

SJC meeting summoned
F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi Faez Isa on Monday summoned a meeting of the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) on February 29 to consider the complaints of misconduct against former apex court judge Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi. Mazahar Naqvi is probably the only judge who is facing proceedings of misconduct after his resignation.



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PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, along with Provincial Ministers addressing a press conference.

Maryam sworn in first woman CM of Punjab

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Monday took the oath as the Chief Minister of Punjab during a grand but solemn ceremony at the sprawling lawns of the Governor's House here.

Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman administered the oath to Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif who became the first-ever elected woman chief executive of a province in the country. Punjab Chief Secretary Zahid Zaman read the orders of the appointment.

On this historic occasion of a woman taking over reins as Chief Minister, Maryam Nawaz Sharif was flanked by her father and Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and uncle Prime Minister-designate Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif while she also placed a photo of her late mother Kalsoom Nawaz Sharif in front of her on the occasion. Instead of the traditional Darbar Hall, the oath-taking was held at the lawns of the Governor's House to make room for more guests to watch their popular leader making history. The ceremony started with recitation of verses from the holy Quran followed by Naat e Rasool e Maqbool Khatam un Nabiyeen Muhammad (P.B.U.H.).

The ceremony was attended by a large number of diplomats, Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) leadership, MNAs, MPAs, representatives of the armed forces, government functionaries including the Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Zaman, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwer, lawyers, senior journalists, anchors, and a large number of party workers.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's family including her husband Capt. (Retd) Safdar, son Junaid Safdar, daughters and granddaughters were present on the occasion. Former Chief Minister Hamza Shehbaz Sharif and Salman Shehbaz were also present. The US Consul General in Lahore Kristin Hawkins, Chinese Consul General Zhao Shiren, Türkiye Consul General in Lahore Durmus Bastug and Iranian Consul General in Lahore Mehran Movahed were among the distinguished guests.

Conspicuous among the party leaders were Ishaq Dar, Ahsan Iqbal, Talal

Chaudhry, Amir Muqam, Attaullah Tarar, Rana Sanaullah Khan, Pervaiz Rasheed, Khawaja Saad Rafique, Ayaz Sadiq, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Rohail Asghar, Khurram Dastgir Khan, and Mian Javed Latif.

Meanwhile, in her first speech on floor of the assembly as chief minister, the newly elected Chief Minister of Punjab Maryam Nawaz has assured that the doors of CM office and her heart will remain opened for ruling and opposition members round the clock. She thanked Allah Almighty for giving her respect and congratulated the speaker and deputy speaker on assuming their respective offices. "I hope that under your leadership, the House will hold democratic values high," she stressed.

Maryam Nawaz regretting the absence of the opposition members said she wished they were here. "Being democratic workers, we understand how important it is to compete in politics. We have also faced difficult times when every tide was against us, and cruelty and brutality were inflicted on us. But thank God, we did not leave the field," she stressed.

She said she wished the opposition members were present to create emotion during her speech. Maryam said, "I am a chief minister for everyone, including those who did not vote for me. The doors of my office and the doors of my heart are always open for the opposition." She further thanked the members of the allied parties, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), PML-Q and PML-Zia.

The newly elected chief minister also gave her five-year agenda and salient features of which were as under: Vision to make Punjab an economic hub; Focus on solving problems of Lahore and Punjab as first priority; Policies to ease doing business for investors; Activation of price control committees; Launch of Ramazan package named "Nighebaan"; Restarting Ramazan Bazaar model; Revival and upgrading of government school infrastructure and curriculum; Introduction of Punjab's first air ambulance service; Establishment of at least one Daanish school in every district; Aim for equal

Pakistan to seek loan package plus climate finance from IMF

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan will seek a loan package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) plus 1.5 billion dollars climate finance, sources said on Monday. The country is exploring the possibility of increasing the program to \$7.5-8 billion, reportedly seeking addition of climate finance in the next bailout package, sources said.

Climate finance will be sought to expand the loan package. The International Monetary Fund provides affordable long-term financing for countries dealing with climate change and pandemics. According to sources, the authorities are looking for options to increase the upcoming IMF bailout package to 7.5 to 8 billion dollars with possible application for climate finance.

Sources said that the IMF Board of Governors in its meeting in December last year had approved enhancing the quota of all countries and this decision will also be implementable over Pakistan. "Under this decision Pakistan could borrow from 6 to 8 billion dollars". Pakistan is seeking a Bangladesh-style deal with the IMF for special financing of 1.5 billion dollars for climate finance, sources said. Sources said that Pakistan have to allocate initial fund for betterment of the environment before seeking the loan from the global lending institution.

Court allows PTI founder meeting with lawyers

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday allowed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan to hold one-on-one meeting with his lawyers in the absence of jail security personnel.

As per details, the PTI founder's plea was disposed of after the court directed the jail administration to allow the counsel to meet Imran Khan alone as per the jail manual. The court ordered that no jail security personnel should be present during Khan's meeting with his counsel and they can also carry pencil and papers in Adiala Jail. Furthermore, the Islamabad High Court also approved the plea seeking a meeting between former prime minister and his political advisors. Earlier, An anti-terrorism court allowed PTI leader Omar Ayub Khan to meet the incarcerated party founder Imran Khan in Adiala Jail.

However, Omar Ayub later claimed that he was barred by the jail authorities from meeting Imran Khan in Adiala Jail. It is pertinent to mention here that PTI founder Imran Khan is currently in Adiala Jail, where he is incarcerated in Toshakhana, Cipher and illegal nikah case. Imran Khan has been facing a number of legal challenges since his ouster in April 2022 through a no-confidence motion.

(Continued on Back Page)

Strong response will be given against national integrity:CJCSC

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The Armed Forces of Pakistan, along with the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) and Services Chiefs, commemorate the fifth anniversary of "Operation Swift Retort." February 27, 2019, marked a significant event in our history, demonstrating the resolve of the people of Pakistan and the professionalism of the Armed Forces in response to unwarranted aggression from India, motivated by political considerations and electoral concerns. Despite desperate Indian

attempts to favourably shape the information space, the events of that fateful day showcased absolute operational ascendancy of Pakistan's Armed Forces over the Indian side. The steadfastness and competence of Pakistan's Armed Forces were acknowledged by military experts and analysts throughout the world, effectively debunking frivolous Indian claims which could not stand to factual scrutiny. The strategic foresight to return the downed pilot in interest of peace, from a position of strength and after having dominated the opposing force decisively,

is, unanimously hailed, to this day, by the international community as a remarkable gesture of political maturity and superior statecraft. As a state committed to peace, we shall continue to emphasize the importance of peaceful coexistence with our neighbours. Any aggression against the people of Pakistan, our sovereignty and territorial integrity, will however be responded immediately, with full might and without any hesitation. Every single time. INSHALLAH. Pakistan Armed Forces Z i n d a b a d , P a k i s t a n Paaindabad

NA Secretariat summons new session on 29th

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly Secretariat has convened the lower house of parliament's session on February 29 at 10am following President Arif Alvi's refusal.

In a statement on Monday, the secretariat said the NA session is bound to take place on the 21st day of the general elections under Article 91 of the Constitution. The president could have summoned the session on the 21st day but he did not, the

secretariat officials said. The NA secretariat said the president and speaker's notification is not required to summon the session on the 21st day of the polling.

Earlier on Monday, sources told media that outgoing Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has "decided" to convene the inaugural session of the new lower house of parliament on February 29 amid a looming constitutional crisis. The development came moments after President Arif Alvi reportedly rejected a summary to summon

the NA session, sources said, in which MNAs-elect will take oath.

Alvi believed that the NA was incomplete sans the allocation of all the reserved seats to the political parties. While the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has allocated reserved seats to political parties, it has not awarded reserved quota to the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed independent candidates joined their ranks.

The Frontier Post

Fawad's bail plea dismissed

ISLAMABAD (PPI): An accountability court in Islamabad on Monday rejected the bail plea of former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry in a corruption case. AC judge Nasir Javed heard the case and rejected Chaudhry's bail plea in a case related to misappropriation in construction projects in Jhelum. Former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry along with his group announced the boycott of the general elections 2024.

Despite law and order situation, KP govt hold elections

KP CM says caretaker provincial government managed to steer province out of financial crunches

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah on Monday said that when he took charge of the office of Chief Minister, the province was faced with acute financial crunches and there was no cushion available even to pay the salaries of employees, but through better team work and effective strategy, the caretaker provincial government managed to steer the province out of the financial crunches.

He said that at this point of time there existed an amount Rs.100 billion in the provincial exchequer, whereas during the period the caretaker government did not borrow even a single penny from any financial institution. He said that the issue of the outstanding dues of the province against the federal government was effectively taken up at federal level which yielded fruitful results.

He said that the provincial government was able to receive an additional amount of Rs. 64 billion from the center adding that an amount of Rs. 4.1 billion was received through reconciliation between KP Revenue Authority and Federal Board of Revenue, an additional amount of Rs. 20 billion was received under National Finance Commission Award, an amount of Rs. 28 billion was received under AIP for the merged districts whereas an amount of Rs. 12 billion was received in the head of Net Hydel Profit.

He was addressing a press conference regarding the achievements of his government here. Flanked by provincial ministers Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel, Ahmad Rasool Banagash, Dr. Najeeb Ullah and others, the Chief Minister said that despite difficult law and order situation, the caretaker provincial government was able to hold the General Elections in a peaceful and transparent manner for which he is thankful to Allah Almighty and added that all this was possible because of the hard

work and close coordination of civil administration, armed forces , police and other relevant entities for which they deserve huge appreciation.

Touching upon the achievements in education sector, Syed Arshad Hussain Shah remarked that with the collaboration of Pak Army and Frontier Corps, "Education for All Campaign" was launched in the province under which 33,000 children were enrolled in schools, 134 dis-functional schools were functionalized, Digital Skills Labs were established in 10 different schools, 250 teachers were hired under Parents Teacher Council Funds and 961 student were provide with Hostel facility.

"In Planning and Development sector, 57 developmental projects worth Rs. 206 billions were cleared from PDWP, different mega projects worth Rs. 109 billion were cleared from ECNEC, similarly PC-1 of 1337 km long roads and 62 bridges worth Rs. 105 billion were cleared under Rural Roads Development Projects", the Chief Minister said adding that rationalization of 376 developmental projects was carried out resulting in a saving of Rs.24 billion to the provincial exchequer.

Regarding achievements in Energy and Power sector the Chief Minister said electrification of three union councils in district Shangla was completed with a cost of Rs.485 million, an amount of Rs. 5.5 billion was received from the electricity produced by the provincial government being supplied to the National Grid, successful negotiation were made with Asian Development Bank and European Union for the rehabilitation of flood affected Ranolia Hydro Power projects and Mini Micro Hydro power projects respectively.

Touching upon the Mines and Minerals sector, Syed Arshad Hussain Shah stated that during his tenure Mines & Mineral Profit Sharing Rules 2023 were framed and approved, 400 licensee were issued for attracting private investments whereas Rs.2.7 billion would be

received under the head of Royalty and Excise Duty.

With regard to Information Technology sector, the Chief Minister remarked that KP Right of Way Policy was approved, status of Special Technology Zone was given to Digital City Haripur, and Digital Workspace was launched in 32 departments. The Chief Minister specially mentioned his efforts for the newly merged districts and said that medical equipment worth billion of Rupees were provided to the hospitals of merged districts, 13 hospitals of the merged districts were outsourced to improve healthcare services, industrial activities were started in the Economic Zones of merged districts whereas feasibility was carried out for setting up Economic Zones in Kurram and Wana. "Khushal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Program was launched with its main features being Good Governance, Zero Tolerance Policy against corruption, reforms in revenue system, crackdown against illegal encroachments and narcotics etc".

Syed Arshad Hussain shah maintained and added that under the Human Resource Export Strategy of the caretaker government, result oriented steps were taken to export five hundred thousand youth to International job markets after being imparted market based training in technical education and IT sectors.

Touching upon the health sector, the Chief Minister stated that steps were taken for the establishment of two medical universities, enhancement of 3,000 seats in medical and dental colleges of the province, enhancement of seats in nursing colleges, enhancement of 150 seats for Trainee Medical Officers and creating 60 internships for Physiotherapist adding that quantum computing was introduced in the province whereas 20,000 google scholarships were obtained for the youth of the province. The Chief Minister extended special thanks to civil bureaucracy, police, armed forces, media and the general public for their support during his tenure as Chief Minister.



KARACHI: Syed Murad Ali Shah speaking on Assembly floor after being elected as Chief Minister of Sindh.

Murad Ali Shah becomes Sindh's CM for third time

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Newly-elected Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on Monday sought help from both sides of the aisle, the government benches and opposition benches, after being chosen as the provincial chief executive for a record third time.

The Sindh Assembly earlier today elected Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) candidate, Murad, as the chief minister of Sindh. The third time e lucky, has served twice as Sindh's chief minister from 2016 to 2018 and then from 2018 to 2023, and this will be his third consecutive term.

Taking the floor after his election, CM Murad thanked PPP and its top leadership for choosing him for the post. "I have been chosen for the third time for leading the province and I have been elected as the member of this House for the fifth time," he said Recalling his early days in politics, Murad said that his father had told him and his brother that one of them should contest in the 2002

polls as he couldn't at that time. He said that PPP leader Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, who was in exile at that time, encouraged him to take part in the polls.

He recalled the "time" when talks of his arrest were on the rise but Bilawal said that "Murad will be my CM from jail" if he is sent to prison. Murad also mentioned how he reformed himself without criticism. "PPP will not play with the security of the country for just a few seats that were taken away from us. Instead, we will fight a legal war for them," he said.

The CM-elect said that there have big terrorist incidents in the last six months, but the new government will have a special focus on improving the peace and security situation, with getting rid of the dacoits in the kacha areas on top of the priority list. Speaking about Bilawal's determination, Murad recalled the catastrophic floods in Sindh in 2022, saying that the PPP chairman had tasked him to

prepare a plan to house the displaced people.

"I thought Bilawal is a young politician, he will forget about it, but he asked me right on the next morning about the plan," he said. He then lauded PPP founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, saying that if anyone has the credit for making Pakistan a nuclear state, it is the former prime minister.

Murad then prayed for courage to run the province and the ability to bring all parties and opposition in harmony while dealing with provincial affairs. Today, the election for the province's chief executive began after a half-an-hour delay via an open ballot with those supporting Muran and MQM-P Khurshidi directed to go right and left of the assembly hall, respectively. A total of 148 members of the assembly participated in the polling, which saw Murad securing 112 votes to become the 25th chief minister of Sindh in the contest against MQM-P Ali Khurshidi, who got only 36 votes to his name.

IHC issues notice to NAB, FIA on Imran, Bushra's pleas

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has issued notices to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), and the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to seek their replies by Thursday (February 29) over incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, his wife Bushra Bibi, and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's pleas challenging their sentences in cipher and Toshakhana cases.

The IHC's two-member division bench comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Mian Gul Hassan Aurangzeb conducted the hearing on Khan, and co-convict Qureshi's pleas seeking the overturning of their 10-year sentences pronounced by the trial courts in the cipher case. The IHC office also removed objections to an appeal submitted by the disqualified prime minister.

Additionally, notices have been issued to the anti-corruption watchdog for Thursday over Khan and Bushra's pleas against their 14-year, each, imprisonment in the Toshakhana case. At the outset of the hearing, PTI counsel Barrister Ali Zafar argued that unusual occurrences were witnessed during the trial.

The chief justice remarked that the counsel should point out disagreements at the time of raising arguments during the hearing. It is noteworthy to mention here that in the previous hearing, a bench was also constituted to hear the bail application of Imran Khan in the £190 million corruption case. Last month, ex-PM Khan and former foreign minister Qureshi were sentenced to 10 years, each, in the cipher case by a special court established under the Official Secrets Act 2023.

PTI completes consultation for finalization for Cabinet

PESHAWAR (APP): PTI's committee has completed a consultation for the finalization of names for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinet to be composed of 15 to 20 members including ministers, advisers and special assistants.

According to party sources, the committee has finalized the name of Ali Amin Gandapur as the Chief Minister. Chief Minister, while the losing candidates in the general elections would be included in the cabinet as advisers and special assistants.

The party leadership recommended to giving the position of Deputy Speaker of KP assembly to a female member Suraiya Bibi from Chitral, as desired by the party chairman.

The names recommended by the committee for the provincial cabinet would be forwarded to the PTI chairman for final approval, said party sources adding two former ministers Taimur Saleem Jhagra and Kamran Bangash, who could not win the general elections would also be included in the cabinet as advisers.

PTI leader Ali Amin decides to contest KP CM election as independent

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Amin Gandapur, a potential candidate for the office of KP Chief Minister, has decided to take oath in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly as an independent.

Gandapur has not submitted his affidavit of joining Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) as he was eyeing on the position of provincial president of PTI which would not be possible in case of joining SIC.

According to party sources, Gandapur would contest the election of party's provincial president during the intra-party elections scheduled for March 3.

