

Balochistan Assembly session

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Kakar has summoned the Assembly session on Wednesday at three in the afternoon. During the session, newly elected members of the Balochistan Assembly will take oath. The outgoing Speaker of the Balochistan Assembly, Mir Jan Muhammad Jamali, will preside over the session and take the oath from the elected MPs.



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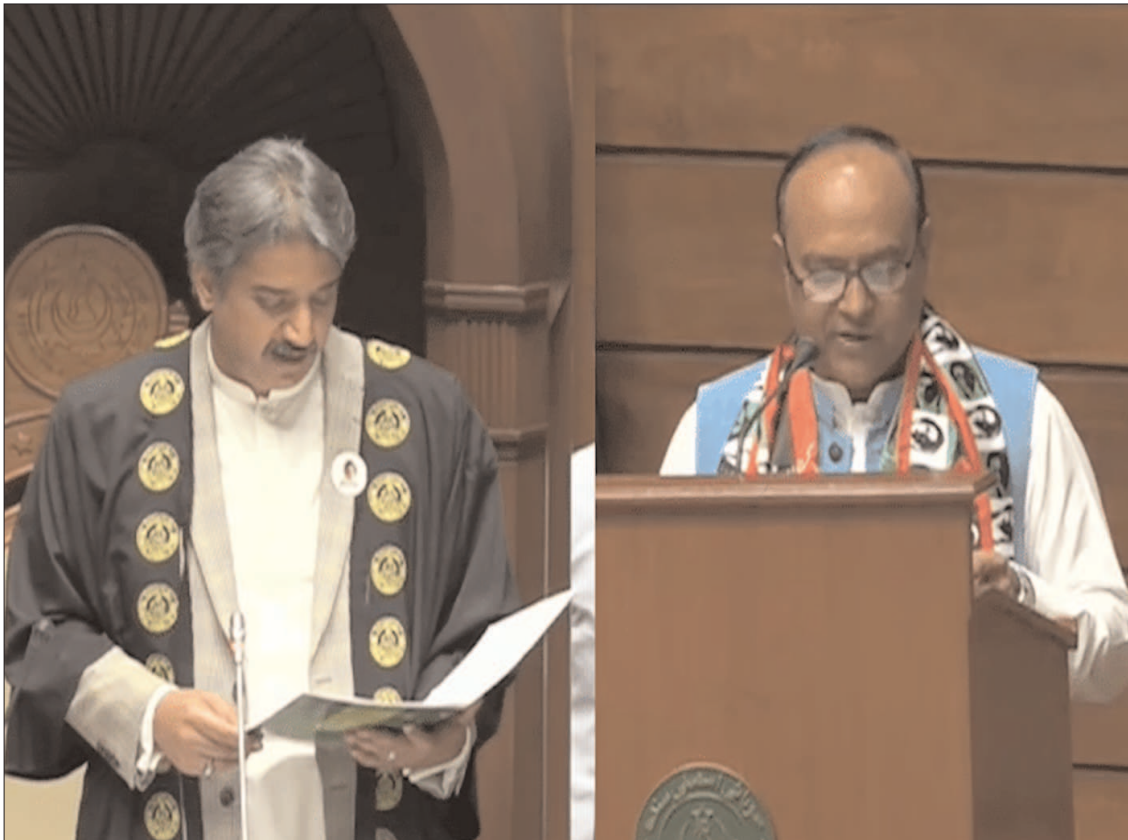
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KARACHI: PPP's Owais Qadir Shah (L) and Anthony Naveed (R) take the oath as newly-elected speaker and deputy speaker of the Sindh Assembly on Sunday.

PTI concludes talks on govt formation in KP

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) committee on Sunday concluded talks on formation of government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). According to sources, the proposed names for the KP cabinet are being forwarded to PTI founder and the cabinet will be finalised after his approval.

Sources said that the provincial cabinet will be squeezed to 15 to 20 members which will also include advisors and assistants.

Party will prioritize the loyal members who lost elections, for the advisor and assistants' slots, sources added.

It is important to note here that the inaugural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Assembly session has been summoned on February 28 at 11 am by Governor Haji Ghulam Ali, according to a notification from the assembly secretariat.

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.

Punjab to elect CM today

Maryam Nawaz poised to make history

LAHORE (INP): The Punjab Assembly is set to witness a one-to-one contest for the post of chief minister (CM) today as nomination papers of PML-N nominee Maryam Nawaz and Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) Rana Aftab were declared valid after scrutiny.

Sunday noon was the deadline, announced by newly-elected Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Ahmed Khan for submission of nomination papers for the post.

Malik Ahmed Khan did

the verification of nomination papers.

He said that the election for the coveted slot will be held in tomorrow's assembly session.

Maryam Nawaz, the political scion of PML-N supreme leader Nawaz Sharif, was nominated as the party's candidate for the coveted position of the chief minister of the country's most populous province, Punjab.

Meanwhile, PTI – at the eleventh hour – named Rana Aftab Ahmed Khan as its new candidate for

the post following the provincial police's attempt to arrest its earlier nominee, Mian Aslam Iqbal.

PTI leader Hammad Azhar noted that party founder Imran Khan had earlier nominated Mian Aslam Iqbal for the post but heavy contingents of the police force were deployed outside the Punjab Assembly to arrest him. Citing the situation, Hammad Azhar said that the party leadership decided to nominate Rana Aftab after holding consultations with the former.



US, British forces carry out more strikes against Houthis in Yemen

WASHINGTON (Reuters): U.S. and British forces carried out strikes against more than a dozen Houthi targets in Yemen on Saturday, officials said, the latest round of military action against the Iran-linked group that continues to attack shipping in the region. The United States has carried out near daily strikes against the Houthis, who control the most populous parts of Yemen and have said their attacks on shipping are in solidarity with Palestinians as Israel strikes Gaza.

The strikes have so far failed to halt the Houthis' attacks, which have upset global trade and raised shipping rates. A joint statement from countries that either took part in the strikes or provided support, said the military action was against 18 Houthi targets across eight locations in Yemen including underground weapons and missile storage facilities, air defense systems, radars and a helicopter.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said the strikes were meant "to further disrupt and degrade the capabilities of the Iranian-backed Houthi militia." "We will continue to make clear to the Houthis that they will bear the consequences if they do not stop their illegal attacks, which harm

Middle Eastern economies, cause environmental damage and disrupt the delivery of humanitarian aid to Yemen and other countries," Austin said.

The strikes were supported by Australia, Bahrain, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands and New Zealand. Al Masirah TV, the main television news outlet run by the Houthi movement, said on Saturday that U.S. and UK forces carried out a series of strikes in the capital, Sanaa. It quoted an unnamed Houthi military source as saying the renewed raids were "a miserable attempt to prevent Yemen from providing

support operations to the Palestinian people in Gaza." Earlier this week the Houthis claimed responsibility for an attack on a UK-owned cargo ship and a drone assault on a U.S. destroyer, and they targeted Israel's port and resort city of Eilat with ballistic missiles and drones.

The group's strikes are disrupting the vital Suez Canal shortcut that accounts for about 12% of global maritime traffic, forcing a longer, more expensive route around Africa.

No ships have been sunk nor crew killed during the Houthi campaign. However there are con-

cerns about the fate of the UK-registered Rubymar cargo vessel, which was struck on Feb. 18 and its crew evacuated. The U.S. military has said the Rubymar was carrying more than 41,000 tons of fertilizer when it was hit, which could spill into the Red Sea and cause an environmental disaster.

The European Union has launched a naval mission to the Red Sea "to restore and safeguard freedom of navigation". The United States has a parallel coalition, Operation Prosperity Guardian, aimed at safeguarding commercial traffic in from attacks by the Houthis.



The Frontier Post

Sharmila, Sehar becomes MNA

KARACHI (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued a notification of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) nominated female leaders on reserved seats Sharmila Farooqui and Sahar Kamran. Both now became elected members of the National Assembly on the reserved seat from PPP. PPP Shazia Murri and Nafisa Shah resigned from the reserved seat after winning the general elections.

PPP leader Awais Qadir elected as Sindh Assembly speaker

KARACHI (PPI): Awais Qadir Shah of the People's Party (PPP) was elected speaker of the Sindh Assembly on Sunday.

Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani announced the result according to which Awais Shah bagged 111 votes. His rival, MQM-P's nominee Advocate Sofia Shah got 36 votes. Soon after the declaration of results, swearing-in ceremony was held on the floor of the house. He took oath in Sindhi language. When he rose to take oath, the PPP members raised slogan [long live Bhutto]. It may be recalled that the PPP has fielded Owais Shah and Anthony Naveed as candidates for speaker and deputy speaker, respectively, while the MQM-P has nominated Advocate Sofia Shah and Advocate Rashid Khan. The speaker was elected through secret ballot. Later, Awais thanked the party leadership for their confidence in him.

Earlier, nine independent members-elect of the Sindh Assembly, backed

by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and one member of the Jamaat-e-Islami took oath.

The session of the assembly started 19 minutes late under the chairmanship of Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani who administered oath to the newly-elected members.

Three members of the People's Party (PPP) and the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) did not take oath.

It may be noted that 147 members took oath on Saturday and with the addition of 10 members today, the total number rises to 157.

The Election Commission (ECP) had issued notification for 163 members-elect. The PTI-backed members did not take oath on Saturday but the party leadership decided to join the assembly today.

Meanwhile, nomination papers for office of Sindh chief minister will be submitted today while the election will be held tomorrow (Monday). The newly-elected members of Sindh Assembly took oath on Saturday during the

inaugural session. Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani administered the oath to newly elected MPs.

PTI boycotts Sindh Assembly's Speaker election:

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Sunday announced to boycott the election of speaker and deputy speaker of Sindh Assembly.

As per details, the PTI-backed independent candidates jointly announced that they will neither support MQM-P candidate nor PPP nominated candidate for the speaker and the deputy speaker of Sindh Assembly.

Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) PTI-supported nine members and a Jamaat-e-Islami member took oath in Sindh Assembly earlier today (Sunday).

Murad Ali Shah welcomed the members who took oath today and said, "We hope we all will play a role in betterment of the province".

People's Party's candidate for Speaker's office, Owais Qadir Shah also held a meeting with the PTI's independent mem-

bers and welcomed them in the house. "Hopefully you will sit in a better environment in the house," he added.

Sindh Assembly has been in session to elect the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the House today. The People's Party has nominated Owais Qadir Shah as its candidate for Speaker and Naveed Anthony as Deputy Speaker for Sindh Assembly. The MQM-Pakistan has nominated Advocate Sofia Shah and Advocate Rashid Khan as the party's candidates for speaker and deputy speaker's offices of the provincial assembly respectively. The members will elect the speaker and deputy speaker with a secret ballot.

The election for Sindh's chief minister will be held tomorrow. Murad Ali Shah has been People's Party's candidate for the CM office. Sindh Assembly Secretariat has announced that the candidates for chief minister could submit their nomination papers from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm today.

PTI-supported nine members take oath in Sindh Assembly

KARACHI (INP): Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) PTI-supported nine members and a Jamaat-e-Islami member took oath in Sindh Assembly on Sunday.

Murad Ali Shah welcomed the members who take oath today and said, "We hope we all will play a role for betterment of the province". People's Party's candidate for Speaker's office, Owais Qadir Shah also held a meeting with the PTI's independent members and welcomed them in the house. "Hopefully you will sit in a better environment in the house," he added. Sindh Assembly has been in session to elect the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the house.

The People's Party has nominated Owais Qadir Shah as its candidate for Speaker and Naveed Anthony as Deputy Speaker for Sindh Assembly. The MQM-Pakistan has nominated Advocate Sofia Shah and Advocate Rashid Khan as the party's candidates for speaker and deputy speaker's offices of the provincial assembly respectively. The members will elect the speaker and deputy speaker with secret ballot. The election for Sindh's chief minister will be held tomorrow. Murad Ali Shah has been People's Party's candidate for the CM office.

Sindh Assembly to elect Leader of House today

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Assembly will elect its Leader of the House on Monday (February 26), for which Sayed Murad Ali Shah of the Pakistan People's Party (PPPP) and Ali Khursheedi of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan will be the contesting candidates.

Sindh Assembly has been in session since February 24, and on the first day, 147 members out of 168 took the oath as MPs. As per schedule, the election for Speaker and Deputy Speaker was held on Sunday (February 25).

Sayed Awais Qadir Shah and Anthony Naveed of the Pakistan People's Party were

elected as Speaker and Deputy Speaker, respectively, by securing 111 votes each. MQM-PS candidates Sofia Shah and Rashid Khan secured only 36 votes each, while nine members of the Sunni Ittehad Council and one of the Jamaat-e-Islami did not take part in the voting process. As many as 158 members of the provincial assembly were present in the PA session on Sunday. Of them, 147 took part in voting for the election of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker of the House, while 10 members abstained.

Outgoing Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani chaired the session and conducted the Speaker's election as per the

Rules of the Business of the Sindh Assembly. After taking the oath as Speaker, Sayed Awais Qadir Shah took over charge of the House and chaired the session. The newly elected Speaker conducted a session and supervised the process of electing the Deputy Speaker. As per the schedule of the Assembly Secretariat, the nomination papers have been submitted by interested candidates, and after scrutiny, a list of contrasting candidates will be issued by the Assembly Secretary later in the evening. The election of the Leader of the House (Chief Minister) will be held in the Sindh Assembly on Monday at about 11 am.

MQM-P decides to field Ali Khursheedi for Sindh CM slot

KARACHI (INP): Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) has decided to field its candidate for Sindh chief ministership, party source said on Sunday, citing sources.

The sources said the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) has finalised the name of Ali Khursheedi for the Sindh CM slot. It is to be noted that the MQM-P won 26 seats in the February 8 polls. Elections for Speaker and Deputy Speaker

of the Sindh Assembly are being held. This was announced by Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani during the Sindh Assembly Session in Karachi. On the other hand, the election of Sindh Chief Minister will be held tomorrow. According to the schedule issued by the Provincial Assembly Secretariat, nomination papers will be issued and received on Sunday, and the final list of candidates will be affixed to the notice board after scrutiny of papers until evening.

Israel, Hamas skirmish in Gaza as truce efforts pick up pace

JERUSALEM/CAIRO (Reuters): Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen clashed throughout the Gaza Strip over the weekend, as mediators picked up the pace of talks over a possible ceasefire to free hostages held by Hamas and bring a measure of Ramadan respite to the battered enclave. Prospects for securing any truce looked uncertain, however, with Israel saying it was, in parallel, planning to expand its sweep to destroy Hamas, while the Islamist faction stood firm on its demand for a permanent end to the nearly five-month-old war. Residents said Israeli forces shelled several areas of the enclave as tanks rolled into Beit Lahiya and soldiers and gunmen waged running battles in the Zeitoun sector of Gaza City - both in the north, which had been conquered early in the offensive.

At least 86 Palestinians were killed in Israeli strikes since Saturday, medics said on Sunday. Israel's military said two soldiers died in fighting in south Gaza and that its forces killed or captured Palestinian gunmen in Zeitoun and elsewhere.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu convened his war cabinet for a briefing late on Saturday by intelligence chiefs who returned from a meeting with Qatari, Egyptian and U.S. mediators in Paris about a possible second Gaza ceasefire.

Egyptian security sources said there would be more talks this week in Doha, with mediators shuttling between Hamas and Israeli delegates, and a follow-up round in Cairo. There

was no immediate confirmation of that from Israel, Hamas or Qatar.

The first pause in fighting, in November, saw the release of around half of the 253 people Hamas seized during an Oct. 7 cross-border killing spree that sparked the war. In that deal, Israel freed three times the number of Palestinians from its security pris-

ons and admitted more humanitarian aid to Gaza. Israeli media, citing unnamed officials, reported there was a framework for the return of around a third of the 130 remaining hostages over a six-week truce covering the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

There was no formal confirmation from either side.

Israeli delegation headed to Qatar for Hamas hostage talks

JERUSALEM (AFP/APP): Israel's war cabinet approved on Saturday sending negotiators to Qatar to continue talks aimed at securing a ceasefire in the war against Hamas and the return of hostages being held in Gaza, officials and local media said.

The talks began in Paris, where the head of Israel's overseas intelligence service Mossad and his counterpart at the domestic Shin Bet security service met with mediators from the United States, Egypt and Qatar.

National security adviser Tzachi Hanegbi said in a televised interview Saturday evening that the "delegation has returned from Paris -- there is probably room to move towards an agreement".

The negotiators had asked to speak to the cabinet "to bring us up to speed on the results of the Paris summit", he added shortly before the meeting.

Israeli media later reported that the meeting had concluded, with the cabinet agreeing to send a delegation to Qatar in the coming days to continue negotiations on a weeks-long truce involving the release of hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held in Israel.

Pressure has steadily mounted on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to strike a deal to free the hostages, with thousands gathering in Tel Aviv Saturday at what has come to be known as "Hostages Square" to demand swifter action. "We think about them (the hostages) all the time and want them back alive as soon as possible," said Orna Tal, whose close friend Tsachi Idan was kidnapped from the Nahal Oz kibbutz.

"We'll protest again and again until they're back," she told AFP.



Tarar criticizes PTI for 'derailing' democracy

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz leader Atta Ullah Tarar said on Sunday that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had always tried to derail democracy.

Addressing a press conference at PML-N's Secretariat here, he alleged that President Dr Arif Alvi was delaying the convening of the National Assembly session.

He said that as per the Constitution, the National Assembly session has to be convened on the 21st day after the general elections and added that if it was not convened, the speaker could himself convene it.

Atta Ullah Tarar said after the notification of the elected members there was no justification for delaying the convening of the session. He said that people have rejected the politics of hypocrisy.

Utility Stores reduces prices ahead of Ramazan

LAHORE (APP): The Utility Stores Corporation on Sunday reduced the prices of various items ahead of Ramazan along with the reports that rates of more essential items will be reduced under the Ramazan relief package next month.

USC representative claimed that rates of a number of brands of cooking oil, tea, ghee, and other products have been reduced. The price of ghee and cooking oil was reduced by four to 100 rupees per kg.

Additionally, a packet of branded tea weighing 800 grams was reduced by Rs100. The Utility Stores spokeswoman claimed that more price reductions under the Ramazan assistance package will begin next month.

Film actor Habib's anniversary

LAHORE (APP): The eighth death anniversary of legendary Pakistani film actor, producer and director Habib-ur-Rehman was observed across the country on Sunday.

He was born in 1931 in Indian state of Patiala. The great actor showcased his talent in more than six hundred Punjabi and Urdu films and is counted among illustrious romantic heroes.

Habib-ur-Rehman started his film career in 1956 with the movie 'Lakht-e jigar' as a side hero with Noor Jehan. His first superhit movie was 'Zeher-e-Ishq' with Mussarat Nazeer.

Habib-ur-Rehman also won worldwide recognition for his heartfelt performance in historical movie 'Devdaas' paired with Shamim Ara and Nayyar Sultana. The government awarded him the Presidential Pride of Performance to honour his services. He died after a prolonged illness in 2016 in Lahore on this day.

100 types of new animals to arrive at Lahore Zoo

LAHORE (APP): Over 100 types of new animals will arrive in the Lahore Zoo and Safari Park.

According to Lahore Zoo official sources, an excellent aquarium has also been built in the Safari Park and night safari facility will also be provided to visitors.

Excellent arrangements have been made for the corporate sector in the Safari Park, they said. To a query, they said that 90 percent work of Lahore Zoo and Safari Park had been completed. In this connection, Secretary Forest and DG Wildlife worked hard, they said, adding that it was impossible to upgrade two big zoos in such a short time.

Moreover, the Secretary to CM has personally supervised the upgradation of the Safari Park. Provincial Minister Bilal Afzal worked hard on the Lahore Zoo and Safari Park Upgradation Project.

Every Provincial Minister was assigned responsibilities to oversee the upgradation work of hospitals besides other responsibilities.

Meanwhile, Punjab CM Mohsin Naqvi has congratulated children on the completion of the upgradation project of the Safari Park and Lahore Zoo.



LAHORE: An illuminated view of mosque decorated with colourful lights in connection with Shab-e-Barat in the Provincial Capital. —APP Photo

A better future of Pakistan associated with educated youth: Governor KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali Sunday said that the better future of the country is related to the educated youth and the youth cannot be seen in any situation. The provision of all educational facilities including quality education to the youth is one of the primary duties of the federal and provincial governments, Haji Ghulam Ali said.

It is desired that no child should be deprived of basic needs such as education due to unfavorable conditions, male and female students should not waste their time, he added. Young people should spend their valuable time reading books and use social media including the internet according to their educational needs, said the Governor while advising the youth. He was addressing a joint 70-member delegation comprising students of the University of Peshawar, Agricultural University, Khyber Medical College, NCS and Imam Abu Hanifa College at the Governor's House.

The delegation also vis-

ited the Governor's House. In the meeting, the delegation informed the governor about the problems of fees, scholarships, etc. for the students. The delegation also thanked the governor for his hospitality in the governor's house.

There is a governor who has not only kept the doors of the governor's house open for everyone, but also takes steps to solve their problems on a priority basis. He said that he is the first governor of the province who not only visited the universities but also invited delegation from different sectors to sort out their problems as early as he could.

He encouraged the students but also honored them by inviting them to the Governor's House. Speaking to the delegation, the governor said that the governor will talk to the heads of the relevant educational institutions including the vice chancellors regarding the provision of scholarships and waiving of fees to the poor students studying in universities and colleges across the province including Peshawar and in this regard.

Full cooperation will

also be provided by the Governor's House. He said that all the universities, including Khyber Medical University, were directed to provide absolutely free education to the disabled children on scholarship so that they could also serve the country in a better way.

The governor said that the youth are our valuable capital and we have to ensure the protection of this valuable capital, but the youth should also use their energies and abilities positively to become a part of social development, our youth today are getting education based on modern facilities. "If the facilities are more, the challenges and expectations are also more," the Governor said. The governor said that the provincial and federal governments are spending a lot of money for the promotion of education and are making every possible effort to provide modern facilities.

He said the students are in a better position to shine not only the name of their parents, region but also the name of the country and the nation.

Efforts to be made to overcome inflation, poverty, says Azma

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz leader Azma Bukhari has said that an all-out effort will be made to overcome inflation and poverty in Punjab.

Taking to media outside the Punjab Assembly on Sunday she hoped that the opposition would accept the PML-N's mandate and added that her party wanted to take along the opposition. She said, "The PML-N does not believe in politics of revenge."

Azma Bukhari said that the leader of the house in the Punjab Assembly would be elected through division of the house procedure. She said that in 2018, the PML-N had accepted the then PTI government despite all reservations.

She hoped that the opposition would play a sensible role by adopting parliamentary norms. The PML-N leader further said that the party would focus on strengthening all areas including health and education. She said that the Punjab Assembly and people of Punjab had faced the arrogance of the PTI founder. Azma Bukhari said that assemblies should complete their constitutional term as it was essential for strengthening of democracy.

Rs 7.5mln disbursed to 53 people

LAHORE (APP): Through the efforts of Ombudsman Punjab Major (retd) Azam Suleman Khan, outstanding dues amounting to Rs 7.558 million, including educational scholarships, farewell grants, death grants, monthly grants, and marriage grants, were disbursed to 53 individuals.

