

5 more die of Pneumonia
F.P. Report
LAHORE: Pneumonia claimed lives of five more children while 717 new cases were reported across the province during 24 hours. Five more children fall prey to infectious pneumonia and with recent deaths toll during the ongoing year has claimed to 410. As many as 182 news pneumonia cases have been reported from Lahore during one day but no death was reported.

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SC rejects petition seeking annulment of general elections

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has rejected a petition seeking recently-held general elections to be declared as null and void, and slapped a heavy fine on the petitioner.

The petitioner had prayer the court to declare the February 8 general elections as null and void due to alleged violations of democratic norms and electoral integrity. The plea had also urged the court to order new elections within 30 days to be held under the direct supervision and oversight of the judiciary “to ensure fairness, transparency and accountability”. A three-judge apex court bench led by Chief Justice of

Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali conducted the proceedings on Wednesday as petitioner again did not show up in the court.

As the hearing began, Additional Attorney General (AAG) Amir Rahman informed the apex court that a notice had been sent to petitioner Ali Khan’s house through the defence ministry and police had also gone there as well, but he was not present there. When Chief Justice Isa asked about the identity of the petitioner, the AAG said Ali Khan was a former brigadier who had been tried by a court-martial in 2012 and awarded five-year jail when General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani was the Chief of the Army Staff.

The CJP noted that according to the petitioner’s email, he was abroad and had requested to withdraw his plea. Ali went to Bahrain by taking a connecting flight via Doha, Justice Isa added. PTI leader Shaukat Basra came to the rostrum but he was not permitted to speak as he was “neither a petitioner nor a counsel”. CJP Isa then told Basra to step aside from the rostrum.

Regarding Ali, CJP Isa remarked, “It is strange that the petitioner filed the plea and then went abroad the next day. Our (fixation) branch has confirmed the email as well that it has been sent by the same person.” The court rejected the petition and slapped half a million rupees fine on Ali Khan.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Miracle Salt Collective Inc called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

Prices of life-saving drugs hiked

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a major blow to the inflation-hit people of the country, the caretaker federal government on Wednesday increased the prices of 146 life-saving medicines.

The decision, according to a notification issued today, primarily targets essential medications crucial for treating conditions such as cancer, vaccines, and antibiotics. The prices of life-saving medicines crucial for treating heart disease diabetes, physical pain, epilepsy and injections were also increased. It is pertinent to mention that the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) had sent a summary to the caretaker government to increase the prices of 262 drugs. However, the government opted to implement adjustments exclusively for 146 medicines vital for saving lives.

Of the medicines listed for price increments, 116 are slated for price adjustments to be executed by pharmaceutical companies themselves. In a bold policy shift, the government has deregulated drug prices, granting pharmaceutical companies the autonomy to independently raise prices. This move underscores a paradigm shift in the governance of pharmaceutical pricing, potentially reshaping the dynamics of the healthcare industry.

Under the proposals, prices of medicines other than essential medicines in the national list would be exempted from the Drugs Act, of 1976 and necessary amendments will be made in the Drug Pricing Policy 2018.

More than 8m Pakistanis left abroad

F.P. Report

KARACHI: More than 8 million Pakistanis had left abroad during the outgoing year 2023, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) said in its annual immigration report. According to the report, FIA Immigration successfully processed 19.5 million passengers at international arrival and departure counters.

Out of 9.2 million passengers, 7.1 million Pakistanis and 2.1 million foreigners visited Pakistan. Out of 10.3 million passengers, 8.1 million Pakistani nationals and 2.2 million foreigners departed from Pakistan. A maximum of 3.6 million Pakistanis traveled through Lahore Airport for overseas arrivals and departures. 3.5 million Pakistani passengers traveled through Islamabad Airport.

The FIA Integrated Border Management System processed 2935 stop list cases, arrested 1602 human traffickers while carrying out operations against human traffickers, the report said. As many as 25 most wanted human traffickers were also arrested during the year 2023, it said, adding that the US State Department maintained Pakistan’s Tier 2 status in its annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report 2023.

New era will usher in Punjab, says Maryam

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Maryam Nawaz, Punjab’s 297 constituency as 297 districts in order to ensure development in every lawmaker’s constituency. “I have worked on the Safe Punjab Programme; we’ll have to expand the Safe City Project to all cities. To improve the environment of police stations for women, we will be making model women police stations,” she said.

She added that her government would also address the problem of traffic in Lahore. Lamenting that there’s no IT city across the country, she vowed to establish five of them across the province. “We will also deliver marriage, death, and car certificates to people’s homes,” she said, adding that her government would also grant interest-free loans to the youth. “We’ll redesign health cards and ensure treatment at private and public hospitals.”

The CM-hopeful also pledged to work on the health and education sectors and the provision of employment and housing to the people of the province. “We will make one hundred thousand houses for the poor, provide interest-free loans to the youth and merit-based scholarships to young students to study abroad,” she added.

Earlier, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz’s parliamentary party expressed full confidence in the decision of the party leadership to elect Maryam Nawaz as Punjab Chief Minister.

The development

occurred in the parliamentary party’s meeting which was presided today by the party’s chief organizer in which the elected members of the Punjab Assembly participated. The parliamentary party of PML-N expressed their trust in the decision of the leadership to nominate Maryam Nawaz as Punjab CM and their determination to solve the problems of the people of Punjab under the leadership of Maryam Nawaz.

Speaking during the meeting, she said she was grateful to the people of Pakistan, especially Punjab, who gave the mandate to the PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif and made the party successful in the election as the largest party. On the occasion, she expressed the hope and will to carry out the promises made by the party during the election campaign while adding her nomination as the first woman chief minister of Punjab was also a moment of honour for the women of the country. She said that under the leadership of the party leader and president, she would follow his thought of developing Punjab to serve the people with a new spirit, determination and sincerity.



PTI demands ‘constitutional right’ to form govts

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Wednesday demanded its ‘constitutional right’ to form governments in Centre, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) due to public mandate given to Imran Khan-led party in general elections 2024.

Taking to Twitter, PTI leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said that the country’s future was linked with ‘complete supremacy’ of the Constitution. “The country always engulfed in crisis whenever it derailed from Constitution,” he added. He pointed out Imran Khan-led party emerged single largest party in the elections despite the challenges it faced, which included the “snatching” of iconic symbol bat. “We weren’t allowed to conduct an election campaign,” he regretted.

“Daylight robbery of public mandate is a desecration of votes,” he said, stressing the need for political stability and put Pakistan on the path of development. Barrister Gohar also demanded the election commission issue election results in sync with Form-45. “The seats that are robbed should be returned to PTI,” he said, adding that his party would fulfill the responsibility of safeguarding the public mandate.

CEC needs to step down, says Siraj

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Sirajul Haq has reaffirmed his commitment to the pursuit of civilian supremacy, emphasizing the urgent need for the resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) in response of severe allegations election rigging.

Addressing a press conference held at the residence of JI vice-emir Mian Aslam on Wednesday, he underscored the demand for an impartial judicial commission to thoroughly investigate allegations of election rigging.

Sirajul Haq argued that true independence in the inquiry could only be achieved with the resignation of the CEC and stressed the importance of including political party representation in the proposed commission. He contended that a government established on the grounds of a stolen mandate would not effectively serve the country’s interests.

He expressed concerns about the prospect of perpetuating the dominance of two political dynasties that had held power for decades, attributing issues such as unemployment, inflation, and lawlessness to their prolonged rule.

Mineral sector achieving new development goals

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday said Pakistan’s mineral sector, valued in billions of dollars, was achieving new heights of development under Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

He was talking to a delegation of Miracle Salt Collective Inc which called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar here. During the meeting, the prime minister hoped that salt export from the country would increase after the signing of joint venture between Pakistan Mineral Development

Cooperation (PMDC) and Miracle Salt.

He said it would also further strengthen the trade ties with the US. “This joint venture is a manifestation of the fact that Pakistan has the most suitable destination for foreign investment,” he added. He said Himalayan pink salt was the identity of Pakistan in all over the world and its export in international markets would be a welcome sign.

He said during its short tenure, the caretaker government took several steps to promote foreign direct investment and to facilitate the businesses in the country which yielded positive

results. The delegation of Miracle Salt thanked the government, especially the Special Investment Facilitation Council for its cooperation with the company.

They told the prime minister that after the formation of the company in Pakistan, it would be listed on major stock exchanges around the world, which would benefit the government of Pakistan and local investors. The delegation also apprised the prime minister about the plan of action prepared regarding economic improvement, education and health, and employment provision of the local population in the salt mining areas.



LAHORE: Cricket fans enjoying during Pakistan Super League Twenty20 cricket match between Peshawar Zalmis and Karachi Kings at Qaddafi Cricket Stadium.

‘We took too long to recognise them’, JUI-F claps back at PML-N

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Maulana Fazlur Rehman-led party, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), has clapped back at the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), saying it was not too late in approaching the party for government formation, rather they took too long to see them for who they are.

“Ishaq Dar says we took too long in approaching them, however, we took too long to recognise them for who they are,” JUI-F leader Hafiz Hussain Ahmed said in a statement hours after his party’s Secretary-General Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri met the former finance minister on Monday.

As per the inside story of PML-N leader Dar and Haideri’s meeting, the latter offered its former ally to form a coalition government in Balochistan, according to sources. However, Dar told Haideri that the PML-N was going to form a coalition government with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the province as the power-sharing agreement between the two parties had already been reached in the Centre.

“The PML-N and the JUI-F can at least form a coalition government in Balochistan,” sources quot-

ed Haideri as saying. However, Dar responded: “We wanted to go together, but Maulana you are too late.” The PML-N leader said he had been trying to reach out to the JUI-F but to no avail. “Now we have struck an agreement with the PPP.”

In the statement, JUI-F’s Ahmed said his party had no plans of being part of the government in Balochistan and claimed that he was “surprised” that went ahead and met Dar despite the party’s stance to not be part of any set-up. “PDM (Pakistan Democratic Movement) still exists and has not been dissolved. JUI-F leadership was ignored in national and provincial-level decisions,” he lamented.

JUI-F Emir Fazl has refused to accept the February 8 elections and said his party was made to lose elections in several constituencies via rigging and irregularities. In a surprising move, he also met arch-rival PTI leaders and discussed launching joint protests against alleged rigging in the elections.

Moreover, Fazl also claimed that the no-confidence motion against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan was orchestrated and led by former army chief Qamar

Javed Bajwa in March 2022 — with support from all parties, including PPP and PML-N. In response, the PPP and PML-N criticised the JUI-F chief over his claims and rejected his no-trust and rigging allegations.

JIT to probe ‘drive’ against ECP, govt officials

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The caretaker federal government has formed a joint investigation team (JIT) to conduct an investigation into the ongoing malicious campaign on social media against the government officials, including ECP.

The JIT is headed by the FIA Cyber Crime Wing additional director general and includes Grade-19 officers of the IB and Inter-Services Intelligence, PTA and NADRA. The JIT will be tasked with probing various facets of the nefarious activities, including the dissemination of false information on social media platforms, the printing of fake ballot papers, and propaganda aimed at influencing public sentiment.

Reply sought from govt

RAWALPINDI (PPI): Lahore High Court Rawalpindi bench on Wednesday ordered interior ministry and federal government to submit replies over a petition filed by former interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed seeking removal of his name from exit control list (ECL). The LHC Rawalpindi bench conducted hearing on Rashid’s plea for removal of his name from ECL. Justice Sadaqat Ali Khan heard the case.



PDMA issues weather warning

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Director General Imran Qureshi has issued a warning to all departments concerned in the wake of expected heavy rainfall, storm and more snowfall in Murree, Galyat and surrounding areas in the last week of February.

He called upon the departments to get ready to deal with any weather-related emergency. He directed the traffic police and authorities concerned for providing optimal services with special attention for tourists' facilities during this period of time.

Qureshi urged tourists to consider weather conditions while planning a trip to these areas. In case of any emergency, they may contact PDMA helpline at 1129 while for Murree administration's control room, they may contact the authorities on telephone number 0519269015, 0519269016 and 0519269018.

The WhatsApp contact number for the purpose is 03369804229, the DG added.

Police arrest liquor supplier with 88 bottles

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police in an operation managed to recover 88 bottles of liquor and arrested an accused, said a police spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed that Pirwadhai police conducted a raid and arrested a liquor supplier namely Bilal Abbasi and recovered 88 liquor bottles from his possession. Superintendent of Police, Rawal, Faisal Saleem said that the accused would be challenged with concrete evidence. The spokesman said that police officers were directed to accelerate operation against drug peddlers and bootleggers and they would be sent behind the bars.

Speakers stress making Punjabi language part of curriculum

LAHORE (APP): A seminar was held here on Wednesday in connection with the International Mother Language Day observance, under the auspices of the Unique Group of Institutions (UGIs).

Group Chairman Professor Abdul Manan Khurram chaired the event, while well-known Punjabi poet Bashir Ahmad Najmi and singer Ustad Sajjad Bari were among the guests. Addressing the seminar, speakers said that Punjabi is our identity and it should be made part of the curriculum.

UGI Chairman Prof Abdul Manan told the audience that Punjabi is a serious and ancient language and important steps are needed for its promotion. He said that thinkers around the world agree that what is taught in the mother tongue has an impact. Famous poet Bashir Ahmad Najmi said the Punjabi language is reflective of the rich culture of Punjab.

Nisar Khuhro congratulates Asif Zardari

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan People's Party Sindh president Senator Nisar Khuhro has congratulated Asif Ali Zardari on his nomination for the post of President of Pakistan and said that only PPP can get the country out of the current economic and political crisis. In a statement, Nisar Khuhro said that on becoming Asif Ali Zardari as the President of the Pakistan, the parliament and the new governments will complete their 5-years constitutional term.

Other provisions of provincial autonomy under the 18th constitutional amendment will be implemented during the upcoming government, Khuhro claimed. He said that after the election of Asif Ali Zardari as President of Pakistan, way will be paved for the launch of new National Finance Commission Award and the share of the provinces in resources distribution would also be increased.

‘Punjab govt trying to bring more improvement in Children’s Hospital’

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr. Javed Akram has said that the provincial government is trying its best to bring more improvement in Children's Hospital Lahore.

Addressing the 10th syndicate meeting of the University of Child Health Sciences held under the chairmanship of the caretaker provincial health minister here on Wednesday, he said that fundamental steps are being taken to make the University of Child Health Sciences paperless. He said that under the leadership of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Syed Mohsin Naqvi, the revamping project has been successfully completed in the hospital.

The minister said that Children's Hospital Lahore is the second largest hospital in the world and the first in Asia in terms of treatment of children. At the University of Child Health Sciences, special attention is being paid to qualitative research, he said.

Professor Dr Javed said that the orders of the Lahore High Court regarding the quality and performance assessment report of the Children's Hospital Lahore have been implemented in its letter and spirit. He said that a historic decision has been made to bear all costs of cochlear implants except for hearing aids for patients residing Children's Hospital. During the syndicate meeting, all the decisions of the 11th meeting of the academic council were approved. During the meeting, the ongoing progress on the complex under construction of the University of Child Health Sciences was also reviewed in detail. The officers of Infrastructure Development Authority Punjab also gave a briefing during the syndicate meeting in this regard. During the syndicate meeting, the post of Professor of Genetics in addition to the approval of various statutory positions, the posts of the maintenance department of the University of Child Health Sciences were also approved during the meeting.

Dr. Javed Akram approved all the minutes of the 9th Syndicate meeting. Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Masood Sadiq also presented a report on the implementation of the decisions of the 9th Syndicate meeting.

Later, Dr. Javed Akram was honored for his best efforts for the improvement of Children's Hospital Lahore. During the syndicate meeting, an MoU was also agreed between Professor Riaz and the University of Child Health Sciences for research on hereditary diseases.

In the meeting, Additional Secretary Admin Department of Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Zahida Azhar, Special Secretary Higher Education Department Shahida Farukh, Pro Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Junaid Rasheed, MD Children's Hospital Prof. Dr. Tipu Sultan, Prof. Sajid Maqbool, Prof. Tahir Masood Ahmad, Shahid Imtiaz and other syndicate members participated.

Pak Army Organizes Special Awareness Campaign Against Drugs in Bajaur

F.P. Report

BAJAUR: In a concerted effort to create a healthier environment for the local population, particularly the youth, Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps North jointly organized a special awareness campaign against the sale and use of drugs in Bajaur district. The campaign featured an impactful awareness walk commencing from Agriculture Office Pashat. A multitude of enthusiastic youths actively participated, brandishing banners and placards adorned with slogans denouncing drugs. During the event, local elders and youth delivered impassioned speeches elucidating the detrimental effects of drug abuse on both individual health and societal stability. Emphasizing the importance of collective action, attendees vowed to collaborate closely with law enforcement agencies to eradicate the scourge of drugs from their communities. Expressing gratitude towards the Pak Army, district administration, and senior officials of Frontier Corps North, the youth voiced optimism that such initiatives would expedite the eradication of drugs from the area.



Freedom Network declares ban on ‘X’ unannounced censorship

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Freedom Network called undeclared ban on 'X' social networking platform, which is down in Pakistan since 17 February for unknown reasons, a direct state-led censorship to deny citizens right to express. The X down comes ban on mobile phone and mobile internet on election day 8 February 2024 which was shocking to disallow voters to use the technology in easily moving to polling stations. "No other is

responsible for this undeclared censorship to down X than the federal caretaker government which is proving to be violating fundamental rights of citizens of this country," the award-winning Freedom Network said in a press statement to join chorus for allowing citizens to access the platform.

The media watchdog organization said: "The public access to the social networking platform must be restored without any further delay as the ban goes contrary to the caretaker government's plans to digitalize the country".



LAHORE: Women dancing on Punjabi song during Punjabi Language Day at Shimla Pahari Chowk.

‘Punjab Assembly session to be convened soon to form new govt’

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Governor Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman on Wednesday said that he would summon the Punjab Assembly session upon receiving requisition.

He said the session of the Punjab Assembly should be held in few days to form new government.

Talking to media after inaugurating the two-day Pak Pharma and Healthcare Expo at the Lahore's Expo Centre, he said that the constitutional work was done in the previous governments too and it would be continued.

Governor Baligh-ur-Rehman said the new government must see the initiative of the caretaker government to deregulate the prices of medicines and that regulation should not be so much tight that the pharmaceutical companies start thinking to leaving the industry. And any regulation should also not be so weak that the companies start exploiting the masses, the governor said, adding, patients should not be exploited under any circumstances.

He recalled that during the

tenure of the PML-N government in 2013-18, the prime minister had rejected such summaries of increase in the prices of medicines.

The Governor lauded the efforts of Prime Event Management and the Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PPMA) for organising a successful expo. He was of the view that it's good that raw materials were being produced in Pakistan too, saying there was still room for technology and exports in the pharma sector.

Earlier, the Governor visited various stalls and interacted with the representatives of local and foreign companies. On this occasion, PPMA Chairman Mian Misbah-ur-Rehman told the media that Pakistan was the only country where the government was still fixing prices of medicines and drugs and now the government's permission to the pharmaceutical companies to fix prices except life-saving drugs would follow the World Health Organization (WHO) standards. He said that the prices of more than 450 medi-

cines, which did not fall in the ambit of the essential drugs list of the WHO, were being determined by the government bodies. He said the Indian government regulated prices of only 360 medicines. Talking to media, organizer Kamran Abbasi said that the exhibition was exclusively focused on the Pharmaceutical Equipment Manufacturers, Laboratory Equipment, Research and Testing Laboratories, Raw and Packaging supplier, Pharma Printing, Pharma Chemicals, Lab chemicals and Pharma Instruments, Hospital & Health Equipment Manufacturers, Ultra Sound, X-Ray, MRI Machines Cardiac Monitors, Medicines manufacture, surgical equipment, Hospital Consumables and accessories.

Earlier, the two-day 16th Pak Pharma & Healthcare Exhibition & Conference (PPE) kicked off with the participation of more than 400 stalls and 100 foreign and local exhibitors. The mega event was being organised by Prime Event Management with the support of the Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PPMA).

Another girl re-united with parents through “Mera Pyara App”

LAHORE (APP): Another young girl of Sheikhupura has been re-united with her parents through Punjab Police's initiative "Mera Pyara App", here on Wednesday. In a heart-warming series of events, Lahore's Chief Traffic Officer, Ammara Athar, under the directives of Punjab's Inspector General Dr. Usman Anwar, has orchestrated a program to reunite missing children and elderly individuals with their families. This initiative, led by a dedicated team of volunteers, marks yet

another success for the "Mera Pyara App" project.

Recently, the team, along with the Child Protection Unit, successfully reunited Nida, also known as Nadra, who had been separated from her mother since 8 years. Nida, whose parents got job for her in a house at Gulberg, but she fled away due to torture by her owners. Nida wan-

dered aimlessly, unable to return home due to her orphaned status. The "Mera Pyara App" team's relentless efforts over five months finally bore fruit as they conducted follow-up sessions in Lahore and Sheikhupura, ultimately reuniting Nida with her family. Grateful for the efforts of Punjab's Inspector General and Lahore's Chief Traffic Officer, Nida's family

praised their endeavors.

In light of this achievement, the Inspector General urged the public to download the "Punjab Police Pakistan" app and utilize the "Mera Pyara" section to provide information about missing individuals, especially those with special needs, enabling a collaborative effort between the community and the police to reunite lost loved ones.

PROVINCIAL HEALTH SERVICES ACADEMY

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA PESHAWAR, HEALTH DEPARTMENT

ONLINE ADMISSIONS IS OPEN FOR TWO YEARS PARAMEDICAL DIPLOMA SPRING SESSION 2024-26

Applications are invited on prescribed online admission form for two years Paramedical Diploma courses admission in session Spring 2024-26 (Morning & Evening Self Finance Shifts) available on ZAB PGPI Official website www.zabpgpi.kp.gov.pk and PHSA website www.phsa.edu.pk for the following institutes under PHSA Network.

1. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Post Graduate Paramedical Institute Peshawar

3. Paramedical Institute of Medical Technologies (PIMT) Abbottabad.

2. Paramedical Institute of Medical Technologies (PIMT) Swat.

4. Paramedical Institute of Medical Technologies (PIMT) Di-Khan

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Domicile	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including merged areas.
Upper Age Limit	▶ 30 years on 1st March, 2024 for fresh candidates ▶ Regular In-Service Candidates 45 years on 1st March, 2024.
Qualification for Fresh Candidates	▶ Matric with science at least 50% marks and Biology as compulsory subject.
Qualification for In-Service	▶ Matric with science at least 50% marks and Biology as compulsory subject; and ▶ Medical Faculty Certificate for In-Service in the relevant field is mandatory
Additional Qualification	▶ Hafiz-e-Quran marks (20) will be included in SSC marks on provision of certificate from Wafaq ul Madaras ▶ 10% weightage will be given to F.Sc (Pre-Medical) passed candidates with at least 50% aggregate marks.

S. No.	Name of Institute & Correspondence Email	Catchment areas for 1. Male/Female - 2. Reserved Seats - 3. In-Service
1	ZAB-PGPI Peshawar	Peshawar, Mardan, Charsadda, Nowshera, swabi, Kohat, Karak, Hangu, Khyber District, Mohmand District, Orakzai District, Khurram District.
2	PIMT Swat	Swat, Shangla, Dir Upper, Dir Lower, Chitral Upper, Chitral Lower, Bunir, Bajour & Malakand
3	PIMT Abbottabad	Abbottabad, Haripur, Kohistan Upper, Kohistan Lower, Kolai Palas, Batagram, Mansehra & Torghar
4	PIMT DI-KHAN	Di Khan, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, South Waziristan, North Waziristan.

■ For more details and information please download prospectus from official website of ZAB PGPI Peshawar & PHSA Peshawar.