Atif writes to PTI CEC to notify his name as party chairman

PESHAWAR (APP): PTI leader Atif Aleem has written a letter to chief election commissioner PTI Rauf Hassan requesting him to notify his name as party chairman.

According to the letter, Aleem said that he had been elected as chairman of PTI as per the election rules, adding that according to the resolution of the general body and the election schedule, no one except him had submitted the papers for the chairmanship.

He said that as per the directives of the party's chief election commissioner, he submitted his papers before February 2 and there was no other candidate in the row therefore he had been elected as unopposed chairman of PTI.

He further said that on February 2 he came to know through social media about the postponement of the party's election, which was announced by Barrister Gohar on behalf of the founder of PTI.

Aleem further sought the list of all the candidates who were elected unopposed from all over the country, said the letter.

ANP to stage protest in front of KP assembly

PESHAWAR (APP): Awami National Party on Monday announced to hold a protest demonstration in front of the Provincial Assembly here on February 28 at 2 pm.

A press release issued here by Bacha Khan Markaz said that the Provincial President of ANP Aimal Wali Khan has announced the demonstration which was aimed at condemning the alleged rigging in the elections.

He said ANP had been struggling for supremacy of the constitution, democracy, and people's rule. He appealed to the people of KP to join ANP's protest for real democracy in the country.

Aimal directed all party officials, organizations, and other leaders to make full preparations for the protest demonstration.

Ban imposes on mobile use in schools

PESHAWAR (APP): The Elementary and Secondary Education Department in KP has decided to impose a ban on mobile use in public sector schools to save the precious time of students.

According to a notification issued here on Monday the students and staff will submit their mobiles to the school's staff. The school heads will contact the parents by landline phone during any emergency. School staff will only be able to use mobile during recess or free periods.

Permission will be necessary from relevant school heads to make photography or videos.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali shakes hands with Jamia Darul Ulom Sarhad Sheikhul Hadis Maulana Ihsanul Haq.

Local strawberry arrives in market with lower price

PESHAWAR Strawberry crops produced in district Charsadda have arrived in the market at a lower price for the people.

Compared to last year 240 acres, this year the crop was cultivated on 250 acres. Last year, the produced yield was 705 tons.

The crop is cultivated in the month of November and begins production in February, which continues till April. Antioxidants in strawberries, including vitamin C, which support the immune system and lower your chances of getting sick when you're around germs. It also helps curb inflammation, manage your blood sugar, and guard against health conditions like high cholesterol, cancer, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

Though the fruit is being sold at the rate of Rs.300 to Rs.350 per kilogram, growers are complaining of low price as compared to their cost on its production.

Asad, a local farmer, said that he has been cultivating the crop for the last 8 years, but he has never got profit in proportion to the cost. Growers complain that though the crop cost highly, but due to the prior presence of already produced strawberries in Punjab, they are getting less-price than the farmers of the latter. The crop of Punjab usually comes earlier in the market, it was sold at the rate of Rs.1400/- per kilogram, while the same fruit produced in KP is sold for Rs.300/- to Rs.350 per kilogram.

In his comments on the production of strawberry crop, an official of the Agriculture Department said that the growers are hesitant in approaching the field officers to get advice regarding improvement in the production. Neither the growers are seeking advice regarding method growing nor about needs of fertilizer, which results in less production.

However, the official said that they always remained in constant contact with the growers in order to provide them first-hand knowledge about its cultivation and diseases and help resolve their problems relating to production and delay in it.

According to experts, the cultivation on one acre produces about 400 kilograms of strawberry and beside markets across the country is also exported to neighbouring Afghanistan.

Rain, snowfall in KP to be continued

PESHAWAR (INP): A new spell of rain and snowfall in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa starting from Monday was likely to persist till Friday, said provincial meteorological office.

According to the report of meteorological office, intermittent and heavy rains with snowfall in upper parts and hilly areas were likely to occur till Friday, next. These weatherly conditions will cause a mercury drop in upper parts and also add to chilly conditions in plain areas. The rainfall and snowfall were likely to occur during evening hours in the upper parts.

The weather remained cloudy in the provincial metropolis, the Met office said, adding that light rain was likely to prevail during the current week.

On the other hand, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has informed the district administrations regarding arranging pre-emptive measures to deal with any situation.

DG PDMA, Muhammad Qaisar Khan has also asked the general public to remain at a distance from electricity wires, dilapidated structures, signboards, and billboards during heavy rain and fast winds.

The locals and tourists were also advised to refrain from unnecessary traveling and adopt all preemptive measures during traveling.

Meanwhile, the snowfall spell in South Waziristan that remained halted for some days, restarted during the night on Sunday, and around one foot of snowfall was recorded in Shawal, Makeen, Kaniguram, Karwan Manza, and Parigal areas of the tribal district.

The snowfall has blocked most roads in South Waziristan, creating hardship for the locals and visitors.

LRH OPD to remain open on Saturday

PESHAWAR (APP): The administration of Lady Reading Hospital has ended two weekly offs and announced that the OPD would remain open on Saturday for facilitation of patients.

The spokesman of LRH Muhammad Asim said that doctors would be available in the OPD from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, while private checkup would be conducted from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. It is pertinent to mention here that earlier, OPD working hours were 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. with two weekly offs on Saturdays and Sundays.



PESHAWAR: Farmers busy in work on their field.

Mayor directs beautification

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar Zubair Ali here Monday visited the GorKhatri archaeological complex where he took keen interest in its historical significance. He directed the deployment of additional staff and emphasized the need for cleaning, installation of security gates, beautification, and improved lighting.

He urged authorities to enhance facilities for both the Mosque and Hindu temple situated within the premises of Gor Khatri archaeological site. He went around of the site and issued instructions for its cleanliness.



PESHAWAR: Cleaning work starts at KP assembly building for a new assembly session 2024.

KP PSC tentatively selects 85 candidates for BPS 17

PESHAWAR (APP): As a consequence of competitive written examination, psychological test and viva voce, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission has tentatively selected 85 candidates for appointment as PMS Officer in BPS-17.

The selectees include Ms Aziza, Muhammad Umair, Ms Minahil Gohar, Muhammad Hamza Mutahir, Muhammad Arif, Syed Ali Wajahat Ayub, Riaz Ahmad, Tabish Ali Khan, Junaid Zakir, Ms Yameen Sana, Ms Faryal Shuaib, Farhad Ullah, Mujahid Wasim Durani, Zeeshan Iqbal, Muhammad Usama, Ms Fatima Khaliq, Ms Nida Shams, Muhammad Bilal, Dania Khan, Yasir Israr, Sajid Ali Khan, Taimoor Ul Hassan, Nasir Kamal, Ms Ammara Arif Baloch, Asad Zahoor, Syed Ahmad Jamal Shah, Ms Sara Saeed, Ms Annol Anwar, Adil Shehzad, Mujahid Khan, Rizwan Ullah, Muhammad Sumair Khan, Izharullah, Sardar Behram, Ms Adan Zahid, Ms Muniza, Ms Aimen Wali Khan, Hamza Ayaz, Kamran Ali Shah, Muhammad Asad Khan, Muhammad Ikhlas Saleem, Ms Arooba Iftikhar, Shan E Azam, Noman Waheed, Shujaat Ali Khan, Ms Rabia Afridi, Ms Tooba Sana, Ms Hajra Rehman, Asad Ullah, Ahmad Arsalan Khalil, Ms Uswa Jamila, Junaid Jamsheed, Sadiq Ullah, Asad Ullah, Sajjad Hussain, Ms Saira Khan, Saiful Islam, Shah Naveed, Ms Sumbal, Junaid Saeed, Muhammad Adeel Khan, Ms Hania Shah, Saqib Rahim, Khushal Khan Khattak, Saifullah, Inayat Ullah, Ms Anum Jehangir, Muhammad Imran, Jamal Ahmad, Zainul Abideen, Junaid Ismail, Haris Naseer, Muhammad Arif Khan Haseeb Pervaiz, Ms Minahil Shawal Afridi, Muhammad Ishfaq Alam, Ms Farhana Hayat, Ms Shaista Gul Khattak, Ms Mahzad Sareer, Ms Ume e Roman, Ms Afnan Raza, Ms Maham Babar, Ms Afsheen Rehman, Ms Ammara Javed and Ms Farda Ihsan.

67 winners to become MPAs for first time

PESHAWAR (APP): Around 67 winning candidates in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa out of the total 114 notified by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to become Members Provincial Assembly (MPAs) for the first time.

According to data released by ECP KP, these 67 new MPAs belong to 13 districts of the province. While 47 winning candidates have remained MPAs in previous terms.

The ECP KP has so far issued notification of 114 members out of the total of 145 as winning candidates. The assembly will be completed with the issuance of notification of 31 more members.

Among these new MPAs, the maximum are from the Peshawar district where electorates choose 11 fresh candidates as their representatives in the legislative assembly.

Ceremony of book preview and Mushaira held at UET

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The launching ceremony of Professor Dr. Afzal Khan's book and a pleasant Urdu-Pashto mushaira was held at University of Engineering, Peshawar was held on Monday with under the umbrella of ASME. Prof. Dr. Afzal Khan and Dr. Muhammad Alamzeb organised the event.

In the first session during the book launching ceremony Engineer Siraj-ul-Haq Siraj introduced the book in Urdu and then Professor Dr. Saeed Ahmad Saeed did the same in Pashto.

After the launching of the book a colorful mushaira took place in which Nawidullah Marwat, Asrar Ghalib and Altaf Hussain were the compere of the mushaira. In this pleasant mushaira, these poets presented their poems; Ahmed Saeed, Dr. Syed Zubair Shah, Fazl Maboud Diyar, Mrs. Samina Qadir, Zafar Khan Zafar, Dr. Zaigham Hasan, Professor Dr. Abd al-shakoor, Safdar Ali Safdar, Shamsad Angar, Riyaz Ahmad Hiran, Shahab Shaheen, Usama and Dr. Fazl Kabir and in addition to some students.

This colorful and enjoyable event was attended by distinguished scholars, faculty and students (boys and girls) from different engineering universities of Pakistan and many of them looked very happy on this occasion with their smiling faces. The event extended until midnight, while the poets kept the party warm with their words, on the other hand, the students expressed their warm feelings by applauding and chanting with joy under the moon as the green ground below was illuminated by the lights of countless bright lanterns flown by the students in the sky.

The organizers of the university gave certificates of appreciation and a heavy Pashtun feast to the poets.

Two drug peddlers arrested

PESHAWAR (APP): The Excise Police on Monday arrested two drug peddlers and recovered 10 kg of heroin and six kg of hashish.

According to the spokesman, the Excise Police Station Peshawar Region conducted an operation on Ring Road Motorway opposite DSP Pump Peshawar and foiled a bid to smuggle large quantities of drugs to Punjab.

During the operation, 10 kg of heroin was recovered from the secret compartments of the vehicle, said the spokesman adding that an accused Rehman Syed, resident of Timargara, district Lower Dir was arrested on the spot.

In another operation, six kg of hashish was recovered from the hidden compartments of the vehicle and a peddler Zeeshan Ahmed resident of Gulbela Kochian, Peshawar was arrested. The excise police registered cases and started further investigation from the accused.

Health teams to administer polio vaccine

PESHAWAR (APP): Health Department, district Mardan has informed the parents that the health care team will administer the polio vaccine to the children under the age of five. The campaign will commence from Sunday March 3. In this campaign, children will also be given vitamin A capsules, of which blue capsules will be for children between six months to one year, while red capsules will be for children from one year to five years.

Power suspension notified

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Monday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from Peshawar University Grid Station on 27th and 29th February from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of University Campus, Canal Town, Malakandher, Engineering, Regi, Taj Abad, Taj Abad 2, Agriculture, Mera Achini, HMC, Ring Road, Danish Abad, Ghrbi Abad, Rahatabad 1, CMB and Abdara feeders will face inconvenience.

It said that power supply will remain suspended from RMT Grid Station on 27th and 29th February from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of Safdar Abad 2, RMT, Professor Model Town, Dorani Media Colony, Sheikh Yaseen feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from PESCO Colony Grid Station on 27th and 29th February from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of Bank of Khyber, Scarp 1, ICF, Darmangi, Warsak Road and Jail feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from Peshawar Cantt Grid Station on 27th and 29th February from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of Tehkal, Islamia College, KTH, Commercial, Jahangir Abad, University Town, NCB, Air Port, PAF Base, Saddar Road, Mall Road, MES 1, 2, Old MES, Babu Garhi, Marble Industry, SAA, Palosi 1, Behri Colony, Tehkal Payan feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply, it said will also remain suspended from Mardan Grid Station on 27th and 28th February from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly consumers of Mohabbat Abad, Express, SIDB, Shaikh Maltoon, Industrial, SIDB, Janabad, Pakistan Chowk, Canal Road, New Charsadda Road, New Manga, Saleem Khan and Gujar Ghari.



In brief

Two killed in road mishap

SARGODHA (INP): Two people were killed in a motorcycle and coaster collision here under the jurisdiction of Mianwali police station on Monday. Police spokesperson said that Muhammad Mushtaq (34) and Hanif (28) r/o Harnai were travelling to Mianwali on motorcycle when all of a sudden a speeding coaster hit and ran over them near pull 217 area. Police concerned and Rescue 1122 teams reached the spot, shifted the bodies to hospital for necessary legal formalities. Meanwhile, the irrigation task force caught seven farmers for stealing water from canals here on Monday. According to a spokesperson, the task force team raided Mith Ranja, Kot Miana, Naseerpur Kalan village and surrounding areas and caught farmers including Nadeem, Akhtar, Nawaz and others for stealing canal water. Police have registered cases against the water pilferers.

Addict kills father

BAHAWALNAGAR (INP): An addict youth gunned down his father for forbidding him to use drugs here, police said on Monday. According to details, Abdul Waheed 50, hailing from Basti Shah Abbas of Bahawalnagar exchanged hot words with addict son and warned him about drugs use. The enraged accused shot dead his father and fled the scene after committing murder. The body was shifted to hospital for post-mortem and police after registering a case into the incident started raids to arrest the culprit.

Fire gutted fiber factory

GUJRANWALA (PPI): A massive fire broke out in a fiber door manufacturing factory located in Naukhar area of Gujranwala on late Sunday night, Dunya News reported. According to details, the fire erupted after a fire-cracker fell inside the fiber door manufacturing factory. The fire spread and engulfed the entire factory very quickly. Three fire brigade vehicles and rescue teams reached the spot after being informed and brought the fire under control after a hectic effort. According to rescue sources, no casualty was reported in the incident. However, valuable worth millions of rupees were reduced to ashes by the fire.

Woman shot injured

SHUJABAD (INP): A woman was shot injured by armed robbers over resistance during a robbery here on Monday, police said. According to details, two armed robbers attempted to snatch purse and cell phone from a woman in Tabba Sehlab area of Shujabad. The robbers fearing to be captured opened fire at woman critically injuring her and fled the scene. The injured woman was shifted to hospital and police after registering a case into the incident started investigations.

Section 144 imposed F.P. Report

MARDAN: To maintain transparency in the annual examinations under the supervision of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), starting from March 5TH, Deputy Commissioner Mardan Fayyaz Khan Sherpao has banned the entry of unrelated persons in the limits of examination centers under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code. This order will be effective from March 5 to April 8 till the end of the annual examinations. Violators of this order will be prosecuted under Section 188 of the Pakistan Penal Code.



FAISALABAD: A lady health worker administering polio drops to a child during 7 days anti-polio campaign.

KKKUK embarks on a literary odyssey with Dosti festival

F.P. Report

KARAK: The Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak, kicked off a two-day literary show, the Dosti Peshawar Literature Festival, on Monday, showcasing a vibrant activities of culture, academia, and literature. The inaugural ceremony, marked by insightful discussions and engaging presentations, was headed by Dr. Rafi Ullah Khan, Registrar of Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak, as the chief guest.

In his inaugural address, Dr. Rafi Ullah Khan expressed his anticipation for the festival to set the stage for a new era of academic and literary progress. He emphasized the profound and lasting impact this event is expected to have on the cultural and literary landscape of Southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"I believe this festival will open a new chapter, not just in the academic realm but also in the literary heritage of our region. The efforts put forth by the organizers are commendable, and I am confident that this beginning will have long-term effects on the



cultural and literary development of Southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," remarked Dr. Rafi Ullah Khan.

The Chief Organizer of the Dosti Peshawar Literature Festival, Dr. Syed Hanif Rasool Kaka Khel, provided a comprehensive overview of the festival's programs during the inaugural session. Dr. Hanif Rasool outlined the diverse range of literary activities and sessions that attendees can expect, promising a rich and intellectual experience for participants. The event was participated by faculty members, scholars, and a large number of students from

Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak. The atmosphere was alive with intellectual exchanges, as participants engaged in discussions, workshops, and cultural showcases throughout the festival.