Acting on the orders of the Ombudsman, relief was extended to petitioners belonging to various districts whose cases were pending due to various reasons. The spokesperson told the media on Sunday that the Ombudsman office facilitated families of deceased government employees, ensuring payment of farewell grants, death grants, monthly grants, and marriage grants. Additionally, 22 citizens were provided educational grants amounting to Rs 852,000.

CM Naqvi meets Punjab governor

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday met with Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman. Mohsin Naqvi informed the governor about the 13-month performance of the caretaker setup.

The Chief Minister also presented a book to the governor about the performance of the caretaker government.

The governor while appreciating Mohsin Naqvi and the cabinet for completing public welfare projects in a record time said that the supervisory cabinet under his leadership had set a good example of public service,

transparency and governance. CM Naqvi inaugurates new lab, collection center at SIMS: Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurated the newly built lab and collection center at Services Institute of Medical Sciences (SIMS) Lahore late Saturday night.

The chief minister also cut the cake on the occasion of the inauguration of the 42nd project of the health sector. Later he went round different sections of the lab and the collection center.

Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi appreciated Lahore Commissioner Division, Secretary Health,

Secretary of Construction and Communications and his team for completing the construction of new lab and collection center in a shortest period of time. He also praised the quality of the new lab and the collection center. Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inspected the reception of the new lab and collection center and interacted with the staff. Speaking on the occasion, the CM said that the establishment of the best lab and collection center in a very short time was a good omen. The SIMS will also get revenue from the new lab and collection center, said Mohsin Naqvi.

PML-N Ulema accuse PTI of attempting to undermine national economy

LAHORE (APP): PML-N Ulema and Mashaikh Wing Punjab General Secretary Sahibzada Hafiz

Muhammad Amjad lambasted the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder for allegedly sabotaging the nation's economic stability by corresponding with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Addressing an Ulema Convention on Sunday, Amjad asserted that the PTI's purported agenda is to dismantle the national economy, citing the recent letter to the IMF as evidence. He criticized the PTI for burdening the country with loans and

then shifting the responsibility of repayment onto future generations.

Highlighting the PML-N's track record, Amjad claimed that his party has historically navigated the nation out of crises towards progress. He emphasized the role of Ulema and Mashaikh in safeguarding Pakistan's ideological boundaries and promoting social consciousness.

Amjad called upon Ulema and Mashaikh to utilize their platforms to cultivate awareness among the populace, advocating for the establishment of an Islamic, prosperous society. He stressed the impor-

ance of creating a peaceful environment to alleviate public uncertainty, thereby facilitating political stability and economic revitalization.

Prominent figures including Pir Zahoore Abbas Qadri, Maulana Mazhar Usmani, and Maulana Ehsan ul Haq Siddiqui echoed Amjad's sentiments during the convention. Hafiz Muhammad Shoaib ur Rahman Qasmi and Hafiz Muhammad Tayyab Qasmi also addressed the gathering, reaffirming the commitment of Ulema and Mashaikh towards national prosperity.

Jirga Organised by Frontier Corps North in Bajaur



F.P. Report

BAJAUR: A special jirga convened by Frontier Corps North, honoring tribal and regional traditions, saw active participation from various sectors.

Major General Noor Wali Khan, Inspector General Frontier Corps North, engaged deeply in discussions alongside dis-

trict, provincial, and police representatives.

The agenda encompassed FATA integration, bolstering Bajaur Police capabilities, counter-terrorism initiatives, and healthcare collaborations.

Major General Noor Wali Khan emphasized leveraging Bajaur's mineral resources for local

prosperity, echoing the sentiment that Bajaur's welfare is integral to Pakistan's progress.

Local elders commended Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps North for their pivotal role in upholding peace, pledging continued collaboration to sustain tranquility in the area.

New population policy draft complete

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Population Welfare Department Secretary Salman Ejaz has announced the completion of a draft for a new population policy, soon to be presented for cabinet approval.

Presiding over a meeting here on Sunday, he highlighted the policy's transformative approach to family planning services and counselling, aiming to bring these vital services directly to the public. Through communication channels, the initiative seeks to raise awareness about family planning and its benefits.

The planning welfare secretary stressed that the prospective Population Policy 2024-29 envisions a society characterized by prosperity, health, and education. Recognizing fundamental rights to reproductive health, sufficient nutrition, and an elevated quality of life for all citizens, the policy targets a reduction in population growth rates, emphasizing coordination with stakeholders, including religious leaders and community engagement.

The Population Welfare Department in Punjab, renowned for its reproductive health services, is dedicated to extending its accessible model beyond provincial borders.

Leveraging transportation, awareness campaigns, and education, the department aims for comprehensive coverage. The Punjab Population Policy 2024-29 aims to nurture a society that is prosperous, healthy, and educated, focusing on planning and enhancing upbringing facilities for every family.

During the meeting, Population Welfare Director General Saman Rai underscored the commitment to provide access and choices for improved reproductive health, ensuring services reach urban areas. The provincial government incorporates the well-being of small families and health services provision into its policy framework.

The World Bank has initiated a significant family planning project in Punjab, focusing on reducing contraceptive drug use and population growth, offering free access to standardized services.

The World Bank program aims to empower youth platforms through voucher schemes, social marketing, engaging men and community leaders, and expanding services in family planning projects. The initiative seeks to strengthen collaborations for more effective family planning service delivery.

Karachi youth shot dead over resisting robbery

KARACHI (INP): Another young man shot dead by armed robbers over resistance in Karachi's Malir Liaquat Market, police said on Sunday. As per details, the deceased who was identified as Nabeel was a resident of Sher Shah Karachi.

The victim was in Malir to meet his relatives when robbers opened fire after he resisted giving his bike. Earlier, a young man was gunned down by armed robbers over resistance near Karachi's Ghani Chowrangi. The police said the incident took place when Hikmatullah, 18, was shot and killed when he refused to give them his mobile phone.

Hikmatullah – a resident of Chaman – was intercepted by armed muggers riding on a motorbike and as soon as he offered some resistance one of them shot him and rode away. The victim's family members said that he recently came to Karachi for employment and was working in electronics market in Saddar. The body was shifted to hospital and will be handed over to family after medico-legal formalities are fulfilled.

In a separate incident, a 55-year-old man was shot dead by muggers when he tried to resist a robbery attempt in Malir. A 55-year-old man – identified as Haider Raza – was returning home from a bank after withdrawing his salary when unknown assailants opened fire on him outside his house in Saudabad area of Malir district.



LAHORE: People enjoy traditional ricksaw ride during the Lahore Literary Festival at Al Hamra. —APP Photo

‘Our govt will uphold highest democratic values’

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister-designate Ali Amin Khan Gandapur Sunday reiterated the pledge that our government will uphold highest democratic values at all levels inside and outside the parliament.

He said security, law and order will be ensured. Health card, Langar Khana, shelters homes and police reforms will be restored, while educational facilities including the teaching of the Qur'an in educational institutions and uniform education system will be increased enormously, while the lack of resources

will not be made hurdle in the completion of this great mission, he further pledged adding that our ‘Murshid’ wants to make Pakistan a great Islamic welfare state on the pattern of Madinah state and we will play a leading role in realizing this dream.

In meetings with the members-elect of provincial and national assemblies, party workers and people from different walks of life including scholars and lawyers at the Speaker House Peshawar, Ali Amin Gandapur said that although ruthless atrocities were unleashed on the leadership and workers of Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Insaaf by breaking into their houses at nights and endless series of mishandling women and children by misusing the power, but we think, he maintained, we have suffered all this barbarism for the sake of the country and the nation and henceforth we will plan to move forward on the path of brotherhood, development and prosperity instead of revenge politics.

Meanwhile in meeting with Qari Ruhollah Madani, convener of the World Council of Religions Pakistan and former provincial minister for Revenue, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs, the

Chief Minister-designate further said that PTI has proved by meeting with Ulema and entering into alliance with religious parties of all schools of thought, that we believe in national unity and cohesion and want to make the people of Pakistan one nation beyond all kinds of ethnic and religious prejudices because in this lies the secret of our survival and prosperity.

He expressed the confidence that the Ulema and religious scholars will support and guide us in the welfare programs of the provincial government and in the process of religious education and reforms.



PESHAWAR: Student delegation of Peshawar University Campus meeting with Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali at Governor's House.

PML-N to play a strong opposition role: Muqam

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided to play a strong role of the opposition in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Provincial President Pakistan Muslim League-N Engineer Amir Muqam told media here in Sunday.

He said this soon after chairing the Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Parliamentary Party Meeting, Engineer Amir Muqam while chairing the Parliamentary party meeting congratulated all the elected members of the assembly on behalf of the party leadership.

The meeting was attended by all the newly elected 9 provincial assembly members of PML-N. Pakistan Muslim League-N will play the role of strong opposition in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly together with other opposition parties, Amir Muqam added.

Citizens worried about increase of prices of food items

PESHAWAR (APP): Inflation continued as increase in the prices of various edible commodities in vegetables and fruits markets with no check from the official concerned on the day to day increase in rates.

During a visit to the vegetables and fruits markets it went to the reach of common people. Likewise the rate of the Onion Rs 200 per kg while tomato Rs 140, white potato Rs 110 and red potato Rs 85 per kg, Peas Rs 180, okra Rs 260, garlic Rs 540 and ginger Rs 500 per kg, according to the official price list.

The price of Lemon is 130, cauliflower 80, capsicum 280 and eggplant 120 per kg.

As far the price of fruits including Kabuli apple 280, golden apple 190 and Iranian apple 310 rupees per kg, Malta Punjabi 180, Malta Swat 330 while Kino Rs 220 dozen sold, Guava Rs 230, Pomegranate Rs 400 and Banana Rs 80 to Rs 140 per dozen.

Increase in the price of live chicken per kg, the price of live chicken will reach 455 rupees per kg while eggs are being sold at Rs 450 per dozen, which is now out of the reach of the salary class. It is beyond our reach, one Inayat Ullah told APP.

“We could not afford such things and the prices of vegetables and fruits, eggs and chicken are increasing every day,” he added. “There is no check on them, the official rates and rates we are purchasing are totally different,” he said.

Favourites named in PTI list of reserved seats for women in KP

PESHAWAR (INP): Favourites have been added to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's list of reserved seats by showing them as long-time workers, sources within the party said on Monday.

They claimed that the party has finalised the list and former members of provincial assemblies have been preferred.

The decision comes three days before the newly elected representatives in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would take oath as MPAs on February 28.

The PTI backed independent candidates emerged victorious by securing 91 seats out of the total 112 seats where the election was held on February 8.

Sources stated that lawyer Mashaal Yousafzai and her two friends were added to the list and the party was planning to also include Fozia Bibi from Chitral.

Moreover, family members of two party workers who died in party activities were also named it. They added that no

women from the Peshawar district were named on the list as the disgruntled women supporters decided to protest outside the house of the speaker.

Senator Falak Naz's friend Zahida Zahoor was also added to the list, they said and added that two names were added on the insistence of the party's candidate for the KP chief minister Ali Amin Gandapur. Party's founding chairman Imran Khan would give final approval to the list.

Good governance a pillar for prosperous societies

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In the dance of nations, good governance is like the sturdy pillar that supports the entire structure. It is not just a fancy term; it is the glue that holds societies together, ensuring fairness, transparency, and prosperity.

As Nelson Mandela wisely stated, “Good governance is the key to unlocking a nation's potential.” Good governance is akin to a wise captain steering a ship through stormy seas. It involves leaders making decisions for the greater good, considering the needs of all citizens. When leaders prioritize the well-being of the people, they pave the way for a harmonious and thriving society.

One crucial aspect of good governance is transparency. It is like a clear window that allows citizens to see the workings of their government. Transparency builds trust, as it shows that leaders have nothing to hide. As Thomas Jefferson once said, “Honesty is the first

chapter in the book of wisdom.” In the book of governance, transparency is that first chapter, laying the foundation for a wise and just administration.

Accountability is another cornerstone of good governance. When leaders are held accountable for their actions, it creates a system of checks and balances. As Mahatma Gandhi aptly put it, “You must be the change you want to see in the world.”

In the realm of governance, leaders being accountable set a precedent for a responsible and responsive government.

Inclusive decision-making is a vital thread in the fabric of good governance. When diverse voices are heard and considered, it leads to policies that address the varied needs of the population. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu emphasized, “A person is a person through other persons.” Similarly, a government is effective when it understands the interconnectedness of its people and values their perspectives.

Efficiency in governance is like a well-oiled machine – it ensures that processes run smoothly and citizens receive timely services. When bureaucracy is minimized, and public services are streamlined, it reflects a commitment to effective governance. As Ronald Reagan wisely stated, “Governments tend not to solve problems; only people solve problems.” Efficient governance empowers people to contribute to problem-solving and nation-building.

Furthermore, good governance fosters economic development. When leaders prioritize sound economic policies and create an environment conducive to business growth, it stimulates the economy. Lee Kuan Yew, the founding father of Singapore, once remarked, “Good governance is the art of putting long-term, collective welfare above individual, short-term interests.” This perspective underscores the link between good governance and sustained economic prosperity.



PESHAWAR: Director LRH Hospital Dr. Muhammad Ibrar Khan presiding over a certificate to Tariq Jamil Khanzada.

Sohan Halwa, other traditional sweets add colours to weddings

PESHAWAR (APP): Known as the land of hospitality, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a unique province of Pakistan where traditional sweets including Sohan Halwa of Dera Ismail Khan become an important food item in weddings and birthday parties due to its delicious taste and full of energy.

The sohan halwa of DI Khan, Gajar ‘halwa’ of Bannu, Mardani Pera of Mardan and Rajjar Methai of Charsadda district make marriages, engagement and birthday parties more delectable in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where these mouth-watering commodities were being preferred on traditional sweets on joyous occasions.

Several varieties of sohan halwa are brought from different districts including Multan to Peshawar as special items, however, the Dera Ismail Khan's variety attracts a substantial number of buyers due to its unique flavor, taste and being cost-efficient.

Barakat Ali alias Pehlwan, who run a famous sweet shop at Qissa Khawani Peshawar told APP that he had brought 40kg sohan halwa stock from DI Khan and all of it were sold out on Sunday.

“My son had visited DI Khan last night to bring additional 50KG sohan halwa stock to fulfill people's pressing people's demands for wedding parties ahead of Ramadan,” he said. The ingredients required for the special halwa include milk, khoya, soni, fine flour, sugar and ghee besides dry fruits, which make it more delicious and tasty.

The traders from different parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan, Azad Kashmir and Punjab have placed heavy orders for upcoming Eid and extra labour was hired to meet their pressing demands for sweets and confectionaries.

Like other food items, he said the prices of DI Khan and Multani sohan halwa were also increased in local market due to soaring price hike and one KG was available on ranges of Rs400 to Rs600 per KG in Peshawar, which was economical than Multani sohan halwa that was being sold at Rs500 to Rs700 per KG.

“My entire family likes DI Khan sohan halwa due to its delectable taste and energy perspective,” said Ehtisham Khan, a lecturer of Urdu literature at Qissa Khwani bazaar. “I purchased four KG sohan halwa including two kg for my married daughter as a special gift on her birthday,” he said.

Like sohan halwa, the Rajjar Methai made of pure “Gur” of Charsadda district also attracts a large number of buyers for joys parties due to its appetizing taste and affordable prices.

Located about one kilometer north of Charsadda city, Rajjar bazaar has now turned into a sweets market where a great rush of buyers are being witnessed in all bakery shops.

The traditional sweet was brought in substantial quantities in Peshawar, Charsadda, Swabi, Nowshera and Mardan districts where Rajjar sweets were being sold like hot cake.

Yaqoob Khan, an owner of Razzar sweet told APP

on Sunday that this hard earned business was started by his grandfather Israruddin alias Chacha Halwai in 1930 and he belonged to the third generation running it today to support his family.

The delicious quality of the sweet differentiates it from the rest of confectioneries due to its better taste, chemically free and affordable price. The people served it to relatives and guests as a special item besides on joys occasions of Eid, weddings, engagements and children birthday strengthening the bond of love and friendship.

“Personally, I like Rajjar sweet due its palatable taste and cost-efficient,” said Khayam Khan, a government employee, adding people of all social status can afford it. “I purchased four KG Rajar sweets at Rs 400 per kilogram for my family members and friends as a special marriage gift,” he added.

Haji Yaqoob said the recipe for the popular sweet changed over the years and only butter, flour and gur were used in its preparation by my father as sugar was not available in those ancient days in Charsadda.

He said presently it was being prepared with various ingredients including desi ghee, milk, butter, gur and white flour enhances its taste and delectability. The popular sweet also attracted traders from Afghanistan and Central Asian Republic while marching to the sub-continent via Charsadda and Peshawar through GT Road.

The local people also send the sweets as a gift to their friends and relatives,

living in other parts of the country as well as abroad. It is also being exported to Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria and several Middle East countries besides send to USA, UK and other western countries as a special gift for friends and relatives.

Similarly, mardani pera sweet prepared of milk and butter beside other ingredients, also attract buyers. “Mardani sweet is my first choice for Sunday parties. I purchased 10 kilograms of sweets including five KG each for my married sisters, maternal uncles and relatives as special gifts,” Professor Dr Naeem Khan of Swabi University told APP.

He said Pakistan can earn valuable foreign exchange by exporting the traditional confectionery to international markets. Focus should be made on its marketing by involving foreign missions to explore new avenues for these popular products besides social and digital media to be used for its proper projection overseas.

The manufacturers and shopkeepers of these traditional sweets said that they had suffered great financial losses due to the corona pandemic and last year devastating flood and urged the government to financially support the affectedes besides providing interest free loans to them.

This would enable the affected shopkeepers and manufacturers to strengthen their business besides providing jobs to labourers.

They also demanded industry status to DI Khan's sohan halwa and Rajar methai of Charsadda.

Formation of political govts signifies parliamentarians’ resolve to address country’s challenges, carry democratic system forward

PESHAWAR (APP): Political and economic experts here Sunday said the process of formation of political governments in provinces have signified lawmakers’ unshakable commitment to take the country's out of existing challenges and address people's problems at their doorsteps.

“After February 8 general election, the formation of new governments in provinces have been started last week that was a good omen for democracy and people of the country,” said Professor Dr AZ Hilali, former Chairman, Political Science Department, University of Peshawar while talking to APP on Sunday.

He said the Speakers and Deputy Speakers of Sindh

and Punjab Assemblies were elected while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor has summoned KP Assembly session on February 28 for oath-taking of the newly elected members of Provincial Assembly.

Under the constitution and law, he said that process of formation of new governments in federal and provinces would be completed next week.

He said parliamentry democracy provides an inclusive mechanism for resolution of socioeconomic and political issues through evolving of a broad based political reconciliation among all the relevant stakeholders to anchor the ship of democracy to the safe shores.

“Democracy provide

solutions to all the country's problems. It is the best governance system practicing in world through which socioeconomic and political conflicts are being addressed through reconciliation and dialogue among all relevant political stakeholders mandated by the people,” Professor Dr AH Hilali said.

In democratic process, he said the doors of political dialogue among religious and political entities are always open aimed at to take decisions in national interest and for people's well being.”

“Political government takes decisions in the country's interest as it enjoy masses support and remove misunderstanding of opposition on election issues

besides works on strengthening of democracy and take the country forward on internal and external fronts,” he said.

Professor Dr Hilali said that unfortunately our politicians did not learn lessons from our history and again started wrangling by closing the doors of political dialogue after general election despite the country's difficult economic situation.

He said that a permanent political divide with no channel of communication and intolerance in society would further retards the political and economic development besides widen the economic gap between the influential and underprivileged and that democracy will suffer.

He said if the trend of political intolerance, accusations and blame games among politicians continued after the election, then it would be extremely difficult to bring political and economic stability to the country.

He said the absence of political dialogue among politicians in the past led to derailment of democracy for four times in Pakistan.

He said the government of Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was dismissed after the 9 religious and political parties under the platform of Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) launched agitation movement, claiming rigging in 1977 elections.

In-spite of strong denial of the rigging allegations

by PPP, he said PNA's agitation movement sparked riots, unrest and incurred colossal economic losses to the country and subsequently democracy was packed up for the third time on July 5, 1977.

In 90s, he said the absence of political dialogue had led to the premature dissolution of the elected assemblies and the governments of former Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif twice each after being accused of riggings in elections by opponents and its negative outcome came before us in the shape of martial law on October 12, 1999.

He suggested immediate initiation of political dialogue between the upcoming government and oppo-

sition on existing difficult economic, election results and political challenges inevitable for the country's stability and development.

Ikhtair Wali, PMLN KP spokesman said that his party strongly believed in political dialogue. He said Charter of Democracy signed between former Prime Ministers, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was a great example of political reconciliation that later led to an adoption of the landmark 18th constitutional amendment that returned all powers back to the parliament, granted provincial autonomy to the federating units, identity to people of KP after renaming NWFP and abolishment of the draconian 58 2 (B)

article from the constitution. He said PMLN did not believe in political victimization of opponents and wanted to take all political parties along in the Parliament.

PMLN President Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was nominated as Prime Minister and Maryam Nawaz as Chief Minister Punjab keeping in view of their leadership qualities to take all the parties along and address the country's challenges swiftly.

Accusing PTI for creating political division in society and harming the country's economy, he said PTI announcement to write letter to IMF was an attempt to ruin the national economy and keep people backward.



In brief

Three prisoners escape from jail

SUJAWAL (INP): Three notorious prisoners escaped from judicial sub-jail Sujawal. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) suspended the security squad. According to details, three notorious criminals Rafique Margar, Bilawal Chandio and Sattar Minghar were imprisoned in barrack No 3 of Sujawal sub-jail. The prisoners break opened the window of the barrack on Saturday-Sunday night and managed to escape. The prisoners were found missing when the jail administration observed the barrack next morning. SSP Sujawal, Shehla Qureshi suspended all squad deployed for security of sub-jail including RI Police Lines.

SSP conducts security checks

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Following the directives of District Police Officer Abbottabad Senior Superintendent Police (SSP) Traffic Abbottabad, Tariq Mahmood Khan Sunday conducted security checks at all churches in Abbottabad city. During the inspection, SSP Abbottabad Tariq Mahmood Khan met with church administrators to discuss detailed security plans. Speaking on the occasion, he emphasized the importance of intensified security measures and thorough checks across all churches in the Abbottabad district. Priests were instructed to ensure strict adherence to security guidelines.

Anti-polio campaign

OKARA (INP): Like other cities of Punjab, the five-day anti-polio vaccination campaign successfully continued in Okara on Sunday, the second day. Earlier, on Saturday, the Deputy Commissioner Okara had kicked off the campaign by administering polio drops to children at Government High School Sutlej. During the five-day campaign, as many as 6,52,255 children of the district would be administered anti-polio vaccine. The Deputy Commissioner Okara has urged the citizens to get their children vaccinated to save them of disabling and life-threatening polio disease.

Funfair, Spring festival held

SARGODHA (APP): A funfair and spring festival was held at Khubaib Orphan Girls School and College Sargodha on Sunday. The event was inaugurated by Principal Khubaib Girls School and College Ms Sarwat Ansar. For the entertainment of orphan girls, teachers set up food and drink stalls while games zone and swings were also set up for students at very low rates. A large number of mothers and university students participated in the colorful event. Principal KGSC Sarwar Ansar distributed money to orphan girls so that they could also enjoy the funfair. On the occasion, she said the purpose of holding the funfair and spring festival was to provide entertainment to orphan girls and the institution would continue to organize various programmes for the encouragement of orphan girls in future as well.

