

Sh Rashid's bail extended
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: District and Sessions Court Islamabad on Saturday extended interim bail of former interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed in a case pertaining to hatching conspiracy against Asif Ali Zardari. Judicial Magistrate Dr Sohail Thaheem conducted hearing of the case. Sheikh Rashid appeared in court along with his lawyer Sardar Shehbaz and others.

 @thefrontierpost

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

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI

No. 34

Regd. No. 241

SHABAAN 14 1445 -- SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25 2024

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30



KARACHI: Police officials arresting a female activist during GDA, JUI-F, JI and PTI protest against alleged rigging in elections in front of Sindh Assembly building.

148 newly-elected Sindh MPAs take oath

F.P. Report

KARACHI: As the process of government formation in the country moves ahead, at least 148 newly-elected Sindh Assembly members took oath in the House of 168 on Saturday (today) as the session began with a delay amid high security.

The session commenced with the recitation of the Holy Quran after which Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani administered the oath to members as they chanted slogans in the assembly. However, four members — two of whom are senators elected on provincial seats — did not take oath for different reasons.

One of these members was Jamate-Islami (JI) Karachi Emir Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman, whose notification of success in the polls had not been issued following his announcement of relinquishing his provincial assembly seat, PS-129. Meanwhile, PPP's Abdul Aziz Junejo, who had been elected on PS-80, passed away after the polls.

After the oath-taking, the legislators will now elect the House's speaker and deputy speaker under the assembly rules. The Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), Jamaate-Islami (JI), PTI and Muhajir Qaumi Movement (MQM-Haqiqi), had announced to hold a joint "peaceful" protest against the alleged rigging in the February 8 general elections outside the Sindh Assembly.

However, the situation turned tense before the swearing-in ceremony, as several workers, including women clashed with the police party present there to keep the order. Over 20 Qaumi Awami Tehreek workers, including women, were arrested and shifted to the police station during the clashes. The law enforcement officials also baton-charged the protes-

tors.

Earlier, GDA Information Secretary Sardar Abdul Raheem said that their protest in Sindh was against stealing the people's mandate, warning that the demonstrations would keep intensifying till their mandate was returned. He said that a peaceful protest was their right and the government should avoid using force against them.

Caravans of various political parties coming from different parts of Sindh were stopped on the outskirts of the metropolis. Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) MPA Syed Waseem said his party nominated Sofia Saeed for the speaker's slot and Rashid Khan for deputy speaker. He said MQM-P wanted resolution of the province's issues in coordination with other parties. He said the political parties should do their party politics but should reduce people's troubles.

The MQM-P leader said the ones who were defeated in the past levelled allegations of rigging. They should approach the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) if they had evidence of rigging as blocking roads would not benefit them, he said. The Sindh government earlier imposed Section 144 in the south zone in anticipation of the protest by the political parties to prevent any harm to security and order. "... the Government of Sindh, in exercise of the powers conferred under Section 144 (6) Cr.PC, hereby imposes a ban on public assembly, gatherings, protests, processions, and demonstrations in South Zone Karachi Division for 30 days with immediate effect," stated the provincial government's notification issued late Friday.

It further notifies, "In pursuance of Section 195 (i) (a) Cr.PC, the S.H.Os of the concerned Police Station are

hereby authorised to register complaints under Section 188 PPC in writing for the violation of Section 144 CrPC against the violators of this notification." Meanwhile, Sindh's interior minister, Brigadier (Retired) Haris Nawaz, said Section 144 is now in effect in the area around the building of the provincial assembly; hence, no marches or protests can be held nearby.

Nawaz stressed that strict security measures have been taken to protect the area around the assembly to ensure a law and order situation. The interior minister issued a stern warning, saying that strict legal actions await those who disrupt peace or engage in unlawful activities. "Any troublemakers will face consequences," Nawaz declared, calling for cooperation between the public, the police, and other law enforcement agencies.

On the other hand, the arteries leading to the Sindh Assembly were blocked by placing containers on them. The road leading to Burns Road from the Sindh Assembly was also blocked with containers. The vehicular traffic coming from Fawwara Chowk, Sindh Club and Saddar was prevented from going towards M.R. Kiyani Chowk. Traffic police said traffic would be diverted from here towards Aiwan e Saddar and Khajoor Chowk. The traffic coming from I.I. Chundrigar Road will not be allowed to go towards M.R. Kiyani Chowk either and will be diverted towards Khajoor Chowk or Pakistan Chowk. Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Asad Raza South said that the heavy police force had been deployed on Sharea Faisal for security and also around the Sindh Assembly. He added that the road from Baloch Colony to Metropole was also partially closed.

KP Governor summons assembly session on 28th

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali on Saturday summoned the first session of the provincial assembly on February 28, at 11am.

The newly elected members will take oath, oath of Speaker and Deputy Speaker and election for the chief minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

As per the notification, the KPK assembly session has been summoned on February 28 at 11am. It said lawmakers will be administered their oaths according to Article 65 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

According to the results issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), PTI-backed independent candidates had won 97 seats in general election held on February 8. PTI founder Imran Khan had nominated Ali Amin Gandapur as KP chief minister and Aqibullah Khan as provincial assembly speaker.

The PTI had announced that its independent candidates would join the Sunni Ittehad Council to form governments at the Centre, in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in a bid to secure reserved seats. The PTI candidates contested the elections as independents after the Supreme Court upheld the election supervisor's decision, considering its intra-party polls "unconstitutional" and revoked its claim on the electoral symbol of 'bat'.

Meanwhile, the Awami National Party has announced a protest outside the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on the day of its inaugural session. Earlier, six MPAs, including Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) leader Chaudhry Shafay Hussain and Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) Hafiz Farhat Abbas and Waseem Khan Badoazi, and independent candidates Rai Murtaza Iqbal Khan, Fateh Khaliq, Tashakul Abbas Waraich, who were not present in the House's inaugural session on Friday, took their oaths.

The sworn-in MPAs then marked their attendance in the register after the oath, following which the session was briefly adjourned for 20 minutes for the Maghrib prayer. After this, the polling for the new speaker was conducted. As many as 327 MPA-elects cast their votes during the ballot.

Balochistan's MNAs, MPAs call on Shehbaz

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, President, Pakistan Muslim League-N, has said instead of political interests, the interests of Pakistan is to be prioritised.

These views were expressed by him while talking to newly elected MNAs and MPAs from Balochistan who called on him under the leadership of President, Pakistan Muslim League-N, Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail on Saturday. Issues regarding formation of government in Balochistan and other issues of bilateral inter came under discussion during the meeting. Leaders from Balochistan apprised Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif of the political contacts made so far to form provincial government in Balochistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said that all would have to work with sincere heart for the development of Pakistan and Balochistan, adding, "Due to your endeavours, stable political situation is arising in Pakistan".

Asad elected LHCBA chief

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Asad Manzoor Butt of the Professional Group, led by Hamid Khan, Saturday was elected president of the Lahore High Court Bar Association (LHCBA) in the annual elections of the bar here.

According to the results announced, Asad secured 6,195 votes by defeating Saqib Akram Gondal of the Independent group, also known as Asma Jehangir Group, who got 5768 votes.

Vice president's slot was won by Mian Sardar Ali Gehlan, who secured 3,344 votes, whereas his opponents Abdul Rehman Ranjha, Haseeb Bin Yousaf, Malik Fida Hussain, Mazhar Abbas Khan Sial, and Mian Waheed Nazir got 2998, 1905, 1677, 615 and 1369 votes respectively.

PML-N gets Speaker's slot in Punjab Assembly

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's Malik Ahmed Khan gets 224 votes; opposition's candidate Ahmed Khan Bachar secured 96

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Malik Ahmed Khan on Saturday was elected as a new speaker of the Punjab Assembly after securing 224 votes.

The Punjab Assembly session to elect the House's speaker and deputy speaker kicked off this evening after a delay of one-and-a-half hours as the protests inside and outside the legislative marred the timely beginning of the meeting. The second session of the newly-elected provincial assembly, presided over by outgoing Speaker Sibtain Khan, saw members of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) chanting slogans against each other.

A heavy police force and prison vans were also present outside the assembly to ensure the maintenance of law and order during the assembly session. After his election as the new Punjab Assembly speaker, Malik Ahmed was sworn in during oath taking administered by outgoing speaker.

Earlier, six MPAs, including Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) leader Chaudhry Shafay Hussain and Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) Hafiz Farhat Abbas and Waseem Khan Badoazi, and independent candidates Rai Murtaza Iqbal Khan, Fateh Khaliq, Tashakul Abbas Waraich, who were not present in the House's inaugural session on Friday, took their oaths.

The sworn-in MPAs then marked their attendance in the register after the oath, following which the session was briefly adjourned for 20 minutes for the Maghrib prayer. After this, the polling for the new speaker was conducted. As many as 327 MPA-elects cast their votes during the ballot.

Elections for the speaker and deputy speaker are being held via a secret ballot under Rules 9 and 10 of the Rules of Procedure of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab, 1997. PML-N's Malik Ahmad Khan and Malik Zaheer Iqbal Channer submitted their nomination papers for the slot of Punjab Assembly speaker and deputy speaker, respectively.

Meanwhile, SIC members Ahmad Khan Bhachar and Muhammad Moeenuddin Riaz Qureshi submitted their papers for the speaker and deputy speaker positions. Earlier during the session, SIC leader Sahibzada Hamid Raza termed the assembly's proceedings "unconstitutional" and "illegal" without the presence of the

party's MPA-elects on the reserved seats.

He said that SIC members were being barred from attending the assembly sessions "A new history of politics of revenge is about to be made. We will not let the PA proceedings continue without members on the reserved seats," he added. Meanwhile, Rana Aftab termed the Punjab Assembly "incomplete" and vowed to challenge any move made by the House in the court.

Taking the floor in the provincial assembly, the SIC leader said that 27 reserved seats for women and minorities are yet to be decided by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). "[PTI nominee for Punjab chief minister slot] Mian Aslam is not in the House. He will contest the poll [for the chief minister] from our side," he added. At this, the outgoing speaker said that he could not tell the election regulator to summon the absentees to the assembly, which may require the session's adjournment.

"I am leaving the chair [speaker's post] in a respectable manner. I don't want myself to have a label that I kept adjourning the session," he said. Sibtain said that there were 30 seats in the provincial legislative, which include the 27 reserved and three minority seats.

He said that if the ECP doesn't decide on the seats that have not been notified yet, for the next six months, one party will have to move the high court while the other will have to move the Supreme Court. Reacting to Aftab's remarks, PML-N's nominee for the speaker's slot Malik Muhammad Ahmad said that the people, who the SIC leader was talking about are not part of the House.

Referring to Article 254 of the Constitution, the PML-N leader stressed holding the elections for the slots of speaker and deputy speaker. Yesterday's session marked the beginning of PML-N's chief minister nominee Maryam Nawaz's parliamentary politics, as 321 out of 371 elected members took oath as the new MPAs. Out of these 321 legislators, 221 belonged to the PML-N its allied parties, 98 members of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) and one each of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) and PML-Zia.

It may be noted that PML-N has become the largest party in the Punjab Assembly after the induction of 13 MPA-elects from PPP, 10 from PML-Q and five from the Tehreek-e-Istehkam Party. Having the majority, PML-N has announced to form the government in the province with Maryam as its head.

PTI real face exposed before masses: Bilawal

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Criticising the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for not allying against Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said Saturday that the Imran-founded party had never tried to block Shehbaz Sharif's way to the Prime Minister's Office through holding political talks with the PPP.

"Shehbaz Sharif would also have to extend thanks to the PTI after becoming the PM," Bilawal said while taking a dig at the Imran-founded party in a press conference in Karachi. "The PTI founder may have decided to not fight against Shehbaz. We are giving votes to the party which approached us [to form the next government in the Centre]," Bilawal, who was the foreign minister during Shehbaz's previous stint as PM, said.

The PPP and PML-N have entered into an agreement, with the Bilawal-led party set to support Shehbaz as the prime minister, while his party will be getting other top posts. However, the PPP will not be part of the federal cabinet. The politico also commented on Imran Khan's letter to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to block financial aid to Pakistan over alleged rigging in the February 8 nationwide polls and said: "The letter has no importance but it would expose their [PTI] real face before the nation."

Bilawal's comments came as he visited a PPP loyalist Abdul Rehman's residence in Karachi's Orangi Town who had been killed during election-related violence. Bilawal said that 12-year-old Abdul Rehman had been killed after his family was threatened to stop supporting the PPP, adding that many party loyalists lost their lives in violent incidents during the polls.

"We will catch the culprits involved in the attacks and provide justice to the

families of slain PPP workers," vowed Bilawal, adding that the PPP-led government in Sindh and Karachi would not tolerate any kind of religious, ethnic, and sectarian terrorism. Bilawal said that he personally sought assistance from the law enforcement agencies against the violent incidents in which PPP workers were targeted.

He further announced that PPP would never forget its martyred activists and that a thorough probe through a joint investigation team (JIT) would be held into the incidents of violence and firing during the polls. Commenting on ongoing protests against "election rigging", the PPP chief said that political opponents could not blackmail them by levelling false allegations. "Those parties which cannot win the polls without rigging are now protesting against election manipulation today without providing any solid evidence." He asked protesting parties to approach legal forums to address their rigging claims.

Faisal Javed asserts PTI founder would take PM office

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Faisal Javed, a senior leader of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI), has disclosed that the PTI founder would take the oath as the Prime Minister of Pakistan by contesting elections from Mianwali.

Speaking to the media outside the session court, Javed urged the release of all innocents, including the PTI founder and his spouse, who were currently under

arrest.

Addressing questions regarding the May 9 riots, Javed emphasized the PTI founder's commitment to the rule of law and justice, advocating for a judicial inquiry into the incident. He asserted that those found guilty should be convicted in accordance with the law, emphasizing a commitment to surrender before the principles of law and justice. Regarding allegations of rigging in the poll results,

Javed called for an inquiry to investigate discrepancies in Form-45 and Form-47. He stressed the importance of justice and transparency, asserting that fairness and justice were integral to all aspects of the state, including the economy.

Celebrating PTI's victory with 180 seats despite rigging and forged polls, Javed emphasized the need for a government formed with a public mandate, expressing confidence in its success.

Mohsin Naqvi meets Maryam Nawaz

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi Saturday met with Punjab Chief Minister-designate Maryam Nawaz here at Raiwind on Sunday.

He congratulated her for being nominated for the slot of Chief Minister. He said that it was a great honour to be the first woman chief minister of the largest province of the country and expressed good wishes for her.

He said he was sure that she would write a new chapter of people's service in Punjab. Mohsin Naqvi said that he would continue extending his support for the welfare of Punjab and its people.

Maryam Nawaz thanked him for his good wishes and appreciated his role as caretaker CM and the initiatives taken for the welfare of the people. Mohsin Naqvi also briefed her about development projects in the province.

CM Naqvi visits Ganga Ram Hospital, Civil Secretariat: Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Syed Mohsin Naqvi visited the Sir Ganga Ram Hospital and the Civil Secretariat in Lahore late Friday night.

The CM went to the hospital's Model Room and saw the facilities provided there. He, on the occasion, directed that all private rooms of the hospital too should have the same facilities. "There should be chairs in these rooms," he directed.

During his visit to the Civil Secretariat, he praised labourers for the work they had done on its renovation, saying it was quality work.

On the occasion, the Punjab chief secretary briefed the chief minister and members of his cabinet about the secretariat's renovation. Provincial ministers Dr. Javed Akram, Amir Mir, Punjab IGP Dr. Usman Anwar, the CCPO, secretaries of tourism, health, construction and communication ministries, commissioner Lahore, MS Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, vice-chancellor Fatima Jinnah University and other concerned officials accompanied the CM on the visit.

CM inaugurates apartments for police personnel: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurated the police apartments near Bhubtian here on Saturday.

Another project being postponed for the last 10 years has been completed. The police personnel have been allotted 90 flats.

The CM visited the police apartments and inspected their construction work while IG Police gave a briefing to the CM regarding their construction work.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, the CM stated that this project had been halted for a long period of time which has now been completed by caretaker government. He added the police force should take pride in their IG Police Doctor Usman Anwar as he has undertaken mega projects for the welfare of the Punjab police. The Punjab government undertook a lot of initiatives for the police welfare and strived to the utmost to resolve their residential issues, he added. Chief Secretary, IG Police, Secretary Communication & Works, Commissioner Lahore, CCPO and officials concerned were present.

Croatian envoy calls on Punjab governor

LAHORE (APP): Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia Dr. Drago Stambuk called on Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman and discussed matters of mutual interest and ways to enhance cooperation in the fields of culture and trade during a meeting at the Governor's House here on Saturday.

Croatian Honorary Consul General in Lahore Imran Baig was also present on this occasion.

Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that the human tragedy in Palestine is painful. He said that wherever there is oppression in the world, voice should be raised against it. He said that people-to-people contact is every important in promoting bilateral cooperation.

He said that Pakistan wants to strengthen bilateral relations with the Republic of Croatia in all sectors including trade and education. He said that the opening of the honorary Consulate of Croatia in Karachi is an important development which will further strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries.

He further said that in order to promote trade relations between the two countries, there should be exchanges of delegations of business and various chambers of commerce and industry. Ambassador Dr. Drago Stambuk said Sufism is the beautiful face of Islam, adding that the future of the world is in peace. He said that the Croatian embassy was making great efforts to increase bilateral trade between Pakistan and Croatia.

Anti-polio campaign to begin from Monday

KARACHI (INP): A seven-day anti-polio campaign would kick off across Sindh from Monday.

The provincial task force on polio eradication said that over 10.6 million children across the province would be immunized during the week-long drive. The provincial task force on polio eradication held a meeting in Karachi to review and finalise the arrangements in this regard.

Earlier on January 21, Ministry of Health sources confirmed the presence of poliovirus in sewage samples of the Lasbela district of Balochistan.

According to sources within the Health Ministry, Type-1 Wild Poliovirus (WPV1) was detected in sewage samples collected from Lasbela district.

Hajj pilgrims to be provided with best facilities: Aneeq

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed on Saturday said that his ministry would provide best facilities including accommodation, transportation and food to the Hajj pilgrims.

Addressing the intending Hajj pilgrims during 'Hujjaj Training 2024' at the Directorate of Hajj here, he said that the pilgrims would be provided with three times best food, new transportation and best accommodation in Saudi Arabia during Hajj.

He said that a Hajj application (app) had been launched to facilitate the pilgrims. He said that Whatsapp did not work in Saudi Arabia and keeping that in mind the Hujjaj would be given a SIM free-of-cost having 180 minutes to contact their loved ones.

Aneeq said that female Hajj pilgrims would be gifted an Abbaya with a small flag of Pakistan on its back. He said that first time in the history of the country Hajj package had been decreased by Rs 0.1 million from Rs1.175 million.

He further said that Rs30,000 to Rs35,000 would be transferred to the accounts of Hujjaj.

The Caretaker Minister urged the Hajj pilgrims to pray for the country during performing Hajj. He said that the country was passing through inflation and other challenges.

He said that disappointment was being spread among the students under planning. Aneeq said that his ministry had worked hard from dawn to dusk and would continue working to facilitate the people.

PPP to cast vote for PML-N candidates: Gillani

LAHORE (INP): PPP leader Ali Haider Gillani has said that the party's members will vote to the PML-N Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Chief Minister's candidates.

Ali Haider Gillani, a son of former PM and People's Party stalwart Yousaf Raza Gillani, was talking to media in the premises of Punjab Assembly.


He said that the PPP parliamentary party's first session held today and attended by all 14 members of the party. "The session reiterated to cast their votes to the PML-N CM, speaker and deputy speaker candidates," Gillani said.

Gillani said that the party also decided to raise voice for Seraiki province in the assembly. "We have to forget our differences to join hands," he said.

PPP leader lauded the PML-N's decision to nominate a woman member for the office of the chief minister.

He said the party has been assured to resolve the people's problems. "Every segment of the society has been disturbed, we have to work together for them," he said.

He called for constitution of a committee to remove obstacles in the path of the South Punjab province.



PAKISTAN AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS NORTHERN AIR COMMAND
INVITATION OF TENDERS FOR SUPPLY OF
RATION ITEMS FY 2024-25

1. Sealed tenders {Technical (Without Price) and Financial (With Price)} are invited from reputable, well-experienced, financially sound and Income Tax Registered Pakistani Firms / Contractors / Millers for supply of Dry / Fresh Ration items for **NAC Bases / Hospitals** under Northern Air Command, PAF during the Financial Year 2024-25 (01 July, 2024 - 30 June, 2025). Dry ration would be concluded at HQ NAC, PAF (Peshawar); whereas Fresh Ration Contracts would be concluded at respective PAF Bases. Firms / Contractors which are not registered with PAF can also participate in tendering process and approach to concerned Base for collection of Tender / Registration documents.

Central Contracts at Headquarters Northern Air Command, PAF Peshawar

(a) Atta Group

(i) Atta (Including collection of wheat from PASSCO Godowns, Grinding, Packing & Supply (transportation) of Atta at under Command Bases)

(ii) Semolina (Suji) of good quality (iii) Vermicelli {(Seviyan) Branded}

(b) Cooking Oil Canola (Branded)

(c) Full Cream Milk Powder {Branded Full Cream Milk Powder (Locally manufactured) packed in Aluminium foil and Polythene bag (Nitrogen or a mixture of nitrogen and carbon dioxide layers) fortified with vitamins A & D contents}. Bidders are to provide Halal Certification, OHSAS-18001 (Occupational Health and Safety) / ISO-14001 (Environmental Management System), Manufacturing License from PSQCA / Province, FSSC 22000 (Food Safety System Certification) / ISO-9001 (Quality Management Certification) / Hazard Critical Control Points (HACCP) Certified, Laboratory Analysis report of latest batch produced from PNAC - Accredited Labs Complete details of Milk Collection Centres, Chiller Vans which can maintain temperature between 0-4 degree centigrade, quantity of Fresh Milk collected through suppliers and **a certificate that the firm's own production plant is operational round the year.**

(d) Rice Group

(i) Rice Saila {Basmati (Grain length 8 mm or more)} (ii) Rice Basmati {Super (Grain length 8 mm or more)}

(e) Tea Group

(i) Black Tea (Premium quality Tea Leaf Branded) (ii) Green Tea (Branded)

(f) Lentil Seeds Group

(i) Dall Chana, Mong (Split), Masoor (Split), Mash (Split), Channa Kabuli (Channa white) & Red Beans (Lobia) shall be of one variety and of good cooking quality

(ii) Bengal Gram Flour (Besan) of good quality

(g) Condiments Whole {Red Chillies (whole), Turmeric (whole), Cumin Seeds (whole), Coriander Seeds (whole), Tamarind (with seeds) & Black Pepper (whole)}

(h) Sugar (Good quality)

(j) Local Contracts at Respective PAF Bases / Hospitals and High-Altitude Sites of Northern Air Command, PAF

(i) Meat Group {Mutton, Beef & Beef Boneless for (Dogs)}

(ii) Meat on Hoof (For PAF Base Qadri)

(iii) Poultry Group (Chicken Dressed, Eggs & Fish)

(iv) Chicken Alive (For PAF Base Qadri)

(v) Misc Group {Onion, Potato, Milk Fresh, Squash (Branded), Ice MM, Salt iodized, Ginger (Fresh), Garlic (Fresh) and Fire wood}

(vi) Fruit Group 'Citrus / Non-Citrus' (as per seasonal chart provided with guide lines)

(vii) Vegetable Group (as per seasonal chart provided with guide lines)

(viii) Liquid / Packaged Milk for Aero Tech Trainees of PAF Base Kohat

(ix) Hospital Comforts (For PAF Hospitals)

(k) Local Contracts for Animal (Horses) Ration at PAF Base, Peshawar, Risalpur & MM Alam (Mianwali) as per SRS-2015

(l) PAF Base Qadri will conclude independent contracts for Fresh Ration and Tinned Foods group for High Altitude sites only.

(m) Criteria for Supply of Meat Items (Mutton, Beef, Chicken & Fish) for PAF Base Risalpur, Peshawar, Minhas, MM Alam, Kohat, Murid, Kallar Kahar, Qadri & Site (Skardu) and Hospitals (Peshawar & MM Alam): -

(i) Bidders are to provide certificate regarding availability of Serviceable (Running Condition) Air-conditioner / Chiller fitted Meat transport with proper hood. Moreover, it is to be ensured that the vehicle is in good condition.

(ii) Butchery at the supplier's premises must be clean, hygienic, and installed with Serviceable (Running Condition) air conditioner. The butchery should have Marble Flooring and Marble / Tiles fitted on the side walls (tiles fitting till six feet height at least).

(iii) To inspect live animals, slaughter procedure and to ensure safe transportation of meat to the Base, a team of PAF representatives will visit butchery on daily basis.

(n) "All bids of Whole Milk Powder will be technically evaluated based on the Special Technical Evaluation Criteria (in addition to normal criteria applicable to all items). Same is to be made integral part of bids documents despatched / handed over / transmitted to interested / participating firms"

(p) Detail specifications of all items / Evaluation Criteria can also be downloaded from PPRA's website (www.ppra.org.pk).