The Dosti Peshawar Literature Festival aims to foster a sense of solidarity among literature enthusiasts, providing a platform for meaningful dialogue and the exploration of diverse literary perspectives. The organizers expressed their gratitude to all participants and attendees for contributing to the success of the festival's inaugural edition.

Seminar for promotion of pulses cultivation held

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: The Agricultural Research Institute (ARI), Dera Ismail Khan with the cooperation of PARC, Islamabad organized one-day awareness seminar here at Ratta Kulachi Farm for promotion of pulses cultivation.

The seminar was aimed at guiding growers about modern techniques about pulses crops and enabling them to get booming yield of pulses. Project Director PSDP-Pulses and National Coordinator of Pakistan Agriculture Research Council, Islamabad Dr Muhammad Mansoor was the chief guest of the event which was also attended by Focal person of PSDP-Pulses DI Khan Ikram Ullah, ARI, DI Khan Director Abdul Qayyum Khan, Principal Investigator PSDP-Pulses, DI Khan Muhammad

Kashan Qureshi, other agriculture experts from across the country, students of University of Agriculture Dera Ismail Khan (UAD) and local farmers in large number. While addressing the seminar, ARI, DI Khan Director Abdul Qayyum Khan welcomed the guests and briefed the participants about the functioning of his office and its ongoing projects. Principal Investigator PSDP-Pulses, DI Khan Muhammad Kashan Qureshi shed light on varietal development and characteristics of pulses.

He urged upon the growers to use recommended varieties of seed and adopt mechanical harvesting technique of seed to get maximum yield. Other speakers also highlighted the importance of modern technologies in the field of agriculture.

Rescue 1122 service handles 16 emergencies

last week: Rescue 1122, Tank handled a total of 16 emergencies and provided prompt services to citizens over the last week.

According to a weekly performance report issued by the service on Monday the total emergencies include 13 medical and three emergencies were recovery-related. The control room of the emergency service received a total of 838 calls including 16 those of emergency and 215 were irrelevant calls.

It also reveals that the rescue 1122 service provided services in 19 referral-related emergencies including eight within the district and in 11 emergencies patients were shifted to other districts. He said the rescue 1122 teams were fully equipped with all necessary equipment and they had been efficiently rendering their services during emergencies.

Court orders convicts to plant saplings as punishment

DADU (INP): In a novel move, a local Dadu court on Monday awarded a different kind of punishment to three accused who were found guilty of chopping down trees. Sindh Forest Department officials arrested three people for illegally cutting trees in Katcha area of Dadu.

Rather than imposing a fine or sending the three convicts to prison, Civil Judge and Judicial

Magistrate Dadu, Irfanullah Phul decided to teach them a lesson in rectifying the damage caused by their actions.

The convicts were ordered to plant 150 new saplings as their punishment in the Katcha area. The court ordered three convicts to plant 50 each saplings within 18 months at different places in Katcha area.

Trees provide us with

oxygen which helps sustain life on this earth. They also provide us with nutrition in the form of fruits and vegetables which keeps us alive. With increasing pollution and climate change, trees remain our best safeguard to fight against the destruction that is being done by man around the world. Often, people tend to chop off trees without worrying about consequences.

Anti-polio drive inaugurated in Sialkot

SIALKOT (APP): Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zulqarnain inaugurated the five-day anti-polio campaign by administering polio vaccine to nomad children at Kashmir Road here on Monday. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Health Sialkot Dr Rehan Azhar, DHO Dr Waseem Mirza, Dr Shahzad Iqbal besides polio teams were also present on the occasion.

The DC said that during the anti-polio campaign, every child under five years of age would be administered vaccine. The registered children who would not

available at their home would be traced and their physical verification would be done. He said that during the polio campaign, 795,877 children would be administered polio vaccine including children living in local slums and cottages in the district.

A dose of Vitamin-A would also be given to children. He said that a total of 6,288 polio workers and staff had been deputed to fulfill the national duty. He said that during the anti-polio campaign, 2,676 mobile teams would go homes, schools and madrasas, 133

fixed teams would go to rural and Primary health centers, dispensaries, EPI centers and hospitals, while 69 roaming/transit teams would perform the national duty of administering anti-polio drops to children at Lorry Addas, bus stops, important squares and markets.

The Deputy Commissioner said that 129 UC monitoring officers and 536 area in-charges would perform duty for monitoring the campaign, assistant commissioners and deputy DHOs in all four tehsils would jointly supervise the campaign.

40 people including women and children injured in Dir mishap

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: As many as 40 passengers including women and children were injured when a Bajaur-bound bus overturned on the Khazana bypass road and plunged into a deep ravine in the jurisdiction of Munda police station here on Monday.

The bus was coming from Karachi to Bajaur when it went out of the driver Attaullah's control. The Rescue 1122 medical and disaster teams along with a disaster vehicle rushed to the site and rescued the 40 injured passengers and shifted them to the district headquarters hospital Timergara.

Later on some of the injured were referred to Peshawar due to their critical condition. The additional deputy commissioner Jan Muhammad and additional assistant commissioner Tariq Khan supervised the rescue operation on the site. Meanwhile the Lower Dir deputy commissioner Wasil Khan along with additional assistant commissioner Hazrat Bilal visited the DHQ hospital and inquired about the health of all the injured persons. He directed the hospital staff to provide the best possible treatment to the victims.

An official of the Rescue 1122 told on contact that two of the injured were rescued with the help of hydraulic cutters. The



injured were identified as Ikrumullah 45, Bilal, 35, Irshad Khan 38, Ziaur Rehman 25, Amjad 21, Hayatullah 15, Khairo Jan 50, Mamor Khan 40, Hareefullah 31, Said Rehman 41, Aisha 6, wife of Faqir 40, Muhammad Zaman 34, Habibullah 5, Shahid Khan 25, Abu Huraira 3, Usman 20, Ahmad Khan 46, Sufian 7, Madian 5, wife of Shah Faisal 24, wife of Nazir Khan 44, wife of Ziaur Rehman 24, Said Wali 23, Amir Nawaz 24, Ishaq 16, Rahmanuddin 35, Usman 26, Yousaf 40, wife of Usman 55, daughter of Ahmad Khan 13, Salahud Din 33, Sajjad 24, Umar Farooq 18 and four others. Most of the injured belonged to Bajaur district.

The Timergara police registered a case and started further investigations. In the aftermath of a tragic bus accident in

Manda Tehsil of Lower Dir, where one individual lost life and 38 passengers sustained injuries, Frontier Corps North, in collaboration with rescue teams, promptly initiated an emergency response effort. The passenger bus, en route from Karachi to Bajaur, overturned, leading to injuries and chaos.

However, the swift intervention of Frontier Corps North and allied rescue teams ensured that the injured were swiftly transported to the nearest medical facility for urgent treatment. The valiant efforts of the Frontier Corps North and the dedicated rescue teams have been met with gratitude from the local populace, who commend their rapid response and lifesaving actions. The collective efforts of all involved have undoubtedly minimized the impact of this tragic incident and saved numerous lives.

UoM gets X category award in BS education Program

F.P. Report

MALAKAND: The National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (NACTE), Pakistan has granted X category to BS Education Program of the Department of Education, University of Malakand.

It is the highest category and was made possible through team work and the untiring efforts of Dr Iqbal Ahmad, the then HoD, Department of Education, University of Malakand. Dr. Rani Gul, Assistant Professor and Department of Education, University of Malakand also played a significant role in achieving the distinction.

It is pertinent to mention here that NACTE Team evaluated the academic and allied facilities of the B.Ed (Hons) Program offered by Department of Education, University of Malakand and recommended that the departmental library should be upgraded by inclusion of latest books and a full time librarian should be recruited.

Besides, they also evaluated the curriculum contents and appreciated the efforts of the faculty members for integrating a mandatory course of information and communication technology into the curriculum. The NACTE team highly acknowledged the efforts of faculty members for providing quality education and research facilities to the students in a very conducive environment.

The VC UoM Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad, Prof Dr Mohammad Nisar, Dean Faculty of Education & Dr Ethar Khan, HoD Education congratulated all the stakeholders of Department of Education, UoM and pledged to extend full support for uplifting the quality of academic and research activities.



ASTORE: Heavy machinery being used to remove snow from road in different area of District Astore by GBDMA and Works department Gilgit-Baltistan.

Muhammad Naseer assumes charge of VC Kohat University

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naseeruddin assumed the additional charge of Vice Chancellor Kohat University and Vice Chancellor Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naseeruddin Dean Faculty of Social Sciences Pro Vice Chancellor of Kohat University of Science and Technology has been appointed.

According to the notification, issued by the Higher Education Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Professor Dr. Muhammad Naseeruddin has been appointed on the said posts for a period of two years. Meanwhile, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Naseeruddin has also assumed the additional charge of the post of Vice Chancellor Kohat University of Science and Technology and Vice



Chancellor Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak.

Dr. Muhammad Naseeruddin will hold charge of both the posts till arrival of the permanent vice-chancellor. Dr. Muhammad Naseeruddin is a renowned educationist who is currently working as the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences as well as the Head of the Department of Education and Research.

Meanwhile, an important meeting of district football teams/clubs of Kohat was held under the chairmanship of former secretary Football Association Muhibullah Shinwari, in which the presidents of the association and teams/clubs participated. The meeting expressed great concern for depriving the voting rights football teams/clubs of its Voting Rights.

This decision was declared against the constitution of the Football Association. Giving voting rights to new teams/clubs ignoring the voting rights teams/clubs, was declared as an unconstitutional. The participants of the meeting appealed to the Chairman of the Normalization Committee of Pakistan Football Federation to take notice of this key issue and restore the voting rights of the already voting rights teams/clubs.



S Korea sets deadline for striking young doctors to return to work

SEOUL (AP): South Korea's government gave striking young doctors four days to report back to work, saying Monday that they won't be punished if they return by the deadline but will face indictments and suspensions of medical licenses if they don't.

About 9,000 medical interns and residents have stayed off the job since early last week to protest a government plan to increase medical school admissions by about 65%. The walkouts have severely hurt the operations of their hospitals, with numerous cancellations of surgeries and other treatments. Government officials say adding more doctors is necessary to deal with South Korea's rapidly aging population. The country's current doctor-to-patient ratio is among the lowest in the developed world.

The strikers say universities can't handle so many new students and argue the plan would not resolve a chronic shortage of doctors in some key but low-paying areas like pediatrics and emergency departments. Vice Health Minister Park Min-soo said during a televised briefing Monday that the government won't seek any disciplinary action against striking doctors if they return to work by Thursday. "We want them to return to work by the end of this month, Feb. 29. If they return to the hospitals they had left by then, we won't hold them responsible" for any damages caused by their walkouts, Park said.

But he said those who don't meet the deadline will be punished with a minimum three-month suspension of their medical licenses and face fur-



ther legal steps such as investigations and possible indictments. Under South Korea's medical law, the government can issue back-to-work orders to doctors and other medical personnel when it sees grave risks to public health. Refusing to abide by such an order can bring up to three years in prison or 30 million won (\$22,480) in fines, along with revocation of medical licenses. There are about 13,000 medical interns and residents in South Korea, most of them working and training at 100 hospitals. They typically assist senior doctors during surgeries and deal with inpatients. They represent about 30% to 40% of total doctors at some major hospitals. The Korea Medical Association, which represents about 140,000 doctors in South Korea, has said it supports the striking doctors,

but hasn't determined whether to join the trainee doctors' walkouts. Senior doctors have held a series of rallies voicing opposition to the government's plan.

Earlier this month, the government announced universities would admit 2,000 more medical students starting next year, from the current 3,058. The government says it aims to add up to 10,000 doctors by 2035. A public survey said about 80% of South Koreans back the government plan. Critics suspect doctors, one of the best-paid professions in South Korea, oppose the recruitment plan because they worry they would face greater competition and lower income. Striking doctors have said they worry doctors faced with increased competition would engage in overtreatment, burdening public medical expenses.

Nine people died in South Africa road crash

CAPE TOWN (AP): Nine people were killed in a road crash in South Africa after attending an election rally by President Cyril Ramaphosa and his ruling African National Congress party. The ANC supporters were traveling on a bus back to their home province of Mpumalanga the morning after rally in the eastern city of Durban, the ANC said in a statement. The bus left the road and overturned, police said.

Emergency services said a further 17 people were hurt in the crash near the small town of Paulpietersburg, around 360 kilometers (223 miles) north of Durban. The ANC said that a number of the injured were in a critical condition. Provincial ANC officials were traveling to the crash scene and to the hospitals where the injured had been taken, the party said. The ANC officially launched its election manifesto at Durban's Moses Mabhida Stadium in front of tens of thousands of supporters. The May 29 national election could be the biggest threat yet to the ANC's 30 years in government in South Africa, with opinion polls predicting the party could lose its majority for the first time since it came to power in 1994 following the end of apartheid.

Serbia protests against Croatia

BELGRADE (AP): Serbia sent a protest note after Croatia's foreign minister described President Aleksandar Vucic as a Russian "satellite" in the Balkans. It was the latest spat between the two neighbors, which have been at odds for most of the time since the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

Croatian Foreign Minister Gordan Grlic Radman told N1 television that Vuic must decide which side he is on, Russia or the European Union, "because it is impossible and uncomfortable sitting on two chairs at the same time." "He shouldn't have a big dilemma," Grlic Radman said, saying that Vuic can remain Moscow's ally but "malign" Russian influence that could undermine the stability of the Western Balkans will not be allowed. The populist leader and other Serbian officials reacted with anger. "The Croatian minister not only brutally interferes in the internal affairs of Serbia, but as usual he lies and insults the Serbian people and threatens its citizens," Vuic said on Instagram. "Grlic Radman is right about one thing, maybe I am someone's satellite ... but I have never been anyone's servant, which cannot be said for Grlic Radman." In its protest note, the Serbian Foreign Ministry said that it expects that in the future, Croatian officials "will refrain from statements that represent interference in the internal affairs of Serbia, and will lead a policy of reconciliation and good-neighbory relations between the two states." Reacting to the protest note, the Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs rejected the allegation that Croatia is interfering in Serbia's internal matters, pointing out that the Croatian official "stated the fact about Serbia's non-alignment with the foreign and security policy of the European Union regarding the Russian aggression against Ukraine."

"As we have already pointed out, no one can be a candidate for EU membership and use all the benefits of that, while unprincipledly and calculatedly avoiding condemnation of the Russian aggression and EU policy related to it," the Croatian ministry said. Vuic's government has maintained close ties with Moscow despite its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and the Serbian autocratic leader has often boasted about his close personal relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin despite Serbia's formal bid to join the European Union. Serbia has refused to join Western sanctions against Russia, a traditional Slavic ally, while allowing Moscow propaganda outlets such as RT and Sputnik to spread their narrative throughout the Balkans. EU officials have repeatedly said that Serbia must align its policies with the bloc if it really wants to join, and warned of the increasing Russian influence in the war-torn region.

Zelenskyy says 31,000 Ukrainian soldiers killed in war

KYIV: Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has said that 31,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed in action in the two years since Russia launched its full-scale invasion. Speaking at the "Ukraine. Year 2024" forum in Kyiv, Zelenskyy said that "each of these losses is a great sacrifice" for Ukraine.

He added that "tens of thousands of civilians" had been killed in occupied areas of Ukraine, but said that no exact figures would be available until the war was over. It's the first time that Kyiv has confirmed the number of its losses since the start of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Russia has also provided few official casualty figures.

Independent Russian news outlet Mediazona said that about 75,000 Russian men died in 2022 and 2023 fighting in the war. A United States intelligence report declassified in mid-December 2023 estimated that 315,000 Russian troops had been killed or wounded in Ukraine. If accurate, the figure would represent 87 percent of the roughly 360,000 troops Russia had before the war, according to the report. It has been two years since Russia invaded Ukraine and commemorations to mark the second anniversary brought expressions of continued support, new bilateral security agreements and new aid commitments from Ukraine's Western allies. But Ukraine's Defence Minister Rustem Umerov highlighted that they still needed to deliver on their commitments if Kyiv is to have any chance of holding out against Moscow and stressed that delays in arms shipments will cost lives.

"We look to the enemy: Their economy is almost \$2 trillion, they use up to 15 percent official and nonofficial budget [funds] for the war, which constitutes over \$100bn annually. So basically whenever a commitment doesn't come on time, we lose people, we lose territory," he said, speaking at the Kyiv forum. Europe has admitted it will fall far short of a plan to deliver more than one million artillery shells to Ukraine by March, instead hoping to complete the shipments by the end of the year. Umerov highlighted that such delays put Ukraine at a further disadvantage "in the mathematics of war" against Russia, which the West has said is increasingly building a war economy. Kyiv has also been weakened by the blocking of a vital \$60bn US aid package amid political wrangling in the US Congress.