■ Candidates shall download Bank Challan of Application Processing Fee @ **Rs. 500/-** from official websites mentioned above and deposit in the concerned banks of the relevant institutes before submitting online admission form. If any candidate fails to submit challan in concerned banks and fails to upload during apply, the application will be considered as cancelled.

■ Gmail account is mandatory for online apply.

■ Last date for submission of online admission form is **Thursday 7th March, 2024**, no application will be entertained after the closing date.

■ The list of candidates applied for 02 years paramedical diploma will be displayed on the above mentioned websites on **Friday 8th March, 2024**.

■ The deadline for submission of application / grievance for correction of data, in the uploaded list is: **Monday 11th March, 2024**. The correspondence email is pgpipeshawar@phsa.edu.pk

■ Separate lists of Shortlisted candidates along with interview schedule will be displayed on **Thursday 14th March, 2024** on the above websites.

■ Only shortlisted candidates will appear in the interview at concerned institutes. Physical presence of the candidates mandatory at the time of interview. Any candidate failing to appear in interview on the scheduled date and time for any reason whatsoever, will lost the right for the admission and the interview shall not be rescheduled.

■ No separate call letter / message will be issued / communicated to the shortlisted candidates and they are directed to visit the official websites regularly.

■ The selection process will be finalized on the date of interview. The selected candidate will deposit admission fee within three days of display of the selection list.

■ In-Service candidates should provide NDC from the concerned department at the time of interview.

■ Decision of the admission committee shall be final. Students must submit an affidavit on stamp paper for compliance of rules (format available in prospectus)

■ Applications submitted online will be entertained only.

■ If the interview schedule is changed due to any reason, it will be updated on the official website of ZAB PGPI Peshawar.

DIRECTOR GENERAL PROVINCIAL HEALTH SERVICES ACADEMY, BUDNI ROAD, DURANPUR PESHAWAR

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR
NATIONAL DATABASE & REGISTRATION AUTHORITY
Regional Head Office Peshawar (KP)
EOBI Building, Plot#31, Sector B-1, Phase-V Hayatabad Peshawar

Invitation for Open Auction

Auction of NADRA Used Unserviceable/Scrap Items
No. RHO/Pesh/Proc/Auction/2023-24

- Open Auction of the following 20 x used/unserviceable items on the basis of "as and where it is" will be held at NADRA Store/Plot at Ring Road, Near Achinee Chowk, towards Wadan CNG, Peshawar. The detail of actionable items is as under:-

Sr#	Item Name	Unit	Total Qty	Sr#	Item Name	Unit	Total Qty
1.	AC Out Door	No	29	11.	Pedestal Fan	No	21
2.	AC Indoor	No	31	12.	AC Window	No	2
3.	Acid Batteries	No	23	13.	Steel Almira	No	8
4.	Amplifier	No	10	14.	Safe Locker	No	5
5.	Electric Heater	No	3	15.	Officer Chair	No	55
6.	Gas Heater	No	5	16.	Computer Chair	No	305
7.	Air Cooler	No	27	17.	Table Chair	No	8
8.	Refrigerator	No	1	18.	Wheel + Wooden Scrap	No	60
9.	Electric Water Dispenser	No	8	19.	Visitor Stools/Chairs	No	110
10.	Electric Water Cooler		17	20.	Bracket Fan	No	21

- Registration fee of Tender documents having terms & conditions @ **Rs. 1000** (Non Refundable) along with CDR of **Rs. 50,000** must be submitted to Procurement section on or before **6th February 2024** at 1100 HRS. Open auction activity will be held on **6th February 2024** at **1130 HRS** at NADRA store/plot. Only registered and active tax payers bidders will be allowed to participate.
- Items can be checked/inspected on working days during office hours from **18th January, 2024 to 5th February, 2024**.
- The successful bidder will be responsible to clear all expenses within 72 HRS after order from this RHO.
- The contractor will be responsible to bear all expenses of labor, carriage, weightage of Auctionable items and all applicable taxes.
- The above mentioned quantity may increase or decrease as per physical existence.
- Tender is also available on PPRA Website: - WWW.PPRA.ORG.PK
- Competent Authority reserves the right to accept/reject a ny/all offers as per the clause 33 of PPRA Rules.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (ADMINISTRATION)
NADRA REGIONAL HEAD OFFICE, PESHAWAR
EOBI BUILDING PHASE 5, HAYATABAD PESHAWAR
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PID(I)4990/23

Provision of stipends to House Officers: PHC orders hospitals for providing salary

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice SM Attique Shah ordered private teaching hospitals for provision of stipend to House Officers as per government standards while dispose of all writ pleas in this regard.

The writ pleas filed by Abdul Haseeb and others while their counsel including Tariq Afghan and Hafiz-ul-Asad advocates along with other lawyers argued the petitions before PHC's divisional bench.

The petitioners were adjusted in different private medical colleges in Peshawar on court's orders after closure Muhammad

College of Medicines on 16th May 2022 by Pakistan Medical and Dental Council on allegations of receiving donations as well as provision of admissions on fraudulent grounds, the counsel argued.

Earlier, the private medical colleges demanded annual fees from the petitioners despite PHC directions that Federal Investigation Agency will ensure submission of dues from the account of Muhammad College of Medicines Peshawar, the counsel added. He further stated that the petitioners were deprived from House Jobs by respective teaching hospitals despite PHC's orders for provision of house job on 9th August 2023.

The 11 pages judgment stated that issuance of provisional license and provision of house job at teaching hospital is right of every successful candidate after passing of examination and completion of the program.

The rules are clear that concerned teaching hospital will provide stipend to House Officers as per government standards.

The teaching hospital will also provide certificate to House Officers after completion of house job, the verdict stated. However, the respondents' colleges pleaded that the petitioners were admitted on court's orders and can't liable for provision of house jobs as well as stipends them because they were students of Muhammad College of Medicines Peshawar.

Although, PHC's judgement stated that the petitioners had passed examinations from respondents' colleges and the place liability on the concerned teaching hospitals for provision of house jobs as well as provision of stipends to successful graduates.

The verdict orders provision of stipends not less than government because

House Officers providing full time services to concerned teaching hospitals because the Constitution bars every kind of exploitation. The denial of stipend will be considered as forced laboring while it is government responsibility to end every kind of exploitation.

Moreover, the petitioners writ pleas also supported by Pakistan Medical and Dental Council and Khyber Medical University Peshawar lawyers because Sections 20&21 of Teaching Hospitals Regulation 2023 placed liability on private medical colleges for provision of house job along with stipends to successful graduates, the verdict stated.

PHC's divisional bench Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice SM Attique Shah accepted writ pleas as well as orders provision of stipends as their right from starting date of house job while dispose of all petitions in this regard.

Commissioner chairs meeting

PESHAWAR (APP): The Commissioner Peshawar Division, Muhammad Zubair on Wednesday chaired a meeting to discuss restricting the boundary of a recreational park in Sheikhabad area of Peshawar city.

On special directives of Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Commissioner Peshawar Division, Muhammad Zubair chaired the meeting regarding restricting the boundary of a recreational park in Sheikhabad.

The meeting was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Relief Peshawar, the Director General of Capital Metropolitan Government Peshawar, Director East and West Capital Metropolitan Police, and administrative officers of Capital Metropolitan and Auqaf Board. Officers from the Capital Metropolitan and Auqaf Board presented their stances regarding park ownership and jurisdictional matters.

Consequently, under the leadership of Assistant Commissioner Peshawar City Hashim Rao, a committee was formed to decide on the park boundary in the presence of all stakeholders.

The committee was tasked to submit a report to Commissioner Peshawar Division within a week. Based on the report, decisions will be made regarding park ownership, jurisdiction, and outstanding dues.

BoG stopped from taking decisions

PESHAWAR (APP): KP Health Department has stopped the Board of Governors of all MTI Hospitals from taking major decisions including new appointments.

A letter by Advisor to Chief Minister issued here on Wednesday said the new provincial government will make decisions regarding the policies of MTI hospitals until that the BOGs were not authorized to take any kind of decisions.

38 shopkeepers arrested

PESHAWAR (APP): The District administration Peshawar during a crackdown against profiteers arrested 38 shopkeepers for selling under-weight roti and poor cleanliness conditions on Wednesday.

The officers of the district administration have launched a crackdown against profiteers and unhygienic conditions in shops.

During operation in various bazaars at Kohat Road, Ring Road, Gulabhar, City Circular Road, Nishtar Abad and localities of the interior city, the officers of the district administration inspected 118 shops and arrested 38 shopkeepers for lack of official price-lists and selling of under-weight roti while 21 others were warned to bring improvement in the cleaning conditions.

The arrested shopkeepers included fruits & vegetable sellers, bakers, milkmen, grocers and others.

DC Peshawar Afaq Wazir has directed the officers of district administration for random visits to various bazaars of the district to implement the officially issued price list in letter and spirit and stern action against the violators.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister KP Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah meeting with son of martyred police Inspector Wakeel Khan.

PTI's Aslam moves PHC for transit bail

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf candidate for the Chief Minister Punjab Mian Aslam Iqbal on Wednesday moved Peshawar High Court (PHC) for transit bail.

Mian Aslam is Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf candidate for the Chief Minister Punjab slot, announced by Gohar Ali Khan after the approval of PTI founder Imran Khan.

Earlier, PTI leaders including the party candidate for Chief Minister Punjab Mian Aslam Iqbal declared absconders in May 9 case.

As per details, the anti-terrorism court in Lahore heard the case related to putting containers on fire at Kalma Chowk on May 9 and declared 11 PTI candidates absconders.

The PTI candidates include Mian Aslam Iqbal, Azam Swati, Zubair Niazi, Murad Saeed, Hamad Azhar, Imtiaz Sheikh, Wasiq Qayyum Abbasi, Mussarat

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Iqbal Cheema, Jamshed Cheema, Hamid Raza Gilani and Siyad Khan.

May 9 violence
Violent clashes were broken out across Pakistan after former prime minister Imran Khan was arrested on May 9, 2023.

The protests were held in remote and major cities as the party workers were agitated due to their chairman's arrest, with Balochistan, Punjab, KP, and Islamabad summoning the armed forces to ensure law and order.

Army installations, including the Corps Commander's house in Lahore, had come under attack during the protests by PTI workers.

Formation of federal govt:

Consenses between PMLN, PPP welcomed

PESHAWAR (APP): The politicians, civil society and people of all walk of life here Wednesday welcomed the consenses reached between Pakistan Muslim League (N) and Pakistan People Party over formation of the new government and termed it a positive development for Pakistan.

Member Provincial Assembly elect from Shangla, Rushad Khan told APP on Wednesday that reaching of consenses between the two main political parties was a good omen for democracy in Pakistan.

He said PM nominated Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has proved his abilities to smoothly run a coalition government in the centre and would again take along all coalition partners along to take the country's

out of all existing challenges.

Professor Dr AZ Hilali, former Chairman, Political Science Department, University of Peshawar has also welcomed the development and said that political tolerance and a broad based consenses was basic principles to successfully run the coalition government.

He said the country needs political reconciliation and stability after election 2024 to address the problems of shabby economy, price hike and climate change.

Former Ambassador Manzoor Haq while welcoming the political consenses between the two mainstream political parties said that it has passed a strong message to abroad that we are all unite for Pakistan.

He said that illiteracy, unemployment, shabby economy and price hike were major challenges before the government that needed to be tackled.

Ambassador Manzoor said unnecessary delay in formation of Government was not in the country's interest.

Former Chairman International Relations Department, University of Peshawar Professor Dr Ejaz Khan, Professor Dr Muhammad Naeem Khan of Swabi University, Ex Minister Wajid Ali Khan and others members of the civil society welcomed the consenses and termed it significant development for people of Pakistan.

They said peaceful transition of power to strengthen democratic institutions in Pakistan.

Meeting discuss steps for success in merged districts

PESHAWAR (APP): Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), USAID on Wednesday holds a meeting with stakeholders to achieve the objectives of "Food Security and Livelihood Program" in merged tribal districts of Khyber, Mohmand and Bajaur.

The meeting was attended by Additional Secretary Agriculture Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Tahir, Manager Cargo Peshawar Airport, Kaleemullah, stakeholders, exporters and representative of FAO. The

meeting also discussed steps to increase production of vegetables including chilies, peas and bitter gourd, and to improve refrigeration for the vegetables in cold storage terminal of Peshawar airport.

During meeting, Additional Secretary Agriculture

and airport authorities assured to resolve problems of stakeholders associated with vegetable business. Airport authorities also assured that scanning and loading of perishable items would be done on priority

basis and they would be placed in shady areas to minimize temperature at the time of loading. Exporters also suggested proposals including improvement of scanning machines to retain freshness of vegetables destined for export.

Representative of FAO, Farrukh told that basic infrastructure of cold chain process would be improved to increase export, improve financial position of local farmers aiming better livelihood of people in merged areas.

Education Dept issues notices to 13 teachers over poor performances

PESHAWAR (APP): The Department of Education of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has issued show cause notices to thirteen teachers of different cadres who showed zero performance in the matriculation examinations.

It has been directed to send an explanation within seven days and action against the teachers who

showed poor performance in the matriculation exams is ongoing on behalf of the education department, an official of the education department said here Wednesday. He disclosed that more than 150 teachers, principals, vice principals were issued formal show cause notices and were asked to explain.

The education department issued show cause notices to thirteen teachers of different cadres including Salahuddin, Muhammad Sajid, Muhammad Zakaria, Tariq Shah, Shahid Shahzad, Khalidur Rehman, Naveedur Rehman and Fawad Saeed Government High School, Badaber village, Abdul Wahab of

GHS Nothia Jadeed Peshawar, GHSS Garhi Sherdad Peshawar Muhammad Fahim, Ghulam Sarwar Khan GHS Jatai Bala Peshawar.

Show-cause notices have been issued to Muhammad Iqbal GHSPAF Shaheen Camp and Sufyan Ali Khan GHSPAF Shaheen Camp Peshawar for poor performance, the official said.

PESCO notifies power suspension

PESHAWAR (APP): PESCO authorities have notified power suspension in areas of Peshawar, Kohistan, Mingora and Karak due to necessary work.

According to PESCO, power supply will remain suspended from 500 KV Sheikh Muhammadi-Tarbela Grid Station on 22 and 23 February from 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM, resultantly load management will be carried out on 132 KV Peshawar University Grid Station supplying electricity to Peshawar Cantt, Peshawar Industrial, Kohat, KDA, Shahibagh, Hangu, Warsak, Rajar, Peshawar City, Sakhi Chashma, Shabqadar, Rehman Baba, Rajar, Mattani, Jamrud, Hayatabad and RMT.

Power Supply will remain suspended from Warsak Power House on 22,23 and 24 February from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM, resultantly consumers of Warsak, Peshawar Cantt, Regi Model Town, Shahi Bagh and Sakhi Chashma grid connected feeders will face inconvenience.

Similarly, power supply will remain suspended from Besham-Thakot-Pattan Transmission Line on 22 February from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, resultantly consumers of 33 KV Pattan and Thakot grid connected feeders will face inconvenience.

Power supply will remain suspended from Mingora Grid Station on 22 and 24 February from 9 AM to 3 PM, resultantly

consumer of Malam Jaba, Express Saidu Hospital, Bandai, Mingora 1,2,3,4, 5,Kabal, Nawa Kali, Saidu Sharif, Barikot 2, Odigram, Kabal 4,Matta 2, Faiza Ghat, Kabal 2, Gulda, Marghuzar, Saidu Hospital, Kabal 3, Gogdara, Takhta Band, Qambar, Singar, MES, Haji Baba,Shin, Saidu Baba, Bara Bandai, Shah Dara, Hospital Express feeders will face inconvenience.

Power supply will remain suspended from Karak Grid Station on 22, 23 and 24 February from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM, resultantly consumers of Mir Sahir Khan, Bahadar Khel, Takht Nusrati, Bogra and Warana feeders will face inconvenience.

7th Agricultural Census costing Rs650m to be launched countrywide

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) as per United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO) guidelines has decided to conduct 7th Agricultural Census throughout the country including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and its newly merged districts to integrate the agricultural, livestock and agro machinery on scientific lines by using digital technology. A budget of Rs. 650 million is allocated for 7th Agricultural Census despite meager financial resources of the country.

It was revealed in a special meeting of PBS at Benevolent Fund Building Peshawar that was chaired by senior member PBS Muhammad Sarwar Gondal (Sitara-e-Imtiaz) while high ups and senior field officers from PBS, KP Bureau of

Statistics, KP Agriculture and Information departments attended in large number.

The meeting was told that large scale Agri holdings (NCH) and Process re-engineering strategy has been evolved to make this vital national move a success story like the COVID Census that was successfully conducted on crash grounds in 2019. The data and information thus collected will be utilized for evidence-based policy making. Hence efficient and effective management of human and financial resources are crucial for this 7th Digital Agricultural Census, the meeting was further told.

It was informed that PBS has established 157 Agricultural Census Support Centers for seamless execution and management of field operations



wherein the provincial stakeholders viz Board of Revenue, Agriculture Extension, Livestock, KP Bureau of Statistics, Crop Reporting Services will support in Field Operation, Supervision and Monitoring. It was also decided to fully exploit the print, electronic and social media for outreach of this national exercise to all the concerned circles of society.

M. Sarwar Gondal, Member (SS/RRM), PBS, informed that the 7th Agricultural Census will

provide benchmark data for policy planning to fulfill the food and fiber needs of more than 241 million population of the country. For broader involvement and wider acceptability, PBS has initiated engagements with its partner organizations and provincial stakeholders whose participation will help in diversified perspectives, identifying needs, and addressing the shortcomings and potential issues in provision of reliable data in agriculture sector.

Meeting of all Provincial

Focal Persons was held on 20th December 2023 at PBS HQ Islamabad. Afterwards, series of Provincial meetings started, first provincial meeting was held at Provincial Census Coordination Center (P3C), PBS, Karachi, Sindh. The second provincial meeting was held on 15th February, 2024 at P3C, PBS, Provincial Office, Punjab, Lahore while third provincial meeting of this sequel being held at Peshawar. Pakistan is an agricultural country and agriculture has

23% shares in our national GDP out of which share of only livestock is 64%. Agriculture is providing employment to 37% of our labor force, therefore, Agricultural Census 2024 will be an important source for evidence-based policy making. He emphasized on the maximum participation and cooperation of provincial stakeholders, for successful completion of the field operation in the 7th Agricultural Census.

He further apprised in detail regarding the

methodology, field operation plan, Media Strategy, and efficient use of the available budget requirements. He informed that PBS is using newly developed sampling design which is also vetted by FAO wherein 11054 Mouzas/Blocks are selected all over the country, out of which 2190 mouzas/blocks pertains to KP. He informed that it will be the First Integrated Digital exercise in the field of agriculture for data collection in Pakistan through optimum utilization of available resources.

The Digital aspects like Tablet based data collection, use of digitized maps of Mouzas/Blocks, SMS Gateway, Call Centers, were elaborated clearly. It was informed that for smooth and efficient field operations, various working groups for Complaint Management and provision

of information have been constituted.

The divisional and district census coordinators have already been deployed by PBS at each Agricultural CSC for technical guidance, facilitation, and operational management. Similarly, 157 Training Venues having facilities of multimedia, internet, sound system, laptops, printers have been shortlisted. Training will be imparted using ICT materials with interactive videos/audios by the expert trainers to ensure standardization of the census concepts. PBS has also planned for process re-engineering to enumerate the big holdings throughout the country.

The provincial stakeholders appreciated the efforts of PBS and ensured the cooperation for successful conduct of this great task of National importance.



In brief

ANP mandate rigged: Samad Syed Waliullah Shah

NOWSHERA: The mandate of Awami National Party (ANP) has been rigged and manipulated to imposed puppet on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for third consecutive terms who had put the province towards bankrupt, on Wednesday. This was claimed ANP district general secretary Abdus Samad Paracha in a press statement issued for media personnel. He added that ANP mandate has been looted to eliminate voices for Pakhtun rights at the parliament. The ousting of Pakhtun nationalists from legislative floors to deprive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from its constitutional rights by imposing puppets propagating fascist attitude in the democratic institutions. He claimed that ANP will oppose the rigging manipulation in general elections 2024 at every forum.

Restoration of electricity sought

SHANGLA: The residents of Shangla deprived from electricity from last 72 hours due to ignorance and negligence of competent authority despite prediction regarding further downpour and snowfall in hilly areas. According to details, the route connecting upper regions with the headquarter is still closed due to arrogance of administration and municipal officers serving at Shangla district. The heavy snowfall at Shangla top, Yakh Tangi and Kandaw top along with others highest peaks had cause to downfall of temperature below freezing point. The residents demanded restoration of electricity in the premises which closed since Sunday. The residents argued competent authorities to ensure delivery of public services within stipulated timeframe otherwise they will be compel to arrange protest against incompetence of public servants.

Students of Holy Quran honoured

D I KHAN: The Zamung Kor center in Dera has organized a special ceremony in honour of students of the Holy Quran. Director Zamung Kor project, Najam Sehr graced the ceremony as a chief guest which was also attended by Assistant Director of Zamung Kor project Rafiullah Khan, other staffers and students of the center. As many as 25 students have completed their Nazra Quran while 35 students of Hifz section have passed their examination for memorizing one third of the Holy Quran. Najam Sehr distributed the awards among the students who completed the Nazra Quran and termed these students as 'future of the nation'.

MoU signed

LOWER DIR: A momentous Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the University of Malakand and the Government Sadiq College Women University Bahawalpur, Pakistan here on Wednesday. The primary objective of this MoU is to foster collaborative efforts aimed at establishing and enhancing academic exchanges and cooperation in teaching, training, research, as well as collaboration in R&D activities, all rooted in principles of equality and reciprocity. This partnership seeks to promote relations and mutual understanding between both the parties. The MoU was signed by Professor Dr. Rashid Ahmad, Vice Chancellor, University of Malakand, and Professor Dr. Ashfaq Mahmood Qureshi, Vice Chancellor, Government Sadiq College Women University Bahawalpur.

Two minor brothers drowned to death in pond

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Two minor brothers drowned in a pond of accumulated water at Peepal area of Katlang, Mardan district, on Wednesday. This was claimed ANP district general secretary Abdus Samad Paracha in a press statement issued for media personnel. He added that ANP mandate has been looted to eliminate voices for Pakhtun rights at the parliament. The ousting of Pakhtun nationalists from legislative floors to deprive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from its constitutional rights by imposing puppets propagating fascist attitude in the democratic institutions. He claimed that ANP will oppose the rigging manipulation in general elections 2024 at every forum.

Students a national asset: Students are the valuable capital of our country who can play a key role in the war against drugs.

An awareness seminar was held at Government Higher Secondary School Hatyan regarding the harms, remedies and rules of drugs in which DSP Sadar Circle Gul Wali Khan, SHO Lund Khwar Police Station Khaista Khan, teachers and students participated in large numbers. On this occasion, DSP Sasdar Circle Gul Wali Khan while giving a lecture regarding the harms of drugs, remedies and its negative effects on the society said that during the ongoing campaign against drugs, especially ice by the police, awareness through seminars campaign continues in educational institutions the aim of which is to

raise awareness among the young generation and students against drugs and to inform them about the harms of drugs.

Young generation especially students are the future of our country who should play a positive role in the development and prosperity of the country. Our young generation will take the path of development by saving the society from the scourge of drugs. The teachers and students of Government Higher Secondary School Hatyan appreciated all the efforts of DPO Mardan Najib Ur Rehman against drugs and vowed to cooperate with the police in every way.

AAC inspects primary school: Additional Assistant Commissioner Takhtbhai conducted a surprise visit to Government Primary School Ahmad Gul Banda Lund Khwar. All the teaching and non-teaching staff including Principal was present. Students were present according to daily attendance register. Basic facilities like clean water was available.