Tender Forms

2. **Central Contracts.** Tender forms for **Central Contracts** with complete specifications, special terms & conditions and other details of Dry Ration items can be collected from the office of **SSO (Support & AD) at Headquarters Northern Air Command, 66- The Mall Road, Peshawar Cantt Tel: 091-9210777 (Ext: 2065)** on submission of application for tender on letterhead along with photocopies of NTN, GST, Professional Tax certificate & attested CNIC. Completed tender forms are to be submitted at **1300 Hrs by 14 March, 2024.** Tender will be opened on the same date at **1330 Hrs** in the office of **SSO (Support & AD) at Headquarters Northern Air Command, PAF Peshawar.**

3. **Local Contracts.** Tender Forms for Local Contracts, with complete specifications, special terms & conditions and other details of fresh ration items can be collected from respective PAF Base Catering Flights on submission of application for tender on letterhead along with photocopies of NTN, GST, Professional Tax certificate & attested CNIC between **0800 Hrs to 1300 Hrs. Technical Tender** will be opened at 1330 Hrs in the office of **O i/c Catering Flight / O i/c S&T Sqn / O i/c Log Sqn** (as applicable) as per given schedule.




4. **Opening of Tender.** The Tender Forms are to be submitted as per **PPRA Rule 36 (b) single stage - two envelope** procedure {**Technical** (Without Price) and **Financial** (With Price)}. Separate envelope shall be marked as **"Technical Proposal"** and **"Financial Proposal"** in bold and clear letter to avoid confusion. After vetting of **Technical** bids, qualified bidders will be informed through Letters / Telephone about the venue, date and time for opening of financial proposal.

SCHEDULE FOR OPENING OF TECHNICAL TENDER				
S No	Base	Date / Time for Collection of Tender Forms	Technical Proposal Opening Date / Time	Contact No
(a)	Headquarters Northern Air Command, PAF (Peshawar)	24 Feb to 14 Mar, 2024 (0800-1300 hrs)	14 March, 2024 (1330hrs)	Tel: 091-9210777 Ext: 2061 / 2069 Cell 0323-9410401
(b)	PAF Base, Peshawar	24 Feb to 11 Mar, 2024 (0800-1300 hrs)	11 March, 2024 (1330hrs)	Tel: 091-9210777 Ext: 3843 / 3845, Cell 0306-5726446
	PAF Base, MM Alam (Mianwali)			Tel: 0459-232051-56 Ext: 5219 / 5221, Cell 03096235789
	PAF Base, Murid (Chakwal)			Tel: 0543-553994 Ext: 3775 Cell 0323-9412723
	PAF Base Risalpur			Tel: 0923-631391-97 EXT: 3843 / 3845, Cell 0316-9396400
(c)	PAF Base, Kohat	24 Feb to 12 Mar, 2024 (0800-1300 hrs)	12 March, 2024 (1330 hrs)	Tel: 0922-9260092-97 Ext: 5219 / 5221, Cell 0301-6386204
	PAF Base, Minhas (Kamra) & Islamabad International Air Port			Tel: 0572-9316215 Ext: 3847 / 3849 Cell 0326-8013733
	PAF Base, Kallar Kahar			Tel: 0543-58830809 Ext: 3845 Cell 0323-9419721
	PAF Base Qadri (Skardu) & High Altitude sites			Tel: 05815923078 Ext: 3849 / 3860 Cell 0355-9455701-11

Note:-

- Any Firm / supplier whose contract has been terminated / Blacklisted by PAF / Defence/ Govt Organization due to poor performance / un-ethical practices will not be eligible for taking part in bidding process for contracts.
- The Contract will have to be signed by the **Owner** of the Firm / Mill.
- If any Firm / Contractor is not registered with PAF, then relevant documents / information for registration can also be collected from the above mentioned PAF offices.
- Any information, if found incomplete / false at any stage, will result in immediate rejection of the application for the Tender, on technical grounds.
- Mill Owners will be preferred in case of Sugar, Rice & Atta contracts only **PASSCO** Wheat will be used for grinding of Atta.
- In case of Canola Cooking Oil Contracts, reputed Mills / manufacturer will be preferred.
- Rates of Vegetables and Fruits are to quoted as per Seasonal Chart / Seasonal Schedule of Fruits and Vegetables which may be collected from Catering Flight.
- No of issues of Mutton, Beef, Chicken, Eggs & Fish can be modified (increase / decrease) in light of Air Headquarters policies.
- Interested Contractors / Firms are to deposit a bank draft of Five Lac / 2% of total Tender value as earnest money in favour of **Public Fund Account at respective RACs Base.**
- Firm / supplier will submit (04 bags / Packets each of 1/2 kg of Dry items, 01 Ltr of Canola Cooking Oil and 01 Kg of Full Cream Milk Powder) to **SSO (Support & AD) at Headquarters Northern Air Command, PAF Peshawar till 1300 hrs by 14 March, 2024.** HQ NAC will decide / facilitate / monitor Lab testing process from any renowned laboratory like PCSIR & INTERTECH. Lab testing fee will be deposited by Contractors in advance. **On the parallel, all tests of Dry Ration items will also be carried out through AFIN Lahore by HQ, NAC.**
- SSO (Support & AD) HQs NAC, OsC Support, Admin Wing, Admin & Supp, O i/c S&T Sqn, O i/c Logistics Squadron & O i/c Catering Flight of concerned Bases may ask for any further information and details at abovementioned numbers given in schedule, if required.

SSO (Support & AD)
Headquarters Northern Air Command, PAF
66-The Mall, Peshawar Cantt.
Phone 091-9210777 Ext - 2061 & 2069, Cell 0323-9410401



Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Competition 2025

Opportunity for Professional Development in the USA

The United States Educational Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP), a bi-national commission, invites applications for the Hubert H. Humphrey Program. This non-degree program is designed for mid-career (5-15 years of relevant experience) professionals and consists of 10-12 months of graduate-level, non-degree academic coursework and an opportunity to work in the United States in the relevant field.

For information about eligibility, program description, relevant fields, and application process, and to apply, visit:

www.usefp.org

All application materials, including degrees, transcripts, CV, Duolingo English Test score report, and references must be submitted online to USEFP by

Wednesday, April 24, 2024

Duolingo English Test score report is mandatory with the application. Valid scores of TOEFL iBT and IELTS are also acceptable.

Plagiarism, fraudulent publications, or other misrepresentation in an application will lead to disqualification at any stage of the program.

Applicants from underserved communities and/or with diverse backgrounds are strongly encouraged to apply.

Email: humphrey@usefp.org

In the Court of Jehangir Khan Judge Banking Court-II Federal Judicial Complex Phase-7 Hayatabad Peshawar. **Case No: 140/1** Next Date **18-3-2024** Suit for recovery of **Rs.5,46,413/57** HBL Takht Bhai Branch Mardan Vs. Muhammad Inam

Notice Versus: (1) Muhammad Inam S/o Muhammad Iqbal R/o Near Ganjal Hospital Takht Bhai District Mardan Where is the plaintiff Bank has instituted a suit for the recovery of **Rs.5,46,413/57** against you under section 10(2) of the Financial institutions (Recovery of Finance) Ordinance 2001. You are hereby summoned to obtain leave of the court to appear and defend the suit within 30 days after receipt/publication of the notice in the newspaper filling which an exparte decree shall be passed in favor of the plaintiff Bank with costs.

Banking Court-II Peshawar

اشتہار نیلام

عدالت محترمہ میںین اذومعدیہ مرکز تاجنیکنگ کورٹ-1خیبر پختون خواپشاورمیں جوڈیشل کمپلس نمبر7قربانجیہات آباد پشاورABLIصندوقدارتاکت برائےآگبریارنامہMS/تخونگنخرطیظنومبر115انٹرنیشنل کمونالٹیکمپلیمینٹریوڈیومبرمعدیہان وصولی زرگزریں785250001رہے تاریخ چٹری برائے رپورٹ تمام 22/03/2024آشتہار نیلام بات جائیداد: (ازمعدیہ انٹرنیشنل پرائیویٹ لٹڈ) پشاور115انٹرنیشنل کمونالٹیکمپلیمینٹریوڈیومبرمعدیہ انٹرنیشنل پرائیویٹ لٹڈ (تاکت برائے آگبریارنامہ MS/تخونگنخرطیظنومبر115انٹرنیشنل کمونالٹیکمپلیمینٹریوڈیومبرمعدیہ انٹرنیشنل پرائیویٹ لٹڈ) پشاور20/03/2024کے ساتھ کاپی کرنا ہے۔ تمام کسٹمرز کے ساتھ 2 سبک چاری کرنا ہے۔ کسی شخص یا عوام سے ملتا ہے۔ سب سے زیادہ بولی دینے والے کا کامیاب قرار دیا جائے گا۔ بشرطیکہ عدالت اس کی توثیق کرے۔ عدالت کوئی دین منظور کرے گا اعتبار حاصل ہے۔ کامیاب بولی وصولی و حاکم نامہ 14/4/2024میں عدالت کے پاس درج نامہ نمبر 15/4/2024میں عدالت کو پیش کرنا ہوگا اگر کسی شخص یا ادارے کے کامیاب نہ ہونے کی وجہ سے عدالت کے فیصلے عدالت کے فیصلے میں آئیں۔ آج تا 7-2-2024بجائے عدالت سے جاری کیا گیا۔

جج بینکنگ کورٹ نمبر 1 پشاور

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly: Reserved seats to remain vacant

PESHAWAR (APP): A total of 118 newly elected members would take the oath in the first session of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) assembly, while 21 female seats and four seats for minorities would remain vacant.

Caretaker Chief Minister, Arshad Hussain Shah, had already sent a summary to Governor KP to summon the session of the newly elected provincial assembly.

On the first day, 91

members of the Sunni Ittehad Council, seven members of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), five members of the Pakistan Muslim League, four members of the Pakistan People Party, two members of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarians, one member of the Awami National Party, and one member of the Wehdat-ul-Muslamin would take the oath.

Two women members of JUI, two of PMLN, and one member of PPP would take

oaths on reserved seats, and the remaining 21 seats would remain vacant. The seats are vacant as independents still did not fulfill the criteria to provide a list of women and minority seats.

Ali Amin Khan Gandapur and Aqibullah Khan were nominated for the slots of CM and Speaker, while a newly elected member from Chitral would likely be nominated as Deputy Speaker.

KMU, KUBIC, 3Majors host entrepreneurial camp

PESHAWAR (APP): KMU Business Incubation Center (KUBIC) and 3Majors Pvt Ltd jointly host startup and entrepreneurial boot camp here on Saturday.

KUBIC, the business incubation center of KMU, collaborated with 3Majors Pvt Ltd to organize a dynamic three-day Startup and Entrepreneurial Boot Camp, said a press release.

The event attracted 25 participants, including students, faculty, and professionals eager to explore the intricacies of entrepreneurship.

The boot camp, covering startup culture, grant and funding application writing, documentation requirements, and pitch delivery featured a captivating journey of success shared by Dr. Jawad Ahmed, CEO of 3Majors.

Dr. Jawad's insights provided a valuable perspective on the challenges and triumphs of entrepreneurship. The event showcased the prowess of the 3Majors team, including Dr. Sohaib Ali, Zeeshan, and Dr. Ehsan.

3Majors recently secured the innovative seed fund by the World Bank, reinforcing their commitment to innovation and excellence.

Participants engaged in a spirited competition, with Dr. Saeed ur Rehman from KMU emerging as the winner, earning a spot in the Hult Prize semi-finals in Dubai.

The esteemed judging panel, consisting of Dr. Touqeer Shah, Director FES; Hanif Khan Jang, Coordinator Durshal; and Zeeshan, CTO of 3Majors, contributed to the event's success by providing valuable feedback.

Dr. Jawad Ahmed commented, "Sharing my journey with the participants was a privilege, and witnessing the enthusiasm of the budding entrepreneurs was truly inspiring. We, at 3Majors, believe in empowering the next generation of innovators, and this collaboration with KUBIC aligns perfectly with that mission."

Participants echoed their appreciation, finding the boot camp highly informative and productive.

The interactive sessions, combined with Dr. Jawad's keynote and the success stories of the 3Majors team, created a rich learning environment.

Rain, snowfall over hills likely: PMD

PESHAWAR (APP): Rain-wind/thunderstorm with snowfall over hills is expected in Balochistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir, Pothohar region, and Islamabad in the evening/night during the next 24 hours, as per Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) forecast.

Isolated heavy falls are also expected in southwestern Balochistan during the forecast period. Mainly cold and dry weather is expected in most parts of the country, while partly cloudy in western parts.

Cold and partly cloudy weather is expected in Islamabad and surrounding areas, however, rain-wind/thunderstorms are likely during the evening/night.

In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, cloudy weather is expected in most districts of the province. However, rain-wind/thunderstorm with snowfall over the hills is likely in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Buner, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Charsadda, Nowshera, Peshawar, Mohmand, Bajaur, Khyber, Kurram, Kohat, Bannu and Waziristan during evening/night.

In Punjab, mainly dry weather is expected in most districts of the province. However, light rain-wind/thunderstorm is likely in Pothohar region, Mianwali, Attock, Khushab, Sargodha, Layyah and Bhakkar, while rain-wind, thunderstorm/snow in Murree, Galliat and surrounding during evening, night.

In Balochistan, cloudy weather with chances of rain-wind thunderstorm with snowfall over hills in Chaghi, Noushki, Kharan, Panjgur, Gwadar, Awaran, Khuzdar, Kalat, Turbat, Washuk, Kech, Quetta, Ziarat, Chaman, Pishin, Qila Abdullah, Qila Saifullah, Zhob, Sherani, Barkhan, Musakhel, Makran, and Kohlu. Isolated heavy falls are also expected in Panjgur, Gwadar, Turbat, Kech, and Makran during the forecast period.

In Sindh, cloudy weather with gusty/dust-raising winds are expected in most districts of the province.

In Kashmir/Gilgit-Baltistan, very cold and cloudy weather with rain-wind/thunderstorms and snow is expected during the evening/night.

During the last 24 hours, cold and dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country, while very cold and partly cloudy in northern parts. However, rain occurred at isolated places in central Punjab.

The rainfall recorded was Faisalabad (GMA Water Works 12mm, Madina Town 08, Dogar Basti 07, Gulistan Colony 06, Allama Iqbal 03) and Jhang 01. Light snow was also recorded in Murree.

The lowest minimum temperatures recorded were Leh -17C, Kalam -12, Astore -09, Skardu -06, Gupis, Hunza -05, Gilgit, Bagrote and Malam Jappa -04C.

Accountability courts abolished KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Four accountability courts have been abolished in Peshawar, the federal government issued a notification in this connection here on Saturday.

According to the notification, Anti-Narcotics, 1 FIA and 1 banking court changed and now Anti-Narcotics courts will be established in Peshawar, anti-corruption immigration courts in Abbottabad and banking Courts in Dera Ismail Khan.

Now instead of 8, 4 accountability courts will work in Peshawar, the notification says.

Undertrial prisoner moves PHC F.P Report

PESHAWAR: An under trial prisoner, Tufail Zia, who is behind the bars in central prison Peshawar has moved the Peshawar High Court against refusal of admission in M.Phil Political Science merely because he is behind the bars.

Advocate Nouman Muhib Kakakhel filed the petition on behalf of the prisoner.

The counsel pleaded that the petitioner is behind the bars and is undergoing trial, since years now.

It is pleaded that the petitioner is a lawyer and a masters degree holder, who wishes to continue with his educational pursuit behind the bars, belonging to an educated family.

It is requested that under trial prisoners have a right to education and every other right guaranteed by the constitution and other legal instruments remains intact but only their right to movement is curtailed.

The counsel prayer before the court to allow the petitioner to undergo the degree, if not in person then through video link or Skype or a tutor be arranged in the prison premises.

FIA arrest two suspects

PESHAWAR (APP): Two suspects of an organized gang involved in the hundi and illegal currency business were arrested with gold bricks that were also recovered from them, an official of the FIA said here Saturday.

According to details, the FIA Commercial Banking Circle Peshawar, conducted an operation over a tip-off against elements involved in the hundi and illegal currency business. During the raid two suspects of an organized gang were arrested by the FIA team.

Currency and gold bars worth millions were recovered from the arrested accused identified as Shahid and Habibullah. The accused was arrested from Sarafa Market Peshawar, the official said.

A total of 65,20,000 Pakistani rupees was recovered from the accused and 9 gold bricks were also recovered from the accused.

The total value of exported gold is more than 200 million. Hundi and illegal currency records related to foreign currency were also recovered from the accused.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah visiting Pakistan Sweet Home's gallery.

Annual cardiology moot held by RMI

PESHAWAR (APP): The Rehman Medical Institute (RMI) hosted its highly anticipated annual cardiology conference here on Saturday, bringing together experts in the field for a meaningful exchange of knowledge.

The event, dedicated to advancing cardiac care in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa featured insightful discussions on pivotal topics such as left main disease management, the future of cardiovascular interventions, emerging data from 2023, and adult congenital heart disease management, said a press release.

Esteemed speakers including Prof. Afsar Raza from London, UK, Dr. Naeem Tahirkheli from Oklahoma Heart, USA, Prof. Zubair Akram from Lahore, Prof. Maad Ullah Khan from Rawalpindi amongst others shared their expertise, fostering engaging conversations among participants.

Prof. Dr. Miqdad Ali Khan, Head of Department Cardiology at RMI and the conference's patron, underscored the significance of such collaborative gatherings, said, "the knowledge exchanged during these sessions undeniably contributes to our collective growth and innovation in cardiovascular disease management."

The conference also served as a platform to highlight RMI's commitment to delivering exceptional cardiac care, attracting leading experts from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Kabul and showcasing the institute's regional influence.

With a renewed sense of collaboration, the event concluded, promising to propel innovation and elevate patient care standards in the region.

Throughout the conference, leading experts discussed into the development, research, and testing of new interventions. The discussions were attended not only by RMI senior consultants but also by young residents and students of Rehman Medical College.

Excise Police seizes 6 kg of hashish, one arrested

PESHAWAR (APP): In a successful operation of Police Station Excise Peshawar Region, an attempt to smuggle large quantities of drugs to Punjab has failed, Excise spokesperson said here Saturday.

According to details, the spokesman said that 6 kg of hashish was recovered from vehicle number LEB 2200 on the way to Gol Chowk, Motorway Exchange Peshawar. The alleged accused M. Nadeem son of Noor resident of Lahore was arrested on the spot, the Excise spokesman said.

A case has been registered at the Excise Police Station Peshawar Region for further investigation, Excise Spokesman said.

Five-year tax-holiday for revival of industries, business demanded

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq demanded five-year of tax-holiday for revival of industries and business in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The SCCI chief asked the government to take chambers and relevant stakeholders on board for framing sustainable economic and business-friendly policies. Fuad Ishaq said chambers and bureaucracy are part and parcel for each other and called for establishment of close liaison between them that would help to frame jointly viable policies and ensure its smooth enforcement.

Similarly, he demanded the uninterrupted power and gas supply to flourish industries and businesses in KP. Fuad Ishaq was speaking during an inland tour of the participants of the 39th Mid-Career Management Course, National Institute of Management (NIM) Islamabad here at the chamber house, which was led by NIM Islamabad Directing Staff Semi A Khan, said in a press release here on Saturday.

Senior vice president of the chamber Sanaullah Khan, members of the executive committee Imran Khan Mohmand, Minhajuddin, Ismail Safi. Hamza Ibrahim Butt, former senior vice president of the chamber Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, Rashid Iqbal Siddiqui, Ihsanullah, Ishtiaq Muhammad, Saddam Gul and Secretary Sajjad Aziz, traders and industrialists were present in a large number.

Responding to various queries of the senior officers on the occasion, Fuad Ishaq said peace and stability imperative for industrial and business growth in K-P and other parts of the country, adding that economic stability would come by only flourishing businesses and industries and jobs would be available to people in the province.

The chamber president said there was no scarcity of potential as KP is blessed with abundant natural resources, like mine, mineral, precious stones, agriculture, tourism and other important sectors in which prospects of investment are very high.

Fuad Ishaq told the meeting that SCCI would hold a conference in the first week of May dubbed: Traders and Industrialists – builders of the nation and treasury-full Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and he highlighted key-objectives of the moot.

The SCCI chief emphasized the need for provision of soft loans to revive small-scale business and industries in the province.

He was of the view that industrialization would only come with provision of low-cost industrial lands and availability of sufficient loans that could create ample employment opportunities.

To a question about the CPEC, Mr. Ishaq replied that there were a lot of expectations that had been attached with this important project that were yet not met because of which the business community didn't take full benefit from the CPEC projects, particularly Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He called for bringing down tax-ratio to single digit, equalization tariff of 224 items to duties of Afghanistan, revisiting economic policies, making them business-friendly, and tapping all available natural resources efficiently and steps for promotion investment in the province.

White coat celebration held in PDC

PESHAWAR (APP): A white coat celebration was held at Peshawar Dental College with the old students welcoming the new enrolled students here on Saturday.

Dr. Iftikhar Hussain, Prof. Dr. Hafeezur Rahman, Dean, PMC, Prof. Dr. Saeed Anwar Executive Director, Prof. Dr. Mohammad Aman Khan, Principal, PMC and Prof. Dr. Shamim Akhtar, Principal, P.C. Students including DC and their parents participated.

Addressing the audience, Professor Dr. Hafeezur Rahman congratulated the students on their admission to Holy profession. He told the students gratitude, professionalism, ethical values, deep commitment to learning, positive attitude and respect for others.

Professor Dr. Shamim Akhtar assured the students that the institute is the most modern focusing on making them good physicians along with providing facilities. In the ceremony, Dr. Nasih Muthahir asked the future physicians about their responsibility.

Dr. Mashida Durrani, Dr. Lalina, Dr. Mah Noor Fatima, Dr. Gul Sanga Shams and Dr. Ayesha Tahir shared their experiences in the institution, entertain the audience. During the celebration, white coat ceremony was also held in which students, especially the newly enrolled students enthusiastically participated.

Projecting Mughal era Sethi House through digital media imperative to bolster archaeological tourism

PESHAWAR (APP): Known as architecture wonder with rare wood craftsmanship, Sethi House is a unique building of Peshawar needs proper projection on digital media to attract foreign tourists and architectural lovers.

Constructed by Sethi family in 1886, Sethi House is a historical building of the British era carrying a unique architectural value and eye-catching wood designs is an amalgamation of Muslims and Vernacular Uzbekistan's architecture could attract foreign tourists in droves if properly showcased on digital media through short videos and pictures to gain maximum capital.

Located in a small alleyway Sethi Mohallah near a historic Ghanta Ghar Peshawar, Sethi House is about 10 minutes drive from the bustling Qissa Khawani bazaar.

"Inspired by Muslims and vernacular architecture of Bokhara Uzbekistan, the Sethi family associated with international trade had constructed the masterpiece after migrating from Jehlum Punjab to Peshawar in early 19th century at Mohallah Sethian where about seven havelis were built in almost the same style, signifying an affluent Sethis estheticism passion," said Bakhtzada Muhammad, senior research officer of Archaeology Department KP while talking to APP.

Associated with wood and furniture business with their trade expanded up to Central Asia, Sethi family had brought new innovation in architecture of houses, mansions and buildings as evident in the Sethi House, showing their unmatched architectural intellect and immense love for Muslims architecture.

"The fate took a negative turn on Sethis in start of 20th century when they received severe economic jolts due to Bolshevik Revolution, resulting their businesses has been adversely affected after adaptation of a new currency by Soviet Union. Subsequently, they sold their houses for revival of their business and strengthening of economy," he said.

Built by Sethi Karim Bakhsh, Sethi House is spread on 33 marlas having three portions including basement, courtyard and first floor. Its construction was started in 1835, and finally completed after 49 years in 1886.

"It is my second visit to Sethi House. I was very pleased to see rehabilitation

and repair works of the architectural masterpiece of Peshawar," said Manzoorul Haq, former Ambassador while talking to APP.

"I had visited many countries but could not see such an impressive building with red and greens' window glasses and ventilators structure anywhere in world," he said.

"The mehrabs' inside its rooms are filled with small pieces of glass shelves intended to place candles at night, shining just like stars in sky, has impressed me a lot," he said.

The ceiling is designed with pure Islamic architecture and the visitors could look at ceiling for hours at a stretch, which enhances its elegance.

"Buildings like Sethi House are built in centuries. It is the identity of Peshawar and its projection

was required to attract foreign tourists," he said.

The visitors' soon after entering Mohallah Sethian see its main wooden gate constructed on around five-foot height, leading him to a vast open courtyard with a water fountain in middle, which reminds them of its glorious days when this stunning architectural masterpiece welcomed scores of people through its doors.

Four spacious rooms in surrounding of its courtyard are connected through passageways attracted visitors' attention. The windows of the rooms face the courtyard, each from the same angle, having a colorful glasswork looking great aesthetic beauty.

