Industries, Starlet Innovative, Variety Dyeing, X-Air Avenue Grid Feeders: Noorpur, Farooqabad Grid Feeders: C1,2,5, from Fatehgarh Grid Feeders from: Fatehgarh, Harbanspura, Mughalpur, Jamal Mustafa, Mian

Park, Feeders from Fort Grid: Fort 2, Garden Town Feeders from Grid: Rahmanpura, Ghazi Grid Feeders: Feeders from Usman Nagar, Hadiara, Sarfraz Rafiq Road, Gulshan Ravi Grid: Munshi Hospital, Sir Syed, Gulzeb Colony, Jinah Colony, Chauhan Shamam, Sanda, Haveli Grid Feeders from: Sharifabad, Pir Ghani, Bhila, Jamal Kot, Hujra Grid Feeders from: Hujra City, Rajgarh, Johar Town. Feeders: GR Singh, Budhike, Feeders from Qasor New Grid: RMA, Qasor Old Grid Feeders: B Shah, Kot Radha Feeders from Kishan Grid: Zafar K, KKK, Lathani, Owais Qarni, New Changa Manga, Feeders from KSK Grid: B Manawan, Siraj Steel, OK, RTM, Lahore Cantt Feeders from Grid: MES Power, Lafo Grid Feeders from: Lafo Word, Liliani Feeders from Grid: Soy Asal, Haral, Laliani , MH Plastics, Net Food, Nipan Paint, Peel, Pharmagen, Regency, SST,

Tube Well, Yusuf Nagar, Basfa Textiles, Mandi Ahmedabad Grid to Feeders: Aabad City, Lakho Malkana, Malikpur Grid to Feeders Z6, D4, McLeod Road Feeders from Grid: Nasbat Road, Royal Park, Mochi Feeders from Grid: Linda Bazar, Fwarachowk, Model Town Feeders from Grid: Faisal Town, Campus Road, Mohlin Feeders from Grid: RTW, Nankana Grid Feeders: Feeders from City 1, Narang Grid: Narang Mor, Rustampur, Kala Khatai, Okara City 1 Feeders from Grid: Asia Feed, Fazal Shah, Power House, Okara City 2 Feeders from Grid Zakabar Road, Fwar Chowk, Rahmatpura, GD18, Faisalabad Road , Fazi Paper, Salva Oil Mill, Salva Oil Mill 11, Old Kot Lakhpat Feeders from Grid: Nusrat Road, Patuki Feeders from Grid: Behrwai, Abbas, Hala Chowk, Hospital, Shah Wali, Pholangar Feeders from Grid: Bhai Phero 2, Punjab Small

Industries Feeders from State Grid: Shamke Bhattian, PWR Feeders from Grid: Waheed Colony, GT Road 1, Boston Colony, Madani, Mustafaabad, Qurtoba Grids Feeders from: Bahawalpur House, Samanabad, Qala Sattar Shah Grid Feeders from: Nowshahi Paper Mill , Yadgar Paper, Glue, Feeders from Rayon Old Grid: Tablighi Center, Ravi Feeders from Grid: Forest Colony, Jamal Steel, New Shad Bagh, Noor Road, Rehman Park Feeders from Grid: Landmark, Makkah Colony, Feeders from Renala Grid: Feeders from Aleem Town, Ghous, Sabzazar Grid: Hasan Town, A Block, Feeders from Sadar Gogira Grid: Akbar, Sadar Gogira, Sagian Feeders from Grid: Moola Bakhsh, Saidpur Feeders from Grid: Nargis, Chowbarji Park, Nawan Kot, Gulshan Feeders from Abbas, Mansoor, Sodiwal, Shadman Grid: Jail Road.



حکومت پاکستان
(وزارت داخلہ)



NAADRA

نیشنل ڈیٹا بیس اینڈ رجسٹریشن اتھارٹی (نادر)

نوٹس بوجہ غیر حاضری

آپ احمد خان (جوئیرا گیزٹو) ای۔ آر۔ بی نمبر 57993/75204، ولد احمد خان (بی۔ پگوان گل گل) گھر اکانہ در تحصیل ضلع ویراپر) مورخہ 08-Nov-2023 سے اپنی ڈیوٹی سے بغیر درخواست / جتنی اجازت تیار تھاری مسلسل غیر حاضریں۔

حکم ہذا سے (2) نوٹس کوالیفیئر:

RHO/NADRA/Disp/08/HR/57993/First Notice Dated:30-Nov-2023

اور نوٹس کوالیفیئر

RHO/NADRA/Disp/08/HR/57993/Second Notice Dated:15-Dec-2023

کے ذریعے ڈیوٹی پر حاضر ہونے اور اپنی غیر حاضری کی وضاحت کرنے کی ہدایت کی گئی لیکن آپ ان کی قبل میں نامہ آپ کا یہ عمل سرورس آرگنائزیشن ریڈر کارکردگی اور نظم و ضبط) 2020 کی سرینا خلاف ورزی کے ضمن میں ہے۔ آپ کو بذریعہ نوٹس ہدایت کی جاتی ہے کہ آپ اشتہار ہذا کی اشاعت کے چودہ (14) ایام کے اندر اپنی ڈیوٹی پر حاضر ہوں اور تحریری طور پر اپنی غیر حاضری کی وضاحت پیش کریں۔ بصورت دیگر سرورس آرگنائزیشن ریڈر کارکردگی اور نظم و ضبط) 2020 کے تحت یک طرفہ تادیبی کارروائی عمل میں لا کر آپ کو ملامت سے برطرف کر دیا جائے گا۔

ڈائریکٹر جنرل (محاذ آفیس)

ریجنل مینیجر، نادر ای۔ آر۔ بی نمبر 57993/75204، 31 مئی 2023ء، 5 بجے، پشاور

PID(\\4921\23 091-9217840) فون نمبر

5 of family died in tragic road accident

PESHAWAR (APP): Five of a family died and one person was seriously injured in a tragic head-on collision between a bus and a motor car near Qayyumabad area of Safi Tehsil, Mohmand district, an official of the Rescue 1122 confirmed here Sunday morning.

A dangerous collision between a bus and a motor car in Qayyumabad area of Safi Tehsil wherein 5 people died on the spot while one was seriously injured, the official of the Rescue 1122 said.

As soon as the incident was reported, the medical and DR team of Rescue 1122 reached the spot and removed the bodies from the motor car and shifted them to District Headquarters Hospital Ghalanai, the Rescue 1122 official said.

Those died in the tragic road accident identified as Hazrat Omar son of Noor Gul aged 45 years, Lal Bacha, son of Painsda Gul, age 50 years, Jamdad son of Fateh Khan age 54 years, Syed-ur-Rahman, son of Fazlur Rahman, age 45 years, and woman while Waheed Gul son of Hamish Gul, of Soran, received serious injuries and said to be critical condition, the Rescue 1122 official said.

Four killed in a firing in Wazir Qala: As many as

Implementation of teachers upgradation demanded

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: All Primary Teachers Association (APTA) congratulated newly elected Members for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and argued to ensure implementation of previous government upgradation order regarding teachers of primary schools.

According to details, former provincial government congratulates all the members of the assembly who are successful in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

You had given the gift of gradation but unfortunately the caretaker provincial governments did not implement it. APTA KP president Azizullah Khan expressed these views in a press release. He said that from October 6 to October 10, 2022, the primary teachers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa staged a historic protest sit-in in which more than 50,000 primary teachers participated, which is on the record and on national and international media.

That time the Provincial Education Minister Shahram Khan Turkai and Finance Minister Taimur Jhagra Secretary and Director E& SE and Provincial leadership of APTA were present in the talks.

Shahram Khan Tarkai, following Pakhtun traditions, gave a presentation on primary teacher upgradation in the provincial cabinet meeting on January 17, 2023, and the provincial cabinet unanimously approved the upgradation under the chairmanship of the chief minister.

But unfortunately the caretaker government in the province did not issue the notification on the basis that all credit would go to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

APTA Provincial President Azizullah Khan said that now, with God's will, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has come with two-thirds majority for the third time, so we hope that the teachers will issue the notification of upgradation at the first opportunity.

Teachers are the builders of the nation and the role of teachers in national elections is as clear as day.

No electricity in KP, power transmission affected

PESHAWAR (APP): Due to rain in different areas of PESCO region, power transmission is affected and there is no electricity in provincial capital Peshawar and in other districts across KP. The rains continue in Mardan, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Swat and Swabi. and due to rain, some feeders of PESCO have been tripped. On the instructions of PESCO Chief Executive Officer Akhtar Hameed Khan, the field staff has been put on high alert. As soon as the intensity of rain decreases, the process of restoring electricity will be started and consumers are requested to stay away from electrical installations during rains, spokesperson PESCO said.

Snowfall, skiing lovers throng Upper Swat following Met Office's forecast as winter tourism shines in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Known as the Switzerland of Pakistan, Swat has attracted an influx of tourists and adventure sports enthusiasts along with families on weekends to explore its mesmerizing natural beauty, skiing and trout fish besides snowfall of the winter season.

In the wake of Met Office's forecast report of heavy rains and snowfalls over the hills in upper-central parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Swat, Dir, Chitral, Abbottabad and Mansehra from February 17-21, the snowfall and skiing lovers from across the country especially Northern Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa thronged to Kalam, Bahrain and Malam Jabba in Sunday.

Besides Kalam and Malam Jabba, the snowy mountains peaks of Gabin Jabba, Miandam, Matiltan, Kalam, Utror, Gabral, Matiltan, Mahodand, Loye Sar resorts also drew influx of snowfall lovers along with families and children amid great fun and laughter despite muggy weather.

"I came from Nowshera to my favorite tourists' destination Swat for snowfall following MET's Office predictions besides enjoying its brown trout fish available at reasonable rate," said lecturer Ehtisham Qaiser of Wapda Town Peshawar while taking to APP.

Advising tourists to bring warm clothes, he said the cold breeze has increased chill in Upper Swat forcing tourists to wear additional cloths and wollen sweaters.

Tourists from Peshawar, Nowshera, Mardan, Charsadda, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad were seen in large numbers at Kalam, Malam Jabba and Bahrian on Sunday to get pleasures from snowfall, trekking and brown trout fish found in abundance following Govt successful projects in fishery sector.

Known for a combination of its seven distinctive features including snowfall that was hard to find together in any tourist destination of Pakistan, Swat is also a home to primitive Gandhara civilization and

Prices of fruits, vegetables go beyond affordability level

PESHAWAR (APP): As the sun rays bath the mud house of poor fruit seller, Ayaz Khan starts his journey from his village to the fruits and vegetable market hoping to purchase apples, guavas, bananas, and citrus at reasonable rates to support his six members of the family on the financial front.

Donned in traditional attire—woolen chadar, Chitrali cap, and wearing Peshawari Chappal, Ayaz Khan (32), who is assisted by his elders brothers, wakes up early in the morning and starts his Chingchi rickshaw soon after having breakfast and rushed to the fruit market Pabbi Nowshera, expecting to get fresh fruits through open auction on reasonable prices by anticipating sale.

Associated with the inherited pain-sticking business for the last 12 years after the death of his father Sher Ali Khan at village Mohib Banda Nowshera, the motivated fruit seller said that he suffered financial losses in case perishable fruits and vegetables were not sold on time.

"These days many consumers just ask about prices of fruits and vegetables and return empty handed due to exorbitant prices forcing us to wait till late at night with a hope to sell out stock of perishable goods to avert financial loss." The citrus of Khanpur Hariapur and Manki Sharif Nowshera is almost out of common man's reach after its prices soared to record Rs. 350 per dozen in local fruit markets against Rs. 280 last year.

The alarming surge in vegetable and fruit prices in Peshawar and Nowshera districts raised significant concerns among the citizens, prompting them to call upon the district gov-

Ministry team visits AG Office

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation from Ministry of Law and Justice headed by Additional Owais Nauman Kundi visited Attorney General Office at Peshawar High Court, Peshawar.

Additional Attorney General Sana Ullah briefed the delegation regarding dealt with federation as well as disposal of pleas at Principal and Circuit benches of Peshawar High Court in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Director General Liaison Monitoring Cell Khurram Shahzad, Director Jamal, Additional Director Gulfam Hameed and Deputy Director Ali Abbas also present in the delegation.

Deputy Director discusses digitization of cases and relevant data deeply. The delegation stressed on quick dissemination of justice.

Mobile educ school established

PESHAWAR (INP): Mobile Education and Infotainment School has been established by Pakistan in North Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to details, set up the vision 'Ilm Tolud para' meaning 'Education for everyone', the school aims inculcating the love for learning in youth of the remote rural areas of the district.

As part of the co-curricular activity, the children of the area were shown animated films and cartoons which they enjoyed a lot.

So far more than 1800 students from different places of North Waziristan have benefited from this facility and have committed to make every effort for getting education.

The residents of the area also appreciated the initiative by Pakistan Army and said these co-curricular activities along with education enrich the intellectual process of children.



PESHAWAR: A roadside vendor selling french fries along roadside during rain.

Army plays role in provision of quality treatment facilities

PESHAWAR (APP): The Pakistan Army has played a significant role in provision of quality treatment facilities to people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Pakistan Army has completed scores of hospitals projects for the people in different districts of the province.

Following a long wave of terrorism, Pakistan Army has taken practical measures for reconstruction of many hospitals besides improved facilities in health sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a security official told APP.

The reconstructed hospitals includes Alizai Kurrum hospital, Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Mir Ali, Razmak Hospital Bazar Zakakhel Khyber, Mamound hospital Bajaur, Toikhola hospital South Waziristan, Darazanda hospital DIKhan and a 40 bed hospital at Dogar Kurrum comprising 9 male and two female doctors besides nine

of Swat is skiing sports being played at Malam Jabba every year during winter and it should be promoted to bolster rural economy.

KP tourism department officials told APP that a mega project was prepared for organizing different winter sports and tourism events in various districts including Swat.

Kalam's winter gala and tour-de-cycle race would be organized in Swat while first-ever sports rafting at River Swat to be held besides an international paragliding event at Saidu Sharif.

To reduce tourists' load at Kalam, Malam Jabba and Bahrian, new tourists spots would be developed at Sola Tanar, Puchar and Jargo valleys while walking tracks to promote ecotourism in Swat.

To maintain natural beauty and avoid pollution at tourist spots in Swat, he said camping pods would be established at new tourists' destinations besides Kalash culture events in Chitral. To link new tourist destination with

Free medical camp organized

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a joint initiative aimed at providing essential healthcare services to the residents of remote areas, the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps North partnered with an NGO organize a Free Medical Camp in Sara Ghari, on Sunday.

This endeavor, dedicated to the well-being of the local populace, witnessed the participation of 15 doctors, nursing staff, and 5 administration personnel from the NGO.

A total of 705 patients, comprising 230 males, 268 females and 207 children, benefited from the comprehensive medical check-ups and received essential medications, all provided free of charge.

Beyond medical assistance, the event also emphasized the significance of personal hygiene and the adoption of healthy lifestyle practices, with patients and locals alike receiving valuable education on these topics.

Expressing their gratitude, the community members extended heartfelt thanks to the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps North and NGO for organizing the free medical camp during a crucial time of need.

Blood expert visits Hamza Foundation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Dr. Usman Waheed Technical Blood Bank Expert Health Department Government of Pakistan, Islamabad and his team consisted of Khalid khan Technical Expert Blood banks KP, Dr. Noor e Saba Director RBC Peshawar and two female Psychologist visited Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassemia Center and Blood Transfusion Services Peshawar.

They were briefed in detail by Dr. Tariq khan, Medical Director HF and Engr. Hamza Ejaz VC- HF. The delegation visited different sections of Hamza Foundation and took keen interest in digital and state of the art Laboratory/ Blood bank, and checked the record, equipment.

They highly appreciated the welfare services of the organization and blood/ products provisions by following all the SOPs of Safe Blood Transfusion.



In brief

5 passengers killed

LASBELA (INP): At least five people were killed and several others sustained injuries when two passenger buses were collided on Coastal Highway Kund Malir area in the Lasbela district of Balochistan on Sunday. According to rescue officials, the collision occurred at the Coastal Highway Kund Malir, a popular tourist spot. The victims were immediately transported to the DHQ Hospital for medical treatment, a private news channel reported. According to a Police source, one bus was heading from Karachi to Gwadar whereas the other from Gwadar to Karachi.

Man electrocuted

ABBOTTA B A D (APP): At least one person electrocuted to death on Sunday in Qalandarabad when he was trying to fix an electricity issue during heavy rainfall. According to the details, a 40 years old resident of Qalandarabad Abbotabad Yasir who was trying to rectify the fault in the main power line during a heavy downpour was caught by the electricity and electrocuted to death on the spot. Rescue 1122 officials reached the spot and shifted the dead body of the ill-fated Yasir to Ayub Teaching Hospital Abbottabad for the completion of medico-legal formalities.

Man died in road accident

FAISALABAD (INP): A collision between a car and a mini-truck led to the death of an engineer of a local firm near Khurrianwala. Police said on Sunday that Engineer Ihsan ul Haq was riding a car at Khurrianwala chowk when a mini-truck hit his four-wheeler. Resultantly, Ihsan suffered head injuries and died in a local hospital. Police have registered a case against the fleeing truck driver.

EDO health promoted

FAISALABAD (APP): On the recommendation of the Provincial Selection Board-II, the competent authority has promoted Dr Asfand Yar to Grade-19. According to a notification, Dr Asfand Yar after promotion to Grade-19 will continue his present responsibilities as Executive Officer District Health Authority till further orders.

Oil tanker catches fire

SIALKOT (APP): A fire broke out in an oil tanker on Jamkay-Silver Star Road. Rescue 1122 took timely action and controlled the fire and saved the nearby population. According to a rescue spokesperson, District Emergency Officer (DEO) Engineer Naveed Iqbal commanded the operation. Six fire vehicles of rescue participated in the operation. According to the driver, the fire had started due to short circuit. There was about 15,000 liters of diesel in the tanker, said rescue officials.

Security provided: IGP

BAHAWALPUR (APP): On the directives of the Inspector General Police (IGP) Punjab, foolproof security was provided to churches across Bahawalpur district on Sunday. On the directives of IGP Punjab, the personnel of the district police of Bahawalpur was deployed at churches across the district where the faithful came to offer prayers. He said that the District Police Officer, Bahawalpur, Syed Muhammad Abbas monitored the implementation of a security plan designed for churches.

Elections rigging:

Four parties alliance block highways amid widespread protests

QUETTA (PPI): The four parties alliance on Sunday blocked the main highways of Balochistan in protest against alleged rigging in election 2024.

The activists of the alliance comprising Balochistan National Party (Mengal), National Party, Pushtunkhwa Milli Awami Party and Hazara Democratic Party blocked main highways of the province, causing traffic jams.

Balochistan-Sindh highway was blocked for all kinds of traffic near Darakhshan scheme area of Quetta by the workers of Balochistan National Party (Mengal), Central Labour Secretary BNP (Mengal) Musa Baloch and other party activists were also present.

The workers of National Party blocked Quetta-Karachi highway near Bhawani area of Hub. Similarly, workers of Pushtunkhwa Milli Awami Party

(PKMAP) blocked Quetta-Chaman highway for all kinds of vehicular traffic at the site of Kojak Dara area of district Chaman.

Quetta-Chaman, Quetta, Pishin and Quetta-Ziarat highways were also blocked by the workers of PKMAP in Buleli, Kuchlak, Yaru, Syed Hameed cross and Bostan areas.

Meanwhile, Like other parts of the province, workers of Balochistan National Party staged a protest sit-in on Quetta-Karachi highway in Mughal Chowk area of Kalat. The leader of Balochistan National Party (Mengal), Mir Qadir Bakhsh Baloch and others were also present.

National highways were also closed by the workers of BNP (Mengal) in Turbat, Hoshab, Surab and Panjur areas of Balochistan province. Highways were also blocked for all kinds of traffic in Sib, Naseerabad and

Bolan areas of the province. A wheeljam strike was observed on Pak-Iran RCD highway in district Noshki. Workers of Balochistan National Party blocked Quetta-Noshki highway near Noshki station. A protest sit-in of four parties alliance was held outside the office of Deputy Commissioner, Quetta/ District Returning Officer at Ansoomb Road area of Quetta against rigged election.