Washrooms were refurbished. The principal of the school (being conscious & aware of issue of climate change) had planted trees in the school which had added beauty to the school. Moreover, AAC visited all classes, interacted with students and delivered speech regarding importance of

education in the society.

PTI backed independent candidates join Sunni Ittehad Council: Members of the Provincial and National Assembly supported by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have continued to join the Sunni Ittehad Council as per the party instructions.

PTI's Information Secretary Peshawar Region Engineer Adil Nawaz told the media that according to the rules of the Election Commission, independent candidates will join any party within three days after the notification of successful independent candidates is issued, otherwise they will be considered independent. Keeping this situation in mind, the party's wider interest and the request to get specific seats on the instructions of the party leadership. PTI-backed independents MPA from Mardan and Provincial Deputy General Secretary Iftikhar Ali Mashwani,

Meanwhile, Vice President of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zahir Shah Toru, Zarshad Khan, Ehtisham Advocate, Abdul Salam Afridi, Tufail Anjum, Ameer Farzand, Pir Maswir Shakeel Khan, Liaqat Khan, including all the nine elected members of the Provincial and National Assembly submitted their affidavits in the regular Sunni Ittehad Council Joined.



KOHAT: Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court, Muhammad Ibrahim Khan offering dua after inaugurating newly constructed courts.

Admn commits for provision of recreation at public parks

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad has said that district administration is taking all possible measures for providing recreational facilities to people particularly children and women and Municipal Committee Hafizabad is providing swings, beautiful models, benches and other recreational facilities in children and family parks.

DC said that trees were also being planted in the parks to make healthy and pollution free atmosphere so that people could spend their leisure time in pleasant and calm environment. A D C R / Administrator Municipal Committee Imtiaz Ali Baig and Chief Officer Ansar Sahi visited children and family parks to review pace of renovation work, cleanliness and provision of other necessary facilities in the parks. Imtiaz Ali Baig said that jogging tracks would also be built in the parks.

Meanwhile, Administrator MC Imtiaz Ali Baig has paid salaries to daily wages sanitary workers. Sanitary workers were deprived of salaries for last two months and they suffering from financial problems.

Chairman CBA Union Ishaq Khokhar thanked the Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad for releasing salaries of daily wages staff of the MC. He said that sanitary staff would perform their duties with satisfaction and cleanliness condition of the city would be improved.

Teachers union appreciates DC efforts: Local leaders of Teachers Unions including Ch. Fiaz Ahmad Warriach, Riaz Ahmad Tarar, Khalid Pervez, Asghar Hanjra, Malik Ali Shabar, Jaffar Bajwa and Ameer Hamza have thanked the Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad, Chief Executive Officer Education Sohail Azhar Khan and District Accounts Officers for releasing salaries of class four employees recruited 13 months ago. They congratulated class four employees of education departments for getting their salaries.

Pak Army organizes drive against drugs

F.P. Report

KHAR: In a concerted effort to create a healthier environment for the local population, particularly the youth, Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps North jointly organized a special awareness campaign against the sale and use of drugs in Bajaur district, on Wednesday.

The campaign featured an impactful awareness walk commencing from Agriculture Office Pashat. A multitude of enthusiastic youths actively participated, brandishing banners and placards adorned with slogans denouncing drugs.

During the event, local elders and youth delivered impassioned speeches elucidating the detrimental effects of drug abuse on both individual health and societal stability. Emphasizing the importance of collective action, attendees vowed to collaborate closely with law enforcement agencies to eradicate the scourge of drugs from their communities.

APTA flays attack on Dara teachers president

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: All Primary Teachers Association (APTA) has condemned the attack on the Tehsil Dara Adam Khel Khel teachers president Muhammad Khalil. They demanded that the government and the police department ensure the safety of teachers and take strict action against the culprits.

Otherwise, they may opt protests. An emergency meeting was held by the All Primary Teachers Association in the district, attended by district president APTA Tariq Mahmood and other teachers. In the meeting, a resolution was presented stating that the police should provide protection to teachers and ensure that culprits get punishment so that no one dares to attack or disrespect teachers in future.

Last day, when district president Muhammad Khalil Afridi was about to perform his duty, he encountered the armed accused Taj Ali, son of Syeda Khan, who had been waiting in ambush. He attacked Muhammad Khalil Afridi, but fortunately, he escaped without any serious injuries.

It was emphasized in the meeting that such attacks on teachers during working hours are intolerable, yet no special action has been taken by the police. They

stated that they give a three-day ultimatum to take strict action against the culprit and provide protection to the teachers.

Food officials inspect food items in different markets: Under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Khushal program and directives of the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority team inspected food items in various markets of Kohat through a modern mobile testing laboratory and proved the adulteration of water in milk seller was fined.

On this occasion, a grocery store was fined for recovering a large quantity of expired items and issued necessary instructions to other shopkeepers to ensure the implementation of the law.

Meanwhile, under Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Khushal Program and on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Kohat Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, Assistant Commissioner Lachi Irfanullah Wednesday visited the health facility centers in Tehsil Lachi regarding the provision of facilities to the general public.

Assistant Commissioner Lachi reviewed the staff attendance, stock of medicines and other facilities

provided to the public at Civil Dispensary Lachi Payan and SHC Sodal. On this occasion, instructions were issued to the staff to ensure attendance and provide the best medical facilities to the patients.

Police carries out search operation in Jangle Khel areas, Afghan camp: Police search and strike operation in Kohat Jangle Khel and adjacent Afghan camps was carried out with a number of suspects, including facilitators of criminals, were arrested during an intelligence-based targeted search operation.

According to the details, an official of the Kohat Police regarding the operation said that during the targeted search operation, 2 pistols, and 110 grams of ice were recovered from the arrested persons.

He said, all the persons detained during the search operation were transferred to Jangle Khel Police Station for investigation. Cases were registered against the arrested persons including arms and drugs in the search and strike operation, he added. He said the search operation was conducted under the leadership of DSP Headquarters Imaduddin. A heavy contingent of Police participated in the search operation led by SHO Jangalkhel Wajid Ali.

Israel committing genocide of Palestinians: Samina

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri has expressed anger, sorrow and her deep concern over the ongoing brutality on Palestine by Israel. She said in her statement that Pakistan has serious reservations about the Israeli aggression on Palestine in the Middle East. Hundreds of Palestinians are being martyred on a daily basis, which is a slap on the face of humanity.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said in her statement that the Israeli attacks

Schools, hospitals and even ambulances are being targeted, which is also against the rules humanity and international war. More than 30,000 Palestinian Muslims have been martyred in Israeli brutality, including a large number of innocent children. She said that we are concerned about the ongoing Israeli brutality in the Middle East and the fragile and fragile situation

of Palestine. Pakistan has always advocated a two-state solution for lasting peace in the Middle East.

It has called on the United Nations and other organizations to establish a viable, independent and contiguous state based on the pre-1967 borders. Palestine should be established with Jerusalem as its capital. She called on the international community to unite for the survival of the lives of Palestinian citizens and the protection of Palestine and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri also said that in the Middle East World peace has been threatened by increasing violence and this situation can turn into a major tragedy at any time. She said that there is an urgent need to solve the Palestine problem, for which the United Nations must play its full role. She said that sustainable peace in the Middle East lies only in the two-state solution.

Palestine is an independent state founded on the pre-1967 borders, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri also called on the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) to raise its voice for Palestine and the helpless Palestinian citizens in the recent war clashes between Israel and Palestine and to be truly effective for the long-standing Palestinian issue.

She said that an independent state is the fundamental right of the Palestinians and to achieve this right, Muslim countries should raise their voice for the establishment of an independent state of Palestine. There has been a terrible increase in recent days, but every eye is crying tears of blood at the indifference of the international community. They must play their full role in providing security and finding lasting solutions to the problem.



QUETTA: A resident of Karachi Werisha along with her mother addressing a press conference.

World Mother Language Day observed with zeal

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: In connection with International Mother Language Day, a gathering was organized at Bacha Khan Chowk, Landi Kotal Bazaar on Wednesday aimed to approve mother language as a medium of education in schools.

Under the banner of the local youth community, a number of political elites, members of civil society participated in the moot. Addressing on the occasion speakers including Aftab Shinwari, Nisar Shinwari,

local leader of Pakistan People Party Shah Rehman Shinwari and others highlighted the importance of mother language and said the government had ignored the importance of the mother tongue that had created a sense of deprivation among the speakers of various local languages.

Mother language is the identity of a community and reflects the culture and traditions of its speakers, they added and said mother language should be inducted as a compulsory subject in curriculum for private

and state-run schools.

The speakers said that the adoption of the mother languages as medium of instruction in schools would develop the local languages and would also help increase literacy rate in the country.

The purpose of celebration of the language day was to develop better understanding among different ethnic groups in the country, they remarked. They also urged the local traders and shopkeepers to write their sign boards in their mother language, Pashto.



SHANGLA: A view of main highway after heavy snowfall. — F.P. photo

Youth killed, woman injured over old enmity

F.P. Report

LARKANA: A 30-year-old Khalil Ahmed Weesar was killed as a result of indiscriminate firing by the armed men of the Jalbani parties on the old enmity between two parties, Jalbani and Weesar, in the silk market of Ratodero tehsil of Larkana district.

A 35-year-old woman, Musrat Dayo, was seriously injured during the firing. A situation like commotion arose in the busiest Shahi Bazar of Ratodero city. Later, he was handed over to the heirs, while the woman was seriously injured in the firing. Musrat Dayo was admitted to the Ratodero taluka hospital for medical assistance, a scene of doomsday unfolded when the dead body of the young man reached the house.

Talking to the media, the father of the deceased, Haji Ahmed Ali Veesar said that for a long time, Jalbani and

Vassar. The old enmity between the community continues, but the members of the Brohi tribe have innocently killed my young son Khalil Ahmed, while the case of the incident has not been registered by Ratodero police till the latest last information.

Meanwhile, the All Pakistan Jamali Ittihad protested in front of the press club for the recovery of Jamali youth who had been missing for three months in Larkana. Addressing the protesters on the occasion, Roshan Jamali, Chairman of All Pakistan Jamali Ittehad, Akhtar Ali Jamali and others protested and said that Fakir Khair Mohammad Jamali, a resident of Gajanpur Chowk, a suburb of Larkana city, was employed by a person Riaz Qureshi three months ago.

I had taken him to Karachi to give him and he was allegedly kidnapped by

certain dacoits, after that calls for a ransom of 25 lakh rupees to recover the hostage kept coming, threatening to kill him if the ransom was not paid. While the abducted youth belongs to a poor and destitute family, he demanded the Sindh caretaker chief minister and Inspector General of Police to take steps to recover the abducted youth and ensure the delivery of justice.

PPF hold seminar: Pakistan Race Foundation organized a seminar in a local hotel to protect the legitimate rights of journalists and political and social workers of other schools of thought participated, on this occasion, the coordinator Lala Hassan Pathan, the journalists working in the field, informed the journalists participating in the seminar about the physical, judicial and policy trends and the Sindh Protection established by the provincial government.



Lack of rain leaves Italy gasping

MILAN (AFP): A blanket of smog covers Milan, empty reservoirs bake in Sicily and wine production is down in Piedmont as a lack of rain across Italy exacerbates pollution and sparks droughts. Gas-guzzling cars were banned from roads in Milan and eight other cities across Lombardy after the northern Italian industrial region registered high levels of particle pollution that is dangerous for health.

"The levels of smog have become intolerable," 60-year-old resident Sergio, who has lived around Milan for the past 36 years, told AFPTV. The high levels are due to three factors, according to Italian environmental group Legambiente: road transport emissions, the heating of homes and the agriculture sector. The region, home to many intensive livestock farms, banned the customary spraying of animal waste onto fields, a practice known to cause air pollution. Legambiente expert Andrea Minutolo told AFP it was no coincidence the air pollution levels had risen in February, as a month-long ban in the region on spraying waste had been lifted at the end of January. "The sky is grey even if it's a cloudless day. The quality of air in Milan has never been very good, now it's disgusting," said Paolo Ciacco, 22, who said he was considering wearing a mask. Northern Italy has ranked among the most polluted areas in Europe for many years. Part of Lombardy's problem is geographic -- it sits in a basin between mountains, which means it is poorly ventilated. But clean air campaigners say this handicap is too often used as an excuse by authorities for high levels of air pollution. High particulate levels were also registered in the capital, Rome. Regions across Italy are suffering drought or severe lack of rainfall. Snow levels were down in both the Alps and Apennines. The Italian snow water equivalent -- the equivalent amount of water stored in the snow pack -- is down 64 percent this month compared to a year earlier, according to the CIMA Research Foundation.

The lack of rainfall is aggravating an already difficult situation, following heatwaves last year which lowered reservoir levels and drove up water consumption. Sicily declared a natural disaster over drought earlier this month, while on the island of Sardinia, farmers are limited in how much water they can use. Reservoir levels there are down 23 percent compared to the average over the last 14 years. The southern regions of Puglia and Basilicata are also suffering, with farmers' association Coldiretti warning this weekend that warm temperatures have woken thousands of bees early from their winter slumber. This threatens the pollination of some crops because the bees are out of

sync with the flowering period of plants from which they gather pollen. Meanwhile Piedmont in the northwest asked the agricultural ministry to declare a natural disaster for drought in the region, saying it has affected vineyards and caused "significant" drops in wine production. Experts say climate change driven by human activity is boosting the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, droughts and wildfires. Planet-heating emissions, mainly from the burning of fossil fuels, have risen in recent years. Scientists say they need to fall by almost half this decade. Italy's northern Lombardy region imposed severe antimog measures across Milan and eight surrounding provinces to combat a particularly bad period of air pollution. The measures bar heavy motor vehicles from operating during the day and impose limits on heating and industrial agricultural activities in the nine provinces. A lack of rain and wind has exacerbated air pollution levels in Italy, particularly in the mostly land-locked and industrial northern Po River Valley. Parts of the Italian peninsula are frequently hit by periods of bad air quality in winter, thanks to a combination of low rainfall, industrial and vehicle emissions and mountain ranges that trap the smog. Overall, Italy leads Europe for deaths attributed to atmospheric pollution with around 80,000 deaths a year, according to the Italian Society for Environmental Medicine. In announcing the restrictions, the regional government cited levels of particulate matter above accepted levels and weather forecasts indicating the smog won't lift anytime soon.

Italian environmental group Citizens for Air said the situation is severe and requires strict measures to limit vehicular, heating and farming pollution. "Current pollution thresholds are fully unsatisfactory to protect our health, this is what the World Health Organization says," said said Anna Gerometta, head of Italy Citizens for Air campaign. The Italian government recently approved a decree to allow several northern Italian regions, among the most polluted in the country, to postpone a ban on diesel cars on the grounds that consumers and businesses couldn't transition so quickly to low-emission or zero-emission cars. In imposing the antimog measures, Lombardy officials nevertheless insisted the situation overall was improving on the basis of annual data. Lombardy's assessor for environment and climate, Giorgio Maione, said particulate matter levels had fallen over 20 years and that investments in sustainable energy renovations over the past five years have amounted to 19 billion euros.

Trump breaks silence on Navalny

WASHINGTON (Reuters) -Donald Trump, who drew criticism as US president for his praise of Russian leader Vladimir Putin, made his first public comment on the death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny in a social media post that cast no blame but alluded to his own legal woes.

"The sudden death of Alexei Navalny has made me more and more aware of what is happening in our Country," the frontrunner for the Republican presidential nomination wrote on his Truth Social platform, appearing to link the death to his own political troubles. "It is a slow, steady progression, with CROOKED, Radical Left Politicians, Prosecutors, and Judges leading us down a path to destruction. Open Borders, Rigged Elections, and Grossly Unfair Courtroom Decisions are DESTROYING AMERICA. WE ARE A NATION IN DECLINE, A FAILING NATION! MAGA2024"

It was not clear what similarities Trump was trying to draw with Russia's most prominent opposition leader. Navalny, 47, fought for years against what he called vast corruption in Putin's Russia, ruled by "crooks and thieves." The Trump campaign did not

immediately respond to a request for clarification. Trump has railed against a judge's order that he pay \$355 million in penalties for overstating his net worth to dupe lenders, a decision he called politically motivated. Trump also is preparing for four upcoming criminal trials as he pursues the Republican nomination.

President Joe Biden directly blamed Putin for Navalny's death in a penal colony north of the Arctic Circle, as did Trump's main Republican rival, Nikki Haley. "Putin is responsible for Navalny's death," Biden said. The Kremlin has denied involvement in his death and said that Western claims that Putin was responsible were unacceptable. Since Navalny's death was reported, former US presidents and top members of Congress from both parties also denounced Putin. But Trump, the Republican candidate leading the race to challenge Biden in the November election, remained silent.

During his 2017-2021 White House tenure, Trump expressed admiration for Putin. In 2018, he refused to blame the Russian leader for meddling in the 2016 US election, casting doubt on the findings of his own intelligence agencies and

sparking criticism at home. Last week, he suggested the United States might not protect NATO allies who do not spend enough on defense from a potential Russian invasion. Haley, the former South Carolina governor who will face Trump as an underdog in her home state's presidential primary, called Trump's response unapologetic.

"Donald Trump could have condemned Vladimir Putin for being a murderous thug. Trump could have praised Navalny's courage," she wrote on X. Instead, she said, he denounced America and compared it to Russia. Campaigning in Sumter, South Carolina, Haley criticized Trump again over his NATO comments, saying, "He sided with a dictator who kills his political opponents." Republican former US Representative Liz Cheney, a vice chair of the congressional panel that investigated the Jan. 6, 2021, storming of the Capitol by Trump supporters, recalled Trump's frequent promise to seek "retribution" against political opponents if he regains power. "What Vladimir Putin did to Navalny is what retribution looks like in a country where the leader is not subject to the rule of law," Cheney said.

Guinea's military junta dissolves government

GUINEA (BBC): Guinea's military junta, which seized power in a coup in September 2021, has dissolved the government. The announcement was made through a presidential decree read on state TV by the presidency's Secretary General, Brig Gen Amara Camara.

Mr Camara did not disclose the reason for the dissolution or say when a new government will be put in place. Ministers in the dissolved government were ordered to surrender their passports and official vehicles. Their bank accounts have additionally been frozen. The junta also instructed security agencies to "seal" all the country's borders until government ministries have been fully handed over to the junta. Lower-level officials will temporarily manage state ministries until a new government is appointed. Mr Camara said. The dissolved government was led by Bernard Goumou, who had been appointed prime minister by coup leader Mamady Doumbouya. In September 2021, Col Doumbouya led Guinea's armed forces to overthrow elected President Alpha Condé, after a series of protests over Mr Conde's controversial bid for a third term. Guinea and several other countries in West and central Africa have been hit by coups in recent years. Others include Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Gabon. The coups have been strongly condemned by the West African regional bloc Ecowas, as well as the African Union and the UN. Guinea is expected to hold elections to restore democratic rule in 10 months, when the 24-month transition period set by the junta and Ecowas expires.

Estonia detains 10 people

HELSINKI (AP): Estonia's domestic security agency said that it had apprehended 10 people suspected of sabotage and of spreading fear and creating tension within the Baltic country in a coordinated "hybrid operation" by Russia's special services.

Among the suspects - detained between December and February - are individuals believed to have broken the car windows of Interior Minister Lauri Läänemets and a local journalist in December, the Estonian Internal Security Service said. "The information currently collected in criminal proceedings indicate that the Russian special service had coordinated a hybrid operation against the security of the Republic of Estonia, involving the suspects that have been detained," it said. "To the knowledge of the Estonian Internal Security Service, its aim was to spread fear and create tension in Estonian society."

Estonia's relations to neighboring Russia have remained icy ever since its independence in 1991. As a legacy of the Soviet Union, the country of 1.3 million, which is now a member of NATO and the European Union, has a sizable ethnic Russian minority. According to State Prosecutor Triinu Olev, the suspects have been detained pending the results of an investigation into criminal proceedings. Security officials said the suspects held a variety of roles in Estonia, depending on instructions from their Russian handlers. Some of them focused on collecting information, while others planned attacks that were also carried out, officials said. The head of the Estonian security service, Margo Palloson, said that some of the suspects who are believed to have vandalized undisclosed memorials were recruited through social media. "As procedural acts are currently being carried out to verify the suspicion and ascertain important facts, it is not possible to discuss these incidents in further detail," the security agency said. Moscow has maintained high interest in the internal affairs of Estonia and its Baltic neighbors Latvia and Lithuania, particularly on security and military matters after all three countries joined NATO and the EU in 2004.

WHO completes second Gaza hospital evacuation amid fighting

GENEVA/CAIRO (Reuters): The World Health Organization said it had completed a second evacuation mission from Gaza's Nasser Hospital but voiced concern for nearly 150 patients and medics who remain at the site amid continuing fighting. The Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, Gaza's second-largest, stopped working last week after a week-long Israeli siege followed by a raid, the UN agency said. WHO staff and other aid groups have so far evacuated a total of 32 critical patients including injured children and those with paralysis, but the agency is concerned for those left behind with supplies dwindling.

"WHO fears for the safety and well-being of the patients and health workers remaining in the hospital and warns that further disruption to life-saving care for the sick and injured would lead to more deaths," the WHO said on the social media site X, saying those remaining included 130 patients and 15 medics. Israel says Hamas, the Islamist group that has run Gaza since 2007, uses hospitals for cover. Hamas denies this and says Israel's allegations serve as a pretext to destroy the healthcare system.

The WHO's Tarik Jasarevic told reporters in Geneva that WHO staff who were part of the rescue mission had to navigate through pitch-black corridors with flashlights to find patients against a backdrop of gunfire. Help had to arrive on foot because a deep, muddy ditch near the site made the road impassable, the WHO said. "It's very difficult to see these scenes of people just being cut off," Jasarevic said, saying food supplies were limited. "It's heartbreaking to see that there are people in health facilities who are not able to be treated correctly." Efforts to transfer the remaining patients are continuing, WHO said. The site has no electricity or running water and medical waste and garbage are "creating a breeding ground for disease," it added.

Palestinian health authorities said



the situation had reached a "catastrophic level" and that Israeli forces had effectively converted the site into a "military barracks." At least eight patients have already died at the facility, mostly due to fuel shortages and oxygen shortages, Palestinian health authorities have said. They said the lives of those remaining there are directly threatened. The more than four-month-old war was triggered by a Hamas attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7 in which 1,200 people were killed and 253 taken hostage, according to Israel.

Intent on destroying Hamas, Israel has responded with an air and ground assault that according to the Gaza health ministry's tallies has killed 29,195 Palestinians and wounded more than 69,000. As night fell, Palestinian health officials said two Israeli air strikes in Rafah, Gazans' last refuge, killed six people including two traveling in a car. In Central Gaza areas, medics said 12 people have been killed, most of them during an air strike on a house in Deir Al-Balah city. The war has displaced most of the enclave's 2.3 million people and over 1 million of them are now living in UN shelters or in tents and cardboard boxes in the southern-most tip of the enclave, against the

border with Egypt.

A little before midnight, an Israeli air strike on a house in the city of Rafah, where over a million people are concentrated, killed eight people, health officials said. In the nearby city of Khan Younis, residents said Israeli tanks advanced on the coastal road effectively separating Khan Younis and Rafah from the rest of the enclave. The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) said its medical teams evacuated two bodies and eight injured people from the Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) headquarters on the coastal road, Al-Rashid Street, west of Khan Yunis. "The mission was carried out in coordination with and accompanied by a team from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). They were transported to the International Medical Corps field hospital in #Rafah," PRCS said in a statement on social media platform X. In Cairo, Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh, who is based in Qatar, was expected to hold new meetings with Egyptian officials, who along with Qatari counterparts were trying to mediate a new hostage deal between the Islamist faction and Israel, but gaps remain.