US President Joe Biden said the hold-ups directly contributed to Ukraine being forced to withdraw from Avdiivka. Ukraine's Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said he was "deeply convinced that the US will not abandon Ukraine in terms of financial, military and armed support". In recent weeks, fighting has intensified on parts of the front line. Russian shelling and rocket strikes continued to pummel Ukraine's south and east, as local Ukrainian officials reported that at least two civilians were killed and eight others were wounded in the Zaporizhia and Kherson provinces. Moscow and Kyiv also continued to trade nightly drone attacks, with Ukraine's air defences shooting down 16 of 18 Iranian-made Shahed drones launched overnight

by Moscow and a Russian drone striking an unspecified facility in Ukraine's western Khmelnytskyi region, the regional military administration reported without giving details. Russian troops also appeared to be pressing on west of Avdiivka, the strategic city whose capture this month handed Moscow a significant victory. Zelenskyy told a news conference that Ukraine has a clear plan for a new counteroffensive against Russian forces. Kyiv's troops conducted a counteroffensive last year, but were unable to break through prepared defensive lines in the Russian-occupied south and east. "There is a plan [for a counteroffensive], the plan is clear, I can't tell you the details," Zelenskyy said. He said that a major shake-up that saw the head of Ukraine's military replaced earlier this month was connected to the new plan of action on the battlefield.

"This plan is related to the change of management; there are corresponding changes. Several plans will be prepared due to a leak of information," Zelenskyy said, without elaborating. Earlier he said that Kyiv's plans to conduct a counteroffensive last year had been leaked and ended up "on a desk in the Kremlin" before the operation had even begun. Meanwhile at the forum in Kyiv, besides highlighting issues in military deliveries, Umerov insisted that Ukrainian forces were doing "everything that's possible, and also what's impossible, to secure a breakthrough" this year. The defence minister said that a "strong" military strategy is already in place for the coming months, but did not disclose details. — Al Jazeera

Algeria inaugurates Africa's largest mosque

ALGIERS, Algeria (AP): Algeria inaugurated a gigantic mosque on its Mediterranean coastline after years of political upheaval transformed the project from a symbol of state-sponsored strength and religiosity to one of delays and cost overruns.

Built by a Chinese construction firm throughout the 2010s, the Great Mosque of Algiers features the world's tallest minaret, measuring at 869 feet (265 meters). The third largest mosque in the world and largest outside Islam's holiest cities, its prayer room accommodates 120,000 people. Its modernist design contains Arab and North African flourishes to honor Algerian tradition and culture as well as a helicopter landing pad and a library that can house up to 1 million books. The inauguration would guide Muslims "toward goodness and moderation," said Ali Mohamed Salabi, the General Secretary of world union of Muslim Ulemas.

Propagating a moderate brand of Islam has been a key priority in Algeria since

government forces subdued an Islamist-led rebellion throughout the 1990s when a bloody civil war swept the country. Algerian President Abdelmajid Tebboune inaugurated the mosque, fulfilling his promise to open it with great pomp and circumstance. The event, however, was mainly ceremonial. The mosque has been open to international tourists and state visitors to Algeria for roughly five years. An earlier ceremony was delayed. The timing allows the mosque to officially open to the public in time to host nightly prayers during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which begins next month. Beyond its gigantic dimensions, the mosque is also known for the delays and controversy that characterized the seven years it was under construction, including the choice of site, which experts warned was seismically risky. The state denied that in a news release posted on APS, the state news agency website. Throughout the delays and cost overruns, the project never stopped feeding Algerians' anger, with many

saying they'd rather have four hospitals built throughout the country. The project's official cost was \$898 million.

The mosque was originally a project of former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who designed it to be the largest in Africa. He wanted it to be his legacy and called "Abdelaziz Bouteflika Mosque" much like Mosque Hassan II in Casablanca, Morocco. That mosque, named after the former King of Morocco - Algeria's neighbor and regional rival - was once marketed as Africa's largest. But the protests that swept Algeria in 2019 and led him to resign after 20 years in power prohibited Bouteflika's from realizing his plans, naming the mosque after himself or inaugurating it in February 2019 as scheduled. The mosque - along with a major national highway and a million new housing units - each were marred by suspicions of corruption during the Bouteflika era, with suspected kickbacks to contractors then paid to state officials.

Namibia's late President funeral held

WINDHOEK (BBC): A huge crowd has attended the state funeral of Namibian President Hage Geingob following his death at the age of 82 from cancer. Mr Geingob was interred in a mausoleum at Heroes' Acre on the outskirts of the capital, Windhoek, as mourners paid tribute to a man they hailed as a nation-builder and a pan-African hero. His widow, Monica Geingos, wept as his casket was lowered into his grave.

Mr Geingob's funeral marked the culmination of three weeks of mourning. Mr Geingob died in hospital on 4 February, with his deputy, Nangolo Mbumba, sworn in as his successor soon afterwards. His death led to a surge in patriotism, with Namibians from across the political divide coming together to mourn. Thousands of people - many carrying the Namibian flag and draped in the national

colours - lined the streets as his casket was driven through Windhoek. His body lay in state at Independence Stadium, before being taken, in a gun-mounted carriage, to Heroes' Acre. Huge screens were put up so that the public could see his funeral. The military gave Mr Geingob a 21-gun salute while K-8 fighter jets flew past. This was the first time Namibia had buried a president since its independence from South Africa, then under white-minority rule, in 1990. Described as the chief mourner, Mr Mbumba said Mr Geingob was unwavering in his commitment to the nation. "Your impact on us has been profound, your footprint on this nation is immense. You leave our country in better shape," he said.

Mr Geingob's two predecessors, Sam Nujoma and Hifikepunye Pohamba,

attended his burial, along with almost 20 heads of state and government. Germany's President Frank-Walter Steinmeier was among the dignitaries who spoke at Mr Geingob's memorial. The privately owned Namibian newspaper quoted him as saying that Germany should apologise for the atrocities it committed in Namibia during colonial rule. "I believe it is high time to tender an apology to Namibia. My only regret is that Geingob will not be there to close the process he started," Mr Steinmeier was quoted as saying. Namibia was under German colonial rule from 1884 till World War One. In 2021, Germany acknowledged committing genocide there. German colonisers massacred more than 70,000 Herero and Nama people between 1904 and 1908, in what historians consider to be the 20th Century's first genocide.

Two-month-old Palestinian boy dies of hunger amid war on Gaza

GAZA: A two-month-old Palestinian boy has died from starvation in northern Gaza, according to media reports, days after the United Nations warned of an "explosion" in child deaths due to Israel's war on the besieged enclave. The Shehab news agency said Mahmoud Fattouh died at al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City. Footage, verified by Al Jazeera, shows the emaciated infant gasping for breath in a hospital bed.

One of the paramedics who rushed the boy to the hospital says Mahmoud died from acute malnutrition. "We saw a woman carrying her baby, screaming for help. Her pale baby seemed to be taking his last breath," the paramedic says in the video. "We rushed him to hospital and he was found to be suffering acute malnutrition. Medical staff rushed him into the ICU. The baby has not been fed any milk for days, as baby milk is totally absent in Gaza." Mahmoud's death came as the Israeli government - which launched its assault on Gaza following attacks by Hamas fighters in October - continues to ignore global appeals to

allow more aid into the Palestinian enclave. At least 29,606 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's war on Gaza, while 69,737 have been wounded since October 7. The revised death toll in Israel from the October 7 attacks stands at 1,139. The UN says some 2.3 million people in Gaza are now on the brink of famine. Israel, which cut off all supplies of food, water and fuel into Gaza at the start of the war, opened one entry point for humanitarian aid in December. But aid agencies say stringent checks by Israeli forces and protests by far-right demonstrators at the Karem Abu Salem crossing, known by Israelis as Kerem Shalom, have hampered the entry of food trucks. When the supplies do get through to Gaza, aid workers say they are not able to pick up the goods or distribute them because of a lack of security, caused in part due to Israel's targeted killings of policemen guarding the truck convoys. The situation is particularly desperate in northern Gaza, which has been almost completely cut off from aid since late October.

Dr Hussam Abu Safiya,

the head of Kamal Adwan Hospital in north Gaza, said he was seeing "many" deaths among children, especially newborns. "Signs of weakness and paleness are apparent on newborns because the mother is malnourished," Abu Safiya told Al Jazeera. "Unfortunately many kids have died in the past weeks ... if we don't get the proper aid urgently, we will be losing more and more to malnutrition." Despite the dire situation, UN agencies have not been able to provide help. The World Food Programme tried to resume deliveries to northern Gaza but announced a suspension two days later, citing Israeli gunfire and a "collapse of civil order". It said its teams witnessed "unprecedented levels of desperation" in the north, with hungry Palestinians mobbing trucks to get food. The agency said it was working to resume deliveries as soon as possible and called for better security for its staff as well as "significantly higher volumes of food" and the opening of crossing points for aid directly into northern Gaza from Israel.

The UN has meanwhile said its assessments indi-

cate that at least 90 percent of children under five in Gaza are affected by one or more infectious diseases while 15 percent, or one in six, children below two years of age in northern parts of the territory were acutely malnourished. "The Gaza Strip is poised to witness an explosion in preventable child deaths, which would compound the already unbearable level of child deaths in Gaza," said Ted Chaiban, UNICEF's deputy executive director for humanitarian action, in a statement last week. "We've been warning for weeks that the Gaza Strip is on the brink of a nutrition crisis. If the conflict doesn't end now, children's nutrition will continue to plummet, leading to preventable deaths or health issues which will affect the children of Gaza for the rest of their lives and have potential intergenerational consequences," he said. Before the war, only 0.8 percent of children below five in Gaza were considered acutely malnourished, the UN said. "Such a decline in a population's nutritional status in three months is unprecedented globally." — Al Jazeera

Thousands of Brazilians rally in support of Bolsonaro

BRASILIA: Tens of thousands of Brazilians have rallied in support of former President Jair Bolsonaro amid a probe into allegations that he tried to orchestrate a coup following his election loss in 2022. Bolsonaro, who called the rally in Sao Paulo after being targeted by a police raid earlier this month, denied the coup charges and hit out an election ban that has seen him barred from seeking office for eight years.

"What is a coup? Tanks in the streets, weapons, conspiracy. None of that happened in Brazil," Bolsonaro told his supporters, who filled up six blocks of Sao Paulo's iconic Paulista Avenue. "We cannot accept that an authority can eliminate whoever it may be from the political scene, unless it is for a fair reason," he said. Federal police in Brazil

seized the former president's passport earlier this month after accusing him of editing a draft decree to overturn election results following his electoral loss to leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva in 2022. They also say he pressured military chiefs to join a coup attempt and plotted to jail a Supreme Court justice. The former army officer is also facing several other investigations, such as the falsification of COVID-19 vaccination certificates, and the alleged misappropriation of gifts received from other nations, such as jewellery offered by Saudi Arabia. Separately, hundreds of Bolsonaro's supporters were also arrested and face charges for invading and ransacking Brazil's presidential palace, Supreme Court and Congress on January 8, 2023, a week after Lula took office.

Bolsonaro said that he was being "persecuted" and that his draft decree was based on the constitution. He also called for amnesty for people who took part in the January 8 riot. "What I seek is pacification. It is erasing the past," Bolsonaro said. "It is to seek a way for us to live in peace and stop being so jumpy. Amnesty for those poor people who are jailed in Brasilia. We ask all 513 congressmen, 81 senators, for a bill of amnesty so justice can be made in Brazil." While Bolsonaro is barred from running for office until 2030 due to two convictions of abuse of power, he remains active in Brazilian politics as the main adversary for left-of-centre Lula. As this year's mayoral elections loom, candidates have split between the two leaders. Al Jazeera's Monica Yanakiew, reporting from

Sao Paulo, said Bolsonaro called the rally to demonstrate his political strength.

"All these people around me, and there are thousands of them, have come to show support for Jair Bolsonaro. They are dressed in yellow and green, which are the colours of Brazil. We haven't seen such a rally since January 8, 2023, when there was the uprising," she said. "Bolsonaro called this rally because he has been facing a whole series of legal battles, and he risks being imprisoned. Bolsonaro wants to show that he is still popular and can be a kingmaker in the upcoming municipal elections in October." Bolsonaro and his supporters also waved Israeli flags at the protest, in a rejection of Lula's recent remarks comparing Israel's offensive in Gaza to the Holocaust. — Al Jazeera

15 killed in attack on Catholic church in Burkina Faso

BURKINA FASO: At least 15 Catholic worshippers have been killed in a Burkina Faso village when gunmen attacked a community as they gathered for mass at a church in the country's conflict-hit northern region, church officials said. Violence in the village of Essakane was a "terrorist attack" that left 12 attendees dead at the scene, while three others died later as they were being treated for their wounds, according to a statement issued by Abbot Jean-Pierre Sawadogo, vicar-general of

the Catholic Diocese of Dori, where the attack happened.

He said two others were injured in the attack. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the shooting. "In this painful circumstance, we invite you to pray for the rest in God for those who have died in faith, for the healing of the wounded and ... for the conversion of those who continue to sow death and desolation in our country," Sawadogo said in a statement. The shooting took place in a region where

armed groups have carried out several attacks, some of which have targeted Christian churches while others have involved the abduction of clergy. About half of Burkina Faso is outside government control, as armed groups have ravaged the country for years. Fighters have killed thousands and displaced more than two million people, further threatening the stability of the nation, which experienced two coups in 2022. The country's military rulers have struggled to restore peace in violent

areas since the first coup in January 2022. The number of people killed by armed groups has nearly tripled compared with the 18 previous months, according to an August 2023 report by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. In addition to the limited capacity of the military government, the security situation has been worsened by the country's porous borders with Mali and Niger, both of which are also run by military officials and also struggle with security crises. — Al Jazeera

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India's water aggression, what next?

ACCORDING to the media, the water flow of the Ravi River has reportedly been stopped to Pakistan after the completion of the Shalpur Kandi barrage. Pakistan would not receive the previously allotted 1150 cusecs water from India any more, which will now be supplied to Indian farmers in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). India has constructed a series of dams and barrages on the rivers coming into Pakistan from occupied Jammu and Kashmir causing serious water shortages, and irrigation problems in the low-stream country.

Over the past two and half decades, India has violated the multiple provisions of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) by constructing dams, and barrages, power-generating projects, and irrigation initiatives on the River Neelum and Chenab. It is sheer water aggression to deprive Pakistan of its share of water from the three western rivers allocated to it under the treaty as a lower riparian country. The government of Pakistan has been consistently raising its concerns regarding the construction of dams and barrages by India on the western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab), claiming that these constructions violate the treaty's provisions related to the sharing and use of these rivers' waters. India, however, continued its planned water aggression against Islamabad on the plea that New Delhi fully comply with the treaty and use water from western rivers for irrigation, flood control, and hydropower generation, which are allowed under the treaty. Wherein, as a lower riparian country Pakistan can use water for irrigation and other purposes from the rivers Ravi and Sutlej which were allotted to India under the 1960 Indus Water Treaty (IWT). Although, India uses the water of three western rivers on the same pretext but it completely stops the water of three Eastern rivers which provide the same water use to Pakistan. Anyhow it is not clear whether such kind of water theft or water aggression comes under the violation of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) or not that had been the legal dilemma between the two South Asian neighbours over the past years. Historically, New Delhi had been exploiting the provisions of the Indus Water Treaty through disputed constructions on the Pakistani side of three western rivers. Taking advantage of its upper riparian position, India blatantly uses Pakistan's share of water for various purposes, causing serious water insecurity, soil erosion, and other environmental issues in Pakistan.

In fact, the dispute highlights ongoing tensions, differing interpretations of the treaty, and misuse and manipulation of the accord provisions by New Delhi which has brought both nations into an unceasing tussle. The historical agreement involves three parties, India, Pakistan, and the World Bank which acts as a mediator and guarantor of the decades-long accord. The Pakistani sides have always raised objections to Indian constructions on the western three rivers but it takes months and years to collect factual data, raise concerns, arrange an onsite inspection, and file a legal case with the World Bank for onward debate, discussion, or decision. New Delhi has taken full advantage of such a prolonged procedure and further employed delaying tactics to complete unlawful construction until a verdict/third-party intervention failed its nefarious designs.

Pakistan faces significant water insecurity due to several factors, including population growth, climate change, inefficient water management practices, and the impacts of India's water aggression in the shape of upstream developments. The country heavily relies on the Indus River system for its water supply, which is under pressure due to reduced water flows, pollution, increased demand, and blockage in the upstream. Water insecurity is a grave challenge that is further exacerbated by political tensions and disputes with neighboring India over the water-sharing mechanism. Addressing these challenges requires sustainable water management practices, improved infrastructure, and cooperation among riparian states which is not possible without the involvement of the World Bank or any other third-party mechanisms that press India to comply with the Indus Water Treaty in good faith without tempering its provisions and hurting its sole. So, Pakistani growers get their due share of water and our cultivating land does not turn into a barren desert. Unfortunately, if it does not happen, the future was between Islamabad and New Delhi will be on the water issue instead of Sir Creek or Kashmir.