The visitors could not remain unimpressed while seeing red and greens in window glasses, which are reminiscent of post-renais-

sance art in European churches.

The glass cut-pieces were imported especially from Belgium to concoct mélange of architecture.

Bakhtzada said the intricate web of floral designs on its doors, windows and arches stands as a testament to the artistry of the era's artisans. These embellishments add to accolades one has for the workers, who put unsurpassed effort into intricacies of the unique design, making Sethi House architectural wonder.

Upon entering its first floor and balconies, a visitor came across with cold breeze and see birds eye view of the surrounding areas of Peshawar being the home of over 3,000 years old civilization.

Its basement has spacious living rooms for accommodation of visitors

and holes in wooden ventilators are angled at a unique angle, ensuring an ample lighting throughout the day.

"Sethi House is a model for modern-day green architecture because of its perfectly built ventilating structures and unique architectural airy designs", said Shahryar Khan, Chief Architect at Communication and Works Department while talking to APP.

Despite passage of over one century of its construction, he said its architecture was intact reflecting its durability and quality design.

Bakhtzada said Sethi House was purchased by the KP Government in 2006 and later was converted into museum by Archaeology and Museums Department in 2010 after renovation, attracting tourists and architecture lovers.

Sethi House's conservation was achieved under the Cultural Heritage Trail Project (CHTP) Peshawar. Under the CHTIP, about 500 meters long trail from ancient Ghanta Ghar to Gor Gathri had been renovated including centuries-old buildings and houses to restore original grandeur of Peshawar being the oldest city of South Asia.

The trail starts from historical Ghanta Ghar and passes through ancient Bazaar-e-Kalaan and primordial Mohallah Sethian famous for scores of beautifully designed architectural houses constructed by Sethi Family in 1880s.

He said the trail had significantly improved the outer appearances of about 85 heritage buildings of Mughal, British and Sikh era.



In brief

Sharif defends his PhD thesis F.P. Report

MARDAN: The PhD Scholar Department of Sociology, Mr. Sharif Uddin of Abdul-Wali Khan University Mardan has defended his PhD thesis in the public defense on Friday here at AWKUM auditorium. During his PhD Defense Sharif Uddin successfully defended his research on "Analyzing the Sources of Political Tolerance in District Lower Dir " in front of the research board under the supervision of Dr. Syed Rashid Ali, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Psychology AWKUM, Dr. Ahmad Ali, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology AWKUM, the external examiners were Dr. Asad Ullah, Associate Professor, Department of Rural Sociology, The University of Agriculture, Peshawar, and Dr. Arshad Khan Bangash, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Bacha Khan University, Charsadda.. Beside the Professors, assistant professors, Students, and Scholars, there were a large number of public as well, present on the occasion.

Fire erupts at factory

SHUJABAD (INP): A cardboard factory caught fire late night on Friday in Shujabad, a town located 45 kilometres (km) from Multan in Punjab. According to the rescue officials present on the scene, the blaze initially engulfed the factory before spreading to nearby warehouses. Rescue teams along with firefighters are trying to put extinguish the flames and prevent them from spreading further. The cause of the fire is not yet known. Buildings caught fire in various locations across Karachi late on Friday. A fire erupted on the third floor of a building near Shah Faisal Colony Bridge. Firefighters were quick to respond to the situation and the fire was brought under control by fire brigade officials. Similarly, shops near Dawood Chowrangi in Landhi Town were engulfed in flames. Several shops including a bakery were affected by the fire. It took over four fire tenders from the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) to put out the flames. The fire cost significant damage and financial loss to the owners. However, exact scale of damage is under investigation.

Housemaid tortured to death

FAISALABAD (INP): A teenage housemaid was allegedly tortured to death by the employers. Police arrested three including two women nominate in case. According to details, the incident took place Nehmat Colony of Faisalabad where 12-year-old housemaid was allegedly tortured to death by her employers. Police said that the employer woman along with body of the housemaid visited the civil hospital and she claimed that the marks on her body were of allergy rather torture. However, parents of the deceased lodged a case against the employers of torturing their daughter to death. The police arrested three including two women nominated in the cases. Police said that post-mortem report was awaited after which proceeding into the cases could be made. Meanwhile, the Environment Protection Department fined industrial units on the charges of polluting the environment in different parts of Faisalabad here on Saturday. Deputy Director Environment Johar Abbas Randhawa said that environment teams checked factories and brick kilns and found violation of environment protection laws in three textile unit on Sargodha Road, in brick kiln near Thikriwala and in a sizing unit on Akbarabad Road.



ASTORE: Heavy machinery being used to remove snow from road by GBDMA and Works department Gilgit-Baltistan.

Teachers threaten sit-in if not promoted

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The senior schools' teachers waiting for promotion to the posts of subject specialist and headmaster on Saturday threatened to stage a sit-in at Peshawar on March 5 if their promotion was further delayed. The announcement was made during a meeting of the senior secondary schools' teachers (SSTs) at Timergara.

The meeting was informed that the SST association leadership had held several meetings with the concerned secretary and director education for expediting their promotion process but to no avail. Speaking on the occasion the SSTs leaders said that the promotion case was being delayed unnecessarily.

The speakers including Sher Bacha, Haroonur Rashid and others said that several male and female senior teachers were waiting for their promotion to the posts of subject specialist and headmaster but the concerned authorities were taking no interest. They said the association would stage a protest sit-in at Peshawar on March 5 if the matter was not resolved soon.

Afghan killed: An Afghan refugee identified as Irfanullah 35 s/o Muhammad Zaman, a resident of the Afghan refugees camp No. 2 was killed when unknown person [s] opened firing on him at the Ashari Gat area in the jurisdiction of Timergara police station here on Saturday. The attacker [s] fled from the scene. The Timergara police registered a case and started investigations. An old enmity is stated to be the cause of the incident.

Meanwhile on Rehmat Shah 37 was injured when he fell into a deep well at Khazana area in the jurisdiction of Munda police station. The Rescue 1122 medical team rushed to the spot and rescued the victim. He was shifted to the district headquarters hospital Timergara after the first aid by the Rescue 1122 team.

First ever bodybuilding competition held in Dir: As per the direction of Deputy Commissioner Lower Dir Wasil Khan the 1st Youth Inter district bodybuilding competition was organized by the district youth officer in collaboration with the bodybuilding association at government degree college Lal Qila in Maidan here on Saturday.

More than 30 bodybuilders from all over the district participated in the event. Mushtaq won the title of Mr Dir, Mr Basit Khan won the title of Mr Timergara, Mr Mudasir won the title of Junior Timergara, Mr Hamza won the title of Junior Dir, Mr Anees won the title of Mr Physique and Mr Sudais won the title of Junior physique. This was the biggest event in its category which was held for the first time in the history of Lower Dir. Mr South Asia Ijaz Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa gold medalist Faqir Said and the KP Physique champion Saeqeb Khan performed as technical officials.

The Lower Dir district youth officer Shehzad Tariq, president bodybuilding association Tanveer Khan, general secretary Sheikh Inam and area elders were also present to encourage the athletes and promote health and fitness in the district. The newly MPA-elect Liaqat Ali who was chief guest on the occasion awarded titles and trophies to the winners and runner up athletes. The guests also distributed certificates and shields among the position holders and sports' officials.

Khyber Bar files complaint against road blockade

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Khyber Bar Association lodged a complaint in the Court of magistrate, Landi Kotal against routine blockade of Pak-Afghan highway here on Saturday.

Vice-President of the Association, Advocate Sajjad Shinwari said that blocking Pak-Afghan highway in personal interests and in private matters had become a routine business that had multiplied miseries of the residents including students, patients and travelers from across the border.

Taking immediate action on the complaint, the magistrate directed the in-charge Zayarai check to forthwith open the road and ordered the Station House Officer, Landi Kotal police station to file First Information Report (FIR) against those involved in blocking the Pak-afghan road. Advocate Sajjad Shinwari vowed that they will report such kinds of irregularities and will raise their voice against injustice.

The locals appreciated the positive initiative of the lawyers and said the constant blockade of Pak-Afghan highway had become a headache for the locals and travelers that must be halted.

13 suspects arrested, arms recovered

F.P. Report

KOHAT: The Kohat Police in a targeted search and strike operation in various areas of Kohat Gumbat have arrested 13 suspects and weapons and drugs were recovered from their possession here on Saturday.

According to details, given by the Kohat Police, during operation 1 Kalashnikov, dozens of cartridges and 950 grams of ice were found in the possession of the detained persons. The operation was led by DSP Muzaffar Syed and SHO Gumbat Riaz Hussain. Police also conducted raids on the possible hideouts of the criminals. All the persons detained during the search operation were transferred to Gumbat Police Station for further investigation. Cases were registered against the arrested accused persons.

Meanwhile, in attempt to smuggle hashish worth Rs of millions was foiled in an operation on the Indus Highway on Friday.

The operation, under the supervision of ASP Sadar Circle Talha, was carried out based on intelligence information. SHO Muhammad Riaz Shaheed Shah Dauran recovered 80 kg of hashish from a truck full of coal in an operation along with a police force.

In the operation, three interprovincial drug smugglers, Amjad Hussain, Fazal Siddique residents of Orakzai, and Zeenat Ali, a resident of Kachai, were arrested along with the truck. The seized drugs were being smuggled to Punjab under the guise of coal. A case was registered against the detained drug smugglers at the Mohammad Riaz Shaheed police station.

Govt working to ensure good governance: Domki

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Caretaker Chief Minister (CM) Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has said that the interim set-up was working with diligence to ensure good governance and fulfilled its responsibilities assigned for the execution of daily official affairs along with the mandate of conducting transparent and impartial elections in the province with diligence.

CM, while addressing the dinner hosted in honor of secretaries of all departments and IG Police Balochistan here Friday night, said that the restoration of peace was a big challenge for the caretaker government as the problems and conditions of Balochistan are completely different, which cannot be compared to other provinces of the country in any way.

Ali Mardan said, "The

provincial government has successfully implemented its strategic initiatives for the provision of health, education, and other basic facilities to the population spread over a wide area to ensure the socio-economic development of its people despite the lack of basic infrastructure in remote areas."

The caretaker provincial government, with the support of senior and hard-working officers, played a key role in reducing the problems of the people by completing the pending projects. Ali Mardan said, "In all the extraordinary circumstances of Balochistan, the caretaker provincial government has ensured the holding of peaceful elections as well as the rights of Balochistan being defended at every forum."

"The caretaker government has completed the pending projects of public

nature, including the Quetta development package, rehabilitation projects in flood-affected districts, and means of communication to provide relief to the masses," he added.

The caretaker chief minister, while addressing the officers, said that efforts should be taken to prevent illegal activities aimed at forcing back the measures initiated for resolving the problems of the common man and the development of Balochistan.

He said, "It is normal to be a part of the traditional system and let the system run, but those who play a positive and collective role in this system will always be remembered.". Domki appreciated the positive role of the officers in matters of public interest, including holding peaceful elections, restoring sustainable peace, and completing pending projects in the province.

Police to launch crackdown against kite selling

F.P. Report

MULTAN: The city police have decided to launch a comprehensive crackdown against kite selling and flying to prevent mishaps reported in the past where various people lost their lives and many went differently-abled.

In line with the special directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Sadiq Ali, the police have formed special teams to launch the crackdown on a daily basis without any discrimination.

He also asked citizens to avoid using their houses for kite flying; otherwise, strict legal action would also be

taken against them. The CPO said that kite selling was a crime, and the violators could get three years of imprisonment and a fine of Rs 100,000. He said that the Names of violators would also be added to the police character certificates, through which they would be ineligible for government jobs and travel to other countries. He said, "Police teams have been directed to continue the crackdown on a daily basis without any discrimination."

Meanwhile, police said on Saturday to had arrested 25 criminals and recovered drugs and illegal weapons from their possession during a crackdown launched across the district in the last 24 hours.

According to police sources, police launched a

crackdown against criminals across the district and arrested two drug peddlers and two illegal weapon holders besides recovering 30 litres of liquor, two pistols and rounds from their possession.

The police have also apprehended 14 kite sellers and recovered 1803 kites and chemical thread while two power pilferers were arrested for stealing electricity through direct wires.

Meanwhile, three proclaimed offenders were arrested and involved in different cases of dacoity, robbery, theft and other crimes while two drivers were also held over violations. Separate cases have been registered against the criminals with the concerned police stations, police sources added.



FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Nair Abdullah Sheikh administering polio drops to a child during the inauguration of anti-polio campaign.

Conference on advances in engineering concludes

F.P. Report

WAH CANTT: The third International Conference on Advances in Civil and Environmental Engineering (ICACEE-2024) concluded here at the University of Engineering and Technology (UET) in Taxila.

Different international scholars and researchers from nine countries, including the USA, Japan, France, Germany, Greece, the UK, KSA, UAE, and China, participated in the conference, which aimed to bring together a multi-disciplinary group of highly cited researchers and engineers from all over the world to present and exchange breakthrough ideas related to civil and environmental engineering.

Brigadier Dr Waseem Khaliq, Director General, of the National Institute of Transportation, was the chief guest at the concluding ceremony. In his address, Mr Khaliq highlighted the necessity of such interpretational conferences and urged young scholars to gain knowledge and learn research methodology. He congratulated the

university administration for the successful conduct of the international conference and the receipt of 145 research articles from all over the globe.

Prof Dr Qaiser uz Zaman Khan, Vice Chancellor, UET, Taxila, highlighted the key features of the conference and briefed about the achievements of the university, including the improvement of the university ranking as per the rating measured by Time Higher education (THE) 2024, wherein the university stood first among the engineering and technology universities of Pakistan.

Qaisar added that ICACEE-2024 shares an insight into recent research and cutting-edge technologies, which gained immense interest with the colossal and exuberant presence of brilliant researchers, delegates, and talented student communities. Several members from national and international organizations are part of the technical committee for ICACEE-2024. In the end, shields and souvenirs were presented to the chief guest, guests of honour, and various members of the organizing committee.

MPA meets Wapda officials

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Unannounced load shedding will not be tolerated and in this connection newly elected Member Provincial Assembly Malik Liaqat Ali Khan called on Wapda officials to stop the unannounced load shedding in the area.

According to details, the MPA held a meeting with the officials of the Wapda and expressed his reservation over the unannounced load shedding in the area. The Wapda officials assured him to solve the electricity problem on emergency basis.

MPA Liaqat Ali Khan held detail discussion and directed the Wapda officials to stop such practice and provide electricity to the people of Dir Upper. The Wapda officials assured that they would solve the electricity problem on an emergency basis by seeking an answer from the WAPA administration as soon as possible.



MULTAN: Vice Chancellor of Nishter Medical University Dr. Mahnaz Khakwani Briefing the 16-member delegation of officers led by Chief Instructor National Institute of Management (NIM) Islamabad Dr. Samreen Zahra during a study tour as part of the 39th Mid Career Management Course.



Two years after Putin ordered a war on Ukraine, what’s changed in Russia?

MOSCOW: On December 30, a volley of rocket fire hit the Russian city of Belgorod near the Ukrainian border. “I live in the very centre of the city, and three or four things fell just outside my home. I don’t know whether it was a shell or shrapnel or what,” said 21-year-old Yuliya, a journalist from Belgorod who requested Al Jazeera use only her first name.

“The buildings nearby were seriously damaged. My own building was fine, but it was very frightening, very loud. In that moment, you can only think, ‘This is the end.’” Belgorod’s been bombarded several times since the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, but December’s barrage was the deadliest. At least 25 civilians, among them five children, were killed in the attack blamed on Ukraine’s armed forces. For the residents of the Russian border city, the war had come home. “The atmosphere in the city shifted dramatically since December 30 because people in Belgorod finally felt what war is, that it’s nearby and that it’s not so safe in the city as it seemed,” Yuliya said. “Life has greatly changed.”

She said children now know what it’s like to be shelled, recognise the sound of air raid sirens and know how to tie a tourniquet. “Now the council doesn’t discuss how many tulips to

plant for the summer festivals but how to paint the insides of bomb shelters. I think life in Belgorod will never be the same.” In the weeks after the invasion on February 24, 2022, the picture looked bleak for Russia as the rouble crashed and foreign investors fled.

But the economy has withstood sanctions. “The Russian economy went through multiple stress tests,” economist Artem Kochnev said. “The first one was in 2014 when the first round of sanctions was introduced and Russia took some lessons from that specifically by building a national financial infrastructure and tightening the grip over the financial sector. The second was the COVID crisis and how they tried to manage logistics in very rapidly changing circumstances. So they had some experience they could draw upon.”

Kochnev added that the gradual implementation of sanctions gave Russia time to readjust its oil exports. The European Union halted its imports from Russia, so Russia turned to China and India instead, using a “shadow fleet” of barges registered with shell companies in third countries such as Cameroon. Russia also had vast cash reserves from its petroleum sales, which were originally set aside to offset the shock from any drop in oil prices. “Now this money has been used for completely

another purpose – financing the war,” Kochnev said.

“That’s a fiscal stimulus which is actually larger than what government has put into the economy during the COVID crisis,” Major global brands, such as McDonalds and Starbucks, have left Russia, forced to sell off their assets far below market value to buyers approved by a government committee before being rebranded. For example, Starbucks has become Stars Coffee. A few firms have effectively been nationalised.

According to Kochnev, the assets went mainly to powerful and well-connected individuals, which may have created some friction between elites. Despite a dramatic mutiny by Wagner mercenaries last year, Putin’s position appears to be stable. He is expected to win a fifth six-year presidential term in the upcoming March election. Assuming he lasts until the end of his term, he’d be the longest-serving Russian leader since the tsars, overtaking even Josef Stalin.

Two candidates running on an anti-war platform, Yekaterina Duntsova and Boris Nadezhdin, were disqualified by the Central Election Commission despite neither being considered a serious contender against Putin. The war has certainly left an impact on society: After a decade of decline, problematic drinking has reportedly become more com-

mon, which some health experts have attributed to geopolitical confrontations. But on the whole, life goes on.

There are still music concerts and exhibitions, and customers can still buy foreign goods, such as Coca-Cola, which have been rerouted through third countries such as Uzbekistan. Some Russians are even upbeat. “I’ve heard a lot about propaganda in the West. It makes people idiots,” 51-year-old Alec from St Petersburg said. “But absolutely everything is still here. You think people don’t want to make money? Nothing has changed except the psychopathic liberals have left. Whether we like it or not, Russia has started it’s great game, and it’s very interesting to see. You have to be here to understand it.”

On the front lines in Ukraine, nearly 45,000 Russians have been killed in action since February 2022, the independent outlet MediaZona has reported. That is three times the Red Army’s losses during its decade-long occupation of Afghanistan. Even so, Russia has greater resources in terms of manpower than Ukraine. Since Ukraine’s failed counteroffensive in the summer, Russian forces have slowly inched forward, capturing the town of Avdiivka this month after a fierce, months-long battle.

“Russia’s hidden mobilisation has continued,” said Oleg Ignatov, senior

Russia analyst for the International Crisis Group think tank. “Regions are given the number of contract soldiers they have to call up. As a result, regional officials persuade whoever they can to sign up. These include debtors, people with financial and lifestyle problems, single men, ex-criminals and so on as well as [state employees]. The military, in turn, persuades conscripts to sign a contract. Also, more foreigners are coming to the front. But apparently, such methods work. The Russian army manages to replenish its ranks faster than the Ukrainian army.” Russia’s defence industry appears to still be functioning at full capacity, pumping out shells to be fired on Ukrainian positions.

“Russian military production has grown significantly, including by restoring production at old Soviet factories,” Ignatov added. “Russia has been able to outpace Western ammunition supplies and maintain its advantage in equipment and long-range weapons. Sanctions, of course, increase the price of production and create logistical problems but do not hinder the production of shells and hardly prevent Russia from modernising old Soviet equipment and sending it to the front. Russia’s industrial capability to produce weapons is very large but not enough to create a decisive advantage, so Russia buys

ammunition from North Korea.”

Besides the shelling of Belgorod, there have been several cross-border raids by the Russian Volunteer Corps, a militia of Russian citizens with far-right nationalist views fighting for Ukraine, engaging in brief skirmishes with Russian forces and border guards before falling back. Their strategic impact on the war has been limited but has undermined Russia’s sense of security. Meanwhile, drones have targeted Russia’s oil infrastructure, spectacularly blowing up a fuel export terminal near St Petersburg in January.

“Ukraine has conducted a series of successful attacks on Russian infrastructure and apparently managed to destroy several units of valuable and expensive equipment, but in general, these attacks do not change the overall picture, which is still in Russia’s favour,” Ignatov said. This will bring little comfort to Yuliya, whose heart still races whenever she steps outside. “Some of my friends who’ve left Russia and see the shelling of our city say, ‘Well, what did you expect? People are dying in Ukraine as well, and rockets are flying from Belgorod to Kharkiv,’” she said. “But I live here, and no matter what I do, I can’t stop these rockets. No one in our city can. So I don’t know how you can say that we had it coming. It’s very upsetting.” — Al Jazeera

Shamima Begum loses appeal against removal of British citizenship

LONDON: Shamima Begum, the British national who travelled to Syria as a schoolgirl to join ISIL (ISIS), has lost her latest appeal attempt to regain citizenship stripped by the United Kingdom.

The Court of Appeal ruled that Shamima Begum was lawfully deprived of her British citizenship. The court said it could be argued that the decision to strip the 24-year-old of her citizenship may be “harsh” but it could also be argued that Begum is “the author of her own misfortune”. “But it is not for this court to agree, or disagree with either point of view,” the ruling said.

“Our only task is to assess if the deprivation decision was unlawful. We have concluded it was not, and the appeal is dismissed.” Reporting from outside the court in London, Al Jazeera’s Harry Fawcett said this is not necessarily the end of the road for Begum’s case. “Her lawyers have a week now to consider this judgement. The chief justice said, if necessary, they can take more time to come back to the court,” he said, adding that lawyers can now take the case to the country’s



highest court, the Supreme Court.

Begum, born and raised in east London, left her home in Bethnal Green to travel to Syria and join the group. She was accompanied by two other schoolgirls, Kadiza Sultana and Amira Abase, with Sultana believed killed in an explosion and the fate of Abase remaining unknown. Begum’s lawyers had argued that she was trafficked to Syria and the fact that she was a minor when it happened must be considered, but were rejected by government lawyers who argued she did it with full

knowledge.

“On both the legislation relating to the European Convention on Human Rights and British common law the judges here determined that it was some four years after [she went to Syria] that the declaration on citizenship took place” and that the home secretary had the right to strip her of citizenship, Al Jazeera’s Fawcett reported. Her British citizenship was revoked on national security grounds in 2019 after she was found in a Syrian refugee camp. She was pregnant at the time, and the baby, along with her two other children, have died.

She had admitted that she joined the organisation knowing it was proscribed as a “terror” group, and has said she was “ashamed” and regretted joining the group. Begum, who lived under ISIL rule for more than three years and was married to a Dutch member of the group, has since appealed the decision and says she wants to come back to Britain.

She was born in the UK to parents of Bangladeshi origin but does not have Bangladeshi citizenship. She could have applied for Bangladeshi citizenship until she was 21, but did not, and the South Asian country has said there is “no question” of her obtaining citizenship now.

The UK Home Office stripped her of citizenship when she was 19 years old, meaning she still had time to file for Bangladeshi citizenship, something that appeared to strengthen the legal basis for revoking her citizenship. Begum now lives in the al-Roj detention camp in northeastern Syria, where she is likely to stay for the foreseeable future since she is effectively stateless. — Al Jazeera

German lawyers sue Scholz

BERLIN: A group of lawyers is filing a criminal complaint with the German federal prosecutor against senior German politicians, including Chancellor Olaf Scholz, accusing them of “aiding and abetting” the genocide they say is being committed by Israel in Gaza.

The case against several members of the country’s Federal Security Council, which directs national security policy and authorises weapons exports, was announced. In addition to Scholz, Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, Economics Minister Robert Habeck, Finance Minister Christian Lindner and others stand accused.

The lawyers behind the case represent families of two Palestinians with roots in the Gaza Strip, including that of Palestinian-German migration scholar Nora Ragab. “We, Palestinians in the diaspora, will not stand by and watch a genocide being committed against our families and our people,” Ragab said in a statement. “We will use all means at our disposal. ... Today we aim to hold the German government accountable for its complicity in the genocide in Gaza.”

The European Legal Support Center, the Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy and the UK-based Law for Palestine are among the civil society organisations backing the case. In a jointly written statement, they said: “The German state is one of the countries that has shown some of the strongest political and material support to Israel in its assault on the Gaza Strip and the Palestinians.” Alexander Gorski, one of the lawyers supporting the case, acknowledged that “from a legal point of view and given the political landscape in Germany, this case will be a difficult one.” “But we believe it’s our responsibility as people working in the judicial sector to try to do something,” he told Al Jazeera. “We are seeing a genocide being livestreamed around the world, and despite this, the Israeli government is still being supported by other countries and is still receiving weapons from them.” After the October 7 attacks by Hamas, during which 1,139 people were killed in southern Israel, the Israeli government retaliated with a military campaign in Gaza that has to date killed more than 29,000 Palestinians, the majority of them women and children. Israel has said it wants to crush Hamas, which governs the densely populated strip, but after four months of war, the devastating civilian toll is causing alarm among world leaders.