In Chaman, a city bordering neighbouring country Afghanistan, a protest sit in of Awami National Party held in progress against rigging in election. Similarly, a protest sit-in of Jamhoori Watan Party was held in Naseerabad area of the province against election rigging.

Moreover, the workers of Pakistan Peoples Party also observed a protest sit-in in Naseerabad against rigging in election.

Caretaker CM Balochistan pays surprise visit to city

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki paid a surprise visit to Quetta city on Sunday and reviewed the business activities in important business centres.

He passed through Meezan Chowk, Liaquat Bazar, Prince Road, Jinnah Road, Manan Chowk where business life was going on and markets were open against the shutdown call given by the four-party alliance.

Expressing his pleasure over the business community's response to the protest call he said, "It is a welcome thing, that markets are open".

He highlighted that people and business professionals will not be used for any individual interests. It

is our constitutional responsibility to give peace to the business class and people, he stressed.

Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki was accompanied by Caretaker Interior Minister Mir Zubair Khan Jamali, Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafaqat, and Additional IG Police Balochistan Jawad Dogar.

Chief Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki was briefed by the Caretaker Interior Minister, Commissioner Quetta and Additional IG Police Balochistan on the overall situation of law and order and the measures taken to restore peace, on which the Caretaker Chief Minister expressed his satisfaction.

Wheel jam strike of

four alliance failed: Achakzai

Caretaker Provincial Information Minister Balochistan John Achakzai on Sunday said that the wheel jam strike of the alliance of 4 parties has failed.

"All major highways are open. Traffic is light on some national highways due to Sunday", he said in a statement issued here.

He deplored that Sardars and Nawabs of Balochistan are punishing the common people to reject the 2024 elections.

He said that the alliance should not harm the welfare of the state and people but should resort to legal forums. The people of Balochistan have rejected ethnic nationalism, CM further maintained.

10 homes established for 100 orphan kids

MULTAN (APP): In a remarkable joint effort, internationally renowned welfare organization GiveLight Foundation and Bait ul Jameela Foundation unveiled 10 new homes designed to accommodate 100 orphan children in Ali Park, Qasim Bela.

The inauguration ceremony, held with great enthusiasm on a Sunday, was graced by the presence of Dian Alyan, the esteemed President of the GiveLight Foundation.

In her address, Alyan underscored the foundation's commitment to serving hundreds of orphan children across 40 different

countries and expressed heartfelt joy at realizing the long-held aspiration of establishing homes in Multan. "The initiative marks a significant milestone in addressing the needs of vulnerable children, offering them not just shelter but a comprehensive array of support services", she remarked.

She said that the well-planned homes promise to provide a nurturing environment where children will receive not only accommodation but also education, clothing, nutritious meals, medical care, and various other essential daily amenities.

The philanthropic spirit extended further as the Rotary Club pledged to establish a dispensary on-site and provide additional facilities to enhance the well-being of the children residing in Bait ul Jameela Homes.

With the capacity to accommodate 100 orphan children, Bait ul Jameela Homes symbolized a beacon of hope and compassion in the community.

The ceremony saw the attendance of numerous civil society representatives, highlighting the widespread support and solidarity for this noble cause.

Man killed in accident

FAISALABAD (APP): A collision between a car and a mini-truck left an engineer of a local mill dead near Khurrianwala.

Police said on Sunday that Engineer Ihsan ul Haq was riding a car at Khurrianwala chowk when a mini-truck hit his four-wheeler. Resultantly, Ihsan suffered head injuries and died in a local hospital.

Police have registered a case against the fleeing truck driver.

Eleven held with contraband:

Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested 11 drug peddlers and seized narcotics from their possession. Sargodha road police apprehended two drug pushers identified as Jamshed and Rahim from Awan Chowk and Akba-

rad Chowk, respectively and seized 2kg hashish.

An accused Hamid was held from 195-RB red-handed with 25 litres of wine. Noman from Sadr Babar, Abrar from Dilpanad hosiery, Arif from 66-JB, Ahmad Khan, Atif, Dildar, Tayyab and Samar were also arrested red handed.

GCUF announces admission schedule for private candidates in Associate Degrees

Government College University, Faisalabad (GCUF) has announced the admission schedule for private candidates in Associate Degree of Arts, Science and Commerce first annual examination 2024.

According to the controller examination, admission forms with a single fee will be accepted from

February 26 to March 26. The forms with double fee will be received till April 05 and with triple fee till April 12.

He said that further information in this regard was available at the university website or office of the controller examinations.

86 acre state land reclaimed

On the orders of Punjab Ombudsman Major (Retd) Azam Suleman Khan, 86 acres of state land worth about Rs 560 million has been retrieved from illegal occupants.

The Ombudsman office had received several complaints about the illegal occupation on state land. The Ombudsman issued directions to authorities concerned for reclaiming the land.

aged in society to help them live their lives happily.

He said that rehabilitation of drug-addicted persons was a top priority and a special campaign was continued. He also appreciated the administration of social welfare administration for their services in this noble cause.



QUETTA: PTI candidate for NA-264 Sardar Zain Khilji speaking during a press conference.

Three die in motorcycle, car collision

QUETTA (INP): Three persons were killed in a collision between a motorcycle and car on Airport Road in Quetta on Sunday.

Three die in road accident in Uthal.

In yet another road accident in Balochistan, three people were killed when two passenger buses collided with each other on the Coastal Highway near Uthal city of the province.

Several others, including women and children, were injured in the incident.

Similarly in Daska, Punjab, four friends were killed while another sustained serious injuries in a road accident.

The tragedy took place on Daska-Sambrial Road when their car rammed into the wall of a shop while returning from a wedding.

The deceased were identified as Bilal Ahmad, Muaz, Danish and Talha while the injured as Ahsan.

Electricity thieves attack Wapda team

MANSEHRA (APP): A team of Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Mansehra was attacked by the residents of Mohallah Wazirabad area of Lari Adda police station on Sunday while checking electricity theft.

According to details, Saifullah along with his sons and accomplices launched an assault on the WAPDA team after they attempted to remove illegal connections. The attack resulted in injuries to several WAPDA team members including XEN Rashid Ahmed Qureshi and Khaki Sub Division Officer (SDO) Danish Khalil.

In response to the incident, an FIR has been lodged, and Saifullah has been apprehended with warrants issued for the arrest of other suspects involved.

WAPDA employees have called for swift justice in light of the attack.

8 robbers held in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD (INP): The police arrested eight robbers and recovered stolen valuables during separate actions in different areas of Hyderabad on Sunday.

According to details, a police team headed by SHO Asad ul Nabi Khichi during a raid in 'B' Section police station of Hyderabad arrested three robbers including Asif Kamran, Additional SP Muhammad Zia, ADIG Aamir Mushtaq participated, while other district police officers joined the meeting through video link.

Addressing the meeting, the RPO Shariq Kamal Siddiqui directed that there was no permission for kite

flying and kite selling in the region therefore, indiscriminate action should be taken against those involved in such activities.

He directed to keep the arrangements for the security of sensitive places complete in the division adding that there should be no negligence in that matter.

He further said that all district police officers should conduct search operations against criminal elements in their respective districts in collaboration with other departments and speed up the action against drug dealers.

peripheries said that begging increasing trend of begging could also become a security threat.

Beggars of all ages, including women and children, move freely to get money from people at different places, including markets, bazaars, and bus terminals, a school teacher Farzana said.

People urged the Social Welfare Department and Child Protection Welfare Bureau to take action against beggars whose number is increasing day by day.

Meanwhile, a police spokesperson said the department took strict action against beggars involved in criminal activities.

Tourists' facilitation centres set up

MURREE (INP): As many as 13 tourist facilitation centres have been established at various points of Murree, the spokesperson said and added that strict action was being taken against parking rules violators.

A special control room has been set up to facilitate the people, particularly tourists. In case of any difficulty, the tourists could get help and guidance from the tourist facilitation centres.

The tourists could contact Emergency Service, Rescue-1122, Tourism Helpline-1421, or PDMA Helpline-1129 in case of emergency, according to the spokesperson.

He added that machinery and human resources were being used to remove snow from the roads.

Tourists were being

given information about weather updates and travel advisories at all entry points of Murree, the spokesperson said and added that strict action was being taken against parking rules violators.

A special control room has been set up to facilitate the people, particularly tourists. In case of any difficulty, the tourists could get help and guidance from the tourist facilitation centres.

The tourists could contact Emergency Service, Rescue-1122, Tourism Helpline-1421, or PDMA Helpline-1129 in case of emergency, according to the spokesperson.

He added that machinery and human resources were being used to remove snow from the roads.

In case of any emer-

gency, the Punjab emergency service, Rescue 1122 could be contacted while the tourists could also use Tourism Helpline-1421, and PDMA Helpline-1129.

The tourists should check the vehicles thoroughly before leaving for the journey, the spokesperson said and advised them to keep the necessary items in view of the snowfall.

He advised the tourists that in case of any emergency, PDMA helpline 1129 could be contacted.

Murree district administration control room numbers 051-9269015, 051-9269016, and 051-9269018 could also be used by the tourists for help and assistance.

A WhatsApp number 0336-9804229 could also be used in case of any emergency.

4 outlaws held; narcotics, stolen items recovered

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The Dera police on Sunday claimed to have arrested four outlaws who recovered drugs, weapons, and stolen items from their possession during different operations.

According to a police spokesman, the Dera police, following the directions of District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani, tightened a noose around criminal elements and made all-out efforts to ensure a crime-free society.

As a part of such efforts, a team of Cantt police station led by

SDPO City Muhammad Adnan along with SHO Gulshar Khan conducted a successful operation and busted a gang of bikers and rounded up their two members, namely Akram and Ikram.

The police also recovered five motorcycles and Rs 3.7 million in cash from their possession.

Similarly, a team of Daraban police station led by SDPO Daraban Circle Malik Anees ul Hasan along with SHO Abdul Ghaffar Khan arrested an accused, namely Azad Khan, son of Abdul Raheem, and recovered

1020 grams of hashish and a stolen motorcycle from his possession.

Meanwhile, the Gomal University Police station team, during a search operation, arrested the accused, namely Ahmad Khan, and recovered six stolen 'Iron-Garder' and a rifle, along with 14 cartridges, from his house.

The separate cases were registered against the arrested accused.

4 killed after car collides with wall

SIALKOT (APP): Four persons were killed and one got injured after a car collided with the wall of Mart, due to overspeed at Daska-Sambrial Road.

According to a rescue spokesperson, the accident occurred at Daska-Sambrial Road near Adam-Kay Stop, late last night where a speedy car collided with the wall of the Mega Mart after hitting the divider.

In the result of collision, 20-year-old Bilal, 20-year-old Moaz, 22-year-old Danish, 24-year-old Talha were killed on the spot while 21-year-old Ahsan was seriously injured.

Rescue 1122 shifted the bodies and injured to the THQ Hospital Daska.

PFA imposes fine on ghee factory

DERA GHAZI KHAN (APP): Punjab Food Department imposed a fine of Rs 245,000 on different production units for using poor-quality ingredients and ignoring cleanliness measures.

According to official sources, a ghee factory, situated in Fatehpur was fined Rs 100,000. The owner was found selling ghee without registration and the ghee was prepared and stored in poor-quality tanks, completely ignoring cleanliness. The sample of the ghee was also sent to the laboratory.

Another owner of a school-canteen was fined Rs 50,000 in Alipur at Jhang Road whereas, Rs 50,000 fine was imposed on the administration of a hotel for using poor-quality ghee.



Thaksin Shinawatra Divisive ex-PM looms over Thai politics

BANGKOK (AFP/APP): He was ousted in a coup more than 17 years ago and spent 15 of them in self-imposed exile, but even abroad Thailand's billionaire former premier Thaksin Shinawatra cast a remarkable shadow over the kingdom's politics. Loved and loathed in almost equal measure, the 74-year-old transformed Thai politics in the early 2000s with populist policies that won him and his party enduring loyalty from the rural masses. But that success came at a cost: he was despised by Thailand's powerful elites and conservative establishment who saw his rule as corrupt, authoritarian and socially destabilising.

Ousted as prime minister by the army in 2006, Thaksin took himself into exile two years later but never stopped commenting on national affairs -- or meddling in them, according to his critics.

He pledged repeatedly to return, despite being convicted on graft and abuse-of-power charges in his absence. Thaksin finally made good on his vow last August, touching down in Bangkok to a hero's welcome from his supporters.

He was immediately arrested and sentenced to eight years in jail, but was whisked to a police hospital within hours because of his health.

Within days, King Maha

Vajiralongkorn had cut his term to one year, and on Sunday he returned to his Bangkok home.

The government said he was eligible for early release because of his age and health.

Thaksin was born on July 26, 1949, into one of the most prominent ethnic Chinese families in northern Chiang Mai province.

He served as a police officer before amassing a vast fortune founding a series of data networking and mobile telephone firms that would become telecoms giant Shin Corp.

In 1998, he launched his own political party, Thai Rak Thai (Thais Love Thais), and was elected prime minister in 2001, becoming the first premier to serve a full term.

With the economy on its knees from the Asian financial crisis, Thaksin promised to use his business savvy to rebuild and lift poor rural villagers out of poverty with his "Thaksinomics".

His "war on drugs", which Human Rights Watch says resulted in around 2,800 extrajudicial killings, brought international condemnation.

He was re-elected in a landslide victory in 2005, thanks to huge support from rural voters grateful for cash injections and debt relief.

The following year he was dogged by corruption allegations and mired

in controversy over the tax-free sale of Shin Corp shares.

Months of mass protests culminated in the nullifying of elections, and in September 2006 army tanks rolled into Bangkok and toppled Thaksin's government while he was at the United Nations in New York.

Despite his Thai assets being frozen in 2007, he purchased Manchester City and later sold it for a sizeable profit to an Abu Dhabi-backed group -- thereby kickstarting the British football club's golden era of investment and success.

Thai Rak Thai was dissolved by court order after the 2006 coup, but eventually evolved into the Pheu Thai party, which brought Thaksin's sister Yingluck to power in 2011.

Thaksin is seen by many as the true master of Pheu Thai, which came second in May's general election and now leads a governing coalition.

Yingluck laboured under claims she was a Thaksin stooge and eventually, she too fell to a coup.

From exile in Dubai, divorced Thaksin regularly took to the Clubhouse social media platform under the moniker "Tony Woodsome" to address supporters in Thailand.

He threw his weight behind his daughter Paetongtarn as she took up the Pheu Thai mantle and led the party's election campaign.

Could mini nuclear stations plug South Africa's power gaps?

PRETORIA (AFP/APP): South African nuclear scientists want to build a new generation of mini nuclear reactors, both to plug holes in their own country's blackout-plagued grid and to build an export industry for the future.

One company has designed a gas-cooled small modular reactor that it says can be installed within three years on a site smaller than a football field and safely produce enough power for a city.

Similar projects are underway in other countries, as the world confronts the challenge of powering a future economy of electrified transport, heating, and data centres while slashing carbon emissions.

Europe is divided on the way forward. Some countries, led by France, are betting on nuclear. Others, like Germany, are hoping that renewables like wind and solar will replace fossil fuels and make up for the loss of access to Russia's natural gas exports.

South Africa will rely on coal for some time to come but, with power already in short supply, it is betting on building up its nuclear programme. And some experts like Kelvin Kemm, a nuclear physicist and chief executive of Pretoria-based

private outfit Stratek Global, think South Africa is uniquely placed to take the lead in developing fourth-generation reactors.

"I believe the future is not only around the corner, I believe the future has arrived," Kemm told AFP in an interview in his garden in the Pretoria suburbs.

"I see in the next half dozen years, there is going to be a massive worldwide proliferation of nuclear power of all sizes, that there will be a huge change of heart over the next 24 months. I believe South Africa is already a leader."

South Africa's civilian nuclear journey began in 1976 when construction began on the Koeberg nuclear power plant, on the South Atlantic coast just north of Cape Town.

It was commissioned 40 years ago and has a capacity of just under 2,000 megawatts, a small chunk of the 27,000 MW that South Africa's much-derided state electricity firm Eskom can deliver, thanks largely to carbon-intensive coal-fired plants.

But domestic demand for power often peaks at more than 32,000 MW per day, and South Africans face rolling blackouts or "load-shedding" of up to 12 hours a day, a serious bur-

den on the economy of what should be the continent's powerhouse.

In December, the government announced that it planned to bring the first of a new series of nuclear plants on stream by 2033, adding another 2,500 megawatts of capacity, while planning to renew Koeberg and extend its life for another 20 years.

But, even with solar panels springing up on homes and developments across the country, that still leaves the country short of power in the medium term. This is where, in the plans of nuclear evangelists like Kemm, small modular plants come in.

Large plants like Koeberg, with its two French-designed pressurised water reactors (PWR), must be situated by the ocean to allow for 80 tonnes of cold water a second to be pumped in to cool its reactors.

Most of South Africa is dry, however, and its commercial hub Johannesburg and its energy intensive mines and industry are far from the sea. The capital Pretoria is as far from Cape Town's cool Atlantic shore as Rome is from London.

This is where Stratek hopes to come in with its High Temperature Modular

WHO says Gaza's Nasser hospital not functional after Israel raids

The World Health Organization has said Gaza's Nasser hospital has ceased to function following an Israeli raid.

Israel Defense Force (IDF) troops entered the complex on Thursday, saying intelligence indicated hostages taken by Hamas were being held there. The WHO said it had not been allowed to enter the site to assess the situation. The IDF has described its operation in Nasser as "precise and limited" and accused Hamas of "cynically using hospitals for terror".

Writing on X, formerly Twitter, WHO head Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said: "Nasser hospital in Gaza is not functional anymore, after a week-long siege followed by the ongoing raid."

"Both yesterday and the day before, the WHO team was not permitted to enter the hospital to assess the conditions of the patients and critical medical needs, despite reaching the hospital compound to deliver fuel alongside partners," he said.

"There are still about 200 patients in the hospital. At least 20 need to be urgently referred to other hospitals to receive health care; medical referral is every patient's right."

The Hamas-run health ministry in Gaza says only four medical staff were left in the hospital trying to care for the remaining patients.

One source inside the hospital, who did not want to be named, told BBC News that 11 patients had died due to interruptions in the supply of electricity and oxygen, and that several doctors had been arrested.

Yesterday, the Israeli military said its troops had been told to keep the hospital running and that food and water had been delivered. Asked about the state of the hospital this morning, an army spokesman said only that they were checking.

Fighting has raged around the Nasser site for weeks. Israel has repeatedly claimed Hamas is using hospitals, along with schools, as operational bases.

The Israeli military says it has killed about 20 Hamas fighters and seized numerous weapons in the area of the hospital.

"Over the past day, dozens of terrorists were eliminated and large quantities of weapons were seized," the IDF said. At least 1,200 people were killed during attacks in Israel by Hamas-led gunmen on 7 October last year. In response, Israel launched a military campaign in the Gaza Strip. More than 28,400 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed and more than 68,000 wounded since the war began, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

It added that at least 127 Palestinians have been killed and 205 others injured in the past 24 hours.

Despite the continued fighting in Gaza, efforts to broker a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas have been taking place in Cairo in recent days - although Qatari mediators said recent progress was "not very promising".

"The pattern in the last few days [is] not really very promising but, as I always repeat, we will always remain optimistic and will always remain pushing," said Sheik Mohammed, speaking at a meeting of world leaders at the Munich Security Conference on Saturday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he sent negotiators following a request from US President Joe Biden, but added they did not return for further discussions because Hamas's demands were "delusional". Hamas has blamed Israel for a lack of progress in achieving a ceasefire deal. The group has laid out a series of conditions, includ-

ing the exchange of hostages for Palestinian prisoners, full withdrawal of Israel's forces and an end to the war after a 135-day pause in fighting, broken into three phases. Mr Netanyahu has also reiterated the Israeli government is continuing to push its ground invasion of Gaza further south, taking in the area of Rafah, despite international pressure not to do so without first having a plan to evacuate Palestinian civilians who fled there during the early days of the war.