PFA destroys vegetable grown

SARGODHA (APP): Punjab Food Authority (PFA) destroyed vegetables grown with sewerage water here on Sunday. According to PFA press release, a team of PFA carried out an operation in Sillanwli and destroyed the crop of spinach cultivated on 16 kanal land. PFA DD (Operation) Shahbaz Sarwar said that a ban had been put on the cultivation of sewage grown vegetables and strict action was being taken against the farmers over the violation.

AC pays surprise visit to hospital

— inspects shops in Tank bazaar

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The Assistant Commissioner Tank Ameen Ullah Khan paid a surprise visit to the District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ) Tank and inspected medical facilities.

During the visit, the AC was briefed about the cleanliness and facilities available in the hospital and the plans. The assistant commissioner also checked the stock register and attendance of staff.

Later, he visited various sections including the OPD block, emergency ward, and stores and took stock of treatment facilities.

He also met with patients listened to their problems and directed the

hospital administration not to ignore any complaints registered by patients.

Moreover, he issued special instructions to focus on cleanliness in the hospital so that a clean and healthy environment could be ensured for patients.

Meanwhile, Assistant Commissioner Tank Ameen Ullah Khan has paid a visit to the bazaar and checked the rates and quality of food items at various shops.

According to the district administration, the assistant commissioner visited several butcher shops, bakeries, departmental stores, chicken shops, and fruit and vegetable shops. During the visit, he checked hygiene conditions, expiry dates of

the food items and price lists. He directed the shopkeepers to display the price lists at prominent places and ensure cleanliness at their shops.

Besides, the assistant commissioner checked LPG refilling shops and warehouses of flour and fertilizers. He warned the dealers of flour and fertilizers that strict action would be taken against those who were found involved in hoardings.

The AC said the government had made several initiatives for the welfare of the masses and the district administration would take all possible measures to pass its benefits to the grassroots level.

Women among nine hurt in truck-bus collision

FAISALABAD (INP): At least nine people including women were injured when an over speeding truck rammmed into a passenger bus here on Sunday, rescue sources said.

According to details, due to bursting of tyre, a truck hit a passenger bus in Mushtaq Chowk of Tandlianwala in district Faisalabad.

Due to collision, the bus went off road and overturned resultantly nine people including 35-year-old Mohsin s/o Asghar Ali, 24-year-old Aqsa w/o Hafiz Amjad, 60-year-old Shehbaz s/o Muhammad Boota, 50-year-old Zahida Bibi w/o Noor Ahmed, 28-year-old Hafiz Amjad s/o Muhammad Aslam, 45-year-old Irshad Bibi w/o

Abdul Razzad, 31-year-old Irfan s/o Abdul Rasheed, 30-year-old Parveen d/o Ahmed Umer and 32-year-old Nazeer Ahmed s/o Muhammad Sharif were injured.

The injured were shifted to Tehsil Headquarter Hospital Tandlianwala for treatment.

The police impounded both vehicles and after registering a case into the incident started an investigation.

SSC student shot dead by class fellow over petty issue

A matriculation student was shot dead by class fellow over petty dispute in Chak No 7 GB on Sunday, police said.

According to details, a group of class fellows had

gathered in a private academy to prepare for annual SSC exam where two class fellows Abdullah Irshad s/o Irshad Ali and Ali Arman exchanged hot words.

Other class fellows present on the scene settled the dispute between the two but Ali Arman considering it to be his insolence opened fire Abdullah Irshad while returning home from academy leaving him critically injured.

The injured student was rushed to hospital where he succumbed to his wounds despite all out efforts of the medics.

The police registered a case into the incident and started raids to arrested the culprit who had managed to escape from the crime scene.

10,033 shopkeepers fined over profiteering

FAISALABAD (APP): Price control magistrates fined 10,033 shopkeepers Rs.12,0665 million in Faisalabad division during the last 3.5 months.

This was stated by Divisional Commissioner Madam Silwat Saeed after presiding over a meeting of price control magistrates. She said that price control magistrate were fully active in the field and they were ensuring strict implementation of the price control mechanism.

She said that the price control magistrates had inspected 147,661 shops and grocery stores across

the division during last 3.5 months and imposed a total fine of Rs.12,0665 million on 10,033 shopkeepers on the charges of overcharging and non-display of rate lists at conspicuous places. Some 958 shopkeepers were also arrested in addition to sealing 13 shops and getting 45 cases registered on sheer violation of the Price Control Act during this period, she added.

She directed the deputy commissioners of all four districts of the division including Faisalabad, Jhang, Toba Tek Singh and Chinot to pay surprise visits to vegetable markets

early in the morning and review the auction of vegetables and fruits so that profiteering and overcharging could be eliminated.

She said that the government was committed to providing maximum relief to the masses and in this connection no negligence from the price control magistrates would be tolerated.

The meeting of price control committees would be convened regularly to review and check their performance and strict action would be taken against those who fail to control profiteering, overcharging and hoardings, she warned.

Shab-e-Barat being celebrated today

SUKKUR (APP): The holy month of Shab-e-Barat, the night of fortune, is being observed throughout northern Sindh tonight with due religious fervour and devotion. On this occasion, the administration of Allah Wali Masjid in Sukkur, different masjids have chalked out programmes including holding Waiz (religious sermons) and dua-mahfils today.

Besides, religious sermons highlighting the significance of Shab-e-Barat will be delivered at various mosques after Maghrib prayers alongside holding special munajat after Esha prayers in Sukkur, Khairpur, Shikarpur, Ghotki, Larkana,

Jacobabad and other districts of northern Sindh. The Mayor Sukkur Barrister Arslan Sheikh on Sunday greeted on the occasion of the holy Shab-e-Barat.

In his message, he said the holy Shab-e-Barat has come into mankind with the advent of the holy month of Ramadan and good fortune.

“This holy night brings immense opportunity to obtain special grace and forgiveness from the Almighty Allah,” he said. Islam is the religion of peace and welfare, the Mayor said, adding that the ideals of Islam are the means of welfare for the present life of the people

and their salvation hereafter.

Mayor Arslan Sheikh said “Along with mercy and blessings of the Almighty Allah, we will pray for continued progress and welfare of the country and greater unity of the Muslim Ummah on the holy night of Shab-e-Barat”.

He urged the affluent people to come forward to help the distressed and poor people on the occasion.

He wished mercy, blessings, progress and welfare for the whole of mankind. “Allah shows His greatness of forgiving and fulfilling our desires”, he added.

Scooty riding trend rising in Sargodha

SARGODHA (APP): Like other cities of the country, the trend of bike riding among women is also on the rise in Sargodha.

Students, teachers and working women, fed up with high fares of rickshaw and taxi, have started using their own motorcycles. Female scooty users said it was not only economical but also a fast mode of travel to reach educational institutions and workplaces.

Talking to APP here on Sunday, Myra Ali, who works at a private bank, said: “Since the day I started riding a scooty to reach

my workplace, it ended my dependency on others. For being affordable and offering quick mobility, I would suggest every girl use it,” she added.

Another scooty rider, Samia Gulzar, who is an employee at a college, said it had nothing to do with feminism or liberalism or women empowerment.

“We are simple working women who leave their homes to make a living for our family. It has rid me of waiting at bus stops in rain and sweltering heat,” she added.

Parents are also encour-

aging their daughters to learn to ride a scooty so they could reach their workplaces and educational institutions without relying on others.

Eight held with drugs, weapons: Sargodha Police on Sunday arrested eight accused and recovered narcotics and weapons from them. The police said teams of various police stations conducted raids and arrested eight accused and recovered 1.3-kg hashish, 30 litres of liquor, two guns, a pistol and a rifle.

Cases were registered against the accused.



CHINIOT: A view of accumulated water and blocked sewerage at Riaz Shah Kothi Road needs attention of concerned authorities.

Police arrested 12 suspects

KOHAT (APP): During the operation in the suburbs of Jarma, 12 suspects, including wanted proclaimed offender and drug dealers, were arrested and weapons and drugs were recovered from their possession.

According to details, given by the Kohat Police, as a result of the search operation at the targeted locations, 1 Kalashnikov, dozens of cartridges and 2,260 kg of hashish were recovered.

The intelligence-based operation was led by ASP Sadar Talha and SHO Jarma Fazal Muhammad.

A heavy contingent of police and elite force and female police officers participated in the operation which has been going on since the early hours of Sunday.

A proclaimed offender, drug dealers and suspects arrested in the operation were transferred to Jarma Police Station for investigation.

Cases were registered under various provisions against the arrested accused including arms and drugs.

Fake Peerni awarded life-term

FAISALABAD (INP): Anti Terrorism Court awarded life imprisonment and imposed Rs20 million penalty on a fake Peerni for setting mentally retarded girl on fire.

According to details, the incident took place in Ghulam Muhammadabad of Faisalabad where family of mentally retarded girl identified as Sonia Sultana 25, took her to a fake Peerni of the area. The fake Peerni in the name of treatment blotted the body of girl with iron rods besides laying her on burning coal leaving her injured.

A case was registered against the fraudster spiritual healer on complaint of brother of the victim lady.

The Special Judge of ATC Muhammad Hussain heard the case and after observing evidences and witnesses awarded life-term to the fake Peerni under Section 336 (b) of Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) besides directing her to pay Rs20 million fine.

62 electricity thieves caught

MULTAN (INP): In a crackdown against defaulters and electricity thieves in the Mapco region of South Punjab, authorities apprehended 62 individuals for stealing electricity in a single day. As a result, 22 new cases were registered against the offenders at various police stations. Additionally, four-wheel thieves were arrested on the spot during the operation.

According to a spokesperson for Mapco, a total of Rs. 30,60,000 was imposed in fines on the electricity thieves.

In a separate effort to address defaulters, an impressive sum of Rs. 8,30,90,000 was collected from both active and inactive defaulters in the Mapco region within a single day.

The spokesperson also disclosed that the electricity supply to three agricultural tubewell consumers was disconnected due to non-payment of dues amounting to Rs. 25,40,000.

Dispute resolution council inaugurated

KHYBER (INP): District Police Officer (DPO) Khyber, Salim Abbas Kalachi, has officially inaugurated the Dispute Resolution Council (DRC) in Wadi Tirah, a remote area of Khyber. The ceremony saw the presence of SP Investigation Kamal Hussain, DSP Circle Swalzar Khan, SHO Tirah Syed Khan, along with other police officials, DRC members, and area elders.

Addressing the gathering, SP Investigation Kamal Hussain emphasized the importance of activating the DRC under the directives of IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and CCP Peshawar.

He urged the members of the Conciliation Council to maintain neutrality and impartiality in mediating disputes to ensure fair resolutions.

Hussain highlighted that the establishment of DRC would bridge the gap between the community and law enforcement, ultimately leading to a reduction in crime rates. He

announced plans to establish DRC committees across all circles of Khyber, further strengthening community-police relations.

Members of the Mishran reconciliation council expressed optimism that the DRC would facilitate free and timely justice for the underprivileged citizens of Tirah.

They commended DPO Salim Abbas Kalachi and senior police officials for fulfilling the longstanding demand of tribal elders by establishing the DRC.

Anti-polio drive to kick off in Balochistan

QUETTA (INP): A seven-day anti-polio drive is all set to kick off across Balochistan from today (Monday).

The provincial task force on polio eradication said that over 2.655 million children across the province would be immunized during the week-long drive.

The children will also be given Vitamin A drops during the campaign.

It is important to note here that no polio case has

been registered in Balochistan since 2021

However 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.

“The genome sequencing of the virus, found in

samples collected from Lasbela and Hub, showed that it belonged to Gadap Karachi.

Last month, the Ministry of Health confirmed the presence of poliovirus in environmental samples from nine districts of the country.

Earlier, countrywide anti-polio vaccination campaign to immunise more than 40 million children under the age of five was conducted on January 8 in three phases.

Basit elected president of LHC Bahawalpur Bar

BAHAWALPUR (INP): Sardar Abdul Basit Khan Baloch and Sohail Akhtar Alkara have been respectively elected President and General Secretary of Lahore High Court Bahawalpur Bench Bar Association.

Chairman, Election Board, Advocate Muhammad Aslam Khan Dhakar, Senior Member, Advocate Ghazannfar Ali Khan, Member, Advocate Chaudhary Umar Mahmood, Member, Advocate Sardar Muhammad Akram Khan Baloch, and Member, Advocate Sardar Tahir Mahmood Khan, announced the results of the elections held for the offices of

Lahore High Court Bahawalpur Bench Bar Association for 2024-25, said a press release issued on Sunday.

According to the results, Advocate Sardar Abdul Basit Khan Baloch was elected President of the LHC Bahawalpur Bar Association by securing 1440 votes, while another candidate, Mian Faiz-Ul-Hassan stood runner-up by securing 1374 votes.

Advocate Sohail Akhtar Alkara was elected General Secretary of the LHC Bahawalpur Bench Bar Association by securing 1217 votes, while another candidate, Advocate Imran Aziz Khan Channar, got the

second position by securing 935 votes.

Advocate Khawaja Muhammad Tahir Qayyum has been elected as Senior Vice President (Bahawalpur Post). Advocate Rana Muhammad Afzal Anjum has been elected Vice President (Bahawalnagar Post).

Spring festival to start in DGK

DG KHAN (INP): The spring festival will be marked with enthusiasm from March 1-8 in DG Khan. The flower exhibition would be organized, while stalls and traditional and cultural clothes would also be exhibited.

These views were expressed by Additional Deputy Commissioner of Revenue Mian Rizwan Nazir while presiding over a meeting regarding the spring festival.

Additional Deputy Commissioner General Ghulam Mustafa Sehar, DG PHA Qudsia Naz, CDO Rab Nawaz, DEO Ahmed Kamal, and other officials were present.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Revenue Mian Rizwan Nazir said, “The spring festival will be celebrated enthusiastically in Dera Ghazi Khan on the directions of the Punjab government. Spring is a source of joy in our region.”

“During the festival, the citizens of Dera Ghazi Khan will have entertainment opportunities, and cultural and traditional civilization will be highlighted.” Mian Rizwan said, “There will be swings for children, games for youth, and a musical program for families.”

SHCBA elects Tunio as president

HYDERABAD (APP): The Sindh High Court Bar Association (SHCBA), Hyderabad, has elected advocates Ayaz Hussain Tunio, Hameedullah Dahiri and Irfan Bughio as President, Vice President and General Secretary, respectively.

According to the election results announced late on Saturday night, Tunio bagged 930 votes against 516 and 125 which were received by other candidates, advocates Ishrat Ali Lohar and Abdul Sattar Sarki, respectively, contending on the same seat.

Likewise, Dahiri won his seat with 741 votes against 413 votes of Rehana Nazeer Gujjar and 407 of Peerul Majeedano who were also vying for the slot of Vice President.

The post of General Secretary was secured by Bughio with 854 votes

while his opponent candidates Raja Jawad Ali Sahar and Jehangir Khan Pathan were given 529 and 186 votes, respectively.

On the seats of the Joint Secretary, Library Secretary and Treasurer Ghulam Murtaza Shaikh Muhammad Ali Kolachi and Mumtaz Sachal Aiwan emerged successful with 711, 641 and 903 votes, respectively.

On the 7 seats of the Members Managing Committee (MMC), Abdul Ahad Sahito, Mehtab Munir Nirban, Naeem Hussain Gadehi, Muhammad Yasir Qureshi, Shazeel Ali Memon, Taimur Hussain Keerio and Osama Yousuf Paryhar have been elected.

Around 1,600 lawyers who are members of the bar exercised their right to vote.



Ukraine vs. US border at annual conservatives gathering

NATIONAL HARBOR (AFP/APP): With a red T-shirt covered in Donald Trump pins, there is no doubt as to which candidate Patti Douglas will be backing in November's presidential election.

But unlike the former US leader, who Douglas came to see deliver a speech in the suburbs of Washington on Saturday, she has no reservations about giving Ukraine more assistance. "I want to help Ukraine... I think they are doing a really good job, but they need more help," she told AFP at the annual "CPAC" gathering of conservatives.

While Ukraine marked the second anniversary of Russia's invasion on Saturday, a new \$60 billion security package sits stalled in the US Congress, as Trump calls on Republican lawmakers to hold out until Democrats agree to measures cracking down on immigration, and to convert any aid to Kyiv into loans.

Douglas, a resident of Florida in her 50s, says she disagrees that the different policies should all be tied together. "I think the Congress should do separate bills: one for Ukraine, one for our border and other things like that. If we do huge bills, it doesn't work," she said.

A security package without immigration measures has passed the Senate with bipartisan backing, but Republican leaders in the House have pledged to not take it up.

But friends Stephanie Jordan and Nannette Coil, whose cowboy hats stand out among a sea of red caps typical at Trump campaign rallies, said they believe the US border issue should be handled first before Ukraine gets any more aid.

"It's like in an airplane, you put on your own oxygen mask first, before you help anyone else. We need to take care of ourselves first," Coil told AFP.

Jordan, also in her 60s, says she thinks about "domestic issues first."

"I know being nationalist is not popular, I don't know why, because strength starts within the country," she said. Trump, in his nearly 1.5-hour speech, hammered President Joe Biden over the historically high number of illegal border crossings in recent months -- an issue he has sought to make a key part of his campaign to retake the White House.

"They're killing our people -- they're killing our country," Trump said of the migrants, pledging to enact the "largest deportation in the history of our country," if elected.

In only brief remarks on Ukraine, Trump reiterated his belief that Russian President Vladimir Putin would not have invaded if he were in office. "Ukraine would have never happened. I talked to Putin a lot. I got along with him well," said Trump, highlighting the weapons that were delivered to Kyiv while he was president. When asked about renewing US aid, 69-year-old Mary Phelps, clad in a "Make America Great Again" T-shirt, told AFP: "We already sent to Ukraine a lot of help. There's not a clear path for them to get out of this mess." "I feel like we need to secure our border first and then we have to worry about helping other people," she said.

"And I think that other NATO partners have to step it up a little more and we have to save more of our resources to save our borders."

One attendee named Jean, who did not wish to give a last name, said she believes the situation would be different with migration and the war in Ukraine "if Trump were allowed to be president." When asked if the United States should continue supporting Ukraine, she said "right now it's a very terrible condition and it's very hard to answer that question."

Australia PM pledges ‘whatever support’ needed as wild fires destroy homes

SYDNEY (Reuters): Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese pledged on Sunday to provide whatever support was needed to assist Victoria state in a days-long wildfire emergency that has razed homes after authorities warned extreme heat could fan the blazes this week.

"We will provide whatever support is requested from Victoria," Albanese told reporters in the city of Frankston, Victoria, according to a transcript.

"It's a reminder of the need for us to be vigilant for us to continue to work and act on the threat that is climate change."

The emergency has killed livestock, destroyed six homes and forced more than 2,000 people to leave western towns and head to the city of Ballarat, 95 km (60 miles) west of the state capital, Melbourne.

Australia is in the grips of an El Nino weather pattern, which is typically associated with extreme phenomena such as wildfires, cyclones and droughts.

More than 15 bushfires were burning in Victoria on Sunday, with the most serious blaze, ranked at the second highest danger rating, near several remote towns, according to the state's emergency authority.

State authorities have said there are concerns about the weather this week particularly Wednesday into Thursday when extreme heat is forecast that could further fan the fires.

Around 1,000 firefighters supported by more than 50 aircraft

have battled the fires since they started. The last two bushfire seasons in Australia have been subdued compared with the 2019-2020 "Black Summer", when bushfires destroyed an area the size of Turkey, killing 33 people and an estimated 3 billion animals.



Portugal electoral campaign begins with right looking to gain



LISBON (AFP/APP): Portugal's official election campaign begins Sunday, with the March 10 legislative vote likely to see a breakthrough by populist parties after an influence-peddling scandal brought down eight years of Socialist government.

Portugal, which this April celebrates half a century since its "Carnation Revolution" put an end to an almost equally long fascist dictatorship, has avoided the right-wing and anti-establishment parties that have recently scored successes elsewhere in Europe.

That exception is expected to end. The Chega party ("Enough" in Portuguese), formed in 2019 by a former football commentator who has become an ardent critic of the country's political and economic elites, is credited with 15 to 20 per cent of the vote. The surprise resignation of Socialist Prime Minister Antonio Costa, who is not running for re-election, has helped Chega, said Antonio Costa Pinto, a political scientist at the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon.

"The theme of corruption, in this European conjuncture, favours the radical right," he said.

Several European countries, including Italy, Slovakia, Hungary and Finland, are run by coalitions either headed by or including far-right parties.

The Netherlands could join this list after the victory of Geert Wilders in last November's legislative elections. Chega, which is anti-immigrant but not always anti-European Union, already became the country's third largest political force in Portugal's January 2022 elections with seven per cent of the vote and 12 deputies in the 230-seat parliament.

Andre Ventura, its president, aims to displace the centre-right Social Democratic Party (PSD) as the dominant force on Portugal's right, which is expected to have a majority of the seats in parliament.

Costa's successor at the Socialist Party, Pedro Nuno Santos, has said he wouldn't block the formation of a minority government headed by the centre-right should they finish first but without a working majority.

However according to analyst Costa Pinto, the "sanitary cordon around the extreme right hasn't worked in other European democracies, and Portugal will be another example."

Prime minister since the end of 2015, Costa improved the government's finances and oversaw a largely healthy economy, but was brought down by a series of scandals. The final blow came when a probe into influence peddling reached his chief of staff, who was found with 75,800 euros (\$82,000) in cash hidden in his office. Costa's name was cited in the probe and he resigned in November, saying he wouldn't seek a new term.

Belarus' Lukashenko says he'll run for president in 2025

MOSCOW (Reuters): Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko said he would run for president again in 2025, Belarusian state news agency BelTA reported on Sunday. "Tell them (the exiled opposition) that I'll run," Lukashenko told journalists at a polling station after voting in parliamentary and local council elections. "No one, no responsible president would abandon his people who followed him into battle."

Lukashenko, 69, has ruled Belarus since 1994 and is one of Russian President Vladimir Putin's closest allies.

"We're still a year away from the presidential election. A lot of things can change," he said in response to a follow-up question, BelTA reported.

"Naturally, I and all of us, society, will react to the changes that will take place in our society and the situation in which we will approach the elections in a year's time."

Economy another victim of war in impoverished Sudan

PORT SUDAN, Sudan (AFP/APP): Before the Sudanese army and paramilitary fighters turned their guns on each other last year, Ahmed used to sell one of Sudan's main exports: gum arabic, a vital ingredient for global industry. Now he's out of business, and his story encapsulates the broader economic collapse of Sudan during 10 months of war.

Since combat between two rival generals began on April 15, Ahmed has been at the fighters' mercy. "When the war began, I had a stock of gum arabic in a warehouse south of Khartoum that was intended for export," Ahmed told AFP, asking to use only his first name for fear of retaliation.

"To get it out I had to pay huge sums to the Rapid Support Forces," the paramilitaries commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Daglo who are at war with the Sudanese Armed Forces led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan.