In late January, the United Nations’ top court, the International Court of Justice, or ICJ, found it was “plausible” that Israel was committing acts in Gaza that violated the international Convention on Genocide. Since the court’s decision, Germany and all other third-party states should have been trying to stop Israel from committing such acts, the lawyers behind case said. — Al Jazeera

US sanctions 500 Russia-linked targets

WASHINGTON: The United States has issued sanctions on more than 500 Russian-linked targets in response to Moscow’s invasion of Ukraine two years ago and the death in prison of opposition leader Alexey Navalny. Washington has also imposed new export restrictions on nearly 100 entities for providing support to Russia and take action to further reduce Russia’s energy revenues, US President Joe Biden said.

The entities and sectors targeted include Russia’s Mir payment system, Russian financial institutions and its military industrial base, sanctions evasion, and future energy production, and will also include officials believed to be involved in the death of Navalny, the Treasury and State departments said. The measures represent the largest single tranche of penalties since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, and come on the back of a series of new arrests and indictments that the US Department of Justice announced, targeting Russian businessmen, including the head of state-owned VTB Bank, Russia’s second-largest bank.

“They will ensure Putin pays an even steeper price for his aggression abroad and repression at home,” Biden said of the sanctions. The new economic restrictions come after the White House said this week that it was preparing “major” penalties after the death of Navalny, Russian President Vladimir Putin’s most prominent critic, in an Arctic penal colony.

Biden said, after meeting Navalny’s widow Yulia and daughter Dasha in California, that “we’re going to be announcing sanctions against Putin, who is responsible for his death, tomorrow.” The Kremlin has denied Putin was behind Navalny’s death and slammed the West for making assumptions before there was proof to back up its allegations.

Deputy US Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo told the Reuters news agency that the sanctions will also be taken in partnership with other countries who are looking to keep up the pressure on Russia over its war on Ukraine. “Tomorrow we’ll release hundreds of sanctions just here in the United States, but it’s important to step back and remember that its not just

America taking these actions,” Adeyemo said.

Washington has been coordinating with its European allies in its efforts to cut Russia off from the global economy. The European Union announced its 13th package of sanctions against Russia, banning nearly 200 additional entities and individuals accused of involvement in the two-year conflict. “Today, we are further tightening the restrictive measures against Russia’s military and defence sector,” said EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell. “We remain united in our determination to dent Russia’s war machine and help Ukraine win its legitimate fight for self-defence.”

The United Kingdom has imposed sanctions on six officials overseeing the penal colony where Navalny died. “Sanctions and export controls are geared towards slowing Russia down, making it harder for them to fight their war of choice in Ukraine,” Adeyemo said. The Biden administration has exhausted money previously approved for Ukraine, and a request for additional funds for military aid to Ukraine is stuck in the Republican-controlled House of Representatives.

“But ultimately, in order to speed Ukraine up, to give them the ability to defend themselves, Congress needs to act to give Ukraine the resources that they need and the weapons they need,” Adeyemo added. The US and its allies have additionally capped the price at which Russian crude oil can be sold on global markets, frozen billions of dollars of its central bank’s assets and imposed trade restrictions in an attempt to block technology and equipment used by Moscow to supply its military. However, they have not dented Russia’s ability to wage war.

Putin claimed that 95 percent of Russia’s strategic nuclear forces had been modernised and that the Air Force had just taken delivery of four new supersonic nuclear-capable bombers. In a recorded speech to mark Russia’s annual Defender of the Fatherland Day, which celebrates the armed forces, he also praised soldiers fighting in Ukraine as heroes battling for “truth and justice”. — Al Jazeera

Why is measles making a comeback in the UK?

LONDON: The first case of measles in seven years was reported in Northern Ireland. Outbreaks of measles have sprung up in parts of Britain in recent months amid concerns of what Dr Vanessa Saliba from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), has called a “worryingly low MMR [measles, mumps and rubella] vaccine uptake in some areas across the country”. So where and why is measles on the rise in the UK?

In the four weeks since January 22, 169 new cases of measles have been recorded in England, taking the total number of confirmed cases there since the start of October to 581. To put that into perspective, there were only two confirmed cases of measles across the whole of the UK in 2021 and 54 one year later. This month, a man in his 40s died in Ireland after contracting the virus during a visit to the West Midlands in England, where UK measles cases are among the most prevalent and at their highest since the 1990s. That case has focused the minds of many health professionals in the British Isles.

This week’s case reported in Northern Ireland was found in an adult who also became infected while travelling. Measles, which was recorded as long ago as the ninth century by Persian doctor Rhazes, can be serious for both adults and children. If coughs and sneezes spread diseases, then measles is one such illness to which that old adage applies.

Common symptoms of measles, which is caused by a virus, include a high fever, sore and watery eyes, coughing and sneezing. These symptoms are accompanied by a red rash all over the body. While measles can be contracted at any age, children are most at risk. Most people who catch measles recover within seven to 10 days, but in more serious cases, it can cause pneumonia, meningitis, seizures, complications leading to blindness and even death.

In more affluent parts of the world, measles is fatal in about one in 5,000 cases. But in poorer regions with less

robust healthcare systems, as many as one in 100 who catch measles will die from it. Over the past decade, deadly measles outbreaks have been documented in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Samoa and Pakistan among other countries. Prior to the introduction of the first measles vaccine in 1963, 2.6 million people died from the disease worldwide each year. In 2016, despite a much higher overall global population, 90,000 people died from measles. In 2017, the World Health Organization declared that the UK had eliminated measles as a result of vaccine use.

Roald Dahl, the Welsh-born children’s author, lost his daughter Olivia to the virus in 1962 at the age of seven after she developed measles encephalitis. While the measles vaccine came one year too late to protect Olivia Dahl, an improved version that caused fewer side effects was developed in 1968 by which time inoculations had been rolled out across parts of Africa.

The MMR vaccine, first introduced in Britain in 1988 and still used today, offers lifelong protection against measles, mumps and rubella and is 99 percent effective. As part of the UK national vaccination programme, it is normally given to children in two doses: at 12 months and again at around three years and four months. A triple-shot MMR vaccination is now used across many parts of the world. It has proved highly effective in reducing infections. According to the World Health Organization, “between 2000 and 2020, measles vaccination prevented an estimated 31.7 million deaths worldwide.”

In England, the most populous of the UK’s four constituent nations, uptake of the MMR vaccine in children for 2022-2023 was recorded at about 85 per cent, the lowest level since 2010-2011, sparking fears that this highly contagious but preventable disease could make a comeback in Britain. Despite saving millions of lives globally, the MMR vaccine has proved fertile ground for conspiracy

theorists.

The British physician Andrew Wakefield made headlines in 1998 when a study he wrote was published in the international medical journal The Lancet. His study linked the MMR vaccine to the development of autism in children despite his findings being based on only 12 patients. Wakefield was later unveiled as a fraud. He was found to have had a financial interest in claiming a damaging link to the MMR vaccine, and his conclusions were debunked. But the damage was done. The average uptake of MMR in England dropped sharply from 91.8 percent in 1996 to 79.9 percent in 2004, and cases of measles rose, largely as a result of his false claims.

Experts said today’s drop in MMR uptake in Britain – the National Health Service England said 3.4 million children under 16 have not been inoculated – is down to a number of factors. They include a conflation of anti-vax conspiracy theories during the pandemic when myths peddled about the COVID-19 vaccine rubbed off on the MMR vaccine, causing scepticism in some parents. In 2019, the European Commission and the World Health Organization urged governments to take action against the spread of misinformation about vaccines. Cases of tuberculosis (TB), an illness caused by a bacterial infection that many in Britain today associate with the Victorian and Edwardian eras, rose by 11 per cent last year in England.

There were, according to the UKHSA, 4,850 cases of TB in England in 2023 as opposed to 4,380 in 2022. TB, known as “consumption” in the 1800s because sufferers often lost weight and almost wasted away, commonly affects the lungs, and symptoms include a persistent cough, a high temperature and loss of appetite. As was the case in the past, TB remains linked to poverty and deprivation, but can be successfully treated today with antibiotics. However, if left untreated, TB can still prove fatal. — Al Jazeera

Teachers seek relief

GUADALAJARA: In Maria Soto’s classroom, nearly half of the fourth-graders have not yet learned how to read. The rest are at least a year behind. For these kids, the pandemic era continues, even if no one wears a mask anymore. But as Soto sees it, the problem lies not just in learning delays accumulated during months of remote education. It stems equally from an ongoing trend of classroom crime.

The Eduardo O’Gorman elementary school, in Guadalajara’s impoverished Chulavista neighbourhood, has been the victim of near-constant robberies since 2020, Soto said. The latest occurred this past October. Bit by bit, furniture, electrical equipment and plumbing infrastructure — down to the toilets and sinks in the bathrooms — have disappeared from the campus, which features a pair of skeletal two-storey buildings linked by a square patch of asphalt, decorated with hopscotch squares.

The school has become a buffet for local criminals who resell stolen goods, at the expense of the community’s children. Many of the thefts occurred in broad daylight, with multiple witnesses and security camera footage as evidence. But

police investigations have not yielded any answers or any change, Soto said. “They stole everything little by little, the cables, the windows, the sinks,” she explained. “The neighbours had to have seen who was doing it, but no one admitted that they saw anything.”

What is happening at O’Gorman elementary is part of a nationwide trend. In the year after the COVID-19 pandemic began, the National Union of Educational Workers (SNTTE), Mexico’s largest teachers’ union, estimated that 40 to 50 percent of the nation’s schools had faced robbery or vandalism. Teachers and education advocates like Soto say that heightened risk has yet to subside. And they fear that the continued threat of theft will exacerbate the education setbacks wrought by the pandemic.

“We couldn’t return to school for two years, so we did online class, and now 35 percent of the kids can’t read,” Soto said. Fernando Ruiz, an investigator at Mexicanos Primero, a non-profit involved in improving the Mexican public education system, told Al Jazeera that school robberies continued throughout 2023 at high levels, affecting 11,000 of the

schools his organisation worked with last fall. The damage can end up shuttering educational facilities indefinitely, he added. “There are schools that remain pretty much abandoned.”

Ruiz and other advocates suspect the number of schools affected is likely much higher. But the Mexican government has not collected data on the subject since 2022. In a press conference in July 2023, Daniel Covarrubias Lopez, the SNTTE’s secretary general, remarked on the frequency of school robberies by saying, “This is our daily bread.”

For Soto — a short teacher with tall, block heels whose firm, measured tone lays bare her decades of experience — the constant repairs and replacements required at her school have left classrooms with few resources.

Midway through the pandemic, the school was able to gather money from state government grants, allowing it to make the minimum necessary repairs. “When we were able to raise money, the first thing we did was replace the electricity, so workmen could come do construction,” Soto said. “But the next day, the new cables were gone.” — Al Jazeera

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

*USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Political wrangling and national interests

THE International Monetary Fund (IMF) has expressed its desire to engage with the new government on policies to ensure macroeconomic stability and prosperity for all of Pakistan's citizens. The development comes a day after PTI Spokesman announced that a letter would be sent from incarcerated party founder Imran Khan to the international lender urging it for an independent audit of the Feb 8 general elections before it engages with Islamabad. During a press briefing, the IMF's Chief Communication Officer was asked about whether the IMF board would consider the proposed letter by the PTI Chairman opposing IMF's Cooperation with the next government as a political group perceives that recent elections were rigged/manipulated by its political opponents in collaboration with Country's military, Election regulator as well as the top judiciary.

Historically, Pakistan fell prey to unceasing animosity of its leaders who never came out of their ego, political fame and lust for power. The politics of hate, and name calling prompted agitation and violence leading to nationwide political unrest and economic frailty in the past multiple years. Political instability and bad governance brought the country on the verge of an economic collapse that was narrowly averted through timely IMF bailout package of \$3 billion under Stand-By Arrangement, that expiring in next two months. Currently, Pakistani Economists are working to get approval from the IMF board for issuance of a fresh long term \$6 billion IMF loan which perceived to be crucial for economic stability and servicing of foreign loans in the coming years. Interestingly, the interim government successfully maintained economic stability through strict adherence to fiscal targets, protection of the social safety net and realizations of tough goals set by the global lender for the government. Meanwhile, the Central Bank continued tight monetary policy was pavit to control headline inflation and build up of foreign exchange reserves.

There had been little improvement in country's economic indicators in recent months while transition of a newly elected government created a Ray of hope for future political and financial stability in the country. Unfortunately, the PTI leaders expanded their political tussle other continent reaching out to International Monetary Fund to block country's access to foreign loans that will although fail their political rivals in implementing their manifesto but also plunged the country into deep economic crisis. Previously, Pakistan Tahreek-e-Insaf provincial governments in KP and Punjab sabotaged Pakistan deal with the IMF by not up holding their constitutional obligations. Now, the same policy is being implemented in the garb of electoral rigging and election irregularities.

The nation has not witnessed such kind of national service by any leader, political group and his supporters, where in armed mob attack national institutions in the name country's defence, fuel violence in the name of civil rights, block dearly needed funds in the name political opposition and spoiled foreign relations in the garb of national integrity. Apparently, no nation needs an enemy whose loyalists dig country's foundations through diggers and mattocks. In fact, PTI's rigid political works is doing an equal amount of harm to the country as being performed by the Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan through bullets and bombs.

The mnation suffered enormously from months long instability and economic crisis that stem out from political rivalry of its leaders. There is a clear framework, rules and limits for political work, civic activities, opposition and criticism which governs by the national, institutional and communal interest. Presently, PTI leaders are mourning democracy but they are ignoring country's security, prestige and sovereignty that are seriously hindering from ruthless politics and agitation. It would be better that our leaders keep their political wrangling with in a specific limit inside the country, so it does not undermines Pakistan's core interests at the global level.

West's new prism about Afghanistan

THE US Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ambassador Thomas West recently endorsed the importance of the UN-led Doha Conference and called on the United Nations to develop a roadmap for Afghanistan's full integration into the international system. According to Thomas West, the welfare of Afghans and the common interests of the global community in that country will guide this effort. He was of the view that no country wants to see a re-emergence of terrorism threat from Afghanistan. All want to see women and girls return to secondary school, university, work, and public life. While pointing out the global humanitarian aid provided to over 26 million Afghans last year, West raised concerns about the sustainability of this aid and emphasized the importance of an approach that empowers Afghans economically.

Afghanistan has been left out of the multiple global forums including the UN-hosted global Climate talks including COP 26, COP 27, and COP 28, in recent years after the Taliban took control of the country in 2021. The US-led Western bloc took a unified front against the Islamic Emirate after freezing Afghan assets in Western banks, reimposing UN sanctions against the Taliban regime along resisting diplomatic and trade ties with Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. Historically, the political boycott of the Islamic Emirate seriously hurt the Afghan people, and businesses and largely undermined the economic development and social uplift in the country. Amid such circumstances, Pakistan has been the sole advocate of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan at the global level, which undertook various political and diplomatic initiatives to reduce economic, social, and political issues of the people of Afghanistan throughout the past years until the Taliban regime partnered with the Pakistani proscribed elements and Islamabad severed its ties with the Emirate.

The Frontier Post categorically mentioned on these pages multiple times in the past that severing ties with Kabul and pushing the Afghan interim rulers into diplomatic isolation would not serve the shared interests of the global community concerning Afghanistan. The global community looks at Afghanistan as free of transnational terrorists, with no terror haven, politically inclusive government, grooming civil society, and flourishing human and women rights in that country. Presently, the US government has realized its mistake and announced a pivotal change in its Afghanistan policy. Hopefully, the Afghan rulers will also reciprocate this goodwill by embracing political inclusiveness and introducing liberal policies regarding women and girls' status in their country. This is the beginning of a long journey that merits two-way cooperation to achieve shared goals and a common destiny.

Important Notice

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



Second candle and international jungle

Ghassan Charbel

THE masters of the profession taught us not to fall under the weight of the event, not to jump to hasty final conclusions and to put the scene within the context of history and geography. We must pay attention to the deep spirit in the arena of events, the arsenal of hatred and the temptation of revenge. Thus, we were trained to feel some anxiety when confronted with coups and earthquakes.

I was part of a press delegation shortly after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war. On the Iranian side of the border, I witnessed two Iraqi soldiers escort an old Iranian man "to a safe place" from his house, where he was hiding. The man's face showed signs of fear and humiliation, and I wondered about the extent of revenge Iran would carry out when it had the opportunity.

Decades later, the world watched Gen. Qassem Soleimani dancing with the Iraqi militias after the withdrawal of the American forces that had uprooted Saddam Hussein's regime.

I was also worried when the US military pounced on Saddam's regime based on accounts that it had ties to Al-Qaeda and possessed mobile biological weapons facilities. Some victories carry within them signs of their eventual collapse, especially when the party with enormous power fails to understand what is taking place underneath the scene of its victory. I also felt anxious as I was leaving a meeting with a Syrian official and received a phone message saying Rafik Hariri had been assassinated in Beirut.

I was worried when I traveled from the Middle East to witness the collapse of the Berlin Wall. It was no secret that the wall was both a state border and an imperial frontier. Empires do not usually disappear without bloody feasts, even if they are delayed. I did not know that day that a young KGB officer had quickly destroyed his documents near where he was stationed by the wall and fled back into Russia's depths. The officer's name was Vladimir Putin. I remembered the masters' lessons when I walked down Arbat Street in Moscow under

Boris Yeltsin. The sight of Red Army officers' uniforms displayed with their medals for a handful of dollars was cruel and terrible. History is a strict teacher. Russia scratches its wounds under the snow and then rises to start a great fire. And this is what happened.

In a few days, Putin will extinguish the second candle of the "special military operation" that he launched on Feb. 24, 2022, to correct both history and geography. He dispatched the Red Army to chase the "Nazis" in Ukraine, which he asserted was a country that would not have existed had it not been for a mistake committed by Stalin. After the advisers leave, he will celebrate alone. The czar is always one and alone. He will smile sarcastically. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last

the collapse of the wall and the disappearance of the Soviet Union. Most likely, he will also ridicule the "comrades" who were quick to surrender and made it easy for their countries to jump off the Soviet train. He will also mock those who danced with joy at joining the NATO paradise under the American era. He has the right to ridicule those who, in the wake of his forces' invasion of Ukrainian territory, were quick to believe that he had committed the mistake of his life and his setback near Kyiv would push him to accept a settlement to save face.

Putin has the right to mock those who flocked to the Ukrainian capital, believing that the time had come to discipline the man sitting on Stalin's throne. He also has the right to

There is no harm in the Kremlin master resorting to the arsenal of Kim Il Sung's heir or drones from the countries of Ayatollah Khomeini's successors. Your only mission in war is to win. He brilliantly exploited his country's massive nuclear arsenal to deter the West from committing the adventure of victory. A nuclear arsenal is useful without even using it. This message is extremely dangerous for the future of the world. A journalist monitors the pulse of the world and reports to readers. Are we exaggerating if we say that the world is passing a very dangerous turning point? How can we be reassured in a world that has lived for months with this horrific massacre in Gaza and is unable or reluctant to rein in the Israeli killing machine?

Moreover, the fragility of the Middle East does not need evidence. There is no international police guaranteeing freedom of navigation in the Red Sea. International legitimacy does not have the ability to stop roaming missiles and drones traveling in many directions. The Russian coup through Ukraine is also accompanied by a coup led by the North Korean leader near the Asian powder kegs. Then, if the world concedes to Putin the right to redraw the Ukrainian map, how can it reject China's right to restore Taiwan as a matter of "returning the branch to the origin?" The Gaza crisis also showed the scale of the Iranian coup in the Middle East. Iran is troubling America and Israel through four Arab maps.

Putin has the right to celebrate. But I wish he would worry a little. He engaged his country in a terrible arms race with the West, which continues to increase its defense budgets. The master of the Kremlin, who is the master of missiles, should pay a little attention to the fact that the West's capabilities are enormous, especially their technological power. The Soviet Union was not killed in war, but in the battle for the model and prosperity. Putin has the right to celebrate. The Wagner leader came and went. Alexei Navalny came and went. Russia has a weak memory.

Arab News

Putin has the right to be sarcastic. The leaders of the West did not accept that he could not lose ... that he went to Ukraine to punish the entire West and to launch a major coup against a world that was born from the collapse of the wall and the disappearance of the Soviet Union. Most likely, he will also ridicule the "comrades" who were quick to surrender and made it easy for their countries to jump off the Soviet train.

week ordered his forces to withdraw from the city of Avdiivka in front of Russian forces after aid and ammunition were delayed due to the "wars" raging in the corridors of the US Congress. Zelensky's position reminded me of a remark made by late Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to former Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, that "the one who is covered by the Americans is naked." The same phrase could be said by Putin to Zelensky.

Putin has the right to be sarcastic. The leaders of the West did not accept that he could not lose ... that he went to Ukraine to punish the entire West and to launch a major coup against a world that was born from

mock those who besieged Russia with color revolutions and NATO experts. Today, they are discovering that he is advancing to besiege them by manipulating the borders of the Ukrainian map. He has the right to celebrate because he seemed to be a master at circumventing Western sanctions, at concealing the number of Russian casualties from his people ... because the performance of his country's economy surpassed experts' expectations ... because his ability to produce munitions far exceeds that of the aging continent, which is consumed by fear of the possibility of Donald Trump returning to the Oval Office.

Global financial architecture needs reform

Xu Wenhong

AFTER the end of World War II, an international financial architecture was built with the aim of helping war-ravaged and low-income countries to recover and rebuild the global economies. At the center of this architecture were the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The international financial architecture's aim is to ensure the stability and smooth functioning of the global monetary and financial system. The international financial architecture had certain structural deficiencies at the time of its conception, but with the passage of time the architecture has become increasingly plagued by inequities and inefficiency. It is dysfunctional in the sense that it serves the interests of only a small group of Western countries and ignores, even neglects, the real needs of the world, especially of the develop-

ing countries. For example, the existing global financial architecture allows the United States and the European Union to weaponize their currencies USD or Euro which have the global currency status, to plunder the wealth of other countries by tidal movements, a fresh case was in 1998 in Asian financial turmoil, to dominate international payment system to punish countries with different opinions, worse, even fund wars in other regions. It also allows the major Western economies to use their values and policies to influence the world order in the name of "promoting democracy" and "defending human rights".

The fact that the rest of the world does not enjoy the above privileges makes it very difficult for countries to manage their debt because of the exorbitant interest rates which is up to eight times more than those for developed countries.

Also, the developing countries are struggling to address the dramatic challenges and budget deficits due to their limited access to financial resources. About 60 percent of the least-developed countries are in or at the risk of debt distress today compared with 39 percent before the pandemic. Currently, 25 developing economies have external debt payments exceeding 20 percent of their total revenue. For them, this debt cycle will likely continue pushing millions more into poverty, unless the existing international financial architecture undergoes thorough reform.

An apt example of the IMF's discriminatory policy was evident in 2021. The IMF allocated more than \$650 billion in special drawing rights, but \$160 billion went to EU member states and just \$34 billion to African countries which are

actually in need of financing. In other words, people in the EU received on average nearly 13 times more funds than those in Africa. In addition, Washington, along with its allies, is weaponizing the US dollar to maintain its global economic and geopolitical position. Washington has imposed economic sanctions on nearly 40 countries across the world, including Cuba, China, Russia, North Korea, Iran and Venezuela, affecting nearly half of the world's population and creating severe hardship for ordinary people and seriously disrupting those countries' economies.

Moreover, the US Federal Reserve's aggressive tightening policy has made the dollar a much stronger currency. With the dollar continually gaining in strength, currencies around the world have been weakening, pushing up the prices of imported goods,

Making all countries in Asia and Pacific more dynamic

Qu Dongyu

WE all know that we live in a changing world. In the vast area of Asia and the Pacific that change is most evident. Over the past 20 years, the economies of many nations in the region have been moving out of the category of 'least developed' and graduating into a 'middle income' status. However, the positive changes that help to make our lives better, healthier, and more prosperous, are not happening at the same time equally across all countries, or even equitably within them.

On the one hand, Asia and the Pacific is now home to three of the world's five largest economies. These and other countries in the region help to feed much of the rest of the world - the majority of aquaculture, rice production and the rapidly growing protein sector is found here. On the other hand, hunger is still widespread in some parts of the region - indeed more than 371 million are undernourished in Asia and the Pacific - or half the world's total. Nearly two billion people cannot afford a healthy diet. Despite considerable progress, poverty remains a problem for many families. Meantime, inequalities persist among and within countries, between men and women and for youth, and indigenous peoples, and between cities and rural areas.

To address these challenges, FAO is increasingly striving to leverage science and innovation, including new technologies - especially digital solutions - developed in both the public and private sectors, particularly through four regional priorities designed to deliver the Four Betters (Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment, and a Better Life, leaving no one behind).