The scourge of power pilferage

THE Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 57,401 kundas/illegal connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its five districts including Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur, and Okara in the past 166th day when the corporation launched a grand anti-power theft campaign. According to the details, 52,957 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations, and 17,627 accused have been arrested. The LESCO has charged a total of 76,301,843 detection units worth Rs 2,933,049,663 to all the power pilferers. According to authorities, the operations would continue without discrimination until the complete end of electricity theft. The electricity pilferers as well as the LESCO officers and employees who facilitate them are also being brought to justice.

Illegal electricity theft, or the unauthorized use of electricity without proper metering or payment is a widespread problem in today's Pakistan. It causes significant financial losses for the government and relevant power producers/providers companies, contributing to power shortages, overbilling, or circular debt of the government entities. The government and power companies have adopted multiple strategies including the installation of smart meters, technical monitoring, public awareness campaigns, and legal prosecution of the offenders but all those sane endeavors could not work effectively. The issue not only persists but has shaped into a grave challenge for the government and utilities companies facing default and debt payment crises. Unfortunately, the volume of illegal power theft is so massive that over 57,000 cases have been caught red-handed in a single five-district zone whereas the gravity of the issue could easily be assessed in 170 districts across Pakistan including four provinces, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan.

Apparently, such a large-scale crime is not possible without internal complicity and malignancy of the WAPDA employees and staff of power-distributing companies. Due to this reason, no effort of the government and power distributing companies could ever succeed in its goal throughout the past. The caretaker government in collaboration with the Pakistan military has recently launched a nationwide crackdown against power theft and uncovered thousands of illegal connections across the country. There is a dire need for strict handling and severe punishment of the culprits involved in anti-state crimes. Meanwhile, the concerned linemen and other field staff must be penalized for not curbing illegal activity and failure to report crime in their area of responsibility. Until and unless, there is no example of stern justice and ruthless accountability, corruption and crime could be controlled in this nation at any time in the future.



Israel will pay a price for sabotaging its own reputation

Baria Alamuddin

THE latest hearings at the International Court of Justice are nails being hammered into the coffin of Israel's international standing. More than 50 countries are submitting evidence questioning the legality of Israel's "occupation, settlement and annexation" of Palestinian territories. This runs parallel to hearings at the same court considering whether Israel's actions in Gaza constitute genocide.

South Africa's representative denounced Israel's "fundamentally illegal" policies as an "extreme form of apartheid." Saudi Arabia criticized Israel's "dehumanization" of Palestinians as "disposable objects." Egypt said: "Israel cannot invoke self-defense to maintain a situation created by its own illegal conduct." Belize condemned Israel's "racist apartheid" and "excessive use of force, arbitrary killing and mass incarceration." Israel unsurprisingly refused to participate, but apparently cajoled Fiji to speak on its behalf - a move angrily denounced by Fijian citizens. Brazil's president accused Israel of genocide and compared its Gaza offensive to the Nazi Holocaust.

We are witnessing the situation of Israel and its dwindling number of supporters aligning themselves against almost the entire civilized world. Israel's leaders arrogantly brought this global backlash upon themselves with a brazenly disproportionate military campaign in Gaza in which two thirds of the official 30,000 death toll are women and children, along with hundreds of thousands of others maimed, orphaned, or suffering other life-destroying losses. An entire displaced population teeters on the brink of starvation.

This utter collapse in Israel's international reputation has correspondingly left its biggest international champions seriously exposed - in particular the US. Among other young, cosmopolitan anti-war demographics, America's Arab communities wield influence as never before: notably in Michigan, where anti-war anger risks swinging the presidential election against Joe Biden.

This has given rise to a panicked and incoherent hodgepodge of policies. Although the Biden admin-

istration last week affirmed that settlement building was illegal, it utterly undermined that welcome U-turn by simultaneously urging the court against a legal mandate for ending the occupation, arguing that control of the West Bank was justified by Israel's "very real security needs." Britain resorted to the tortuous logic of acknowledging that the occupation was "illegal," while claiming

Britain have been compelled to rethink their language and actions, so as not to completely lose touch with millions of citizens outraged by the carnage. Conservative pro-Israeli bastions of the Western media haven't held back from transmitting heart-rending Gaza developments to their audiences.

The Wall Street Journal highlighted US intelligence findings that "Israeli bias

Younis out of action, all of Gaza's major hospitals are now out of service, with many having been subject to bombing and invasion.

It is right to investigate rape allegations arising from the Oct. 7 atrocities by Hamas. But UN experts say they have seen "credible allegations" that Palestinian women and girls have been subjected to sexual assault and rape in Israeli detention. The UN's special rapporteur found that "violence and dehumanization of Palestinian women and children and civilians has been normalized." A UN human rights panel highlighted the "extrajudicial killing of Palestinian women and children in places where they sought refuge, or while fleeing ... holding white pieces of cloth when they were killed."

The conflict has inspired a flood of fake news from both sides. As Israel sees the tide of global opinion turn relentlessly against it, it has increasingly resorted to transmitting debunked claims. This ranges from incessant allegations that injured and dead Palestinians are "crisis actors," to Israel's president falsely telling a German newspaper that a German dual national had been beheaded on Oct. 7. Both sides exploited old Syria conflict footage to disingenuously support their narratives.

Throughout the democratic world, Israel should rightly fear what will happen to its disintegrating international position as political parties around the world struggle to realign themselves with public sentiment to avoid punishment at the ballot box. Equally, Hamas - already widely labeled a terrorist organization - should consider the impact of its own atrocities against civilians on the reputation of the entire Palestinian cause, and consider tangible measures such as freeing hostages. A vengeful Israel has yet to digest the implications of its actions for global legitimacy and its own regional security. Israel is not the exception it believes itself to be: peaceful coexistence with its neighbors comes only through playing by the rules, treating all its citizens as equals, and conscientiously pursuing a just settlement for Palestinian statehood.

Arab News

The 'greedy good' are destroying Britain's economy

Matthew Lynn

THE Office for Budget Responsibility and the Bank of England were intent on sabotaging her plans. And civil service set itself against her plans, as did the IMF and even US President Joe Biden.

Liz Truss did not mince her words in her speech to the CPAC in the United States this week, blaming the "deep state" for blocking her attempt to drag the British economy out of stagnation. Sure, Truss bears part of the blame for her own failure. The timing and presentation of the mini-Budget, and more pertinently the huge energy bills support package, gave financial markets fright. But she is also on to something.

The "wokenomics" she called out in her speech is fatally undermining the economy. Until we find a way to fix that, we will

never get back to the 2pc-plus growth rates we surely need if we are to have any hope of maintaining our standard of living. It was a more sympathetic audience than one she is likely to find in the UK anymore. In her speech in Maryland, Truss took apart the forces that, in her view, blew up her short Premiership. "There's a whole bunch of people - and I describe them as the economic establishment - who fundamentally don't want the status quo to change because they're doing quite fine out of it. They don't really care about the prospects of the average person in Britain and they didn't want things to change and they didn't want that power taken away." In short, the lesson she has learnt from her short time in office is that the "deep state", as the Americans call it, was so horrified by the assault on its privileges that it

was actively working to undermine her.

True, it might be self-serving, and the reality may be more nuanced, but in fact Truss is making a valid point. In the 18 months since spineless Tory backbenchers evicted her from office, her fundamental point about Britain's miserable growth rate has become more and more glaringly obvious to everyone. The idea that simply stabilising the economy with tax rises to balance the books would restore growth has been exposed as a complete sham. Instead we have destroyed incentives with huge increases in tax rates, but we have still collapsed into a recession, with a shrinking labour force, and miserable levels of investment. With an economy that is now incapable of any meaningful expansion,

we are trapped in a doom loop of rising taxes, huge deficits, rising welfare bills, and stagnant real wages. When Labour takes power, as it inevitably will, that will become even more entrenched. It is hard to see that we would have been much worse off if we had stuck to the Truss growth plan from the Autumn of 2022, even if sterling was a lot lower against the dollar. At least by now, there might have been some glimmers of a revival. The core point is this. There is an economic establishment committed to "wokenomics" that runs from the civil service, to the major corporations, to quangos and think tanks, and takes in central banks and, perhaps surprisingly, the financial markets as well. Collectivism dominates

Europe has lost next world war before it has even begun

Richard Kemp

EVEN in the face of Russia's aggression against Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014, European governments failed to take seriously the possibility that, one day, war on the continent might affect them directly. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, they have blithely redistributed the so-called peace dividend to other areas of spending while slashing their armed forces. The wake-up call came two years ago this weekend when Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine, but it doesn't seem like the alarm was loud enough. Has Europe lost the next world war before it has even begun?

Despite Ukraine's First and Second World War-style battlefields, which remind us of the continuing need for ground forces on a large scale, the British Government has continued to reduce the size of our army. Not long after the war began, Germany said that it would increase defence spending to achieve the Nato minimum 2 per cent of GDP, but that still hasn't been achieved and the ambition is, in any case, pathetic compared to the scale of the threat. Similar stories abound throughout Europe, with one of the few exceptions being Poland, which is increasing defence spending to 4 per cent of GDP.

Then there is Europe's atrophied armaments industry. The EU promised a year ago to supply a million artillery shells to Ukraine by next month. It has delivered less than half that number so far. European manufacturers barely have the production capacity to prevent Ukrainian forces from collapsing entirely, let alone permit their own militaries to fight a war. Meanwhile, Russia has massively increased its long range missile and artillery shell output, is churning out 100 tanks a month, and is rapidly increasing defence spending. It has supplemented its own armaments production with an estimated 1 million artillery shells from North Korea and thousands of attack drones from Iran.

Even now, some Europeans seem to believe that this does not matter very much, that their complacency will have no practical cost because America will ride to their rescue. Well, that may no longer be such a safe bet. Successive presidents have complained about American taxpayers having to subsidise European under-spending, and none more so than Donald Trump. European leaders need to start making real plans to fight for themselves should Putin decide to flex his muscles in the direction of Nato.

But there is perhaps an even greater threat to European defence dependency than a disgruntled US president. That is China. If President Xi Jinping launches an invasion, or even a blockade, against Taiwan, the US military would likely become heavily committed in supporting its ally. There is every reason to believe that would be the moment for Putin to make a move against an Eastern European Nato member state, calculating that

America would be overstretched and unable to deploy rapid reinforcements even if it wanted to.

Then add Iran into the equation. Tehran is on the cusp of gaining nuclear capability and has an extensive network of terrorist proxies around the Middle East that have been threatening the US and its allies for years. We have already seen how Iran is able to coordinate its proxies to tie down American forces. A single day of attacks on Israel by Iran's proxy Hamas, together with rocket firing from Lebanon by Hezbollah, another proxy, was enough for the US to deploy two carrier strike groups to the region as a deterrent. A third Iranian proxy group, the Houthis in Yemen, then began a campaign of attacks against international shipping in the Red Sea. This aggression has tied up immense US naval and air assets.

China, Russia and Iran form a deadly axis that, if acting in concert, could present the US and its allies with a terrible dilemma. Should that happen during the coming few years, European countries may have no choice but to stand on their own feet or go under.

But would Western European countries send their young men and women to fight and die to defend an Eastern European Nato member, even if they managed to build the combat power to do so? When Joe Biden decided to pull US forces out of Afghanistan in 2021, the then British defence secretary Ben Wallace said that he tried to create a coalition from the other Nato members deployed there to remain in place. There were no takers. And despite immense damage to European and global trade from the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea, only one European nation, Britain, has been willing to join the US in offensive action to stop it.

Over many years, European countries have become too accustomed to a comfortable life. Values like pride in the nation have been allowed to wither, and I fear that a great many people would no longer be willing to make any sacrifices whatsoever in order to protect our freedom and way of life. Our societies also lack endurance: witness how quickly some European countries wanted to find an "off-ramp" for Putin, rather than throwing themselves wholeheartedly into supporting Ukraine.

Most of them would like nothing better now than for the war to end, even knowing that this would mean a defeat not just for Ukraine but also for Nato. And after Hamas's massacre last October, it didn't take long for European governments to start demanding a ceasefire from Israel before it eliminates the threat to its citizens. Compromise and vacillation is the only language Europe seems to understand. History shows us that serves only to provoke opponents like Russia, China and Iran who have no compunction about exploiting such weaknesses.

The Telegraph

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Biden, US media and Arab-American political power

ARAB- and Muslim-Americans and some 60 percent of all Americans have wanted for months for US President Joe Biden to pressure Israel into accepting an immediate ceasefire in the war on Gaza. The White House has all but ignored them.

So Arab- and Muslim-Americans decided to flex their political muscle by using their electoral power in critical swing states in this year's presidential election. In December, community leaders from nine potential swing states met in Dearborn, Michigan under the slogan "Abandon Biden, ceasefire now". They vowed not to vote for Biden in the November presidential polls unless he changes his policies that enable Israel's genocidal attacks on Gaza, rob Palestinians of decent life conditions, and largely ignore the views of significant minority communities in the United States.

The campaign quickly attracted support in Michigan and other states with large Arab-American communities, along with criticism from Biden supporters who feared that the campaign to pressure the president might inadvertently guarantee a Donald Trump victory. Arab- and Muslim-Americans intensified their campaign in February, when demeaning articles in the mainstream press helped mobilised even more community members.

On February 2, the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) published an op-ed by Steven Stalinsky, titled Welcome to Dearborn, America's Jihad Capital, which alleged "Imams and politicians in the Michigan city side with Hamas against Israel and Iran against the

US." The article tarred the entire community as dangerous extremists. On the same day, a New York Times op-ed by Thomas Friedman metaphorically compared Middle Eastern countries and political actors to animals in the jungle, including trap-door spiders and wasps.

Whatever these - and other offensive articles and cartoons - aimed to achieve, they inadvertently propelled Arab-American engagements in high-states electoral politics. The city of Dearborn, Michigan, singled out by name and smeared in the WSJ article, became ground zero for this effort. The Michigan community reached out to mobilise nationally with other marginalised communities that the White House has often ignored - notably African-Americans, Hispanics, progressive Jews, labourers, women, university students, and others. They joined hands because they share concerns about foreign policy as well as the White House's domestic priorities and its opportunistic and self-serving citizen engagement.

The activists demand an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the implementation of existing legal restrictions on the unconditional aid and arms the US has provided Israel for decades. They are fed up with being ignored by a White House that takes their votes for granted, as well as by the Democratic Party they have helped boost through voter-registration drives since the mid-1980s. They are also incredibly frustrated with mainstream, often racist, media that misrepresent, demean, and ignore them. I asked Dearborn Mayor

Rami G Khouri

Abdullah Hammoud this week why his town joins hands with other disgruntled American communities to impact national politics and foreign policy at the highest level. He said: "This is all about trust and respect between officials and citizens. We must end the discrepancy we see today between elected officials and the values of citizens. There are no possible justifications or qualifiers for genocide or killing babies and civilians on such a large scale. None at all."

In our conversation and his public statements, Hammoud spelled out how US foreign policy and media coverage directly impact ordinary citizens. "It's personal for us, as some of our families have experienced Israeli occupation or wars, or volunteered in refugee camps," he said. "When foreign policy decisions directly impact the wellbeing of Dearborn residents, it is irresponsible to walk away from difficult policy conversations that can lead to saving the lives of innocent men, women, and children."

Hammoud was clear on his community's demands: "We want action, not words". But so far, Arab- and Muslim-Americans have received mostly words. Worried about the "Abandon Biden" campaign, the president's campaign staff approached local leaders to meet, but they refused. They insisted they wanted to talk with policymakers at the White House. And it worked.

Biden quickly sent to Michigan several of his staffers, including Jon Finer, principal deputy national security adviser; Tom Perez, senior adviser to the president and director of the

Office of Intergovernmental Affairs; and Samantha Power, head of the US Agency for International Development (USAID). But after the meetings, nothing changed yet again. The Arab- and Muslim-American community received more nice words, and no action.

The other partners in the informal coalition to change US policy add clout. Michigan's large United Autoworkers Union has called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, recalling how it had also opposed apartheid in South Africa. The African Methodist Episcopal Church has also demanded an immediate ceasefire and called the attacks on Gaza "mass genocide". Progressive groups, such as US Senator Bernie Sanders's Our Revolution, have also joined the "Listen to Michigan" campaign. Mayor Hammoud told me that coalitions of minority communities have always worked together on shared causes at the local level. But, he added, "I've never seen a paradigm shift on the Palestine issue like we see today, with up to 80 percent of Democrats and 50 percent of youth supporting the ceasefire we call for."

One Arab-American who advised the White House in recent years also told me the newfound political leverage of the community "is unexpected, unfamiliar, and unprecedented." Indeed it is, and Tuesday's Michigan primary should reveal precisely how impactful it might be - and if it can temper American war-making abroad by acknowledging its citizens at home who take seriously that their governance system is anchored in "the consent of the governed".

Aljazeera

Who is winning?