"I had to pay multiple times in areas under their control, before my cargo got to areas controlled by the government," Ahmed said. But the government - loyal to the army -- "then demanded I pay taxes" on the product, an emulsifying agent used in everything from soft drinks to chewing gum.

When the trucks finally made it to Port Sudan for export on the Red Sea, "authorities again asked for new taxes, and I had to pay storage fees six times more than before the war", Ahmed said. His gum arabic -- like many other Sudanese products -- never made it onto a ship. According to Sudan's port authorities, international trade fell 23 percent last year.

Pope Francis urges diplomatic solution to Ukraine war on anniversary of invasion

VATICAN CITY (Reuters): Pope Francis on Sunday called for a diplomatic solution to the war in Ukraine that would lead to a just and lasting peace, as the second anniversary of Russia's invasion was marked a day earlier.

"So many victims, wounded, destruction, anguish, and tears in a period that is becoming terribly long and whose end is not in sight. It is a war that not only devastates that region but also unleashes global waves of hate and fear", Pope Francis said during his weekly Angelus message. "I plead for that little bit of humanity to be found to create the conditions for a diplomatic solution in search of a just and lasting peace", he said.

Heads of the Group of Seven major democracies on Saturday pledged to stand by war-weary Ukraine, and Western leaders travelled to Kyiv to show solidarity on the second anniversary of Russia's invasion. Francis said he was also concerned about escalating violence in the east region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Last week, violent clashes escalated between the DRC's army and Rwandan-backed M23 Tutsi-led rebels in eastern Congo, killing scores and displacing hundreds of thousands. "I join the bishops in their call to pray for peace, hoping for an end to the clashes and a search for genuine and constructive dialogue", he said. Francis reiterated his prayers for Israel, for Palestinians and for "the many war-torn peoples".

Zelenskiy says 31,000 Ukrainian soldiers killed since Russia invaded

KYIV (Reuters): President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Sunday that 31,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed since Russia's full-scale invasion two years ago, giving the first official figure for more than a year.

Zelenskyy told a news conference in Kyiv that he could not disclose the number of wounded because it would help Russian military planning.

"31,000 Ukrainian troops have been killed in this war. Not 300,000, not 150,000 ... (Russian President Vladimir) Putin is lying there ... But nevertheless, this is a big loss for us."

Ukraine has not put a number to its military losses since the end of 2022, when presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak said 13,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been killed since the invasion on Feb. 24.

Battlefield casualties are a highly sensitive subject in a country trying to reform how it mobilises civilians into the army to regenerate its forces after last year's counteroffensive proved unable to break through Russian lines.

A New York Times report in August cited U.S. officials as putting the Ukrainian death toll at close to 70,000. The same report said as many as 120,000 Russian troops had died during the war.

Zelenskyy told reporters that 180,000 Russians had been killed in the fighting.

Russia does not disclose military losses, which it regards as secret.

Both sides regularly describe the other's military losses as vast.

The Ukrainian leader also said that tens of thousands of civilians had been killed in the occupied areas of the country during the war.

Kyiv says it cannot accurately assess the scale of such losses because it does not have access.



Early jacaranda bloom sparks debate about climate change in Mexico

MEXICO CITY (Reuters): Every spring, the streets of Mexico's capital are painted purple with the flowering of thousands of jacaranda trees. Their spectacular colors not only attract the eyes of residents and tourists, but also birds, bees and butterflies that find food and shelter in them.

But this year something changed.

Some jacarandas began blooming in early January, when they normally awaken in spring. The early onset bloom has set off alarm bells among residents and scientists in Mexico City, where the trees have become an iconic, photogenic mainstay of city streets. Local scientists have begun investigating how widespread the early-bloom phenomenon is, but they point to climate change as the first culprit. "We've always seen the jacaranda beginning to bloom towards the end of March, in spring, when we see the flowers change to violet," said Constantino Gonzalez, a researcher at the Institute of Atmospheric Sciences and Climate Change Research at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

"They are starting to flower in January, February, which is winter, when it is not yet their time," said the biologist of 48 years.

Gonzalez explained that in order to draw a correlation between climate change and the early flowering of jacarandas his team needs a representative sample and compare blooms year to year. To do this, he has started to lead a group of young people who are collecting data throughout the city and using satellite imagery.

He noted rising temperatures caused winter in the Mexican capital to end early this year, in mid-January, instead of late March when it is supposed to end. Enthrilled by the Japanese cherry trees that cover Washington, D.C. in pink and white every spring, Mexican President Pascual Ortiz (1930-1932) set out to replicate the same landscape in his nation's capital.

But Tatsugoro Matsumoto, a Japanese landscape architect who settled in Mexico in the late 19th century, told him they would not survive the city's temperate climate for long, so he advocated for jacarandas, a tropical tree he had learnt about during a brief stay in Peru. Since then, the tree has become a staple for Mexico City's nine million inhabitants.

In January alarm spread when users on social networks started to publish photos of flowering jacarandas and began to wonder about the effects of climate change.

"Like never before (...) people have started to say 'this is serious, it's real' and it's no longer just a polar bear floating adrift," said Cristina Ayala, biologist and doctor in Sustainability Sciences.

"It is very good that people are beginning to become aware of what climate change is going to bring to us as urbanites," she added.

Although they are not native to Mexico, for Ayala, jacarandas fulfill an important function for the city. They attract more hummingbirds and bees than many native trees, so a change in flowering could lead to a decrease in these populations.

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Pakistan needs harsh measures to defeat polio

A seven-day anti-polio campaign kicks start today across Sindh including mega cities of Karachi, and Hyderabad, along with far-flung desert regions in Thar Parker, Umar Kot, and Methi. According to the provincial task force on polio eradication, over 10.6 million children across the province would be immunized during the week-long drive.

The deadly poliovirus getting tougher and invincible to the resolve of the Pakistani nation as the collective efforts of successive Pakistani governments and their global partners including the UN, UNICEF, Bill and Melinda Foundation, the Rotary Club, and several other states and charitable organizations worldwide in their anti-polio endeavors over the past two and a half decades. Recently, the Type-1 Wild Poliovirus (WPV1) was detected in sewage samples collected from the Lasbela district. The genome sequencing of the virus, found in samples collected from Lasbela was matched with the poliovirus samples found in Hub and Gadap Karachi. The Health Ministry has confirmed the presence of poliovirus in environmental samples from nine districts of the country, which is of grave concern for the government as well as the public at this point. After the revelation of this shocking news, the government decided to launch a mass emergency polio vaccination campaign to deter the growing risk of polio infection in the province.

Pakistan's continuous failure to defeat the deadly epidemic has caused a challenging and embarrassing situation for the country as a vast anti-polio infrastructure, and multiple anti-polio campaigns at frequent intervals could not produce the desired results in the past decades. Pakistan invested bulk resources, implemented various strategies, and adopted multiple measures since the country joined the global polio eradication program in early 1994. Presently, Pakistan and its first-door neighbor Afghanistan are the two nations worldwide that failed to defeat the deadly polio virus and polio continues to threaten the health and well-being of children in their countries. Unfortunately, all traditional strategies, incentives, and motivations have proved to be futile, because poliovirus is still found in densely populated urban centers and rural areas in the 21st century when our neighboring states landed on the moon and Mars, Pakistan faced defeat on its decadeslong fight against the deadly virus. There is no other reason for Pakistan's failure except continued anti-state and anti-public propaganda and false conservativeness of parents that pose serious risks to the children's health and cause a grave setback to national interests.

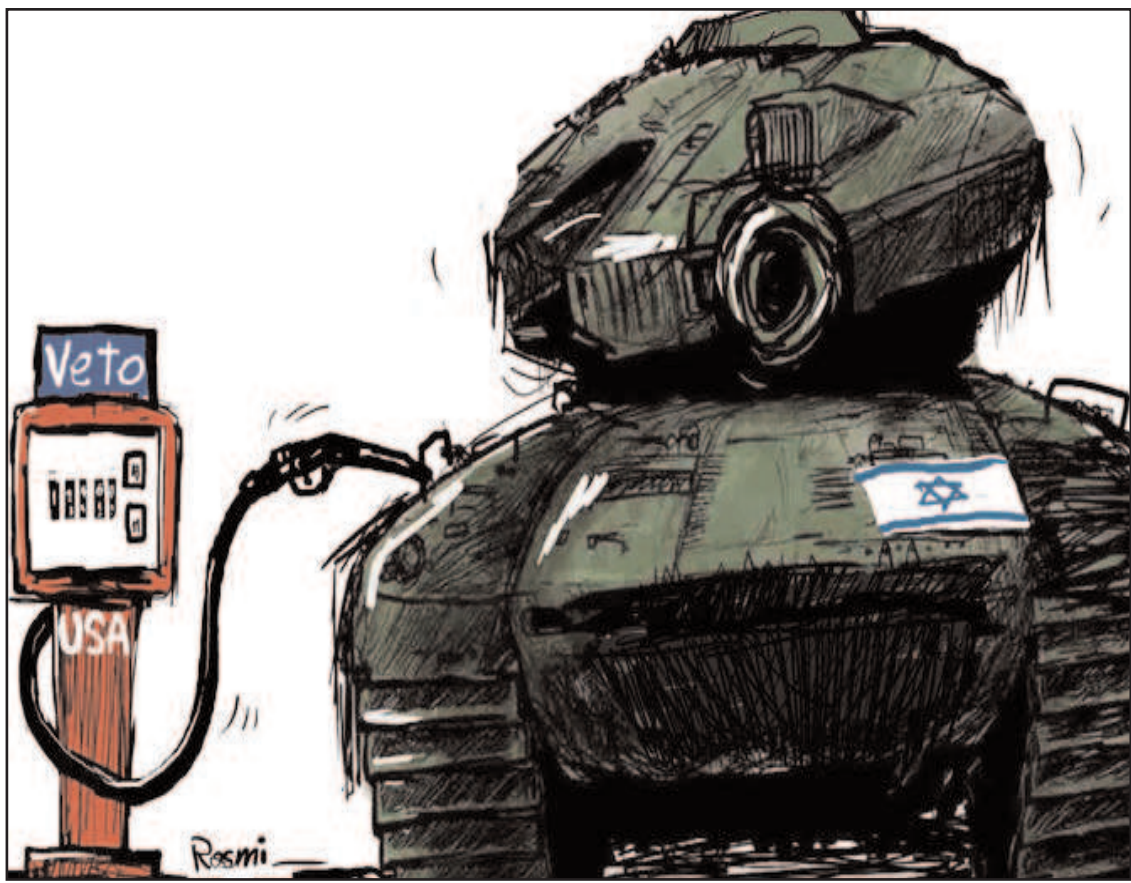
In fact, the Pakistani authorities displayed traditional slackness and unnecessary tolerance toward ongoing opposition and baseless propaganda against the polio vaccination from a particular segment of society in certain areas. Polio vaccination is a national cause not a discretionary decision of any individual or courtesy/ willingness of parents to immunize their kids from the dangerous disease. Rather, it is a binding national obligation of all citizens to get their children vaccinated so that neither their children are affected by the virus nor transmit deadly diseases to other infants in the country. Pakistani authorities have wasted much time in taking stern legal action against those who refused to cooperate with the polio teams hurting the core national interest. There is a dire need for harsh measures that have now become unavoidable to accomplish the national cause and secure future generations from polio infection. The lawmakers must pass urgent legislation reprimanding the parents resisting the polio administration of their children by introducing stern punishment such as blocking their national IDs or Bank Accounts, imposing fines, awarding imprisonment, or both. So the 100 percent vaccination of all children under 5 years of age could be ensured at all costs. Otherwise, the future of our coming generations is insecure and bleak.

The Outcome of Ukraine's War

Two years on, Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Despite the competing nations, the world has witnessed unimaginable effects on the global economy, the unbearable impact of global energy crises, and shortage of food grains. Whilst, harassment and persuasion of weak states by the United States and allies to join the Western camp had been a common challenge to the countries around the globe. The months-long war destroyed Ukraine's civil and military infrastructures along with turning thickly populated cities into unliveable skeletons of buildings with no essentials of life including electricity, kitchen heating, and water. According to statistics, more than 14 million people, nearly one-third of Ukraine's population have been forced to flee their homes since Russia announced its so-called special operation against Ukraine. The Russian Army brought widespread destruction and serious human rights violations against innocent civilians, destroying their lives and livelihoods, turning Ukrainian cities into debris, and cultivating farms into barren land, with no visible end in sight. Almost all competing powers have now exhausted their potential, with dwindling economies, frustrated leadership, and tired militaries. Ukraine which had been purely dependent on its Western allies has now completely succumbed to the ground. Kyiv's Western allies including the US and the European Union currently face domestic opposition in providing fuel to Ukraine's war through their hard-earned taxpayers' money. Russian economy faces massive pressure in the face of growing Western economic and trade sanctions, whilst the Russian military is highly exposed to internal division, defection, and mutiny. The world particularly, Russia and the Western bloc did not get any positive outcome of the years-long conflict, wherein, Ukraine became a scapegoat in the political tussle between the two blocs. Kyiv's sovereignty is on the stack, Russia is still insecure from NATO, and the North Atlantic alliance is shattered and polarized internally. After all, war is not a solution to any dispute. Military clashes have always conversely impacted human life in and around the conflict zones. Ukraine, Yemen, Libya, Syria, Palestine, Kashmir, Myanmar, and other conflict zones are living examples of the miseries that was brought to those regions around the globe. It is pertinent that major powers and their front states acknowledge this fact and resist fueling conflict in this universe. So, peace and tranquility prevail everywhere, human life comes to calm and affluence.

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Morocco's struggle with water scarcity and food security

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Morocco's agricultural sector faces a daunting conundrum that mirrors a broader crisis unfolding across the Global South. As the world grapples with the escalating effects of climate change, nations such as Morocco find themselves at a critical juncture as they attempt to find a balance between food production and dwindling water resources.

By examining the mounting challenges in Morocco, we have a lens through which to view similar impending difficulties that many countries in the Global South are likely to run into unless urgent global actions are taken to mitigate the effects of climate change and adhere to the Paris Agreement's warming targets.

The plight of Moroccan agriculture, exacerbated by prolonged droughts and climatic adversities, has far-reaching consequences that extend far beyond the country's rural landscapes to deeply affect its broader economy, and reveal vulnerabilities in the face of natural disasters such as the 2023 earthquake.

The critical role of agriculture in the Moroccan economy should not be underestimated. The sector employs about 40 percent of the nation's workforce and accounts for approximately 14 percent of its gross domestic product. However, a continued reliance on water-intensive practices, and the subsequent strain on water resources as a result of climatic shifts, have led to a precarious situation not only for farmers but for the entire economic fabric of the country.

Morocco's situation is not unique. Since the 1960s, global water withdrawals have more than doubled, with much of them attributed to agriculture. Climate change and the increased use of water for irrigation, in response to the need to boost food production, have caused the problem of water scarcity to become significantly worse, particularly in the arid regions of the world.

Meanwhile, reduced precipitation levels have caused more severe and frequent droughts, leading to yield shortfalls in basic staple crops and increases in food imports that leave many countries vulnerable to external shocks — as was seen when the war in Ukraine limited wheat imports, driving food inflation across North Africa.

The drought dilemma in Morocco, which is particularly pronounced in vital agricultural regions such as the Souss, has put a severe dent in the country's exports. With dams nearly emptied and irrigation halted, farmers face the grim reality of jeopardized investments and crop failures. This agricultural distress has a domino effect on the rest of the economy, disrupting supply chains and financial stability for businesses linked to the sector, as loan repayments and debt collection become more challenging.

Even as populations grow and demand for food skyrockets, the viability of any medium to long-term investments in agriculture is jeopardized, which will

further complicate the expensive but much-needed transition to water-efficient farming and crop diversification.

Moreover, the contraction of irrigable land from about 750,000 to 400,000 hectares is another troubling vector in the acute scarcity of resources confronting Moroccan agriculture. The economic ramifications of an agricultural downturn extend to other critical sectors, as Moroccan businesses are forced to grapple with navigating financial uncertainty and trying to adapt to a changing economic landscape still reeling from the 2023 earthquake.

The aftermath of that disaster added another layer

The aftermath of that disaster added another layer of challenges to an already strained agricultural sector. Damage to infrastructure, particularly roads and irrigation canals, has disrupted market access and water supplies. Rebuilding efforts are diverting resources from potential investments in agricultural resilience, such as the adoption of drought-resistant crops and improved irrigation technology. The devastation, particularly in the Marrakech-Safi region, which is a significant contributor to gross domestic product through tourism, poses an additional layer of economic vulnerability. The effect of the earthquake on agriculture and tourism, two pillars of the Moroccan economy, underlines the interconnections between natural disasters and climate-induced adversities. The estimated reduction in Morocco's GDP of up to 8 percent as a result of the quake alone highlights the severe economic toll of such natural disasters, and this is compounded by preexisting vulnerabilities such as water scarcity and agricultural dependency.

Disruptions to agricultural activities and the direct hit that tourism has taken underscore the urgent need for a resilient and diversified economic strategy.

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Disruptions to agricultural activities and the direct hit that tourism has taken underscore the urgent need for a resilient and diversified economic strategy.

The challenges in Morocco and the country's attempts to mitigate them are a microcosm of the

licts over dwindling resources. This dire scenario demands an even greater sense of urgency in addressing climate change and water management, not just as environmental or agricultural issues but as matters of global security and human survival.

However, the question remains: How can Morocco, and by extension other countries in similar predicaments, navigate these challenges?

The answer lies in a multifaceted approach that encompasses sustainable water management, investment in climate-resilient agricultural practices, and international cooperation.

Morocco must prioritize the efficient use of its water resources. This includes investment in modern irrigation techniques, such as drip irrigation, that can significantly reduce water usage while maintaining crop yields.

Additionally, a transition to drought-resistant crops and the adoption of agricultural practices that enhance soil-moisture retention can mitigate the effects of climate change. Morocco's experiments with argan trees, which are well-adapted to arid climates, offer a promising avenue for sustainable agriculture.

Post-earthquake efforts to rebuild in Morocco, or any region facing similar challenges, present a critical opportunity not only to restore but to significantly improve agricultural infrastructure. These efforts should aim to enhance resilience to future disasters and optimize water efficiency through the integration of the latest innovations.

The implementation of supportive policies for smallholders, including subsidies for modernization projects and improved access to credit, is pivotal to the efforts to shore up the agricultural sector.

Access to credit opens the door for farmers to make the necessary investments without the immediate financial burden they bring, while subsidies can lower the entry barrier to adopting innovative technologies that are crucial both for increasing productivity and ensuring sustainability.

But we cannot deny one immutable truth: global challenges require global solutions. International support, both in terms of funding and knowledge exchange, will be crucial to help Morocco and other nations in the Global South adapt to the changing climate. Initiatives such as the Green Climate Fund play a vital role in financing projects aimed at enhancing climate resilience.

Morocco's struggles with water scarcity and food security in the face of climate change are harbingers of the challenges that much of the Global South faces. This crisis necessitates a reevaluation of agricultural practices and concerted efforts to embrace sustainable, climate-resilient approaches.

Moreover, it highlights the urgent, critical need for global action to mitigate the effects of climate change, and underscores the interconnected nature of our world.

Munich conference confirmed where the world stands and it was not good news

Yossi Mekeberg

The annual Munich Security Conference, which took place last weekend, was dominated by strong undercurrents of uncertainty about the fragile state of global security.

Rising geopolitical tensions and mounting economic uncertainties mean the world is less safe than it has been in a long time. Moreover, the tragic news of the sudden death of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny in prison, on the very day this biggest annual global security conference commenced, was a stark reminder of the dark forces destabilizing our security, from the personal right up to the international level.

In this case the culprit is Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has for years been inflicting extreme aggression against neighboring countries and his own people alike. The inspiring spirit of Navalny, who fought so courageously for a better future for the Russian people, and of his wife, Yulia Navalnaya, who attended the conference when the terrible news of her husband's death started to filter through, made it all too clear that we are at the dawn, if not the midst, of what might develop into the most unpredictable and insecure era in recent history. If anyone needed a reminder that the post-Cold War world order, with its obvious dividends of win-win international politics, is well and truly over, it was expressed loudly and clearly throughout the conference.

Assessing the success or failure of the 2024 event has more to do with whether or not our expectations about the tangible outcomes that could be achieved over one weekend are realistic or not.

Beyond a record attendance by the main stakeholders in the world of security — including about 50 heads of state and government and more than 100 ministers, in addition to hundreds of representatives of think tanks, nongovernmental organizations, and leading businesses — it is the free flow of views on the complex security challenges the world is facing, and precisely identifying the participants' priorities, that ensure such a gathering is invaluable.

For a start, the conference's annual report acknowledged that the world stands at a perilous moment in which states increasingly define their successes in terms relative to those of others, and in which lose-lose dynamics “are already unfolding in many policy fields and engulfing various regions.”

This, unfortunately, has superseded the more hopeful days when fighting over limited resources was replaced by cooperation over increasing the availability of such resources for everyone's benefit. Additionally, the vision of a world order that is rules-based, through adherence to the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, characterized by a commonality of values, interests, and the peaceful resolution of disputes to prevent war and conflict, now seems rather far-fetched.

Over the years a number of catastrophic developments have shattered the trust between many international actors, and increased the fears and suspicions that have created a more pessimistic environment of uncollaborative and frictional world affairs.

A survey conducted by the conference's researchers revealed that more people in major economies now expect their countries to become less secure and less wealthy, than think the opposite. And who can blame them? First, we were hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caught societies unprepared and exposed many governments as being less than capable of responding to a crisis of this scale.

This was followed by the naked aggression of Russia in its invasion of Ukraine, which led to damaging increases in the cost of living and raised fears about Putin's possible intentions to expand into other former

Soviet states.

More recently, the war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza has cost many thousands of civilians their lives as a result of their failed governments and an international community that has proved to be useless in preventing such wars from happening in the first place, or stopping them from dragging on with devastating consequences.

While conflicts such as those in Ukraine and Gaza attract the most attention because of their ferocity, others fester elsewhere. Fears of a similar escalation of violence in the Indo-Pacific — where the West is deeply suspicious of China's quest for hegemony through increasing militarization in the region, accompanied by economic and diplomatic policies in an effort to lure East Asia into its exclusive sphere of influence — are a major cause for concern. So is the political instability in the Sahel region, where the spread of religious extremism is threatening to reverse efforts to advance social-political developments and reduce the capacity to combat terrorism and manage migration.

All of this is hardly an environment conducive to optimism about a more stable and predictable world.

But the Munich Security Conference did not only address the more traditional security threats, such as countries jockeying for hegemony, competing for resources or aggressively expanding their borders. It also highlighted examples of the threats arising from climate change, the development of artificial intelligence, and the growing sense of malaise in societies, for a variety of reasons, that threatens their stability and thereby makes conflicts between neighbors more likely.

Furthermore, while not officially on the agenda, the possibility of a second Trump presidency lent a further degree of trepidation to the discussions. His outburst only a week earlier that he would encourage Russia to do “whatever the hell they want” to any NATO member country that fails to meet the alliance's defense spending guidelines, which to all intents and purposes represented an abandonment of the core NATO commitment to collective defense, was perceived by other members of the alliance as an outburst based on sheer ignorance and madness.