The first FAO Asia-Pacific regional priority is to transform the region's agrifood systems to be more efficient, more inclusive, more resilient, and more sustainable, with more affordable healthy diets. Increasing agricultural production is paramount for food and nutrient security, but it needs to happen in a climate-friendly process. To that end, we are supporting countries to bolster climate-adaptation and resilience, low-carbon agriculture, modernize seed systems, implement integrated farming management, control transboundary pests and diseases, disseminate good agriculture practices (GAP) and transfer technologies to smallholders and family farmers. We are also promoting increasing digitalization and mechanization among local communities.

The second regional priority is to accelerate sustainable natural resources management for biodiversity conservation and climate action. FAO is leading the development of a new generation of analysis and tools to support the design and improved targeting of investments in agrifood systems. In Asia and the Pacific, we are supporting

countries to strategize and develop proposals to access climate finance and to achieve their climate ambitions in agri-food systems and rural development. The third priority is to support inclusive rural transformation for equitable rural societies through economic growth, job creation and assistance for the vulnerable populations to reduce inequality, leaving no country and no person behind. FAO's The 1000 Digital Villages Initiative, the Hand-in-Hand Initiative and the One Country One Priority Product Initiative promote sustainable livelihoods and decent incomes in the Asia-Pacific region, while encouraging the wide participation of women and youth in agri-food systems transformation.

The fourth priority aims to achieve the above in the unique context of the region's Small Island Developing States (SIDS). At FAO, we are working with the SIDS to implement anticipatory actions against multiple hazards and risks, while initiating a process leading to the formulation of the Pacific Action Plan on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors (2024-2030). This Plan is critical for bringing sustainability and resilience to agriculture and natural resources such as soil and water. In working on these priorities, we are speeding up and scaling up tangible and accountable results on the ground through the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and relevant strategies.

In Asia and the Pacific, we are also assisting countries to promote tailored investment plans for poverty reduction including the Four Betters (Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment, and a Better Life, leaving no one behind). fighting food loss and waste and conserving water; and building adaptive capacities in response to country and regional needs. Meantime, we continue to scale up South-South and Triangular Cooperation and expand partnerships and strategic alliances with a wide range of players, including International Financial Institutions (IFIs), the private sector, regional institutions bodies, civil society, and others. Through these partnerships, we aim to bridge investment and financing gaps to ensure that financing reaches those who need it most, especially smallholder and family farmers.

These advances and more will form the basis of much of the discussion at the upcoming 37th Session of the FAO Regional Ministerial Conference for Asia and the Pacific (19-22 February), which is gathering Government Ministers from FAO's Members from the region in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The changes we still need are many.

But, together, with strong political will and commitment, and with enabling policies, sufficient investment and innovative business models, this region can be an agent of the changes needed - and continue to inspire the world.

The China Daily

Iraq’s positive trajectory serves as a beacon of hope

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

IRAQ is moving in a direction aimed at fostering socio-economic developments. One of the key pillars of the country's transformation lies in its approach to attracting foreign direct investment and prioritizing infrastructure development, thereby setting the stage for sustainable growth and improved living standards for its citizens.

In a landmark move signaling the commitment of Iraqi authorities to the nation's development, the parliament last year approved a record-breaking budget for the years 2023 to 2025. This historic budget, totaling 198.9 trillion Iraqi dinars (\$153 billion), earmarks substantial funds for critical infrastructure projects and expansion of the public sector. With Iraq's population projected to double by 2050, the allocation of resources to infrastructure development is not only a necessity but a strategic imperative.

The significance of this budget cannot be overstated. First of all, decades of underinvestment have left the nation's infrastructure in dire need of repair and modernization. Roads, bridges, schools, hospitals and utilities have suffered neglect, hindering economic growth and impeding social progress. By prioritizing infrastructure development, the government is laying the groundwork for a more resilient and prosperous Iraq that is capable of accommodating its burgeoning population and fostering economic diversification. It is also important to point out that the plan to recruit more than half a million new public sector workers underscores the government's commitment to addressing unemployment and bolstering public services. This creation of jobs will not only reduce unem-

ployment but also stimulate consumer spending and drive demand, further fueling economic growth.

Secondly, the Iraqi administration has embarked on a resolute campaign to tackle corruption, acknowledging that this not only impedes development but also corrodes public trust in governmental institutions. Corruption diverts valuable resources from essential public services and serves as a significant deterrent to potential investors by undermining confidence in the integrity and transparency of the business environment. Anti-corruption efforts are a fundamental pillar of effective governance. The restoration of accountability, transparency and ethical conduct are prerequisites for attracting foreign direct investment and fostering a conducive climate for business growth and investment. The Iraqi administration's multifaceted anti-corruption approach, which aims to root out malfeasance at all levels of government, includes reforms within the state institutions responsible for combating corruption, stringent rules on financial disclosures by senior officials and the establishment of a specialized security force dedicated to investigating corruption cases. These measures have sent the clear message that corruption will not be tolerated and perpetrators will be held accountable. The important issue here is that cracking down on corruption not only restores confidence in Iraqi governance, it also makes the country more attractive to foreign investors. In other words, transparency and accountability are cornerstones of a thriving investment climate and Iraq's commitment to upholding these principles is a testament to its seriousness

about reforms and progress.

In addition, recognizing the need for diversification and sustainable growth, Iraqi authorities have embarked on ambitious initiatives designed to attract foreign investment and forge international partnerships. One such endeavor is the Development Road project, a large-scale infrastructure initiative that aims to improve connectivity and enhance Iraq's geo-economic significance. The project represents a pivotal step in Iraq's journey toward economic diversification and global integration. Its twofold objective is to reduce the country's reliance on oil revenue while simultaneously elevating Iraq's stature as a pivotal nexus for regional and international trade. Strategically located at the crossroads between the Gulf, Asia and Europe, Iraq offers inherent advantages as a transit point for goods and commodities. By capitalizing on this advantageous geographical position, the Development Road project seeks to harness the full potential of transit trade and logistics, thereby unlocking previously untapped revenue streams and catalyzing economic expansion.

Through the development of modern transportation infrastructure and logistical networks, Iraq's aspirations include streamlined trade flows, reduced costs and enhanced efficiency, thereby attracting investment and fostering sustainable growth. In doing so, Iraq will not only mitigate the risks associated with overreliance on oil but also diversify its economy, fortifying its resilience against external shocks and laying the foundation for a more prosperous future. Partnerships that have been forged

with foreign stakeholders, notably including China, also exemplify Iraq's steadfast dedication to fostering robust international cooperation aimed at mutual prosperity. These collaborations represent a strategic alignment of interests, wherein Iraq seeks to leverage the expertise, resources and technological advancements of foreign partners to advance its own developmental goals.

By engaging in joint endeavors encompassing infrastructure projects, investment initiatives and technological exchanges, Iraq is poised to reap multifaceted benefits that extend beyond mere economic gains. Through such partnerships, the country can also gain access to cutting-edge technologies, best practices and innovative solutions, thereby enhancing its capacity for sustainable development and bolstering its competitive edge in the global arena. Moreover, these collaborations facilitate the transfer of knowledge, enhancement of skills and development of human capital, thereby empowering Iraq to build a more resilient and dynamic economy capable of weathering future challenges. By embracing a collaborative approach to international engagement, therefore, Iraq not only fosters mutual prosperity but also reinforces its position as a key player on the global stage.

By prioritizing infrastructure development, combating corruption and fostering foreign investment, Iraq is laying the groundwork for sustainable growth and prosperity. As the nation continues down its path of reform and renewal, it serves as a beacon of hope. Iraq's positive trajectory is a testament to the resilience and determination of this nation and its people.

From Tucker Carlson to Johnny Depp

Marina Hyde

BEHOLD, the current must-have accessory for all the most grimly murderous dictators - a pet American idiot. Not just any American idiot, obviously. You need a male, mid-50s to early-60s, ideally fire-damaged by a recent career setback, who just wants to see the best in you for coins. In short, you need someone of the ... calibre, would you call it? ... of Tucker Carlson or Johnny Depp.

The past week or two has seen the formal reveal of two of these new dictator-pet acquisitions: Vladimir Putin's kind offer to rehome the stray former Fox News host, and Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman's generous response to the question How Much Is That Deppy in the Window? Answer: a rumoured seven-figure tourism promo deal and forking out for one somewhat indifferent period French film. I know. Pets are very reasonably priced, not to say embarrassingly cheap.

So let's start with Johnny Depp, the joint subject of a most eye-catching Vanity Fair article headlined "Inside Johnny Depp's epic bromance with Saudi Crown Prince MBS". Yes, yes - please take us inside it. Although we reserve the right to leave at any time without being dismembered. The safe-word is Raytheon. According to the article, Depp first came into contact with the Saudi ruler while working on a precariously financed French film, last year's Jeanne du Barry. Having secured Saudi funding, the movie's producers required their star to meet MBS's cousin - a guy called Prince Badr - who also serves as some kind of cultural bagman. I'm getting huge Ribbentrop energy, but perhaps he's adorable. Anyway, one thing led to another, and within months Depp was revelling in all-expenses-paid trips and face-to-face time with MBS, listening to his excuses about the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, and making "a genuine connection". Hey - the heart wants what it wants. Likewise the wallet. According to Vanity Fair, "both men knew how

it felt to suddenly go from golden boy to outcast". And certainly the fates can be very cruel.

As can movie financing. Seriously, why spend years waiting for your producer to patchwork together some shaky funding from the French film foundation, plus a lottery grant, plus an endowment from the Trudi Styler Cinema in Peril fund, plus fifty quid from Unesco, plus some crappy Belgian tax credits? You have something really important to get made, in which you get to crossly overturn a small occasional table in Versailles - all while wearing a feathered tricorn hat. How DARE "the market" deny the culture this future gem? How dare people think your god-given right to pretend to be someone else for money should depend on such shifting sands? Why not just go to Daddy Bonesaw and get his chump change in five seconds? And listen, MBS's "Red Sea Film Fund" wants nothing more than to finance a film about a French courtesan. Given that the finished movie contravenes about 437 of his country's decency and modesty laws, I guess something about Du Barry's life just spoke to MBS. Maybe the fact a woman gets her head cut off. For his part, Depp responded to Vanity Fair's request for comment on his new alliance with a lengthy statement claiming to have "experienced first-hand the cultural revolution that is happening" in Saudi, "from emerging young storytellers radiating fresh ideas and works of art to a blossoming film infrastructure and a newfound curiosity for innovation". Attaboy.

In terms of the old quid pro quo, do remember that Depp has in recent years been saddled with what euphemism forces us to style "expensive legal setbacks", followed by "expensive legal victories". He reportedly has an endless array of luxury properties to maintain, including a French village he was trying to sell, and a private Caribbean island. A private island - of course. Has anything good ever come of a

white man owning a private Caribbean island? (Don't write in, Branson, even though I'm using your letters to make a papier-mache sculpture of you carrying a woman in the course of a promotional stunt. I call it "The Ally".) But let's move on to Tucker Carlson, who recently went all the way to Moscow to interview the Russian president in hardcore lapdoggy style. There is a grim sort of poetic justice to the fact this televised fawnathon took place just days before Putin's likely murder of Alexei Navalny, which itself seems to have occurred around the time Tucker was filming imbecilically approving videos in a Russian supermarket. Did you see the one where he seems to think he has discovered a cutting-edge Russian invention in the form of supermarket trolleys you need to release with a coin? I love that it reveals how much Tucker's producer hates him, willingly allowing his super-rich boss to stray into elite self-parody by lauding something freely available to US citizens in Aldis and airports for quite, quite some time now.

In related news, then, a word on pet cruelty. At this stage, Depp has yet to feel the sharp end of an emerging young storyteller radiating fresh ideas. But Tucker's claim to have been in Moscow doing hard journalism was e x c r u c i a t i n g l y factchecked by Putin himself, who, shortly after the interview aired, appeared on TV with a smirk to lament the fact Tucker didn't ask any "tough questions". How mean. A Tucker should be for life, not just for propaganda Christmas. Finally, a bizarrely blame-free social media post about Navalny by Donald Trump suggests the Russian president still has old dogs who pee on the rug/Moscow hotel mattress. In fact, speaking of going to the mattresses, the prospect of that particular dictator-hound throwing down for Putin is more grotesque by the day, and the very strongest of arguments for a no-pets rule in the White House.

The Guardian

High energy costs are a choice - and an act of national self-harm

Nick Timothy

CRUISING up the Channel last week before docking in the Netherlands, was a Chinese vessel that carried 7,000 electric cars. All were manufactured in China, all will undercut rival products made in Europe, and all benefited from state subsidies and energy prices far lower than those in Britain.

Nothing demonstrates better the absurdity of the myth of international free trade, the failure of the model of globalisation pursued by Western governments for more than two decades, and green policies that have driven industrial production from countries with higher environmental standards to those with little or none. In Britain, policy has deliberately increased the cost of energy. Yet expensive energy makes British goods less competitive. In foreign markets and at home, British companies lose out to foreign rivals, with cheaper inputs, lower labour market standards, and higher carbon emissions.

Many consider this progress, but it will soon come to be seen as serious economic, social and geopolitical self-harm. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Britain generally had the third most competitive industrial electricity costs of the G7 economies. But since then we have performed far worse. In the five years before Tony Blair became prime minister, our industrial electricity costs were around 9 per cent higher than the average of the advanced economies comprising the International Energy Agency. By 2010, they were nearly 23 per cent higher, and for the past five years have risen to 52 per cent higher.

Most European countries have seen prices rise dramatically since

Russia invaded Ukraine. But compare British prices with specific countries and the difference is shocking. Our industrial electricity prices are three times higher than in America and Canada. They are more than twice as high as in Korea and New Zealand. They are about twice as high as those in European countries - Finland, France and Sweden - with a strong nuclear energy sector, and much higher than those - like Germany and Poland - still using coal to generate power.

In China, responsible for 53 per cent of global coal consumption, and where coal generates 61 per cent of electricity, industrial electricity prices are around a quarter of those in Britain. Add to this low Chinese labour costs and the enormous subsidies provided through cheap loans and steel, and it is clear that this is not free or fair trade at all. Meanwhile, emissions associated with imports to Britain from China have risen 62 per cent since the late 1990s. We can blame China for abusing the world trading system it joined almost a quarter of a century ago - and indeed the European Union is threatening to impose tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles - but the real problem is with Western naivety.

China was always going to flout the rules and use the system to its own advantage, and for years Western governments turned a blind eye as it did so: stealing industrial secrets, subsidising whole sectors and dumping surplus goods. These electric cars are really only a more visible example of what has been going on across industry for at least two decades.

One result has been the empowerment of China - a strategic threat and a hostile state - to the extent that it openly backs Russia in Ukraine, undermines international institutions, such as the World Health Organisation, corrupts and sets debt traps for foreign governments, threatens Taiwan and even India, and talks up confrontation in the Pacific with America.

Another result has been the enfeeblement of our own industry. Not all global free traders are content to watch China abuse the system in the way it does, but most are at best neutral in response to the decline of industrial production in Britain and elsewhere. Their response is to cite economic theory, and explain that "comparative advantage" means we should be relaxed about other countries dominating manufacturing, because we will dominate other sectors, such as financial and professional services. Nobody sane argues for national self-sufficiency, and trade does make us richer. But it is a simplification - and a case of putting theory before reality - to say we should not care about what is made or done where.

The pandemic demonstrated the danger of stretched supply chains that include hostile states. But in slower, less visible fashion, the transfer of industry from Britain to the East has caused our trade deficit to widen further - with all the consequences that follow - our productivity problems to deepen and our regional disparities to worsen. It has also caused our labour market to bifurcate, with fewer mid-skilled, mid-paid jobs than before. Despite everything, Britain

remains a stronger manufacturing force than many recognise. We are the eighth-biggest manufacturer in the world and investment is growing at the second-highest rate in the G7 since the introduction of the super-deduction tax nearly three years ago. But to really change our economy - to export more, improve productivity, rebalance across regions and sectors, and increase the number of good, well-paid jobs - we need to do more. This must mean reform right across the economy. The super-deduction is an example of how tax reform can aid rebalancing, but there is so much more to do.

British industrial strategy cannot involve the fiscal firepower provided by American subsidies, but it can focus investment, join up decision-making, and protect strategic industries. It can reshape supply chains and move first with regulatory frameworks for developing industries in life sciences and tech. It can invest in secure energy through new nuclear and our own oil and gas. And it can reform post-18 education to provide the technical education and training the country - and millions of our people - need to thrive. But we must also overcome our greatest blind spots. We do need to reduce our dependence on foreign fossil fuels - not least because we should not rely on autocracies for energy - but policy must never run ahead of technology, and our net-zero targets are simply unrealistic and self-destructive. And so too must we get real about trade. It is time to junk the dogma about globalisation and free trade and return to the real world. Unless we do so, economic decline and political instability awaits.

The Telegraph

Mike Johnson has worst job in Washington

Patrick T. Brown

‘ONE must imagine Sisyphus happy,’ wrote the French philosopher Albert Camus. The ancient myth of the king of Ephyra doomed to slowly roll a boulder up a hill, only to repeatedly watch it roll back down and be forced to begin the cycle anew, traditionally stressed the figure's useless toil and unending frustration. The absurdist Camus argued that Sisyphus could reach contentment only when he embraced the existential futility of his situation with a kind of wry humor.

If Camus is right, we must imagine House Speaker Mike Johnson happy. Johnson is pushing a proverbial boulder up Capitol Hill as best he can. But the broader dynamics facing his razor-thin majority, as well as the Republican Party's broader identity crisis, means he is continually faced with the limits of his power.

His critics will point out that the Louisiana Republican was thrust into a leadership role from virtual obscurity. His lack of experience counting votes has led to some high-profile flops, such as the GOP's initial failure to pass a resolution to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and three failed rule votes during his speakership. (Before last year, the normally-routine procedural votes hadn't failed in two decades.) Yet in Johnson's defense, he was dealt an especially challenging hand - one of the smallest House majorities in history and a fractious right flank that has already shown its willingness to defenestrate GOP leadership over

perceived surrenders. Even the second coming of Tom Delay - who kept a bullwhip on his office wall as a sign of his ability to strong-arm the Republican caucus to various legislative victories - would have a difficult time herding a majority made up of figures as disparate (and colorful) as Representatives Matt Gaetz, Chip Roy, Jeff Van Drew, Marjorie Taylor Greene and Nancy Mace. That - plus the recognition that pushing Johnson out of the speakership would simply result in the same shambling process of choosing a successor that led to Johnson's selection last fall - is the speaker's security blanket. But as numerous legislative deadlines loom, those threads are wearing thin.

Over the next two weeks, Congress will be facing twin funding deadlines, set up by Johnson as a way to avert a previous standoff with hardliners on the right. If Congress can't pass a deal to keep the lights on, a government shutdown could occur, an outcome some boisterous House Freedom Caucus members may welcome, but more mainstream Republicans would correctly see as a political vulnerability in an election year. The most likely scenario to avoid a shutdown would be relying on Democratic votes to pass a stopgap deal - the exact maneuver, of course, that sealed former Speaker Kevin McCarthy's fate. If Congress can't reach a spending deal before April 30, an across-the-board spending cut of 1% will take effect. If that happens, a public blame

game would break out between Republicans and Democrats over who is more to blame for cuts to popular programs - Johnson's quiet, close-to-the-vest style wouldn't set him up well to win an extended PR battle over spending. It seems like House Republicans, who long chafed under leadership that tried to channel their rabble-rousing energy into establishmentarian goals, are now realizing that having a speaker who avoids confrontation with his majority's various factions can have serious problems. Take the standoff over aid to Ukraine, for example - unwilling to risk support from either those favoring additional money and those seeking to scale down US involvement, Johnson let the bill sit while the House went on a two-week recess. Because the underlying reason for Johnson's inability to herd the Republican caucus stems from both the relative weakness of the parties in today's campaign system as well as the GOP's lack of clarity about what it stands for.

Parties used to be able to credibly threaten the loss of plum committee placements or fundraising dollars if an individual lawmaker caused too many headaches. The rise of small-dollar donors, single-issue advocacy groups and social media followings allows individual members to pay little price for bucking leadership. Similarly, the old "fusionist" consensus that used to bind Republicans of different stripes together - economic conservatives focused on lowering taxes, social conservatives dedicated

to eliminating abortion, national security conservatives with eye on a strong national defense - has been distorted in the Age of Trump. On economics, Republicans debate reducing regulations and protectionist tariffs; the post-Dobbs landscape hasn't been kind to pro-lifers; and the war in Ukraine has divided hawks and those with more isolationist 'America First' stances. Johnson can barely navigate these tensions - he can hardly be expected to resolve them. The only figure with the ability to set a course for the GOP is its once and presumably future nominee, Donald Trump, who seems to care less about specific policy stances than his own personal beliefs. As such, Johnson, or whoever fills his shoes, will continue to struggle with a job whose description asks its occupant to herd cats with very few sticks, even fewer carrots and only the vaguest sense of where they should be heading.

The only thing that can break Johnson out of his Sisyphusian funk is a change in the political dynamics this November - a Republican president with clear priorities or a meaningfully larger House majority could give him a little more breathing room and a sense of where to aim his efforts. But the underlying dynamics will persist. There's no sustainable way out of this cul-de-sac until the GOP figures out what it is and what it stands for. Johnson's valiant but existential struggle will personify the Republican identity crisis for the foreseeable future; at least until his restive colleagues decide they want some fresh meat.

CNN

Long-term pivot to East

Niu Xinchun

IN China-Arab economic relations, China used to be an investor in Arab countries, not the other way around. The United States has traditionally been the main investment destination for Arab countries. However, the situation has changed over the past few years, with China emerging as an increasingly attractive investment destination for Arab countries. Arab countries' investments in China have reached a level on par with Chinese investments in Arab countries.

It's worth noting that such a change is not a temporary adjustment, but a long-term strategic pivot driven by both political and economic factors. Before 2020, there was hardly any capital from Arab states in the Chinese market. In 2021, Arab countries' new investments in China was a meager \$110 million. The figure surged by nearly ninefold to \$1.05 billion in 2022 and another 2.3 times to \$2.3 billion in 2023, approaching or even exceeding Chinese investments in Arab countries in recent years. It only takes Arab countries three years to increase their investments in China from the ground up to be on par with Chinese investments in Arab countries.

Currently, Arab countries' investment in China is still in its infancy, with a very low starting point. The Middle East's wealth funds spent almost \$89 billion on investments in 2022, according to data provider Global SWF. An outsized \$51.6 billion of that amount went into Europe and North America and only 1 to 2 percent of it went into Asia, mostly China. Arab countries' newfound love for investments in China is first and foremost driven by the two sides' economic complementarity. The ultimate driving force is a common desire to achieve mutually beneficial and win-win outcomes.

Over the past three years, Arab countries' investments in China have mainly focused on the downstream industries of the traditional energy sector and emerging tech sectors. They are the "dual engines" driving Arab countries' economic transformation, and both are indispensable. On the one hand,

the traditional energy industry and relevant industries are the starting point of and foundation for Arab countries' economic reform. Oil revenues have provided a steady flow of funds for their economic reform.

In this regard, the oil demand of China, the world's largest oil importer, has been rising while Europe and the US' oil demand has been decreasing amid the global energy transition. China now imports more oil from Saudi Arabia than Europe and North America's oil imports from Saudi Arabia combined. The future of the oil market is in China. In the age of oil shortage, China tried to secure oil supplies. In 2004, China's Sinopec signed a cooperation deal with Saudi Aramco and Exxon Mobil to expand a refinery in South China's Fujian province. The deal, a typical case of "market in exchange for oil", was aimed at securing oil supplies from Saudi Arabia.

In an age of oil surplus, like today, when the global oil surplus capacity stands at 5 million barrels a day, Saudi Arabia is sparing no efforts to seize the oil consumption markets. In 2022, Saudi Aramco signed an agreement with Chinese companies to form a joint venture to develop a fully-integrated refining and petrochemical complex in Panjin, Liaoning province, where it will supply up to 210,000 barrels of crude oil feedstock per day. In March 2023, Saudi Aramco agreed to buy a 10 percent stake in Rongsheng Petrochemical Co., one of China's refining giants, for \$3.6 billion. As part of the deal, it will supply 480,000 barrels of crude oil per day to the Chinese company. Also in 2023, Saudi Aramco announced to purchase a 10 percent stake in Jiangsu Shenghong Petrochemical Industry Group and a 10 percent stake in Shandong Yulong Petrochemical Co. At the beginning of 2024, the Saudi Basic Industries Corporation announced an investment decision to develop a \$6.4 billion petrochemical complex in collaboration with Fujian Energy Petrochemical Group Co Ltd.

Without any exception, these investments were all

made under the premise that Saudi Arabian oil must be purchased. Getting deeply integrated with the Chinese market to seek new markets for Saudi oil is a major strategic move for the country to accomplish the economic reforms stated in the Saudi Vision 2030 strategy. On the other hand, economic diversification and technology-driven growth are the ultimate goals of Arab countries' economic reform.