Taiwan protests after China boards a tourist boat

TAIPEI (AP): Taiwan protested China's boarding of a tourist boat, as tensions rise around the Kinmen archipelago, which lies a short distance off China's coast but is controlled by Taiwan. Taiwanese media reported the King Xia, carrying 11 crew and 23 passengers, was boarded by the Chinese coast guard for about 32 minutes. Taiwan's coast guard escorted the boat back to Kinmen, and it then continued its sightseeing voyage.

Ocean Affairs Council Minister Kuan Bi-ling told journalists at the legislature that the incident "hurt the feelings of our people, created panic among the people, and was not in the interest of the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait," referring to the 160 kilometer- (100 mile)-wide waterway that separates mainland China from Taiwan, a self-governed island that Beijing claims as its own territory. Premier Chen Chien-jen said Taiwan was seeking to lower tensions in the area, which have escalated as China increased military activities following Taiwan's election of an independence-leading president in January. "We hope

that this matter can be resolved properly," Chen said. "We hope that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait will adopt a rational, reciprocal, and cooperative approach to maintain the security of the waters between Kinmen and (the Chinese port city of) Xiamen and allow people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to communicate in a more healthy and orderly manner." China is stepping up patrols in the waters off the coast of Kinmen and its associated islands, days after two Chinese fishermen drowned while being chased by the Taiwanese coast guard, which accused the boat of trespassing.

Taiwan's coast guard said a boat carrying four people was fishing about one nautical mile away from Kinmen, which Taiwan has claimed as a restricted area largely for military purposes, and capsize during a chase. Relatives of the deceased arrived on Kinmen to preside at traditional funeral services and to bring their cremated remains home. The two survivors were also sent back to mainland China, according to Taiwan's official Central News Agency. China

blamed Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party for the fishermen's deaths. It also said that there was no such thing as "restricted" waters. A spokesperson for the Chinese coast guard said that its Fujian division will regularly monitor the waters off the southern coast of Xiamen - within view of Kinmen - to strengthen maritime law enforcement.

China's Foreign Ministry declined to answer questions on the matter, saying it was not a "diplomatic issue," in a reflection of Beijing's refusal to recognize Taiwan as a independent political identity with its own legitimate governing organs. Fishermen from both Taiwan and China regularly sail that stretch of water, which has seen a rise in tensions as the number of Chinese vessels - including sand dredgers and fishing boats - have notably increased in the area. Kinmen residents have complained of both the noise and sound pollution from the vessels, as well as losses to their livelihood in fishing. Taiwan split from China during the 1949 civil war, but Beijing continues to regard the island of 23

million and its outlying islands as Chinese territory and has been ramping up its threat to achieve that by military force if necessary.

In addition to piling diplomatic, political and military pressure on Taiwan, China is seen as seeking to bring Kinmen into its orbit, along with Taiwan-controlled island group of Matsu, which lies off the Chinese coast to the north. Taiwanese forces based in the area have fired at drones sent over from the mainland in what is seen as a hybrid civilian-military effort to sow fear and undermine support for Taiwan's government. China regularly sends warplanes and navy ships into areas surrounding the island. In the 24 hours leading up to 6:00 a.m. 24 military aircraft and eight ships were detected operating around the island, Taiwan's Defense Ministry reported, adding that 11 of the planes crossed the median line in the Taiwan Strait. It said Taiwan scrambled jets, dispatched ships and put land-based missile defenses on alert, all standard responses to what has become a near-daily show of force between the sides.

South Africa sets May 29 polls that could be the most pivotal

CAPE TOWN (AP): South Africa will hold pivotal national elections May 29 as polls show the ruling African National Congress could lose its majority for the first time since it came to power with the fall of apartheid 30 years ago.

President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the date as Africa's most developed economy faces a myriad of problems under his ANC party. They include record unemployment, an electricity crisis that's led to crippling blackouts for homes and businesses, and widespread voter mistrust following a stream of corruption allegations over the years. Several polls predict that the party once widely admired across the world and led by Nelson Mandela will slip below 50% of the vote for the first time since it won South Africa's first all-race election in 1994 to herald a new democracy following the end of white minority rule.

If it loses its majority, the ANC would need to enter into a coalition to remain in government and keep Ramaphosa - a political protégé of Mandela - as president for a second and

final five-year term. South Africa has never had a coalition at national level because of the ANC's dominance. South Africans vote for a party and not a presidential candidate in a general election. Parties are then allocated places in the 400-seat Parliament according to their share of the vote, and lawmakers elect the president. The president has always been from the ANC because of its parliamentary majority.

The ANC is still expected to win the largest share of the vote, but one poll has it falling dramatically to less than 40%. South Africa's main opposition party, the centrist Democratic Alliance, is in talks over forming a coalition of opposition parties aimed at forcing the ANC out of government completely, although all those parties would have to increase their share of the vote considerably to collectively get over 50%. The third biggest party, the far-left Economic Freedom Fighters, is not involved in that opposition coalition but has drawn more support away from the ANC and was the only one of the

three main parties to increase its share in the last general election. Democratic Alliance leader John Steenhuisen said the election date announcement began "a countdown to a historic moment where South Africa has the opportunity to rescue itself from 30 years of ANC failure, corruption, and state capture." The EFF said the election is "an opportunity for all South Africans to put an end to the misery we have suffered as a nation under the incompetent, corrupt and misguided governance of the ruling party, the ANC."

The vote will be the seventh fully democratic election in South Africa. Before 1994, Black people were not allowed to vote. Ramaphosa announced the election date in a statement from his office. "Beyond the fulfillment of our constitutional obligation, these upcoming elections are also a celebration of our democratic journey and a determination of the future that we all desire," he said. "I call on all South Africans to exercise their democratic right to vote and for those who will be campaigning to do so peacefully,

within the full observance of the law." The ANC has won every national election since 1994 by a clear majority, but its support has gradually waned in the last 20 years. The biggest wakeup call came in local elections in 2021, when the ANC slipped below 50%. South Africans have grown weary of a troubled economy and unemployment that sits at more than 30%, the highest in the world. The unemployment rate for young people aged between 15-24 is at a dizzying 59%. A period of rampant corruption under former President Jacob Zuma from 2009-2018 eroded the party's reputation. South Africa struggles with rising levels of violent crime and widespread poverty.

Ramaphosa, 71, had some success in cleaning up the graft-tainted ANC after first being elected president in 2019, but the electricity crisis that brought record levels of blackouts last year has badly hurt his popularity. In the election, South Africans also will vote for the make-up of provincial legislatures in the country's nine provinces.

Spanish police suspect body may be Russian

MADRID (AP): Police said they suspect the bullet-riddled body of a man found in Spain is that of a Russian defector who escaped across the front line and into Ukraine last year with an army helicopter. The body was found Feb. 13 in La Cala, near the eastern port city of Alicante, according to Civil Guard police. The man had been shot half a dozen times and was run over by the car, according to the Spanish state news agency Efe.

Spain's Civil Guard said they found documents on the body that identified the man as a 33-year-old Ukrainian. But police now believe it could be Maksim Kuzminov, who defected

last year by flying into Ukraine in a Mi-8 army helicopter with the help of Ukrainian intelligence. Andrii Yusov, a representative of Ukrainian military intelligence, confirmed to local media that the former Russian pilot had died in Spain, but didn't provide details. It is not clear how or why Kuzminov would have traveled to Spain. The head of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, Sergei Naryshkin, told Russian journalists that Maksim Kuzminov was a "traitor and criminal" who became a "moral corpse" as soon as he started planning "his dirty and terrible crime," according to Russian state news agency Tass. Tass

also reported that Alexei Danilov, the Secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defense Council, said Ukraine had suggested Kuzminov remain in Ukraine where he would be protected. Asked about the case, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he had no information on it and that Moscow had received no information via diplomatic channels. Spain's Civil Guard said they found false documents on a body discovered Feb. 13 in the entrance to a residential complex in La Cala. Spanish state news agency Efe said the body had been hit by half a dozen bullets and was run over by the car used by the attackers.

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Economy demands transparency and regulation

CARETAKER Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar assured all-out support of his government to the investors, for the effective utilization of human, and mineral resources of the country. During the signing ceremony of a joint venture agreement between Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation (PMDC) and the US-based Miracle Saltworks Collective Inc. for establishing a dedicated facility for crushing and packaging of pink salt for export purposes, the Prime Minister said, human resources coupled with mineral resources will lead to a stable, prosperous, and rising Pakistan.

Nature blessed Pakistan with unimaginable resources, mineral deposits, an ideal four-season environment, cultivated land, vast reservoirs of flowing fresh waters, high mountaint, deep oceans, and shining blue skies with gashing sunlight which remains available to Pakistani industry, workers, and farmers throughout the year. In the case of mineral deposits, Pakistan has plenty of metallic as well as nonmetallic minerals such as copper, iron ore, chromite, rock salt, gypsum, limestone, sulfur, marble, gold, gemstones, etcetera, etc. However, a huge chunk of these possessions have not yet mined out due to a lack of technical expertise, investment, and inaccessibility of the locations in far-flung areas across Pakistan.

Pakistan is the sole and biggest producer of multiple varieties of salt as the world's largest reserves of rock salt lie in the country. Pakistan's pink salt often known as Himalayan pink salt, is a type of rock salt mined in the Salt Range mountains, located in the Punjab, Pakistan. This salt is believed to have various health benefits and is often used in cooking and for treatment purposes due to its supposed therapeutic properties. Its unique color and perceived health benefits have made it popular in culinary and wellness circles worldwide. Unfortunately, India has been exporting Pakistani pink salt to the world as an Indian product in the past decades depriving Pakistan of significant monetary benefits and purloined property rights/ branding of the product. Historically, Pakistani baboos sitting in the Ministry of Commerce and Trade had never been able to protect the country's interests in concerned areas rather Pakistani industry, manufacturers, and growers themselves create export and investment opportunities for their products. There is a dire need for the registration of Pakistani products and obtaining Geographical Identification (GI Tagging) of minerals and precious hidden deposits available in the country including salt, chromite, gypsum, and others. That will not only increase Country's export revenue but promote Pakistani brands in the global market.

Historically, the state institutions and relevant ministries did not undertook their official responsibility in the past, while bureaucrats sitting in the top position spent their time in appeasing political leaders, grabbing lucrative positions, free of cost valuable plots and cultivated land along with employing their wards on important posts in the public sector. That's why each sector of our national life is in deplorable conditions. The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has played an important role in attracting foreign investment and creating an enabling environment for foreign direct investment (FDI) in the country. It served as a one-window facility for the investors besides streamlining processes and removing the bureaucratic hurdles to attract investment in the fields of mining, energy, IT, agriculture, livestock, industry, and tourism. The incumbent government must introduce such a mechanism which ensures merit, transparency, productivity and accountability of each individual at all levels so the governance as well as the growth get at the right track on permanent basis. That is the only way forward for our nation to attain its due prestige in the comitty of the nations.

Environmental impact of plastic bags

COMMISSIONER Mardan Division has recently directed the Deputy Commissioners of his region to launch a crackdown against the use of polythene bags and its businesses in their respective districts. According to the details, the Commissioner expressed displeasure over the lack of interest of the concerned Assistant Commissioners in the campaign against polythene bags and directed them to play their role in eradicating this scourge that destroys the environment.

Polythene bags or plastic bags, have various uses in our daily life. Polythene bags are commonly used in supermarkets and stores to carry purchased items, it is used for product packing, storage and protection of costly items, electronics goods, use as trash bags, waterproofing and insulation purposes. Despite numerous uses and benefits, the plastic bags also have a lot of disadvantages: their disposal can have negative environmental impacts. They can take hundreds of years to decompose, leading to pollution of land and water bodies. Recycling and proper disposal are essential to minimize these impacts. The polythene bags are made from costly renewable energy sources including petroleum, while it is a serious hazard for living organisms including human life, marine life and wildlife.

Although, polythene bags have a wide ranging negative impact on our life yet there is very little awareness and sense of responsibility in our society. Disposal of plastic bags has shaped into a serious problem for authorities due to the worst effect on farming, cleanliness, sanitation, disposal of garbage and recycling. The provincial and local governments along with different institutions and cantonments have time and again imposed a ban on the use of plastic bags in their jurisdictions but those measures were placed in specific areas for a limited period of time thus they could not have a sustainable impact on overall society.

In fact, a comprehensive national strategy on plastic bags should be implemented with particular focus on online public awareness campaigns, reducing the use of polythene, promoting alternatives, and ensuring proper disposal of plastic material at the national, provincial or district levels. So, public life does not impact and the plastic bag issue could be dealt with amicably.

Important Notice

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Namibia, Gaza and German hypocrisy on genocide

Tafi Mhaka

ON January 12, Germany said it will intervene on Israel's behalf in the genocide case brought against it by South Africa at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over its war on Gaza. "The German government firmly and explicitly rejects the accusation of genocide that has now been made against Israel before the International Court of Justice. This accusation has no basis whatsoever," a spokesperson for the German government said in a statement as it accused South Africa of "politicising" genocide.

"In view of Germany's history, crimes against humanity, and Shoah [the genocide of Jewish people under the German Nazi regime during World War II, the Holocaust], the government is particularly committed to the UN Genocide Convention," the spokesperson added. The announcement, which shockingly suggested Germany has a better understanding of the convention than any other nation due to its responsibility for the genocide that led to its conception, caused widespread anger across many Global South countries that had tied their hopes of bringing an end to the carnage in Gaza to South Africa's landmark case at the World Court. One country was particularly vocal in expressing its frustration with and disappointment in Germany's intervention: Namibia.

On January 13, Namibia's presidency condemned Germany's "shocking decision" to support Israel at the ICJ. In a statement published on X, it reminded the world that Germany committed the first genocide of the 20th century in Namibia in 1904-1908, in which "tens of thousands of innocent Namibians died in the most inhumane and brutal conditions", and never fully atoned for this horrific crime. In light of its apparent inability to draw lessons from its horrific history, the presidency said, Germany should "reconsider its untimely decision to intervene as a third-party in defence and support of the genocidal acts of Israel" before the ICJ. "Germany cannot morally express commitment to the United Nations Convention against genocide", or truly atone for

the genocide it committed on Namibian soil, it concluded, while "supporting the equivalent of a holocaust and genocide in Gaza". In this short statement, the tiny Southern African nation of 2.7 million, which was a German colony between 1884-1919, exposed Germany's comprehensive failure to deal with its atrocious colonial past, and blatant double standards about genocide, in one breath. Between 1904 and 1908, German settlers systematically killed up to 100,000 Herero and Nama people following a popular uprising over unlawful land seizures and forced labour in what was then known as German South West Africa. On October 2, 1904, Lieutenant General Lothar von Trotha, the supreme commander of German South West Africa, issued an extermination notice ordering German soldiers to kill "every male [Herero], armed or unarmed" and displace (or shoot) the Herero women and children. Although Germany rescinded the order on December 8, 1904, the settlers had already displaced and killed thousands of Herero people. Von Trotha issued a second annihilation order on April 22, 1905. This time, he directed troops to kill the Nama people. As the methodical massacres were under way, German colonisers systematically raped Nama and Herero women and girls - often with no repercussions. A 1985 UN report by special rapporteur Benjamin Whitaker concluded these massacres in German South West Africa were a genocide. Despite the UN's findings, and despite accepting full responsibility for the Nazi genocide of European Jews between 1941-45 that claimed some six million innocent lives, Germany refused to acknowledge that its atrocities in Namibia also amounted to a genocide for many years. For decades, Germany treated its genocide of the Nama and Herero people, which took place just 33 short years before the Holocaust, as an old, trivial and conventional brutality that did not require any official apology, specific introspection, or meaningful monetary compensation. For successive German governments, the lives of 100,000

African men, women and children brutally killed by the German state in modern-day Namibia clearly did not hold the same value as those Jewish lives brutally extinguished in Europe during the Holocaust. After six years of negotiating in bad faith, Germany eventually recognised the Nama and Herero genocide and offered a formal apology to the Namibian people, signing a so-called "joint declaration" with Namibia in May 2021. In the document, Germany acknowledged that it has a "moral, historical and political obligation" to apologise and "provide the necessary means for reconciliation and reconstruction".

However, it did not commit to paying reparations. Instead, Germany pledged to provide Namibia with 1.1 billion euros (\$1.2bn) in financial aid over 30 years towards a development support programme focused on various initiatives, including land reform, rural infrastructure and energy and water supply. According to the "joint declaration" this pledge was designed to "settle all financial aspects of the issues relating to the past" and seemingly take reparations off the table. After raising several objections to the structure and size of the proposed 30-year grant, Namibia has yet to sign the deal. Of course, rather than "settling" financial or any other aspect of its senseless colonial violence in Namibia, Germany's less than adequate pledges expose the racist hierarchy it has assigned the different victims of its genocidal violence. In 1951, Germany agreed to hold direct discussions with the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference), a non-profit organisation that negotiates for and disburses funds to victims of Nazi persecution. The German government has since paid about \$90bn in reparations through the Claims Council. In March 2022, it agreed to provide an additional \$720m to the Claims Council to fund home care, food and medicine for 120,000 impoverished Holocaust survivors. In stark contrast, Germany has plainly refused to pay a single cent in reparations to the Nama and Herero people. And the 1.1 billion-euro (\$1.2bn) financial aid it

eventually pledged to give Namibia over 30 years is just a tiny fraction of the payments it made directly to the victims of the Holocaust. Moreover, several groups representing the descendants of the 1904-1908 genocide - including the Namibian Genocide Association, Nama Genocide Technical Committee, Nama Traditional Leaders Association, and Ovaherero Traditional Authority - were excluded from the negotiations that culminated in the much-criticised 2021 "joint declaration". To this day, most Herero and Nama people in Namibia - where white Namibians, the descendants of German and South African settlers, own 70 percent of the best land - are largely poor and landless. They have been forced to bear the multidimensional socioeconomic consequences of the 1904-1908 genocide, but Germany refuses to properly and directly compensate them for the atrocities it committed that have led to their marginalisation and poverty.

It's the same Germany that has now declared itself the utmost authority on what constitutes a genocide and is actively defending, in every way it possibly can, the genocide Israel is demonstrably committing in Palestine. Germany says it is defending Israel's indefensible genocidal acts in Gaza in view and memory of its past "crimes against humanity, and Shoah". Of course, if it had actually learned anything from its horrendous history, and the Holocaust, it would atone properly for the countless crimes committed by its short-lived colonial empire in Africa and take meaningful action to put an end to the genocide Israel is currently committing against Palestinians - not go to court to defend it. Namibia is right - Germany needs to immediately "reconsider its untimely decision to intervene as a third-party in defence and support of the genocidal acts of Israel before the International Court of Justice". The failure to reverse this indefensible position would be irrefutable proof that Germany learned nothing from its past, and an insult to all victims of its long history of genocidal violence - whether they are Nama, Herero or Jewish.

Aljazeera

UNRWA donors should reconsider suspension of funds

Kerry Boyd Anderson

At a time of desperate need in Gaza, key donors have suspended funding for the UN Relief and Works Agency in response to allegations from Israel. Donors should take such accusations seriously but should also remember that the Israeli government has its own reasons for wanting to undermine UNRWA.

In January, Israel presented allegations that 12 UNRWA employees participated in the Oct. 7 Hamas attack against Israel. In response, at least 16 countries - including some major donors, such as the US, Germany, Sweden and Japan - suspended funding to the UN agency. The EU, another major donor, is considering suspending funds. Some of those donors are waiting on the outcome of investigations into the allegations before potentially restoring funding. If funding is not restored, UNRWA officials warn that the lack of funds could start having a severe impact on the agency's ability to deliver services by late February.

There is likely some truth in the Israeli allegations. With 13,000 employees in the Gaza Strip, it is unsurprising that a few individuals would, in some way, be involved in the attack. Nonetheless, any participation of UNRWA employees in such a brutal attack is appalling and such allegations must certainly be investigated. UNRWA immediately fired the 10 accused employees, with two having died, even without receiving evidence from Israel.

While acknowledging that Israel's allegations are serious and worth investigating, UN member states must also keep in mind that Israeli intelligence can be unreliable. So far, there is little publicly available evidence to support the allegations. Most media outlets have been unable to verify the claims, although The Washington Post reported some evidence that one of the accused individuals was involved in the attack.

On Friday, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant publicly identified the original 12 individuals and added that more than 30 UNRWA employees were involved in the attack and that 12 percent of the agency's workers in Gaza are affiliated with Hamas or Palestinian Islamic Jihad. These are grave allegations and UNRWA donors should require that Israel provide solid evidence for these and other claims.

For all UN agencies, maintaining independence and a professional commitment to their mission is essential. It must demand high standards for behavior and professionalism. Any involvement by UNRWA staff in an attack on Israeli civilians would clearly violate those standards. Also, the UN is a large institution, with many partners, and realistically, problems will arise. For example, there have been horrific cases of UN peacekeepers sexually abusing women and children. There have been multiple corruption scandals. In such cases, the UN must act to ensure

accountability and terminate employment or relationships with workers and partners that fail to uphold UN values. However, that does not mean totally shutting down an entire UN agency or mission, especially when millions of desperate people rely on the organization's services.

When assessing the allegations against UNRWA, it also is crucial to remember that Israel has long sought to dismantle the agency and end its mission. The agency's mere existence is a thorn in the side of many right-wing Israelis and governments, including the current leadership.

UNRWA is specifically devoted to caring for Palestinians who lost their homes and livelihoods during the 1948 war and the descendants of those refugees. Those refugees' existence is a constant reminder that the idea that Palestine, before Israel's establishment, was "a land without a people for a people without a land" was never true. The continuing existence of Palestinian refugees in neighboring countries keeps alive the idea of a right of return, which the state of Israel adamantly opposes. The ongoing existence of Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip and West Bank helps to sustain hopes for a Palestinian state - an idea that the current Israeli government rejects.

UNRWA symbolizes and sustains those communities and all that they represent. That is the real reason why many Israeli leaders have long tried to undermine UNRWA and why leaders such as Gallant and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu say that its mission must end. Donor countries are right to express concern about the allegations and demand independent investigations; indeed, there are two official investigations underway. However, donor countries were wrong to immediately suspend funding to some of the world's most desperate people on the basis of questionable evidence from a source that is motivated to damage UNRWA.

They should restore funding immediately while making clear that future support will depend on the outcome of the investigations and subsequent action. However, even if some of the allegations prove true, that is not a reason to completely dismantle UNRWA and end its mission, just as past UN scandals were not reasons to halt crucial UN services. As the war in Gaza once again demonstrates, the plight of Palestinian refugees has not been resolved and UNRWA remains an important agency with a legitimate mission.

The vast majority of the more than 2 million Palestinians in Gaza, who are trying to survive a terrible crisis, depend on UNRWA and no other organization can come close to matching this agency's capacity for delivering aid in the Strip. Donors that suspended funds should immediately reconsider whether halting the flow of humanitarian services to desperate people on the basis of biased accusations was a good move.

Arab News

Useless politicians have doomed Britain to managed decline

Tom Harris

IT isn't entirely Rishi Sunak's fault. But politics is a tough game and, as the man holding the parcel when the music stops, he's the one who will have to shoulder the ignominious burden of responsibility for what now seems to be the Conservatives' inevitable decimation. And even "decimation" is probably too optimistic a word: the party would undoubtedly be thrilled by only losing a tenth of its MPs, given the apocalypse-level of predictions provided by most polls.

As the last Labour government drew to an end, and in the years since, the Monty Python question could be easily answered. What had the Labour Party ever done for us? The policies were numerous, even if their benefits could be questioned: the national minimum wage, civil partnerships, unprecedented reductions in child and pen-

sioner poverty, trebling of the NHS budget, devolution...