Peter Bergen

TWO years into the Ukraine war, the tide has shifted, and Russian forces have some momentum, according to retired US General David Petraeus. But he said the Russians have suffered staggering casualties and Ukraine can still hold its own in fighting off Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion if it gets the support it needs from the United States.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which began disastrously for Putin, marks its second anniversary this coming weekend. To get a better insight into the state of the war, I spoke to former CIA director David Petraeus, who was the commanding general during the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and is co-author with Lord Andrew Roberts of the new book "Conflict: The Evolution of Warfare from 1945 to Ukraine." Last weekend Gen. Petraeus was at the Munich Security Conference, the leading global national security conference that was attended by pretty much every European leader and by top American officials - including Vice President Kamala Harris and Secretary of State Antony Blinken. The atmosphere at the conference was somber, happening as the shocking news of Alexey Navalny's death emerged and in the shadow of Ukraine's withdrawal from the key eastern city of Avdiivka, all putting into sharp focus the impassioned pleas from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky for additional military assistance. Shortly after the conference ended, I spoke with Gen. Petraeus. Our conversation has been lightly edited for clarity. It was different than any Munich Security Conference I've ever been to in the past - and I've been going to these since I was a major and a speechwriter for the Supreme Allied Commander of Europe in the late 1980s. Typically, you have the US delegation there that is pushing everyone else to do more. But this time, the Europeans had never been more serious, while there was considerable uncertainty about the American side: concerns about the US commitment to continued support for Ukraine and concerns about US willingness to continue to provide its very important leadership in the world in general. There were heartening elements - the Europeans are stepping up, for instance, with the German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on stage at the conference committing to spend 2% of Germany's GDP on defense. Keep in mind that's the number three economy in the world now, so that's a significant development. And NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg announced that this year 18 of 31 NATO nations will meet the 2% of GDP on defense commitment, marking a steady increase among European members.

Despite Europe very much stepping up - and the EU just before the Munich Security Conference announced an additional 50 billion euros in aid to Ukraine - the additional American support is hanging in the balance in the US Congress, and that is desperately needed. That said, many of the House members who were at the Munich conference, including some of the Republicans that are firm on defense and resistance to Russia, believe that the votes are there and that they'll be able to get this through. But the delay, the indecisiveness, the uncertainty certainly was something that weighed on the mood at Munich. Putin looks at the stalled legislation in the US Congress and the seeming inability to make a decision there to support a fellow democracy that broadly shares our values and principles - however imperfectly, they do - that has been brutally invaded. And then he looks to the US presidential election in November, and he looks at some of the rhetoric in the campaign, and undoubtedly, he draws some hope from that as well. I'm not sure that either side is winning the war. The Russians obviously have been achieving incremental gains, and the Russians do have the initiative right now, having just forced the Ukrainians to withdraw from Avdiivka in the southeast.

There are several other areas in which the Russians are attacking in the east and south and using massive quantities of artillery that generally destroy whatever it is that they're trying to seize and then using human wave attacks that are extraordinarily costly in terms of casualties, yet they seem to be able to sustain that. Vladimir Putin seems unconcerned by these losses and still seems to be able to continue to generate addi-

tional recruits. One question, of course, is: might there come a point where the Russian people, particularly Russian mothers and fathers and wives, say, 'Not my son, not my husband anymore'? And there have been modest demonstrations to bring the boys home, although that has certainly not reached substantial quantity nor been particularly influential. Russia also has a long history of not permitting opposition for any considerable period. Alexey Navalny just died in prison (CNN: the Kremlin has denied allegations of involvement), and a Russian helicopter pilot who defected to Ukraine earlier in the war was just found shot to death in Spain (CNN: Moscow said it had no information on the matter). It's essentially removing any illusion that the Russian Federation is anything other than a Stalinist dictatorship. Well, not necessarily. While the Ukrainians did demonstrate really quite impressive combat operations in the first year of the war - winning the battles of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Sumy and Kherson - once the battle lines hardened and the Russians were able to establish defenses, the counteroffensive hinged on the provision of certain weapon systems in a sufficiently timely manner that the Ukrainians would be able to deploy in large numbers. And, obviously, that did not happen. While the US-led response to the invasion has been very impressive in many respects, there were delays in certain decisions that meant that the Ukrainians did not have US tanks in a timely manner, for example, and that decision led to German delays in approval of the German Leopard tanks. The Ukrainians also didn't have the Western aircraft that would have provided air support for their ground forces.

The US also needs to supply Ukraine with more long-range Army Tactical Missile Systems, ATACMS, which allow the Ukrainians to accurately hit distant targets in Russian-controlled territory. So, when you take that into account, I think not a surprise. The Russians have certainly learned certain lessons after seemingly not being able to do that for the first year or more of the war. They have found a way to generate replacement personnel and additional units, and Russia has put its economy on a full-war footing, and this is where the reality enters the picture, as Russia has more than three times the population of Ukraine and an economy that's more than 10 times the size of Ukraine's. If US support is forthcoming, I think you will see Ukraine able to at the very least sustain its present position, perhaps even make further progress in the one theater where there have been very impressive Ukrainian achievements - and that's in the western Black Sea. There, through the use of anti-ship missiles, some produced in Ukraine, some provided to Ukraine, and then the use of maritime drones developed by Ukraine, the Russian Black Sea Fleet has probably sustained about 30% losses. It has largely been pushed out of the western Black Sea and has had to withdraw the bulk of its fleet from the critical port of Sevastopol in occupied Crimea, a port that it has used for a couple of centuries. And this is a critical achievement because it's allowing Ukraine to export its grain through the western Black Sea to countries that are very dependent on that in North Africa, including particularly Egypt.

These are just staggering losses. And yet there is a seeming lack of concern in the Kremlin because they seem to be able to continue to recruit by using substantial enlistment bonuses in rural areas. Keep in mind, of course, Putin is shielding the elite in Moscow and St. Petersburg; the burden is not falling on them. It's falling on these young men in the much more rural areas. Putin's certainly in a much better position than was the case, say, a year ago, and that's obviously concerning. I think, can not only sustain its position but, in certain cases, make progress. But that's a lot of assumptions. That's a lot of ifs that all have to come together. PETRAEUS: I don't think that this changes the very fundamental issues that are the most significant factors that will determine the way ahead for Ukraine. In particular, Ukraine has to come to grips with how to generate replacement forces, and it has to make a very difficult choice. The Ukrainian parliament has to

make some fundamental decisions about recruiting ages, noting that the average age of a Ukrainian soldier on the front lines is not the 18-to-23 that I was privileged to lead in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's over 40. This is a result of their recruiting policies, and they're going to have to change that. (Under Ukrainian law, men between the ages of 18 to 26 can't be drafted, though they can volunteer).

It's very clear that this is an emotional subject, understandably so, and it will be difficult, but it's necessary. There's no question that Putin would not stop at Ukraine. The question is, how long would it take him to regenerate the forces for employment elsewhere? Certainly, Moldova would be in the crosshairs. There are still, after all, 1,500 or so Russian soldiers on the ground in that sliver of land, Transnistria, in Moldova. His attention could also shift to the Baltic states as well, whose existence he also resents. His goals all along have been to reassemble as much of the Soviet Union or perhaps the Russian Empire as he possibly can, with him at the helm as the czar.

There are elements of World War I here - the trenches; the belts of defensive fortifications; barbed wire; very, very deep minefields; huge quantities of artillery, especially on the Russian side. You also have the Cold War-era tanks and infantry-fighting vehicles, which is largely what you see on this battlefield. And then, on top of all this, you have some fairly advanced drones. Some are "suicide" drones. You also have precision missiles in the air and at sea, and you have maritime drones. Electronic warfare is also much more significant. There are activities in cyberspace. There is even involvement of capabilities in outer space that enables command, control, and communications, Starlink satellite communications, of course, being one of those. And you have the advent of the enormous transparency that comes from the ubiquitous presence of smartphones, internet access and social media platforms. So it's truly different from any previous context for warfare, and it gives us hints as to the future of war that Andrew Roberts and I describe in our book, "Conflict." Because it's in our fundamental national security interest. It's in the interest of our prosperity and the rules-based international order that we and our allies and partners in the wake of World War II established, which, for all of its imperfections, generally furthered our interests and those of our allies and partners. Other countries - Russia and its various confederates around the world - are trying to make the world safe for autocracy, not safe for democracy, and our interests and those of our NATO allies and the free world are defended now at the Ukraine-Russia border.

This is not charity. What we do around the world is not out of the goodness of our heart. It's out of a cold calculation. It is in our national interest to do so, and that if we do not do so, conditions in the world will change in ways that will not be positive for either our national security or our national prosperity. The United States is, at the end of the day, the keystone for NATO capabilities. Even though the NATO secretary general reports that this year 18 of 31 countries will hit the 2% of GDP spending on defense that was agreed upon a decade or so ago, still, the US military is the foundation piece for any NATO operation and for deterrence of would-be aggressors. So NATO, in many respects, is dependent on decisions made in the Oval Office, and those recent statements were a source of concern at the Munich Security Conference. It would. We should note here, we don't know whether the nuclear element here is for nuclear power, the way some of our satellites have, or if it's an actual nuclear weapon - whether a nuclear-powered satellite with some kind of electromagnetic pulse weapon - or if it actually carries a nuclear device that could be used in an anti-satellite role. The real challenge here is that this is enormously destabilizing, because the tens of minutes that the US has right now of warning of some kind of significant nuclear attack would be reduced quite dramatically if the intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets that we have, many of them in space, were blinded and decisions had to be made immediately. "Crisis deterrence" would then be dramatically undermined. So, it's very dangerous, it's very ill-advised and it's also very provocative.

CNN

Farmers' protests in Europe and the deadend of neoliberalism

ON February 26, the World Trade Organization (WTO) will hold its 13th ministerial conference in Abu Dhabi. While few would make the connection between the proceedings at that summit and the plight of impoverished farmers across the world, there is indeed a direct and clear link between the two.

On that day, we, members of the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC), an international organisation representing small-holder farmers in 21 European countries, will be protesting against the neoliberal policies in agriculture the WTO has been promoting for decades which have led to the systematic impoverishment of farmers. This tragic state of affairs has been highlighted by the continuing protests of farmers who have been taking to the streets, blocking motorways and logistics platforms across Europe since January.

These are people who produce Europe's food - whether conventionally or organically, on a small or a medium scale. They stand united by a shared reality: They are fed up with spending their lives working incessantly without ever getting a decent income. We have reached this point after decades of neoliberal agricultural policies and free trade agreements. Production costs have risen steadily in recent years, while prices paid to farmers have stagnated or even fallen.

Faced with this situation, farmers have pursued various economic strategies. Some have tried to increase production to compensate for the fall in prices: They have bought more land, invested in machinery, taken on a lot of debt and seen their workload increase significantly. The stress

and declining incomes have created a great deal of frustration. Other farmers have sought better prices for their produce by turning to organic farming and short distribution channels. But for many, these markets collapsed after the COVID-19 pandemic. All the while, through mergers and speculation, large agroindustrial groups have gotten bigger and stronger, putting increased pressure on prices and practices for farmers.

ECVC has actively taken part in the mobilisations of farmers in Europe. Our members have also been hit hard by dwindling incomes, the stress linked to high levels of debt, and the excessive workload. We clearly see that the European Union's embrace of WTO-promoted policies of deregulation of agricultural markets in favour of big agribusiness and the destructive international competition are directly responsible for our plight. Since the 1980s, various regulations that ensured fair prices for European farmers have been dismantled. The EU put all its faith in free trade agreements, which placed all the world's farmers in competition with each other, encouraging them to produce at the lowest possible price at the cost of their own incomes and growing debt. In recent years, however, the EU has announced its intention to move towards a more sustainable agricultural model, notably with the Farm to Fork Strategy, which is the agricultural component of the Green Deal.

Farmers' organisations welcomed this ambition, but we also stressed that the sustainability of European agriculture could not be improved without breaking away from the logic of international

competitiveness. Producing ecologically has huge benefits for the health and the planet, but it costs more for the farmers, and so to achieve the agroecological transition, agricultural markets need to be protected. Unfortunately, we were not heard. European farmers were therefore faced with an impossible mission: delivering an agroecological transition while producing for the lowest possible price. As a result, differences between farming organisations have clearly resurfaced. On one side, the big farmers and agribusiness organisations, linked to Copa-Cogeca, want to maintain the neoliberal orientation and have therefore asked for the withdrawal of environmental measures set in the EU's Green Deal.

On the other side, ECVC and other organisations affirm that the environmental and climate crises are real and serious and that it is vital to give ourselves the means to combat them in order to ensure food sovereignty for the decades to come. For us, it is the neoliberal framework that must be challenged, not environmental regulation. In particular, we denounce the free trade agreement between the EU has been concluding with various countries and regions. One of them is the deal negotiated with Mercosur countries (Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay). A final text was drafted in 2019, but it has not been signed or ratified by either side. If it comes into effect, it would be a disaster for European livestock farmers, as it will lead to increased imports of meat, among other products, from Mercosur countries. This could potentially drive down prices, putting even more economic pressure on already struggling European live-

stock farmers.

Additionally, the deal could result in the importation of products that do not meet the same strict standards for food safety and environmental sustainability that the EU has embraced. While we are not against international trade in agricultural products, we advocate for trade to be based on food sovereignty.

So we can be sure that farmers' protests will continue to escalate in coming years. All of this is happening at a time when the far right is on the rise across the world. Rather than solving the problems by ensuring a better distribution of income, the far right designates minority populations as scapegoats (migrants, women, LGBTQ, etc) and increases the violent repression of popular movements. In the Netherlands, farmers' anger was exploited by the right-wing Farmer-Citizen Movement party (BBB), which leveraged anti-system and anti-ecology rhetoric to secure more votes. As a result, the BBB made significant gains in provincial and national elections, increasing its seats in parliament from one to seven.

With the EU's incoherent reaction to the farmers' protests, there is a real risk that this trend will continue in the elections for the European Parliament in June. The farmers' unions within ECVC maintain that the real solutions for European farmers are policies to regulate markets and promote food sovereignty, in cooperation with the countries of the South. At a time when capital income is exploding, we, as farmers, are standing with the workers' unions and the climate movement to demand a fair income for all workers and coherent policies to respond to the global climate emergency.

Globalization not reversed

Zheng Yu & Ye Zi

SINCE the turn of the century, rising globalization and inequality have fueled anti-globalization sentiments. Events such as trade wars, geopolitical conflicts and COVID-19 have caused global trade declines, sparking concerns about globalization's reversal. However, the global trading system showed resilience, swiftly recovering from shocks.

In less than two years post-COVID-19, global trade rebounded to pre-pandemic levels, with developing countries leading a robust recovery, particularly in South-South trade. Despite the growing outcry against globalization in developed countries including the United States and European countries, such calls are relatively weaker in developing nations. Over the past three decades, developing countries' weighted average tariffs have been declining, from nearly 40 percent to around 15 percent.

Why can developing countries display great resilience in crises? To start with, participating in global value chains has reduced developing countries' domestic income inequality. Global value chains have provided developing countries with a new means of industrialization and a new way of integrating into the global economy, which helps them elevate their level of economic development. Developing countries can take part in the process of globalization without having comparative advantages in finished products or the entire industry - they only need to produce parts and components in certain production process.

Global value chain participation can create more job opportunities for

workers and attract a large amount of foreign direct investment, thus helping developing countries "make the cake bigger". The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has found that economies with fastest growing participation in global value chains have GDP per capita growth rates 2 percentage points above the average. In the meantime, participating in global value chains helps increase the incomes of low-skilled workers and narrows the income gap in society. According to the World Inequality Database, over the past three decades, the average income inequality level of developing countries has increased during the first two decades and then declined in the past decade. Second, the upgrading along the value chains will increase inequality within developing countries. However, with their ascent along the value chains, the income gap between low-skilled workers and high-skilled ones has been widening, increasing domestic income inequality. Therefore, despite the enormous opportunities from global value chain participation, developing countries will face more difficulties in striking a balance between equality and efficiency as they seek to move up the value chain. Third, overall, global value chain participation has reduced pressure within developing countries for protectionism. Facing shocks from global value chain participation, developing countries are not inclined to resort to protectionist trade policies such as tariffs and import quotas. That's because developing countries face completely different situations

from developed ones. On the one hand, their economic opening-up brings more benefits to labor-intensive industries and low-income workers; therefore, they face less pressure in income distribution than developed countries, thus restraining the domestic outcry for protectionist policies. More importantly, as their global value chain participation advances, trade relations between countries are becoming increasingly complicated and protectionist trade policies can hardly protect the domestic market. It is because of the less-intense contradiction in domestic income distribution that developing countries display a stronger desire for economic opening-up than developed ones.