The Arabian countries in the Gulf region used to be US allies, with their economies deeply integrated with the US economy and they were highly dependent on the US on security issues. However, over the past decade, the Arabian countries in the Gulf region and the US have had growing conflicts and less and less mutual trust, with the latter withdrawing from the Middle East and showing rapidly declining interest in the region. In particular, the US imposed sanctions on Russia and froze \$300 billion worth of Russian Central Bank assets in the wake of the Ukraine crisis, which was a great shock to oil-producing Arab states. The same could happen to Arab countries in the future - evidently, they realized that it is not wise to put all their eggs in one basket. According to a poll conducted by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy in December, nearly 70 percent of people in the Arab states think that the US has become increasingly unreliable and they should pivot toward China and Russia.

Meanwhile, with US and European capital withdrawing from the Chinese market due to political reasons, the political relations between Arab states and China have been thriving, thus encouraging more Arab capital to make forays into the Chinese market. The strategic pivot of Arab countries' investments is driven by their desire to free themselves from oil dependence, wean themselves off their over-dependence on the US, and embrace emerging countries, emerging industries and emerging markets. Such a strategic pivot will continue in the coming decades, resulting in booming Arab investments in China in the long run.



‘SIFC transforming investment landscape of Pakistan’

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan’s Ambassador to the United States (US) Masood Khan has said that Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has transformed investment landscape of Pakistan with speedy approvals, smooth execution of projects and guaranteed returns.

“We have chosen IT, agriculture, alternate energy and extractive industries as the priority areas for investment,” he said, adding that we encourage Pak-US nationals to take advantage of this bonanza and scale up their investments in these sectors.”

Ambassador Masood Khan made these remarks during a virtual meeting with the business leaders heading various chambers

and business entities in Houston, California, and other parts of the US, says a press release received here on Saturday from Washington DC.

The meeting was part of Embassy’s initiative of connecting business organizations and trade bodies and create the required synergy for promoting business activities between Pakistan and the United States.

The meeting was attended by President Pakistan Chamber of Commerce-USA (Houston) Amir Piprani, Chairman PACC (Los Angeles California) Waqar Ali Khan, President Houston

Karachi Sister City Association Muhammad Saeed Sheikh, President Georgia Pakistan Business Council Imran Niazi, renowned entrepreneur and CEO of Ka’aba Fusion Dr Sohail Masood, Director Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited (PSX) Ahmed Chinoy, and other leading businessmen including Usman Arshad, Syed F Ismail, Maqsood, Afsah Khan and Maqsood Ali from Sacramento.

Pakistan’s Counsel Generals in Los Angeles and Houston along with trade and commerce officers were also present during the meeting. Addressing the participants, the envoy paid tribute to the Pak business community in the US which was playing a critical role in cementing trade relations between Pakistan and the US and investing

their resources in the motherland.

He said the Embassy’s initiative to connect trade bodies was meant to create a strong network for greater economic impact. Chairman Pakistan Chamber of Commerce Amir Piprani told the participants that PACC was playing its role since past 27 years and was regularly holding trade shows, exhibitions and seminars to promote bilateral trade.

This year, PACC would be holding a Trade Expo in October and was working closely with TDAP for the purpose. He invited suggestions from the participants for successful holding of the expo.

CEO Ka’aba Fusion Dr Sohail Masood, pioneer in

the Home Infusion Industry, an accomplished entrepreneur and philanthropist, shared his success story with the participants. He informed that Ka’aba Fusion has also established office back in Pakistan to create job opportunities for Pakistani professionals in healthcare.

He further stated that Ka’aba Fusion was also in the process of introducing home infusion services in Pakistan which would provide quality healthcare to the people at their doorstep and would open up huge job opportunities for healthcare workers and professionals.

Maqsood, CEO of TSI Engineering, Inc and alumnus of the Civil Engineering Department UET

Lahore, said that UET alumni had raised \$150,000 last month for their alma mater. He also said that they were helping Pak engineers and had also set up an office in Faisalabad for the purpose.

He informed the participants that Columbia University had evinced keen interest into studying his model for small business development. He suggested imparting construction management education to Pak students.

Muhammad Saeed Sheikh, President Houston-Karachi Sister City Association, speaking on the occasion highlighted the contributions made during flood relief activities. He also apprised the participants

about various initiatives that were taken to connect trade bodies and to support education and youth of Pakistan.

Director Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited (PSX) Ahmed Chinoy highlighted new and existing business opportunities in Pakistan where the business community was enjoying great returns for their equity. He specially highlighted the returns on treasury bills and Roshan Digital Accounts.

Other participants also spoke on the occasion and underscored their commitment to contribute towards economic betterment of the country.

Ambassador Masood Khan thanked the business community for their commitment in sup-

porting efforts to strengthen Pak-US business ties.

Highlighting immense opportunities in the four priority sectors for investment, Ambassador Masood Khan said that Pakistani-American could utilize US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) and International Finance Corporation for scaling up their investments in IT, renewable and alternate energy, agriculture and extractive industries.

“Invest in Pakistan with full confidence. Your trust in Pakistan would encourage your counterparts in United States to choose Pakistan as their preferred investment destination,” said Ambassador Masood Khan.

High production cost a real threat to SMEs, economy

ISLAMABAD (INP): President All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) Syed Maaz Mahmood has said that ever-increasing cost of production in the country is the real threat to small-scale businesses (SMEs), as frequent upward revisions in policy rate and continuous fluctuations in rupee against dollar are posing further threat to the economy.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, he observed that the aggressive economic measures, high borrowing rates, inflation, oppressive taxation and unstable currency have been negatively affecting running businesses, many of which have closed their operations, while the remaining are struggling for survival.

With a view to deal with fiscal challenges, Syed Maaz Mahmood asked the upcoming elected government to work on the three-way strategy by implementing short-term goals that will help to keep generating resources for smooth fiscal operations, medium-term goals where the government should focus on financial inclusion, documenting the economy by designing a system where all businesses can be registered and properly document their income including collection of sales tax, initiating the process of privatization as well as improving governance by introducing reforms in each sector.

The APBF President said, as a long-term goal, the country must focus on improving its human capital, and revamping IT sectors by extending facilitations and providing all the requisite supports. In the same way, we also need to work on designing a com-

prehensive and proactive strategy to tackle challenges related to strengthening border security and implementing effective and comprehensive Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing measures holding accountable and taking to task all those who are involved in illegitimate activities, undermining both our economy and national interests, he added.

Chairman APBF Ibrahim Qureshi said that the government does not have any pragmatic plan to address this liability, apart from asking for more loans to repay existing debt. Likewise, the target for current financial year’s exports is too low to meet the country’s revenue.

Ibrahim Qureshi said that the conventional approach of focusing solely on improving exports while pursuing a passive and imprudent foreign policy towards neighboring countries, poses a significant challenge in meeting export targets. Despite strained relations, the United States remains the largest importer of Pakistani products. Still, there are no efforts to tap into the vast markets of neighboring countries or negotiate trade agreements with them.

The APBF President said that even though Pakistan and China enjoy close relations, yet the volume of exports to China is significantly lower compared to USA. Furthermore, the existing Pakistan China Free Trade Agreement (PCFTA) tends to benefit Chinese-origin corporations more than Pakistani businesses, giving them greater market access at the expense of Pakistani products.

Syed Maaz Mahmood

said that the government is neglecting two important factors, namely, Information Technology and export of human capital that together can contribute towards generating foreign exchange and mobilizing revenue. It is essential to concentrate on nurturing a skilled workforce and assisting them in securing international employment opportunities.

This approach would have a positive impact on our foreign policy and help in building foreign exchange reserves. Given the era of the fourth industrial revolution, Pakistan should prioritize facilitating IT businesses, enabling their access to international markets. By doing so, we can assert our fair share in the international market for IT-related exports.

It is good that State Bank of Pakistan has outlined the central bank’s vision for the future, with a strong focus on price stability. The SBP further emphasized the need to expand access to financial services for a larger segment of population and revealed that under Vision 2028, efforts would be made to bring more people into formal financial system. Furthermore, SBP is planning to connect Pakistan’s remittance system with Arab Monetary Funds Buna, a cross-border payment system. This integration is expected to significantly improve speed and reduce cost of remittance transactions.

Although above measures would improve our financial system, yet the government should reconsider its approach to expanding the tax base, as it currently burdens existing taxpayers instead of including new sectors.

Gold rates up by Rs1,000

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of per tola 24 karat gold increased by Rs 1,000 and was sold at Rs 215,100 on Saturday compared to its sale at Rs 214,100 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 858 to Rs 184,414 from Rs 183,556 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs 169,046 from Rs 168,260, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewelers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten-gram silver remained constant at Rs 2,570 and Rs 2,203.36 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$11 to \$2,056 from \$2,040, the Association reported.

Role of industry to be appreciated

LAHORE (INP): The Ferozepur Road Industrial Association Lahore (FRIA) has suggested the upcoming government-elect to appreciate the role of industry for its potential to harvest maximum benefits, providing mass employment to the jobless population of the country.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, Senior Vice Chairman of FRIA Shahbaz Aslam called for promoting industrialization through lowering cost of production, paying early refunds to solve liquidity crunch and relaxing import policy for industrial raw material.

He said that business community was facing tough challenges because of limited business. In this context, he sought attention of the upcoming elected government for formulation of regional, provincial and central level task force, and formulation of sector wise regional policies which would help the government address the problems confronted by exporters. The PIAF leader suggested that One Window Operation should be introduced for replacing the lengthy procedures that involve interaction of manufacturers with various agencies. The government agencies were harassing the textile industry every day. Social Security, EOBI and other taxes should be merged and deducted at the source.

He also sought government’s attention for formulating aggressive marketing plan and hurdle-free policies as well as urgent decisions in favour of exports while taking on board major stakeholders. He called for concerted efforts for exploring new markets both traditional and non-traditional in order to introduce home made products.

Shahbaz Aslam urged the government to announce favourable policies and allow duty-free import of raw material and accessories. This move will attract investors and help in setting up new industries in the country which will create wide opportunities for employment. We direly need a stimulus economic plan coupled with relief package by the government to maximize production. He also emphasized the need for seeking technical knowhow from China and other countries for the sake of innovation, and improvement of products. The FRIA leader said the sustainable solution to Pakistan’s problems lies in reforms, as we can see very large inefficiencies in tax collection.

Jubilee Life Insurance and SEED Ventures host ECP fundraising event

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Jubilee Life Insurance, the country’s largest private sector insurance company hosted a fundraising dinner for the Enterprise Challenge Pakistan (ECP), a national entrepreneurship competition for 14 - 18-year-old students, with distinguished guests in attendance including Ms Sarah Mooney - British Deputy High Commissioner, Mr Will Straw, CEO Prince’s Trust International, Mr Syed Usman Qaiser, Head of Marketing and Brand Management, Jubilee Life Insurance, Ms. Shaista and Ms. Maha Salman from SEED Ventures as well as other organizations at the British Deputy High Commission, Karachi. The event was aimed at inviting support from various partners for the Enterprise Challenge Pakistan Programme, an initiative of Prince’s Trust International executed by SEED Ventures since 2016 across Pakistan, to further facilitate the objective of the programme.

Jubilee Life has been a strong rallying force behind the programme for the past five years as it aims to inspire entrepreneurial spirit and transform young minds into the job creators of tomorrow. The programme has actively engaged with over 6,000 young individuals from over 200 schools nationwide over the past five years, equipping them with essential skills such as con-



fidence, teamwork, problem-solving, decision-making, and creative thinking. The event was aimed at not just showcasing the milestones achieved through the collaborative efforts of Jubilee Life and SEED Ventures but also highlighting how an enduring partnership with Enterprise Challenge Pakistan aligns seamlessly with a broader vision of alleviating socioeconomic challenges by empowering youth and women in Pakistan.

Mr Javed Ahmed, MD & CEO of Jubilee Life Insurance, underlined the transformative impact of brands in propelling the mission of upskilling young minds forward. He stated, “Our five-year partnership with Enterprise Challenge Pakistan is evidence of the immense potential we see in empowering the youth. Corporations can play a

crucial role in shaping the future of our country by investing in programmes like Enterprise Challenge Pakistan, providing the tools and opportunities for young minds to become impactful contributors to society.”

Shaista Ayesha, CEO of SEED Ventures, shared insights into the programme’s perspective, stating, “Enterprise Challenge Pakistan is not just a competition; it is a journey towards empowering the youth to be change-makers. The support from corporations is crucial to ensuring that this journey reaches more schools, including underprivileged girls, out-of-school kids, and those with disabilities.”

Will Straw, CEO of Prince’s Trust International, emphasized the importance of initiatives like Enterprise Challenge Pakistan and said, “Enterprise Challenge

is a global programme helping inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs while helping them gain vital skills such as confidence, communication and teamwork. In Pakistan, we are proud the programme has grown to support thousands of young people across all seven regions. We are incredibly grateful to all of our partners, including Jubilee Life Insurance for their ongoing support and look forward to working together to help many more young people with their skills development in the years ahead.”

Through this initiative, Jubilee Life Insurance and SEED Ventures envision expanding the reach of Enterprise Challenge Pakistan, aiming to impact 2000 schools and onboard 30,000 young individuals from underprivileged schools across Pakistan in the next five years.

CCP approves 3 mergers with stake in Pakistan’s steel sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has granted approval to three mergers concerning Saudi Iron and Steel Company (Hadeed), having a presence in Pakistan’s steel market.

The overall transaction comprises of restructuring of two entities divided into three stages of transactions, according to press statement issued by the commission here Saturday.

Based in the Saudi Arabia, Hadeed is a well-established company, producing a range of steel products. It deals in spot sales in Pakistan’s steel

market and exports to Pakistan through international traders.

Initially, the Public Investment Fund (PIF) sent a pre-merger application to CCP to acquire 100% shareholding of Hadeed from Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (“SABIC”).

PIF is a sovereign wealth fund of Saudi Arabia and known for its diverse investments in various sectors globally. PIF has entered into a share purchase agreement with SABIC, under which SABIC agrees to sell its entire share capital of Hadeed to PIF.

Moving on the next step, Hadeed was to acquire 100% shareholding of Al Rajhi Steel Industries Company from M/s. Mohammad Bin Abdulaziz Al Rajhi & Sons Investment. Al Rajhi Steel, established in 1978, is a subsidiary of Al Rajhi Invest and is known for its steel manufacturing capabilities in Saudi Arabia.

This involved a share exchange agreement between Hadeed and Al Rajhi Invest.

In the third stage, PIF intends to dispose off its 44.5% shareholding in Hadeed to M/s.

Mohammad Bin Abdulaziz Al Rajhi & Sons Investment thus sharing control over Hadeed and Al Rajhi Steel for improving their respective production capabilities and increasing their operational efficiency.

These transactions, as per the information available, are not anticipated to raise any competition concerns in the relevant market.

The steel sector in Pakistan is one of the most important industries in the country. It plays a vital role and with investments it can help raise the GDP and bring benefits to both the economy and investors.

FBR to take action against stone crushing sector

SARGODHA (APP): Deputy Commissioner Inland Revenue, Federal Board of Revenue, Al Salih Hayat Kalyar, said that stone crusher’s owners who were not paying taxes and not got registering their business would face stern action.

Talking to APP here on Saturday, he said that stone crush being produced at Pul 111, Sargodha, was supplied to all parts of the country due to the high quality of the indigenous rock.

“Unfortunately, this sector has zero contribution in terms of taxes despite massive sales and huge earnings, but some highly influ-

ential persons are involved in this sector who are the major obstacle to the implementation of proper taxation because of their vested interest,” he said.

He said according to safe estimates, the quantum of taxation from this sector is approximately Rs.5 Billion annually. He said that in the past, efforts were made by the tax authorities to enforce tax and prevent tax evasion from this sector. “Recently, under the directions of Dr. Faheem Mohammad, Chief Commissioner, Regional Tax Office,

Sargodha, a concerted plan of action was devised to bring this sector into the tax net in the best interests of the country,” Kalyar maintained.

He said that a team was selected to monitor the production of the sector round the clock under Section 40 of the Sales Tax Act, 1990, and it was expected that credible information being collected from the area would go a long way in the proper taxation of the sector.

The exercise is set to be completed by the end of March, he added.

Dow, S&P 500 eke out fresh records

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Two of Wall Street’s three major indices edged higher to reach new records, as investors looked to take the profits they have accumulated this week on the back of a market rally fueled by US technology titan Nvidia’s blockbuster results.

The Dow and the S&P 500 hit new all-time highs, while the Nasdaq Composite slipped, following a 3.0 percent surge a day earlier.

In Europe, London, Frankfurt and Paris all ended the day higher, with the DAX and CAC indices closing at new records.

Most Asian shares climbed, following a day of record highs in Japanese, US and eurozone markets on Thursday. Tokyo was

closed for a public holiday, one day after the Nikkei 225’s record finish.

While stock markets were relatively buoyant, oil prices sank on demand fears after Federal Reserve policymakers appeared to commit the US central bank to a longer period of high interest rates than some analysts had expected.

And the price of natural gas in Europe fell to a nearly three-year low, dampening inflation fears, as mild winter weather continues and stockpiles hold up.

“The focus of financial markets in the last 48 hours has been Nvidia’s earnings report and its upbeat commentary about the future take-up of AI,” said XTB analyst Kathleen Brooks.

Court Notice

In the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge-II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Dagar, Appeal No. 93/13, Institution 22/8/2023, date of hearing 18/3/2024, Sherzada Vs. Merjawal etc. Notice to No. 2/3 Sherawan s/o Mohamad Sadiq resident of Rega Tehsil Gagra, District Buner. Whereas, in the above mentioned case, the mentioned defendant cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the Court at 9 a.m. dated 18/3/2024, the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Bangladesh wants to invest heavily in Pakistan

SUKKUR (APP): Deputy High Commissioner, Bangladesh, Mehboob Alam, said on Saturday that there was a business and trade agreement between Pakistan and Bangladesh worth 800 million dollars, which would be taken up to one billion dollars, while Pakistani businessmen should work harder and sell garments and other goods.

“Most of the countries in the region are investing in Bangladesh; we want Pakistan to invest as much as possible, while Bangladesh also wants to invest heavily in Pakistan,” he added.

Addressing the press conference at Sukkur Press Club on Friday evening, the Deputy High Commissioner said, “There are brotherly relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh, and there are many opportunities for trade between the two

countries.”

He said, “Bangladeshi people, after continuous struggle, are now playing an important role in the development of the country.” “This year, a large number of people serving abroad, including Bangladeshis, have shown new ways of development in Bangladesh with the continuous improvement policies of the government,” he added.

“Currently, the literacy rate in Bangladesh is 85 percent, he said, adding that the people of Bangladesh and Pakistan also have a very good relationship.”

Mehboos said, “The policy of our government is to establish good relations with all friendly countries, adding that the people of Pakistan and Bangladesh also have a very good relationship, which is why we provide all possible facili-

ties to the businessmen so that they can easily enter our country.”

To come and invest, the High Commissioner said, “The purpose of my visit is to encourage businessmen to bring their products to the markets of Bangladesh.”

In response to a question, he said, “Bangladesh, special measures have been taken for the development of women.”

“In our country, the proportion of female education is high; besides this, women are earning decent jobs in almost every sector of the country, including factory workers,” the deputy high commissioner said.

He said, “At least 27 Pakistani cricketers are included in the Bangladesh Premier League, and similarly, Bangladeshi cricketers also prefer to play in Pakistan.”

Gold rises as US dollar weakens

CHICAGO (APP): Gold futures on the COMEX division of the New York Mercantile Exchange rose as the US dollar weakened.

The most active gold contract for April delivery rose 18.70 US dollars, or 0.92 percent, to close at 2,049.40 dollars per ounce.

Falling US Treasury yields also supported gold.

The hawkish stance of several Federal Reserve officials this week has entirely priced out the possibility of a rate cut in May.

US gross domestic product report will be released on Wednesday.

Silver for March delivery rose 19.80 cents, or 0.87 percent, to close at 22.982 dollars per ounce. Platinum for April delivery rose 4.10 dollars, or 0.45 percent, to close at 909.60 dollars per ounce.



In brief

PCB assigns Wahab task to hire foreign coaches

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi gave the task of hiring foreign coaches to Chief Selector Wahab Riaz. According to sources in PCB, Wahab Riaz started making contacts with the foreign coaches. It may be mentioned here that the contract of former director of the national cricket team Muhammad Hafeez was not extended. Under Mohammad Hafeez's directorship, Pakistan has to face a white-wash in the Test series against Australia while there was a 4-1 drubbing in the T20 series against New Zealand.

Hyderabad, Sukkur win matches

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Hyderabad and Sukkur earned victories in the softball event of the ongoing 18th Sindh Games. Hyderabad defeated Karachi by 5-4 in the day-two match of the softball event in the ongoing 18th Sindh Games, said a press release. For Karachi, Faraz Ejaz, Shah Rukh Khan, Sameer, and Arbaz scored one run each. For Hyderabad, the scorers were Saif Babar, Himmat, Kamran Jutt and Kamran Shah, scored one run each. Earlier, in Match 1, Sukkur defeated Hyderabad by 9-6 runs. Sukkur players who scored two runs each included Fahad, Azim, Asim, and Moosa while Kamran and Shakir scored one run each. Munaf scored brilliant three runs. For Hyderabad, Saif, and Nabeel scored one run each while Kamran Jutt, Kamran Shah and Shoaib scored two runs each. Meanwhile, the Softball Women's final would be played between Larkana and Karachi while in the Men's final Karachi will face Sukkur.

Case filed against Afridi

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Islamabad Police on Saturday booked 10 persons, including former cricketer Shahid Afridi, in a case of fraud. In his FIR registered at Rawat police station, Abid bin Abdul Quddos Qazi said that the suspects received Rs9.5 million from him for two shops at a private housing society. The complainant said that although the suspects kept sending him the amount from the rent for some time, but later it dawned upon him that there was no existence of these shops right from the very start. It was further revealed that the suspects had allotted each shop to different persons. "Moreover, although the agreement had been signed with the man named Sheikh Fawad, but the documents did not bear his signatures, but of somebody else. Therefore, it is requested that legal action should be taken against Afridi and his accomplices," read the FIR.

Hasaranga gets two-match ban

DAMBULLA (Agencies): New Sri Lanka Twenty20 captain Wanindu Hasaranga was given a two-match ban by the International Cricket Council on Saturday for abusing an umpire during this week's series-ending loss against Afghanistan. The 26-year-old remonstrated with onfield umpire Lyndon Hannibal after the match for failing to call a no-ball on a high delivery to Kamindu Mendis in the final over, when Sri Lanka needed 11 from three balls. The ICC said in a statement the encounter had breached its code of conduct on "personal abuse", with Hasaranga accumulating enough demerit points over the past two years to earn the ban and a fine of 50 percent of his match fee.



LAHORE: Sahibzada Farhan picked up the pace after a slow start.

National Polo Open Championship final on Sunday

LAHORE (APP): The final of the Bank Alfalah National Open Polo Championship for the Quaid-e-Azam Gold Cup 2024 will be played between FG Polo and BN Polo at the Lahore Polo Club, Racecourse at 3 p.m. on Sunday (tomorrow).

A number of pre-match festivities have been planned to entertain the golf-lovers at the ground.

The day will kick off with a display of vintage cars, a bikers' parade, Arabian horse show, and javelin exhibition and before that the subsidiary

final between Diamond Paints/Master Paints and Olympia/AZB Polo will be contested.

A grueling battle is expected for the booty between the two best teams on the final day of the 61st edition of the country's premier polo event between FG Polo and BN Polo.

About the finalists, President Lahore Polo Club Malik Azam Hayat Noon said both teams have demonstrated exceptional skill and determination throughout the tournament. He expressed the hope that the golf-lovers

will be provided with a remarkable final game as a suitable farewell to an exhilarating championship.

He voiced his hope that the vibrant community of Lahore would turn up in large numbers to witness a spectacular final.

Noon thanked the sponsors for all-out support for the premier polo event, adding that Polo - sport of kings and knights, thrives on such noble backing, and we are optimistic that more corporations will join in fostering the spirit of this majestic game."

India and Pakistan drive US ticket demand for T20 World Cup

NEW YORK (Web Desk): Organizers of June's T20 Cricket World Cup games in the United States say that early ticket sales have shown there is a huge demand for the sport among cricket lovers in the country.

The highly anticipated clash in New York between cricket rivals Pakistan and India was over-subscribed by 200 times in the public ballot for tickets, the International Cricket Council said.

The 34,000-seat temporary venue, Nassau County International Cricket Stadium on Long Island, has yet to be completed but is already assured of a sell out crowd for the June 9 encounter. The tournament is being co-hosted by the West Indies and the United States.