Some 1.5 million people are in Rafah, close to the border with Egypt, after being told by Israeli forces to seek safety there while Hamas targets were attacked in northern, then central, Gaza.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on Saturday reiterated his opposition to any forced displacement of Palestinians into Egypt's Sinai desert.

In a phone call with French President Emmanuel Macron, both leaders agreed instead on the "necessity of the swift advancement of a ceasefire", according to a summary.

Mr Sisi has long maintained that the only solution is an independent state for Palestinians.

However, on Sunday, Mr Netanyahu announced that his government had unanimously voted to formally oppose what it called the "unilateral recognition" of Palestinian statehood. He said any such agreement must be reached through direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. "Israel rejects outright international dictates regarding a permanent accord with the Palestinians. An accord, should it be reached, will only come through direct negotiations between the sides, without preconditions," a government statement said.

Sacked Twitter staff in Ghana finally get pay-off

GHANA (BBC): X, formerly known as Twitter, has finally paid off the staff it sacked in its African headquarters more than a year after they were laid off, the agency which represents them has said.

Most had only been in the job, based in Ghana's capital, Accra, for a few months when the social media platform fired them in November 2022.

They had threatened to take X to court for failing to pay the redundancy money they said they were promised. The company has not commented.

X has previously said that it had paid ex-employees in full.

Elon Musk, who took over the company in 2022, embarked on a massive global cull of employees, sacking more than 6,000 people. He had said he was losing more than \$4m (£3.5m) a day.

The African contingent, who number fewer than 20, had only just moved into X's new office in Accra, following about eight months of working from

home during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Agency Seven Seven, the company providing legal representation to the staff, said it had been successful in its quest to get a redundancy settlement and repatriation expenses for foreign staff, although it did not specify the amount of the pay-out.

"They are very pleased to finally be able to get their due, put this behind them and look to the future," Carla Olympio from Agency Seven Seven told the BBC.

Last year, sacked staffers told the BBC their treatment by X had harmed their

mental health and their finances.

"It's difficult when it's the world's richest man owing you money and closure," one said.

Twitter fired us then ghosted us -- Africa staff

They said they were initially told that, although their contracts were being terminated, they would be paid to work for one more month. But they were immediately locked out of their emails and no further salary payments were made. Since then, the staff said they had been involved in a frustrating battle for compensation.

Some of them had moved from neighbouring countries, such as Nigeria. Their contract termination meant they were left stranded in Ghana, along with their families.

In a rare interview last April, Mr Musk told the BBC that the social media giant had 1,500 employees, down from the just under 8,000 who were employed at the time he bought the company. When the news of Mr Musk's radical staff cull became public, he tweeted that laid-off employees were given three months' severance pay.

But the staff based in the Africa office say they did not receive this.



London Fashion Week celebrates multiculturalism and urban life

LONDON (AFP/APP): The cultural richness brought by migrations across the world, familial nostalgia and the frenetic pace of London life marked the second day of the city's Fashion Week on Saturday as up-and-coming designers showed off their styles for the season ahead.

Some 60 designers, ranging from rising talents to renowned brands like Burberry, are exhibiting their new designs over five days, hoping to draw the interest of buyers and fashion influencers.

The 40th anniversary edition of the event is also introducing greater diversity and inclusivity in terms of body shapes, ages, and skin colours of the models, as well as in the designers' collections. Sierra Leone-born designer Foday Dumbuya's Labrum London brand closed the day with its "Journey Through Colour" collection, celebrating the diversity of cultures brought by immigrants.

The winner of the 2023 Elizabeth II Award for British Design focused on texture plays, newspaper patterns or monogram patterns on more classic cuts.

There were as many tones of colour -- from royal blue to black, orange, brown, yellow and green -- as there were "inspiring stories" from immigrants.

Some models wore suitcases as headgear, a refer-

ence to people fleeing conflict taking their belongings with them. "People move for different reasons, and when they move, they move their culture with them. And we wanted to celebrate that tonight," Dumbuya told AFP.

One of the models carried on his back a large frame with dozens of flags of "countries that have been involved in key migration throughout history", including the Palestinian flag.

It was a political message and a call for tolerance, argued the creator.

"It's just to showcase you got to support each other. Where we are does not matter. People's life is what is important," Dumbuya said.

"Wherever you are ... Palestinian, Jewish, whatever it is, that world belong to us. It's just saying don't just demonise these people." In her show, Dublin-born menswear designer Robyn Lynch drew inspiration from her sister's career as a Gaelic dancer, using old photographs of high kicks, spangled costumes and passionate spectators for inspiration.

"I vividly remember spending all these week-ends in sports halls at competitions seeing all the glitz and drama that happened on and off stage," said the designer, who used Celtic knots and monograms in her designs.

Lynch's designs featured

diamante encrusted jorts (jean shorts), a long line of hoodies with elastic toggle belts and laser-etched jeans with a colour palette of hickory brown, screen blue, matte black and oat milk white. Earlier, models paraded in London's famous red double-decker buses in outfits inspired by traditional dance.

British designer Ricky Wesley Harriott kicked off his brand SRVC's show with a collection named "Human Resource", inspired by modern "professional women's outfits".

The designer had his models, all perched on vertiginous heels, parade on the iconic red double-decker buses of London to "celebrate life in the metropolis". The show featured rigid and structured jackets with pronounced shoulders, in dark colours with flashy accessories, from XXL silver hoop earrings to rings covering every finger.

Designer Priya Ahluwalia, who draws inspiration from her Indian-Nigerian heritage, was cheered after her show, which featured male and female models in earthy reds, oranges and blues parading to thumping house music. The designer used the Indian and West African fairy tales that she grew up with -- like "The Prince Who Wanted The Moon", "The Magic Fiddle" and "How The Leopard Got His Spots" --

Six police hurt in riots between Eritreans in The Hague

THE HAGUE (AFP/APP): At least six police officers were injured and 13 suspects arrested after rival groups of Eritreans fought running battles in The Hague in the early hours of Sunday, torching police cars and hurling rocks.

Special police units fired tear gas at the rioters, who police said were pro- and anti-Eritrean government groups attending a meeting in The Hague.

"During the riots, stones, fireworks, and other items were thrown at police officers and the fire brigade. Several rioters had weapons to hit people with," police said.

The rioters set two police cars and a tour bus ablaze.

During the disturbances, two officers sustained injuries to their hands and another to her teeth. A fourth was hit by a police car in the chaos.

Police in a later statement said another agent became unwell because of the tear gas, while a sixth officer was wounded in the knee. "Out of nowhere, our colleagues were confronted with very intense and serious violence," said police commander Marielle van Vulpen.

Police made 13 arrests and have called for witness-

es and video footage, as they investigate the riots.

The suspects were men between 19 and 36 years old, a statement said.

"The violence used against police officers and equipment is appalling and unacceptable," said the city's mayor Jan van Zanen.

Anti-immigration far-right leader Geert Wilders posted social media images of the riots with a caption in capital letters: "Arrest and Deport". He then wrote on X, formerly Twitter: "The Netherlands has had it up to here with this."

"Why is half the world allowed to come here to tear down our country, fight

Fire at Spain retirement home kills two women

MADRID (AFP/APP): A fire that broke out in a Madrid nursing home early Sunday killed two women and injured 18 others, Spanish emergency services said.

The blaze broke out at around 7 am (0600 GMT) in a room on the first floor of the residence which is home to 39 people, authorities said.

"We found the second floor flooded with smoke and we had to evacuate the residents who were there to a secure place," firefighter Jose Luis Castillo said in a video posted by Madrid's emergency services on X, formerly Twitter.

One of the injured, a woman, was in critical condition due to burns

while the rest were taken to hospital with moderate or light injuries, mostly due to smoke inhalation.

"The problem was the evacuation and presence of smoke. Once again, smoke is what ends up causing harm."

One of the deaths was due to smoke inhalation, firefighter Roberto Moreira told reporters at the scene.

Spanish media said the women who died, as well as the one in critical condition, were in their 80s.

The cause of the blaze is still being investigated.

"Our deepest condolences for the two who died after the fire in a residence," Madrid mayor Jose Luis Martinez-Almeida wrote on X.

The Frontier Post

JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

“USA and Canada Toll Free Number 415-3704551

A new Pandora box in election rigging

Rawalpindi Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chattha resigned from his post on Saturday, admitting that elections in his division were rigged. Speaking at a press conference at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Chattha revealed that he had attempted suicide earlier in the day due to overwhelming guilt, and later turned himself into the police, taking responsibility for the incident. The Commissioner expressed remorse for forcing his subordinates to engage in wrongdoing and admitted that winning candidates were made to lose 13 seats in the Rawalpindi division. The commissioner accused Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja of being complicit in the rigging and asserted that he, along with the CEC and Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Qazi Faez Isa, deserved punishment, even the death penalty, for their injustice.

Commissioner Rawalpindi Mr. Liaquat Ali Chattha has opened up a new Pandora box through revelation about his involvement in alleged rigging during the recent polls in the Rawalpindi division. The commissioner admitted his guilt and illegal conduct during the polls for pressurizing Returning Officers (ROs) to manipulate the electoral results and turn the victory of the winning candidates into defeat and vice versa. According to him, the rigging took place in the election and candidates who were leading in their constituencies with over 70,000 votes were converted to losers with the help of fake seals under his watch. A week after the election, the Commissioner told the media that he experienced sleepless nights due to the betrayal of trust toward the people and the country.

The revelation and admission of guilt by the Rawalpindi commissioner are important which further spoiled the political situation and deepened the frustration already prevailing in the society over alleged allegations of rigging and manipulation of electoral results. There are wide-ranging doubts, suspicions, and questions regarding Liaquat Chattha's press conference, his constitutional role and level of involvement in the recent polls, true motives behind making the story public and holding a news conference on holiday at the Cricket stadium instead of the press club, his home or office. The Commissioner neither provided any evidence supporting his allegations nor mentioned the name of the individual who compelled him to undertake that unlawful business. Similarly, he did not provide the details on the role of ROs, the number of constituencies or polling stations where rigging took place, and the names of the candidates who were unlawfully favored through rigging under his supervision.

Historically, the Pakistani bureaucracy and the national institutions are across-the-board politicized and divided on political lines, while every other bureaucrat, police officer, judge, or general supports a political group are seeks backing from a politician to grab lucrative positions in his career or avail promotion, deportation or posting abroad. Whilst those government servants had always been ready to comply with unlawful orders of the senior hierarchy or fulfill the illegal demands of the political bosses that duly violated the their oaths and service/ professional codes. Interestingly, the bureaucrat admitted his offense and demanded the prosecution of the Chief Election Commissioner, Sikandar Sultan Raja, and Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, the latter has no direct connection with the recent polls altogether. Hence, the Commissioner's story seems to be more influenced by the ongoing campaign and political narrative on alleged poll rigging in the country instead of the specific rigging incident that allegedly took place in the Rawalpindi division.

Henceforth, the nation is not surprised by the revelations of Commissioner Rawalpindi, however, if his conscious has now awakened he must bring all shreds of evidence to the public in full detail to endorse his claim. Meanwhile, the caretaker government must order an inquiry commission to probe into the Liaquat Chattha revelation, ascertain the truth, and bring it to the nation along with taking all legislative, and regulatory measures to fill in the flaws in the system if any, and take all possible steps to make electoral process transparent, credible and less susceptible. If the Bureaucrat's allegations are found to be groundless then the individual must face stern punishment, so no one ever dares to dodge the nation or play with sensitive national issues in the future.

India's farmers protest

Recently, farmers blocked highways and held demonstrations in many rural areas in northern India to protest over a range of grievances that have also led tens of thousands to march toward the capital in tractors and wagons. Farmers in the northern states of Haryana and Punjab held sit-ins near toll plazas on major highways during the strike, supported by some trade unions. Authorities have blocked main roads through concrete and metal barricades to stop farmers' march, suspended internet services, blocked social media accounts of protest leaders, and used drones to drop tear gas canisters on the protesters in Haryana and Punjab.

The farmers' protests in India, which began in 2020, were primarily against three new farming laws enacted by the Modi government. The laws aimed to deregulate the agricultural sector by allowing farmers to sell their produce outside government-controlled markets, among other provisions. However, farmers feared that these laws would lead to exploitation by corporations and undermine their livelihoods. The protests gained international attention and were one of the largest and longest-running demonstrations in recent history. The latest protests are the continuation of the months-long farmers' protest held by the Sinkh farmers' mostly from Indian Punjab and Haryana states in 2021. The Modi government withdrew controversial laws and guaranteed to raise the prices of farmers' produce mainly food grains and vegetation but did not fulfill its promise over almost two years.

Interestingly, the Modi government has been reluctant to meet farmers' demands as it perceives that Punjab and Haryana farmers are better off as compared to the farmers in other states. In addition, an increase in commodity prices would lead to nationwide inflation while affecting the overall cost of living in the country. Historically, the Modi government demonstrated resilience in the face of utmost pressure during the months-long protests in the past and did not approve price hikes for over two years. This is a lesson for our leaders who do not sustain before cartels' pressure and easily compromise the public interest taking no time in raising prices of daily-use commodities, medicines, and basic utilities. Unfortunately, Pakistani state institutions including DRAP, NEPRA, PPRA, and OGRA argue in support of cartels and pave the way for inhumane increases in commodity prices in the country. This anti-public attitude has turned the country into an unlivable place squeezing the lives of low-income and middle-class communities. It is high time, that Pakistani political parties constitute their study and research groups/caucuses to work and formulate policies on public and governance issues instead of issuing flimsy electoral manifestos in election season.

Important Notice

The Frontier Post will not be responsible for the comments in the articles and letters. The Frontier Post requests the writers of articles and letters to please make sure that they write their email addresses and mention the names of the cities, towns, districts or tehsil of their residences at the bottom of their articles and letters.



Al-Sudani's clear-eyed vision of 'Iraq First'

Hafed Al-Ghwel

In a region convulsing with geopolitical tremors, and a country hobbled by internal strife, Iraq under the stewardship of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani stands at a pivotal juncture as it attempts to reconstruct not only its cities and institutions but the very fabric of its national identity.

As he prepares for an anticipated visit to the White House, Al-Sudani's ambitions are encapsulated in his "Iraq First" vision, a doctrine that aims to reclaim Iraqi sovereignty and assertiveness against the backdrop of escalating external pressures and intense domestic divisions.

Such a daring pursuit is reflective of enduring Iraqi hopes and attempts to regain stability, and to resume stalled progress in a nation hungry for change.

The question must still be asked, however, of whether Iraq's current trajectory, the prime minister's efforts to steer the country through the tumult he inherited, and even the outcomes of his future visit to Washington, will finally realize the ambitions that have eluded Baghdad for more than two decades.

For now, the jury is still out, given the multifaceted challenges Iraq faces, including foreign incursions, proxy wars, and deep-seated political divisions that undermine state authority and erode its functionality.

Meanwhile, Al-Sudani's tenure, while marked by some progress in terms of stabilization and development, illustrates the difficulties of trying to govern a nation with only a semblance of sovereignty.

Nonetheless, this has not dissuaded Baghdad from embarking on a marked shift away from the role of a helpless "leper" trapped between an opaque US posture and an aggressive Iran, toward a more assertive and strategic diplomacy.

Iraq's relationship with the US, historically marked by complex maneuvers influenced by tensions between Washington and Tehran, is undergoing a transformation under Al-Sudani. Far from being a playground for opportunistic politics, Iraq under his leadership is seeking to anchor its foreign policy within a strategic vision that prioritizes national interests and sovereignty. This approach reflects a mature understanding of Iraq's pivotal role in the region and its potential to act as a bridge in US-Iran dynamics, rather than a battleground for their confrontations.

At home, the political landscape in Iraq remains fraught with pressures from Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish factions, which presents a formidable challenge for any leader. Domestically, Iraqi sovereignty is eroded by the fragmentation of its political landscape and the influence of armed militias. The sectarian and ethnic divisions, exacerbated by the political quota system introduced post-2003, have hindered the development of a cohesive national identity and a unified state vision.

Armed groups, particularly those aligned with

Iran, operate with impunity, challenging the authority of the state and its security forces. Al-Sudani's efforts to improve governance and development are constantly undermined by these factions, which prioritize their own agendas over national interests.

Yet Al-Sudani's engagements during, for example, talks about the withdrawal of US forces exemplify his commitment to placing

reform.

With the clock ticking for the next parliamentary elections, expected in late 2025, the need for tangible achievements has never been more urgent for Al-Sudani's government. Despite the inevitable distractions of electoral politics and the constraints imposed by ever-shifting political alignments, he remains focused on transcending factional disputes.

The outcomes of such talks, good or bad, will have enormous ramifications for the nation's politics, economy, foreign policy and security dynamics, necessitating that they be handled with a vision of unity and progress for Iraq, rather than allowing short-term political gains to erode an enduring legacy of reform. With the clock ticking for the next parliamentary elections, expected in late 2025, the need for tangible achievements has never been more urgent for Al-Sudani's government. Despite the inevitable distractions of electoral politics and the constraints imposed by ever-shifting political alignments, he remains focused on transcending factional disputes. It would be a grave mistake to underestimate Al-Sudani's influence in Baghdad because of the intensifying factionalization, given that such divisions serve to highlight the profound weaknesses in the sociopolitical fabric that require an Iraq First vision capable of challenging entrenched political paradigms. Such frictions will not derail Al-Sudani's initiatives. They have become the cauldron within which the mettle of the Iraq First commitment continues to be tested — and proven, much like the efforts to implement a comprehensive government program.

Through meaningful reforms and development, Al-Sudani has sought to restore faith in the Iraqi state and reverse the deleterious socioeconomic conditions suffocating an Iraqi public that had practically lost its voice and faith in the state.

Iraqi interests front and center, in contrast to the usual capitulation. Despite reports of potential repercussions from Washington, the prime minister's steadfastness in projecting Baghdad's voice and opinions underscores his dedication to Iraq First while navigating such dialogue.

The outcomes of such talks, good or bad, will have enormous ramifications for the nation's politics and security dynamics, necessitating that they be handled with a vision of unity and progress for Iraq, rather than allowing short-term political gains to erode an enduring legacy of

Through meaningful reforms and development, Al-Sudani has sought to restore faith in the Iraqi state and reverse the deleterious socioeconomic conditions suffocating an Iraqi public that had practically lost its voice and faith in the state.

Given more time, and ample support, Iraq First will evolve into a multi-pronged assault on the country's external and internal maladies. Beyond its borders, Iraq must still assert its neutrality and seek to balance its relations with major powers and regional heavyweights.

Intensification of diplomatic efforts, for instance, will discourage neighboring countries from violating Iraqi sovereignty, sending a clear message that the nation will not allow itself to be a battleground for foreign interests.

Recently, for example, Turkish military incursions in pursuit of Kurdish militants, and Iranian missile strikes in response to perceived threats, have demonstrated blatant disregard for Iraqi sovereignty. Such actions not only violate Iraq's territorial integrity but also highlight the government's inability to protect its borders and citizens from foreign aggression.

The situation is further complicated by the presence of US forces and ongoing tensions with Iran, which views Iraq as a battlefield for its proxy conflicts. This necessitates a stronger, more cohesive foreign policy and the development of a capable, sovereign defense force.

Domestically, the government must persist with comprehensive state-building efforts that prioritize the reform of political and security institutions. This includes moving beyond the sectarian quota system to promote a meritocracy and national unity.

Strengthening the rule of law and ensuring the state reclaims its monopoly on the use of force are among the critical steps required to reassert control of a domestic landscape in disarray. Moreover, political reforms should include the decentralization of power, thereby addressing the grievances of marginalized communities and integrating them into the political process to help restore the public's lost faith in Baghdad.

As Al-Sudani prepares for his visit to the White House, the stakes are high and the challenges are many. Yet his leadership so far suggests he is ready to confront these challenges head-on with a clear-eyed vision of Iraq First.

The visit to Washington not only represents an opportunity for Iraq to reassert itself on the international stage, it also offers a moment to reflect on the progress that has been made in the country, and the remainder of the journey that lies ahead.

With steady hands at the helm to help navigate mounting external pressures and deepening internal divisions, Al-Sudani's efforts to reclaim Iraqi sovereignty and steer the nation toward a brighter future deserve recognition and support.