As a matter of fact, the recognition among many NATO members that they will have to increase their defense spending to meet the target of 2 percent of their gross domestic product, a benchmark set long before Trump decided to make it his hill to die on regarding US relations with the alliance, is already becoming a reality and this has more to do with the behavior of Putin than Trump. Eighteen of the 31 members of NATO have already hit the target.

The very idea that the volatile Trump, known for his bullying tactics toward fellow member states, might occupy the White House in January next year instills real fear among America's NATO allies. After all, Trump is not one to follow the Munich rule of “engage and interact with each other; don't lecture or ignore one another.”

If there was a clear message from the delegates in Munich, it was about the magnitude of the challenges the world is facing, the sources of such threats to stability, and what should be the guiding principles to at least attempt to mitigate them. The world is facing a new “Zeitenwende,” or turning point, of greater military competition and, with it, increased military expenditure, which places an additional burden on already strained economies.

It is up to like-minded countries that prefer collaboration and cooperation to conflict and friction to translate this into operational and implementable strategies where they have failed so far.

What does the future hold for gas delivery deal between Russia, Europe and Ukraine?

At the end of this year, an agreement that allows Russia to sell gas to Europe and deliver it via Ukraine will expire, since it was signed in 2019 for a term of five years.

There has been a great deal of political speculation about whether, given the war between Russia and Ukraine, such a critical economic and political accord will be renewed or not. It would certainly be to the advantage of the three parties to the deal to renew it because each stands to gain from it economically, politically, and strategically.

In essence, this gas agreement is Russia's only economic pact with Europe, now and for the near future. Ukraine has rejected any prospect of extending the agreement. Russia has confirmed several times that no negotiations are taking place to renew the deal. This precarious situation raises questions about a final economic boycott of Russian gas and oil by Europe.

Currently, and despite the sanctions imposed on Moscow as a result of the war in Ukraine, Russia still exports about 14 billion cubic meters of gas to Europe each year. One delivery mechanism for this is the TurkStream pipeline, which extends through its Balkan Stream pipeline under the waters of the Black Sea and delivers gas from Turkey to Bulgaria, Serbia, and Hungary. A second pipeline runs through Ukraine to Slovakia.

The biggest European countries that are still buying Russian gas are Slovakia, Hungary, Austria, and Italy. The price of Russian gas is slightly lower than supplies from other countries, so they have continued to buy it to

save on energy spending. However, all of these countries have signed up to the REPowerEU plan, an agreement that aims to end Europe's heavy reliance on Russian gas by 2027.

Russia will lose a great deal of revenue if its deliveries of gas via Ukraine are cut off. Such deliveries are managed by Gazprom, the Russian government's state-owned gas and oil

Maria Maalouf

transporting gas through Ukraine are significant. For example, one of the benefits to Russia is that European companies pay for the gas they receive through Gazprombank, a Russian financial institution that remains immune from Western sanctions.

On the other hand, Russian pipelines cross the

blocking the flow of Russian gas through their territory because Moscow might retaliate by escalating its war in the country as punishment for Ukraine taking action that hurts the Russian economy.

Russia could also increase the pressure on the West by attempting to broker agreements among the OPEC+ group of oil-producing nations that are

lower than that of European gas. Therefore, Kyiv will have a financial decision to make.

Ukraine might even be forced to buy Russian gas itself, if the political circumstances force it to do so. There are no European or US plans to explore for oil in Ukraine. Even if they do and find oil and gas quickly in the country, it would take a long time for them to be marketable. Most of the oil refineries and gas depots in Ukraine have been destroyed by Russia during the war.

US President Joe Biden has not commented on this matter. Robert Fico, the prime minister of Slovakia, has suggested that European oil and gas companies, and not Ukraine, could sign their own gas deals with Gazprom. Ukraine's role in this case would be as a mere conduit, allowing gas to flow through its territory en route to its final destinations in a few European countries. Therefore, any potential gas agreement of this nature would be between Europe and Russia, not between Russia and Ukraine.

Another option is that Europe might try to buy gas from Russia, delivered via Ukraine, but in smaller quantities.

Ukraine will lose \$800 million in transmission payments if the gas deal is not renewed. Meanwhile, there might still be demand in Europe for Russian oil. European nations are not united on how best to deal with Moscow.

Perhaps a small country, such as Slovakia, could be successful in ensuring good economic relations between Russia, Ukraine, and Europe by continuing the supply of gas from Russia to Europe despite the war.

Two years after Ukraine war, pessimism grows among Europeans

Andrew Hammond

Two years on from Russia's invasion in February 2022, European public opinion has generally remained solidly behind Ukraine. However, a recent key report found only 10 percent of Europeans still believe Kyiv can "win" its battle against Moscow.

The study, by the European Council on Foreign Relations, makes the astute observation that Russian President Vladimir Putin is hoping war fatigue in Europe, and the wider West, will clear the way for his victory in Ukraine. The research draws on the results of a poll carried out in January this year in 12 European countries: Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and Sweden.

The headline finding was that Europeans are not only increasingly pessimistic about Ukraine's chances of winning the war but most believe it will end in a negotiated settlement, rather than Kyiv fully achieving its aims. Indeed, twice as many Europeans now believe Russia will "win" the conflict, compared with those who think Ukraine will emerge victorious.

The level of confidence in Ukraine's chances of victory is lowest in nations such as Hungary, which in Prime Minister Victor Orban has Europe's most pro-Moscow leader, and Greece. More than 30 percent of the population in both these nations believe a Russian victory is more likely. In all of the nations surveyed, only in two, Poland and Portugal, did people believe a Ukrainian victory was more likely than a Russian one.

A plurality of people in Europe, 37 percent on average, think the war will most likely end in a negotiated settlement of some kind. However, there is not (yet) any widespread shift toward outright appeasement of Putin. Indeed, public opinion in three of the countries surveyed — Poland, Portugal, and Sweden — still favors support for Ukraine's efforts to take back all of its territory.

Against this public opinion backdrop, 2024 will be a very difficult year for Europe if the war continues. With no obvious end to the conflict in clear sight, the resolve of the West is likely to be tested further. For now, European political leaders still stand shoulder-to-shoulder, more or less, behind Ukraine. For example, new sanctions against Russia were recently agreed by the EU and its other European partners, including the UK.

Certainly, Hungary has been outspoken regarding its concerns about European actions against Russia. But as long as US support for Ukraine remains intact, which is itself a source of growing uncertainty as November's presidential and congressional elections draw closer, internal European divisions might not come to the boil anytime soon.

This does not mean that behind the public statements of unified European support for Ukraine there

are not significant divisions. These schisms were highlighted last year in a previous European Council on Foreign Relations poll, which found that while Europeans felt great solidarity with Ukraine, they were less united in their thoughts about the longer-term goals.

The core differences at that time were between a "Peace" camp, amounting to about one-third of those polled, that wanted the war to end as quickly as possible, and a "Justice" camp, about a quarter of those polled, who believed the more pressing goal was to punish Russia.

In all larger EU member states, apart from Poland, there were more proponents of peace than justice. This might still be true today and the fact that Poland was an outlier might partially explain why Poles have higher-than-average confidence among Europeans that Ukraine will ultimately

potentially expanding, gap between the stated positions of some European governments and the public mood in those countries, including Italy. A great divide is looming between those who want to end the war as quickly as possible, and those who want to carry on fighting until Russia has been defeated, if indeed that is possible.

These European fissures over Ukraine have been camouflaged quite successfully so far. However, this might become tougher this year if the war continues apace and the economic pain caused by the crisis bites even harder.

One way that European leaders can help navigate this potential pitfall, according to the latest European Council on Foreign Relations study, is by making a more persuasive case for maintaining support for Ukraine. This will require some adjustment of political vocabulary, two years into the war, to help define what would constitute a realistic

The preference for peace last year was strongest in Italy, and is now growing in other nations such as Austria, Greece, Hungary, and Romania. People in these places are worried, increasingly, about the cost of sanctions and/or the threat of military escalation. Given these public opinion dynamics, the resilience of European democracies will, to a significant degree, depend on the capacity of governments to sustain public support for policies on Ukraine that might cause more economic pain to much of the populace. This at a time when much of the European economy is either on the verge of recession or experiencing low growth. The challenge is significant here because previous European Council on Foreign Relations surveys revealed a sizable, and potentially expanding, gap between the stated positions of some European governments and the public mood in those countries, including Italy.

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"durable peace."

To be clear about this, some Europeans view any form of a settlement as peace. Others perceive the only meaningful peace to be one in which Ukraine's pre-2022, or even pre-2014, borders are reinstated.

The challenge, therefore, lies in building a stronger European, and wider Western, consensus around what being in favor of "peace" actually means, in practice.

As Europe and the US move deeper into what will be a big election year for both, political leaders would benefit from finding a vocabulary that lands better with public opinion in their efforts to maintain popular support for Ukraine.

In this sense, the best way to limit war fatigue would be to build and own the idea of what a successful, sustainable peace deal actually looks like.

If the US wants peace it must back up its words with teeth

The third US veto of UN Security Council resolutions calling for a ceasefire was not received well in the Middle East, although most lost hope in Washington long ago.

America says it wants more time to find a solution to the hostage issue that would usher in a six-week pause in hostilities, but not a full ceasefire. Even on that score, there is no guarantee that the Israelis — especially the four times criminally indicted prime minister, who continuously ignores what the US says — would be willing to listen. Benjamin Netanyahu has said that he knows how to deal with the US, and he has been proved right. He knows very well when Joe Biden is serious, and he still doesn't believe the White House genuinely wants him to stop his war on Palestinians, especially in Gaza.

As a result, the world is dealing with ever-moving goalposts when it comes to when this carnage will stop. Many thought that by the end of 2023, or after the first US presidential pri-

maries, the war would end. But the goalposts continue to move, based on what Netanyahu wants rather than what Washington says.

Now the latest US target appears to be the beginning of Ramadan, expected on March 10 or 11.

In Palestine, the most special place to be during the holy month is Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, the third-holiest place in Islam and a magnet for Palestinian Muslims and any other Muslim allowed in by the Israelis.

In previous years, the Israeli army — expecting vast numbers of people piling up at checkpoints and trying to push their way into the Old City — has generally avoided clashing with observing Muslims. Military checkpoints abandon the usually tight travel restrictions and time-consuming individual checks, and have generally allowed any worshipper wishing to reach Jerusalem to do so, especially on Fridays.

The last ten days of the holy month are the most revered, and the 27th day of Ramadan is the pinna-

Daoud Kuttab

cle. It is called Laylat Al-Qadr, or the Night of Destiny, when Muslims believe the Qur'an was first sent down from heaven and when its first verses were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

Normally, Friday noon prayers are attended by between 250,000 and 500,000 worshippers. On the last 10 days of Ramadan, many of the faithful stay overnight on the 36-acre site, a sixth of the size of the entire Old City of Jerusalem.

But things are different this year: the far-right extremist Israeli government appears to be set on ruining the holy month for Muslims, regardless of the backlash this will cause.

After the Oct. 7 Hamas attack, Israel canceled all travel permits for West Bank Palestinians. The security minister, Itamar Ben Gvir — a notorious bigot who has been charged with hate speech against Arabs and has a criminal conviction for supporting terrorism — is now demanding that the ban on

Palestinians from the occupied West Bank entering Jerusalem be not just upheld, but enforced on Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The Israeli Cabinet appears to be backing Ben Gvir's outright discrimination: but as usual, Netanyahu, not known for his truthfulness, has said that discussions continue about ways to ensure the right to pray for Muslim citizens of Israel. Some Palestinian Muslim leaders who are Israeli citizens are threatening to challenge the restrictions in the High Court.

While the discussion in the Israeli media is focused on Israel's Muslim citizens, no one is even talking about the right to worship of Palestinians who live in the occupied territories, even residents of Jerusalem itself. Ben Gvir has even banned the traditional celebrations and colorful lights that are a regular feature of Ramadan at night in Jerusalem. Worshipers who fast all day go out at night as part of the cultural and social life that comes alive during evening hours, when a wide assortment of cultural and

artistic events take place, especially in the Old City.

Jordan, whose Hashemite royal family have been custodians of Al-Aqsa Mosque for generations, has made no public statements but has sent strong messages using different channels. According to some Israeli reports, Jordan has made it clear that there may be widespread regional unrest if there are any tensions in Al-Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan.

The Jerusalem Waqf Council is due to meet next week to respond to the Israeli decision, but regardless of what Jordan or the council say and do, the Palestinian people throughout the occupied territories and beyond will no doubt respond with strong opposition to any attempt to control their right to worship in Al-Aqsa. The pressure is on the US and Israel to find a solution quickly, because the clock is ticking inexorably toward yet another deadline created by the Americans — who are still unwilling to put any teeth behind their own words.

Epic Saudi struggle for unity remembered on Founding Day

Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

This week, Saudis are celebrating the 297th anniversary of the founding of Saudi Arabia. In 1727, Imam Mohammed bin Saud, a forefather of the Saudi royal family, became ruler of Diriyah, then an obscure small agricultural hamlet in Wadi Hanifah, the 120-km valley along which many towns similar to Diriyah are located.

Imam Saud died in 1765 and was followed by his son, Abdulaziz. During their rule, they unified most of the Arabian Peninsula for the first time in its history. By the time of Abdelaziz's assassination by a foreign agent in 1803, the Emirate of Diriyah's control had swelled to some 80 percent of the peninsula, or more than 2 million sq. km. Saudi Arabia's borders have stayed nearly the same since then, despite brief interruptions.

Unifying Arabia was unprecedented, given its fragmented political and tribal structure and vast ter-

ritory. In the early 18th century, there were hundreds of autonomous towns, villages and cities throughout Arabia with no central authority to keep the peace between them. Within just an 80-km radius from Diriyah, there were about a dozen principalities that were constantly fighting with each other. At times, towns were changing hands in a matter of years. In the desert between these independent towns, nomadic tribes held sway, exacting tributes from passing caravans and raiding villages when they needed to. They also served as soldiers for hire for rival town chiefs hoping to subdue their neighbors.

The great 19th century historian Othman bin Bishr chronicled the events around the time the new state was established: In 1721, marauding tribes from the east besieged and pillaged Diriyah and nearby towns. He commented on the devastation caused by

the artillery employed by the raiders, apparently previously unknown in tribal wars in that area.

Apart from tribal raids and constant clashes between neighboring towns, Bin Bishr reported deteriorating economic conditions, as trade was frequently disrupted by wars and agriculture was affected by recurring droughts. In 1716, there was a famine in towns near Diriyah. In 1724 and 1725, he reported a severe drought that led to famine in the same area. In 1726, an epidemic killed most of the inhabitants of a town about 30 km north.

These were the conditions when Imam Saud started his reign in 1727. He became determined to end this chaos and began building alliances, appealing to the leaders of nearby towns first and then moving in all directions. In 1744, he enlisted the help of a religious reformer, Sheikh Mohammed ibn Abdul Wahab, and gradually con-

solidated the fragmented armies of towns and villages, together with tribal warriors, into a powerful force that safeguarded the newly founded union.

Bin Bishr reports the transformation of security brought about by the new state. Pilgrims, trade caravans and other travelers felt safe over long distances, even when laden with gold and treasures, and without paying tribute or in fear of highway bandits, a remarkable contrast with previous times.

The new state's successes encouraged other principalities to join or enter into alliances with it. These included regions previously under nominal Ottoman control, such as the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah and the eastern provinces.

Spanish explorer and spy Domingo Francisco Jorge Badia y Leblich witnessed the ceremonies when

Makkah joined the new state in 1805 and wrote an account of that monumental event. As control of the holy cities was instrumental in the Ottomans' bona fides as the paramount Muslim power of the time, they became determined to fight the Saudi state. They had tried to snuff it out earlier, through Ottoman forces based in Baghdad and allied tribes in Iraq, but their repeated campaigns in the late 18th century failed to make a dent in the Saudi state's power.

However, after Makkah formally joined the new state, Constantinople dispatched three large and organized campaigns. The first two expeditions (1811-1814) failed, despite the skewed balance of power in their favor. The third campaign lasted two years (1816-18) and succeeded in reaching Diriyah, laying siege to it for six months and finally

destroying the town and ending the Saudi state 91 years after it was proclaimed in 1727. The three campaigns were marked by extreme brutality and destruction, leaving an indelible stain in the Saudi collective memory, with people recounting the bloody battles their ancestors fought in those wars. The destruction is still visible in the ruins of Diriyah.

But the defeat of 1818 did not end the Saudis' ambition to unify Arabia. Having tasted, for the first time in history, the fruits of unity and integration under the First Saudi State, they were determined to try again. They regrouped in 1824, when Imam Turki bin Abdullah established himself in Riyadh, the new capital, ending the short-lived foreign control of the city. The Second Saudi State was beset by internal feuds, allowing Turkish vassals to end its rule again in 1891, sending the

last ruler, Imam Abdul Rahman, King Salman's grandfather, into exile.

However, 11 years later, his son Abdulaziz was able to establish Saudi rule for a third time. He reconquered the capital Riyadh in 1902 and, over the following three decades, was able to reunify Arabia once more. In 1932, Abdulaziz, King Salman's father, was proclaimed king of Saudi Arabia.

The Ottomans were not the only threat to Saudi rule. Britain became concerned with the growing influence of the First Saudi State in the 18th century, as the Emirate of Diriyah extended its borders to the Gulf and established close ties and alliances with local rulers. Britain took full advantage of the Ottoman-Saudi wars and systematically weakened Saudi influence in the Gulf, at times using extreme force. The fall of Diriyah helped Britain entrench its hegemony in

the Gulf.

Saudi-British rivalry continued for another 100 years, managed through a series of limited agreements along the way that were meant to keep Saudi influence in check. In 1927, the Treaty of Jeddah finally placed Saudi relations with Britain on a permanent footing, as London fully acknowledged Saudi independence.

Besides being the custodian of Islam's holy places, Saudi Arabia is today a leader of the Muslim and Arab worlds. It is a political and economic powerhouse, among the top 20 world powers. For the first time in its history, the land is safe, secure and prosperous. Its unification provides an important lesson on the fruits of unity and integration. This achievement owes a lot to the ambitious and strategic vision of the wise leaders of the small town of Diriyah nearly 300 years ago.



PIAF wants effective policy for economic uplift

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Industrial & Traders Associations Front (PIAF) Chairman Fahimur Rahman Saigol has said that educated and skilled people can play a better role in national and economic development, calling for formulating an effective policy for the promotion of demand-driven technical education, as the present setup of technical training is not addressing the requirements of modern industrialization.

These views were expressed by the PIAF Chairman, who attended the annual meeting of Defense Welfare Society as a special guest and addressed the audience.

He appreciated the work and passion of the organizers of Defense Welfare Society who are providing technical education to students in this era of inflation, which is valuable and praiseworthy.

The PIAF Chairman observed that promotion of technical education is vital

and much-needed for economic growth. He said that the collaboration between the industry and academia will ultimately bridge the skill gap, leading to a quantum jump in the country's exports.

Fahimur Rahman said that the young generation should pay full attention to their studies because they have to take care of the country's future.

The speakers on this occasion said that the aggressive economic measures, high borrowing rates, inflation, oppressive taxation and unstable currency have been negatively affecting the trade and industry.

PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol observed that the ever-increasing cost of production in the country is the real threat to both large-scale manufacturing and small-scale businesses, as frequent upward revisions in policy rate and continuous fluctuations in rupee against dollar are posing further challenges.

They 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.

According to the data, the pace of growth in LSM industries is suffering because of restrictions imposed on imports that have caused a shortage of imported raw material. The steep currency devaluation has also made raw material expensive and business models unviable.

Faheem Saigol said that the LSM trend indicates that this year that the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate may remain around 1% due to the shutdown of industries and adverse impact of the devastating floods on the agriculture sector.

The government had targeted economic growth of 3% in the current fiscal year but the latest estimates – both by the IMF and the federal government – indicate that growth will be marginally in the positive

territory.

Since large industries contribute heavily to revenue collection and job creation, any change in their growth impacts the government and business sentiment across the board.

The LSM sector contributes nearly one-tenth to total national output, however, a constant decline in the share and growth of LSM may cause a lot of problems for the government already struggling to create new jobs.

On this occasion, Fahimur Rahman Sehgal congratulated the newly elected President of Defense Welfare Society, Hakeem Mohammad Usman and Vice President Abrar Ahmed. He also appreciated the work of the children of the welfare society and distributed prizes among them. EC members PIAF and Lahore Chamber Hakeem Muhammad Usman, Malik Muhammad Nadeem, Sheikh Muhammad Ashfaq, Abrar Ahmed and other members were also present in the ceremony.



MULTAN: Laborers unloading onions from delivery truck at vegetable market.

USC slashes price of various items

ISLAMABAD (INP): Utility Stores Corporation (USC) has announced another relief for the masses before the Ramadan package.

According to details, Utility Stores Corporation has reduced the prices of various items under the Ramadan package. Prices of various brands of ghee, cooking oil, tea, soap, and washing powder have been reduced.

The prices of ghee and cooking oil have been reduced by Rs4 to Rs100 per kilogram. The prices of branded tea have also been reduced by up to Rs100.

It should be noted that Utility Stores Corporation is starting the Ramadan relief package from next month, and further reductions in the prices of items will be made under the Ramadan package.

Under the Ramadan package, Utility Stores will provide relief on 19 essential items.

According to sources, a package of more than Rs7.49 billion will be given under the Ramadan package, and the package is recommended to be implemented from March 4th.

The cabinet meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Kakar, ratified decisions taken in the ECC meeting.

Traders reject price hike

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: President of Traders Association Khyber Pakhtukhwa, Mujibur Rahman, who rejected the increase in gas and electricity rates, said that government should stop the economic killing of businessmen and people.

The meeting of Traders Association KP was chaired by President Mujibur Rahman, in which the heads of various markets, Aftab Ahmed Nisar, Khalil Naseeruddin Hashemi, Aziz Khan, Zafar Minhas, Waheed Han, Ibrahim Ahmed Ayaz Han,

Humayun Han, Khalil Haji Fazal Karim, Sheikh Aslam Jafar Han, Ehsanullah Hayat and Naveed werer also in attendance.

After the meeting, traders jointly rejected the increase in gas and electricity prices by the government, saying that there is inflation in the country since the first time, and the increase in gas and electricity rates is causing inflation.

They stated that this increase will further multiply the miseries of business community and the people and this will increase unemployment, so the rate

increase should be withdrawn immediately and the business community and the people should not be forced to protest because the business community and the people are already worried. Yes, because of unemployment, inflation and other problems, they are suffering and their patience is exhausted.

Traders added the situation in the rest of the country is getting worse day by day. There is no good hope from the new government. There is no good thing to do for the country and the nation.

Women chamber to host industrial exhibition

SIALKOT (INP): The Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Sialkot is gearing up to host an industrial exhibition on March 2 and 3, as announced by President Dr. Maryam Nauman. Supported by the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry, including President Abdul Ghafoor Malik, the exhibition aims to promote

and encourage new women entrepreneurs by offering subsidized stalls.

The exhibition will showcase a wide range of quality products from Women Chamber members, including cutlery, handicrafts, shoes, leather goods, jewellery, furniture, embroideries, gym wear, and sports wear. Notably, stalls have been booked by young entrepreneurs from various cities such as Faisalabad, Karachi,

Lahore, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Gujarat, and Multan.