While big crowds are expected in the traditional cricket countries in the Caribbean, this will be the first time that an international tournament is held in the United States with the 16 games in the country also including matches in Lauderdale, South Florida and Grand Prairie Stadium, near Dallas. "We had amazing ticket interest. The ballot process showed there's a really big demand," T20 World Cup USA, Inc. chief executive Brett Jones told AFP on Friday.

"India-Pakistan is obviously a game that at every World Cup carries great interest. I think it's really pleasing to see those two countries come to the USA," he added. Powerhouses India and Pakistan will play all their group games in the USA and are sure to attract packed crowds from the diaspora living in the country.

While organizers hope that they can "convert" some Americans to the game, they are well aware that there is already huge interest among immigrant populations and their focus is on serving those fans.

"I think, number one, we want to celebrate those that are already fanatical lovers of cricket. They deserve to see the best players in the world come into their backyard and have that chance," said Jones.

"So, number one, we want to make sure that happens and they get to feel like they're close to a game they love. Number two, I think it's about spiking curiosity in the game," he said.

Americans have never fallen for the charms of cricket, preferring baseball for their bat and ball action, but the sport is set to get an unprecedented platform in the country with the T20 format, including in the Los Angeles Olympics in four year's time.

"Obviously there's a great runway to the Olympics in LA in 28 and then on into Brisbane in 2032 for cricket, which again will keep it in the global view and the consciousness of a big country like the US. I think we've got those two things working for us," said Jones.

"We're saying we want to reward our cricket fans and lovers of cricket in the US, which is a huge market. "Then we want to spike curiosity and really hopefully start a bigger conversation about the game and its benefits at the community level," he added. Ireland, Sri Lanka, South Africa, the Netherlands, Bangladesh and Canada will also play in the USA along with the host nation themselves.

Pollard blitz helps Karachi Kings edge Lahore Qalandars in a last-ball thriller

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Kieron Pollard's blistering half-century helped Karachi Kings edge past Qalandars in a thrilling Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 clash at Gaddafi Stadium on Saturday.

Karachi Kings invited the home team to bat first and started brilliantly with the ball as Mir Hamza sent Fakhar Zaman (6) back in the third over.

Sahibzada Farhan and Rassie van der Dussen (26) then knitted an anchoring partnership of 36 runs from as many balls before Tabraiz Shamsi got his South African teammate lbw while attempting a slog sweep.

Farhan stayed firm amidst economical bowling by Karachi Kings, which reduced Lahore Qalandars to 90-4 inside 13 overs.

Shai Hope then played a quick cameo of 21 runs from 13 balls featuring



one six and two boundaries before he attempted to clear the boundary again only to get caught by Shoaib Malik.

George Linde joined Farhan with the scoreboard reading 121-6 but they turned things around with a quick 54-run partnership from 26 balls to lift the team's total to 175 in their allocated 20 overs. Farhan carried his bat

through the innings with an unbeaten 72 off 45, which included four boundaries and as many sixes.

Meanwhile, Linde scored 26 runs at a strike rate of 200 with the help of three boundaries including one six.

For Karachi Kings, Hamza, Shamsi and Hasan Ali claimed two wickets each.

Mushtaq wins Mir Dir title in first Youth Inter-District Bodybuilding

DIR LOWER (APP): Promising Mushtaq Khan clinched the Mr. Dir title while his strong rival Hamza Khan bagged Mr. Junior Dir title in the first Youth Inter-District Bodybuilding Contests held here at Govt Degree College, Lala Qila on Saturday morning.

Basit Khan won the title of Mr. Timargarah. Mudasir Khan won the title of Junior Timargarah, Hamza Khan clinched the title of Junior Dir while Anees won the title of Mr Physique and Mr Sudais won the title of Junior Physique.

The event was organized on the directives of the Deputy Commissioner Lower Dir Wasil Khan with the collaboration of District Sports Officer 2024 at Govt Degree College Lal Qila. More than 30 bodybuilders from all over the district participated in the Championship.

This was the biggest event in its category which was done in the history of Lower Dir for the first time. Ijaz Khan (Mr South Asia), Faqeer Syed (KP Gold Medalist) and Saeed Khan (Mr. Physique Champion) performed as technical officials.

District Youth office Dir Lower Shehzad Tariq, Mr. Tanveer Khan, President Bodybuilding Association Dir Lower, Shiekh Inam, General Secretary Bodybuilding Association Dir Lower and other important personalities were present to encourage athletes and promote health and fitness activities in Lower Dir.

Liaquat Khan, MPA PK18 was the chief guest on this occasion who gave away titles, trophies, gifts, certificates to the position holder and players and distributed commemorative shields to the officials.

England's Bashir takes four wickets to hurt India in 4th Test

RANCHI (AFP): Spinner Shoaib Bashir took four wickets to lead England's bowling charge and put India on the back foot at 219-7 on day two of the fourth Test on Saturday.

The rookie off-spinner rattled the Indian reply to England's first innings of 353 in a marathon spell of 31 overs unchanged spread over three sessions in Ranchi.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Dhruv Jurel, on 30, and Kuldeep Yadav, on 17, were batting at the close of play with an unbeaten stand of 42 but India still trail the visitors by 134 runs.

The in-form Yashasvi Jaiswal made 73 but Bashir bowled him after the left-hander attempted to defend a low ball that caught the toe of the bat and crashed into the stumps.

Bashir, who missed the opener due to a visa delay and is playing his second Test, was ably supported by two wickets from fellow spinner Tom Hartley.

Joe Root hit an unbeaten 122 for England, who trail 2-1 and are fighting to stay alive in the five-match series.

But the day belonged to Bashir, who came on to bowl in the ninth over of India's innings and remained unchanged from his end until Root replaced him shortly before stumps.

He removed Shubman Gill (38) and Rajat Patidar (17), both out lbw, and then got Ravindra Jadeja caught at short leg to put India in trouble at 131-4 at tea.

Fast bowler James Anderson struck first to send back India skipper Rohit Sharma, caught for two before lunch, but the left-handed Jaiswal rebuilt the innings in an 82-run stand with Gill.

Jaiswal, who tops the series batting chart with 618 runs, including two match-winning double centuries in the second and third Tests, raised his bat to applause after reaching his fifty.

The 22-year-old hit 171

on debut in the West Indies last year and has since amassed 934 runs over eight Tests and 14 innings.

He survived a close call on 40 when he appeared to edge an Ollie Robinson delivery to Ben Foakes for a caught behind but the third umpire denied England's appeal after many replays.

Anderson moved to 697 wickets in the first session after Root ran out of partners and England were bowled out.

The 41-year-old Anderson is poised to become only the third bowler to take 700 wickets, after Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan (800) and the late Australian spin wizard Shane Warne (708).

England resumed on 302-7 and Root put on 102 runs with overnight partner Robinson, who made 58, but the latter's departure brought a quick end to the England innings. Jadeja returned figures of 4-67 and wiped out the tail.

Amir comments on his comeback to int'l cricket

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pace bowler Mohammad Amir has recently cleared the air about coming out of retirement in international cricket.

Amir, who shockingly announced retirement from international cricket back in 2020 at the age of 28, has denied the possibility of a comeback to international cricket.

"I would have felt the absence of international cricket if I were not playing cricket. I am enjoying league cricket, and international cricket is not on my mind," Amir said while talking to a local news channel.

The 31-year-old pacer is representing Quetta Gladiators in the ongoing Pakistan Super League

(PSL) season 9. He also acknowledged his role in the team and expressed his aim to give impactful performances that can help the team win.

"My effort is to make an impact in the match because having a complete impact is more crucial than merely taking wickets.

"If the team requires a bouncer at that moment, I will bowl a bouncer. Until you create pressure, you won't get wickets.

"Scoring centuries and taking five wickets won't be beneficial if the team loses. My focus is not solely on taking wickets but on playing an impactful role in the match."

Notably, former Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed

commented on the potency of the left-arm pacer to take back his retirement from international cricket.

Sarfaraz acknowledged the value Amir brings to T20 cricket in a recent interview with a local news outlet and expressed confidence in the latter's abilities.

"The inclusion of Mohammad Amir has made a big difference. He has been bowling really well and has a lot of experience of playing T20 cricket," Sarfaraz said.

"I have always told Amir that he can still play for Pakistan since he has a lot to offer. He can be useful for Pakistan but it depends on Amir how he sees his future with the national team," he further added.



NEW YORK (Agencies): LeBron James scored 30 points on his return for the Los Angeles Lakers at they won 123-118 at home to the San Antonio Spurs.

The Denver Nuggets, the NBA's defending champions, won again at the Portland Trail Blazers while Tyrese Maxey scored 24 points as the Philadelphia 76ers won 104-97 at the Cleveland Cavaliers in a game shown live on the BBC.

And Miami Heat star Jimmy Butler was one of four players to be ejected following a melee during their 106-95 win at the New Orleans Pelicans.

Butler scored 23 points before being sent to the locker room in the fourth quarter, along with Miami reserve Thomas Bryant and Pelicans players Jose Alvarado and Naji Marshall.

Bam Adebayo had 24 points as Miami improved

to a 31-25 record to join the Orlando Magic atop the Eastern Conference Southeast division.

James added nine assists and seven rebounds for the Lakers after missing their past two games to rest a sore ankle, although the played in the All-Star Game in between.

Anthony Davis added 28 points and 13 rebounds as the Lakers improved to 31-27, while Victor Wembanyama had 27 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists and added five blocked shots and five steals.

That made last year's number one draft pick the youngest player in NBA history to achieve the rare '5x5' statistical performance - including at least five points, rebounds, assists, blocks and steals in the same game.

"He doesn't have a ceiling," James said of the French rookie. "He can do

whatever he wants to do in his career. I said a long time ago how special he was, and it's really that simple."

The Cavaliers are now 36-19 atop the Eastern Conference Central division after suffering their second straight loss and third in four games on the road against the 76ers.

Nikola Jokic had 29 points, 15 rebounds and 14 assists for his 17th triple-double of the season as the Nuggets beat the Trail Blazers to go 38-19.

Divisional rivals the Minnesota Timberwolves and Oklahoma City Thunder are the only teams with more wins in the Western Conference.

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 33 points and 13 rebounds to help the Milwaukee Bucks come out of the All-Star break with a 112-107 win at Minnesota, who are 39-17 with Oklahoma City after Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 30 points in their 147-106 rout of the lowly Washington Wizards.

Stephen Curry scored 15 points as the Golden State Warriors claimed a 97-84 win at home to the Charlotte Hornets, who featured his younger brother Seth, while Kevin Durant's 28 points were not enough for the Phoenix Suns as they lost 114-110 at the Houston Rockets.



In brief

Seven gamblers held

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested seven gamblers and recovered bet money Rs 28,700, 05 mobile phones from their possession during an operation here on Saturday. According to a police spokesman, Gujjar Khan police conducted a raid and held those gamblers who were identified as Waqar, Tanveer, Khurram, Toqeer, Imran and Masoor. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. SP Saddar appreciated the performance of the police team adding that gambling is the root cause of other evils and said that strict action will be taken against those involved in such illegal activities.

NHMP recover drugs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Highways and Motorways Police (NHMP) foiled a drug smuggling attempt on Saturday. According to the spokesman for the Motorway Police, the police recovered 192 kg of hashish and 15 kg of heroin from two vehicles and arrested the accused. An accused was arrested after recovering 192 kg of hashish from the vehicle at M1 Hakla, while 15 kg of heroin was found near the Ghazi Interchange. However, the search for the accused was on, as he could not be arrested. Both operations were carried out based on secret information. The drugs and the accused have been handed over to the concerned department.

11 outlaws held

RAWALPINDI (INP): The police arrested 11 outlaws, recovered weapons, ammunition and liquor during separate actions in jurisdiction of different police stations of Rawalpindi on Saturday. According to details, operations were conducted against criminals in jurisdiction of Airport, Race Course, R A Bazaar, Sadiqabad, Gujjar Khan, Taxila, Kalar Syedan, Wah Cantt and Gunjmandi police stations. During separate actions, the police arrested 11 outlaws including Noman, Sujawal, Ghulam Rasool, Bilal, Zeeshan, Amjad, Yasir, Muneer, Muhammad Tabbasum, Husnain and Arshad. The police recovered six 30 bore pistols along with ammunition, a sharp edged knife and 37 litres liquor from possession of the detainees. The police confiscated the recovered arms, liquor and after registering separate cases at respective police stations started investigations.

18,000 kites confiscated

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested more than 400 kite sellers, and kite flyers and confiscated 18,000 kites and strings from their possession during the crackdown. According to a police spokesman, police have also recovered weapons and sound systems from their custody. To prevent aerial firing during kite flying, More than 1600 police officers and jawan performed their duties 24 hours on rooftops and high-rise buildings. The crackdown was also carried out by installing stairs, raids were ensured through police station mobiles, motorbikes, dolphin patrols, social media and awareness campaigns against kite flying were also conducted in the field. According to the police spokesman, No untoward incidents while flying kites have been reported. The cases have been registered against the arrested persons who will be severely punished.



ISLAMABAD: worker installing security cameras on pedestrian bridge with the help of crane. —APP Photo

Gas leak explosion injures six in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI (INP): At least six injured in a gas leak explosion occurred at a home in Dhok Sayeidan, Rawalpindi.

As per details, the rescue officials said that the explosion occurred because of gas leakage and injured a man, his wife and four children.

Rescue sources said that the injured children and their parents have been shifted to the nearby hospital.

Earlier, at least four members of a family sustained burn wounds in an explosion due to gas leakage in the SITE Area neighborhood of Karachi.

According to police, the incident occurred within the remits of Mominabad police station, where a gas explosion blew off a house in the Metroville area, resulting in injuries to four people.

"The injured included a family comprising a man and a woman and two children," they said adding the explosion caused damage to the parts of the house besides also resulting in the collapse of the boundary wall.

The injured have been shifted to a hospital for treatment as police said that they were investigating the cause of the explosion.

In a separate incident, a powerful gas explosion in Balochistan's Lasbela district killed at least 12 people and injured several others.

According to police, the cylinder exploded while being refilled at a filling shop in the main Bela bazaar of Lasbela. The blast also damaged nearby buildings, shops and around two dozen motorbikes parked in the vicinity.

Levies officials immediately rushed to the spot and shifted the injured to the hospital.

Punjab a talismanic region of culture, history: Director PAC

RAWALPINDI (INP): Director Punjab Arts Council (PAC), Waqar Ahmad has said that Punjab is a talismanic region of culture and history.

He stated this while speaking as chief guest of the prize distribution ceremony of First Punjab Painting Competition held at Government Post Graduate College Tallainwal Jhelum.

Addressing the participants of the competitions, Waqar Ahmad said that Allah Almighty has blessed Pakistan with attractive and attractive natural landscapes, beautiful valleys, historical heritage and fascinating cultural tradition.

Punjab, the land of five rivers, was rich in rich her-

itage, natural scenery, tourism to religious places, historical places and buildings, culture, fairs, festivals, wonderful traditions, rare wildlife and flowers, he added.

The Director PAC further said, "Arts Council has always promoted new talent. Pakistani youths are endowed with natural talent. Encouraging young artists enhances their work. The artists trained by the Arts Council have made Pakistan famous all over the world."

Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Director Muhammad Shakoor said that the artists have captured the beautiful views of nature in colors. Artists

always play a positive role in society. Since its inception, Punjab Arts Council has played an active role in highlighting the culture and traditions of Punjab and various regions. Undoubtedly, this cultural institution has its own distinct and unique identity throughout Pakistan.

Dozens of candidates from 16 to 35 years of age participated in the competitions. Majida Bibi, Nida Arif and Affifa Naz won the first, second and third positions in the painting competitions. At the end of the event, the chief guest also distributed checks and certificates of appreciation among the position holders.

CPO suspends police official for misbehaving Woman

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani has taken stern action against a police officer for misconduct towards a woman. The CPO suspended ASI Imtiaz Nasir following allegations of misbehaviour, directing SP Pothohar to conduct a thorough inquiry into the matter and submit a detailed report.

The incident unfolded when Taxila police apprehended Basir Khan, a wanted criminal linked to pick-pocketing cases, who resisted arrest alongside his mother. Basir Khan has since been detained and taken into custody.

The CPO emphasized a zero-tolerance policy towards the abuse of authority or mistreatment of citizens. He assured that stringent action would be taken against those found responsible, emphasizing the importance of self-accountability within the force.

The protection of citizens' lives and property remains the utmost priority, as reiterated by the CPO. Such incidents of misconduct will not be tolerated, and accountability and transparency will be ensured in all circumstances, he added.

Naseem Begum remembered

ISLAMABAD (INP): Renowned film playback singer, Naseem Begum was remembered on Saturday on her birth anniversary. Born on February 24, 1936, in Amritsar, she was known for singing sorrowful songs in films. Naseem Begum got training in music from the classical singer, Mukhtar Begum.

She started singing in 1958 and lent her voice to more than 500 movie songs. Naseem Begum had won the prestigious Nigar Awards for four years from 1960 to 1964. Her song "Hum Bhol Gaye Har Baat", became very popular among music lovers. She gained popularity after singing memorable duets with famous playback singer Ahmed Rushdi. Naseem was the original singer of the popular patriotic song "Aye Rahe Haq Ke Shaheedo". She died on September 29, 1971, in Lahore.

Overseas workers keen to boost Pakistan's economy: Attique

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Muslim Conference and ex-Premier AJK Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan has said that the great keenness of overseas workers to contribute to the economic boost of Pakistan needs to be harnessed with national economic planning and execution apparatus.

He was briefing the political and youth delegation who called on him in his Mujahid Manzil residence Saturday to congratulate him on his successful 10-day public interactive tour of the United Arab Emirates.

"Our national economic planners should ensure a greater working role for overseas workers in Pakistan's economic planning and execution processes", he stressed.

"I feel the urgency of

forming Pakistan economic councils comprising overseas workers and investors having working advisory facilitation in the national economic development initiatives. Pakistan's and Kashmir's manpower overseas showed great keenness to contribute to Pakistan's economic strength. Their enthusiasm needs to be channelized in our national efforts sooner the better", he pointed out.

Regarding growing anti-Kashmir and anti-Kashmiri atrocities by India in occupied Kashmir, he said that the international opinion is well informed of ill designs of India in the region. "In my interactive meetings during my 10-day UAE visit, I pointed out that under UN

Kashmir resolutions Indian presence in Kashmir is illegal. India is alien in Kashmir. She is Kashmir's occupier. Over one million Indian armed forces today occupying Kashmir are busy reducing the Kashmiri demography in the state", he said.

India has seen that even after jailing hundreds of thousands of Kashmiri nationals, youth, women and teens Kashmiris continue their self-determination rights movement with full political and moral might. India is stealing the geographic resources of the state, depriving Kashmiris of their economic and political rights, he added.

In this inimical circumstance how can she stay in Jammu and Kashmir, he queried.

Alert Issued ahead of rain and snowfall

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Provincial Disasters Management Authority (PDMA) has issued an alert to all district administrations following the forecast by the Meteorological Department of another round of rains and snowfall in the upper districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

According to a news report, "The upcoming spell of rain and snowfall is expected to commence from February 25th to February 27th in the province."

In the alert, the district administrations were advised to take precautionary measures due to the anticipated rains and snowfall.

Muhammad Qaiser Khan, Director General of PDMA, expressed concern that landslides were expected in the upper districts of KP due to the expected snowfall and rains.

He stated, "Directives have been issued to district administrations to ensure the availability of both small and heavy machinery."

The DG PDMA also advised the public to stay away from power lines, dilapidated buildings, structures, signboards, and billboards.

Furthermore, tourists and the local population in sensitive upper areas were advised to stay informed about weather conditions

and to take necessary precautionary measures.

The district administrations in sensitive upper areas have been ordered to convey messages to the local population in their native languages.

The PDMA chief added that in the event of any emergency, all relevant organizations should remain vigilant in maintaining road links.

He also instructed the relevant officials to provide alternative routes in case of road closures.

Muhammad Qaiser Khan stated that passengers should be alerted on provincial and national highways in sensitive areas.

Experts highlight importance of books reading in children

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned educationist and author, Dr. Rashid Hameed on Saturday highlights the importance of instilling a love for books in children.

Talking to PTV, he emphasizes that fostering a positive relationship with reading can greatly enhance their critical thinking skills and spark their imagination.

In a digital age dominated by screens, Dr. Rashid urges parents and educators to prioritize traditional books over digital distractions.

He underscores the enduring impact of printed literature on intellectual development and advocates for the integration of reading into daily routines from an early age.

"Reading books is crucial for enhancing children's capabilities," Dr. Rashid asserts. "It not only cultivates life skills but also instills a lifelong passion for learning."

Educationist and social activist, Meeran Malik also underscored the multifaceted benefits of book read-

ing. She said that books contribute to skills such as effective communication, vocabulary enrichment, and nurturing creativity and curiosity.

"Reading books strengthens various life skills," Malik explains. "From enhancing imagination to boosting self-confidence, books play a pivotal role in shaping a child's character and future."

While recognizing the value of technology in education, Dr. Rashid emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance and preserving the essence of traditional reading experiences.

She acknowledges the usefulness of online platforms in adapting to modern educational needs while stressing the irreplaceable value of original thought and creativity.

Both experts stress the importance of introducing children to books from an early age and utilizing resources like audiobooks and radio stories to further enrich their reading experiences.

TDCP, AG tour sign MoU for tourism promotion

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Tourism Development Corporation of Punjab (TDCP) and AG Tour signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the promotion of tourism and to facilitate the tourists about their destinations.

The signing ceremony was held at Patriata Chairlift, in which the TDCP Regional Manager and an official of AG Tour signed the agreement. Other TDCP officers were also present on this occasion, according to a press release issued here on Saturday.

Talking to the media, the Regional Manager said that the purpose of the agreement is to work together for the promotion of tourism and to highlight new tourist destinations and entertainment places across Punjab.

He further said that AG Tour will effectively take steps to make TDCP's tourist spots more attractive and enjoyable.

Aurat Hunar festival starts from March 8

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 10th edition of the 3-day long 'Aurat Hunar Mela' (National Women-at-Work Festival) to showcase women's work, products, and services starts from March 8 at the Lok Virsa, Shakarparian here.

This is the annual flagship event of Devcom-Pakistan (Development Communications Network) to mark the UN's International Women's Day that falls on March 8, said a press release on Saturday.

This year the event is being organized in collaboration with the National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) and, the Federal Ministry of National Heritage and Culture.

Speaking to this scribe, Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director Munir Ahmed said that over 100 marginalized communities and self-employed women will showcase their products, skills, and services. They will be coming from different far-flung areas such as northern parts including Chitral, Gilgit and Baltistan, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and South Punjab.

This is, in essence, the theme of this year's International Women's Day that emphasizes "inspire inclusion". He said several women folk singers will perform all three days while paintings of women artists will also be put on display at the Heritage Museum Gallery at the Lok Virsa. A conference on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for Women's Development will highlight the importance of the corporate sector's initiatives for women's development. Some of the best initiatives will be recognized with awards.

He said the 8 March is a significant UN day dedicated to ensuring women's rights, empowerment, and mainstreaming of their work. The celebration of the Day has played a key role in the global growth of women's rights campaigns, participation in the political and economic arenas, and empowerment movement. The theme of 2024 International Women's Day is very close to the heart of Devcom-Pakistan, a nonprofit voluntary organization that has been promoting and mainstreaming marginalized women's

work since its inception in 2003.

Munir Ahmed said that Devcom-Pakistan founded "Aurat Hunar Mela" in 2012 to celebrate women's work to inspire more women to enter into different sectors with proactive approaches. The event especially includes, promoting and mainstreaming women's human rights and economic empowerment, and the work of community women to strengthen their voices for social, economic, and political participation.

From this year, he said Devcom-Pakistan will launch awards to recognize, encourage, and appreciate the corporate sector for their great work under their Corporate Social Responsibility for women's development. The Devcom-Pakistan CSR Award for women's development will include significant initiatives of the organizations in the corporate sector contributing to women's education, health and hygiene, food and nutrition, skills development, economic empowerment, and ensuring women-friendly policies and practices with women's internal engagement.



ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of Flamingos on pond at Lake View Park. — APP Photo

Afghan team visits Iran

KABUL (BNA): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce has announced the visit of a technical delegation from Afghanistan to Iran with the aim of enhancing transit cooperation and promoting Afghan exports. According to a statement from the ministry, the delegation includes representatives from the Economic Deputy Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Transport and Aviation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Finance.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Shabaan 14, 1445 — Sunday, February 25, 2024

WHO issues warning

KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Health Organization has announced that since the beginning of January of this current year, more than 286,000 individuals have been afflicted with respiratory illness, among whom 668 have lost their lives. On Sunday, February 24, the organization reported hundreds of deaths and infections due to respiratory illness across the country, coinciding with the onset of winter.

Ibrahim Sanjrani Fort needs repair, says locals

KABUL (TOLOnews): Cultural activists in Nimroz said that the ancient fort Ibrahim Khan Sanjrani in this province's Chakhansur district is at risk of deterioration.

They asked the Islamic Emirate to pay serious attention to the restoration and maintenance of this historical site.