Western govts must not ignore unprecedented warnings from their civil servants

Yossi Mekelberg

To most people, the civil service is a faceless bureaucratic machine working to advise politicians and execute their policies, always operating behind the scenes, out of the public eye, its officials sharing their opinions and analysis within their professional surroundings and not beyond. Therefore the decision by 800 civil servants in the US and Europe to sign a letter that contains scathing criticisms of the uncritical approach by their governments to the manner in which Israel is conducting its war in Gaza, to the extent that it could make their countries complicit in war crimes, should raise alarm bells.

The letter also needs to be viewed in the context of broader legitimate criticisms about Western double standards when it comes to scrutinizing and upholding human rights conventions and the rules of international law.

The unprecedented nature of such a collective and public expression of exasperation — in terms of the scale, the geographical spread of the signatories, and the timing — points to a deep sense of concern, urgency, and perhaps even despair, that providing Israel with a blank check for its response to the Hamas massacre of Oct. 7 was a colossal mistake.

Moreover, allowing it to continue, both tacitly and explicitly, as the letter warns, creates a "plausible risk that our governments' policies are contributing to grave violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes and even ethnic cleansing or genocide."

Anyone accustomed to engagement with civil servants knows that unlike politicians, they tend to favor understatement and nuance, especially when there is a possibility that their thoughts and opinions will become public knowledge.

This was not the case with this letter. Making it public was a deliberate decision and the way in which it was written, signed and published in such a coordinated manner — and the fact that the signatories include about 80 US officials, among them many diplomats — indicates that the officials feel they are not being listened to by the governments that they serve, and do not believe that without external support from the media, opposition politicians, civil society and the general public, they stand no chance of persuading administrations to row back on their harmful policies.

It is not only the respective governments these officials serve that should heed the warnings articulated by their letter. Equally, Israel should see the writing on the wall that its actions are compromising the friendship and support of some of its closest allies.

In the immediate aftermath of Oct. 7, expressions of sympathy and compassion poured in from around the world for the losses Israelis suffered at the hands of Hamas, and rightly so. But in a very short space of time, while the brutality of the acts that killed Israelis has not been forgotten, it was quickly overshadowed by the ruthlessness and carelessness displayed by Israeli forces in the course of fighting Hamas, resulting in the killing of civilians in Gaza in numbers that are almost impossible to comprehend and under no circumstances can be justified.

Those initial messages from friendly countries that supported Israel's right, and indeed obligation, to its citizens to respond to what can only be described as a declaration of war by Hamas, were not a license to use disproportionate and indiscriminate military force in a situation where civilians are caught in the middle and pay the ultimate price, with their lives and those of their loved ones, for crimes they did not commit, and are made to suffer devastation and collective trauma that will take years to heal.

The immediate worry for the senior civil servants that signed the letter is that as Israel faces International Court of Justice accusations of genocide, those countries that provide the country with weapons and ammunition, and even political clout, are also likely to be found complicit in war crimes, if not in a court of law at least in the court of public opinion.

It is also the case that from being a relatively confined war in terms of geography and scope, the conflict has expanded well beyond Gaza, with security, political and economic implications for the West that threaten to destabilize its allies in the region. It has entered the discourse in societies in the most damaging ways.

Between the opportunism and desperation of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the "Judgement Day" delusions of his far-right partners, and the widespread collective trauma among the rest of Israeli society, any call for even a temporary humanitarian ceasefire is seen as an attempt to prevent Israel from achieving victory, and therefore saving Hamas from destruction.

For the more sober-minded, stopping the war at this point and building a vision of peace and reconciliation is an imperative. It should start with preventing what is already a humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip from getting any worse by preventing Israeli forces from entering Rafah, where 1.5 million civilians are crowded together, six times more than the population of the southern city before the war began. This could save many thousands of people from certain death.

A ground assault on Rafah could also strengthen the case against Israel in the ICJ, and would make rebuilding Gaza, not to mention relations between Israel and the Palestinians, an even bigger task than the already mammoth challenge on everyone's hands.

The civil servants who signed the letter are terrified about such a development, from which their own governments would not be able to distance themselves from a share of the responsibility. They are also concerned it would strengthen the allegations that when it comes to guaranteeing human rights and defending defenseless civilians, some groups of people are favored over others, making a mockery of the commitment of governments to defend human rights and apply the rules of international law in an even-handed manner.

In the Netherlands, the public uproar about the indifference their government has displayed toward the loss of Palestinian lives in Gaza led to a court case in which an appeal court ruled last week that the Dutch government should halt shipments of components for F-35 fighter jets to Israel because of its continuing assault on Gaza, which it said risks serious violations of international humanitarian law.

Civil servants are not elected by the people. Political decisions are ultimately taken by elected representatives and should remain within the boundaries of the law. It is legitimate for politicians and their civil service advisers to have differences of opinion.

However, in this particular situation it would be sheer folly to ignore such a unique step taken by many hundreds of political practitioners, who between them have a vast amount of experience and knowledge and, most importantly, are free of ties to any political agenda.

At the end of the day, they acted together to alert the world to the damage being caused to the credibility of the West as a result of its policies on the war in Gaza, and to call for action from nations to promote and uphold an international order based on the cherished values that are central to their own ethos, never mind the rule of international law.

Maintaining Red Sea security is a regional and international necessity

Dya-Eddine Said Bamakhrama

The conflicts and security tensions the Red Sea region is currently experiencing are casting shadows on global security, politics, and economics. They have a negative impact on maritime transport, shipping costs and the movement of goods, as well as hindering local, regional and global economic activity. This means that destabilizing security and stability in this very important passageway poses a significant threat to the region's economy and investment. Herein lies the importance and necessity of securing navigation in this important sealane. Whenever a security situation arises in the region, its negative effects are reflected on the economies of the countries bordering it and on the world beyond.

This leads us to focus on the economic and geopolitical importance of the Red Sea. It serves as a crucial route for maritime trade and transport between the three major continents: Africa, Asia and Europe. More than 15 percent of global trade passes through the Red Sea. It is well known that any crisis or threat in this waterway not only affects commercial activity and maritime transport in the region, but also affects the world as a whole, and requires both international and regional solidarity and cooperation in order to protect this international passageway. It is important to acknowledge that Red Sea security is primarily the responsibility of the countries bordering it, as they are the first to be affected by whatever events occur in and around it.

Politically, the Red Sea is considered a region where diverse political interests intersect, with major powers and regional countries competing for geopolitical benefits. This requires effective cooperation among the concerned parties to maintain stability and avoid any political escalation that might affect navigation in the sea and

thus became the shortest and fastest route between East and West. Control of the Red Sea during the Second World War also had an impact on resolving important battles in the conflict.

Maintaining maritime security in the Red Sea has been a concern for a long time. The Jeddah Pact — signed on April 21, 1956,

Arab and African Border States of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, which includes Djibouti, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, and Eritrea, was established on Jan. 6, 2020, under the leadership of Saudi Arabia, with headquarters in Riyadh. It is, however, still awaiting activation and the assumption of its assigned

good of its people and the peoples of the world as a whole. The security tensions currently experienced in the Red Sea necessitate the activation of the Council of Arab and African Border States of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, and the cooperation of the international community to ensure safety of navigation, to maintain the flow of supplies, and to combat maritime criminal activities such as piracy, drug smuggling, and human trafficking.

The Red Sea countries that benefit from communication through the council are the most affected by the repercussions of any crisis in this important sea. Their security should not be subject to negative influences and interventions from external parties whose personal interests affect common global security. It is also crucial to work earnestly to resolve various crises in the region and put an end to them, rallying at various regional and international levels to preserve the security and safety of navigation in the Red Sea.

Djibouti's position, along with that of Saudi Arabia and other countries, has been to work toward achieving stability in Somalia, Sudan and Yemen, all of which border the Red Sea. The repercussions of the Gaza war, which have shifted the balance in the region and the world due to Israeli actions resulting in the killing of nearly 30,000 people, have had a negative and concerning impact, with serious effects on the stability of the entire region, for which the Red Sea is a vital passageway.

The Red Sea has been — and still is — a strategic region for military powers throughout history. Empires and regional states have used it to deploy military forces and secure strategic points. Its importance became evident in the wake of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which connected the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, and thus became the shortest and fastest route between East and West. Control of the Red Sea during the Second World War also had an impact on resolving important battles in the conflict. Maintaining maritime security in the Red Sea has been a concern for a long time. The Jeddah Pact — signed on April 21, 1956, between Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen — was the first call for establishing a “joint security system” in the Red Sea.

the surrounding areas.

The Red Sea has been — and still is — a strategic region for military powers throughout history. Empires and regional states have used it to deploy military forces and secure strategic points. Its importance became evident in the wake of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which connected the Red Sea to the Mediterranean, and

between Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen — was the first call for establishing a “joint security system” in the Red Sea. Saudi Arabia has commendably continued its efforts to protect the security of the Red Sea and protect the region from negative interventions, whether international or regional. In this context, the Council of

tasks.

Under no circumstances can the Red Sea be separated from the overall interests of major world powers. It is an international passageway and a vital economic artery. Therefore, it is necessary to unify regional efforts first and foremost, along with international efforts, in order to preserve the security of the region for the

Leadership void in US fuels the carnage in Gaza

Ray Hanania

destroy civil society.

Despite all that America does for Israel, and the favoritism displayed by Washington in relation to Israeli policies, previous presidents would have urged restraint on Israel, leveraging the vast largesse the US provides.

The US has the right to scold the Israeli government for its actions, demand it exercises restraint, withhold support, and publicly express views that expose and criticize Israel's violence.

America is a divided and weak nation. Biden is too weak to tell the bully leader of a foreign nation, and an ally at that, to restrain himself. Biden is a weak president whose image is further tarnished by his frequent cognitive lapses and constant memory lapses. This weak image of the president is aggravated by the weakness displayed by Biden's presidential rival, Donald Trump, whose own lack of diplomatic finesse while president fueled the concerns of other nations. Trump's problem is less about degraded mental acuity and more about his personality flaws. He cannot stop himself from responding to petty issues with even greater displays of pettiness. This deflects from the substance of major policies, programs and issues he has tried to promote, making him appear more like a bully himself. Trump cannot handle criticism. Biden is cognitively ambivalent to it. American politics is polarized. There is nobody occupying the center ground who can offer reasoned,

parental-like, common-sense leadership. Many people believe this is one of the reasons Russia proceeded with its invasion of Ukraine: President Vladimir Putin simply was not worried about a strong response from the US. In the event, Biden's response to Putin's invasion was delayed and dulled. By the time Washington reacted, Russia was in too deep.

But the US does not have a strong president. It has one of the nation's weakest and most ineffective presidents, whose international authority is undermined even further by the political polarization he vowed to heal but has instead fueled.

America is a divided and weak nation. Biden is too weak to tell the bully leader of a foreign nation, and an ally at that, to restrain himself. Biden is a weak president whose image is further tarnished by his frequent cognitive lapses and constant memory lapses.

This weak image of the president is aggravated by the weakness displayed by Biden's presidential rival, Donald Trump, whose own lack of diplomatic finesse while president fueled the concerns of other nations.

Trump's problem is less about degraded mental acuity and more about his personality flaws. He cannot stop himself from responding to petty issues with even greater displays of pettiness. This deflects from the substance of major policies, programs and issues he has tried to promote, making him appear more like a bully himself.

Trump cannot handle criticism. Biden is cognitively ambivalent to it. American politics is polarized. There is nobody occupying the center ground who can offer reasoned,

Saudi Arabia is becoming a global leader in marine conservation

Carlos Duarte

The release on Netflix of the documentary “Horizon” showcasing the Kingdom's wildlife is a landmark event in raising awareness about the country's unique biodiversity.

While terrestrial wildlife has been the focus of conservation efforts in Saudi Arabia for decades, there has been less attention paid to marine wildlife. However, under Vision 2030, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is rapidly becoming a global leader in marine conservation.

These efforts are now guided by the many discoveries made by the Red Sea Decade Expedition — a collaborative involving the National Center for Wildlife, King Abdulaziz University, King Abdullah University of Science and Technology, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, NEOM, Red Sea Global and OceanX.

On Feb. 10 and 11, the NCW hosted the Red Sea Decade Expedition Symposium in Riyadh, marking a milestone in marine conservation. Led by the NCW, the Red Sea Decade Expedition surveyed Saudi Arabia's Red Sea waters, from the shoreline to the greatest depths, and from south to north.

This was done with two research vessels, OceanXplorer and KAU's Al-Azzizi, equipped with submersibles, deep-sea robots, a helicopter and advanced technologies and laboratories.

The Red Sea Decade

Expedition used advanced DNA sequencing technologies to establish an end-to-end catalog of the Red Sea's biodiversity, from bacteria to whales, to inform the Kingdom's commitment to conserve 30 percent of the Red Sea.

The expedition discovered many new species and

ocean, had never been filmed alive before. It also retrieved the first footage of living specimens of delicate gelatinous animals that are extremely rare in the ocean.

We assessed the abundance of sea turtles, dolphins, whales and other

The expedition discovered many new species and even new families of corals and other marine species of interest never reported before. It gathered the first images of living lantern fish, the most abundant fish on the planet, which, hidden in the depths of the ocean, had never been filmed alive before. It also retrieved the first footage of living specimens of delicate gelatinous animals that are extremely rare in the ocean. We assessed the abundance of sea turtles, dolphins, whales and other marine wildlife of conservation interest, and discovered a range of amazing ecosystems, particularly the blue holes and sunken lagoons north of Jazan. These remarkable ecosystems, not even known to local fishermen, who do not venture into these shallow reefs and deep holes, are major targets for conservation and ecotourism and are of global significance.

even new families of corals and other marine species of interest never reported before.

It gathered the first images of living lantern fish, the most abundant fish on the planet, which, hidden in the depths of the

marine wildlife of conservation interest, and discovered a range of amazing ecosystems, particularly the blue holes and sunken lagoons north of Jazan.

These remarkable ecosystems, not even known to local fishermen,

who do not venture into these shallow reefs and deep holes, are major targets for conservation and ecotourism and are of global significance.

We unveiled how the efficient operation of the microbial food web in the Red Sea sustains one of the largest stocks of deep-water

operators to improve their compliance with existing policies to avoid marine pollution.

Furthermore, we assessed coral health and identified the best-preserved coral reefs as well as those that should be the focus of restoration efforts, and identified the most important habitats for juvenile sea turtles and discovered for the first time that great whales reproduce in the Red Sea.

We also retrieved samples off the seafloor using technology deployed for the first time anywhere in the ocean.

This was unique because it used advanced chemical and DNA sequencing technologies to determine changes in the Red Sea and its biodiversity since 1800, thereby providing targets to regenerate wildlife to its former abundance.

I had the honor of serving as scientific coordinator for the expedition. Among the many discoveries we brought to land, I discovered the power of collaboration in expanding the horizon of our knowledge of the Red Sea, as well as the power of leadership, exerted by the CEO of the NWC, Dr. Mohammad Qurban, a renowned marine scientist, to forge such a collaborative environment.

Together, as brothers and sisters, we are building a bright future for our natural heritage, which the Kingdom is committed to conserve for generations to come.

Andrew Hammond

Lula rebuilds Brazil's tarnished reputation after decade of crises

The reputation of Brazil, the largest and most influential country in Latin America, took a battering during the era of Jair Bolsonaro, its controversial former president. However, there are growing signs of a rebound in the nation's popularity as it begins its stint as chair of the G20 for 2024.

One of the key catalysts for this significant change in fortunes was the return to office of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in January last year. His “Brazil is back” slogan has been a key message during official visits to more than two dozen nations since his election victory, during which he held talks with more than 50 heads of state, including two kings and the pope.

Part of the reason for the generally positive reception Lula has received, despite some

missteps along the way, is his climate diplomacy. His policies have helped to significantly reduce deforestation of the Amazon rainforest, the so-called lungs of the Earth, and rebuild the credibility of climate talks after the era of Bolsonaro, who was nicknamed the “Trump of the Tropics.”

One of Lula's big ambitions is not just to boost his nation's reputation on the world stage, but also to show that Brazil is once again an international leader. This coming week, the G20's year begins in earnest with a meeting of foreign ministers, followed by a summit of finance ministers soon after. Lula is looking to use the powerful platform of the year-long presidency of the G20 provides to further project his nation's return to the global stage after years of self-inflicted international isolation.

Part of the reason that Brazil is once again being feted is its wealth of natural resources. Several global powers, including the EU and Japan, want to reach a trade deal with Lula and the leaders of the three other member nations of the Mercosur trade bloc, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay, to help diversify supply chains and reduce their reliance on China.

Brazil and the wider Latin American continent, home to half-a-billion people, have the world's largest share of arable land, which provides an estimated 15 percent of global food production and 45 percent of net international agri-food trade. They also have huge amounts of other resources, including critical mineral deposits, and the largest share of renewables in the world. EU foreign policy chief Josep

Borrell has even said the region has the potential to become the new Arabian Gulf, given its wealth of critical mineral assets, such as lithium.

Brazil also has a wider ambition, under Lula, to lead the developing nations of the Global South. While the country certainly boasts the strongest credentials of any Latin American nation in support of this aspiration, especially after its recent stint as chair of Mercosur, China and India also covet this leadership role and so Lula will have his work cut out.

Part of the challenge for Lula in realizing this ambition to lead the Global South is the changed geopolitical and socioeconomic contexts now compared with his first two terms in office, from 2003 to 2010. During

that time, Brazil became a key voice for the developing world, while remaining independent on the world stage of both the US and China, partly through its membership of the prestigious BRICS group of developing nations. Now, though, the global landscape has become more complex, as tensions between the US and China continue to grow in the post-pandemic, post-Ukraine context.

Since 2010, when Lula left office last time, Brazil has become increasingly dependent on China specifically and Asia in general, with the huge region now the destination for about half of its exports. China alone, Brazil's main trading partner, buys about two-fifths of Brazilian farm exports.

While Lula is unlikely to achieve all of his global

leadership goals, the turnaround in Brazil's fortunes has nevertheless been significant. He has already made much headway toward his goal of restoring his country's reputation as a key emerging market and a modern, vibrant and stable democracy.

In 2010, the country had just experienced what in hindsight was a golden decade of solid growth and strong income redistribution. The economy was booming and the country was enjoying enhanced international prestige within BRICS. Finally, it seemed the nation could look forward to a prosperous future after overcoming the legacy of brutal military rule from 1964 to 1989. Yet, the subsequent period proved to be a deep disappointment that threatened the return to democracy.

It culminated in 2018

when Bolsonaro, a former army captain, rode a wave of populism with a platform that evoked nostalgia for the days of the former military dictatorship.

This, in addition to a host of policy positions that were controversial among many people, domestically and internationally, included a relaxing of gun laws and the shredding of environmental legislation, including Brazil's commitment to the Paris Agreement on climate change.

Bolsonaro's victory was set in the context of dented political and economic self-confidence in the country. The economy had endured its worst recession in decades, with Brazilian commodities losing significant value in international markets. By early 2016, the country had shed about 1.5 million jobs, inflation was in double digits, and its debt had

been downgraded to junk status by major credit ratings agencies.

That same year, Rio de Janeiro became the first South American city to host the Olympics, which proved to be a troubled affair. Not only did the government have to make significant spending cuts to the games budget given the financial downturn, but an outbreak of the Zika virus also presented a major challenge.

Taking all of this together, the scale of these crises underline just how far Brazil has already come, reputationally, since Lula returned to office in 2023. While the full extent of his ambitions, particularly for the nation to lead the Global South, are unlikely to be realized, he has nevertheless largely turned the page on the political and economic troubles of the past decade.

‘Repeated rise in gas, power prices leave trade’

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Pakistan Industrial & Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has observed that the repeated increase in the gas and electricity prices to an unbearable level by the interim government has left the trade and industry uncompetitive; blaming it for trapping the country in the IMF plans.

PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol, strongly opposing gas price surge, said that the gas tariff hike has threatened the industrial sector, besides increasing unemployment, saying that the every government had poor economic policies that unleashed the free fall of rupee against the dollar, ensuing in input cost escalation to pull down the manufacturing growth.

He warned that the continued escalation of gas prices could result in the closure of numerous industries, amplifying unemployment rates and diminishing Pakistan’s export capabilities, appealing to the government to reverse this decision promptly and establish a fixed gas price of Rs1800 per mmbtu for industries.