But what, other than finally achieving the electorate's stated wish to depart the European Union, have 14 years of Conservative government achieved for our citizens? Certainly very little that might be considered "conservative". Higher taxes, record levels of immigration, a worsening of the housing crisis, industrial action that regularly cripples public services, an explosion in the size and cost of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion industry. True, there have been some victories - we're just about back to the level of policing that David Cameron inherited from Labour in 2010. But fixing problems it created can hardly be credited to the government.

Sunak is this administration's Alec Douglas-Home, the last in a series of consecutive prime ministers

over a long period of office, to whom has fallen the thankless task of managing the party as it moves from government to opposition. Luck is a vital commodity in politics and Sunak used all of his allotted supply of it by being promoted to Number 10 in the first place, after barely seven years in parliament. Since then, however, all the luck has been with his chief rival, Keir Starmer, who has become the heir apparent to Downing Street through the ingenious strategy of being in the right place at the right time. Polls have rarely painted a bleak picture of the choice the public faces. Both men's approval ratings are in the negative - Sunak's considerably worse than Starmer's - and there is little excitement or enthusiasm for the change in government that now appears inevitable at some point this year.

Margaret Thatcher wrote in her autobiography that she was appalled, on being elected as prime minister in 1979, by the apparent attitude of the civil service that it was their task to manage Britain's decline. Yet the general despondency among voters, a poverty of confidence in either side, suggests that we are reliving that grim period when our leaders lack the confidence or the ideas to restore our country to its full potential.

Is this all there is? Is this tiresome, permanent squabble between the parties about minor policy differences the best we can expect? Did the age of the battle of ideas fade with the age of reason? Where are the radical leaders? The radical ideas? Where is the next Thatcher, or even the next Blair, who is prepared to change the political consensus and challenge the

establishment? The last 14 years may have been a missed opportunity, but what are the prospects for the next decade or so under Labour? If all we can look forward to is further managed decline - more immigration to fill low-paid jobs while millions of Britons are paid to stay at home watching TV all day, more taxes to fund the net zero agenda, more division and grievance generated by the never ending culture wars - must we say goodbye to the notion that future generations can be inspired to do better than their forebears?

The aspiration to do better than your parents did is not just an American one; it provides the central pillar of the engine of British politics and has done for centuries. Yet we are saddled with two parties who seem to have given up on that sacred mission, who now prioritise party and media management above all else and whose parties, to be

fair, have left their leaders with little other alternative. And so we head further into an election year with little anticipation of change, resigned to the prospect that a change in government will not produce the real change - in culture, attitude or even economy - that our country so desperately needs. We have said goodbye to any notion of excitement or enthusiasm, just as we have said farewell to any hope for economic competence or a brighter future for our children.

Sixty years ago, the country had already stopped believing in Harold Macmillan's claim that we had never had it so good. Today such a claim would be dismissed as the raving fantasies of a mad man. And there is no one waiting in the wings who can convince us of the proximity of that bright future our parents once believed in.

The Telegraph

Problem in Palestine is not political, it is ideological

Dr. Ramzy Baroud

THE problem is not the absence of a Palestinian state, but Zionism itself. What is the use of a Palestinian state if Zionism, as a racist, exclusivist ideology, continues to define Israel and impose that definition on the Palestinians? This ideology calls for racial purity of Jews in Palestine, of course, at the expense of the native inhabitants of the land. To achieve this, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians had to be forced into exile and thousands more killed, wounded or incarcerated.

Neither two states nor even one state is possible if Zionism is not entirely defeated - not revamped, not "fixed," but eradicated. As Palestinians are today being killed in unprecedentedly large numbers in Gaza, Western politicians are waking up to the necessity of a Palestinian state. But why now? After all, it was these very politicians and their governments that either defended Israel or remained silent as it thwarted every possibility of peaceful coexistence. Theirs is not a moral awakening but a distraction to appear - at least before their own people - to be proactive, while Israel is systematically destroying the Palestinian people. Former UN Relief and Works Agency official Chris Gunness has said that the Israeli war on Gaza is "the first genocide in the history of humanity that is livestreamed on television." The genocide is worsening now that Palestinians are starting to die from starvation, while an even larger number are dying from diseases and polluted water, aside from those being blown up or shot by Israel. For the likes of David

Cameron, Britain's foreign minister, to talk about the recognition of a Palestinian state as "absolutely vital" for "long-term peace" is bewildering, to say the least. Those struggling to survive daily are hardly concerned about yet more empty Western promises. The genocide underway in Gaza tells us that the issue is not merely political, but ideological. And, while Western leaders speak of "long-term peace," Israel entrenches its system of violence and apartheid.

"There cannot be a situation in which children and women approach us from the wall. Anyone who approaches in order to harm security must receive a bullet," Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir said last week. In Gaza, the violence is far more sickening. The Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor this month reported that "groups of 10 to 20 Israeli civilians at a time were permitted to watch and laughingly film Palestinian prisoners and detainees in their underwear," as they were tortured and abused by Israeli soldiers. There can be no rational political justification for any of this. All of this - the language of genocide, the genocide itself and the threats of committing a greater genocide - is rooted not in a rational political theory but in Zionism. The problem keeps getting worse because we refuse to address it head-on. In fact, many are doing the exact opposite. For example, Western governments have passed - or are passing - laws equating criticism of Zionism with antisemitism. Even Facebook owner Meta is considering increasing its censorship of the term "Zionist" if it

is critical of Israel. When Israeli Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu threatened, on Nov. 5, to drop a nuclear bomb on Gaza, he was condemned by many merely for his inappropriate language, not the act itself. Some Israeli officials also criticized Eliyahu, but only for damaging Israel's international reputation. The Israeli minister was not, however, simply talking out of anger. He meant it, because Israel's behavior in Gaza since then has demonstrated that such willingness to kill Palestinians en masse actually exists. Zionists are ready to do anything to survive and their survival is wholly dependent on the erasure of the perceived enemy; not "erasure" in an intellectual, political or even cultural sense, but the physical destruction of the Palestinians as well. The ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948, known as the Nakba, was a serious attempt at achieving that goal. But since the "enemy," being the Palestinian nation, survived and continues to resist and demand its collective rights, the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people is now back on the mainstream Israeli political agenda. This ongoing Gaza war is the most serious attempt, to date, to destroy the Palestinian people. This is why Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government want to carry on with the war. On the one hand, they want to ensure the continuing slaughter, thus the extermination, of the Palestinians, while on the other they are also fully aware that this is a historic opportunity to finish a job that previous Zionist leaders did not complete 75 years ago. Indeed, Israel

sees the war on Gaza beyond the geographic confines of the tiny Gaza Strip. It is a war on the Palestinians everywhere. If Israel succeeds in subduing Gaza, it will turn its gaze immediately to the West Bank, then to the 2 million Palestinian citizens of Israel.

It is important to recall that, before the current war, the Israeli incitement against Palestinians was focused mostly on the West Bank - with the declared aim of annexing about a third of that occupied region. There was also a major official Israeli campaign to curtail the rights and incite hatred against Palestinian citizens inside Israel. This campaign was rooted in history but became far more apparent following the Unity Intifada of May 2021. It was then that Israel realized that the "division" of the Palestinians was largely political and that, as a nation, Palestinians remain strongly connected. That is why Ben-Gvir lobbied, even before he claimed his ministerial position in December 2022, to have a national guard tasked with "restoring governance where needed."

If Gaza falls, all Palestinians in the rest of Palestine will become the new target for Israeli violence, ethnic cleansing and, if necessary, genocide. Reducing all these issues to that of finding creative political solutions that would merely sell false hope to the Palestinian people is not only ignorant, or devious, but also a diversion from the real issue: Israel's Zionist ideology. Zionism, like all racist colonial ideologies, operates with a zero-sum approach to its relationship with the natives of colonized land: dominance through ethnic cleansing and genocide. For "long-term peace" to become a reality, Zionism must end.

How Biden can avenge Navalny's death

Bret Stephens

PRESIDENT Biden said last week that he was "looking at a whole number of options" to make good on his 2021 warning to Vladimir Putin that Russia would face "devastating" consequences if Aleksei Navalny were to die in prison. Now that Putin has treated that warning with his customary contempt, Biden needs to act as a matter of moral clarity and personal credibility, and for the strategic imperative of demonstrating to a dictator that American threats aren't hollow.

But how? Some analysts suggest that the administration, which on Tuesday vowed to impose tougher sanctions, will struggle to find ways to make them more effective, and that the best single policy to hurt Putin is to continue supporting Ukraine militarily. They're right about the second point. As several close Russia watchers told me, however, there's much more to be done about the first. There are four broad approaches.

Finances: "The single most important thing we can do to hit back at Putin is to enact legislation to confiscate the \$300 billion of frozen Russian bank reserves for the defense and reconstruction of Ukraine," Bill Browder, investor and political activist, wrote me on Monday. Browder is best known as the moving force behind the Magnitsky Acts, which put sanctions on Russian officials implicated in corruption and other abuses. Browder's suggestion isn't new. And it's been resisted by US government officials who fear that it exceeds what American law allows and would encourage a flight from dollar assets. But as the Harvard legal scholar Larry Tribe and a team of experts from the firm of Kaplan, Heckler & Fink noted last year in a report for the Renew Democracy Initiative, seizing Russia's assets is explicitly allowed as a "countermeasure," an act designed to compel an aggressor to come into compliance with international law. As for the flight-from-the-dollar argument, it might otherwise be persuasive if the need to save Ukraine and punish Russia weren't more urgent. Seizing Russia's assets

"would be like two fingers in the eyes from the West," Browder added. "Putin doesn't care how many soldiers are killed, but he cares profoundly about his money. To top it off, all countries should call this new legislation the Navalny Act." Recognition: "Do not recognize Putin as the president of Russia after March 17 - that simple," Garry Kasparov, the legendary chess and human-rights champion, told me by phone from Berlin. "Do not recognize the regime as legitimate."

Kasparov was alluding to next month's sham presidential election, in which Putin is running for a fifth term. But he's also nodding to a deeper point, which is that while Putin might be indifferent to questions of legality, he craves and is keenly attuned to the trappings of political legitimacy, particularly internationally, which bolster his claims to rule. It's a point that was underscored to me by the economist Konstantin Sonin, a professor at the University of Chicago who this month was arrested in absentia by a Russian court. "Putin and his henchmen should be recognized and treated as a gang whose hold on power in Russia is based on brute force rather than any kind of legitimacy," Sonin said. "It does not make sense to negotiate with Putin as any kind of agreement will have to be renegotiated when his regime falls."

Dissidents: When Natan Sharansky called me from Jerusalem, that great Soviet refusenik, who exchanged letters with Navalny last year, turned almost immediately to Vladimir Kara-Murza, another imprisoned dissident. Like Navalny, Kara-Murza, 42, also survived poisonings and comas.

Like Navalny, he's being held in a "strict regime" penal colony on a 25-year sentence for his opposition to Putin. "If there are no changes" to Western policy, Sharansky said, Putin "could kill Kara-Murza tomorrow. The West needs to understand that these dissidents are the real friends of the free world, and they have to be seen as candidates for prisoner exchanges." Sharansky was particularly critical of the 2022 exchange of a Russian

archfiend, Viktor Bout, for the basketball star Brittney Griner, which surely enticed the Kremlin to arrest Evan Gershkovich, the Wall Street Journal reporter, last March. "America showed they are a bad bargainer," Sharansky lamented.

Sharansky is seconded by Reuel Marc Gerecht, a former C.I.A. case officer and senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. "The great Soviet dissidents taught us that they were fortified by Western attention to their plight," Gerecht told me. "Today, we don't know what Russian dissident, what Russian on the cusp of going 'rogue,' might galvanize Russians who loathe the regime." Power: One of my sources for this column asked not to be named because of the sensitivity of his current position, but he's a long-admired expert on energy markets. "America's liquefied natural gas is now part of NATO's arsenal against Russia," he told me. Biden, he advised, could "restore US credibility as an L.N.G. exporter by lifting the administration's 'pause' on new L.N.G. permits and thereby give Europe and Japan confidence to stop importing Russian L.N.G."

While Russia's oil and gas revenues have fallen steeply since the Ukraine war began, they still came to close to \$100 billion last year - enough to finance the Kremlin's war machine. What else could hurt? David Petraeus, the retired general and former C.I.A. director, had a specific suggestion: "The White House should announce the provision of the Army Tactical Missile System to Ukraine, which would double the range to approximately 300 kilometers of the missiles provided by the US to date." Along with everyone I spoke with, Petraeus recognized that those missiles could be provided only if the \$60 billion in military aid to Ukraine that the Senate approved last week can overcome a wall of Republican opposition in the House. Every Republican with a memory of what their party once stood for has an obligation to vote for that bill, just as Biden has a duty to ensure that evil will not go unpunished, and that Navalny did not die for nothing.

The New York Times

For a warm spring of Sino-EU cooperation

David Gosset

FOUR days before the start of the Year of the Dragon, an interesting - and certainly auspicious - cultural event unfolded in Shanghai's historical heart, at the picturesque Villa Basset, the residence of the French consul general. The occasion was the launch of the book, Inspiring Shanghai, a publication I had the honor of editing and which underscores the vibrant dynamics and cultural exchanges between Shanghai and the world.

In my eyes, this event was not merely a book launch. It symbolized much more, especially in the address by Joan Valadou, consul general of France in Shanghai. Amid the architectural elegance of Villa Basset, Valadou highlighted the significance of 2024 for Franco-Chinese relations, a momentous milestone marking the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between France and China.

The event, by its very nature and the distinguished gathering it attracted - including diplomats from various countries and the European Union - served as a testament to the strong cultural and diplomatic ties that bind France and China. Yet its significance extends beyond the bilateral ties between these two countries. It serves as a clarion call for China to engage more deeply with regions across Europe. As we commemorate 60 years of diplomatic relations between China and France, initiated by former French president Charles de Gaulle and Chairman Mao Zedong, our focus should extend beyond merely celebrating historical accomplishments. It is equally important to envision and embrace future opportunities.

The significance of 2024 as a milestone year offers an unparalleled opportunity for China to deepen its engagement with the EU. The need for such engagement has never been more critical, given the complex global challenges we face today - from climate change and economic disparities to geopolitical tensions and armed con-

flicts. Enhanced Sino-European cooperation can play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges, leveraging shared knowledge, resources and innovation. The relationship between China and the EU is pivotal to promoting a multipolar world and strengthening multilateralism. As two of the most influential global actors - together they represent 35 percent of the world economy - their interaction shapes the dynamics of international relations, trade and global governance. The multipolar world, characterized by multiple centers of power, benefits from a cooperative China-Europe relationship, as it diversifies global leadership and reduces the unilateral dominance of any single country, encouraging a more balanced and equitable international order.

Multilateralism is significantly bolstered by China and the EU's joint efforts. Their collaboration within frameworks such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the World Trade Organization, and various climate change initiatives showcases a commitment to address global challenges through dialogue and cooperation. The implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals stands as a paramount endeavor for global progress. These goals, encompassing a broad spectrum of objectives such as eradicating poverty, ensuring environmental sustainability, and promoting peace and prosperity are essential for shaping a better future for our planet. The collaboration between the EU and China to pursue these goals is particularly significant. By pooling their resources, expertise and strategic visions, the EU and China will not only be able to accelerate the progress toward achieving the SDGs but also set a powerful example of global cooperation for the rest of the world.

China and Europe have also a shared responsibility to

ensure the emergence of new technologies does not compromise human dignity. Their collaboration is crucial in setting ethical standards and regulations for technological advancements, including artificial intelligence, biotechnology and surveillance technologies. Both sides have unique perspectives and strengths that, when combined, can lead to a more balanced and humane approach to technology development. By cooperating, they can set guidelines that prioritize the well-being of societies worldwide. Their partnership is essential for fostering a technological future that respects and enhances human dignity, and ensures that innovations benefit humanity as a whole without sacrificing humanistic values. Furthermore, the China-Europe economic and trade relationship is vital for global economic stability and growth. Their mutual engagement in areas such as investment, the digital economy and green technologies not only enhances bilateral economic ties but also contributes to global economic diversification and resilience.

In essence, the China-Europe relationship underpins the promotion of a multipolar world and the effectiveness of multilateralism. By working together, China and Europe can lead by example, showing that international cooperation and mutual respect are the right way to solve the world's most pressing challenges. This partnership is essential for a more stable, prosperous and equitable global order. As we look forward to what can be called a "warm spring of cooperation" between China and Europe, it is essential to recognize that such cooperation will be built on the foundation of understanding, respect, and mutual benefit. China's engagement with various regions across Europe should be seen not as a mere diplomatic endeavor but also as an opportunity to build a more interconnected and harmonious world.

The China Daily

Ukraine faces a valley of death.

There's a way Biden can help it get across

THE message at the Munich Security Conference last weekend couldn't have been clearer: Russia is advancing, Ukraine is struggling to survive and the West needs to provide more military assistance now. "Ukraine is headed for a morale gulch" unless its allies move quickly to bolster support, said Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.), who led a bipartisan Senate delegation to the conference. "Russia is up, Ukraine is down," and the West needs to help Kyiv's brave soldiers find a way across "the valley of death" until Congress acts to send more weapons, Whitehouse said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signaled exactly what he needs - long-range ATACM-300 missiles - during a private meeting with a bipartisan congressional group. He brought out a map showing the Russian targets in occupied Crimea that could be hit by those ATACMS. The strikes wouldn't liberate Crimea, but they would rattle Russia's confidence and lift Ukrainian morale at a time when Russian President Vladimir Putin thinks he's in control. President Biden has been reluctant to send the ATACMS, for good reason. The United States needs them for its own defense. And Biden doesn't want an escalatory spiral with Russia. But nothing is more important to US security right now than helping Ukraine halt Russia's momentum on the battlefield. And Ukraine has shown that it will keep its promises not to fire US weapons into Russian territory. Don't wait for legislation; send the missiles.

Two events last weekend underlined Putin's macabre momentum. The death of heroic dissident Alexei Navalny in a Siberian prison camp shows that Putin is conducting a "no limits" assault, as Russian mobsters like to say. Russia's capture of Avdiivka in eastern Ukraine showed that Putin will sacrifice tens of thousands of soldiers in his "meat assaults," as Zelensky described them. Avdiivka matters not because of its strategic importance, but because Ukrainian troops there were running out of artillery ammunition and air defenses - a sign of their growing vulnerability. The shortage of air defenses is especially worrying: Russian planes could drop precision bombs on Avdiivka at will. If Ukraine doesn't get new air-defense supplies soon, that threat could extend to cities across the country.

Russian troops are grinding forward using their two great national resources - warm bodies and cold-blooded patience. That's how Russia fights its wars, from Napoleon to Hitler to now. "They are crazy, they are raging ... tens of thousands of their soldiers. That's what they have," Zelensky told the conference. Ukraine, in contrast, was struggling to protect its troops, whom he described as "our main weapon." "This war is going Russia's way now," warned a European ambassador who's one of the West's wisest observers of the Kremlin. He remembered cautioning US officials when the war started that "it will take 500,000 dead before Russia stops."

David Ignatius

Their estimated casualties total more than 300,000 dead and wounded, according to US officials.

Putin can keep sending troops not just because of Russian stoicism, but because he has cleverly drawn his forces from the poorest and most disadvantaged areas of the country. Those dying are disproportionately ethnic minorities from backwaters such as Chechnya and Dagestan, US analysts say. The pay for soldiers at the front is three times what they would normally earn, and the families of dead soldiers receive a bonus worth more than \$50,000, noted the European ambassador. "The war has brought a kind of prosperity for poor Russians," he said. Navalny's death displayed Putin's calculus. He doesn't care about elite public opinion because it doesn't threaten his control. Demonstrators laying flowers or staging small marches don't faze him. "Anything below a million we can handle," a Kremlin official told the European ambassador several years ago. The message, the diplomat told me, was that "thousands of demonstrators are a drop in the ocean."

Yet even Putin knows he can't keep the killing machine operating indefinitely. That's why US congressional support for continued military aid matters so much. It buys Ukraine time to consolidate its defenses and protect its territory from attack this year - so that maybe next year, it can relaunch an offensive. For Ukraine, sustaining the fight and blocking Russia is a kind of victory. One sign that the Kremlin is nervous is that

Russian officials continue their nuclear saber-rattling. Dmitry Medvedev, a former Russian president, said on Telegram that if the West tried to force Russia back from the Ukrainian territory it has occupied to its "1991 border," then Russia would use its "nuclear triad" to attack targets including Kyiv, Berlin, London and Washington. Even for a Kremlin henchman, it was outrageous bullying. This war is a character test for the West. Europe, to my surprise, is behaving with admirable fortitude, at least compared with the United States. Biden has been steadfast, but it's time for him to do more. As for congressional Republicans ready to abandon Ukraine at the whim of former president Donald Trump, one can only feel sorrow - especially for someone who once knew better, such as Sen. Lindsey Graham (S.C.), who had been until this year a bedrock member of the Munich conference's consensus to resist Russian aggression. He has become a living sign of the corrosive effect of Trump's embrace.

One of the most poignant images I took away from Munich was shared by Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii). He described reports that Ukrainian soldiers at the front have been checking their cellphones to see what House Republicans will do about the military-aid package. What must those soldiers, huddling under Russian shells and bombs, think of the members of Congress who are ready to abandon them? Let's hope that House Republicans find some backbone before the curtain of shame descends.

The Washington Post

Smirnov indictment pushes GOP

impeachment probe of Biden off the edge

ON Thursday, the Justice Department indicted Alexander Smirnov, a former FBI informant, for lying about President Joe Biden and his son Hunter Biden's involvement in negotiations with the Ukrainian energy company Burisma Holdings. Smirnov is a central witness in the House Republicans' Biden impeachment inquiry, which was already circling the drain as committee leaders have persisted in pursuing baseless allegations for political gain.

According to the indictment, Smirnov lied to the FBI by claiming that officials at Burisma, where Hunter Biden served on the board years ago, bribed then-Vice President Biden and his son so the vice president would interfere with a criminal investigation into the company. Smirnov now faces charges for making false statements to the FBI and creating false records.

Smirnov's testimony has been the "heart" of House Oversight Committee Republicans' stumbling "investigation" into impeaching President Biden. News of Smirnov's indictment had Oversight Committee Chair James Comer of Kentucky beating a strategic retreat: "The impeachment inquiry," he said on Thursday, "is not reliant on the FBI's [interview of Smirnov]. It is based on a large record of evidence." That's to be expected from politicians trying to salvage an investigation whose key witness has been exposed. With Smirnov's indictment for fabricating claims, the air is out of the House inquiry's tires. For those in the fact-based world, the oversight committee's impeachment car, driven by Comer, is stuck on the edge of a cliff with two wheels hanging in thin air.

The Smirnov episode is Exhibit

A in what happens when politicians grinding partisan axes make serious public charges without evidence against elected officials. That shameless behavior erodes citizens' precious trust in government. Prosecutors learn early that, in white-collar crimes, you'd better have indisputable documents or witnesses whose testimony is thoroughly corroborated before seeking an indictment. Otherwise, you can get seriously burned in the backfire.

As Hannah Arendt, the dean of 20th century political theorists, wrote in 1971 about years of government lies revealed in the Pentagon Papers amidst the Vietnam War, "There always comes the point beyond which lying becomes counterproductive." Politicians like Comer and GOP Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, could learn something from Arendt and from capable prosecutors about tossing aside facts and truth. Unfortunately, the MAGA committee chairs seem to have neither time nor interest in thought, care, competence or real evidence. All that seems to matter to them is repeating the charges enough times for them to sink into the public consciousness.