Dubbed as V.Exhibit 2024, the exhibition promises to highlight women empowerment and entrepreneurship through a diverse array of quality products. With opportunities for business advancement through affordable stall rates, the event is set to provide a platform for women to thrive in the business world.

Approval of 80 km 1st phase of Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project hailed

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Businessmen Panel of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Mian Anjum Nisar has appreciated the Cabinet Committee's approval of work on 80-kilometer first phase of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project within its borders after a long delay and hoped that it would proceed expeditiously, as the project was bound to bring an industrial revolution in Pakistan.

In a statement issued on Sunday, he said the businessmen had already been pressing the government hard for procuring the required energy resource from whatever source suits to it to relieve the country of the mounting shortage of gas.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project began in 2013, and several deadlines have already been missed due to long-standing US sanctions against Tehran.

According to reports, Pakistan was trying to negotiate with Tehran to avoid a whopping \$20 billion in liabilities as the long-stalled project's deadline approaches this year. Last year, government also approached Washington, requesting a solution to the lingering imbroglio, but received no response.

The business leader said that we were convinced that Iranian source was the most feasible, financially as well as from the point of view of proximity.

He observed the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline would serve Pakistan's national interests and go a long way in mitigating the energy issues, asserting that an early completion of this mega project of national importance would be a great favour to the business community as its very survival was at stake at the moment. The availability of gas would also help government achieve economic targets.

It was to be noted that in

a landmark development, the Cabinet Committee on Energy has approved the initiation of work on the 80-km segment (Iranian border to Gwadar) of the Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline project, and deferred the filing of application for waiver of US sanction on the project due to geo-political situation.

A summary of Petroleum Division regarding IP Gas Pipeline was presented to the Cabinet Committee on Energy in its meeting, giving its nod to the recommendations of the Ministerial Oversight Committee (MOC) for the IP Project.

The committee recommended to start work on the 80 km segment of the pipeline inside Pakistan i.e. from Pakistan border up till Gwadar in the first phase. The project will be executed by Inter State Gas Systems (Pvt) Ltd and will be funded through Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (GIDC). All the concerned divisions gave a

positive nod to move ahead with the project to ensure gas supplies to the people of Pakistan, thereby addressing the increasing energy needs of the country.

Pakistan has decided to kick-off construction work on 80 kilometre portion of Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project- from Iranian border to Gwadar- to escape a potential penalty of \$18 billion, in case Tehran decided to move to the Paris-based International Arbitration for non-execution of the project. Initially, it has been decided that in first phase of IP project work on 80-km portion from Pak-Iran border to Gwader will be started.

The estimated cost of the 80-km Pak-Iran border to Gwadar portion of the project will be \$158 million and it has been decided to fund it through Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (GIDC). During the PDM coalition government, the then Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had consti-

tuted a committee to recommend a way forward regarding the IP project keeping in view its economic viability, financing, etc on January 31, 2023.

However, the committee was replaced by the interim government with Ministerial Oversight Committee (MOC) on September 11, 2023. The MOC endorsed the decision of the previous committee and got the waiver application prepared by foreign legal counsel.

Moreover, MOC also obtained the legal opinions from foreign legal counsel, M/s Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP.

With regards to US sanctions on Iran, M/s Willkie Farr opined that if Pakistan proceeds with the project, there is a likelihood of imposition of sanctions on the company. Regarding the Force Majeure and Excusing Event notice, M/s Willkie Farr opined that Pakistan does not have a strong case post September 2019 under the French law as no documentary evi-

dence is available to support that concrete steps have been taken by Pakistan to implement the project.

The MOC, after due consideration to the discourses held with Iran during the past one year has recommended that though the final draft of the waiver application is ready, its filing with US authorities is deferred due to current geopolitical situation.

He said that in May 2009 agreement for the project was signed, for supply of gas of 750 MMCFD for 25 years from South Pars gas field of Iran and delivery at Pak-Iran border.

Under the project 1,931-km line will be laid for transportation of Iranian gas to Pakistan, including 1,150-km long pipeline within Iran and 781-km within Pakistan.

According to the deal, Iran will initially transfer 30 million cubic meters of gas per day to Pakistan, but will eventually increase the transfer to 60 million cubic meters per day.

PFC board for industry status to furniture sector

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Furniture Council's Board of Directors (PFC-BoD) has demanded the government to grant furniture sector the status of an industry in order to increase country's overall exports.

Chairing the board meeting here Sunday, PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq said the furniture sector in Pakistan was a vital component of its economy, employing millions and showcasing the craftsmanship and skill of its people. However, it had long been overlooked and undervalued, he said, adding that granting industry status to the furniture sector was crucial for several reasons as it provide access to various incentives, subsidies, and support mechanisms tailored for industrial sectors, thus fostering growth and inno-

vation within the furniture industry.

He said, it would enhance the sector's credibility and attract much-needed investment, both domestic and foreign, leading to modernization and expansion.

"It will facilitate easier access to finance and credit facilities, enabling furniture manufacturers to upgrade technology and improve productivity," he added.

Mian Kashif Ashfaq said that industry status would bolster exports by enhancing competitiveness in the global market.

With proper recognition and support, he remarked, Pakistani furniture can establish itself as a sought-after commodity worldwide, contributing significantly to the country's export revenue and economic prosperity, he added.

BMP wants speedy work on long-awaited Pak-Iran gas line

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has welcomed the Cabinet Committee's approval of work on 80-kilometer first phase of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project within its borders after a long delay and hoped that it would proceed expeditiously, as the project is bound to bring an industrial revolution in Pakistan.

Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman and FPCCI former president Mian Anjum Nisar said the businessmen had already been pressing the government hard for procuring the required energy resource from whatever source suits

to it to relieve the country of the mounting shortage of gas.

The Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project began in 2013, and several deadlines have already been missed due to long-standing US sanctions against Tehran. According to reports, Pakistan was trying to negotiate with Tehran to avoid a whopping \$20 billion in liabilities as the long-stalled project's deadline approaches this year. Last year, government also approached Washington, requesting a solution to the lingering imbroglio, but received no response.

We are convinced that Iranian source was the most feasible, financially as well as from the point of view of proximity. He observed the

Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline would serve Pakistan's national interests and go a long way in mitigating the energy issues, asserting that an early completion of this mega project of national importance would be a great favour to the business community as its very survival was at stake at the moment. The availability of gas would also help government achieve economic targets.

It is to be noted that in a landmark development, the Cabinet Committee on Energy has approved the initiation of work on the 80-km segment (Iranian border to Gwadar) of the Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline project, and deferred the filing of application for waiver of US sanction on the

project due to geo-political situation.

A summary of Petroleum Division regarding IP Gas Pipeline was presented to the Cabinet Committee on Energy in its meeting, giving its nod to the recommendations of the Ministerial Oversight Committee (MOC) for the IP Project.

The committee recommended to start work on the 80-km segment of the pipeline inside Pakistan i.e. from Pakistan border up till Gwadar in the first phase. The project will be executed by Inter State Gas Systems (Pvt) Ltd and will be funded through Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (GIDC). All the concerned divisions gave a

positive nod to move ahead with the project to ensure gas supplies to the people of Pakistan, thereby addressing the increasing energy needs of the country. Pakistan has decided to kick-off construction work on 80 kilometre portion of Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project- from Iranian border to Gwadar- to escape a potential penalty of \$18 billion, in case Tehran decided to move to the Paris-based International Arbitration for non-execution of the project. Initially, it has been decided that in first phase of IP project work on 80-km portion from Pak-Iran border to Gwader will be started.

The estimated cost of the 80-km Pak-Iran border to Gwadar portion of the project will be \$158 million and it has been decided to fund

it through Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (GIDC). During the PDM coalition government, the then Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had constituted a committee to recommend a way forward regarding the IP project keeping in view its economic viability, financing, etc on January 31, 2023. However, the committee was replaced by the interim government with Ministerial Oversight Committee (MOC) on September 11, 2023. The MOC endorsed the decision of the previous committee and got the waiver application prepared by foreign legal counsel.

Moreover, MOC also obtained the legal opinions from foreign legal counsel,

M/s Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP.

With regards to US sanctions on Iran, M/s Willkie Farr opined that if Pakistan proceeds with the project, there is a likelihood of imposition of sanctions on the company.

Regarding the Force Majeure and Excusing Event notice, M/s Willkie Farr opined that Pakistan does not have a strong case post September 2019 under the French law as no documentary evidence is available to support that concrete steps have been taken by Pakistan to implement the project.

The MOC, after due consideration to the discourses held with Iran during the past one year has recommended that though the

final draft of the waiver application is ready, its filing with US authorities is deferred due to current geopolitical situation.

He said that in May 2009 agreement for the project was signed, for supply of gas of 750 MMCFD for 25 years from South Pars gas field of Iran and delivery at Pak-Iran border.

Under the project 1,931-km line will be laid for transportation of Iranian gas to Pakistan, including 1,150-km long pipeline within Iran and 781-km within Pakistan.

According to the deal, Iran will initially transfer 30 million cubic meters of gas per day to Pakistan, but will eventually increase the transfer to 60 million cubic meters per day.



In brief

Bodla breaks his 14th World Record

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani top martial artist Ahmad Amin Bodla broke his 14th Guinness World Record on in Pakistan Association Dubai. Ahmad Bodla performed 534 one leg push ups carrying 60 pounds on back in one hour. The previous Guinness World Record was 300, Bodla told APP. This category was introduced by Guinness World Records in 2023 and the minimum target to achieve the record was 300. Bodla nearly doubled it and he was currently world's number one in three Guinness World Record categories of the world, 355 kicks in one minute, 801 kicks in three minutes and 6970 kicks in one hour. In addition to this Bodla has held 10 more Guinness World Records in the past decade.

Navone downs champion Norrie

RIO DE JANEIRO (AFP): Defending champion Cameron Norrie crashed out of the ATP Rio Open clay court tournament on Saturday, slumping to a straight sets semi-final defeat against Argentinian qualifier Mariano Navone. British No.1 Norrie -- aiming to win back-to-back titles in Rio after defeating Carlos Alcaraz in last year's final -- struggled in hot and humid conditions before sliding to a 6-4, 6-2 defeat. The 22-year-old Navone, currently ranked 113th in the world, was handed three match points when Norrie smacked a forehand long in the eighth game of the second set. Another miscued return by the second-seeded British world number 23 sealed victory for the Argentine youngster, who advances to the first ATP final of his career, where he will face compatriot Sebastian Baez. "It's incredible, my first final," Navone said after the win. "I played so good all week. Today was very hot and humid, it's tough to play in these conditions. "But I've played six matches in a row so I feel pretty good." Navone's victory set up an all-Argentina clash in Sunday's final on the Quadra Giga Kuerten showcourt after Sebastian Baez defeated compatriot Francisco Cerundolo in Saturday's other semi-final.

Indian blind cricket team defeat Pakistan

I S L A M A B A D (Monitoring Desk): India's men blind cricket team defeated Pakistan by 8 wickets in the 3rd T-20 to win the Friendship Cricket Series. In a thrilling three-match series, India emerged victorious by 2-1. Pakistan had won the first match but India came back with force and won the second and third T-20 matches. The series showcased remarkable performances from both teams, but it was India that clinched the title. In the third and decisive T20 match, India demonstrated their prowess by chasing down a target of 194 runs set by Pakistan. With a brilliant batting display, India achieved victory with 8 wickets in hand. The heroics of Ajay Kumar Reddy, who scored an impressive 66 runs, and Sunil Ramesh, who contributed with a powerful 64 runs, played a crucial role in securing the win. Ajay Reddy's outstanding performance earned him the title of Man of the Match for this thrilling encounter. His contributions with both bat and ball were instrumental in India's success. The green shirts fought valiantly, posting a competitive total of 193 runs for 9 wickets in their allotted 20 overs. Notably, Mohammad Salman played a resilient innings, scoring 74 runs, while Mohammad Rashid added valuable runs with his knock of 32. With this victory, India clinched the series.



LAHORE: Rassie van der Dussen brought up the season's first century, Lahore Qalandars vs Peshawar Zalmi.

Bank Alfalah National Open Polo C'ship for Quaid-e-Azam Gold Cup

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): FG Polo clinched the coveted trophy of the Bank Alfalah National Open Polo Championship for Quaid-e-Azam Gold Cup 2024 after defeating BN Polo by 8-6 in the main final played at historic Aibak Polo Ground of the Lahore Polo Club on Sunday.

The match was a showcase of skill and determination, with Raul Laplacette leading FG Polo with a remarkable performance, scoring six of the team's eight goals.

Andres Llorrente contributed the other two, ensuring their team's dominance. BN Polo's Santiago Loza responded fiercely, achieving a hat-trick of goals, supported by Hamza Mawaz Khan with two goals and Santos Iriarte adding one to their tally.

The final was a roller-coaster of emotions and skills, beginning with BN

Polo's quick lead of 2-0. FG Polo, however, quickly narrowed the gap by the end of the first chukker and continued to build momentum, eventually overtaking BN Polo. Despite a strong comeback from BN Polo to level the score at 4-4, the decisive fifth chukker saw FG Polo unleash their prowess, outscoring their opponents to clinch the championship with an 8-6 victory.

The match was expertly overseen by field umpires Mark Holmes and Nicolas Scottichini, with Juan Zubiaurre acting as the match referee. In the aftermath of their triumph, FG Polo Captain Mian Abbas Mukhtar expressed gratitude for the team's hard work and preparation, attributing their success to divine favor.

The championship also saw Olympia/AZB Polo taking home the sub-

sidary final trophy, narrowly defeating Diamond Paints/Master Paints by a 4-3 margin.

The Lahore Polo Club took the occasion to honor contributions to the sport, presenting awards to notable individuals including a lifetime achievement award to former President Lahore Polo Club Irfan Ali Hyder. Awards were also distributed to various club staff for their exceptional service.

Highlighting individual excellence, Raja Mikayial Sami received the best Pakistani player of the year award, while Raul Laplacette was named the best foreign player. Other accolades included the highest goal-scorer of the tournament awarded to Max Charlton, and recognition for the best local and final's best mare, showcasing the integral role of equine talent in the sport.

Ashwin bags five as India chase 192 in England Test

RANCHI (AFP): Spinner Ravichandran Ashwin took five wickets as India bowled England out for 145 on day three of the fourth Test on Sunday to set up a chase of 192 to clinch the series.

India reached 40-0 at stumps, needing another 152 to win their third straight match and the five-Test series. Skipper Rohit Sharma was unbeaten on 24, with Yashasvi Jaiswal on 16. Opener Zak Crawley earlier top-scored with 60 but the rest of the England batting faltered against India's spin, with Ashwin returning figures of 5-51 and Kuldeep Yadav 4-22.

England lost regular wickets to end their innings in the final session, leaving it up to the bowlers to level the series and send it to a fifth-Test decider in Dharamsala.

India's bowlers did their job after wicketkeeper Dhruv Jurel hit 90 in the morning session to reduce the hosts' deficit after they began the day on 219-7.

Ashwin took the new

ball on a pitch with cracks and variable bounce and struck in consecutive balls to remove Ben Duckett, caught at short leg for 15, and Ollie Pope, lbw without scoring, as England were reduced 19-2.

Root, who scored an unbeaten 122 in the first innings, put on 46 with Crawley before Ashwin and India reviewed an lbw appeal, with tracking software indicating the ball pitched just in line and would have hit Root's leg stump.

Crawley raised his fifty but was bowled by Yadav, who turned one sharply with his left-arm wrist spin.

Yadav then removed Ben Stokes just before tea when the England captain was undone for the second time in the match by a ball that barely bounced ankle high and was bowled off his pad.

Jonny Bairstow fell on the first ball after tea and the innings folded soon after. Ben Foakes fell for a 76-ball 17 off Ashwin.

England spinner Shoab Bashir took his first Test

five-wicket haul to help bowl India out for 307, giving the tourists a lead of 46 going into their second innings.

India were rescued in the morning session by Jurel, who put on a 76-run eighth-wicket stand with overnight partner Yadav. Veteran fast bowler James Anderson broke the stand when Yadav, on 28, played on to give the veteran seamer his 698th Test wicket.

The 41-year-old is now two victims away from becoming just the third bowler to take 700 wickets in Tests, after Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan (800) and the late Australian great Shane Warne (708).

Jurel, who made his debut in the third Test in Rajkot, hit six fours and four sixes in his 149-ball stay and picked up his maiden Test half-century.

Bashir, 20, who missed England's win in the first Test due to a visa issue, trapped debutant Akash Deep lbw for his fifth wicket and kissed the ground in celebration.



RANCHI: Ben Stokes is cleaned up as Kuldeep Yadav and co rejoice.

Dussen's ton in vain as Zalmi deny Qalandars first win in PSL 9

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Rassie van der Dussen's quickfire century went in vain as a combined bowling effort led Peshawar Zalmi to a narrow eight-run victory over rock-bottom Lahore Qalandars in the 12th match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 here on Sunday.

Chasing a mammoth 212, the Qalandars fell just eight runs short of claiming their first victory in the PSL 9 despite van der Dussen's unbeaten century.

The home side, once again had a disastrous start to their innings as both their openers Sahibzada Farhan and Fakhar Zaman perished cheaply, resulting in them slipping to 38/2 in 4.4 overs. Following the slump, Shai Hope joined Rassie van der Dussen in the middle and launched recovery. Hope and van der Dussen added 71 runs for the third wicket, conceding just 47 deliveries in the process.

The Caribbean scored 29 off 23 deliveries, hitting one four and a six. Dussen then put on a one-sided partnership with Ahsan Bhatti, who perished in the 17th over after scoring 20 off 13. He brought up his century in the penultimate over by smashing Naveen-ul-Haq for a huge six but failed to steer his side over the line.

Rassie van der Dussen top-scored for the Qalandars with 104 off 52 deliveries, laced up with seven boundaries and six sixes. Naveen led the bowling attack for the Zalmi with two wickets, followed by Luke Wood, Paul Walter and Salman Irshad, who bagged one apiece.

Put into bat first, Zalmi's batting unit dominated the depleted Qalandars' bowling attack and racked up a massive total on the board, courtesy of a marathon opening stand. Zalmi's openers Babar Azam and Ayub came out all guns blazing against the home side and added 136 runs for the first wicket in just 14.2 overs.

The opening stand remained majorly dominated by Ayub while Azam was rotating the strike.

The skipper had an agonizing end to his anchoring knock, falling victim to his Qalandars' counterpart Shaheen Shah Afridi in the 15th over, just two runs short of a well-deserved half-century. Azam scored 48 off 36 deliveries with the help of five boundaries.

Ayub was then joined by hard-hitting batter Rovman Powell in the middle and the duo carried on the momentum. They added a brisk 39 runs in 16 deliveries before Afridi castled the opener in the 18th over.

Ayub remained the top-scorer for the Zalmi with a 55-ball 88 which featured eight boundaries and four sixes.

Following Ayub's dismissal, Powell took charge of Zalmi's batting expedition and bolstered their total with a quickfire knock, which lasted on the penultimate delivery of the innings.

He smashed five boundaries and two sixes on his way to a 20-ball 46.

Powell was supported by wicketkeeper batter Mohammad Haris at the backend, who scored an unbeaten 12 off just five deliveries.

Afridi led the bowling attack for the Qalandars with 3/33 while Jahandad Khan made one scalp.

Sultans end their home leg with a comfortable win over Quetta

F.P. Report

MULTAN: Multan Sultans finished their home leg on a high after defeating Quetta Gladiators by 13 runs at Multan Cricket Stadium on Sunday evening. After posting 180-4 in the first innings, the Mohammad Rizwan-led side restricted Quetta Gladiators to 167-9, courtesy of three-wicket hauls by Mohammad Ali and David Willey. Gaddafi Stadium Lahore will host the second fixture of the day, scheduled to take place between Lahore Qalandars and Peshawar Zalmi at 7 pm.

Quetta Gladiators won the toss and elected to field first. Usman Khan, playing his first game of HBL PSL 9, started the innings with three boundaries in the first over. Abrar Ahmed provided the first breakthrough as Usman (14, 7b, 3x4s) was stumped in the third over.

Reeza Hendricks joined Mohammad Rizwan in the middle and the two stitched a 79-run second-wicket partnership to bring momentum to Multan's innings.

Akeal Hosein broke the partnership in the 14th over as Rizwan holed one out to Saud Shakeel at deep midwicket. The Multan skipper had to walk back after scoring his 18th HBL PSL half-century that showcased two boundaries and four maximums.

Subsequently, Tayyab Tahir – also playing his first

game of HBL PSL 9 – partnered with Hendricks for a quickfire 77-run stand that helped Multan get to a satisfactory total. In the last five overs, Multan amassed 68 runs, with the 18th and 19th overs going for 17 runs each.

By the time Hendricks was dismissed in the final over, the damage had been done as Multan ended at 180-4. With his knock that yielded 72 from 47, which included seven boundaries and four maximums, Hendricks overtook Lahore's Sahibzada Farhan to become the tournament's current leading run-scorer.

Tayyab finished with an unbeaten 35 from 22, including four boundaries and a six. Mohammad Amir bagged two wickets while Abrar and Akeal picked up one each. In pursuit of 181, Quetta Gladiators lost both their opening batters inside the powerplay with Jason Roy falling on an exceptional delivery bowled by Mohammad Ali in the third over and Saud Shakeel getting caught at mid-on by Usama Mir off David Willey.

Khawaja Nafay and captain Rilee Rossouw batted together to add 62 runs for the third-wicket partnership until debutant Aftab Ibrahim got hold of the latter on the last ball of the 12th over. Rossouw walked back for 30 off 18, on the back of a four and two sixes.

Sajjad Ali, coming to bat as a concussion substitute for Sarfaraz Ahmed, could only make two off two before Rizwan stumped him off Usama Mir's bowling. Trouble deepened for Quetta as Nafay (36, 31b, 2x4s, 2x6s) found Usama behind point, awarding Ali his second wicket of the day.

Sherfane Rutherford contributed 21 from 14, including two maximums, before he was caught and bowled by Willey. In the same over, Mohammad Wasim Jnr also fell for just a run.

Amir chipped in with 12 off eight, including two fours, before Ali rattled his stumps in the penultimate over. Aftab, bowling the final over, removed Abrar on the final ball to award Multan the game by 13 runs. Willey and Ali bagged three wickets while Aftab returned with two. Usama also dismissed one batter.

Scores in brief: Multan Sultans beat Quetta Gladiators by 13 runs

Multan Sultans 180-4, 20 overs (Reeza Hendricks 72, Mohammad Rizwan 51; Mohammad Amir 2-46)

Quetta Gladiators 167-9, 20 overs (Khawaja Nafay 36, Rilee Rossouw 30; Mohammad Ali 3-19, David Willey 3-37, Aftab Ibrahim 2-26)

Player of the match – Mohammad Ali (Multan Sultans)



MULTAN: Reeza Hendricks scored 72 off 47.

Colourful Sports Gala of New Islamia High School held

PESHAWAR (APP): The month-long Sports Gala organized by New Islamia High School and College Peshawar ended on Sunday with a colorful ceremony in which a large number of School and college students showed their extraordinary sports skills in different games.