Emphasizing the need for the government to explore and provide afford-

able energy alternatives for the industry, he stressed that such measures are crucial for ensuring the competitiveness of Pakistani products in the global market. As the industrial sector grapples with the ramifications of the gas price hike, PIAF leader’s stance advocates for the preservation of industrial stability and the prevention of potential economic setbacks for Pakistan.

The PIAF Chairman condemned the recent increase in gas tariff as approved by the Economic Coordination Committee and the caretaker govt.

He has demanded the government to take back the decision of hike in gas tariff in the larger interest of national economy and to save the industries from collapse. He warned that in case, the decision is not withdrawn; the industries will close down, resulting in decline in exports and mass unemployment.

In an appeal, he said that the business community was given assurance for 9 cents per KWh electricity tariff by the caretaker government. The assurance brought a sigh of relief and hope for the business community that the new tariff will help in reduction of production cost and they

will be able to continue production unabated and deliver export orders on time. However, contrary to the assurance given, POL, electricity and gas tariff are being increased constantly by the caretaker government. He said that currently, the national economy is passing through severe crisis. To run an industry is no more a profitable business. He questioned the Caretaker Prime Minister as to how economy of the country can be stabilized and strengthened in the absence of industrial and business activities? Unfortunately, the caretaker government has taken no step to provide competitive environment to industries, lower the cost of production and reignite the engine of national economy, which has left the industrial community in despair, he remarked.

He vehemently rejected the recent surge in gas prices, asserting that this decision poses a severe threat to the industrial sector, potentially leading to increased unemployment. He expressed concern over the already elevated production costs in the region, rendering industrialists less competitive compared to their counterparts in neighboring countries.

Showing their profound

concerns, he said that the country’s exports have nosedived comparatively by 12.71 percent from \$31.78 billion in July-June 2021-22 to \$27.74 billion over the same period in 2022-23, citing the harsh factors, which is hurting the industry.

This is 16.61 percent decline to the export target of \$32.35 billion set for the fiscal year 2022-2023, he said that the export-oriented industries are faced with the greatest ever challenges in terms of the highest cost of manufacturing. Many industries, he claimed to have already stopped their production in the country with several others fearing a closure because of the unviable trade, which may also pulled the country’s exports further down.

The interim rule has raised gas tariffs to the highest ever levels by 118 percent from August 2023 and added on with a 40 percent cost of RLNG. This move overall gave a steep rise of 191 percent to the gas prices to the historic levels, he added. The exports industry is also compelled to pay the exorbitant gas price, which is tagged with the cross subsidy that the fertilizer, feedstock, domestic consumers and power generation sector enjoy, he pointed.

Convocation caps a historic year for Aga Khan University

F.P. Report

KARACHI: More than 730 students in four countries graduated from the Aga Khan University at ceremonies attended by Princess Zahra Aga Khan and other dignitaries and watched in-person and online by the University’s supporters around the world.

“On graduating, you return to a world that is full of daunting challenges but also of endless possibilities,” Princess Zahra Aga Khan said in Nairobi, speaking on behalf of AKU’s founder and Chancellor, His Highness the Aga Khan. “Continue to strive with courage and optimism to grasp opportunities to serve your communities and contribute to a more pluralistic and peaceful world.”

391 students graduated in Pakistan - more than 70 percent of them women - and were awarded degrees in nursing, medicine and education. The University’s chief guest was Sabina Khatri, Founder of the Karachi-based Kiran Foundation.

“I cannot help but imagine the great things you will achieve with your immense talent and the knowledge and skills developed during your time at AKU,” Ms Khatri told the graduates. “I have no doubt that your accomplishments can surpass anything I have achieved thus far. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to His Highness the Aga Khan for helping countless young people to fulfill their potential, including the Kiran children studying at Aga Khan schools and colleges and also AKU Examination



Board-affiliated schools like Habib.”

AKU commemorated its 40th anniversary on March 16, 2023. Princess Zahra detailed some of the many achievements that have made the University’s 40th year one of the most consequential in its history. Four new academic programmes welcomed their first students, increasing total enrollment to more than 3,600 for the first time in the University’s history. These are the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in Karachi, the Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery programme in Nairobi and the four-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing programmes in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Construction began on the University’s new 60-acre campus in Uganda, which will feature an academic centre, student housing and a new Aga Khan University Hospital, the first AKU has built since 1985. In Nairobi, the Aga Khan University Hospital implemented East Africa’s first integrated electronic health records system. In Tanzania, the University launched the Arusha

Climate and Environmental Research Centre.

“We are hopeful that these new and continuing programmes and facilities will make AKU an increasingly powerful platform for the education of leaders, the creation of relevant knowledge, and the delivery of world-class education and health care,” Princess Zahra said.

AKU President Sulaiman Shahabuddin called the day a “crowning moment” for the graduates, noting that the University has awarded nearly 20,000 diplomas, degrees and post-graduate certificates since its inception. He outlined the University’s plans for the future, which are contained in its new five-year strategic plan. They include launching close to a dozen new degree programmes in fields ranging from data science to teacher education; enhancing research capacity in mental health, climate change and other disciplines; expanding the AKU health system; deepening the University’s partnerships with public and private institutions at home and abroad; and continuing to earn new forms of aca-

demic and health care accreditation from leading international organizations.

“That AKU has been able to achieve so much across its four decades is above all thanks to its founder, Chancellor, and chief benefactor, His Highness the Aga Khan,” President Shahabuddin said. “His Highness’s vision continues to guide us and continually inspire us with the strength to make bold decisions that keep AKU at the forefront of innovation, quality and impact.”

The School of Nursing and Midwifery conferred the Outstanding Graduate Award on Zehra Amanullah for earning the highest cumulative grade point average. She also received the Nursing Practice Award.

For just the 13th time in its history, the Medical College awarded its Gold Medal to a graduate of the Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery programme. Alizah Pervaiz Hashmi received the Medal for earning the top score on at least three of the four certifying examinations, including the final examination.

Furniture industry direly needs skilled workforce

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan’s furniture industry is grappling with a severe shortage of skilled woodworkers that has triggered significant delays in the timely shipment of export consignments, posing challenges to the industry’s efficiency, repute and profitability.

Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq stated this while talking to a delegation of furniture manufacturers led by Faryad Ahmed Raza here Sunday.

He said, woodworking skills are fundamental in the

furniture manufacturing process, from crafting intricate designs to ensuring the structural integrity of pieces. However, the demand for skilled woodworkers in Pakistan exceeds the available workforce. This shortage can be attributed to various factors including limited vocational training programmes, low wages and a lack of interest among the young generation in pursuing careers in woodworking, he added.

The PFC chief said that one of the primary consequences of this shortage is the delay in fulfilling

export orders. Export-oriented furniture manufacturers heavily rely on timely deliveries to maintain customer satisfaction and uphold their reputation in the global market. However, the scarcity of skilled woodworkers leads to production bottlenecks, prolonging lead times and jeopardizing shipment schedules, he mentioned.

By addressing the shortage, he claimed, Pakistan furniture industry can overcome production challenges; meet export demands; and sustain its growth trajectory in the

global market. Time-sensitive actions and long-term strategies are essential to navigate through this critical juncture and unlock the industry’s full potential.

Fostering partnerships among educational institutions, industry associations, and businesses can facilitate knowledge transfer and skill development initiatives.

Collaborative efforts to modernize production techniques and adopt innovative technologies can also enhance efficiency and productivity in the woodworking sector, he concluded.

Launch of industry first co-branded affinity credit card with Qalandars

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Bank of Punjab (BOP), one of the leading financial institutions with a network of 800 plus branches across Pakistan, had signed a partnership agreement with PSL franchise Lahore Qalandars in January 2022 where BOP is an exclusive banking partner during the 3 years term of the agreement. As a part of the agreement, new joint products were planned to be launched that will be beneficial for both organizations and the customers.

BOP Lahore Qalandars Credit Card (LQCC) is part of planned launch of products developed under the umbrella of the partnership to complete our Digital Banking menu.

A launch event was held at Pearl Continental Lahore on 16th February 2022 where the LQCC was unveiled by the President & CEO of Bank of Punjab, Mr. Zafar Masud and CEO of Lahore Qalandars, Mr. Atif Rana.

Speaking on the occa-



sion, BOP President and CEO Zafar Masud said, “At The Bank of Punjab, our customer is at heart of everything we do. Since cricket is part of our culture and PSL encourages healthy activities among the youth, we have developed Lahore Qalandars Credit Card to especially cater to the needs of Cricket fans in general and Lahore Qalandars fans in particular. We continue with an objective to add value in whatever we put our hand in. LQCC is one such initiative on our part and we expect the industry will follow suit with coming out with new and unique product offering for their customers and the formation of healthy and economically

important activities for the country. Cricket economy is something that we recognize and position ourselves. LQCC is a step in this direction.”

LQCC offers host of facilities to the cardholder in addition to the standard discounts offered on our Gold Cards. A combination of secure technology of Contactless and Chip & PIN coupled with a bold and attractive cricketing design, LQCC customers will enjoy following benefits:

Guaranteed merchandise on of Lahore Qalandar customers

Purchasing PSL tickets at special discounted rates

Opportunity to win PSL tickets

Special discounts on Sports outlets and brands and gyms

Existing customers of BOP can book their LQCC by visiting respective branch or registering a request at the Helpline number 042-111-267-200.

Speaking on the occasion, Lahore Qalandars CEO Atif Rana said: We are excited about this partnership with Bank of Punjab. Lahore Qalandars Credit Card is going to strengthen the bond of fans with Lahore Qalandars through BOP. We believe in developing the infrastructure for Cricket and expect that other franchises will follow this Co-branded/ Affinity card launch with their banking partners in future.”

China reports current account surplus in 2023

BEIJING (APP): China’s current account surplus amounted to 264.2 billion US dollars in 2023, the country’s foreign exchange regulator said on Sunday.

The current account surplus to gross domestic product ratio was 1.5 percent last year, which is within a reasonable and balanced range, according to the State Administration of Foreign Exchange.

The surplus under trade in goods came in at 608 billion dollars last year, the second highest level in the history, data released by the administration shows.

China’s foreign trade has expanded quarter by quarter thanks to the economic recovery trend, underpinning a relatively large current account plus, said Wang Chunying, spokesperson for the administration.

\$1,454 million from IT services’ export earned

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned US \$1,454.881 million by providing different Information Technology (IT) services to various countries during the first six months of the current fiscal year 2023-24.

This shows a growth of 8.98 per cent as compared with the US \$1,334.969 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the last fiscal year 2022-23, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

During the months under review, the export of computer services grew by 10.32 per cent as it surged from US \$1,064.579 million last year to US \$1,174.481 million during July-December 2023-24.

Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed a nominal

decrease of 180 per cent, from US \$3.394 million to US \$3.333 million this year while the export of hardware consultancy services surged by 3.401 per cent, from US \$391.570 million to US \$404.875 million.

The export of repair and maintenance services however decreased by 39.15 per cent from US \$1.530 million to US \$0.930 million whereas the export and imports of computer software services surged by 2.79 per cent, from \$302.376 million to \$310.807 million.

Meanwhile, the export of information services during the months under review dipped by 19.72 per cent from US \$2.180 million to US \$1.750 million.

Among the information services, the exports of information-related services increased by 3.64 per

cent, from US \$0.687 million to US \$0.712 million whereas the exports of news agency services however decreased by 30.48 per cent, from US \$1.493 million to US \$1.038 million.

The export of telecommunication services increased by 3.89 per cent as these went down from US \$268.0210 million to US \$278.650 million, the data revealed.

Among the telecommunication services, the export of call centres services increased by 12.14 per cent during the months as its exports increased from US \$107.006 million to US \$119.994 million whereas the export of other telecommunication services witnessed a decrease of 1.58 per cent, from US \$161.204 million to US \$158.656 million during this year, the PBS data revealed.

Sialkot Chamber of Commerce meeting review industrial exhibition

SIALKOT (APP): A meeting was held at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) auditorium regarding the industrial exhibition to be held on 2nd and 3rd March, 2024 at Living Dreams Marquee, Sialkot Cantt, organized by the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot (WCCIS).

Addressing the meeting, Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sial-

kot President Dr. Mariam Nouman said that Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Abdul Ghafoor Malik along with the business community of Sialkot had fully supported them for holding the exhibition. “So we have made it possible to provide subsidized stalls to co-promote and encourage new women entrepreneurs in business,” she added.

WCCIS President Dr. Mariam Nouman said that the exhibition would have stalls of quality products of WCCIS members like cutlery, handicrafts, shoes, leather products, jewellery, furniture, embroideries, gym wear, sports wear etc.

She said that stalls had been booked by young entrepreneurs from different cities including Faisalabad, Karachi, Lahore,

Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Gujarat, Multan in this exhibition organized by the WCCIS.

Event Management Committee Chairperson Nadia Qaiser briefed the meeting about the second official exhibition “We-Exhibit 2024” said that in this exhibition there will be stalls of all kinds of quality products of women empowerment and women entrepreneurs,

Country at crossroad as bringing economy back on track imperative

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry’s Businessmen Panel (BMP) has said that the country is at the crossroad, as bringing the economy back on track is imperative to restore political stability and to overhaul the bureaucratic machinery.

The FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar said that the economic and fiscal discipline of the country will be driven under the direction of IMF, leaving little room for political parties to make its way, which has not come up with any plan to fix the economy and provide relief to the trade and industry.

Quoting the media reports, he said that the

SIFC’s role as advisors and decision-makers may work well. But, when it comes to the implementation of the decisions and delivery on ground, there are multiple bottlenecks. The executing entities in the public sector are politicized, compromised, outdated and lack competence.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the economy of the country is at the stake now, as the state of the economy and peoples’ welfare are of secondary interest to the political parties and little has so far been achieved at macro or micro levels. Higher inflation, rising utility tariffs, growing unemployment and, above all, the malaise and despondency among the masses are likely to continue unattended.

Economic vulnerability

now looms with political uncertainty at its core. The Moody’s Investors Service has recently given a ‘credit negative’ signal to Pakistan in the face of prolonged political ambiguity and social tensions over election results, which will make it tough to approach the IMF for a new program, weaken external economy and make liquidity management more challenging.

He said that the privatization commission of Pakistan is struggling since months to effectively put in place the privatization of loss-making public sector enterprises; notably, the Pakistan Steel Mills and Pakistan International Airlines despite the urgency and concern expressed, time and again, by the IMF. The election held on Feb 8th in Pakistan

threw up a number of surprises with a significant shift in the country’s political landscape.

With no political party commanding a 2/3rd majority at the center, nor even a simple majority, the decision-making processes and any constitutional amendment are likely to be driven and influenced more by conflicting self-interests of the coalition partners, watering down the key objectives. This is not what the country needs in these unprecedented times of political and economic challenges confronting the nation.

In its report titled ‘Political uncertainty persists in Pakistan following inconclusive election results, a credit negative’, the global credit rating agency said: ‘overall,

uncertainty around Pakistan’s ability to quickly negotiate a new IMF program after the current one expires in April 2024 remains very high. Pakistan’s government liquidity and external vulnerability risks will remain very high until there is clarity on a credible longer-term financing plan.’

It said Pakistan’s foreign exchange reserves remained ‘very low’ at \$8 billion as of Feb 2, 2024, sufficient to cover only about six weeks of imports and well below what was required to meet external financing needs for the next three to four years.

Based on the IMF’s report published in January, Moody’s said Pakistan’s external financing needs were about \$22 billion in the next fiscal year (Jul-

Jun) 2024-25 and about \$25 billion annually in fiscal 2026 and 2027. The country will need a longer-term financing plan to meet its very large financing needs for the next few years, after its current IMF program ends in April 2024.

At present, Pakistan has been assigned a stable rating of “Caa3” by Moody’s. It said prolonged delays in the formation of a government would increase policy and political uncertainty at a time when it faced very challenging macroeconomic conditions.

The performance of the former coalition government of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) in the fiscal year 2022-23 was disappointing. When austerity and debt servicing was the need of the hour the government

expenditures were over Rs2.2 trillion higher than budgeted that resulted in a 25% increase in the debt burden for every citizen, whereas, the gross public debt jumped to Rs62.9 trillion by June 2023.

Hopefully, the new coalition government will be sensitive to the social, economic and fiscal issues of the state, which in the meantime have exacerbated further. Pakistan’s debt-to-GDP ratio is already above 70% and the IMF and credit rating agencies estimate that interest payments on its debt will soak up 50% to 60% of the government’s revenues this year. Debt exceeds legal limit by Rs14.5tr. That is the worst ratio of any sizable economy in the world.

Every macro fundamental is flashing red; notably,

growth, debt, revenue mobilization and investment. Some strong and immediate decisions have to be taken by the new government.

The decision to immediately go for another IMF program appears settled. A \$3 billion program from the International Monetary Fund runs out next month and securing a new program is imperative, given that Pakistan’s foreign exchange reserves are abysmally low compared to its large impending external debt repayment needs. Former deputy governor of the central bank, Murtaza Syed, has said. There is no alternative. In a recent public statement Shahbaz Sharif voiced similar compulsion and has been vocal in advocating another IMF program.

**In brief****Pakistan's Davis Cup**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Davis Cup Juniors and Billie Jean King Cup Juniors teams reached Colombo to participate in their respective tennis events, commencing from Monday. On reaching Colombo, the teams wasted no time and had their first practice session for the events at the clay courts, a Pakistan Tennis Federation spokesman said. The Davis Cup Juniors team is being led by coach Aqeel Khan and comprises of talented players including Hamza Roman, Mikael Shabbaz Ali Baig, and Abubakar Talha. These promising players are known for their exceptional skills and determination on the court and will be looking forward to exhibit their talent in the competition. On the other hand, the Billie Jean King Cup Juniors team, under the guidance of coach Sara Mansoor, is equally ready to showcase their talent.

Kabaddi tournament from Feb 25

FAISALABAD (APP): A two-day Al-Ghousia Gold Cup Kabaddi Tournament would be played at the hostel ground in Chak No 214-RB, Dhudiwala from February 25. The event is being organised in collaboration with Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry's standing committee for sports and Divisional Kabaddi Associations Faisalabad. The teams of four registered clubs would participate in the event. Under the platinum group, the winning team would be awarded cash prize of Rs 100,000, the second team will get Rs 60,000 and the third position holder will receive Rs 40,000. All the four teams will be paid Rs 20,000 as travelling allowance. In the gold group, eight teams of registered clubs took part in the tournament. In this group, the winner will get Rs 30,000; second Rs 20,000 and third Rs 10,000. The teams will also be given Rs 5000 as TA. The entry of spectators will be free.

Pakistan to face off India

ISLAMABAD (APP): Arch-rivals Pakistan and India will be face to face in the Triangular Blind Cricket Series scheduled to be held at the International Cricket Council (ICC) Cricket Academy Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) on February 22. According to Chairman Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) Syed Sultan Shah, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka would feature in the Triangular cricket series, to get underway from February 21. The opening match would be played between arch-rivals Pakistan and India on February 22 while India will play will Sri Lanka on February 23. Pakistan will play against Sri Lanka on February 24 in a single round, while the final between the top two teams will be played on February 25. Sultan said the training camp of the national blind team in preparation for the triangular series was in full swing at Lahore. He hoped the green-shirts would again defeat India in the international event and win the series as well. Nisar Ali would lead the 15-member Pakistan blind cricket team in the series while other players include Zafar Iqbal, Riasat Khan, Mohammad Shahzaib, Fakhar Abbas, Mohammad Salman (B1), Badar Munir (Vice Captain), Shahzeb Haider, Moain Aslam, Babar Ali (B2), Matiullah, Mohammad Rashid, Mohammad Safdar, Kamran Akhter, and Akmal Hayyat (B3). Mohammad Jameel would accompany the team as head coach while Tahir Mehmood Butt as trainer.



LAHORE: Jason Roy and Saud Shakeel put on 157 off 92 balls.

Dutch club arrives in Pakistan to play three-match series

ISLAMABAD (APP): A top hockey club from the Netherlands arrived in Pakistan on Sunday to play a three-match friendly series with the Prime Minister's Youth Talent Hunt team.