In 2016, there was no there there with House Republicans' Benghazi investigation, but the smear looked like it had an adverse effect on former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. So Republicans have apparently decided, "Let's do it again." But don't expect it to work this time. The very smart Democrats now on the House Oversight Committee learned from experience and are onto Comer's political stunts. His claims have been called out by New York Rep. Dan Goldman, a former prosecutor

who worked on the first impeachment of former President Donald Trump, and ranking member Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland, a constitutional scholar who served on the House Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol.

As Yale professor Timothy Snyder, the eminent historian of 20th century totalitarianism, has written, "Students of democracy have argued since ancient times ... that the truth matters, and that truth needs defenses." We are lucky to have capable defenders of truth whose counter-punches have been stronger than Comer's feckless jabs. They don't carry the power of reliable facts. With Smirnov, Comer has led with his jaw. When you are dealing with a shaky witness whose testimony is the key to your fight plan, you need to muscle up with corroboration. Comer has none.

Indeed, Comer and Jordan have overhyped Smirnov's testimony so many times, according to the progressive watchdog Congressional Integrity Project, that it's hard to keep count. To cite just one example, last June, Comer told Fox News' Sean Hannity, "This is one of the highest paid, most respected, most trusted, most effective human informants. So what we learned is what the whistleblowers told Sen. Grassley all along. The FBI never investigated this." That last claim is yet another falsehood. This whole investigation into Burisma goes back five years. In early 2020, Rudy Giuliani, Trump's disgraced lawyer who was trying to dig up dirt on Hunter's father, handed documents over to Trump administration Attorney General Bill Barr. According to CNN reporting, Barr told reporters at the time, "We can't take anything we receive from

CNN

PSX continues with bullish trend, gains 1,094 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 1,094.91 points, a positive change of 1.81 percent, closing at 61,559.16 points against 60,464.24 points the previous trading day.

A total of 362,771,035 shares valuing Rs 12.492 billion were traded during the day as compared to 364,443,122 shares valuing Rs10.928 billion the last day.

Some 347 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 242 of them recorded gains and 84 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 21 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Bank of Punjab with 35,437,903 shares at Rs 6.24 per share, K-Electric Limited with

28,619,621 shares at Rs 4.30 per share, and WorldCall Telecom with 21,425,569 shares at Rs 1.29 per share.

Indus Motor Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 53.66 per share price, closing at Rs 1,548.08, whereas the runner-up was Mari Petroleum Company Limited with a Rs 45.11 rise in its per share price to Rs2,202.46.

Pakistan Services Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 50.00 per share closing at Rs 820.00, followed by Thal Limited with Rs 9.46 decline to close at Rs 260.54.

Rupee gains 07 paise against dollar

The Rupee on Wednesday gained 07 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.49 against



HYDERABAD: A female labour busy in work on vegetable market.

Business community calls 30-year economic vision, charter of economy

PESHAWAR (APP): Former vice president, Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Mohammad Adnan Jalil has called for framing a 30-year economic vision for the country including signing of a charter of economy by all political parties and a roadmap for economic development.

Talking to APP here on Wednesday, he said that the vision prepared in this connection should be reviewed after the passage of a period of five years and no government should be allowed to change it due to their own.

He said that due to inconsistency in policies and frequent changes in them we are issuing a huge number of SROs, which should be stopped. So we should have a 30-years vision, which should not be changed by the subsequent governments.

The FPCCI, all chambers and the business community should be taken on board in a true manner to

seek a solution and how we should enhance our exports. He said that at this moment our export is about US\$30billion and half of it is in the textile sector.

He said that elections have been passed, so now all political parties should show maturity and join hands for the country and its people. So, wisdom and unity must take place, because Pakistan is passing through economic turbulence.

He said we are in the 21st century and the world, including our neighbours moving in the right direction, then why not our country, which has potential and its people are resilient and hardworking. So, it is time that rather than our people move-out of the country, we should think more for Pakistan and create opportunities for them.

He said that we are required to adopt fixed taxation and it should be imposed on all such people who are not under the

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships, Maersk Brooklyn, Beks Nazik, Sea Champion, Simaisam and Torm Elizabeth carrying Containers, Wheat, Canola seeds, LNG and Gas oil, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Grain Terminal and Oil Terminal respectively on Tuesday. Meanwhile eight more ships, Xpress Salween, Jade Prosperity, Chemroad Haya, Medi Chiba, Fame, Sunny Bay and Ullswater carrying Containers, Chemicals, Canola seeds, Soyabean seeds, Coal and LPG also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the last 24 hours.

A total of six ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Maersk Brooklyn and Weco Madelein left the port on today morning and another ship IVS Atsugi is expected to sail on today afternoon.

A cargo volume of 148,934 tonnes, comprising 127,011 tonnes imports cargo and 21,923 tonnes export cargo, including containerised cargo carried in 2,615 Containers (1,856 TEUs Imports and 759 TEUs Exports) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 18ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them six ships, Chemroad Haya, Corona, Ullswater, Agia Erini Force, MSC Ellen and Xpress Salween & two more ships Maersk Cabo Verde and Wide Alpha carrying Chemicals, Palm oil, LPG, Coal and Containers are expected to take berths at EVTL, LCT, SSGC, PIBT and QICT on Wednesday and APL Le Havre is due to arrive at Port Qasim on Thursday.

Businessmen call on DG Transit Trade

PESHAWAR (APP): Businessmen dealing in Pak-Afghan trade have suggested amendments to the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) 2010 through consultation with the stakeholders.

The suggestions were made during the visit of a delegation of businessmen to the office of Director General Transit Trade, Wajid Ali here at Custom House.

The delegation was led by Coordinator Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi and comprised of Directors PAJCCI, Imtiaz Ahmad Ali, Khalid Shezad, former SVP Sarhad Chamber, Engr Manzoor Elahi, Central Vice Chairman All Pakistan Custom Agents Association, Farooq Ahmad and Vice President Khyber Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Muhammad Haroon.

DG Transit Trade was accompanied by Director Transit Trade, Arab Qaiser Hameed, Additional Director Transit, Dr. Wajid Ali and Deputy Director Transit, Ms. Maliaka Ahmad.

Speaking on the occasion, Zia Sarhadi said APTTA 2010 has several lacuna as a result of which 70 percent of transit trade has been shifted from Karachi port to Bandar

Abbas in Iran.

He also demanded the revival of Goods in Transit to Afghanistan (GITA) service through lost cargo via train between Peshawar to Karachi and from Karachi to Chaman.

For this purpose, he continued, the SRO 121 be repealed for allowing GITA services through containers and loss cargo as well.

The documentation (DG) of all this cargo under GITA should be held under WebOC at Azhakhel dry port so that custom clearing and forwarding agents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa should also benefit from this trade.

Zia Sarhadi said in October 2023, the Ministry of Commerce through issuing SRO 1380 imposed a ban on 14 items of Afghan Transit Trade which in a larger context constitute around 212 items, besides enforcement of a 100 percent bank guarantee.

The cargo goods were already covered under insurance guarantee and all the goods were going safely to Afghanistan for the last 13 years. He demanded the revoking of a 100 percent bank guarantee and the revival of the old insurance guarantee system.

He said instead of the imposition of a ban on transit trade items, concentration should be given to

improving monitoring and vigilance on the border to curb smuggling.

Coordinator PAJCCI said hundreds of trucks are illegally bringing different items including petroleum production, and food items from Iran daily which needed to be stopped. The measures taken for imposition of restriction on Pak-Afghan transit trade are hurting commerce in the region, he opined.

Zia Sarhadi also shared data on Pak-Afghan trade and mentioned a decline in volume during the last several years, a reduction to 1400 million dollars.

Both the countries, he continued, have set the target of increasing trade volume to dollar five billion which in prevailing circumstances looks impossible.

The delegation members apprised DG Transit Trade that around 40,000 heavy vehicles are lying idle due to a reduction in business and owners are facing losses in millions of rupees. Whereas thousands of companies dealing in custom clearing forwarding and transportation have been closed.

On this occasion, DG Transit held out assurance of giving due consideration to points raised by the business community, and said decisions would be taken with their consultation.

Pak's Chromium ore export to China increases by 32% in 2023

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chromium ore and concentrates have seen an increase in exports to China from Pakistan in recent years.

In 2023, exports increased by 32%, reaching \$117.68 million, compared to \$89.28 million the previous year, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Wednesday quoting sources from the Commerce Ministry. Ikram Ul Haq Sulehri, an economic expert, told CEN that the Pakistani government is keen to boost chromium ore exports to China.

He also mentioned that Pakistan's exports of chromium ore to China have been increased recently due to good quality and

competitive prices. There has been a huge demand in China in recent years.

"Pakistan has taken proactive measures to ensure the quality and consistency of its chromium ore exports. Stringent quality control standards, adherence to international regulations, and certification processes have enhanced the market reputation of Pakistani Chromium Ore, making it a preferred choice for Chinese manufacturers," he stated.

Sources also mentioned that China's total chromium ore import in 2023 was \$5.033 billion, while Pakistan's share in the total import was over \$117.68 million.

This is due to increased investment by Chinese companies in collaboration with local Pakistani companies and the rising demand for chromium ore products in China post-COVID-19.

This trend is expected to persist as both countries stand to gain from enhanced economic cooperation.

"Pakistan has been actively seeking foreign investments, particularly from huge Chinese companies, to add value and produce more valuable products for the global market.

Having Chinese companies invest in Pakistan would not only provide a boost to the country's economy but also open doors for advanced technologies and

Motorbikes, 3-wheelers sale decreased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The sale of motorbikes and three-wheelers in the country witnessed a decrease of 12.33 per cent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to sales of the corresponding months of the last year.

During July-January, as many as 646,440 motorbikes and three-wheelers were sold against the sale of 737,393 units in July-January (2022-23), according to the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA).

The sale of Honda motorcycles dipped by 8.22 per cent from 612,817 units to 562,440 units whereas the sale of Suzuki motorcycles witnessed a decrease of 61.40 per cent from 22,985 units to 8,870 units during the months under review.

Similarly, the sale of Yamaha motorbikes also went down from 7,577 units to 4,914 units while the sale of Road Prince motorbikes witnessed a sharp decline of 51.62 per cent from 19,706 units to 9,533 units.

The sales of United Auto motorcycles witnessed a decrease of 21.67 per cent from 61,260 units to 47,984 units.

Meanwhile, the sale of United Auto three-wheelers however surged from 937 units to 1,715 units showing growth of 83.03 per cent, while the sale of Sazgar three-wheelers also witnessed an increase of 21.90 per cent from 5,871 units to 7,157 units.

and loopholes that deters investment, stifles innovation and hinders jobs creation.

"Implementing comprehensive corporate tax reforms is essential to address these issues and propel Pakistan towards prosperity," he remarked.

Reducing corporate tax rates would make Pakistan more competitive globally besides attracting foreign investment and encouraging domestic businesses to expand.

Lower tax rates would also incentivize entrepreneurship and spur economic activity, ultimately leading to job creation and higher incomes, he said.

The PFC chief said that

simplifying the tax code and closing loopholes would enhance transparency and fairness, ensuring that all businesses contribute their fair share to the country's development. This would help broaden the tax base and reduce reliance on borrowing, leading to a more sustainable fiscal position in the long term, he added.

Introducing incentives for research and development, he said, green initiatives, and innovation would promote a more dynamic and resilient economy, positioning Pakistan as a hub for innovation and technological advancement in the region.

China stocks jump after rate cut as markets await US tech earnings

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Hong Kong and Shanghai stocks jumped Wednesday after Beijing's latest measures to boost the stuttering economy, but declines on Wall Street weighed on other Asian markets.

China's central bank rate-cut on Tuesday is among measures intended to rally dwindling growth as the world's second-largest economy battles a prolonged property-sector crisis and a global slowdown.

The People's Bank of China said it was lowering the five-year loan prime rate, used to price mortgages, from 4.2 to 3.95 percent -- the largest reduction since the key rate was revamped in 2019.

Hong Kong climbed 2.0 percent, peaking at 3.0 percent at the afternoon break, while Shanghai was up 1.0 percent at the close. Analysts said markets were likely having a delayed reaction to China's cut.

The picture was mixed elsewhere in Asia as investors await key US tech earnings with heavyweight Nvidia reporting later Wednesday and the Fed also releasing policy meeting minutes which will be parsed for clues on the outlook for rates. Sydney, Seoul, Taipei, Singapore, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur were all down. Japanese stocks were also lower as chip-linked shares dipped after Nvidia's slump ahead of its earnings report.

Recent losses in Tokyo have pushed the benchmark Nikkei 225 further from hitting its highest-ever close of 38,915.87, reached

in 1989. But Bloomberg reported "macro and stock hedge funds are betting on Japan this year", predicting the Bank of Japan will shift its nearly decade-long policy of negative rates.

US stocks closed lower Tuesday, with the tech-rich Nasdaq down nearly one percent ahead of chip giant Nvidia's highly anticipated results, with traders hoping it can meet high expectations driven by the AI sector and the firm's strong growth. "The company's results have become the biggest of the reporting period, acting as both a macroeconomic barometer and the proverbial canary in the coal mine for the artificial intelligence boom," Kyle Rodda, senior market analyst at Capital.Com Inc, told Bloomberg.

With its huge valuation, "the bar for an upside surprise is set high", he added. Nvidia was down about four percent on Tuesday, but its shares are still well up since the start of the year, with enthusiasm for AI-related firms having sent its stock price surging.

Chinese commercial banks see profits up 3.2%

BEIJING (APP): China's commercial banks reported a profit growth of 3.2 percent in 2023, data from the banking regulator showed on Wednesday. Net profits of commercial lenders hit 2.4 trillion yuan (about 338 billion US dollars), according to the National Financial Regulatory Administration. The capital adequacy ratio of the lenders (excluding foreign bank branches) was 15.06 percent at the end of December last year, an increase of 0.29 percentage points from the previous quarter ending September of the same year. The non-performing loan ratio of commercial banks stood at 1.59 percent at the end of the fourth quarter of 2023, down 0.02 percentage points from the end of September. The data also showed the total assets of China's banking industry reached 417.3 trillion yuan by the end of last year, up 9.9 percent year on year.

Imports of palm and soyabean oil decreased

ISLAMABAD (APP): Edible oil including soyabean and palm imports into the country during the first 07 months of the current financial year decreased by 49.85 per cent and 34.14 per cent respectively as compared to the imports of 4,332 metric tons worth \$3.67 million in the same period of last year.

During the period under review, food group exports from the country grew by 57.66 per cent as different food commodities valued at \$4.267 billion were exported as compared to the exports of \$2.706 million in the same period of last year.

On the other hand food group imports into the country during the first 07 months of the current financial year decreased by 21.09 per cent as food imports came down from \$5.983 billion in the first 08 months of the last financial year to \$4.721 billion during the same period of the

current financial year.

The imports of commodities including wheat decreased by 28.81 per cent, soya bean oil by 48.85 per cent, palm oil by 34.13 per cent and sugar by 42.75 per cent respectively.

It is worth mentioning here that the exports from the country witnessed an increase of 7.89 per cent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) compared to the corresponding period of last year.

According to the latest PBS data, exports from the country increased up to \$17.782 billion during July-January (2023-24) as against the exports of \$16.481 billion in July-January (2022-23), showing a growth of 7.89 per cent.

On the other hand, imports into the country declined by 14.11 per cent to \$30.949 billion this year against the imports of \$36.034 billion last year.



In brief

‘Stokes will bowl in fourth India Test’

RANCHI (AFP): There is “definitely a chance,” that England captain Ben Stokes will bowl in the fourth Test against India, his deputy Ollie Pope said Wednesday, in a badly needed boost for the tourists. England need a win in the Test starting Friday in Ranchi after successive losses put them 2-1 down in the five-match series. The 32-year-old all-rounder Stokes previously said he would play purely as a batsman in the series because of his knee, but bowled in the nets on Wednesday. He has struggled with his left knee for some time, stopping him bowling in the last three Ashes Tests in 2023 and the ODI World Cup. “There’s definitely a chance,” vice-captain Pope said of the probability that Stokes will bowl in the fourth Test. “He’s not confirmed it even in the changing room so we will see. He bowled at the bats- ters today,” he added. “See how he pulls up, and if that’s good, hopefully we will see him with the ball in hand in the game.” Stokes underwent knee surgery in November and has been working his way back towards full fitness. “If he’s got full confidence in his knee I guess you’ve got to trust the medical advice and trust his opinions as well,” added Pope. Stokes is a right-arm fast bowler who completed 100 Tests in England’s 434-run loss to India in the previous match. He is on 197 wickets, three short of becoming only the third man in five-day cricket with a double of 6,000 runs and 200 wickets. England are expected to rest pace bowlers James Anderson and Mark Wood for the match on a Ranchi pitch expected to help the spinners.

Kewell leads Yokohama

YOKOHAMA (AFP): Harry Kewell said Yokohama F-Marininos had achieved “something special” in his first home game in charge after beating Bangkok United 1-0 to reach the Asian Champions League quarter-finals on Wednesday. Yokohama progressed 3-2 on aggregate to set up a last-eight showdown with China’s Shandong Taishan and give Kewell a flying start to his career in Japan. The former Leeds and Liverpool forward left his job as a first-team coach at Scottish champions Celtic to take up the reins at Yokohama last month. He has led the club to their first-ever Champions League quarter-final and said he “knew the task when I took over.” “It was difficult but it makes it worth it when you do create something special for the club by progressing into the final eight,” said the 45-year-old. “We’re looking forward to the challenge.” Kewell took over when fellow Australian Kevin Muscat left at the end of last season following a successful stint in which he won the domestic J-League. Muscat was preceded at Yokohama by Ange Postecoglou, who left to join Celtic before moving on to Tottenham in the Premier League. Kewell won 58 caps for Australia, appearing at two World Cups and winning the 2005 Champions League with Liverpool. He has never reached the same heights as a manager in lower-league English foot- ball with Crawley Town, Notts County and Oldham. He was sacked by fifth-tier Barnet in 2021 after failing to win in his first seven matches as manager.

Sultans edge winless Qalandars to stay perfect in PSL 9

MULTAN (Monitoring Desk): Multan Sultans clinched a five-wicket victory over Lahore Qalandars to extend their winning streak while the holders succumbed to their third defeat on the trot in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 here on Wednesday.

Set to chase 167, the Sultans accumulated 170/5 with an over to spare, courtesy of Mohammad Rizwan’s anchoring half-century, followed by Ifthikhar Ahmed’s late fire-works.

The home side had a shaky start to the pursuit as they were reduced to 15/2 in 2.5 overs, courtesy of a sensational pace bowling display from the Qalandars. Skipper Mohammad Rizwan batted sensibly and put together a one-sided partnership with Yasir Khan (8). The third-wicket stand yielded 38 runs.

Rizwan was then joined by his deputy David Willey and the duo put Sultans in command with a magnifi- cent 75-run partnership.

Both batters appeared to have attained full control until Rizwan misfired a slog sweep off Zaman Khan and finally perished in the 17th over.

He remained the top- scorer for his side with a gutsy 82 off 59 deliveries, laced up with nine bound- aries and three sixes.

Willey followed Rizwan in the next over when Shaheen Shah Afridi trapped him lbw with a toe- crushing yorker after being hit for a gigantic six. Willey remained a notable contrib- utor with a 23-ball 25.

Later, Ifthikhar Ahmed



turned the game on its head with belligerent hitting and steered his side to glory with relative ease.

He smashed five bound- aries and two sixes on his way to an unbeaten 34 off 11 deliveries.

Shaheen and Zaman both bagged two wickets for the Qalandars while George Linde made one scalp.

The five-wicket victory strengthened Multan Sultans’ hold at the summit of the PSL 9 standings with six points in three matches while Lahore Qalandars remained at the rock bot- tom.

Opting to bat first, the Qalandars registered a for- midable total on the board, despite a dismal start to their innings.

The defending champi- ons lost their in-form opener, Sahibzada Farhan (2) in the second over, bowled by Mohammad Ali, with just three runs on the board.

Following the early debacle, van der Dussen joined Fakhar Zaman in the middle and the duo, batted sensibly to launch a recov- ery.

They added 94 runs for the second wicket in just 11 overs until van der Dussen

fell victim to Usama Mir, briefly after amassing his half-century.

He remained the top- scorer for the Qalandars with a 37-ball 54, smashing four boundaries and two sixes.

Fakhar then put together a brief partnership with Jahandad Khan, before finally perishing in the 16th over.

He scored 41 off 36 deliveries with the help of two boundaries and two sixes.

Later, all-rounders Sikandar Raza and Jahandad added valuable runs at the backend with brief cameos.

Raza scored 23 off 16 deliveries with the help of four boundaries while Jahandad made a nine-ball 16 which featured a six.

Carlos Brathwaite then gave a late push to the Qalandars’ total with a brisk 15. His eight-ball knock featured one bound- ary and a six.

Right-arm pacer Mohammad Ali, once again, led the bowling charge for Multan Sultans in PSL 9, picking up two wickets while Abbas Afridi and Usama Mir could take one apiece.

Babar leads PSL run chart with historic 3000 runs milestone

KARACHI (APP): Babar Azam, the renowned top-ranked batsman globally and former captain of the national cricket team, lead- ing Peshawar Zalmi, has emerged as the frontrunner in the race for the most runs in the ninth season of the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL), the world’s most popular cricket brand. As per the score sheet of the six matches played in the PSL until Wednesday, Azam achieved a historic milestone by becoming the first batsman to surpass 3000 runs in the HBL PSL. Azam achieved this record during his debut match of the season against Quetta Gladiators, where he scored 68 runs off 42 balls, aided by 4 sixes. In the match held in Lahore against Lahore Qalandars, Azam scored 72 runs.

Previously, Azam accu- mulated 2935 runs across 8 seasons spanning from 2016 to 2023. Displaying his batting prowess, he showcased his skills in 77 innings out of 79 matches for Islamabad United, Karachi Kings, and Peshawar Zalmi. His high- est individual score during this period was 115 runs.

In the current PSL Season 9, Azam continues to dominate the run chart, accumulating 140 runs individually across two matches. During his initial match on February 18 in Lahore, he scored 68 runs, followed by a remarkable performance on February 21 in the second match also held in Lahore, where he notched 72 runs, mark- ing his highest score this season thus far.

Multan Sultans’ South African player, Reeza Raphael Hendricks, secures the second position on the list with 137 runs in two matches. His highest indi- vidual score stands at 79 not out. In third place is Sahibzada Farhan of Lahore Qalandars, who has accumulated 119 runs. Agha Salman of Islamabad United follows closely in fourth place with 116 runs, while Saud Shakeel of Quetta Gladiators secures fifth place with 114 runs.

Pakistan’s Naseem, Awais win matches in Asian Men Snooker



ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan’s Muhammad Naseem Akhtar and Awais Ullah Munir win matches in the ACBS Asian Men Snooker Championship 2024 at Doha, Qatar.

In the Pre Quarter

Matches, Muhammad

Naseem Akhtar (Pak) beat

Chau Hon Man (Hong

Kong) 4-3 (124-11, 35-57,

18-64, 60-49, 100-0(86), 4-86, 95-04) while Awais Ullah Munir (Pak) beat Pankaj Advani (India) 4-2 (07-64, 87-06(60), 64-51, 04-74, 128-04(112), 58-46).

In matches played on Tuesday, Muhammad Naseem Akhtar (Pak) beat Farid Barati (Afg) 4-1 (71-44), 69-30, 35-55, 75-07(55), 74-23(54) while Awais Ullah Munir (Pak) bt Khaled Alastai (Palestine) 4-1 (67-06, 75-08, 54-61(61), 67-25(67), 72-0).

The quarterfinals and semifinals would be played on Thursday while the final on Friday.