More than 450 children participated in six different games including cricket, badminton, basketball, volleyball. SP City Muhammad Tayyab was the chief guest of the closing ceremony. On this occasion, New Islamia School and College CEO Ifitikhar Liaquat Ali, Administrator Muhammad Amjad and Academic In-charge Waheed, teachers and other guests were also present.

In the volleyball event Warrior Red clichéd the trophy, followed by the Tiger team. The score of the final match was 25-19, 25-22, 23-25 and 25-21. In the basketball Defender team claimed the title in the Basketball after defeating Black Wolf, the score was 44-41 in the final match played at a fast tempo.

In other competitions, the chief guest distributed trophies and cash prizes to the teams that got first and second position respectively.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, SP City Muhammad Tayyab appreciated the students and management of the Islamia High School and College for holding Sports Gala in which more 450 students of various classes actively

participated.

He also appreciated Ifitikhar Liaquat Ali, the CEO of the Islamia School and College for giving opportunities to the students to excel their hidden talent through different games. He said sports can play a key role in keeping the mind and body fresh. He said sports are now an essential part of academics. He urged the school management to hold different sports activities on a regular basis so as to provide opportunities to the students and participate in healthy sports activities.

While congratulating all the organizers, he said that all the credit for the successful sports gala goes to the teachers, employees and students whose hard work day and night made the successful organization of the sports gala possible.

In his speech, CEO Ifitikhar Liaquat Ali said that the defeat and victory is part of the game, the better the team plays, winning becomes its destiny, there is a need to promote the trend of sports among the youth.

He added that along with the promotion of education, co-curricular activities should also be given importance so the youngsters should learn ways to socialize. He said that sports and positive recreational activities teach discipline, healthy competition, movement and discipline in children. It will prove to be equally beneficial in their practical life, he added.

GHSS No 2 Haripur wins Prof. Ajab Khan Basketball C'ship

HARIPUR (APP): Government High Secondary School No. 1 Haripur recorded victory against Five Stars Club in the final of the Professor Ajab Khan Basketball Championship here on Sunday.

The chief guest of the closing ceremony was SSP Investigation Haripur Amjad Hussain, while former President ATA Raja Hafeez Anwar, Dr. Aslam Chaudhry, Muhammad Siddique, Saqib Imran, Muhammad Akram, Muhammad Ejaz, Raja Shamim, Sufyan Khan, Gul Jamal, Muhammad Munir, Muhammad Javed and students of all the participating teams also present and witnessed the thrilling final.

In the final GHSS No.2 Haripur defeated Five Stars Club Haripur by 47-38 points in a thrilling final. Both GHSS No. 2 team and Five Stars Club players presented an excellent display which was largely enjoyed by the spectators present on this occasion.

In his speech, SSP Investigation Amjad Hussain appreciated the hard work and performance of both the finalist teams and said that sports teach us how to live life and show us the skills of patience and tolerance in bad times.

A good and healthy body gives rise to a healthy mind. At the end of the ceremony, the chief guest distributed shields, medals and runners-up and winner trophies to the athletes, while Jamal Hussain Shah was awarded the Man of the Tournament trophy for his best performance in the tournament.



In brief

Habib death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Eighth death anniversary of Legendary Pakistani film actor, producer and director Habib-ur-Rehman was observed on Sunday. He was born in 1931 in Indian state of Patiala. He showcased his talent in more than six hundred Punjabi and Urdu films and is counted among illustrious romantic heroes. Habib-Ur-Rehman started his film career in 1956 with the movie 'Lakht-e jigar' as a side hero with Noor Jehan. His first super hit movie was 'Zeher-e-Ishq' with Mussarat Nazeer. Habib-Ur-Rehman also won worldwide recognition for his heartfelt performance in the historical movie 'Devdas' paired with Shamim Ara and Nayyar Sultana. The government awarded him with the Presidential Pride accolade to honor his services. He died after a prolonged illness in 2016 in Lahore on this day.

Motorway Police returns purse

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Motorway Police set an example of honesty as they returned a purse containing valuable items that were left over by a family at the Kalar Kahar Service Area. According to S p o k e s p e r s o n Motorway Police, while travelling on the highway, a family stopped for food at the Kalar Kahar Service Area, where they forgot their purse. There was jewellery and cash worth eight lakhs in the purse. On recalling it, the family contacted the Motorway Police through the Motorway Police Helpline 130. As soon as the information was received, the police mobile nearest to the service area started searching for the purse. After a lot of searching, the purse was found, which was reported to the owner. There were six lakh rupees worth of jewellery in the purse, Rs 108,675, 716 riyals, 101 US dollars, and three prize bonds of Rs 1,500 each. The concerned family thanked the motorway police.

e-Learning, e-Teaching conference

ISLAMABAD (APP): ECO Science Foundation in collaboration with the Iranian Association of e-Learning (YADA), University of Isfahan will arrange the 17th International and 11th International Conference on "e-Learning and e-Teaching (ICLeT)" Focusing on Technology Enhanced Learning" from February 27-29. According to an official of ECOSF, the conference, scheduled to be held in Isfahan, Iran, will bring together leading academic scientists, researchers and scholars in the domain of interest from around the world. The conference will revolve around different themes including Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Technologies in e-Learning, Innovative Educational Approaches in e-learning, E-Learning and Informal Education, Generative AI and e-Learning, Psychological, Social, Legal, and Economic Aspects of e-learning, Best Practices in e-learning and Evaluation and Quality Improvement in e-Learning. This conference provides the premier interdisciplinary forum for researchers, practitioners and educators to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, concerns, practical challenges encountered and the solutions adopted in the field of e-Learning and e-Teaching, the official informed. The main segments of the conference include Keynote speeches, Panel discussions, Paper and poster presentations, Report on the best practices, Workshops and an Exhibition.



RAWALPINDI: Artisan busy making wooden bench at Banni Chowk.

Kite flying ban violators being dealt with iron hand: CPO

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani has said that kite flying ban violators were being dealt with an iron hand and no one would be allowed to violate the ban.

According to a police spokesman, the CPO had directed the police officers to take strict action in accordance with the law against the violators.

He informed that Rawalpindi district Police had arrested more than 400 kite sellers, flyers and confiscated over 18,000 kites and string rolls from their possession during the crackdown launched on Thursday night and Friday. Police also recovered weapons, sound systems and other items from their possession.

Rawalpindi District Police had also urged the citizens to ensure that their children do not violate the ban on kite flying imposed by the provincial government otherwise strict action would be taken against the violators. The spokesman said that on the special directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani, police were taking strict action and the ban violators were being

sent behind the bars.

The CPO had requested the parents to stop their children from getting involved in such activities as a crackdown against kite flyers had already been accelerated in the city, he added.

Special squads had been formed to net the violators while deputy superintendents of police and station house officers were also taking part in the operation. He said that the officers concerned had been directed to utilise all available resources to control the kite flying and to net the ban violators and the kite sellers.

The violators were being dealt with an iron hand and no one would be allowed to violate the law and indulge in kite flying and selling, he added. The use of metal string for kite flying results in the loss of human lives therefore, all-out efforts are made to stop kite flying, he said adding, a special awareness campaign is also being run to control the ban violation. He said that the Inspector General of Police, had issued orders to speed up crackdown against kite flying and aerial firing.

He said Rawalpindi district police had adopted a zero-tolerance policy

against kite sellers, flyers, aerial firing and strict action was being taken against the violators. The people had also been requested to report on 15 against kite flying and aerial firing so that such notorious elements could be immediately rounded up, he added. More than 1600 police officials were deployed to thwart any plans for Basant on Thursday night and Friday. Drone operators were being used to monitor kite-flying, he said.

The parents, teachers, scholars and civil society were also taken into confidence to play their role in preventing the celebration of Basant.

The Rawalpindi police had also launched an awareness campaign about the hazards of the risky sport with the help of religious scholars, who were asked to make announcements on their respective mosques sound systems about the demerits of kite-flying.

The police had finalized arrangements for live monitoring of all densely populated areas, while all Station House Officers (SHOs) had been directed to ensure strict surveillance of kite sellers in their areas.

PMD warns of cold snap across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecasted that most parts of the country will remain cold and dry in the next 24 hours. According to the PMD, there is a possibility of rain and snowfall in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir, while thunderstorm rain is also possible in the southwestern districts of Balochistan.

The Meteorological Department had said that Islamabad could experience rain accompanied by strong winds and thunder, while western regions will remain partly cloudy.

On the other hand, in the past 24 hours, the lowest temperature was recorded in Layyah at -14°C, while Kalam recorded -12°C, Astore -9°C, and Malam Jabba -6°C. Skardu, Gupis, and Hunza recorded -5°C, Bagrot -4°C, Rawalakot, Gilgit, and Dir recorded -3°C. According to the Meteorological Department, Quetta recorded 1°C, Islamabad 3°C, Peshawar 6°C, Lahore 9°C, and Karachi remained at 16°C.

One stop facility center set up for incoming members of Parliament

ISLAMABAD (INP): With aim to facilitate and acquaint the newly elected members of the 16th National Assembly of Pakistan, a dedicated facility center has been established within the hallowed halls of the Parliament House in Islamabad. The arrival of these elected officials has commenced, marking the beginning of their journey in the legislative arena.

Under the guidance of Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Sharaf, welcoming banners adorn the precincts of Parliament, extending warm greetings to the incoming legislators. To streamline the induction process, a comprehensive one-window facility center has been instituted in Committee Room Number Two of the Parliament House. Here, members are undergoing essential formalities, including obtaining their assembly cards and familiarizing themselves with the protocols of the National Assembly through provided booklets.

Among the privileges extended to the newly inducted members is the issuance of blue passports for themselves, their spouses, parents, and unmarried chil-

dren under 28 years of age. This passport grants visa-free travel to 46 countries worldwide, albeit necessitating a sworn oath. Concurrently, details of their bank accounts are being collected to facilitate the disbursement of salaries and other entitlements.

Furthermore, as part of their engagement within the parliamentary framework, members are invited to select from four distinct forums: women's rights, children's rights, youth welfare, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This initiative aims to encourage active participation in key legislative agendas.

Moreover, an international relations desk has been established within the facility center to gather pertinent information from new members regarding their political affiliations, educational backgrounds, and foreign travel history.

The inauguration of this facility center underscores a commitment to ensuring a smooth transition for incoming members of the National Assembly, empowering them with the resources and support necessary to fulfill their legislative duties effectively.

ANF recovers over 1215 kg drugs in 32 operations; arrests 36 accused

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting 32 operations across the country managed to recover over 1215 kg drugs and arrested 36 accused during last week, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman.

He informed that ANF in a successful operation also busted a drug dealer group and arrested eight accused.

He said that the raids were conducted simultaneously in three major cities of the country and the gang members were rounded up.

The gang members were involved in selling CBD oil-laced vapes through online platforms, he added.

Eight people were arrested targeting the inter-provincial drug dealer group involved in the distribution of vapes.

During the operation, vapes filled with hashish oil, CBD oil, THC oil and ciga-

rette rolls made from hemp plant were recovered. Apart from this, marijuana oil, opium and other illegal materials including marijuana were also seized.

The accused were involved in illegal activities under the guise of selling natural products and medicines.

E-commerce platforms were being used to supply drugs, the spokesman informed.

The accused used to import prohibited items from foreign countries through cargo companies.

ANF strives to enforce government regulations and standard operating procedures for online businesses, he said. The spokesman urged the parents to discourage teen vape use. He also asked the citizens to keep a close eye on their children's use of online shopping platforms and report any suspicious activity to law enforcement agencies immediately.

WFME grants accreditation to PMDC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) has granted accreditation to the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) for maintaining the highest standard of medical education in Pakistan.

With the remarkable feat of being granted the WFME Recognition Status for a remarkable tenure of 10 years and PM&DC being WFME accredited, all the Pakistani students become eligible to apply for ECFMG and USMLE.

Achieving WFME recognition will enable Pakistan's medical graduates to pursue postgraduate training and practice in other countries that require WFME recognition, such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

WFME has an official relationship with the WHO, representing the medical education and training of medical doctors worldwide. The WFME recognition delivers an independent, transparent, and rigorous method of ensuring that accreditation of medical schools worldwide is at an internationally acceptable and high standard.

WFME evaluated the compliance of accreditation agencies with defined criteria. The accreditation from WFME signifies that PM&DC's medical education programs meet international benchmarks for quality and excellence. It reflects the council's dedication to providing a robust

and globally competitive medical education framework for aspiring healthcare professionals in Pakistan. The PM&DC team, under the leadership of President Rizwan Taj, undertook the WFME recognition process and achieved this historic milestone.

President PM&DC Prof Rizwan Taj expressed in a statement, "We are thrilled to receive recognition from WFME, a testament to our continuous efforts to elevate medical education standards in the country."

This achievement opens new avenues for collaboration and ensures that our medical graduates are well-equipped to meet international healthcare standards. Dr Rizwan added that in pursuit of goals, PM&DC required some direction and long-term relationships with global organizations such as the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME). Their guidance and support would immensely contribute to improving medical education standards in our country. Prof Dr Rizwan congratulated the nation on this landmark achievement and said, "WFME's recognition underscores that the quality of medical education in Pakistan adheres to global standards. This will empower our students with the opportunity to pursue their careers anywhere in the world. He appreciated all the team members who worked tirelessly to achieve this goal. He also appreciated Farzand

Ali, an international consultant on collaboration and recognition, for his guidance and tireless efforts in expediting the complete recognition process in record time.

He appreciated the hard work of medical colleges and hospitals, namely Shifa College of Medicine, Khyber Medical College Peshawar, the University of Lahore, Agha Khan Medical College Karachi, and Army Medical College Rawalpindi, for their support and role in conducting workshops and inspections during the rigorous evaluation of WFME. He congratulated the entire staff of PM&DC for their tireless efforts in achieving this accreditation.

He added that this recognition is a testament to PM&DC's firm commitment to the highest standards in medical education and accreditation. As part of this recognition, all 185 existing medical colleges in Pakistan will become WFME accredited, and the new medical colleges that will be set up in the coming 10 years will automatically become WFME accredited.

The recognition will further enhance the quality and standards of medical education in Pakistan by aligning them with global best practices and benchmarks. He added that PM&DC will continue to work closely with international partners and stakeholders to ensure the compliance and continuous improvement of medical education in the country.

PSF invites applications from young Pakistani students

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) has invited applications from young Pakistani science students to participate in the 21st International Junior Science Olympiad (IJSO-2024).

According to an official of PSF, the International Junior Science Olympiad (IJSO) is going to be held from December 02-11 this year in Bucharest, Romania tentatively. IJSO is a science competition for students under 16 years of age on December 31st of the competition year. IJSO was established to promote interest in science among school students, exposing them to problem-solving, critical thinking and experimentation. Over the years, IJSO aims to positively impact

science and mathematics education at the school level. IJSO is held in the first week of December every year, in any one of member countries.

About the eligibility, the official informed that interested students (boys and girls) under 16 years of age on December 31, 2024 may send their applications on prescribed proforma available through the weblink <https://psf.gov.pk/IjsO2024.aspx>. The applicant must be a regular science student and passed minimum SSC-I (Class-IX) equivalent from a public or private sector (Govt. recognized) institution having proficiency in written and spoken English.

Only shortlisted candidates on the basis of educational credentials shall be

called for test and interview for their final selection.

Six students will be selected for the said event while the decision of the panel of Scientists/ Experts will be final in this regard, the official said.

PSF will bear the expenditure including registration, visa fees and air travel of selected students. Accommodation and local hospitality will be provided by the organizers while no TA/DA will be provided to the students appearing for test/interview.

The last date for receipt of the application is March 11, 2024. Incomplete applications received after the closing date will not be entertained. The queries can be addressed at rehanabatool2005@yahoo.com.

NUST announces article writing competition on Women in Climate Action

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National University of Science and Technology (NUST) has called on all voices of Pakistan to become part of its efforts to amplify the importance of Women in Climate Action by participating in an 'Article Writing Competition'.

According to an official of NUST, the article writing competition, being arranged in collaboration with the Gender Intersectionality and Climate Change (GICC), is aimed at stimulating thoughtful discourse on the intersectionality of gender and climate resilience.

The last date for submission of the articles is February 29. The details of the event can be accessed through the website:

gicc.nust.edu.pk. The article writing competition is part of the "Women in Climate Action - Celebrating Resilience" event being arranged by the NUST and GIZ Pakistan on the occasion of International Women's Day (March 8) in Islamabad. This empowering event aims to recognize and applaud the significant contributions of women in climate action, emphasizing their leadership, innovation, and impact on creating sustainable and climate-resilient communities.

The researchers, climate heroes, academia, and individuals from the development sector have been called to participate in the event featuring panel discussions, success stories, stalls showcasing

women-led initiatives and art and photo exhibitions. About the other activities under this mega event, the official informed that an insightful panel discussion, successful storytelling session, art and photo exhibition and project and product exhibits will also be part of the event. The insightful panel discussion will be aimed at providing a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities women face within the realm of climate action. The success storytelling session will highlight the women doing notable work in climate action and give them a platform to narrate their stories and experiences and the hardships they have faced in their tremendous efforts.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers busy preparing bricks at local bricks kiln.

Muttaqi left for Turkmenistan

KABUL (Ariana News): Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs Amir Khan Muttaqi has left for Turkmenistan for talks with officials of the neighboring country, it was announced Sunday. Hafiz Zia Ahmad, Deputy Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said on his X that Muttaqi, leading a delegation, traveled to Turkmenistan at the invitation of Rashid Murdov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, to discuss bilateral issues.

Afghan national arrested

VIENNA (Ariana News): Austrian police have arrested a 27-year-old Afghan national suspected of killing three women in a brothel in the capital, Vienna. BBC News reported that the victims were stabbed to death, and the suspect was found hiding near the brothel with a knife in his hand. The motive for the killings is currently unclear but the man has been questioned. Another woman and her daughter were killed in an unrelated incident in Vienna in a 24-hour period.

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

First commercial goods plane lands in Mazar

MAZAR-E-SHARIF (TOLONews): For the first time since the Islamic Emirate came to power, a plane carrying commercial goods from the United Arab Emirates landed at Mazar-e-Sharif International Airport. Officials of the airport said that in this flight, 16 tons of Afghan businessmen's property, most of which are electrical appliances, were transferred. Abdullah Mutmaeen, director of Mazar-e-Sharif International Airport Customs, said: "This is the first time that goods have arrived from Dubai to Mazar-e-Sharif Airport, and we hope that the goods of other businessmen will

also come through the airport. The goods that arrived today are 16 tons." The Balkh Chamber of Commerce and Investment and a number of businessmen called the renewed activity of the air corridor to be beneficial for the export and import of commercial goods and called for the continuation of this process. Asadullah Asadi, the head of Balkh chamber of commerce and investment, said: "Transfers by air cargo were very effective for the exporting of businesspeople's goods, especially pine nuts and hing, and the import of valuable goods. It has been three

years since this process was stopped and the fact and its resumption will be effective for the timely transfer of commercial property." "We wish that air corridors would operate permanently for our important exports and imports, so that our businessmen and exporters could use the air corridors to transfer their commercial goods to distant countries and to transfer our goods in other countries' markets," said Khairuddin Mayel, a trader. The Islamic Emirate continuously states it is making an effort to support and provide more facilities for businesspeople in the country.

Stanikzai laments poor reading habits among Afghans

KABUL (Ariana News): Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, the political deputy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said on Sunday that the development of a country depends on reading, but reading habits in Afghanistan are very low. Stanikzai made the remarks at a ceremony in Kabul to unveil books printed during the past 11 months. "In Afghanistan, compared to other countries, people read very little. Maybe some people believe that there were many problems here, there was a war, the economy was weak and people are looking for bread and don't have time to read, but these problems exist in other countries as well. If there is no war in other countries, there is poverty," Stanikzai said. He stated now that security is ensured in the country and there is no feudalism, youths should read under the shadow of the Islamic system, because without reading, success cannot be achieved. "If youths become interested in reading and books, Allah willing, society will get rid of problems very soon. We Afghans have no equal on the battlefield. We have a lot of progress in this regard, and no one else has this honor. We should try to tell the world that with the takeover of the Islamic Emirate, there is peace and security in Afghanistan. There is no more war; there is no more feudalism; there is no more looting. There is an Islamic and Sharia system," Stanikzai said. He has also said that currently many books are imported from other countries, adding that scientific and research institutions and authors of the country should try to write books themselves.

4 executions cccurred since IE takeover: SC

KABUL (TOLONews): The Supreme Court says that 4 executions have taken place in the country since the Islamic Emirate took power. The head of the publication and foreign relations department of the Supreme Court, Abdul Rahim Rashid, said that the executions have been implemented in Farah, Laghman, and Ghazni provinces. According to Rashid, the executions were carried out after the evaluations of three courts and the approval of the leader of the Islamic Emirate. Tajmir, accused of murder, was executed in 2022 on November 7; Ajmal, who was accused of the murder of five people, was executed on June 21, 2023, and two more people who were accused of murder were executed on February 22, 2024. "The first execution was implemented of a murderer in Farah province, the second was implemented in Laghman on another murderer, and the same was implemented on two murderers from Andar of Ghazni and from Sayed Abad district of Maidan Wardak, the God's decree which means execution was implemented in the presence of thousands of people," Rashid told TOLONews. Meanwhile, several legal analysts and Islamic scholars emphasized the need for caution and due process in implementing executions and with related issues. "The punishment should be based on the penal law,



which is based on the representatives of the people, and the people know the values of the society, and how the violator should be punished," said Mohammad Asif Faqiri, a legal analyst. "The condition which is necessary for the implementation of execution is the presence of a governmental system, execution cannot be implemented individually and tribally, so

an Islamic system is necessary to dominate the entire geography," said Hasibullah Hanafi, an Islamic scholar. Earlier the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and Amnesty International in reaction to the execution of two people in Ghazni asked the Islamic Emirate to stop all kinds of executions in the country.

Foreign tourists visit Samangan and Balkh



KABUL (TOLTONews): A group of ten foreign tourists, after traveling to the provinces of Kabul, Herat, Bamiyan and Samangan, have now gone to the city of Mazar-e-Sharif. These tourists said that Afghanistan is an attractive country in terms of culture and history, and hospitality in this country has a special reputation. These tourists are from the US, Australia, Japan, Poland, El Salvador, Great Britain, Vietnam and Germany. Matty Deas, a tourist, told TOLONews: "We are spending ten days in Afghanistan. We started in Kabul then Herat and Bamiyan and now we are here in Mazar, and we will finish in a couple of days in Kabul. We love spending time here in Afghanistan, the people are very friendly. We have seen some amazing sights, a lot of culture and a lot of history. The food has been great as well and everyone has made us feel very welcome." Jasue Minjivar, another tourist, said: "I had a curiosity to come here to Afghanistan just to meet the people, the culture, the food -- different aspects of living here in the country -- and I have been pretty amazed by what I have seen so far here in all the different provinces of the country." Meanwhile, Zabihullah Noorani, head of information and culture of Balkh, said that Afghanistan is a good place for tourism at the moment. Noorani said: "Currently, Afghanistan is secure, and all the provinces have good security, and anyone can visit the provinces and the districts safely. Everyone is assured of security and tourists come to Afghanistan and visit the historical places and tourist attractions of the country with peace of mind." Afghanistan, with many historic and tourist attractions, draws foreign tourists every year. In recent months, hundreds of tourists from different countries have come to

Egg-laying chicken exports up 15 per cent

KABUL (Ariana News): Iranian authorities have announced that the export of egg-laying chickens to Afghanistan has increased by 15 percent over the past year. Hasan Azarian, the head of the veterinary medicine network in Taibad city of Khorasan Razavi province, has said that nearly 148,000 egg-laying chickens have been exported to Afghanistan through Islam Qala port during the past 11 months, IRNA news agency reported. He added that the export of egg-laying chickens this year has increased by 15 percent compared to the same period last year. Azarian stated that during the same period, 3,200 tons of eggs were exported through Islam Qala port, which shows a 23 percent increase compared to last year. He added that 470,000 baby chickens were exported to Afghanistan.