This castle is believed to have a 400-year history.

"If there is anything about which we can be proud, it is clearly our history, and the best way to

describe our history is through ancient works," cultural activist Omid Baloch told a TOLOnews correspondent covering Nimroz.

"Ibrahim Khan Sanjrani Castle is one of the most famous historical castles that shows our history and identity. We ask the government to restore this historical castle," Mehrullah Baloch, another cultural activist said.

However, local officials of Nimroz said that efforts

are underway to restore and maintain the historical area in this province.

"It is our responsibility to take care of ancient monuments because they are both historical and can be a source of income for us," said Habibullah Elham, head of information and culture in Nimroz.

According to provincial officials, the majority of the historical castles and monuments in this province date back to the ancient Sistan era.

Businessmen want ban on yarn export removed

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): Some yarn sellers in western Herat province have complained against the suspension of yarn export and said the move left negative impact on producers and workers associated with this industry.

They said yarn export remained suspended from the past two years which resulted in the significant decline of yarn rate and demand in the market.

Haji Bismillah, one of the yarn producers and sellers in Herat City, said in the past he produced three to four tonnes of yarn each month but currently the yarn market had stagnated due to the suspension of its export.

He said in the past four kilograms of yarn were purchased at 1,200 afis and sold at 1,350 afis but currently the same quantity of yarn is sold from 700 afis to 800 afis.

He asked the government to lift ban on the export of yarn so that they could increase their production.

Haji Bismillah said he alone had provided work for about one 1,500 families in the field of yarn processing, and as a result of current market condition these families also unemployed.

Noor Ahmad Hassanzada, another yarn seller, told Pajhwok Afghan News he sold one kilogram of yarn against 350 afis before but now the rate of one kilogram yarn dropped to 200 afis.

In the past, Noor Ahmad said he sold bags of yarn but now he sold it in kilos.

Jamaluddin Tahiri, head of the Herat Jalaban Union, said from the past two years the export of yarn is banned by the government, earlier, Afghanistan's yarn exported to India, Pakistan and other countries.

Expressing his concern about the condition of the yarn market in this province, he added that, while Herat yarn businesspersons have bought all the yarn available in the province with the hope of resuming exports abroad, but the export of this product has been stopped until now.

He added the price of four kilograms of yarn dropped from 1,800 afis to 800 afis and this situation badly hurt the traders.

Currently, yarn demand in the local market was very limited, and with the suspension of the export of this product, many families in Herat, Badghis and Farah districts have lost their jobs.

Mawlavi Bashir Mohammad Seerat, head of the provincial Commerce and Industry Department, said there was high demand for the production of carpet inside the country but unfortunately due to the lack of proper processing facility the sale of Afghan carpet worldwide had reduced.

He said market situation would be examined and if there was low demand for yarn in the local market its export would be allowed.

China regrets UN Doha meeting's failure

KABUL (Ariana News): China's special envoy for Afghanistan, Yue Xiaoyong, on Saturday regretted that the United Nations' meeting in Doha on Afghanistan earlier this week failed to have dialogue with the Islamic Emirate.

Yue said on X that the meeting was useful for exchange of views and it made a call for more pragmatic engagement and dialogue with Afghanistan.

"Pity is Doha Afghanistan meeting again failed to have dialogu with Afghan interim government or DFA (IEA) as China and regional countries have been calling," Yue said.

The envoy said that China called more humanitarian assistance, moderate governance, and women and girls' education.

China also called on US take major responsibility for Afghanistan's recon-



struction, unfreeze Afghanistan's overseas assets and lift unilateral sanctions.

China also stressed that it is ready to work harder with UN and regional partners especially through Afghanistan's nonboring countries foreign minister-

al meeting and other platforms to enhance engagement with Afghanistan to help for its peace, stability, reconstruction and common prosperity.

The UN had extended an invitation for IEA officials to participate, following

their exclusion from the first meeting in May.

However, the Kabul government said they would not participate in the talks unless they could be the sole representative of Afghanistan at the meetings — to the exclusion of civil society groups.

Latest World Bank decision will support millions of Afghans: IRC

KABUL (Ariana News): The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has welcomed the latest move by the World Bank to use International Development Association (IDA) funds to scale up support to Afghanistan and expand the scope of its programs, saying these funds will support the delivery of services and access to jobs for Afghans who are continuing to endure a major humanitarian crisis as a result of decades of conflict, climate change and economic turmoil.

IRC in a statement said that the focus of Approach 3.0 of the World Bank includes the delivery of livelihoods support which will support Afghanistan to at least maintain the current trajectory of low-level economic growth.

"This will be critical to maintaining and stabilizing the Afghan economy, while ensuring the survival of businesses and sources of income for millions. However, Afghanistan's economic crisis remains the primary driver of the high level of humanitarian needs across the country," the statement said.

IRC stated that although

the announcement of Approach 3.0 represents a new milestone for meeting basic needs in Afghanistan, IRC urges other donors to recognise their role in continuing to contribute to both the delivery of basic services through the World Bank's Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund (ARTF) and to the humanitarian response.

All contributions are vital to sustaining support for Afghans, and the international community must continue to provide funding to sustain basic services and prevent the humanitarian crisis from worsening, it

added.

A week ago, the World Bank Group announced that its executive board endorsed a new approach to aiding Afghanistan that will deploy some \$300 million from the bank's International Development Association fund for poor countries through United Nations agencies and other international organizations.

The shift marks the first time that the World Bank's own funds would be sent to Afghanistan since the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) seized power in August 2021.

Almost 100 Afghan migrants deported to Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations of Afghanistan has reported that nearly a hundred Afghan migrants have returned to the country after being expelled from Pakistan.

In a statement released on Saturday, the ministry stated that 99 Afghan migrants were deported to the country.

According to the state-

ment, the mentioned migrants returned to Afghanistan via the

Torkham border crossing in Nangarhar province after being expelled from Pakistan.

The Torkham border authorities in Nangarhar province also confirmed that the returnees included 18 families.

The ministry's information indicates that these

migrants were forcibly returned from Pakistan.

Recently, the process of expelling Afghan migrants from Pakistan has intensified, with the interim government of Pakistan citing a lack of residency documents as the primary reason for expelling Afghan migrants from the country.

Alongside the challenges of migration, Afghanistan is facing harsh winter con-

ditions, exacerbating the already dire situation in the country.

The harsh winter has led to increased hardships for Afghan refugees and internally displaced persons, adding to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

This comes amid a lack of shelters, food, job opportunities and medical care for the Afghan returnees in the country.

800 ethnic conflicts resolved under Islamic Emirate rule, says officials

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Islamic Emirate said that 800 ethnic conflicts have been resolved since the they came to power.

According to the deputy spokesperson of the interim government, most of the conflicts were about land, forests or water.

"Our regional governance has resolved 800 small and large ethnic conflicts in different provinces

since the Islamic Emirate came to power. Most of them were about land, forests or water," said Hamdullah Fetrat, the deputy spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate.

Fetrat added that most of these conflicts emerged between nomads and regional people in Maidan Wardak, Ghazni, Bamiyan and Takhar provinces.

"The government has

done much to resolve conflicts between nomads and people in different provinces. We had many conflicts in Ghazni, Bamiyan, Maidan Wardak and Takhar provinces which have been resolved significantly," added the deputy spokesperson.

"Most of the conflicts are resolved through regional councils in different provinces," said

Muhammad Asif Faqiri, a law expert.

"The Taliban has been successful in resolving the conflicts through Sharia law," said Akhtar Muhammad Rasikh, a military analyst.

Earlier, the ministry of borders and tribal affairs said that they have established a commission to resolve ethnic conflicts across the country.

Residents of 20 areas lack access to health centre

FARAH CITY (Pajhwok): The Public Health Department of western Farah province says about 100, 000 residents of 20 areas have no access to healthcare services and face serious problems.

Maulvi Ehsanullah Shakir, director of public health, told Pajhwok Afghan News 10 small, two big and one mobile health centres had been established this year in different parts of the province, benefiting about 50,000 people.

He acknowledged despite the establishment of the health centres, around 100,000 inhabitants of the 20 localities were deprived of fundamental medical facilities.

Without naming the areas where health clinics had been established,

Shakir said most of them were created in Gulistan, Parchaman and Farah Rud districts. In order to address the issue, he said, they planned to establish 10 more health centres.

According to him, a well-equipped building for the maternity ward at Farah Hospital was established this year in addition to a pediatric ward and provision of ambulances.

On the other hand, a number of other residents of the province complain about the lack of healthcare services.

Abdul Hameed Hameed, hailing from Parchaman district, complained residents of many areas were deprived of basic health services.

"Ours is a remote and mountainous district. In

winter, the main road remains closed due to snowfall. There is no hospital here, and people cannot take their patients to Farah City or other places."

According to him, five populous areas of the district — Fask, Toli Sharif, Zaminda, Ghorzang and Faizabad — do not have any health centre.

A resident of Gulistan district, Ismatullah, told Pajhwok many areas of this district did not have health centres.

He says most of the time they cannot transfer their patients to medical facilities in other areas due to road closures or bumpy routes.

Many other people hold similar views and urge the government to resolve the problem on a priority basis.

Int'l community supports people of Afghanistan:Rina



KABUL (Khaama Press): Rina Amiri, the US Special Representative for Women's Affairs and Human Rights in Afghanistan, says that the international community is united and committed to supporting the people of Afghanistan and respecting their rights, particu-

larly addressing the issues faced by women and girls in the country.

The US Special Representative for Women's Affairs and Human Rights in Afghanistan wrote, in her social platform X, stating that the recent meeting of representatives of countries in Doha has strengthened this commitment.

Amiri stated that during the Doha meeting, Afghan civil society representatives urged the international community to consider the importance of women's participation and civil society in discussions related to the security situation and the status of women in the country.

The second meeting of representatives of countries for Afghanistan was held last week hosted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Earlier, Thomas West, the US Special Representative for Afghanistan Affairs, also commented on the Doha meeting,

saying that there is a strong consensus among countries regarding collective interests in Afghanistan, and no country wants to witness the emergence and threat of terrorism in Afghanistan.

Critics emphasize that any interaction with the de facto authorities must prioritize principles that uphold women's rights, human rights, including access to education and employment, and the formation of an inclusive government that represents all ethnic and religious groups in the country.

They stress the importance of ensuring that engagement with the current authorities is contingent upon their commitment to respecting fundamental rights, including the empowerment of women, protection of human rights, and the establishment of a government that encompasses the diverse ethnic and religious makeup of the nation.

JALALABAD (Pajhwok): Two families have ended their 20 years enmity in the Kot district of eastern Nangarhar province as a result of mediation by tribal elders and religious scholars.

In a statement, the governor's house said the enmity between the families of Haji Waris and Haji Pir Mohammad had surfaced two decades ago, resulting in the killing of two individuals.

At a reconciliation gathering, Deputy Governor Maulvi Sayed Ahmad Banori hailed tribal elders and religious scholars for reconciling the families.

He urged the people of Nangarhar to cooperate with mediators in preventing feuds and addressing problems.

The implementation of the Islamic Emirate's amnesty decree has inspired the masses and families are embracing reconciliation on a daily basis.

Maulvi Banori said peace and economy were important for a successful government and a prosperous nation.

He expressed his happiness over the return of stability in the country, which was moving towards economic self-sufficiency.

At the reconciliation gathering, tribal

Nangarhar families end two decades old feud



leaders and religious scholars thanked the two families for accepting their decision and making peace.

The members of both families hugged and pardoned each other, promising to live in peace and brotherhood.



GAZA: Crowds of people struggle to buy bread from a bakery in Rafah.

US says new Israeli settlements ‘inconsistent’ with int’l law

WASHINGTON: The United States has said that new Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories are illegal, effectively reversing a policy by the administration of former President Donald Trump.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said an announcement by Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich that more than 3,300 new Israeli settlements are to be built in the occupied West Bank was “disappointing”. “It has been a longstanding policy of both Democratic and Republican administrations that new settlements are counterproductive to achieving enduring peace. They are also inconsistent with international law,” Blinken said at a news conference late on Friday in Buenos Aires.

“Our administration maintains firm opposition to settlement expansion. In our judgement it only weakens, not strengthens Israel’s security,” he added, without making any mention of tangible consequences Israel could face for settlement expansion. This negates the so-called Pompeo Doctrine, which referred to an announcement in November 2019 by then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that Washington supports Israeli settlements in the West Bank, Golan Heights and East Jerusalem as legal.

The majority of the global community views these settlements as illegal and an extension of Israeli occupation. White House national security

spokesperson John Kirby told reporters that Blinken’s position “has been consistent over a range of Republican and Democratic administrations”. “If there’s an administration that is being inconsistent, it was the previous one,” Kirby said.

The Pompeo Doctrine itself had overturned a legal position held by the US Department of State since 1978 when the administration of former President Jimmy Carter had evaluated Israeli settlements to be in violation of international law. Germany has also condemned the latest Israeli plans to construct thousands of new settler homes in the occupied West Bank. “You know our position on settlement construction. It is contrary to international law and this also applies when new construction projects are carried out,” deputy foreign ministry spokeswoman Kathrin Deschauer told a news conference in Berlin.

Israel’s Smotrich had announced the new settlement plans were a supposed response to what he called a “terrorist” attack on Thursday, when three Palestinians opened fire near a checkpoint between Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank city of Ma’ale Adumim, killing one Israeli and wounding several others. Smotrich now plans to build 2,350 new housing units on Palestinian land in Ma’ale Adumim, 300 in Kedara and 694 in Efrat, with backing from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu,

Defence Minister Yoav Gallant and Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer. Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh on Saturday called the announcement a “blatant challenge to the international community” and an obstacle to establishing an independent Palestinian state.

Israeli settlement watchdog Peace Now said that “Israel’s 2024 budget shows an addition of over \$100m to settlements”. “In 2024, coalition funds for settlements will amount to over \$203m [instead of the originally allocated \$76m in the government decision from May 2023],” it added. Ministers in the most far-right administration in the history of Israel have also called for increased curbs on Palestinians, including heavy restrictions on movement, after the attack.

Over decades, Israel has advanced plans to build new illegal settlements regardless of any attacks. The US and its allies have historically done little to pressure Israel to halt or roll back settlement expansion. Raids across Palestinian territories occupied by Israel had become an almost daily occurrence even before the war on Gaza started on October 7, and they have only significantly intensified since, growing deadlier as well.

In the Gaza Strip, more than 29,500 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli attacks since the start of the war, most of them children and women. — Aljazeera

IHC allows Tariq to travel abroad

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Saturday allowed PTI leader and close aide of former prime minister Imran Khan Tariq Shafi, to travel abroad who was on the ECL in connection with prohibited funding case.

As per details, the court directed concerned authorities to remove Tarif Shafi’s name from the passport control list and submit the report to IHC within a week. The six-page detailed verdict issued by Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri stated that one other accused Faisal Maqbool’s name was also removed on July 20, 2023.

Last year in August, the ECP announced the much-awaited verdict in the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) prohibited funding case. The ECP bench in its reserved verdict said the case against PTI has been proven. ECP, in its unanimous verdict, ruled that the party received funds from business tycoon Arif Naqvi and 34 foreign nationals.

PTI Workers Panel to take part in polls

F.P. Report

QUETTA: PTI Workers Panel would take part in intra party election of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Balochistan supposed to be held on March 3 as workers of PTI Balochistan have completely been ignored by the former leadership of PTI Balochistan for conducting intra party election of PTI Balochistan.

These views were expressed by former Senior Vice President, PTI, Balochistan, Syed Sadiq Agha, General Secretary, Insaf Lawyers Federation and Senior Vice President, Balochistan High Court Bar Association, Shams Rind Advocate and others while addressing a press conference at Quetta Press Club here on Saturday.

Strikes kill dozens in Gaza as Israel, Hamas seek deal

GAZA STRIP (AFP): Dozens of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have been killed in the latest Israeli strikes, the Hamas-run territory’s health ministry said Saturday, after Israel’s spy chief joined talks in Paris seeking to unblock negotiations on a truce.

The talks come after a plan for a post-war Gaza unveiled by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu drew criticism from key ally the United States, and was rejected by Hamas and the Palestinian Authority in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The talks also come alongside deepening fears for Gaza’s civilians desperate for food. The United Nations’ main aid body for Palestinians, UNRWA, said Gazans were “in extreme peril while the world watches.”

Hamas said on Saturday that Israeli forces had launched more than 70 strikes on civilian homes in Gazan cities including Deir Al-Balah, Khan Yunis and Rafah over the previous 24 hours. The health ministry said at least 92 people were killed. Israel’s military said it was “intensifying the operations” in western Khan Yunis using tanks, close-range fire and aircraft. “The soldiers raided the residence of a senior military intelligence operative” in the area and destroyed a tunnel shaft, a military statement said. Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist movement that has ruled Gaza since 2007, said fighting was raging in the northern Gaza district of Zeitun.

In nearby Jabalia refugee camp, tempers are rising and on Friday dozens of people held an impromptu protest. “We didn’t die from air strikes but we are dying from hunger,” said a sign held by one child. In the camp, bedraggled children waited expectantly, holding plastic containers and battered cooking pots for what little food is available. Residents have taken to eating scavenged scraps of rotten corn, animal fodder unfit for human consumption and even leaves.

Gaza’s health ministry said a two-month-old baby identified as Mahmud Fatuh had died of “malnutrition.” “The risk of famine is projected to increase as long as the government of Israel continues to impede the entry of aid into Gaza,” as well as access to water, health and other services, the charity Save the Children said. Israel has defended its efforts to deliver aid into Gaza, saying that 13,000 trucks carrying aid have entered Gaza since the start of the war. The UN humanitarian agency OCHA said in a report on Friday that in Rafah, near the Egyptian border, people are reportedly stopping aid trucks to take food, a measure of their desperation. The war began after Hamas’s unprecedented October 7 attack, which

resulted in the deaths of about 1,160 people in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of official figures.

Hamas militants also took hostages, 130 of whom remain in Gaza, including 30 presumed dead, according to Israel. Israel’s retaliatory offensive has killed at least 29,606 people, mostly women and children, according to the latest tally released on Saturday by Gaza’s health ministry. With war still raging after more than four months, Netanyahu on Thursday unveiled a plan for post-war Gaza that sees civil affairs being run by Palestinian officials without links to Hamas. The plan says that, even after the conflict, Israel’s army would have “indefinite freedom” to operate throughout Gaza to prevent any resurgence of terror activity, according to the proposals. It also says Israel will move ahead with a plan, already underway, to establish a security buffer zone inside Gaza along the territory’s border. A senior Hamas official, Osama Hamdan, said Netanyahu “is presenting ideas which he knows fully well will never succeed.”

The plan also drew criticism from the United States. “The Palestinian people should have a voice and a vote... through a revitalized Palestinian Authority,” which currently has partial administrative control in the West Bank, National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said. He added that the United States did not “believe in a reduction of the size of Gaza.” An Israeli delegation led by Mossad intelligence agency chief David Barnea traveled to Paris for a fresh push toward a deal to return the remaining hostages. The United States, Egypt and Qatar have all been deeply involved in past negotiations aimed at securing a truce and prisoner-hostage exchanges. Pressure has mounted on Netanyahu’s government to negotiate a ceasefire and secure the release of the hostages. A group representing their families planned what it billed as a “huge rally” to demand swifter action, coinciding with the Paris talks on Saturday night.

“We keep telling you: bring them back to us! And no matter how,” Avivit Yablonka, 45, whose sister Hanan Yablonka was captured on October 7, said at a traditional Shabbat dinner for hostage families in Tel Aviv. White House envoy Brett McGurk held talks this week with Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant in Tel Aviv, after speaking to other mediators in Cairo who had met Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh. A Hamas source said the new plan proposes a six-week pause in the conflict and the release of between 200 and 300 Palestinian prisoners in exchange for 35 to 40 hostages being held by Hamas.

US warns of environmental disaster

WASHINGTON (AFP): A cargo ship abandoned in the Gulf of Aden after an attack by Yemeni rebels is taking on water and has left a huge oil slick, in an environmental disaster that US Central Command said could get worse.

Rubymar, a Belize-flagged, British-registered and Lebanese-operated cargo ship carrying combustible fertilizer, was damaged in a Sunday missile strike claimed by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels. Its crew was evacuated to Djibouti after one missile hit the side of the ship, causing water to enter the engine room and its stern to sag, said its operator, the Blue Fleet Group.

A second missile hit the vessel’s deck without causing major damage, Blue Fleet CEO Roy Khoury told AFP. CENTCOM said the ship is anchored but slowly taking on water and has left an 18 mile oil slick. “The M/V Rubymar was transporting over 41,000 tons of fertilizer when it was attacked, which could spill into the Red Sea and worsen this environmental disaster,” it said in a post on X, formerly Twitter. The ship’s operator said Thursday the ship could be towed to Djibouti this week.

Khoury said the ship was still afloat and shared an image captured on Wednesday that showed its stern low in the water. When asked about the possibility of it sinking, Khoury had said there was “no risk for now, but always a possibility.” The attack on the Rubymar represents the most significant damage yet to be inflicted on a commercial ship since the Houthis started firing on vessels in November — a campaign they say is in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza during the Israel-Hamas war. The Houthi attacks have prompted some shipping companies to detour around southern Africa to avoid the Red Sea, which normally carries about 12 percent of global maritime trade. The UN Conference on Trade and Development warned late last month that the volume of commercial traffic passing through the Suez Canal had fallen more than 40 percent in the previous two months.

Air Chief Marshal (R) Hakimullah laid to rest

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Air Chief Marshal (Retired) Hakimullah passed away at the age of 88 at PAF Hospital, Islamabad after a prolonged illness. The Former Air Chief was laid to rest at his native village, Sheikh Kali in Charsadda with full military honours. A smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Air Force presented gun salute at his grave.

After the burial, floral wreaths were placed at the grave of the deceased on behalf of President of Pakistan, Prime Minister, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Chief of Army Staff, Chief of Naval Staff, Chief of the Air Staff and other dignitaries. High ranking civil and military officials attended the last prayers of the deceased and conveyed their condolences to the bereaved family.

Air Chief Marshal (Retired) Hakimullah was born on 15 October, 1935 in Charsadda district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He completed his training at the then Royal PAF College Risalpur and was commissioned in the GD(P) branch of Pakistan Air Force on 11 January, 1957.

He excelled as a fighter pilot, demonstrating exceptional skills and enthusiasm in deterring enemy aims



during both the 1965 and 1971 wars. He played a crucial role in engagements, forcing an enemy Gnat pilot to force-land in Pakistani territory and leading successful missions against India showcasing his courage and leadership abilities.

During his illustrious career he commanded a Fighter Squadron, Flying Wing and an Operational Air Base of Pakistan Air Force. As an Air Officer he was appointed as Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Flight Safety), Senior Air Staff Officer at Air Defence Command and Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Operations). Later, he was appointed as Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Operations) and as Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Administration), before taking over the command

of Pakistan Air Force in March 1988 from which he retired on 09 March, 1991. In recognition of his unmatched bravery and courage he was awarded the war decorations of Sitara-e-Jurat and Tamgha-e-Basalat. He was also a recipient of the coveted Nishan-e-Imtiaz (Military) and Hilal-e-Imtiaz (Military).

In his message, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force said that the services rendered by Air Chief Marshal (Retired) Hakimullah for Pakistan Air Force would always be remembered. He also wished eternal peace to the departed soul and expressed the hope that the bereaved family would be able to bear the loss with courage and fortitude.

‘Those having fear of failure can never be successful in life’

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif on Saturday said anyone having the more fear of failure than the hope for success could never succeed in life, as he urged the youth to rely upon wisdom, not passion, in their practical life.

Addressing the Sharif Medical and Dental College and the Sharif College of Nursing convention, he said the educational institutions at the Sharif Medical City were purely based upon merit. In his address, Shehbaz Sharif — the PML-N president who will assume the prime minister office in the coming days — said the hard work was the reason enabling the students receiving medals

at the event.

Highlighting the importance of healthcare sector and professionals, he asked them to serve the humanity without any consideration for caste, creed or colour. Shehbaz said their father Mian Muhammad Sharif had laid the foundation of this institution, which had developed into a towering tree. Maryam Nawaz — the political scion of elder Sharif who has been nominated by the PML-N as the Punjab chief minister to become the first woman in Pakistan’s history to occupy the slot in any province — was also present on the occasion.

It was public appearance of Nawaz after the Feb 8 elections, making many believe that he would discuss political issues in his

speech. However, it did not happen. Nawaz was hoping to enter the prime minister’s office for a record fourth term, but a divided mandate meant he resisted the temptation and opted to nominate his younger brother to lead the future government with the support of other parties.

Earlier on Friday, Ishaq Dar — the former finance minister and a close aide of Nawaz — had told media persons that the elder Sharif was still leading the PML-N and guiding the party in federal and provincial affairs. The Punjab Assembly will elect the new speaker and deputy speaker later in the day for which the PML-N has named Malik Ahmad Khan and Malik Zaheer Iqbal Channer respectively.