"It is a watershed moment indeed as the Dutch club Billy Ozendaal is the first international hockey club to visit Pakistan after 22 years to play hockey matches here," the event organizer, Olympian Khawaja Muhammad Junaid told APP.

According to Junaid Orange and Black was the last European club that visited Pakistan in 2001.

"The series rolls into action with the first two matches hosted by the National Hockey Stadium, Lahore on Monday and Wednesday. The third match is scheduled to take place at the Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium Islamabad on Friday (February 23)," Junaid said.

He said Khawaja Junaid Hockey Academy had teamed up with Billy Ozendaal to strengthen the national sport of hockey in

Pakistan following the requirements of modern times. "We aim to enhance the capabilities of our players and for that, we are committed to fostering a closer relationship and exchange of expertise between the two countries", he added.

As part of the programme, our team, which is comprised of a highly talented bunch of players will also travel to the Netherlands in August, this year to play matches, added Junaid, who was part of Pakistan's bronze medal-winning team at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona.

He credited Chairman Higher Education Commission Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Inspector General Punjab Police Dr. Usman Anwar, the Netherlands Embassy in Islamabad, Director General Pakistan Sports Board Shoaib Khoso, and Punjab Sports Board officials for playing significant roles in holding the series in a befitting manner.

He said the first match between the two teams

would be dedicated to honour the martyrs of Punjab police. "The arrival of a top-notch European club in Pakistan after over two decades is a breath of fresh air for Pakistan hockey. While cricket matches of PSL are being played on one side, the visit of the club will contribute greatly to establishing a positive image of the country globally," he reckoned.

He said with its foundation laid in 1935, the Billy Ozendaal club holds a special place among the well-established clubs in the Netherlands. Many of its players have represented the Netherlands at the international level. "It was the club's tradition to tour Spain, Portugal, Australia, and South America during the cold season. However, this time they have agreed to visit Pakistan as a result of our efforts. We are also grateful to the Dutch Embassy in Islamabad for playing a key role in persuading club members and their families to come to Pakistan," Junaid added.

Javed Miandad calls on Mohsin Naqvi

LAHORE (APP): Former cricket star Javed Miandad met with the Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi at CM Office here on Sunday.

Javed Miandad felicitated the CM on being elected as Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). Matters pertaining to the promotion of cricket and putting Pakistani cricket on a sustainable basis were discussed.

Javed Miandad paid tributes to the CM on the successful launching of the PSL-9. He remarked that hopefully, the CM would elevate Pakistan cricket to new heights. He offered his services for the betterment of cricket.

Mohsin Naqvi acknowledged that Javed Miandad was a cricket legend. "We want to utilise his invaluable experience in the field of cricket. We have to redeem the real status of Pakistani team in the arena of international cricket. I believe in the teamwork and consultations are being conducted so as to further strengthen the Pakistan's cricket team" he said. Domestic cricket will be promoted so that the talent of promising players could come to fore, he added.

Two former top cricketers' entry into Peshawar Zalmi

PESHAWAR (APP): Two top former cricketers were given entry into the Peshawar Zalmi family when former Test cricketer Umar Gul and legendary batsman Muhammad Yousaf joined as bowling and batting consultants.

According to detail, Pakistan's former Test cricketer Umar Gul has been appointed bowling consultant for Peshawar Zalmi in the Pakistan Super League-9, while former Test cricketer Mohammad Yousaf has been appointed batting consultant for Peshawar Zalmi.

The chairman of Peshawar Zalmi, Javed Afridi, welcomed Muhammad Yusuf and Umar Gul to the Zalmi family. Young, talented batsmen Saim Ayub, Muhammad Haris, Haseebullah, and others in the Peshawar Zalmi squad will get a chance to learn a lot from Muhammad Yousaf and Umar Gul.

Born on October 15, 1992, in Nawa Khali, Peshawar, Umar Gul is a Pakistani cricket coach and former cricketer who is the current bowling coach of the Quetta Gladiators and interim bowling coach of the Pakistan national cricket team. Gul was a member of the Pakistan team that won the 2009 ICC World Twenty20, being the highest wicket taker of the tournament, along with being the runner-up of the 2007 tournament, in which he was also the highest wicket taker.

He played all three formats of the game as a right-arm fast medium bowler for the Pakistani cricket team. Umar Gul was the second-highest wicket-taker in Twenty20 international cricket, with 74 dismissals, behind Saeed Ajmal.

Pakistan Super League 9

Quetta Gladiators beat Peshawar Zalmi by 16 runs

F.P. Report

LAHORE : Quetta Gladiators started their HBL PSL 9 campaign on a winning note, beating Peshawar Zalmi by 16 runs after a hard-fought and high-scoring contest at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore on Sunday afternoon.

The second match of the day will be played between Multan Sultans and Karachi Kings at Multan Cricket Stadium. The first ball is expected to be bowled at 7pm.

Chasing a mammoth total of 207, Saim Ayub and Babar Azam provided a solid start to Peshawar Zalmi. Saim clubbed Akeal Hosein for the first six of Zalmi's innings in the second over. In the following over, Babar hit Mohammad Amir for a sumptuous straight drive. Mohammad Hasnain was welcomed with six over long off by Saim on the first ball of the fourth over. Babar stamped his authority against Mohammad Wasim Jnr in the fifth over as he struck him for two magnificent sixes.

The duo amassed 70 off the powerplay. The 91-run opening partnership came to an end as Rossouw ran out Saim (42, 26b, 2x4s, 3x6s). Hosein struck to remove Mohammad Haris (7, 6b, 1x4) in the 11th over. Tom Kohler-Cadmore (18, 18b, 1x6) and Babar put on a 39-run third-wicket partnership before Babar fell to Abrar Ahmed on the first ball of the 16th over scoring 68 off 42 balls with four boundaries and as many maximums. Babar also became the first-ever batter to score 3000 runs in the HBL PSL history.

Two balls later, Abrar struck again to dismiss Kohler-Cadmore leaving Zalmi 150-4. Dan Mousely joined Rovman Powell in the middle with 57 runs required off 26 balls. Mousley man-

aged to hit Mohammad Amir for a much-needed maximum over deep backward square on the last ball of the 17th over.

Amir returned in the 19th over to dismiss a dangerous Powell, bringing an end to his cameo of 17 from nine balls leaving Zalmi in dire straits. He bowled the penultimate over for just six runs. Zalmi required 25 runs off the last over but Wasim Jnr only gave away eight runs while eking out the scalp of Mousley.

Returning to competitive cricket after an injury, Abrar bowled a tight spell giving away 29 runs and bagging two prized scalps. Amir, Hosein and Hasnain bagged one wicket each.

Earlier, after being put into bat by Peshawar Zalmi, the Quetta Gladiators got off to a breezy start. Saud Shakeel, making his HBL PSL debut, accompanied by the experienced Jason Roy came out all guns blazing. Saud hit the first ball of the match for a four towards the mid-wicket setting a positive tone for the innings. The duo amassed 18 runs off the first over of Aamir Jamal's spell while completing the fifty-run opening partnership in 4.4 overs.

By the end of the powerplay, Quetta had raced to 70 for no loss. At the halfway mark, Saud and Roy brought up hundred-run partnership.

Roy reached his fifty in the 11th over, off 29 balls after he smashed Mousley for a maximum over deep midwicket. He also completed 1000 runs in his HBL PSL career. Saud too followed suit and brought up his maiden HBL PSL fifty off 36 balls in the next over. The duo went berserk in the 14th over of the innings as they notched 20 runs off Saim's bowling, with Saud clubbing two sixes and Roy chipping in with

one maximum that was hit over the bowler's head.

Luke Wood drew the first blood for Zalmi in the 16th over as Saud (74, 47b, 6x4s, 4x6s) skied one to mid-on where Babar took a brilliant running catch. The opening stand of 157 between Roy and Saud is the joint third-highest partnership for any wicket in the HBL PSL and the highest for Quetta Gladiators. Skipper Rilee Rossouw, walking in to bat number three, got off the mark with six over mid-wicket. A ball later he belted a four down the ground.

Rossouw's (14, 7b, 1x4s, 1x6) stay on the crease was cut short by tall Mohammad Zeeshan, making his HBL PSL debut as well, who managed to crash a full-pitched slower ball into his stumps. Salman Irshad brought an end to Roy's innings as he was caught at mid-wicket after scoring 75 off 48 balls laced with nine boundaries and two sixes.

Salman bagged two more wickets in the last over of the innings as he dismissed Sherfane Rutherford (20, 13b, 3x4s) and Mohammad Wasim Jnr (4, 2b, 1x4) in a space of three balls. Quetta crossed the 200-run mark for the first time in this edition of the HBL PSL posting a 206-5 in their 20 overs.

For Peshawar, Salman returned with three scalps while Wood and Zeeshan grabbing a wicket each.

Scores in brief: Quetta Gladiators beat Peshawar Zalmi by 16 runs. Quetta Gladiators 206-5, 20 overs (Jason Roy 75, Saud Shakeel 74; Salman Irshad 3-38).

Peshawar Zalmi 190-6, 20 overs (Babar Azam 68, Saim Ayub 42; Abrar Ahmed 2-29, Mohammad Amir 1-29).

Player of the match – Saud Shakeel (Quetta Gladiators).

India crushes England with record win to lead Test series 2-1



Jonny Bairstow was trapped lbw for the second time in the match.

RAJKOT (AFP): Yashasvi Jaiswal hit an unbeaten double century to help India to its biggest-ever win Sunday, crushing England by 434 runs in the third Test to take a 2-1 lead in the series.

Chasing 557 for victory, England's batting fell like a pack of cards with the loss of eight wickets in the final session to be dismissed for 122 on day four in Rajkot.

"In Test cricket... when you're playing well you have to make it big," Jaiswal told broadcasters after the stunning win. "Test cricket is hard, but I thought that when I'm in there, I need to give my 100 percent," he said.

Ravindra Jadeja got Mark Wood out for 33 as the final wicket — and his fifth — and he kissed the pitch as India registered their greatest win in terms of runs. England lost their openers, including first-innings centurion Ben Duckett run out on four, before tea and Jadeja then rattled the middle-order with his left-arm spin.

Jonny Bairstow and Joe Root extended their poor run in the five-match series, out for four and seven respectively. Skipper Ben Stokes attempted to resist the

Indian bowling but fell lbw to left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav for 15 in his 100th Test.

"We're 2-1 down in the series but still have two games left," Stokes said. "We leave this game behind — know we've got to win the next two to win the series."

'Bat till the end' The left-handed Jaiswal stood out with his 214 off 236 balls to flay the opposition attack before India declared their second innings on 430-4.

The opener returned to bat in the morning session after he retired hurt on 104 late on day three due to back pain. "Today when I came, I wanted to make sure that I take the game forward and bat till the end," Jaiswal said.

He raised his second double ton in consecutive matches with a single off Root and jumped for joy. Jaiswal hit a record-equaling 12 sixes in his knock, which included three straight hits over the fence off James Anderson — a first for the veteran quick who has 696 wickets in 185 Tests.

Jaiswal now stands level with former Pakistan great Wasim Akram, who also hit 12 sixes in an innings against Zimbabwe in 1996.

He put on marathon stands that included an unbeaten 172-run partnership with debutant Sarfaraz Khan, who made 68 for his second half-century of the match. The 22-year-old Jaiswal, who hit a match-winning 209 in the second Test, remains the leading batsman in the series with 545 runs.

Indian bowlers set up victory after they bowled England out for 319 in the first innings, after the tourists' batting collapsed from 299-5 despite the absence of star spinner Ravichandran Ashwin on Saturday.

Ashwin, who left the Test midway on day two due to a family emergency hours after taking his 500th Test wicket, returned to the field and got his 501st wicket on the fourth day. Off-spinner Ashwin, 37, became only the ninth bowler in Test history and the second Indian after fellow spinner Anil Kumble (619) to reach 500 wickets.

Skipper Rohit Sharma's 131 and 112 by Jadeja steered India to 445 in the first innings after they elected to bat. England won the opener by 28 runs but India bounced back in the second match. The fourth Test starts on Friday in Ranchi.



In brief

Cop injured in shootout

ISLAMABAD (APP): A police personnel was shot and injured during an attempt to apprehend a proclaimed offender in the precincts of Dhamial Police Station in Rawalpindi on Sunday. According to the police, Sub-Inspector Inaam Ali, along with other personnel, went to arrest a suspect when his accomplices opened fire on the police party, resulting in the injury of the officer. The injured police personnel has been transferred to the hospital for medical treatment, according to a private news channel. The injured police officer has reportedly sustained four gunshot wounds.

Amir Hamza Khan remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 29th death anniversary of renowned Pashto poet, writer, novelist, translator and the father of Pashto ghazal Amir Hamza Khan Shinwari was observed on Sunday. Shinwari was born in Landi Kotal. After matriculation, he became inclined towards the literary arts. In 1935, he wrote the first Pashto drama, 'Zamindar,' for All India Radio Peshawar, followed by scripting the story, dialogues, and lyrics for the first Pashto film, 'Laila Majnoon,' released from Bombay in 1941. Apart from writing, he also directed and performed playback singing duties. Following the establishment of Pakistan, Hamza Shinwari penned numerous dramas, features, and speeches for Radio Pakistan Peshawar. As a translator, he rendered translation of Rahman Baba's 204 ghazals into Urdu, while translating Allama Iqbal's 'Javid Nama' and 'Armughan-e-Hijaz' into Pashto. He also translated 'Nahjul Balagha' into Pashto. Amir Hamza Shinwari contributed to every genre of Pashto literature, leaving behind a rich legacy in mysticism, poetry, psychology, and culture through numerous prose and poetic works. His work 'Tajalliyat-e-Mohammadiya' is considered as a seminal work in Pashto Sufi literature.

Citizens urged to save water

RAWALPINDI (APP): The citizens have been urged to use water carefully as the supply of water from Khanpur dam to Rawalpindi city and Cantonment areas has been reduced due to the ongoing de-silting project which started on February 12 and may lead to a shortage of water in many localities. According to Managing Director (MD) of Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA), Muhammad Saleem Ashraf, the Khanpur dam canal de-silting project will be completed by Feb 21. He urged the residents to use water judiciously in their daily routine to avoid shortage as water supply to city areas from the Khanpur dam had decreased due to the de-silting project. He informed that the water supply had decreased to 6 million gallons from 8 million gallons per day and that WASA was trying to meet water demand through tube wells. The agency was also taking all possible measures to ensure supply from bowzers and tube wells to fulfill the needs of the locals while the citizens could use the toll-free number 1334 or get registered their complaints at the nearest complaint centre, he added. He said the project was being completed jointly by the Capital Development Authority, WASA, and the Cantonment Board. Water supply to the residents would normalize after completion of the de-silting project, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Commuters getting shelter under the bridge to avoid the rain that experienced in the city.

Mushaal expresses concern over health condition of Yasin Malik

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister for human rights and women empowerment, Mushaal Hussein Mullick has vociferously condemned Indian authorities' inhumane behavior towards her husband, Chairman JKLF Mohammad Yasin Malik.

She has said that Yasin Malik's health has deteriorated to an alarming level after he stopped taking medicines in protest to inhuman behavior of authorities for their delaying tactics to take him to the hospital for proper medical treatment, despite court orders.

Mushaal said that the expired and outdated pacemaker implanted in him had now gone ineffective, endangering his life. She said that in addition to his heart problems, Yasin Malik was also suffering from kidney ailment. She further said that according

to confirmed reports his body weight had also dropped to a great extent, which was a great cause of concern.

Mushaal said that as per reports, the health of Muhammad Yasin Malik, was deteriorating speedily due to lack of his proper medical treatment in Tihar Jail. She said that just two weeks ago, his mother had approached a court in Delhi to draw the court's attention towards the deteriorating health condition of her son and over concerns of the lack of interest of the authorities towards his health. In her plea to court, his mother also expressed her readiness to bear the expenses of her son's treatment.

Mushaal said that her husband Yasin Malik worsening health condition and court orders demanded that Yasin Malik should have been immediately transferred to the hos-

pital and kept there under the supervision of doctors until his full recovery.

She said that Yasin Malik was taken to a government hospital in Delhi on February 13 only after his condition deteriorated to alarming level. She said that despite the court orders to keep him under supervision in hospital, authorities brought him back to the jail after just a routine medical checkup.

She appealed International human rights institutions to intervene so that the precious life of the most popular pro-freedom political leader of the people of the Jammu Kashmir was saved. She further emphasized that the resilient people and leadership of Jammu and Kashmir cannot be intimidated or subdued through false and fabricated cases, or by employing heavy-handed and inhumane tactics.

MoHR launches an awareness campaign to prevent child abuse

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) has launched an awareness campaign to prevent child abuse through social media. An official MoHR talking to APP here on Sunday said that social media is an outstanding tool in the fight against child abuse.

"We believe social media is effective in raising public awareness about social issues, including child abuse," he added. He added that at least half of the adult population uses social media.

In other words, by posting child abuse prevention messages, the chances of reaching the adults who need these messages are much higher. He further added

that media can play a vital role among people, adding that "our voices are stronger when we speak as one."

He further added that "in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the dignity of children and their right to live free from violence is placed as a priority of the international development agenda through the implementation of the range of goals and targets of the 2024 Agenda relevant to ending exploitation, abuse, trafficking, torture, and all forms of violence against children, as well as eliminating all harmful practices, such as child labor, early marriage, and forced marriage.

Murree administration urges tourists to get weather updates before visiting 'Queen of Hills'

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Murree district administration has urged the tourists to get weather updates and traffic-related information prior to traveling to Murree and also advised the tourists to take all due precautions in Murree, Galiyat and surrounding areas.

According to a Murree district administration spokesman, the administration on the special directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Murree, Zaheer Abbas Sherazi had finalized all arrangements for snowfall season. The tourists were being given information about weather updates and travel advisories at all entry points of Murree, he added.

The tourists had also been requested to follow the instructions being given at the entry points, he said adding, that strict action by the law was also being taken against parking rules violators. Murree District Administration had set up a

special control room to facilitate the people, particularly tourists, he added.

The control room was working round the clock under the supervision of senior officers.

In case of any difficulty, the tourists could get help and guidance from the tourist facilitation centers. The citizens were also advised to follow the traffic rules to ensure the flow of traffic on the roads. The tourists could contact Emergency Service, Rescue-1122, Tourism Helpline-1421, or PDMA Helpline-1129 in case of emergency, he added.

Personnel from various departments were present at all the tourist facilitation centers to guide and assist the tourists, he added. He informed that machinery and human resources were being used to remove snow from the roads. The administration had taken solid steps to remove snow from different roads to facilitate

the tourists, he said.

Murree district administration after snowfall forecast by the Meteorological Department for the 'The Queen of the Hills', Murree on Friday put all the departments concerned on high alert.

According to a Murree district administration spokesman, the MET office had forecasted rain and snowfall for Murree on Sunday and Monday.

He informed that 13 tourist facilitation centers had been established at various places to help and guide the tourists. In case of any emergency, Punjab emergency service, Rescue- 1122 could be contacted while the tourists could also use Tourism Helpline-1421, and PDMA Helpline-1129. Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) had also directed all the departments concerned to remain on high alert in Murree, Galiyat and surrounding areas and also issued an advisory for the tourists.

Citizens urged not to allow children to fly kites; 356 arrested with 48000 kites

RAWALPINDI (APP): The district administration and Rawalpindi District Police have urged the citizens to ensure that their children do not violate the ban on kite flying imposed by the provincial government otherwise strict action would be taken against the violators in accordance with the law. According to a police spokesman, over 356 kites flyers and sellers were rounded up during this season and nearly 48,000 kites and 800 string rolls were recovered from their possession.

He informed that Potohar division police netted 147 violators with 5300 kites, 200 string rolls, 326 liquor bottles, two pistols, sound system and other items.

Similarly, Rawal Division police conducted raids in their respective jurisdiction and netted 18 accused with 438 kites and 15 string rolls while Saddar Division police held 23 kite flyers and sellers and seized 630 kites, 18 string rolls and other items.

He said, separate cases had been registered against all the violators.

The spokesman said that on the special

directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani, police were taking strict action in accordance with the law. The CPO had requested the parents to stop their children from getting involved in such activities as a crackdown against kite flyers had already been accelerated in the city, he added.