On the whole, global value chains have not only enhanced economic interdependence between countries, but also consolidated the social foundation within developing countries for supporting economic opening-up, thus strengthening their resilience in economic crises and making them staunch supporters of economic globalization. Developing countries have become a critical force for defending globalization, rather than a driver of the anti-globalization movement, which greatly reduces the risk of globalization going into reverse. That said, as developing countries climb up the global value chains, income inequality within these countries will continuously worsen, resulting in greater pressure for them to roll out protectionist trade policies. When facing growing pressure from globalization, developing countries should attach greater significance to the

adjustment of domestic policies. First, for labor-intensive developing countries, gains from global value chain participation outweigh the associated risks of losses. Global value chain participation could enhance productivity, increase exports and create job opportunities, which help mitigate domestic contradictions and effectively maintain their economic stability and sustainable development. Second, when pursuing upgrading along the global value chains, developing countries need to pay more attention to the adverse impacts of technological progress on low-skilled workers and its social impacts. A country's efforts to achieve industrial transformation and value-chain climbing will likely worsen income inequality. Income inequality exerts a crucial impact on social cohesion and political stability, and is thus an important premise of whether globalization can advance. Last, the conventional protectionist measures, such as tariffs, have a limited effect in tackling inequality - adjusting domestic social policies will play a bigger role.

Countries should promote the re-employment of low-skilled workers, put in place social protection measures, and adopt long-term measures such as strengthening education and vocational training. In the meantime, they should adopt more flexible social protection measures to reduce the cost of inequality in the short run and prevent industrial transformation from further worsening income disparities. By doing so, they could better adapt to globalization and steer its course in the right direction to achieve more sustainable and inclusive growth.

The China Daily



PSX stays bullish, gains 490 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Monday, gaining 490.11 points, a positive change of 0.78 percent, closing at 63,305.93 points against 62,815.82 points the previous trading day.

A total of 452,868,834 shares valuing Rs 16.491 billion were traded during the day as compared to 377,974,404 shares valuing Rs16.011 billion the last day.

Some 345 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 207 of them recorded gains and 114 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 24 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 54,064,451 shares at Rs 4.44 per share, Kohinoor Spinning with

53,374,000 shares at Rs 4.57 per share, and WorldCall Limited with 22,971,314 shares at Rs 1.31 per share.

Pakistan Tobacco Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 35.00 per share price, closing at Rs 1,080.00, whereas the runner-up was Sazgar Engineering Limited with a Rs 24.61 rise in its per share price to Rs 352.72.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 654.17 per share closing at Rs 21,145.00, followed by Nestle Pakistan Limited with Rs 330.11 decline to close at Rs 7,580.

Rupee gains 16 paise against dollar

The Rupee on Monday gained 16 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.20 against the previous

day's closing of Rs 279.36.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.4 and Rs 282.3, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 23 paise to close at Rs 302.31 against the last day's closing of Rs 302.54, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs185, whereas a decrease of 08 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 353.87 compared to the last closing of Rs 353.95.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 04 paise each to close at Rs 76.01 and Rs 74.44 respectively.

Indus Hospital launches ambitious Ramadan drive



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Over two hundred esteemed guests gathered at the Indus Hospital, Korangi Campus, Karachi, to witness the unveiling of the Indus Hospital and Health Network's (IHNN) Ramadan Campaign 2024. The audience comprised media and government officials, IHNN's valued donors, senior leadership, and various staff members. The objective of the Ramadan Campaign 2024 is to mobilize resources to sustain Pakistan's largest private healthcare network.

Salim Razzak Tabani, Chairman of the Fundraising Committee of IHNN's Board of Directors, opened the event with remarks emphasizing the organization's vision and mission to provide free, indiscriminate, and quality healthcare to the people of Pakistan and beyond. He expressed gratitude for the continuous support received from government and private partners, donors, corporates, media, youth volunteers, and ambassadors. Mr. Tabani appealed for support in making the Ramadan Campaign 2024 a beacon of hope for numerous patients in need.

Syed Mashhood Rizvi, Chief of Staff to the President and Executive Director of Communications and Resource Development at IHNN, provided insights into the crucial role IHNN plays as the nation's necessity, encompassing 10 hospitals, 4 regional blood centers, 3 physical rehabilitation clinics, 38 primary care sites, and various public health initiatives across Pakistan.

In a detailed briefing, Mr. Rizvi highlighted the multifaceted role of IHNN within the community, emphasizing its expansive reach beyond traditional hospital functions. He

underscored the enduring bond between the community and IHNN, emphasizing inclusivity across all age groups in actively participating and contributing to the institution's collective well-being. Particularly, Rizvi acknowledged the pivotal role of the media in IHNN's journey, highlighting its importance. He introduced the 'Media Ambassador Program' (MAP), an initiative exclusively for media persons to join and actively contribute to IHNN's cause.

Acknowledging the healthcare challenges in Pakistan, he noted that over 400,000 households fall into poverty annually due to health expenditures, resulting in preventable deaths, especially among children and women. Despite challenges, IHNN serves over 500,000 patients monthly, with more than 70% benefiting from Zakat.

Rizvi went on to emphasize the catastrophic impact of the previous year's economic turmoil on the healthcare sector particularly in terms of the exorbitant costs of care IHNN was faced with such as a 30% increase in the cost of life-saving medicine. Heartbreakingly, these are not just mere numbers and rather, represent precious lives which are left destroyed. As such, Mr. Rizvi introduced IHNN's ambitious Ramadan target of PKR 4.5 billion. He stressed the dire need for openhearted generosity from Indus' community and beyond to address the urgent need of free of cost, high quality healthcare for the most deserving communities of Pakistan. Dr. Abdul Bari Khan, President of Indus Hospital & Health Network, expressed grati-

tude for the journey that has made IHNN a nationwide network. He thanked the Almighty for the success seen and the positive impact on countless patients' lives. While acknowledging the challenging financial times, Dr. Khan urged continued support for Indus.

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During the event, Dr. Abdul Bari Khan also unveiled IHNN's Ramadan Campaign Ad/TVC, which beautifully captured IHNN's commitment to providing comprehensive healthcare services to communities across the country. The ad highlights how IHNN goes beyond basic healthcare services and takes care of patients' psychosocial, rehabilitation, food, and nutritional needs as well.

In addition to the ad, the IHNN team had set up stalls to display some of their extraordinary work at the event. One of the many Mobile Health Units that go to the remotest areas in Pakistan, improving health equity for many, was also parked at the event. This unit is one of the many ways that Indus Hospital is committed to providing healthcare services to underserved communities in Pakistan.

The ceremony concluded with a mass prayer for the success of the Ramadan Campaign 2024.

Gas theft crackdown: Another 252 connections disconnected

F.P. Report

LAHORE: During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, disconnecting another 252 connections; Rs 5.8 million fine imposed.

In Lahore, the regional team disconnected 12 connections on illegal use of gas while another 03 on use of compressor.

In Rawalpindi the team disconnected 4 connections on illegal use of gas while another 1 on use of compressor and amount of Rs 0.21 million against gas theft cases. The team also lodged one FIR against gas theft case.

In Multan 04 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas while another 20 on use of compressor.

In Peshawar and Karak, the company disconnected 155 connections on account of direct use of gas and illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 5.5 million against gas theft cases.

In Sahiwal two connections were disconnected on use of compressor while another 2 on illegal use of gas.

In Sheikhupura 43 connections were disconnected on illegal use of gas and amount of Rs 0.03 million booked against gas theft cases.

The regional team of Bahawalpur disconnected 01 connection on illegal use of gas.

In Faisalabad the team disconnected 5 connections on illegal use of gas and imposed fine of Rs 0.06 million against gas theft cases.

IBA Karachi organizes IBA Leaders Connect



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi held 'IBA Leaders Connect' at Movempack Hotel, showcasing IBA's dedication to nurturing a community of thought leaders and professionals committed to advancing higher education and empowering young individuals to pursue brighter futures.

The event commenced with an opening address by Dean, School of Mathematics and Computer Science, Dr. Shakeel Khoja, who was representing Executive Director, IBA Karachi, Dr. S Akbar Zaidi, Director, Alumni Affairs, Resource Mobilization & Corporate Affairs, Malahat

Awan, delivered a presentation highlighting IBA's impact and opportunities for partnership. Additionally, IBA alumna and a National Talent Hunt Program scholar, Muskan Amjad, shared her inspirational journey with the audience.

The highlight of the event was the keynote address by Chairman, Dawood Hercules Corporation and Engro Corporation, Hussain Dawood. In his address, Mr. Dawood emphasized the importance of leveraging wisdom from religion to navigate life's unique challenges, highlighting the need for individuals to approach obstacles with resilience and faith. He underscored the value of drawing upon spiritual

insights to address personal and professional hurdles effectively.

The event also featured a dynamic Q&A session with Mr. Dawood, providing attendees with the opportunity for an insightful discussion.

The event was attended by more than 200 individuals. A few notable individuals included Ghias Khan, CEO Engro Corporation; Jahangir Piracha, CEO Engro Polymer and Chemicals; Farhan Essa, MD Essa Laboratories; Sabeen Rabbani, Member BOD Orange Tree Foundation; Zar Badshah, Head of Frontier Coverage - AKD Securities Ltd.; and Ruhail Muhammad, CEO Lucky Power, among many

other representatives from leading organizations of the country.

Towards the end of the event, IBA acknowledged and recognized the contribution of the donors who have pledged to support IBA in creating an ecosystem that is comparable to the world's elite higher education institutions. The recognition session included the intended support from Habib Bank Ltd., Orange Tree Foundation, Faysal Bank, Jaffer Family Foundation, and OGDCL, who have come together to support IBA through multiple initiatives that support its infrastructure development and nation building endeavors.

LIPTON and Al-Fatah join forces: Doubling impact, elevating tea experiences

F.P. Report

LAHORE: LIPTON Teas & Infusions (LTI) is excited to announce a transformative partnership with Al-Fatah, Pakistan's largest premium departmental store chain. This collaboration marks a pivotal moment in our commitment to innovation and customer satisfaction, as we work together to enhance our reach and double our business in the Pakistani tea industry.

"By joining forces with

Al-Fatah, we aim to create unparalleled value for our consumers and elevate the overall tea industry experience," said Farheen Salman, LTI President of BSPAN & GM Pakistan. "This strategic alliance will not only broaden our reach but also strengthen our position as leaders in providing premium tea offerings. We are excited about the possibilities this partnership holds for doubling our business and delivering exceptional tea experiences

to a wider audience."

Earlier this week, a virtual signing ceremony was held, bringing together the Al-Fatah team and the LIPTON Modern Trade Team. From Karachi, Farheen Salman and Farrukh Iqbal, Head of Sales, Pakistan, from LTI attended the ceremony.

Representing LTI from Lahore were Omer Farooq, GSM LHR & Hybrid Markets, Jahanzeb Aamir, National Key Accounts & Channel Lead, and

Shahrukh Khan, Key Account Manager.

The Al-Fatah delegation in Lahore included Sheikh Mohammad, Owner & Director Purchase, and Syed Haider Rizvi, Procurement Head.

Established in 1941, Al-Fatah has been a trusted shopping destination for over seven decades, offering a diverse range of high-quality products. "This collaboration with LIPTON Teas & Infusions is a testament to our commitment

to innovation and customer satisfaction," said Sheikh Mohammad, Owner & Director Purchase, Al-Fatah. "Together, we are poised to set new standards in the tea industry, offering an unmatched selection and doubling our impact on consumers."

As LIPTON Teas & Infusions and Al-Fatah embark on this exciting journey, the focus remains on creating value for consumers and shaping the future of the tea industry.

Telenor and EFU Life enhance customer protection with innovative insurance bundles

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Telenor Pakistan and EFU Life have entered into a strategic partnership to introduce innovative life and health insurance solutions to the Telenor customer base. As the first initiative, both entities have designed unique GSM mobile bundles for Telenor users. Telenor subscribers can activate these bundles through My Telenor App, EasyPaisa, and other retail channels. This collaboration marks a significant milestone in enhancing customer protection and financial inclusion in Pakistan.

The 'Monthly Ultimate Offer' priced at Rs. 1600 per month offers 200 GB data, unlimited on-net and

1200 off-net minutes and impressive insurance cover against natural and accidental cases. This includes coverage up to PKR 75,000 in case of health benefit and up to PKR 250,000 in case of loss of life. The insurance coverage is valid for 30 days from the activation of the mobile bundle. The offer requires no additional insurance premium, and claims can be filed directly with EFU Life.

The partnership between Telenor Pakistan and EFU Life aims to address the evolving needs of customers by offering innovative and easily accessible insurance solutions. By integrating insurance coverage directly into Telenor Pakistan's GSM mobile bundles, customers will



now have access to enhanced protection, providing them with peace of mind and financial security.

This collaboration is a testament to our commitment to innovation and customer-centricity," said Ahsan Maykan, VP Consumer

Marketing and Digital Platform, at Telenor Pakistan. "By partnering with EFU Life, we are bridging an untapped gap and providing our valued customers with convenient access to insurance services, further enriching their digital experience."

Mohammed Ali Ahmed, CEO, EFU Life said, we are excited about the strategic partnership, stating that it marks a pivotal moment for both organizations. Our primary focus is on delivering the best possible experience for Telenor subscribers.

Engro Corp revenues show robust growth of 35% in 2023

F.P. Report

KARACHI: On a consolidated basis, Engro Corporation's revenue grew by 35% to PKR 482 billion in 2023, while consolidated PAT before accounting impact due to re-measurement of thermal energy assets increased to PKR 66 billion versus PKR 46 billion last year, recording an EPS of PKR 63.01.

Major variance is attributable to higher urea sales, efficient plant operations, higher earnings from dollar-denominated businesses and efficiencies derived through cost optimization.

However, after incorporating the accounting impact due to re-measurement of thermal energy assets, the consolidated PAT stood at PKR 36 billion with an EPS of PKR 38.60 in 2023.

Engro Corporation announced a final cash div-

idend of PKR 2/- per share for the year. This is in addition to the PKR 46/- per share dividend announced during the year, bringing the cumulative payout to PKR 48/- per share.

Proposed divestment of Thermal Energy assets

Referring to the various disclosures made at PSX by the Company regarding the ongoing discussions with Liberty Mills Limited along with other parties acting in concert, the Company is now evaluating to execute the proposed divestment of the Company's thermal energy assets comprising of shareholding in Engro Powergen Qadirpur Limited, Engro Powergen Thar (Pvt.) Limited and Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company Limited held via Engro Energy Limited through a sale of shares process.

SECP vide SRO 986 (I)/2019 dated September 2, 2019, has granted specif-

ic exemptions to Independent Power Producers (IPPs) from the applicability of IFRS 9, IFRS 16 and IAS 21. As a result of this, debt component recovered from CPPA-G as part of tariff approved by NEPRA is recorded as revenue in the profit or loss statement over the life of the loan. However, the corresponding depreciation expense related to the IPP is recorded over the term of the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). The term of the loan being shorter than the term of the PPA results in higher Net Assets in the Consolidated Financial Statements of the Group.

In accordance with the requirements of IAS 36, the Company has carried out an assessment of the recoverable amount of the thermal energy assets for the purpose of Standalone and Consolidated Financial Statements.

Due to the specific accounting treatment for IPPs, as mentioned above, the Net Assets of thermal energy assets in the Consolidated Financial Statements of the Group are higher than their recoverable amounts. Accordingly, an accounting impact of PKR 30 billion (Owners' Share: PKR 13 billion) has been recognized in the Consolidated Financial Statements for the year ended December 31, 2023.

In case of Standalone Financial Statements of the Company for the year ended December 31, 2023, no impact has been recognized as the recoverable amount of thermal energy assets is significantly higher than their carrying amount.

Portfolio performance
The Fertilizer business achieved a historic milestone of highest ever urea sales of 2,327 KT through

record urea production, cost optimization, and long-term reliability projects executed during 2022. The business enabled import substitution to the tune of USD 0.8 billion in 2023.

Despite macro-economic headwinds, Engro Polymer and Chemicals Limited was able to sustain an 89 percent market share by ensuring product availability and implementing various incentives to boost market confidence. The business recorded domestic sales of 199 KT, thus, enabling import substitution of USD 91 million. As a mitigant to lower domestic demand, business focused on export opportunities and achieved the highest ever export volumes of 44 KT, including caustic soda exports of 22 KT, generating foreign exchange of USD 26 million for the period.

Engro Enfrashare (Pvt.)

Limited continued to expand its national tower footprint and achieved a scale of 3,952 tower sites with a 1.21x tenancy ratio during 2023 versus 3,329 tower sites with 1.17x tenancy ratio in 2022, catering to all four major Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) of Pakistan.

In the Energy vertical, the Mining business is committed to initiate Phase III of the expansion to enhance capacity to 11.4 MTPA. Engro Powergen Thar (Pvt.) Limited achieved 82% availability during the year, while Qadirpur Power Plant achieved 100% availability through ensuring efficient plant operations and dispatched a Net Electrical Output of 870 GWH to the national grid.