Pakistan’s Ahmed, Ahtesham move in ITF World Junior quarterfinals

ISLAMABAD (APP):

Pakistan’s Ahmed Nael

Qureshi and Ahtesham

Humayun moved in boys

singles quarterfinals of the

ITF Pakistan Zainab Ali

Naqvi Memorial World

Junior Championship Leg- 2

here at PTF-SDA Tennis

Complex on Wednesday.

Ahmed and Ahtesham

downed their opponents in

boys singles and moved

into the quarterfinals of the

championship.

In boys singles pre-quar-

terfinals, Jacob Kailiang

Shen (HKG) beat Xiuyuan

guo (CHN) 4-6,6-4,6-1;

Jiwan Park (KOR) beat

Doruk Elbirlik (TUR) 4-

6,6-0,6-0; Kaigaoge

Kang(CHN) beat Bilal

Asim (PAK) 6-2,6-4; Dong

Hyeon Euom (KOR) beat

Amir Mazari (PAK) 6-1,6-

0; Shijie Chen (CHN) beat

Hamid Israr (PAK) 6-2,6-4;

Ahmed Nael Qureshi

(PAK) beat Makarov

(RUS) 3-0 (Retd);

Ahtesham Humayun (PAK)

beat Ilya Kryukov (RUS) 4-

0 (Retd); Oscar Reilly

(NED) beat Hamza Aasim

(PAK) 7-6(5), 6-4.

In girls singles pre-quar-

terfinals, Stefaniya Neporent

(BLR) beat Deniz Cakil

(TUR) 7-5,6-3; Gehansa

Methndi (SRI) beat Sheeza

Sajid (PAK) 6-2,6-1;

Ekatrenia Pestereva (RUS)

beat Hinru Zhong (CHN) 6-

2,7-6(2); Chaewon Whang

(KOR) beat Lidia

Ratobylskaya (RUS) 6-1,6-

0;Paramee Tackaew (THA)

6-0,6-1; Katsiaryna Dubik

(BLR) beatJosefa Beatrice

(PHI) 6-1,6-0; Kira

Kalinouskaya (BLR) beat

Dicle Izgi (TUR) 6-1,6-3.

In boys doubles quarter-

finals, Dong Hyeon Euom

(KOR), Jiwan Park (KOR)

beat Kieran Lin (USA),

Ivan Makarov (RUS) 6-3,6-

3; Hamid Israr (PAK),

Papangkorn Bunyarit

(THA) beat Howard Chen

(HKG), Xiuyuan Guo 6-

4,6-1; Bilal Asim, Ahmed

Nael Qureshi(PAK) beat

Ulad Dalbusin (RUS), Ilya

Kryukov(RUS) 6-3,6-1.

In girls doubles quarter-

finals, Ekatrenia

Pestereva(RUS), Stefaniya

Neporent (BLR) beat Kira

David, Marsh propel Australia to thrilling T20 win over New Zealand



WELLINGTON (AFP): Tim David hit a four off the last ball to give Australia a nail- biting six-wicket victory over New Zealand in the first Twenty20 international in Wellington on Wednesday.

Having been set 216 to win, Australia skipper Mitchell Marsh hammered 72 off 44 balls before batting partner David (31 not out) sealed a thrilling last-gasp victory. “I thought we were done, to be honest,” admit- ted the relieved Marsh.

“Timmy David is extremely calm and had a lot of confidence in his ability towards the end. We are very lucky to have him. It was a great game of cricket.” The three-match series is the last for both teams before the T20 World Cup in the United States and West Indies in June.

Rachin Ravindra had earlier put New Zealand in

the driving seat by hitting 68 runs off 35 balls to claim his first half-century in the format as the hosts finished on 215-3.

Marsh finished with best bowling figures of 1-21 before leading the charge with the bat, hitting seven sixes and two fours in his unbeaten knock. The cap- tain steadied his side after they lost openers Travis Head and David Warner early on. Head went for 24, caught by Tim Southee off the bowling of Adam Milne.

Veteran Warner followed for 32 in the sixth over, caught by Glenn Phillips. Having criticised New Zealand fans in the build- up, Warner blew kisses at the crowd as he was booted off the pitch. Marsh built a partnership of 42 for the third wicket with Glenn Maxwell, who was clean- bowled by Lockie Ferguson

on 25 to leave Australia 111-3 after 10 overs.

New Zealand’s fielding let them down in the 12th over as Southee missed a catch off Josh Inglis, then Phillips dropped Marsh next ball on the boundary.

Inglis was dismissed with three overs left and Australia on 172-4 when he skied his shot to Ravindra at deep backward square leg. Inglis made 20.

The game went to the wire after New Zealand seamer Adam Milne was smashed for 19 runs in the penultimate over.

Australia needed 15 from the last six balls, but David held his nerve by smashing a six before send- ing the final ball of the night to the boundary past a diving Phillips.

“I thought we didn’t bowl too bad, but the power they possess all the way down is the reason why they are pretty good.” New Zealand captain Mitchell Santer said of Australia.

“We had a pretty good score, but we know they keep coming with the bat. The only way to stop them is to take wickets and we didn’t really do that.”

The series moves to Auckland with the next two T20 internationals both to be played at Eden Park, on Friday and Sunday, before a two-Test series.

Sarfraz lauds Amir’s return in national cricket team

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan’s wicketkeeper-bats- man Sarfraz Ahmed has lauded the fast bowler’s exceptional performance during season nine of the Pakistan Super League (PSL).

Amir, who has claimed two wickets in two matches for Quetta Gladiators, has earned praise from Ahmed for his impressive death bowling skills, proving to be a valuable asset for the team.

Talking to a private news channel, Sarfraz Ahmed emphasized Amir’s significant impact on the team, noting his experience and exceptional bowling prowess in T20 cricket. Ahmed expressed his belief in Amir’s potential return to the national team, affirming that the pacer still has much to offer.

While cautiously optimistic about Quetta Gladiators’ performance in PSL 9, Ahmed acknowledged the team’s early success with two consecutive wins. He highlighted the importance of maintaining the current team combination for favorable outcomes in upcoming matches.

Addressing his role as Quetta’s captain, Ahmed expressed contentment and enjoyment in leading the team, replacing South African Riley Russo. He commended Russo’s leadership while expressing confidence in the team’s over- all performance under his guidance.

Shoaib Malik’s first-ball wicket gave Karachi Kings momentum: Hasan Ali

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Karachi Kings’ pacer Hasan Ali hailed Shoaib Malik for providing positive momentum to the team, leading them to a comfortable victory over Peshawar Zalmi in the sixth match of the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9.

Hasan, while speaking at the post-match press confer- ence after Karachi Kings’ seven-wicket victory over Peshawar Zalmi, opened up on the teams’ strategy of bowl- ing slower deliveries in the early phase of the innings.

“Look, we always plan after accessing the conditions. So, as per the conditions, the change of pace was very essential and we were aware as a bowling unit that they

possess such batters, who can hit big,” said Hasan.

“If you talk about Shoaib bhai, I think he gave us the momentum by taking a wicket on the first delivery. So, in T20, the early momentum gives confidence to the bowl- ing unit and the team approach the game more dominantly,” he added.

Hasan Ali further com- mented on his bowling per- formance for Karachi Kings, stating that he was satisfied with the way he bowled.

“My recent performances [for Pakistan] were not that good. I played well in the World Cup but in the recent Test series, could not pick many wickets.

“However, as far as PSL is

concerned, I always consider it as an opportunity to prove myself. I am very satisfied with my [current] perform- ance, there are still eight matches left and then playoffs. So, I’m confident that such performances will keep on coming.” The right-arm pacer also opened up on his trade from Islamabad United to Karachi Kings and heaped praise on his new team’s cap- tain Shan Masood. “I am very happy to become a part of Karachi Kings. I still miss Roti Group, one of its members hit me for a six today. “Shan is a brilliant player. He just got the captain- cy of Pakistan and he’s getting better day by day and he’s a good man.”

We focus on every batter, not a single one” says Shamsi

KARACHI (APP): Karachi Kings’ left-arm wrist spinner Tabraiz Shamsi praised Peshawar Zalmi’s captain Babar Azam ahead of the two sides’ clash in the ongoing HBL PSL 9, however, he asserted that his team focuses on every player.

“The performance of previous seasons is now a thing of the past, even if you are a champion, you still have to start from zero,” said Tabraiz Shamsi while talking to the media ahead of Karachi Kings’ second match in the HBL PSL 9.

“We have a new management this season and the team environment is good. We are training hard and it will bore fruits in the next games. Shamsi praised Babar Azam but also mentioned that Zalmi also have other good players and Karachi Kings are focusing on each one of them.

“Babar Azam is a special player who performs around the world at the highest stage, but he’s not the only batsman in the team. “There’s not only a single player that we focus on. There are so many other good players in the team. Shamsi also praised the quality of cricket in the PSL, say- ing, “It is a top-quality tournament. Pakistan always pro- duces good fast bowlers and PSL is a good platform for young talented players to showcase their skills.”

Lastly, he expressed his excitement to play in front of the Lahore crowd in the upcoming match between Karachi Kings and Peshawar Zalmi. “I have played one match for South Africa in Lahore but it was during the COVID-19 days.

active.

The ceremony unveiled the Winner Trophy and screened a documentary film showcasing the rally’s anthem. The event also highlighted the history and culture of the Cholistan Desert, the historical palaces of Bahawalpur, historical buildings, historical backgrounds, tourism, and culture through beautiful cultural dances in addition to light and sound shows.

Earlier, shields were distributed to the organiz- ers and racers of the rally by the Commissioner of Bahawalpur Division. A magnificent fireworks dis- play was also part of the event.

Deputy Commissioner Bahawalpur Zaheer Anwar Jappa, Project Director DHA Bahawalpur Brigadier Naveed Iqbal, District Police Officer Bahawalpur Syed Muhammad Abbas, offi- cials, participants and racers attended the ceremony.



ty, and rich cultural and tourism events.

He said that the rally attracts many tourists from Pakistan and around the world to Bahawalpur every year. The commis- sioner also revealed that the rally will feature races in 7 categories. He announced that the prize money for international racers would be set to be in dollars in the upcoming years.

Addressing the ceremo- ny, Managing Director of

Tourism Development Corporation of Punjab (TDCP) Humaira Akram emphasized the significant role the Cholistan Desert Rally and its important role in the social and eco- nomic development of the region. She mentioned that this year, drivers from Saudi Arabia, the UK, Afghanistan, Iran, and the USA are also participating in the rally.

She further revealed that the women’s category has been made more



In brief

Int'l Mother Language Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): International Mother Language Day is being observed on Wednesday to promote cultural and linguistic diversity. The theme this year is "Multilingual education is a pillar of intergenerational learning". International Mother Language Day was proclaimed by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in November 1999. The idea to celebrate International Mother Language Day was the initiative of Bangladesh. The UN General Assembly welcomed the proclamation of the day in its resolution of 2002.

Mushfiq Khwaja remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 19th death anniversary of Urdu poet, literary columnist, critic and distinguished researcher Mushfiq Khwaja was observed on Wednesday. Mushfiq Khwaja's original name was Khwaja Abdul Hai and he was born in Lahore. After securing M.A degree in Urdu from Karachi University, he got associated with 'Anjuman Taraqi Urdu'. Affiliation with 'Anjuman Taraqi Urdu' ignited Mushfiq Khwaja's personality and he carried out many important research achievements from this platform. In the 1980s, Mushfiq Khwaja started writing a literary column under the pen name of 'Khama Bagosh', which created a sensation in the entire subcontinent. All his life, Mushfiq Khwaja remained engaged in purely academic and research writing and compilation. Among his famous works and compilations are 'Tazkira-i-Khush Marka-i-Zaiba', 'Ghalib and Safer Bilgrami', 'Jaiza-e-Makhtootat-e-Urdu', 'Khama Bagosh Ke Qalam Se', 'Sukhan Dar Sukhan', 'Sukhan Haay Na Guftani', 'Sukhan Haay Gustarana', 'Aabiyat(poetry collection)' and Kulliyat-E-Yagana'.

ANF recovers 253 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 253 kg drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He said, 68 kg opium and 72 kg hashish were recovered from two suspects near Ring Road Peshawar. 80 kg Ice was recovered from Nokundi Road Chagai and 9 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects arrested near Hayatabad Toll Plaza Peshawar. He said that a raid was conducted in Labour Colony Peshawar and 9 kg hashish was recovered from two accused while 8 kg hashish was seized from GT Raod Peshawar and an accused was netted during the operation. 6 kg hashish was seized from Zakhakhel Khyber, the spokesman said and informed that separate cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

Police arrest two bike lifters

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two bike lifters and recovered four stolen motorcycles from their possession, said a Police spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that a team under the supervision of SHO, Dhamial Police Station managed to net two bike lifters namely Aliya Pitras and Ehtesham and recovered four stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council & Special Assistant for interfaith Harmony, Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi addressing a Press conference during the "Misaq-e-Pakistan Convention".

Renovation of nursing hostel, college to be completed at Rs 725m

RAWALPINDI (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister of Primary and Secondary Healthcare and Population Welfare Dr. Jamal Nasir on Wednesday said that renovation of the nursing hostel and college would be completed at the cost of Rs 725 million.

He said this while laying the foundation stone of the renovation of the nursing hostel and college at the District Headquarters Hospital, Rawalpindi.

The minister said that along with providing quality health facilities to the public, measures were also

being taken for the welfare of the medical staff. Vice Chancellor Rawalpindi Medical University Dr. Muhammad Umar, Medical Superintendent DHQ Hospital Rawalpindi Dr. Farzana and other officers were also present on the occasion.

Police arrest five kite makers, sellers with a large number of kites

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi District Police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi are making efforts to control kite flying and managed to arrest five kite makers and sellers on recovery of a large number of kites, string rolls and kites making material, said a police spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed, Waris Khan Police conducted a raid and arrested five accused namely Semab alias Mani King, Shahzaib, Ibrahim, Numan and Zubair and recovered a large number of kites and kites making material from their possession. Superintendent of Police, Rawal, Faisal Saleem said the operation against the rules violators would continue without any discrimination.

The spokesman said that the Divisional Superintendents of Police had directed the police teams to accelerate operations against kite sellers and flyers. Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi said that strict action in accordance with the law would be taken against the violators and they would be sent behind the bars.

PTSM providing guidance to tourists for safe journey

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Punjab Tourism Squad Murree (PTSM) provides comprehensive guidance and awareness to domestic and foreign tourists making their journey safe and enjoyable.

Punjab Secretary Tourism Raja Jahangir Anwar said that information and assistance could also be obtained by calling the Tourism Squad helpline number-1421 to avoid any untoward incidents, said a news release issued here on Wednesday.

He said Punjab Tourism Squad team were checking the vehicle's details on the various routes by advising the driver and his family members that it was not suitable to stay in the vehicle as there was a risk of accumulating carbon monoxide which is a health and safety hazard. For guidance on tourism in Malika Kohsar Murree, information could be acquired from the Punjab Tourism Squad team at the tourist spot.

Madad Sindhi directs NAVTTC to increase quota for disables, transgenders

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi on Wednesday directed the chairperson NAVTTC to increase the quota for disables and transgenders in all programs.

He was chairing Steering Committee meeting of the Prime Minister's Youth Skill Development Program (PMYSDP) at Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training.

The caretaker minister said that the meeting played a pivotal role in facilitating essential discussions to propel the program's objectives forward. He further said that this was the second meeting of NAVTTC steering committee under his tenure as minister. He pointed out that this is also the second meeting in five years. He highlighted the importance of this committee meeting. The caretaker minister said that in the last meeting, he had increased the quota for women which has been implemented in letter and spirit.

Madad Ali said that domain of NAVTTC should be expanded to provinces to achieve the progress.

He was of view that it would be prudent to include universities for increasing scope of NAVTTC in future.

He took notice of the absence of Secretary Education Punjab and Sindh.

Meanwhile, the Executive Director NAVTTC/Secretary of the Committee, Muhammad Aamir Jan briefed the committee on the current status and progress of PMYSDP 2023-24 project, achievements and outlining future goals.

A significant decision was made regarding the High-Tech IT and High-End IT Training Components.

The committee endorsed the consolidation and strategic reallocation of seats, not only to enrich industrial training opportunities but also to lay the groundwork for a groundbreaking collaboration with esteemed universities like COMSATS, NUST, NUML, and NSU to facilitate the pilot project being implemented with the Federal Directorate of Education.

This collaborative effort is crafted to launch High-Impact IT Training with 16 FDE Colleges, intending to bridge the gap between academia and industry. The initiative aims to provide cutting-edge IT skills to the youth, ensuring their relevance in the ever-evolving job market, he told.

Waseem Ajmal, Secretary Ministry of Federal Education, endorsed the pilot program and emphasized that the modalities may be formulated with the help of Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) and Pakistan IT Industry Association (P@SHA). In a bid to streamline implementation, the committee sanctioned the exemption of Bank/Insurance Guarantee for TEVTA, PVTC, PWDs, and other public institutes excluding public sector universities. Furthermore, various courses under the program, spanning High-Tech IT, High-End IT Training Component, Hospitality, Languages, Care Workers, and Gym/Sports Trainer, will now confer international certification, thereby enhancing the global recognition of the program.

Ms. Gulmina Bilal Ahmad, chairperson NAVTTC, expressed optimism about the program, and said, "We aspire for these 56,000 youth to become valuable assets for the country. Our initiatives are geared towards inclusivity, accommodating youth from all strata of society."

She highlighted NAVTTC's active action for transgender and persons with disabilities (PWDs), offering exemptions from criteria approved by the steering committee and NAVTTC. In another significant initiative focusing on High-Impact Trainings in globally IT skills demand such as AI, Data Science, and Blockchain, Ms. Gulmina Bilal Ahmad noted, "Our pilot program, catering to 500 to 700 youth in collaboration with FDE Colleges, aims to provide skill training to the youth, enhancing their prospects for better global job opportunities and contributing to the country's remittances. We are introducing international certifications for IT programs to boost the global recognition and consumption of Pakistani youth."

SOCPA hosts IMA accounting student case competition

ISLAMABAD (SPA/APP): The Saudi Organization for Chartered and Professional Accountants (SOCPA) announced its partnership in organizing and hosting the "2024 Student Case Competition" organized annually by the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) for accounting students from various universities across the Middle East and Africa.

For the first time, applications will be accepted in Arabic as part of SOCPA efforts to enhance knowledge in the field of management accounting.

This reflects the organization's commitment to engaging students to enrich their knowledge and refine their skills, underscoring the Kingdom's strong commitment to human capacity development to achieve global competitiveness.

The Saudi Organization for Chartered and Professional Accountants (SOCPA) indicated that the competition aims to analyze and evaluate problems related to this field, encouraging the innovation of quality solutions through teams consisting of 3 to 5 members who present a case study for a company.

SOCPA also noted that the competition offers valuation financial prizes to the winning teams, in addition to numerous benefits, including grants to take the Certified Management Accountant (CMA) exam.

Announcing the participation requirements for the competition, the organization stated that eligible students must be enrolled in full-time bachelor's or graduate programs at the same university or college. Each participating group must designate a leader and have a faculty advisor from the same university or college. And each eligible college or university can select multiple teams, consisting of three to five members.

SOCPA confirmed that the final deadlines for registration and submission of solutions is March 10, with the evaluation of solutions and selection of nominated teams on April 15. The final competition will take place in Riyadh on May 1.

Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Media

ISLAMABAD (APP): Executive Director Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr Zia Ul Qayyum on Wednesday attended the International Media Conference at the University of Sargodha as chief guest to facilitate discussions among academia, media experts, and researchers on the role of Artificial Intelligence in Media. The International

Media Conference, held jointly by the Association of Media & Communication Academic Professionals and Sargodha University.

The conference, titled "Artificial Intelligence and Media: A Force of Colonisation or Empowerment," aimed to facilitate discussions among academia, media experts, and researchers regarding the constructive and destructive roles of AI in media.

During his visit, Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum also toured the newly established Waheed Wain Incubation Centre and the renovated Wazir Agha Library at the University of Sargodha, showcasing the institution's commitment to innovation and academic excellence.

Delegation of 39th MCMC visits DC office

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of the 39th Mid-Career Management Course (MCMC) Peshawar visited the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration Deputy Commissioner's (DC) Office here on Wednesday.

According to a spokesman of ICT, Dr Abdullah Tabasum, the delegation was warmly welcomed by the DC Islamabad, Rana Waqas Anwar.

During the session, the DC, on behalf of the Chief Commissioner's Office, shed light on the workings of the ICT administration. The delegation was also given a comprehensive overview of the various departments within the administration and briefed them on the pivotal role played by the district administration in Islamabad. Expressing gratitude for the briefing,

the team from Peshawar's 39th MCMC commended the efforts of the District Administration in Islamabad. The exchange of knowledge and experiences was marked by mutual appreciation and a shared commitment to effective governance. On the occasion, DC Islamabad also presented a special shield to the head of the visiting delegation.

The visit aimed at a platform for dialogue and learning, allowing mid-career managers from Peshawar to gain valuable insights into the functioning of the Islamabad district administration.

It highlighted the significance of inter-provincial exchanges in promoting cross-cultural understanding and enhancing administrative capabilities nationwide.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindhi chaired the steering committee meeting of NAVTTC.

Turkey detains 40 Afghans

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Turkish Coast Guard has announced the detention of 42 Afghan refugees, including 15 children, in the city of Izmir, Turkey. According to reports, these refugees were apprehended from a plastic boat in the Dikili area of Izmir. According to the command teams of the Turkish Coast Guard, these refugees were deemed “illegal” and were referred to the Foreign Nationals Return Center in Izmir after identification.

The Frontier Post

Shabaan 11, 1445 — Thursday, February 22, 2024

Balkh businessman rescued

KABUL (Pajhwok): Security forces have rescued a businessman within two hours of being kidnapped in northern Balkh province. In a statement, the police headquarters said security forces rescued Fawad Akbarzada from his kidnappers in the 6th police district of Mazar-i-Sharif on late Tuesday night. Akbarzada was abducted from his house in limits of 8th police district earlier in the day. But two hours later, the security forces freed and reunited him with his family.

Progress made to facilitate mining of Mes Aynak

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (MoMP) said that progress has been made to begin mining of the Mes Aynak copper mine in Logar. According to MoMP, steps have been taken forward to remove current obstacles and provide facilities for the Chinese company, and that soon extraction from Mes Aynak will start.

According to the Mines Ministry, the site in Logar has been estimated to hold over 11.5 million tons (metric) of copper.

“Challenges have been nearly addressed and we have had consecutive meetings with the Chinese company and we are in negotiations to address some problems and provide conditions for the commencement of the major economic project,” said Hamayoon Afghan, the spokesman of

the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum. This large mine is located 40 kilometers to the southeast of Kabul in Logar province, which contains the world’s second-largest copper reserve and is considered a major source of Afghanistan’s natural wealth.

“Until there is the transfer of and protection of historical monuments, we have more work to be done, the construction of an electricity plant and a road and an airport are also planned there,” said Zabihullah Mujahid the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate. “It can be extraordinary for income and the productive aspect and the aspect of... macro-economics and political connections in the region, it can play a great role,” said Sayed Masoud, an economist.

“If the mines, especially the mines where there are historical remains, are

extracted, it will be that a big investment for Afghanistan,” Abdul Nasir Rishtia another economist.

The Afghanistan Chamber of Industries and Mines said that facilities have been provided for the extraction of this mine and if the work of extracting starts, it will provide work for thousands of people.

“The commencement of the Mes Aynak mine will provide good income both in terms of job creation and other economic areas,” said Sakhi Ahmad Paiman, the deputy of the Chamber of Mines and Industries.

A contract for the Mes Aynak mine was signed with the Chinese MCC company for 30 years of extraction from 1999 but was not commenced for various reasons, including the discovery of ancient artifacts in this area during the previous government.