Special squads had been formed to net the violators while deputy superintendents of police and station house officers were also taking part in the operation.

He said that the officers concerned had been directed to utilise all available resources to control the kite flying and to net the ban violators and the kite sellers.

He said that the violators were being dealt with an iron hand and no one would be allowed to violate the law and indulge in kite flying and selling.

The use of metal string for kite flying results in the loss of human lives therefore, all-out efforts are made to stop kite flying, he said adding, a special awareness campaign is also being run to control the ban violation.

RDA gears up operation against illegal housing schemes

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of the Director General, Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa has geared up its ongoing operation against illegal housing schemes.

According to RDA spokesman, the Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate of RDA had issued notices to Malik Tassawar, Zakir, Malik Riyasat, Asim Aziz, Sheikh Maisam, Idress Awan, Master Zaheer, Syed Samar Shah, Ch Aslam Bani, Qazi Naveed, Haji Abrar, Ch. Hameed, Malik Aslam, Malik Ibrar, Khurram Qayum, Ch. Abid, Raja Tahir, Ch. Yasir, Mr. Kosar, Badar, Anjum Kiyani and Tahir Madni, the owners of two private illegal housing schemes and 11 illegal subdivisions of the land namely Ittehad Town at Mouza Harnal on Mandra Chakwal Road Gujar Khan, Aziz Builders & Developers Pvt. Ltd at Mouza Jarary on Jorian to Gahi Syedan Road Rawalpindi, Land Subdivision at Mouza Kallar Budhal Tehsil Kallar Syedan, Land Subdivision at Mouza Mankiyala Stupa Road, Land

Subdivision Nazimabad at Mouza Louni Kallar Bypass Road Kallar Syedan, Land Subdivision at Mouza Louni Tehsil Kallar Syedan and Land Subdivision at Mouza Kallar Budhal Tehsil Kallar Syedan, Land Subdivision at Mouza Bagga Sheikhhan, Land Subdivision at Mouza Chak Bhatta, Dhamial and Bishandot, Land Subdivision at Mouza Khabal and Sukhoo, Land Subdivision at Mouza Mera Sangal and two more Land Subdivisions at Mouza Khabal and Sukhoo. He said the DG had also directed the Director MP&TE that action should be taken against illegal advertisements and marketing and First Information Report should also be lodged against the owners of illegal housing schemes.

Moreover, the sponsors of illegal housing schemes were directed to immediately stop the marketing of their unapproved and illegal housing schemes and contact RDA for getting NOC/approval of the scheme as per law, otherwise, strict legal action would be taken against the rules violators, he added. The citizens had also been

requested not to invest in illegal and unauthorized housing schemes, he said adding, they were advised to check status of the housing projects on RDA official website www.rda.gov.pk. He said that the owners and sponsors of illegal housing schemes were misleading the public through illegal advertisements.

In this regard, 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, he informed. RDA has also issued notice to a marketing company, M/s Reliable Marketing for an advertising campaign of nine illegal housing projects. The spokesman further informed that the MP&TE Directorate RDA issued notice to a marketing company namely M/s Reliable Marketing and directed them to stop advertising campaign of nine unapproved and illegal housing schemes namely New Metro City, Al-Muqet City, Mega City, Al-Imran Homes, Al-Imran Garden, Prism City, Sarwar Shaheed Garden, Khan Village Housing Society and Faisal Town Phase-II.

Govt achieves 13 goals, out of 15, set to promote IT sector within brief period: Dr. Saif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif has said the caretaker government had successfully achieved 13 goals, out of 15, set to promote the IT sector and increase its exports within a brief period of 5 months under the caretaker setup.

In a video message, he said, "We have achieved 13 out of 15 important targets for the promotion of the IT & telecom sector in a short period of 5 months in the caretaker set-up. The forum of SIFC will prove to be a great support for the upcoming elected government in the process of building and developing the country, and the elected government will also reap the benefits of the measures we have taken during the caretaker period."

"We worked with the SIFC and the State Bank to make a significant policy intervention, allowing IT companies to keep 50% of their export revenue in dollars in an account in Pakistan and make their international expenses without any restrictions from this amount," he further explained. He said that with this decision, allowing the retention of 50 percent in dollars, the country's IT exports have increased by 32 percent in the last 60 days.

Dr. Umar Saif highlighted that the establishment of the Telecom Tribunal fulfills a long-standing demand of the telecom sector. The specialized Tribunal will now handle telecom sector disputes and cases instead of the High Courts, aiming to expedite the resolution of legal issues and facilitate rapid progress in the telecom sector. According to the minister, the Ministry of Law will nominate the chairperson and members of the Tribunal.

The Chairperson must be a Judge of the High Court or a lawyer with 15 years of experience, he said. Similarly, the Tribunal will have 2-member technocrats, whose number may be increased or decreased from time to time.

The minister believes that this specialized approach will lead to faster and more efficient resolution of disputes, contributing to the overall advancement of the telecom industry. He said, "The effective implementation of the Right of Way Policy, the Special Investment Council has removed all departmental hurdles, and all decisions in the interest of the country and the nation have been approved without delay."

He said that the ministry is concurrently establishing a research and development fund

to support mobile phone manufacturing companies and facilitate the growth of the mobile phone manufacturing sector.

Dr. Umar Saif said that the first standardized quality test for the 75,000 information technology graduates will be conducted soon. He highlighted significant decisions made to revamp IT education in collaboration with various entities, including HEC, the National Computing Accreditation Council, the Examination Testing Council, the Pakistan Software Export Board, and the Pakistan Software Houses Association.

Dr. Saif said students who successfully pass the test will be offered job opportunities through the Industry Placement Program. He added that funds will be allocated to support special industry courses in universities, aiming to prepare students for current industry trends and needs. He explained that the National Computing Accreditation Council will consider the pass rate of students to determine a university's rating and the permissible enrollment of IT students.

Emphasizing the importance of aligning educational institutions with industry requirements, he stressed the need for facilitating industry-specific

training to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and practical industry needs.

He said that freelancers would now receive their payments through PayPal, addressing a longstanding demand. The minister clarified, "While PayPal itself is not coming to Pakistan, an agreement has been reached where remittances would be channeled through PayPal via a third party."

"Under the newly devised program, freelancers will not need to open a PayPal account. Instead, individuals outside the country will make payments from their PayPal accounts, and the funds will be promptly deposited into the freelancers' accounts," the minister explained. He said that under the nation's first space policy approved by the federal cabinet, international companies would be allowed to provide communication services through low-orbit communication satellites.

Dr. Saif said that satellite communication technology was advancing rapidly, and many private companies in the world wanted to provide communication services through low-orbit satellites. "Satellites used to be geostationary, far away from the land. They are useful for broadcasting TV signals but commu-

nicating is difficult because there is latency," he said.

Dr. Saif said that communication services and internet services could be offered through low-orbit satellites, which were relatively closer. He said that there had been a lot of development in this regard in the private sector. "So now it has become possible for communication services in Pakistan to be provided through satellites and the private sector has this technology," he said. He expressed confidence that 5G services in the country would be launched by July-August current year, and 300MHz spectrum would be offered for auction.

He said that before the launch of 5G services, the optic fiber network had to be enhanced. Currently, only 6,000 mobile towers relate to optic fiber cables (OFC) of around 56,000 towers across the country.

Dr. Saif said that the government launched a project to establish 10,000 e-Rozgar centers across the country that would be equipped with the latest facilities for freelancers and startups.

"We have also fulfilled another promise made to the people, where a significant number from the existing 1.5 million and upcoming new freelancers can work independently at very low rates," the minister said.

He said the best facilities including high-speed internet, UPS, training centers, individual cabins, meeting rooms, and separate office rooms for start-ups had been provided to freelancers. The minister said that with the completion of the great project, IT exports would be increased soon by \$ 10 billion annually, and under public-private partnership, these centers would also be able to significantly increase the capacity and income of freelancers.

He said, the Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) would be responsible for providing freelancers and required technical support for these centers. Dr. Umar Saif said that as promised, e-rozgar centers in other cities were also nearing completion. "We have taken all the required steps for the digital ecosystem in Pakistan, and we have also used all available forums to declare Pakistan as a "Technology Destination" internationally" he added. The minister said that the government had allocated Rs 2 billion for the Pakistan Startup Fund to accelerate venture capital investment in the country. He said the Fund would provide financial assistance to the start-ups, with each receiving 30% support, while venture capitalists would contribute the remaining 70% of the capital.

Switzerland donates \$1.9m

KABUL (Ariana News): The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has announced Switzerland's donation of \$1.9 million to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund. The announcement was made on Sunday on OCHA's X platform, stating that Switzerland has contributed 1.7 million francs, equivalent to \$1.9 million, to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund. Switzerland had previously donated \$4 million to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund.

The Frontier Post

Shabaan 08, 1445 — Monday, February 19, 2024

Iranian envoy warns Europe

KABUL (Ariana News): Iran's Special Envoy for Afghanistan Hassan Kazemi Qomi has said that Europe should not use humanitarian aid to Afghanistan as a hostage for regional ties. Qomi made the comments in a meeting with his EU counterpart, according to the Iranian diplomat's post on his X account. He said that he had a frank and constructive discussion with the EU's Special Envoy for Afghanistan.

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

Wignaraja visits earthquake victims

HERAT (TOLOnews): Kanni Wignaraja, Assistant Secretary General and Regional Director of Asia-Pacific at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), on a trip to Injil district of Herat told TOLOnews that the United Nations will cooperate with the Herat earthquake victims until they reach a normal life.

According to Wignaraja, in addition to the earthquake, the earthquake victims are also affected by climate change and drought.

In her trip to Chahak village of Anjil district to deliver temporary houses to families affected by the earthquake, Wignaraja said that the only way out of Afghanistan's economic crisis is to provide equal

opportunities in the field of education and work for women and men.

Kanni Wignaraja said that "this is a beginning" and things are moving to a better state, so it is important to build permanent shelters for the earthquake victims and they can return to normal life in the society. She also said that schools, clinics, and a system for obtaining healthy drinking water should be provided for the earthquake victims.

In a meeting with a number of rural women, she emphasized support for Afghan women and said that in order to save Afghanistan from the economic crisis, it is necessary to provide equal educational and work opportunities for women and men.

The residents of the

earthquake-stricken village of Chahak, who have been living under tents for months, said they are happy about the construction of temporary shelters. They asked local institutions to build permanent houses for them.

Abdul Hakim, a resident of Injil district of Herat said: "We did not have shelter in this cold weather but now I am very happy."

"They provided us with solar panels and house tools that we did not have along with these houses, and we are happy for their help," said Mohammad Daud, a resident of the district.

The UNDP has also rebuilt a canal in Parwana village of Injil district of Herat. This canal provides water to 600 acres of agricultural land.

Deputy PM meets with officials

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, the Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs, convened a meeting with officials and professors from private universities in Kabul and other provinces.

According to a statement from the Deputy Prime Minister's office, the meeting highlighted the significant role private universities have played over the past two decades in training scientific personnel and specialists, alongside government universities.

The officials and professors expressed that with government support, they could provide higher education to a large number of youth in the future, aligning with societal needs and minimal land use.

The participants suggested creating opportunities for higher education and organizing academic conferences at national and regional levels. This would enhance their capacities and enable better performance in their tasks in collaboration with relevant authorities.

The Deputy Prime Minister emphasized the importance of university activities for society. He stated that the government is committed to supporting all private educational institutions on a large scale and ensuring favorable conditions for them.

He also noted that foreign interventions have had adverse effects on Afghan society in various aspects. However, the Islamic Emirate is committed to addressing the problems of all sectors, including higher education, with new standards over time.

The meeting highlighted the idea of future joint sessions and supervision to support private universities and address their issues and suggestions. The Deputy Prime Minister assured complete cooperation in this regard.

Crucial role of scholars highlighted

KABUL (BNA): Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Deputy Prime Minister in Administrative Affairs, held a meeting with scholars from Jawzjan province.

Mawlawi Abdul Salam Rahmani, speaking on behalf of the group, provided an update on the social and economic situation of Jawzjan province and its local governance.

Rahmani reported that security is fully ensured in the province, with local officials striving to deliver necessary services and facilities to the residents. He appealed to the leadership of the Islamic Emirate to focus on education and training, fortify madrassas and schools, and motivate the nation's teachers and elites.

In his address, the Deputy Prime Minister underscored the significant and valuable role of scholars in enlightening public opinion, educating society's children, and strengthening the Islamic system.

He affirmed that the Islamic Emirate gives special attention to all areas, particularly education, and will spare no effort in fostering the country's growth and development.

Kabul calls statement of 12 European FMs 'baseless'

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Islamic Emirate denied the claims of 12 European countries foreign ministers' joint statement about the violation of human rights in Afghanistan.

Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesman for the Islamic Emirate, said that countries are trying to convey an unpleasant picture of Afghanistan.

"Countries that failed in Afghanistan and left the country, they are now trying to provide untrue information to the region through their intelligence. The countries express such baseless remarks without considering the ground facts in Afghanistan," said Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate.

At the Munich Security Conference (MSC) 2024, the foreign ministers expressed concern about the violation of human rights, especially women's rights, in Afghanistan, saying that the situation has no improvement since last year's meeting of the MSC.

In the joint statement, the 12 countries asked the Islamic Emirate to allow Afghan girls to seek education with international standards.

"The international community must continue to focus its attention on the human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan. It must reinforce its efforts to use the legal instruments at its disposal in their support, to end violations of international law including the provisions of international conventions to which Afghanistan is



a party," reads the statement.

In the statement, the countries called the counternarcotics and counterterrorism a challenge not only for Afghanistan but the region.

"We recognize the need to address multiple challenges involving the State of Afghanistan and the wider region, e.g. the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking. We underline the international community's joint understanding that the adherence to Afghanistan's international obligations by the de facto authorities, especially pertaining to human rights, remains one of the central pre-requisites for the reintegration of the State of Afghanistan into the international system," reads the statement.

"The Islamic Emirate says that cultivation of drugs has decreased by

95 percent and the human rights has had its problems. There should be an agreement on these issues not expressing concerns and damaging the mentality of people," said Sayed Qariullah Sadat, a political analyst.

"There are problems, but solutions also exist for the problems. The world should not just concentrate on their concerns about terrorism," said Akhtar Muhammad Rasikh, an international relations expert.

The international community has made the recognition of the Islamic Emirate conditional on the protection of human and women's rights in Afghanistan, but the caretaker Afghan government says that the world should define women's rights considering the cultural diversity of countries.

Islamic Emirate reacts to UN report on women in Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Islamic Emirate's spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, in response to the joint report of UN institutions addressing the situation of women in Afghanistan, said that UNAMA is preventing the political progress of the current Afghan government by publishing such reports.

The spokesman for the Islamic Emirate, Zabiullah Mujahid, said that the current realities of the country are not reflected in these reports and these institutions are seeking to create conspiracies and make excuses regarding Afghanistan's diplomatic relations with other countries, which are not yielding results.

Mujahid said that women's rights are ensured in the country and such reports are baseless.

"Recognition of a country is based on the laws of the UN, not on the basis of some women or some people in a country. Second, the institutions are seeking to create conspiracies and make excuses regarding the diplomatic relations of institutions and countries with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan," the spokesman said.

"UN Women, IOM and UNAMA convened online and in-person (where safe to do so) group consultations and conducted individual telesurveys, together reaching 745 Afghan women across all of Afghanistan's 34 provinces," the report said.

According to the UN institutions' survey, women said international recognition of the current Afghan government should happen only when restrictions on female are reversed.

"Women stated that international recognition should happen only after reversing all restrictions (32 percent) or after some specific bans are reversed (25 percent) on women and girls; 28 percent said that recognition should not happen at all, under any circumstances. In July 2023, a similar question found that 96 per cent of women maintained that recognition should only occur after improvements in women's rights or that it should not occur at all," the report reads.

"Women expressed deep disappointment with those Member States

that, in their efforts to engage the DFA, overlook the severity of an unprecedented women's rights crisis and the associated violations of international law, based on the treaties to which Afghanistan was a signatory. Women did not accept the current plight," the report further stated.

Meanwhile, some political experts think that the Islamic Emirate's recognition depends on its ability to comply with the world's demands for the protection of women's and girls' rights.

"Apart from the fact that whether or not the international community recognizes the current government, the issue of girls schools and universities, the employment of women and the meaningful presence of women in society are demands of national interests and are an important step for the stability of Afghanistan," said Najibullah Jami, a political analyst.

This comes as many in the international community has made the recognition of the Islamic Emirate conditional on the ensuring of women's rights in the country.

Red Crescent rebuilds 200 homes for earthquake victims

PAKTIKA (Khaama Press): The Red Crescent Society recently announced that nearly 200 residential homes have been built by this organization for the earthquake victims in Paktika province.

The Bakhtar News Agency reported on Saturday, the twenty-eighth, citing the Red Crescent Society that the reconstruction of 192 residential homes in Paktika province has been completed.

Red Crescent officials added that 192 residential homes in the districts of Gayan Wolesi Jirga of Paktika province have been rebuilt and handed over to the residents of this area.

This comes as many



people in this province have lost their homes due to recent earthquakes.

One year ago today, a devastating earthquake

shook the districts of Gayan and Barmal in Paktika province, resulting in the loss of 406 lives and injuries to 1,685 others.

It is worth mentioning that this earthquake occurred in three districts of Paktika, destroying more than 7,000 homes.

Ministry deems participation in meeting unproductive

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has released a statement expressing its view that participation in the Doha meeting was not beneficial due to the lack of progress in establishing a conducive environment for high-level, transparent discussions between the Afghan delegation and the United Nations on all issues.

The statement underscores Afghanistan's efforts over the past two years to fortify the political, administrative, security, economic, and social systems, while also making positive strides in regional relations. The Islamic Emirate has been actively engaged in dialogues with the United Nations,

Western countries, and particularly the United States, addressing issues such as unilateral sanctions, blacklists, and the release of Afghanistan's banking reserves.

The Islamic Emirate believed that the special representatives' meeting in Doha, Qatar, led by António Guterres, the Secretary General of the United Nations, presented a good opportunity for clear and result-oriented discussions on contentious issues. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has stated that the participation of the Afghan delegation proved futile and unproductive due to the lack of progress in creating a conducive environment for these discussions.

The statement empha-

sizes that if the United Nations acknowledges the existing realities, refrains from succumbing to pressure from certain limited parties, and recognizes that the current Afghan system is not influenced by any individual as the previous regime was, progress in talks with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is possible.

The Ministry further asserts that the Islamic Emirate's two-year interaction with regional countries has shown that avoiding the unsuccessful experiences of the past twenty years and adopting a realistic and pragmatic approach, as opposed to unilateral decisions and pressures, can lead to progress in bilateral relations with other parties.

Iranian firm eyes investment in Afghanistan's oil sector



KABUL (BNA): Sheikh Shahabuddin Dalawar, the Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, recently held a meeting with Morteza Asghari, a representative from the Iranian company, Asmary Group. The meeting was centered around exploring investment prospects in Afghanistan.

As per the Ministry's statement, the Acting Minister and Asghari engaged in

discussions about potential investments. Asghari showed a keen interest in investing in Afghanistan's mining sector, with a special focus on oil and gas. He noted that Afghanistan now presents significantly improved opportunities for investors compared to previous years.

Dalawar warmly received Asmary Group's investment interest in Afghanistan's

mining sector. He provided detailed information about the oil blocks in Herat, which span an area of 23,000 square kilometers and are located in the provinces of Herat and Badghis.

The Acting Minister underscored the government's commitment to creating favorable conditions for both local and foreign investors, particularly in Afghanistan's mining sector.

Businessmen complain high transportation fare

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): Some businesspersons in western Herat province have complained against the high transportation fare of domestic animals' skins to foreign countries especially to Pakistan and asked officials to pay attention to this issue.

The linked hike in the transportation fare of domestic animals from Herat to Pakistan with the formation of a Commission by the provincial Transport Department and said the decision left negative impact on all businessmen.

They said the sudden hike in the transportation fare was something unforgivable for them and unacceptable to them and it posed threat for many of businessmen for the contin-

uation of their work.