KABUL (TOLONews): Afghan students who are studying in India once again said that they have been living in uncertainty for more than two and a half years. They asked the Islamic Emirate to pay serious attention to resolving their challenges. According to Zamen Ali Haidari, a doctorate student at an Indian university, said the Indian authorities cancelled several Afghan students' study visas, including his own, following the reestablishment of the Islamic Emirate in Afghanistan. "I ask the Islamic Emirate to try to establish its foreign relations with India. They should at least do something to help those students who are stuck in Afghanistan, and talk to the Indian government about them and tell them these are not politicians," Haidari told TOLONews. Some Afghan students studying in India are concerned that the Indian government will revoke their scholarships and refuse to renew their visas. "Afghan students suffer from the issue that Indian



government would revoke their scholarships and lack of access to visas," said Najibullah Rahmati, a master's student in India. "They are concerned that the government of India will refuse to give them scholarships," said Ishaq Sarwari, a student. However, the Islamic Emirate said that they are in contact with Indian authorities to find a suitable solution for the challenges of

Afghan students there. "We have tried our best in this regard, we are in contact with the Indian government, but so far there has been no proper solution to this. We want this problem to be solved as soon as possible, and visas should be given to Afghans and for interaction between the two countries to continue normally," said Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesman of the Islamic

Emirate. Earlier, the acting Consul General of Afghanistan in Mumbai, Sayed Mohammad Ibrahimkhil, said in a video that he and the Consul General of Afghanistan in Hyderabad, Zakia Wardak, have taken responsibility for the consulate services of Afghanistan's embassy in New Delhi based on requests of the Indian government.

Over 6 million Afghan migrants reside in Iran

KABUL (Khaama Press): Hassan Kazemi Qomi, the special representative of the Iranian president for Afghanistan, stated that currently, more than 6 million Afghan migrants are living in Iran. Mr. Qomi, made these remarks on Saturday, February 24th, during an interview with an Iranian media outlet. The special representative of the Iranian president added, "The migration of people from Afghanistan is due to the crises created by the Americans in that country." The Taliban has not yet commented on this statistic given by the Iranian representative about the Afghan migrants in Iran, but the trend of expelling migrants by the Islamic Republic of Iran has continued recently. This comes as the Ministry of Migrants has recently announced that just yesterday, about 1,588 Afghan migrants residing in Iran entered the country through the Islam Qala-Herat border after being expelled. Afghan migrants in Iran encounter numerous challenges from Iranian authorities and citizens alike. These challenges include harassment, incarceration, disrespect for their rights, and forced deportation.

In a recent incident in Tehran, an Iranian individual pushed an Afghan migrant from a bridge, resulting in the migrant's death. This incident sparked widespread criticism from human rights activists and Afghan citizens on social media platforms. The tragic event of an Afghan migrant being killed by an Iranian citizen underscores the vulnerability and risks faced by Afghan migrants in Iran. Such incidents highlight the urgent need for greater protection of migrants' rights and accountability for perpetrators of violence against them.

3 people killed in Afghanistan last week

KABUL (Pajhwok): UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres last week hailed a two-day meeting in Doha on Afghanistan as productive and hoped Afghan rulers would participate in future such meetings. **Casualties** Three people were killed in Afghanistan last week in various incidents. Local officials say a robber was killed in a clash with security forces, the son of a previous district chief was gunned down in Baghlan and in Ghazni, one person was killed in a clash between two families. In the previous week, two people had been killed in Afghanistan. **Doha meeting** A two-day meeting, which concluded on Monday in the Qatari capital, aimed to bring together member states and international envoys to address various issues confronting Afghanistan, but a special envoy for Afghanistan was not appointed in the meeting. Delegations and special representatives from 28 countries and international organizations attended the talks in the absence of any official representative from Afghanistan. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that the caretaker government of Afghanistan had set a number of conditions for participating in this meeting, which, according to him, were not acceptable to the United Nations. He hoped that representatives of the Islamic Emirate would participate in more such meetings in the future.

The Doha meeting did not appoint a UN representative for Afghanistan But Guterres said that further consultations will be held on this matter. Journalist Lotfullah Najafizada, former lawmaker Shah Gul Rezaei, women's rights activists Mehbooba Siraj and Mitra Mehran had been invited to the Doha meeting on behalf of Afghanistan's civil society. However, Russia abstained from the ruddle, terming the caretaker government's demands as legitimate. **Doha meeting successful or failure?** Guterres called the meeting productive and said: "We want a peaceful Afghanistan, an Afghanistan that is at peace with itself and its neighbors

and a country with national sovereignty, able to fulfill its international commitments... Afghanistan should not become a center of militancy; the rights of women and girls should be respected and there should be a government in which all ethnic groups can participate. Russian Foreign Ministry's Spokesperson Maria Zakharova said the second UN-convened meeting in Doha on Afghanistan was a 'failure'. Zabihullah Mujahid, chief spokesman of IEA, said the Doha meeting was unsuccessful due to the absence of the caretaker government. **Interaction with IEA** Japanese ambassador in Afghanistan Takayoshi Kormaya in a meeting with acting minister of information and culture Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwa has said his country wants positive ties with the IEA. Kormaya said his country desired positive ties with the IEA and the time had come for the international community to interact with the Afghanistan caretaker government. Russia's Permanent Representative to the UN said that the world's engagement with the Islamic Emirate was important. Speaking at a press briefing following the conclusion of the second Doha meeting on Afghanistan, Vasily Nebenzya said that although not recognized by Moscow, being engaged with Kabul is paramount. "... We have no choice but to engage pragmatically with the de facto authorities

of Afghanistan whom we did not recognize like nobody else. But the reality is there, we have to engage with those people who rule Afghanistan now," said Vasily Nebenzya. **Human rights** A statement from the German Foreign Ministry said: "At the Munich Security Conference 2024, we, the Foreign Ministers of Albania, Andorra, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, France, Germany, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Mongolia, the Netherlands and Romania express our deepest concerns about the ongoing human rights violations of women and girls in Afghanistan, and urge the de facto authorities to put an end to systematic gender persecution, which could amount to crimes against humanity."

According to the statement, this included the recent wave of detentions of women and girls in Afghanistan by the authorities. "We demand their immediate release and reaffirm our unwavering commitment to the fundamental rights of women and girls in Afghanistan." Zabihullah Mujahid said: "Afghan citizens, including women, are entitled to their rights, public rights, honor and properties are protected, they have physical and spiritual security, the doors of courts are open for all Afghans without any discrimination, the economic situation of the country is on the path to stability, the local currency is stable, mega projects are being implemented, development has been made in health,

education and infrastructure sectors and the process is ongoing." Mujahid said despite all these developments made in the past two and a half years, a wrong image of Afghanistan was being promoted and tension and fears spread about Afghanistan, which demonstrated the lack of understanding by these countries or some circles provided wrong information intentionally to these types of gatherings. **Humanitarian aid** Switzerland has donated \$1.9 million to the Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund (AHF). The Global Fund has approved over US\$4.7 million in emergency funding to deliver HIV, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria services to 1.3 million Afghans returning from Pakistan.



KOSTYANTYNIVKA: Firefighters work at the scene of a Russian missile strike that destroyed a train station, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine.

How Trump defeated Nikki Haley in her home state of South Carolina

SOUTH CAROLINA (Reuters): Donald Trump's big primary victory over Nikki Haley in her home state of South Carolina was the result of a ruthless and methodical campaign to eliminate her as a threat, according to aides and people close to both campaigns. Despite having already secured a string of primary victories, it was crucial for Trump to win South Carolina, a key early Republican primary state that often predicts the party's nominee. Unlike in 2016, Trump was facing a rival who had won two terms as governor of the state and is still locally popular.

The plan was to isolate Haley politically by locking down endorsements from scores of officials in the state as quickly as possible to demonstrate publicly that she had no path to the presidency through South Carolina, aides with knowledge of the Trump campaign plan said.

Trump's victory on Saturday was not a complete blowout but he still defeated her by a comfortable 20 percentage points on her home turf.

"We were facing a two-term governor. That necessitated a show of force. We needed endorsements to stop donors and voters taking a look at Nikki," a senior Trump campaign adviser told Reuters on condition of anonymity. Chris LaCivita, a co-manager of Trump's campaign, said the series of big-name endorsements played a critical role in snuffing out the competition in the state. LaCivita said another crucial part of Trump's

success was to harvest data on the thousands of voters who attended the former president's rallies. "What happens in the state after we're on the airplane. That's where the real work begins," LaCivita said.

Working out of a nondescript office park in North Charleston, campaign staff have been toiling for months to use voter data to communicate regularly with potential voters. Trump used a similar game plan to win in Iowa and New Hampshire.

As recently as December, Haley was still saying publicly that South Carolina was where she would finally score a win over Trump and turn the nominating contest around. Instead, it may be remembered as the state where her campaign suffered its fatal blow. By Jan. 24 - a month before the primary - Trump had secured the endorsements of 158 current and former South Carolina Republicans officials, including lawmakers, mayors and sheriffs. By this week Haley had received endorsements from one member of the U.S. House of Representatives, 11 current state lawmakers and two mayors.

"Those endorsements (of Trump) do matter. They are absolutely embarrassing in their numbers for Nikki Haley," the Trump campaign adviser said. "If you have the local police chief or a city council person evangelizing about President Trump at a barbecue or at a local meeting, it's a force multiplier on our ground game and grassroots efforts," the adviser said.

Spearheading the push to lock up endorsements was the state's governor, Henry McMaster; Ed McMullen, Trump's former ambassador to Switzerland and a veteran of South Carolina politics; and Justin Evans, a state operative who ran Haley's first political campaign in 2010.

The influential South Carolina House of Representatives speaker, Murrell Smith, who endorsed Trump in August 2023, also played a key role in securing endorsements inside the State House, as did the state's lieutenant governor, Pamela Evette.

McMullen said he and other Trump allies began sketching a plan to ensure the former president's total dominance in the state as early as June 2022, months before Trump officially announced he was running for president that November. Haley declared her candidacy in February 2023. Trump's South Carolina surrogates began contacting every state House and Senate member in May 2023. Lawmakers who were reluctant to endorse Trump were invited to personal meetings with him when he flew into the state, either at airports or other venues. "The president was very generous with his time, he met with numerous people, it made clear to people he was serious and very much wanted their support," McMullen said.

For her part, Haley said publicly she was not bothered by the endorsements Trump received, although associates have spoken of a sense of betrayal that some high-profile allies deserted her.

Farmers protest

Haryana extends mobile internet suspension in 7 districts

CHANDIGARH (INP): The Haryana government has further extended the suspension of mobile internet and bulk SMS in seven districts in the wake of the ongoing farmers' 'Delhi Chalo' agitation.

According to Kashmir Media Service, mobile internet and bulk SMS were first suspended in Ambala, Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Jind, Hisar, Fatehabad and Sirsa on February 11 and the suspension was extended on February 13, 15, 17, 19, 20 and 21. In the order issued

on Friday, Additional Chief Secretary T V S N Prasad said, "After assessment of the current prevailing law and order situation in the state, the conditions are still critical and tense in the district Ambala, Kurukshetra, Kaithal, Jind, Hisar, Fatehabad and Sirsa."

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha are spearheading the 'Delhi Chalo' agitation to put pressure on the government to accept their demands, including a law

on minimum support price (MSP) for crops and a farm loan waiver. Protesting farmers from Punjab taking part in the march have been camping at Shambhu and Khanauri border points of the state's border with Haryana since February 13, when their march was stopped by security personnel. The farmers will continue to stay put at the two border points till February 29, when the next course of action will be decided, farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher had said.

Assam scraps colonial-era Muslim marriage law

GUWAHATI (Reuters): India's Assam state has scrapped an 89-year-old law that allowed marriage involving underage Muslims, against opposition from leaders of the minority community who called the plan an attempt to polarise voters on religious lines ahead of elections.

Assam, which has the highest percentage of Muslims among Indian states at 34%, has previously said it wants to implement uniform civil laws for marriage, divorce, adoption and inheritance, as the state of Uttarakhand did earlier this month. Nationwide, Hindus, Muslims, Christians and other groups follow their own laws and customs or a secular code for such matters.

Prime Minister

Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has promised a Uniform Civil Code, opposed by Muslims.

Assam repealed the Assam Muslim Marriages and Divorces Registration Act, 1935, effective from Feb. 24, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma wrote on X on Saturday. "This act contained provisions allowing marriage registration even if the bride and groom had not reached the legal ages of 18 and 21... This move marks another significant step towards prohibiting child marriages in Assam."

Asked by Reuters on Sunday whether the northeastern state would implement a Uniform Civil Code before general elections due by May, Sarma said: "Not immedi-

ately". Many Muslims in Assam trace their roots to the neighbouring Bengali-speaking and Muslim-majority country of Bangladesh. Tension often flares between the Muslims and ethnic Assamese, who are mostly Hindu.

The BJP, the governing party in Assam - and Uttarakhand - calls itself the champion of ethnic communities. Muslim opposition leaders said repealing the colonial-era law was discriminatory.

"They want to polarise their voters by provoking Muslims, which Muslims will not let happen," Badruddin Ajmal, a lawmaker from Assam who heads the All India United Democratic Front that mainly fights for Muslim causes, told reporters on Saturday.

Talks with PML-N on ministries moving in right direction: MQM-P

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): MQM-P leader Syed Mustafa Kamal has said that talks with the PML-N on ministries were well underway and there was no "deadlock".

Kamal said that there were no issues, adding that the parties' last meeting was a positive one.

He said that the first step for the elected members is to take oath in Parliament followed by the oath-taking of the premier. "The cabinet will come after that," he said, adding that the "procedure is being processed" and the parties were moving in the right direction. "There is no deadlock," he reiterated.

Health, education facilities critical for women empowerment: President Alvi

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi said the provision of health and education facilities were critical factors for achieving the goal of women's empowerment. He underscored the need for the provision of a harassment-free environment to women so that they could become part of the workforce and contribute to economic growth.

The President expressed these views while speaking at the 5th edition of the HUM Women Leaders Award 2024.

The President said, "Today we celebrate women leaders for their endeavors and men who contributed to the economic empowerment of women." Talking about the rights of women, he cited the saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who said that a man who raised two daughters earned his place in paradise. President Dr Arif Alvi stated that women in human societies, through the ages, were epitome of love and hope and they taught children love and kept the family system intact. He pointed out that women suffered the most in wars and acts of genocide, adding millions lost their lives in genocides in the previous centuries. The President criticized the acts of genocide by Israeli forces in

Gaza, saying that thousands of women and children were killed.

The President further said genocide was committed in Gaza for the vested interests and in negation of humanitarian values.

The President said that the Pakistani nation had capability to overcome challenges as it did during the COVID-19 pandemic, through collective efforts and Pakistan remained the third most successful country in tackling the deadly disease. He urged the nation to work together and forge unity to address the numerous challenges including poverty, malnutrition, stunting and maternal and neonatal deaths.

The President lamented that more than 26 million children in the country were still out of school. In comparison, enrollment of children in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India were higher, he mentioned.

He said China focused on health and education sectors to lift 700 million people out of poverty and Pakistan should adopt the same path.

The President also lauded the nation, particularly women and youth for their participation in the voting process during the general election.

Speaking on the occasion, First Lady Samina Alvi commended the

efforts of organizers and added that these awards recognized and encouraged our unsung heroes; our sisters for their valuable contribution in different walks of life. She urged women to come forward to avail the easy loans offered by banks for setting up businesses.

Organizer of the Award Show, President Hum Television Sultana Siddiqui, said that the Women Leaders Awards were organized every year to acknowledge the role of women and felicitate women leaders and entrepreneurs who overcame obstacles through continuous struggle and made their mark in their respective fields. The President and the First Lady along with other distinguished personalities bestowed awards on women leaders for their outstanding contribution in the fields of education, health and business.

Sheba Najmi, Khurshid Bano, Razia Korejo, Huma Fakhar, Bibi Amna, Sania Saeed, Sheema Kirmani, Sadiqa Salahuddin, Numaira Saleem, Dr Amany Asfour, Dr Amjad Saqib and Dr Izzeldin Abuelaish were the recipients of awards for their significant contributions to society. Ministers, diplomats and members of civil society also attended the ceremony.

Russia says its forces take better positions near Avdiivka and Donetsk

Ukraine floats possibility of inviting Russia to peace summit

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia said on Sunday that its forces had taken more advantageous positions near Avdiivka and Donetsk after President Vladimir Putin ordered the military to push further into Ukraine after two years of full-scale war. Russia's defence ministry said its troops had pushed back Ukrainian forces near Klishchiivka, Dyleyevka and Kurdiuvivka in the Donetsk region and taken better positions near Avdiivka which fell to Russia earlier this month.

"In the Donetsk direction, units of the Southern grouping of troops improved the situation along the front line and defeated formations of the 22nd, 28th and 92nd mechanised brigades of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the areas of the settlements of Klishchiivka, Dyleyevka and Kurdiuvivka," it said.

"In the Avdiivka direction, units of the Centre group of forces occupied more advantageous lines and positions, and also defeated manpower and equipment of the 3rd Assault Brigade of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the 107th Air Defence Brigade."

The ministry said Russian troops had repelled seven Ukrainian counterattacks in the area. A total of 77 Ukrainian drones were destroyed, the ministry said.

Reuters was unable to immediately verify battlefield accounts from either side in the war. Putin said on Tuesday Russian troops would push further into Ukraine to build on their success on the battlefield after the fall of the town

KYIV (Reuters): Ukraine and its foreign partners could invite Russia to a future peace summit to discuss an end to Moscow's two-year-old invasion on Kyiv's terms, a senior Ukrainian official said on Sunday.

Switzerland will host a summit to discuss a vision for peace by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, which could be handed to Russia during a second meeting at a later date, said Andriy Yermak, Zelenskyy's chief of staff.

"There can be a situation in which we together invite representatives of the Russian Federation, where they will be presented with the plan in case whoever is representing the aggressor country at that

time will want to genuinely end this war and return to a just peace," he said during a televised conference in Kyiv.

Zelenskyy first announced his peace formula at a November 2022 summit of the Group of 20 major economies. It calls for restoring Ukraine's territorial integrity and a total withdrawal of Russian troops.

Kyiv has maintained that it would not speak with Moscow until all Russian troops have left Ukrainian territory.

The Kremlin has said there is no current basis for peace talks between Russia and Ukraine and that Kyiv's peace plan was absurd because it excluded Russia.

deep mine fields patrolled by drones and guarded by heavy artillery.

Russia currently controls a little under one fifth of territory internationally recognised to be Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says he will not rest until every last Russian soldier is ejected.

Russia says the territory its forces control is part of Russia and that it will never be given up.

PML-N leaders say to contact all parties for grand dialogue

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Ayaz Sadiq has said he and Khawaja Saad Rafique will go to the leadership of all political parties for initiating a grand dialogue to steer the country out of crises.

Addressing the party workers here on Sunday, he said the PML-N and its allies would make all possible efforts to tackle the gigantic challenges facing the country currently. He said he and Kh Saad Rafique wished that all political forces get united on common points of the national interest. He hoped that all other political parties would also like to join hands to overcome problems facing the common man and the country.

Former National Assembly speaker said the government job was to conduct legislative and developmental works and the opposition could criticise it. However, that criticism should be constructive, he said and added that he and Khawaja Saad would try to unite all stakeholders just for betterment and prosperity of the country.

He said stability of Pakistan was essential for all stakeholders, adding that the PML-N did not believe in politics of revenge. "The PML-N does not want to follow politics done from 2018 to 2022," he added.

Speaking at the event, Kh Saad Rafique said, "The PML-N does not believe in politics of humiliation." He said there was a need to show tolerance and focus should be on solving problems of masses. He said, "The PML-N is a pro-democratic party."

India 'fully stops' water flow to Pakistan with Shahpur Kandi barrage on Ravi river

ISLAMABAD (INP): The water flow of Ravi river has reportedly been stopped to Pakistan after the completion of Shahpur Kandi barrage which is situated on the borders of Indian Punjab and the state of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, as per Indian media reports.

India Today reported that previously allotted 1150 cusecs water of Pakistan, will now benefit the region of Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). The water will be benefiting 32,000 hectares of land in the Kathua and Samba districts.

Indian perusing the water terrorism agenda, now executing the latest project of Shahkandi barrage that would supposedly be used for 'irrigation and for hydro power generation' but at the cost of cutting the flow towards Pakistan. Already India so far constructed many dams like Bhakra Dam on Sutlej, Pong and Pandoh Dam on the Beas and Thein (Ranjitsagar) on the Ravi.

The Indus Waters Treaty is a water-sharing agreement between India and Pakistan, arranged by the World Bank, signed on September 19, 1960.

The treaty divides the rivers into two categories: Eastern Rivers (Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi) which are allocated to India, and Western Rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab) which are allocated to Pakistan.

Indian media reported Shahpur Kandi dam completion allows India to make maximum use of the River Ravi water previously flowing towards

Pakistan from the Lakhapur dam. It is pertinence to note that former Indian Prime Minister Narsima Rao laid the foundation stone for the shahpur kandi in 1995 and remained disputed for almost over four and a half years. Earlier, addressing the UN Security Council, Pakistan Permanent Representative in the United Nations Ambassador Munir Akram said Pakistan aims to reinvigorate the Indus River basin which provides food security to over 225 million people. Pakistan has called for strict implementation of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty to address the looming water crisis. He said that to this end, Pakistan has launched the multi-dimensional Living Indus projects.

officials, judges of the Supreme Court and high courts, federal secretaries, attorney general of Pakistan, auditor general of Pakistan, chief ministers of Punjab and Sindh, provincial governors and other dignitaries will attend the event.

According to well-informed sources in the federal capital, the prime minister after taking the oath of his office will request the president to also administer the oath to the MNAs who will become ministers in the first phase.

Justice Qazi Faez Isa, Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, Joint Chief of Staff Committee Chairman General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi, Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshall Zahoor Ahmad Babar, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar, members of his cabinet and foreign envoys will be in attendance. Similarly, high-ranking civil and military

ISLAMABAD (INP): The country's new prime minister will take oath of his office by March 1, 2024, it was learnt on Sunday.

President Arif Alvi will administer the oath at a ceremony to be held at the President's House either on February 29 (Thursday) or March 1 (Friday).

Before that either on February 28 or February 29, the newly elected members of the National Assembly (MNAs) will elect leader of the House through 'show of hands'.