Ghani perform Umrah

KABUL (Khaama Press): Ashraf Ghani, the former President of Afghanistan who had settled in the United Arab Emirates after his controversial escape, has received permission to travel to Saudi Arabia for the first time.

Videos circulating on social media show Ashraf Ghani during the Umrah pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia.

Bilal Sarwari, an independent journalist wrote on his social media platform X that Mr. Ghani was seen in Saudi Arabia.

In the published videos, it can be seen that the former President of Afghanistan is performing the Tawaf around the Kaaba wearing the special attire for pilgrims.

Ashraf Ghani fled Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, and has since been residing in the United Arab Emirates.

His escape has been described as “scandalous” and is also one of the key reasons that led to the collapse of the republic system in Afghanistan.

Mr. Ghani and his wife, Rula Ghani, are accused of transferring about \$169 million from the reserves of the Afghan bank to the United Arab Emirates during their escape from Afghanistan.

It has been almost two and a half years since Ashraf Ghani fled, and during this time, he has not traveled anywhere and has lived in seclusion due to severe international criticism.

However, according to the latest reports, Saudi Arabia has allowed former president Ashraf Ghani to travel to the country.

IE welcomes foreign investment

KABUL (BNA): Dr. Mullah Abdul Wasay, the General Director of the Administrative Office of the Prime Minister, expressed the Islamic Emirate’s aspiration for positive engagement with foreign traders and investors.

This statement was made during a meeting with Mikhail Alexandrovich Malchenov, the head of the international company “Khemprom Service,” and Syed Amin Syed Mohammad Vich, the head of the Russian international company “Gidromash,” who visited Kabul.

During the meeting, Malchenov expressed interest in investing in waste collection and packaging in Kabul city, installing 14 turbine bases with the capacity to produce 130 megawatts of electricity, and systematizing the electronic governance sector.

He stated that gas, electricity, and chemical fertilizer could be produced from the collected waste.

Vich, on the other hand, showed interest in investing in the production of drinking water and the extraction and refining of oil in Afghanistan.

Both company officials expressed their readiness to train Afghan specialists in Afghanistan and Russia, further emphasizing their commitment to the country’s development.

Dr. Wasay affirmed that the Islamic Emirate seeks positive engagement with traders and investors from all countries.

He assured that the necessary conditions and facilities would be provided for them, and they would receive the support they need.

UN-sponsored meetings on Afghanistan: IEA’s absence does not mean relations strained

KABUL (Khaama Press): Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs Mawlawi Abdul Kabir says the Islamic Emirate wants a meaningful presence in future UN-sponsored meetings on Afghanistan.

A day after the two-day Doha meeting wrapped up, Kabir said the IEA’s absence at the meeting did not mean Kabul’s relations with the international community are “gloomy”.

Kabir said the IEA is trying to have a “positive and meaningful” presence in future UN meetings.

In a meeting with the Japanese ambassador, Kabir said the Islamic Emirate had been ready to attend the Doha meeting but had set conditions.

He said the “designers” of the meeting missed this opportunity.

He also welcomed the UN Secretary General’s decision about the need for



more meetings in future and said the IEA “views” these meetings favorably.

Meanwhile, the head of the IEA’s political office in Doha Suhail Shaheen said in an audio message that the reason for the Islamic Emirate’s absence at this week’s meeting was that

the conditions they had set were not met.

“We did not participate in the Doha meeting because the conditions were not accepted.”

Representatives of more than 25 countries attended the meeting that was held in Doha on Monday and

Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference, Antonio Guterres, the Secretary General of the United Nations, said participants discussed “creating conditions in the next meeting for the presence of the ruling authorities of Afghanistan”.

‘Islamic Emirate committed to implementing social justice’

KABUL (TOLONews): On the World Day of Social Justice, the Islamic Emirate said that it is committed to implementing justice in society. Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic Emirate, said that efforts are being made to take effective steps in connection with providing social justice.

Mujahid said: “More effective steps will be taken in social justice and poverty eradication, and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is committed to this issue.”

Meanwhile, some citizens of the country said that social justice in the country is not fully provided, and the Islamic Emirate should pay serious attention to this issue. “The United Nations is the founder and promoter

of social justice but currently they look at this issue very recklessly, and we witness this every day. It has been two and a half years since a large group of Afghan women were put into political, social, and cultural isolation,” Noor Rahman Amiri, a Kabul resident told TOLONews.

“Social justice is not considered by the government, for example, currently we see that all the women in our country were deprived of education,” said Frozan Hanan, a Kabul resident. “Regarding justice among members of the society, for example, the poor and rich class in our country, their justice is not the same. Providing social justice is the responsibility of the Islamic Emirate,” said Abdul Qayel, another



Kabul resident.

The question is how we can provide social justice in a better way in the country?

“Social justice can be provided when several points are taken into account. The first point is that the ruler and the subjects should be considered the same, that is, the class

system based on the accepted principles of Islam and other principles should be the same,” said Zia Yousofi, a politician.

In 2007, the 20th of February was designated as the World Day of Social Justice by the United Nations in order to combat poverty and discrimination.

MOIC announces signing of 22 agreements



KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce (MOIC) has signed 22 memoranda of agreement with a total value of \$3.5 million dollars with the aim of supporting and spreading small and big businesses in the country.

These memoranda have been signed with domestic institutions and will be implemented in 14 provinces.

The spokesman of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Akhundzada Abdul Salam Jawad, said that more than 6,000 people will directly benefit from these projects.

The spokesman said: “In this meeting, agreements were signed with 22 institutions worth more than \$3.5 million dollars for the growth and development of small and medium-sized businesses, and it is

planned that projects will be implemented in different sectors in 14 provinces, and about 6,000 people will benefit directly.”

Meanwhile, the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI) said that for the growth of small and large businesses in the country, it is necessary for the Islamic Emirate to provide more facilities in the tax and transit sectors.

Mirwais Hotak, head of the board of directors at ACCI, said: “We welcome all movements that lead to the growth of the private sector and the development and growth of the country’s economy and we support it within the limits of our capabilities. Supporting small businesses, which are important in our country, can be effective in creating jobs and preventing poverty and unemployment.”

Some economic analysts called the small businesses an important part of the country’s economy and emphasized more support in this sector.

“Increasing the trade balance, creating job opportunities and increasing the country’s exports are dependent on the growth and support of small and medium businesses.

Therefore, the providing government facilities for small and medium enterprises can be very important and vital,” said Abdul Zohor Mudaber, an economic analyst.

According to the statistics of MOIC, during the past two years, 63 memorandums have been signed between the ministry and domestic institutions worth \$54.5 million, which have provided employment for more than 641,000 people in 25 provinces.

Mediamen sin by shaving beards, taking photos



KABUL (Khaama Press): The head of the Public Invitation and Guidance Department of the de facto administration stated that many media employees still commit a major sin by shaving their beards.

Mohammad Hashem Shahid Wror, the head of the Public Invitation and Guidance Department of the Taliban, said on Tuesday, February 20th in a meeting, that growing a beard is obligatory and should not be trimmed.

He said, “Media employees should also keep their beards and refrain from shaving.”

He further stated that

media employees also commit a major sin by taking pictures.

He emphasized that media employees should not waste all their time on photography, as taking pictures is a major sin and they will be held accountable before God in the Hereafter.

He added, “Media employees are our Afghan compatriots, but they are persistently committing the sin of shaving their beards and are more focused on corruption.”

Earlier, the governor of the Taliban in Kandahar recently issued a written directive to all institutions

and authorities of the Taliban in this province, prohibiting any photography of formal and informal meetings and ceremonies.

Mullah Shirin Akhund, the governor of the Taliban in Kandahar, instructed in this written directive, which has been published on social media and some media outlets, that national and military officials of the Taliban government in this province should refrain from taking pictures and photographing their “human being” at formal and informal gatherings.

Traffic accidents killed over 1,600 in 10 months, says officials

KABUL (TOLONews): The General Directorate of Traffic said that over 1,600 people died and more than 4,000 more were injured due to traffic accidents in the past ten months.

Officials at the directorate added that 976 of the fatalities are men, 192 are women and 447 are children.

“Around three thousand

and 45 traffic accidents took place across the country which killed and injured a large number of people in the past ten months. We have programs underway to decrease the number of accidents in the country, which will be implemented across cities and highways,” said Abdul Wodud Khair Khwa, head of plans and policies at the directorate.

People and drivers believe that the absence of traffic signals and signs have led to a rise in the number of traffic accidents while the carelessness of drivers has also contributed to the numbers of accidents.

“People are in trouble for the lack of traffic signals in the country. The signals will help decrease traffic and traffic accidents,” said Naweed, a Kabul resident.

“People have given bribes for getting driving licenses during the previous government. It is not professional drivers that have caused an increase in the number of traffic accidents,” said Attaullah, a driver.

Nadim criticizes meetings held abroad on Afghanistan

KABUL (TOLONews): The Acting Minister of Higher Education, Neda Mohammad Nadim, in a seminar in Kabul criticized the holding of meetings on Afghanistan abroad, saying that what is raised about women’s rights in these meetings is not correct.

Speaking during the seminar, Nadim said that now more than ever, women’s rights are protected in the country.

“Shamelessly, meetings are held abroad in which concerns are expressed about the situation

in Afghanistan. Their participants also talk about the violation of women’s rights in Afghanistan. The Islamic Emirate has paid much attention to the rights and dignity of women in the country that no one in the world has paid attention to at this level,” he said.

According to Nadim, the current government is facing many problems and efforts are being made to eliminate challenges.

The Acting Minister of Education, Sayed Habibullah Agha, who was a participant in the seminar, said that if Islamic

laws are properly followed by the citizens, the current government will be strengthened.

“We who are in charge of inviting people, must do so based on ethics and the Prophet’s (PBUH) method; Because through this, our Islamic system can become strong and stable in the country,” the acting minister of education added.

In meetings about Afghanistan, concerns are expressed about the violation of women’s rights in Afghanistan, especially their right to work and education.



SHC orders govt to restore social media platforms in country

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Wednesday directed the federal government and the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority (PTA) to restore services of social media platforms including X, formerly known as Twitter, across Pakistan.

The order was issued by SHC bench, headed by SHC Chief Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, on a petition against the "unconstitutional" internet outages across the country in recent days. The court also summoned report from PTA for suspending internet services on election day and issued notice to federal government.

Social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter, continues to remain inaccessible to users in Pakistan after internet watchdog groups started to report outages on Saturday. NetBlocks, an organisation that monitors accessibility issues on the internet, On February 17 confirmed that

a "national-scale disruption" has hit X in Pakistan in the aftermath of widespread protests in the country triggered by the alleged vote rigging in general elections.

PTI-backed Independent candidates consolidated their lead in the Pakistan general elections 2024 over mainstream political parties, especially in the National and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assemblies, throughout the result announcement process. According to the results announced so far, PTI-backed independent candidates have managed to win 92 seats. PML-N is in the second position with 79 seats, while the PPP has won 54 seats.

The MQM-P won in 17 constituencies, JUI-F in four, and PML-Q in three, while IPP and BNP won two seats each. Following the general elections, both the PML-N and PPP had formed committees to decide the terms and conditions for the next federal government.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) have finally reached an agreement on forming a government in Centre as both parties have agreed on a 'power-sharing formula' following days of negotiations. "PPP and PML-N have achieved the required number and [now] we are in a position to form the government in Centre," PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said while addressing a joint press conference at Zardari House in Islamabad.

Bilawal Bhutto pointed out that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed candidates and Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) failed to achieve a simple majority to form government in the Centre. He said that that both parties are going to form the coalition government and PML-N president Shehbaz Sharif will once again be the country's prime minister, praying that they would succeed in solving the problems of Pakistan.

Qaiser's bid to meet Imran thwarted by jail authority

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Qaiser's bid to meet PTI founder Imran Khan at Adiala Jail was thwarted, with jail authorities citing specific days for visitation, leaving Qaiser unable to meet Khan.

Addressing the media outside Adiala Jail, Qaiser revealed his unsuccessful attempt to meet the founding chairman, expressing determination to return the following day after securing permission from the Islamabad High Court. In a fiery address, Qaiser criticized the current political landscape, denouncing opponents for lacking legitimacy and accusing them of orchestrating electoral malpractice. He urged the courts to intervene, particularly highlighting concerns over the authenticity of Form 45 and the revelations from the Commissioner of Rawalpindi.

Asserting PTI's rightful claim to governance based on electoral mandates, Qaiser condemned opposition parties for their alleged role in perpetuating poverty and instability. He vowed PTI's resurgence, asserting that merit-based decisions would pave the way for PTI's return to power. The impassioned remarks underscored PTI's ongoing struggle for political legitimacy amidst allegations of electoral fraud and opposition pressure. As the political turmoil intensifies, PTI remains resolute in its pursuit of justice and a return to leadership under Imran Khan's guidance.

Egypt's legal counselor Jasmine Moussa said Israel's ongoing 'onslaught' on Gaza killed over 29,000 Palestinians and displaced 2.3 million people in violation of international law. "It is shocking that some states do not want the court to render its legal opinion. What message does this send on their respect for international justice and the rule of law?" asked Moussa.

Egypt's Jasmine Moussa said the Middle East "yearns for peace and stability" and a "comprehensive and lasting resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict". UAE representative Lana Nusseibeh said the viability of peace and an independent Palestinian state are imperiled by Israel's violations which have risen sharply recently.

The UAE is confident that the court will determine the legal consequences of Israel's violations of international law against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank. "According to the United Nations, 2023 has been the deadliest year for

PPP finalises three names for Punjab governor slot

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) on Wednesday finalised three nominees for the esteemed position of Governor of Punjab.

Sources within the party revealed that the frontrunners for the coveted role include seasoned political figures Makhdoom Ahmed Mahmood, Qamar Zaman Kaira, and Nadeem Afzal Chan. However, it is Makhdoom Ahmed Mahmood who emerges as the top priority for the party's leadership.

Sources added that Mahmood's candidacy is not only endorsed by the PPP but also enjoys acceptance from other political parties including Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N). The announcement comes in the wake of a power sharing formula for government formation and power-sharing unveiled jointly by PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif, and former President Asif Ali Zardari.

The trio convened a press conference at the historic Zardari House in Islamabad to disclose the collaborative approach towards national leadership. During the press briefing, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari reaffirmed Shehbaz Sharif's candidacy for the premiership, signaling his return to the pinnacle of executive authority.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi in a group photo with a delegation of military officers from friendly countries undergoing training at Command and Staff College Quetta, Aiwan-e-Sadr.

US urges UN court not to order Israel out of Palestinian lands

THE HAGUE: The United States said a call for withdrawal of Israel from occupied territories in Palestine requires to take into account Israel's real security needs speaking at the International Criminal Court of Justice (ICCJ) on Wednesday.

The US is working to find a resolution of peace for Israeli's and Palestinians and to pave the way for the establishment of a Palestinian state, added the representative. Egypt, UAE and Cuba were among the speakers that appeared at the third day of hearings at the ICCJ, also known as the World Court, in the Hague.

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The UAE is confident that the court will determine the legal consequences of Israel's violations of international law against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank. "According to the United Nations, 2023 has been the deadliest year for

Palestinians in the West Bank," said Nusseibeh. Nuseibeh said Israel must cease all policies and practices that impede the exercise of Palestinian right to self determination.

Israel must ensure freedom of access to holy places and respect the legal and historic status quo of these areas, added Nusseibeh. The UAE concluded their statement by calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and criticized the UN's Security Council's failure to adopt a peace resolution.

Russia will also present arguments on Wednesday in proceedings at the UN's highest court examining the legality of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories. The ICCJ, also known as the World Court, was asked in 2022 by the UN General Assembly to issue a non-binding opinion on the legal consequences of the occupation.

Israel, which is not taking part, said in written comments that the court's involvement could be harmful to achieving a negotiated settlement. Washington in 2022 opposed the court issuing an opinion and is expected to argue on Wednesday that it cannot rule on the occupation's lawfulness. More than 50 states will present arguments until Feb. 26. Egypt and France were also scheduled to speak on Wednesday.

On Monday, Palestinian representatives asked the judges to declare Israel's occupation of their territory illegal and said its opinion could help reach a two-state solution. On Tuesday, 10 states including South Africa were overwhelmingly critically of Israel's conduct in the occupied territories, with many urging the court to declare the occupation illegal.

The latest surge of violence in Gaza that followed Hamas' Oct. 7 attacks in Israel has complicated already deeply-rooted grievances in the Middle East and damaged efforts toward finding a path to peace. The ICCJ's 15-judge panel has been asked to review Israel's "occupation, settlement and annexation ... including measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and from its adoption of related discriminatory legislation and measures."

The judges are expected to take roughly six months to issue their opinion on the request, which also asks them to consider the legal status of the occupation and its consequences for states. Israel ignored a World Court opinion in 2004 when it found that Israel's separation wall in the West Bank violated international law and should be dismantled. Instead, it has been extended.

The current hearings could increase political pressure over Israel's war in Gaza, which has killed about 29,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health officials, since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7. Israel captured the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem — areas of historic Palestine which the Palestinians want for a state — in the 1967 conflict. It withdrew from Gaza in 2005, but, along with neighboring Egypt, still controls its borders. Israeli leaders have long disputed that the territories are formally occupied on the basis that they were captured from Jordan and Egypt during the 1967 war rather than from a sovereign Palestine. — Arab News

Hunger grips war-torn Gaza as truce talks resume in Cairo

GAZA (AFP): Heavy fighting rocked besieged Gaza on Wednesday as aid agencies warned of looming famine, a day after a UN Security Council resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire was blocked by a US veto.

Washington, which argued the resolution would have imperilled ongoing efforts to free hostages, sent top White House official Brett McGurk to Cairo for renewed talks involving mediators and Hamas. Global concern has spiralled over the high civilian death toll and dire humanitarian crisis in the war sparked by Hamas's October 7 attack against Israel.

Combat and chaos again stalled the sporadic aid deliveries for desperate civilians in Gaza, where the UN has warned the population of 2.4 million is on the brink of famine and could face an "explosion" of child deaths. The UN World Food Programme said it was forced to halt aid deliveries in north Gaza because of "complete chaos and violence" after a truck convoy encountered gunfire and was ransacked by looters.

More Israeli strikes pounded Gaza, leaving 103 people dead during the night, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory, which put the overall death toll at 29,313. "We can't take it anymore," said Ahmad, a resident of Gaza City, where entire blocks are in ruins and cratered streets

are strewn with rubble. "We do not have flour, we don't even know where to go in this cold weather," he said. "We demand a ceasefire. We want to live." Particular concern has centered on Gaza's far-southern Rafah area, where 1.4 million people now live in crowded shelters and makeshift tents, fearing attack by nearby Israeli ground troops. Aid groups warn a ground offensive could turn Rafah into a "graveyard" and the United States has said the vast numbers of displaced civilians must first be moved out of harm's way.

US National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said that "without properly accounting for the safety and security of those refugees, we continue to believe that an operation in Rafah would be a disaster." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted the army will keep fighting until it has destroyed Hamas and freed the remaining 130 hostages, around 30 of whom are feared dead. War cabinet minister Benny Gantz has warned that, unless Hamas releases the captives by the start of Ramadan around March 10, the army will keep fighting during the Muslim holy month, including in Rafah. The war started when Hamas launched its unprecedented attack on October 7, which resulted in the deaths of about 1,160 people in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of Israeli figures.

Israeli strike hits Damascus, killing at least 2

DAMASCUS (AP): Israeli strikes hit a neighborhood of the Syrian capital on Wednesday morning, killing two people and causing material damage, Syria's state TV said. There was no confirmation of the strikes from Israel.

The Syrian state TV reported that several missiles hit the western neighborhood of Kfar Sousseh but did not elaborate or say who were the people killed. The pro-government Sham FM radio station said the strike hit a building near an Iranian school. Rami Abdurrahman, who heads the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based opposition war monitor, said the two killed were inside an apartment but did not give any clues about their identities.

He added that the strike was similar to last month's killing in Beirut of Saleh Arouri, a top official with the militant Palestinian Hamas group. The strike damaged the fourth floor of a 10-story building, shattered window glass on nearby buildings and also damaged dozens of cars parked in the area.



NEW DELHI: Indian farmers run for cover from tear gas fired by police. The protest organisers say the farmers are seeking new legislation that would guarantee minimum prices for 23 crops.

Ukraine outnumbered, outgunned, ground down by Russia

KRAMATORSK, Ukraine (Reuters): As the Ukraine war enters its third year, the infantry of 59th Brigade are confronting a bleak reality: they're running out of soldiers and ammunition to resist their Russian invaders. One platoon commander who goes by his call sign "Tyr" estimated that just 60-70% of the several thousand men in the brigade at the start of the conflict were still serving. The rest had been killed, wounded or signed off for reasons such as old age or illness.

Heavy casualties at the hands of Russian forces have been compounded by dreadful conditions on the eastern front, with frozen soil turning into thick mud in unseasonably warm temperatures, playing havoc with soldiers' health. "The weather is rain, snow, rain, snow. People get ill with simple flu or angina as a result. They're out of action for some time, and there is nobody to replace them," said a company commander in the brigade with the call sign "Limuzyn". "The most immediate problem in every unit is lack of people."

On the cusp of the second anniversary of its Feb. 24 invasion, Vladimir Putin's Russia is in the ascendancy in a conflict that combines attritional trench combat reminiscent of World War One with high-tech drone warfare that's sending tens of thousands of machines into the skies above. Moscow has made small gains in recent months and claimed a major victory at the weekend when it took control of Avdiivka in the hotly contested eastern Donetsk

region. A spokesperson for 3rd Separate Assault Brigade, one of the units that tried to hold the town, said the defenders were outnumbered seven to one.

Reuters spoke to more than 20 soldiers and commanders in infantry, drone and artillery units on different sections of the 1,000-km frontlines in eastern and southern Ukraine. While still motivated to fight Russian occupation, they spoke of the challenges of holding off a larger and better supplied enemy as military support from the West slows despite pleas for more from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Another commander in the 59th Brigade, who only gave his first name Hryhoriy, described relentless attacks from groups of five to seven Russian soldiers who would push forward up to 10 times a day in what he called "meat assaults" - highly costly to the Russians but also a major threat to his troops. "When one or two defensive positions are fighting off these assaults all day, the guys get tired," Hryhoriy said as he and his exhausted men were afforded a brief rotation away from the frontlines near the Russian-occupied eastern city of Donetsk.

"Weapons break, and if there is no possibility of bringing them more ammunition or changing their weapons, then you understand what this leads to." The Ukrainian and Russian defence ministries didn't immediately respond to requests for comment on the state of the play on the

frontlines and how both sides intend to prosecute the war through to the end of the year.

Kyiv relies heavily on money and equipment from abroad to fund its war effort, but with \$61 billion in U.S. aid held up by political bickering in Washington it is looking more exposed than at any time since the start of the invasion. A soldier serving in a GRAD rocket artillery unit, whose call sign is "Skorpion", said that his launcher, which uses Soviet-designed ammunition held by few of Ukraine's allies, was now operating at about 30% of maximum capacity.

"It became like this recently," he said. "There aren't as many foreign munitions." Artillery shells are also in short supply as a result of Western countries' inability to keep up the pace of shipments for a drawn-out war. On top of the U.S. supply pause, the EU has conceded it will miss its target to supply a million shells to Ukraine by March by nearly half. Michael Kofman, a senior fellow and Russian military specialist at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a Washington-based think-tank, estimated that Russia's artillery was firing at five times the rate of Ukraine's, a figure that Hryhoriy of the 59th Brigade also gave.

"Ukraine is not getting a sufficient amount of artillery ammunition to meet its minimum defensive needs, and this is not a sustainable situation moving forward," Kofman added. Moscow now controls almost a fifth of