Sayed Naem, one of the businessmen, told Pajhwok Afghan News the price of animal skin is low in the local market and one skin is sold against 20 af and its fare cost 40 af.

He said the Commission formed by the Transport Department of the province for the transfer of goods has not taken into account the price differentiation, the price of skin is down, and if the situation continued this way trades will go bankrupt and their problems will increase.

Mohammad Nasir, another skin sellers acknowledged Sayed Naem's statement and added that they collected skin from all over the western region and transferred it

to Pakistan, the value of the transferred skin is not as high as its fare.

He said in the past one truck of skin was loaded from their market and went to Pakistan but now they should commission load the truck outside the city and transferred via Torkham because Spinboldak crossing is shut.

He said the skin price of a sheep is 20 af while a goatskin price is 40 af, this comes despite the fact that storing skins in Herat is not a suitable option for traders because of the increase in rent, and by transferring them, nothing else will be gained for them except fatigue and helplessness.

Jamaluddin Tahiri, head of the Jalaban Union in Herat city, acknowledged

the problems faced by businessmen and said the problems that had been developed was due to the lack of leather companies in this province, and these skins should be exported outside the country, but unfortunately, there has been no cooperation with small businessmen in this field.

The provincial Transport Department was contacted to get their view point on this issue but no response was received despite frequent efforts.

But Mawlawi Nisar Ahmad Elias, the governor spokesperson, said in fact, when a big problem is tackled a small portion of society get affected but differently commissions had been made to address the problems faced by businessmen

and traders. The creation of a Commission for cargo transfer also has advantages that we should pay attention.

The absence of an authoritative person during loading is something wrong but earlier it was natural which is basically an illegal act, as well as the safety of the cargo, which has been given considerable attention in this regard and now the transfer take place safely, he added.

It should be noted that all animals' skins and intestines from the city and districts of Herat province are collected by Jalaban and are sold for a low rate outside the country, a challenge that has worried many of these businessmen.

Majority Independent candidates backed by PTI still await official notifications by ECP

ISLAMABAD (INP): Independent candidates backed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are still in limbo as they await official notification of their electoral success. Despite more than a week passing since the general elections, the Election Commission of Pakistan has yet to issue notifications for the majority of independent candidates who secured seats in the National Assembly.

Out of over 10 victorious independent candidates, only 8 have received official notifications by Saturday evening. Late into the night, the Election Commission announced the success of an additional 33 candidates. According to reports, notifications have been issued for 154 out of 265 National Assembly seats, with only 41 independent candidates among them. It

takes three days for an independent candidate to join a political party after their victory.

Raja Khurram Nawaz, triumphant from NA-48 Islamabad, was the first independent candidate to receive notification on February 12, after joining the Pakistan Muslim League two days prior.

Further successes were declared on subsequent days, including former Punjab Governor Mian Muhammad Azhar from NA-129 Lahore and Ghulam Muhammad from NA-93 Chiniot on February 13. On February 15, PTI-backed independent candidate Adil Khan of NA-262 Quetta and independent candidate Aqeel Malik of NA-54 Rawalpindi were notified. Additionally, Muhammad Ilyas Chaudhry from NA-62 Gujarat,

Osama Malik from NA-83 Sargodha, and Nisar Ahmad Jat from NA-100 Faisalabad were declared successful on February 16.

Among the late-night notifications, 33 constituencies saw independent candidates declared successful, including NA 1, NA 2, NA 3, NA 4, NA 5, NA 6, NA 7, NA 9, NA 10, NA 12, NA 13, NA 14, NA 16, NA 17, NA 18, NA 19, NA 20, NA 21, NA 22, NA 23, NA 24, NA 25, NA 26, NA 26, NA 30, NA 31, NA 32, NA 33, NA 34, NA 35, NA 36, NA 37, NA 39, NA 41, NA 42, and NA 45. Additionally, one seat each was won by candidates from Majlis-e-Wahdat Muslimeen, PPP, and Muslim League-N. The delay in notifications has raised concerns over electoral transparency and the timely processing of electoral outcomes.

Political parties forceful protest against election rigging continue

QUETTA (INP): The outcry against alleged election rigging in Balochistan continues as political parties persist in their protests and sit-ins across the province. What began as a sit-in outside the District Returning Officer (DRO) office by the PK MAP, National Party, BNP, and Hazara Democratic Party in Quetta has now transformed into a full-fledged protest rally.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Abdul Malik of the National Party voiced concerns over the marginalization of nationalist parties in Balochistan. In Chaman, the ANP staged a ten-day dharna outside the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office and JUIF's district complex, while in PB50 Qila Abdullah. Meanwhile, the People's Party's protest against the results of Naserabad PB 14 enters its 11th day, and the Jamhoori Watan Party establishes a protest camp at Rabi Canal in Jafarabad. The Tehreek-e-Insaf's protest in NA-40 North Waziristan, ongoing for nine days, has disrupted traffic flow on highways, leaving numerous goods vehicles stranded.

Alexei Navalny: US and UK ambassadors to Russia lay tributes

MOSCOW (BBC): The US and UK ambassadors to Moscow have laid flowers to honour Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader who died in prison on Friday. US ambassador Lynne Tracy and Britain's Nigel Casey were pictured paying their respects at a memorial in Moscow.

Navalny's allies believe he was murdered on the orders of President Vladimir Putin. Prison authorities say he suffered "sudden death syndrome".

About 400 Russians have been detained at gatherings for the campaigner.

Pictures showed a growing pile of flowers left for Navalny at the Solovetsky Stone - a monument to political repression that has become a major site of tributes for the 47-year-old.

"Today at the Solovetsky Stone we mourn the death of Alexei Navalny and other victims of political repression in Russia," the US embassy in Moscow said on social media.

"We extend our deepest condolences to Alexei Navalny's family, colleagues and supporters. His strength is an inspiring example. We honour his memory," the embassy's

post added.

The UK embassy in Moscow's account on X, formerly known as Twitter, posted a photo of the British ambassador visiting the memorial on Saturday, and in an earlier post called for a "full and transparent investigation into Navalny's death."

They said the Foreign Office had summoned a representative of the Russian embassy, adding "we make it clear that we hold the Russian authorities fully responsible for Alexei's death."

Navalny's wife, Yulia, posted an Instagram on Sunday a photo of herself with her husband and the caption "I love you".

She had earlier called for the Russian president and his allies to be held accountable for her husband's death. The EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, confirmed on X that he would welcome Ms Navalnaya at the bloc's Foreign Affairs Council on Monday. He said that EU ministers would honour Navalny's memory and "send a strong message of support to freedom fighters in Russia".

As tributes pour in for

the Kremlin critic, questions remain over the whereabouts of Navalny's body, with allies accusing the Russian authorities of hiding his body.

Russian prison authorities said on Friday that the opposition activist had become unwell following a walk and had lost consciousness at the remote IK-3 prison in the Arctic Circle - also known as the Siberian "Polar Wolf" penal colony. Navalny allies said the politician's mother, Lyudmila Navalnaya, was told his body would only be handed over once a post-mortem examination had been completed, and that the cause of death was said to be "sudden death syndrome" - a generic, vague term for a condition which could cover a cardiac arrest with no apparent cause.

Navalny's allies said that Ms Navalnaya was told his body had been taken to the town of Salekhard, near the prison complex, but when she arrived the morgue was closed. Prison officials reportedly told her an initial post-mortem examination was inconclusive and a second would have to be carried out.

The report maintained that acquittal of those involved in blasts showed Hindutva extremists enjoy impunity under Modi-led BJP/RSS/VHP and Bajrang Dal govt in India and that the Indian court decision in this regard was a reflection of Indian state policy to protect the Hindutva terrorists.

Despite the passage of 17 years, families of victims of the Samjhauta Express terrorist attack still await justice while the Indian court acquitted four culprits involved in the Samjhauta Express blast owing to their Hindutva connections. The report maintained that acquittal of those involved in blasts showed Hindutva extremists enjoy impunity under Modi-led fascist Indian government and that the court decision in this regard was a reflection of Indian state policy to protect Hindu terrorists. It lamented that Indian agencies had blamed a Pakistan-based group despite seeing a clear Hindutva link to the Samjhauta blast. The report said that Samjhauta Express bombing was a false flag operation aimed at maligning Pakistan.

The report maintained that acquittal of those involved in blasts showed Hindutva extremists enjoy impunity under Modi-led fascist Indian government and that the court decision in this regard was a reflection of Indian state policy to protect Hindu terrorists. It lamented that Indian agencies had blamed a Pakistan-based group despite seeing a clear Hindutva link to the Samjhauta blast. The report said that Samjhauta Express bombing was a false flag operation aimed at maligning Pakistan.

17 years on, India denying justice to families of Samjhauta Express attack victims

ISLAMABAD (APP): Despite the lapse of 17 years, the Indian government continues to deny justice to the families of victims of the Samjhauta Express terrorist attack despite the availability of evidence.

On February 18, 2007, 68 persons, mostly Pakistanis, were killed in bomb blasts in Samjhauta Express, a cross-border train service between Pakistan and India, said a report released, on Sunday by Kashmir Media Service. The report maintained that the bombs were planted by Hindutva terrorists with the connivance of Indian secret agencies.

The report deplored that the Indian government continues to deny justice to the families of victims of the heinous act despite the availability of evidence. It said that the bombs were planted by Hindutva terrorists in connivance with the Indian secret agencies to malign Pakistan.

The report maintained that the

acquittal of those involved in blasts showed Hindutva extremists enjoy impunity under Modi-led BJP/RSS/VHP and Bajrang Dal govt in India and that the Indian court decision in this regard was a reflection of Indian state policy to protect the Hindutva terrorists.

Despite the passage of 17 years, families of victims of the Samjhauta Express terrorist attack still await justice while the Indian court acquitted four culprits involved in the Samjhauta Express blast owing to their Hindutva connections.

The Samjhauta Express bombing was a false flag operation aimed at maligning Pakistan while the Indian secret agencies like RAW have staged several Samjhauta Express blasts like false flag ops to defame Pakistan.

The international community and peace-loving countries must realize that the RSS-backed Hindutva BJP government is a threat to global and

regional peace. It deplored that the Indian court acquitted four Hindu terrorists despite having evidence of their involvement in the heinous act, adding the court acquitted four culprits owing to their Hindutva connections. It pointed out that the court decision came even after a Hindu extremist leader and affiliated with RSS, Swami Aseeman and confession during the investigations of having been a part of the incident.

The report maintained that acquittal of those involved in blasts showed Hindutva extremists enjoy impunity under Modi-led fascist Indian government and that the court decision in this regard was a reflection of Indian state policy to protect Hindu terrorists. It lamented that Indian agencies had blamed a Pakistan-based group despite seeing a clear Hindutva link to the Samjhauta blast. The report said that Samjhauta Express bombing was a false flag operation aimed at maligning Pakistan.

Europe seeks to sway Trump camp on NATO, Ukraine aid

MUNICH (Reuters): Even as they insist they are not dancing to Donald Trump's tune on NATO, European leaders are singing from a song sheet designed to appeal to the former U.S. president and his Republican supporters.

Trump sparked fierce criticism from Western officials for suggesting he would not protect countries that failed to meet the transatlantic military alliance's defence spending targets, and would even encourage Russia to attack them.

At the weekend, the comments by the frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination hung over the Munich Security Conference, a big annual gathering of politicians, soldiers and diplomats that is often a barometer of U.S.-European relations. European leaders are anxious not only about NATO's future if Trump beats incumbent President Joe Biden in November but also about a hold-up to a \$60 billion Ukraine aid package in the U.S. Congress, as Republicans demand border security measures to pass the bill.

Ukrainian and Western leaders say the package is vital as Kyiv's forces struggle almost two years after Russia's invasion began. Moscow said on Sunday it had taken full control of the devastated eastern Ukrainian town of Avdiivka.

European leaders are reaching out

to U.S. lawmakers, business leaders and think tanks as part of efforts to influence the Trump camp that began even before his controversial comments a week ago.

Among their arguments: Europe is spending more on defence and will do more; such spending and aid for Ukraine are worth billions to U.S. arms firms; and protecting Europe projects U.S. strength to China - a major focus of Trump's foreign policy. "We Europeans must take much greater care of our own security, now and in the future," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told the conference in the luxury Bayerischer Hof hotel, attended by dozens of U.S. lawmakers. "The willingness to do so is very great," he declared. Scholz and other European leaders, such as Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte - the favourite to be NATO's next boss - insisted they were getting more serious about defence because it was in their own interests, not because of Trump. But they aim to persuade Trump and his followers that sticking with NATO, as he did during his presidency despite complaining loudly, would be good for them too.

"It is in the U.S. interest to have a NATO alliance with strong allies that can reinforce U.S. influence," Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre told Reuters in Munich. Late last month, current NATO

Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg travelled to the U.S. for a visit partly designed to sell the alliance and support for Ukraine to the Trump camp.

He spoke at the Heritage Foundation, a Trump-friendly think tank in Washington, and visited, opens new tab a Lockheed Martin plant in Alabama that makes Javelin anti-tank missiles. "The money which is allocated to Ukraine, very much of that money ends up in the United States. Because they buy weapons - for example, the Javelins - from defence producers in the United States," Stoltenberg said in Munich.

Citing U.S. concerns about China, he said: "The United States represents 25% of the world's GDP. Together with NATO allies, we represent 50% of the world's GDP and 50% of the world's military might. So as long as we stand together, we are safe."

European leaders say their higher defence spending reflects a view that Russia now poses a far greater security threat. It also reflects a growing view among European governments that they will have to take more responsibility for their security in the years ahead, regardless of who wins the next U.S. presidential election.

"The U.S. over time, I think, will be less inclined to feel that they have to fully underwrite European security," Latvian Foreign Minister Krisjanis Karins told Reuters.



ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Umar Ayub addresses press conference.

ECP notifies 36 KPK NA seat winners

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has notified the winners for 36 National Assembly seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

The ECP, in a notification issued here, has asked the returned candidates to affiliate with a political party of their choice within the next three days.

Among the declared victors are Sibghatullah from NA-4 Upper Dir, Gohar Ali Khan from NA-10 Buner, and Umar Ayub from NA-18 Haripur.

The notification affirmed Asad Qaiser's success in NA-19 Swabi and Shandana Gulzar's victory in NA-30 Peshawar.

Shehryar Afridi clinched victory in NA-35 Kohat, while Sher Afzal Marwat secured success in NA-41 Lakki Marwat.

Additionally, the notification underscored the victories of a member each from the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), Pakistan People's Party (PPP), and MWM in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

The province contributed 45 seats to the National Assembly, including 10 reserved for women.

Mushahid hopes Pakistan can join BRICS with Russian support

MOSCOW (APP): Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Defence, Senator Mushahid Hussain has hoped that Pakistan could join the BRICS, an intergovernmental organisation being evolved into a cohesive geopolitical bloc, and welcomed "Russian goodwill for Pakistan".

The Senator is visiting Russia on the invitation of the ruling 'United Russia' party, during which he met Former President Dmitri Medvedev (who's number two to President Putin) and Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, a news release here received said.

He also attended the newly-formed International Forum for 'Freedom of Nations' where he was elected as a Member of the Forum's 20-member Standing Committee. The Forum was organized by the United Russia party. Senator Hussain Co-Chaired the Forum's plenary session where Foreign Minister Lavrov spoke and Senator Hussain had a comprehensive exchange with former President Dmitri Medvedev, now Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of Russia.

Senator Hussain and Dmitri Medvedev discussed Pakistan-Russia relations, the situation in Afghanistan, the war in Gaza, and the 'unlimited possibilities for Pakistan-Russian collaboration in the region, particularly on energy & economic connectivity', adding 'Pakistan core interests are linked to this region, where Russia is a key factor'.

Senator Hussain told Mr Medvedev that the probable election of President Trump in the US Presidential elections in November 2024 would qualitatively change the region's geopolitics. Senator Hussain said he found 'tremendous goodwill' for Pakistan in all official and popular circles in Moscow. During the visit, Senator Mushahid Hussain also delivered a lecture at the Russian Diplomatic Academy, the first prominent Pakistani to be invited to address the Diplomatic Academy in 50 years.

‘Delhi Chalo’ Farmers March continue on fifth day in India

NEW DELHI (INP): Indian farmers march continued on the fifth day as thousands of farmers, led by 250 farmer unions, are gathered and protesting for guaranteed minimum prices, debt relief, crops and policy reforms, in the outskirts of New Delhi. As per Indian media reports, the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta Ograhan) also announced to protest outside the residences of three senior BJP leaders in Punjab.

According to Economic Times, another farmers faction, Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), also announced plans to escalate their protest against the BJP's Modi government anti-farmers policies.

Bharatiya Kisan Union Punjab former chief minister Amarinder Singh, BJP's Punjab unit chief Sunil Jakhar and senior leader Keval Singh Dhillon are ready to stage outside the homes.

It is pertinent to note that India has

been heading towards general elections this year amid the allegations of anti-Muslim and anti-minorities policies by the center government of India led by BJP. The hindutva party is expecting to get third term in office at times when India's PM has inaugurated the Ram Temple on the site of the Babri mosque violating the basic rights of Muslims, which are the largest minority in India.

Declaring its support for farmers with the "Delhi Chalo March", the union will also protest at hundreds of toll plazas across India.

Bharatiya Kisan Union Tractor Rally led by Gurunam Singh Charuni will take out a tractor rally today in solidarity with the Delhi Chalo March.

The Delhi Chalo March, which started on Tuesday, has been stopped for the fifth day by the security personals in the border areas of Shambhu and Khanuri

Political stability vital for economic stability: Kh Asif

SIALKOT (APP): Former defence minister and central leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said that political stability in the country is crucial for economic stability.

Addressing a press conference at his residence on Sunday, he said consultations with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) for forming a government in centre was under way currently. "We have majority in Punjab where we are in a position to form the government alone, and the process for the purpose had started already."

He said Shehbaz Sharif would be the PML-N candidate for prime minister's

office. He said a coalition government in centre would unite people and work for development and prosperity of the country.

Kh Asif said political stability in the country is very important for economic stability, but some people were engaged in promoting politics of chaos, anarchy and unrest in the country, which could not be well-wishers of the country and the nation in any case. He said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had withdrawn from every slogan that they raised, which was proof of the contradiction in their words and actions. The PML-N leader said all government and party affairs would work under

the leadership of Nawaz Sharif. He advised that the political community should go beyond their personal interests and sacrifice for the country and the nation. He said that for political stability in the country, they should shun party politics and play a constructive role even if they sit in the opposition.

In response to a question, he said that there was no estrangement from Maulana Fazlur Rehman. "We still have a very good relationship with him," he said and added that the Maulana was cooperating with the PTI now, but it was beyond understanding to unite or protest together with those who are the beneficiaries of the rigging."

China to step up patrols near Taiwan after 2 killed in deadly boat incident

KINMEN ISLANDS (AFP): China on Sunday said it would step up law enforcement patrols in waters near Taiwan after two Chinese nationals died in a boat incident involving Taiwan's coast guard.

A Chinese boat was carrying four people when it capsized on Wednesday near the Kinmen islands while pursued by the Taiwanese coast guard.

All four on board were thrown into the water and two of the crew later died.

The Chinese coast guard said it would "carry out regular law enforcement patrol operations" in the area. The patrols are intended to "further maintain the order of operations

in relevant waters and protect the safety of fishermen's lives," Gan Yu, a spokesperson for the Chinese coast guard, said in a statement.

China has condemned democratic Taiwan for the incident and urged the island to release the two surviving members of the boat crew, who were detained. Taipei in turn blamed Beijing, saying the boat was "within prohibited waters" around the Kinmen islands — a territory administered by Taiwan but located just five kilometres from China's city of Xiamen.

Wednesday's incident comes against a backdrop of heightened tensions

across the Taiwan Strait.

Beijing claims Taiwan as part of its territory and has vowed to one day bring the self-ruled island under its control.

Taiwan's presidential election, held in January, was won by the Democratic Progressive Party's Lai Ching-te, whom Beijing considers a "separatist". Chinese President Xi Jinping has in recent years ramped up the rhetoric for the "unification" of Taiwan with China. And Beijing has stepped up its military presence near Taiwan, deploying warplanes and naval vessels around the island on a nearly daily basis.