Engro Elengy Terminal (Pvt) Limited handled 73 vessels during 2023, delivering 215 bcf re-gasified

LNG into the SSGC network with an availability factor of 97.1%. The Terminal contributed 13% - 15% towards Pakistan's total gas supply during the year. Engro Vopak Terminal's chemical throughput was adversely influenced due to disruption in the operations of key customers, however, a notable 64% increase in LPG marine imports was recorded compared to last year.

Engro Eximp FZE, the Company's international trading arm that initiated commercial activity in UAE in 2022, achieved a turnover of approximately USD 400 million including third party contracts.

Court Notice

In the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar. Appeal. No. 92 /13 Institution 18/10/2022. Date of hearing. 8/3/2024. Bakhtawar Shah VS Shamaren etc. Notice to no 11. Hamedullah s/o Mohamad Ayub resisent of Shalbandi thesel Gagra district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 am dated 8/3/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.



In brief

Karachi gears up to host PSL matches

KARACHI (APP): The National Bank Stadium (NBS) is getting everything ready to host 11 matches of the ongoing HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 from February 28. The home ground stadium will host 11 matches including the finale scheduled to be held on March 18. The 15th match of the HBL PSL 9 will be played between Karachi Kings and Islamabad United on February 28 while the 16th match will be played between Karachi Kings and Quetta Gladiators on February 29. Islamabad United and Peshawar Zalmi will face off in the same ground on March 03. Karachi Kings and Lahore Qalandars will confront on March 09. Quetta Gladiators will compete against Lahore Qalandars on March 10, Karachi Kings over Peshawar Zalmi on March 11 and Quetta Gladiators will face Multan Sultans on March 12. Moreover, Qualifier will be held on March 14 and Eliminator 1 on March 15. The finale of the ninth edition of HBL PSL will be played to decide about the champions of 2024 on March 18.

PHF form committee

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Hockey Federation has constituted a committee for scrutiny of hockey clubs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, wherein three former hockey Olympians Naeem Akhtar, Rahim Khan, Mussadiq Hussain would be its members. Besides three hockey Olympians, former internationals goal-keeper Rauf Khan, former international hockey umpire Asif Orakzai, Tufail Khan and Afsar Ali will also be the members of the PHF Scrutiny Committee. The committee in the first face would scrutinize the hockey Club, followed by the forming of District Hockey Association through election and in the third face Provincial Hockey Association would also be formed through free, fair election wherein the office-bearers and those having nomination would cost their right of vote.

Afridi, Gayle to shine in WCL

DUBAI (INP): In a momentous development, Toyam Sports Limited (TSL), a leading sports entity listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange, formally declares its strategic partnership with the World Championship of Legends (WCL). Facilitated by its subsidiary, Pacific Star Sports (PSS), this alliance highlights the participation of esteemed cricketing legends such as Yuvraj Singh and Kevin Pietersen. This collaboration signifies a significant milestone in the progression of global sports entertainment, as it assembles a distinguished array of cricketing excellence. WCL, a branch of Zabawa Entertainment, renowned for its prowess in Bollywood film and music production, will witness the convergence of cricketing titans from across the globe. With luminaries like Yuvraj Singh, Kevin Pietersen, Shahid Afridi, and Chris Gayle at the helm, alongside Bollywood superstar Ajay Devgn as a co-owner, the league is set to captivate audiences worldwide. The World Championship of Legends (WCL), endorsed by the prestigious England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), is poised to deliver an electrifying T20 cricket extravaganza at Edgbaston, United Kingdom, from July 3 to July 13, 2024.

Babar, Arif lift Zalmi to edge United in a high-scoring thriller

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Babar Azam's quickfire century, followed by Arif Yaqoob's five-wicket haul propelled Peshawar Zalmi to an eight-run victory over Islamabad United in the 13th match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 here at Gaddafi Stadium on Monday.

Chasing a mammoth 202-run target, the United fell short of the victory despite a sensational partnership between Azam Khan and Colin Munro. The United had a shaky start to the run chase as they lost Jordan Cox (13) in the fifth over with just 32 runs on the board.

The United then lost two more wickets in quick succession as Shadab Khan (6) and Salman Ali Agha (14) walked back after modest contributions.

Azam Khan joined Munro in the middle with the United reeling at 73/3 in 9.3 overs and turned the game on its head with an astounding knock. The right-handed batter dominated the 108-run stand with Munro, scoring 75 off just 30 deliveries with the help of six boundaries and as many sixes.

His magnificent knock ended on the final delivery of the 18th over when he mistimed a shot off Naveen-ul-Haq.

His partner Munro followed his footsteps on the next delivery which prompted a lower-order collapse. The left-handed batter made 71 in 53 balls, hitting seven boundaries and a six. Spinner Arif Yaqoob brought the game back into Zalmi's command by picking up three more wickets in the penultimate over and finished with astonishing figures of 5/27 – the first five-wicket haul of the PSL 9.

The United then needed 19 runs off the final over and they eventually came up short despite Naseem Shah's six on the second delivery. Besides Yaqoob, Salman Irshad, Naveen, Luke Wood and Saim Ayub made one scalp each.

Put into bat first, Zalmi's openers Saim Ayub and Babar once again scripted a flourishing start with a 73-run partnership. The in-form duo dominated the United bowlers and scored at a brisk rate until Ayub was cleaned up by Salman Ali Agha in the eighth over. Ayub remained a notable run-getter for the Zalmi with a 21-ball 38 which featured three boundaries and two sixes.

His dismissal fuelled United with momentum and their captain solidified their position by striking twice in the next over, removing Mohammad Haris and Haseebullah Khan. The successive blows had reduced Zalmi to 80/3 in 8.4 overs and the former champions, as a result, went into a defensive mode.

The Zalmi then lost two more wickets — Paul Walter (19) and Rovman Powell (eight) — in quick succession and slipped to 124/5 in 14.5 overs. But Babar Azam launched a ruthless counterattack on the United with belligerent hitting and turned the game on its head. The highlight of his sensational hitting was an expensive 18th over when he clobbered four boundaries and a six to young Hunain Shah.

He then hit a boundary on the first delivery of Tymall Mills' final over and followed it up with a single to bring up his second PSL century.

Murray again hints at impending retirement

DUBAI (AFP): Andy Murray suggested he may retire within the next "few months" after winning his opening match in Dubai on Monday.

The former world number one battled back from a set down to beat Denis Shapovalov 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 and reach the second round.

The 36-year-old, who snapped a six-match losing streak in Doha last week before going out against Czech teenager Jakub Mensik, told the BBC last December that 2024 could be his final year on the ATP Tour.

"I probably don't have too long left but I'll do as best as I can these last few months," said Murray on Monday.

"I still love competing and still love the game.

Obviously, it gets harder and harder the older you get to compete with the young guys and keep your body fit and fresh."

Murray appeared to say to his player's box during his gruelling loss to Mensik last week that "this game is not for me anymore", but he played down those comments.

"People read a lot into what I say on the court sometimes and it's not always rational," he added. "But everyone asks me about it all the time anyway."

Murray clinched his 500th win on hard courts, joining Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic, Andre Agassi and Rafael Nadal in reaching the milestone.

"Yeah, it's not bad (500 hard-court wins). For courts have been a great surface for me over the years...

I'm very proud of that."

Murray struggled to contain a powerful first-set display from former top-10 player Shapovalov, who is searching for his best form after missing the end of last season through injury.

But the three-time Grand Slam champion edged a second-set tie-break before easing through the decider with a double-break.

Murray will face either fellow veteran Gael Monfils or French fifth seed Ugo Humbert in the last 16. The Briton has not reached the quarter-finals at an ATP event since his final loss by Daniil Medvedev in Qatar over a year ago. Murray dropped 17 spots in the ATP rankings earlier on Monday, falling to 67th place.

Karachi Heroes win softball event

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a superb display of talent during the men's and women's softball event at the 18th Sindh Games, Karachi Heroes lifted the titles of men's and women's events in style.

The men's final was played at the KMC Sports Complex, Kashmir Road. Karachi won the gold medal by defeating Sukkur by 12-2 after a one-sided contest. Sukkur won the silver medal while Hyderabad got the bronze medal.

In the women's final, Karachi defeated Larkana by a margin of 14-3 to win the gold, Larkana won the silver, while Hyderabad won the bronze medal.

Vice President of Softball Federation of Pakistan Farah Saeed, President of Sindh Softball Association Prof. Dr. Farhan Essa Abdullah, CEO of Combaxx Sports

Omar Saeed, Softball Federation President Asif Azeem, Chairperson Yasmin Hyder, Vice President Tehmina Asif and Director of Siccotel Abdul Wahab distributed trophies, medals and souvenir among the players and officials.

In the men's final, Karachi scored 12 runs in 3 innings. Shah Rukh Khan, Arbaz Ijaz and Mueez Khan scored 2 runs each. Sukkur scored 2 runs in 3 innings.

In the Women's final, Karachi scored 14 runs in 3 innings. Muskan and Sabin scored 3 three runs each and Manahil and Disha scored two runs. For Larkana Fauzia and Aameena scored 1 each.

In the men's championship event, Kamran Shah of Hyderabad was the best catcher, Muhammad Munaf of Sukkur was the best hitter and Karachi's Faraz Ijaz

was adjudged the best pitcher.

In the women's event, Mercline Pervez of Karachi was the best catcher, Fozia Baloch of Larkana was the best pitcher and Sabeen Gul of Karachi was awarded the best hitter award.

On the occasion, chief guest Farah Saeed said organizing Sindh Games not only provided ample opportunities for athletes to exhibit their talents, but also the spirit of mutual harmony, sportsmanship, and love among them.

SSA President Dr. Farhan Essa lauded all teams for showing excellent discipline during the event.

He said the players who performed prominently in the championship would be invited to the training camp of the Sindh team participating in the National Softball Championship.

Gill, Jurel help India clinch Test series against England

RANCHI (AFP/APP): Shubman Gill and Dhruv Jurel kept calm to lead India to a series-clinching five-wicket win over England on day four of the fourth Test on Monday.

Chasing 192 for victory, India slipped to 120-5 but Gill (52) and Jurel (39) put on an unbeaten stand of 72 to achieve the target in the second session in Ranchi. The win gave India an unassailable 3-1 lead in the five-match series after they lost the first Test.

It was the first series defeat for captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum since they took charge in 2022 and changed England's fortunes with their attacking philosophy dubbed "Bazball".

Gill played the anchor in his 124-ball knock as he and Jurel, who made 90 in India's first innings, staved off a mini-crisis when Shoaib Bashir took two wickets in two balls soon after lunch. India still needed 72 more but Gill and Jurel rotated the strike coolly to pick off singles before raising his fifty with two

successive sixes off Bashir.

Jurel hit the winning runs, punching the air and hugging his partner as the Indian dressing room rose to celebrate. India started the morning strongly with captain Rohit Sharma and Yashasvi Jaiswal extending their overnight 40-run opening stand to 84.

Root made the breakthrough in his first over of the day, as he induced Jaiswal, on 37, to loop a catch to a diving James Anderson at backward point. Rohit reached his half-century but fell for 57, stumped by Ben Foakes off Tom Hartley's left-arm spin.

England's travelling army of fans then erupted when Bashir, who took his maiden five-wicket haul in the first innings, had Rajat Patidar brilliantly caught by Ollie Pope for a duck to leave India 100-3.

After the interval Bashir silenced the home fans with his twin strikes to give England some hope of an unlikely win. Ravindra Jadeja slapped a full toss Jonny Bairstow at mid-wicket,

Sarfaraz Khan tickled the next ball to Pope backward short-leg for a duck but Jurel survived the hat-trick ball.

England had scored 353 all out in their first innings and led by 46 after India's 307.

Indian spinners Ravichandran Ashwin and Kuldeep Yadav set up the victory after they shared nine second-innings wickets to bundle out England for 145 on day three. England had recovered from 112-5 in their first innings courtesy of Root's unbeaten 122. India were without pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who was rested, but the bowling stood up - including debutant quick Akash Deep, who took three early wickets after England elected to bat.

Anderson reached 698 Test wickets in the match and needs two more to become only the third bowler to 700 after Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan and late Australia spin wizard Shane Warne (708). The fifth and final Test begins on March 7 in the Himalayan hill town of Dharamsala.



LAHORE: Babar Azam leaps for joy, Islamabad United vs Peshawar Zalmi, PSL 2024.

PCB gets 2 High-Performance Centres

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Government of Punjab, in its commitment to nurturing cricket talent, has handed over two High-Performance Centres to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB).

Located in Sialkot and Faisalabad, these centres mark a significant milestone in the development of cricket infrastructure in these two cities.

Each High-Performance Centre has state-of-the-art facilities tailored to elevate the skills and performance of upcoming cricketers. Among the highlights are dedicated cricket grounds, equipped to the highest standards, providing the ideal environment for players to train and play matches.

The High-Performance Centres are open to players of all ages and genders. With the addition of these two High-Performance Centres, PCB now is in possession of five High-Performance Centres. The other three are National Cricket Academy in Lahore, Hamif Mohammad High-Performance Centre in Karachi and Inzamam-ul-Haq High-Performance Centre in Multan.

The PCB will now start planning events and coaching programmes, at the two newly inducted High-Performance Centres. Director Domestic Cricket, Nadeem Khan, "I would like to express my gratitude towards the Government of Punjab for entrusting the PCB with two High-Performance centres. These state-of-the-art facilities will significantly elevate the standard of cricket training in Pakistan. "With access to top-notch infrastructure and resources, our players will have the ideal environment to hone their skills and reach their full potential."

Chaklala Club victorious in Football match

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chaklala Club has qualified for the next round after defeating Galactico Club by 4-5 in the Muhammad Shah and Muhammad Aslam Memorial Football Tournament at the Municipal Stadium Rawalpindi. Both teams' score was 1-1 at the scheduled time therefore the game went on penalty kicks which was won by Chaklala Club.

2nd Malik Umar Khattab Memorial KP Jr Tennis begins

PESHAWAR (APP): The second Haji Malik Umar Khattab Khalil Memorial KP Junior Tennis Championship got under way here at Synthetic Courts of the Peshawar Sports Complex.

As many as 110 players are taking part in the Championship in three different categories boys U-10, U-14 and U-18. Pakistan's number one tennis star Aqeel Khan was accompanied by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Olympic Association President, former Provincial Sports Minister Syed Aqil Shah, Secretary Zulfiqa Butt, Vice President of Provincial Tennis Association Umar Ayaz Khalil, Arshad Hussain, coaches Zakirullah, Nauman, Shehryar, Roman, Gul, Janan Khan and other personalities were present.

In the first round of the U18 round of the Championship organized under the auspices of the Provincial Tennis Association, Waqas Janus defeated Basit Khan of KP by 6-2 and 6-3, Hamza Rahmat defeated Sudis Khan by 6-2 and 6-3, seed number four Junaid Khan was upset by Hazrat Ali with the 6-2 and 6-1. Jawad Khan defeated Dawood 6-2 and 6-3, Seed Number one Shahwar Khan defeated Mohammad Umar 6-2 and 6-1 to qualify for the next stage.

Addressing the ceremony on this occasion, Pakistan's number one Aqeel Khan also announced the construction of three synthetic tennis courts by the newly elected President of Pakistan Tennis Federation, Aisam-ul-Haq, which is owned by the Directorate of Sports, Provincial Olympic Association and Provincial Tennis Association. KP Tennis Association Vice President Umar Ayaz Khalil while talking to the media said that these competitions are being organized with the support of Kashan Umar in which there will be competitions for boys U10, U14 and U18.

The prize money has been fixed at fifty thousand rupees. On the occasion of the closing ceremony, DG Sports Abdul Nasser Mohman will be the special guest along with Chairman Tennis Association Professor Dr. Muhammad Tahir, Deputy Director IB, Muhammad Saleem Marwat, Senior Vice President Professor Dr. Farhat. Abbas will also be present.

National Boys U20 Volleyball C'ship in City from March 1: Khalid

PESHAWAR (APP): The National Boys Under-20 Volleyball Championship will start from March 1 here at the indoor hall of the PSB Coaching Center, Secretary General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Volleyball Association Khalid Waqar told APP here on Monday.

He said for the smooth conduct of the National Boys Under-20 Volleyball Championship, all arrangements have already been made and the teams from all over the country would be arriving till February 29, 2024.

He disclosed that a total of 12 teams from all over the country will participate in the Championship wherein Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Volleyball Association with the collaboration of Pakistan Volleyball Federation would be organizing.

He said the team comprising Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, Islamabad, Pakistan WAPDA, Pakistan Army and Air Force and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will vie for the top honor.

Two teams from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will participate with the aim to engage maximum number of players so that new talent could be found out of this National Age Group Volleyball Championship. According to Khalid Waqar, General Secretary of the Provincial Volleyball Association, the national team for the Asian Under-20 Boys Volleyball Championship will also be selected in the Championship. The selection committee would thoroughly monitor their performance of the players along with the Chinese coach and would short-list the training and coaching camp.

He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is blessed with more talented players in the game of Volleyball, which could clearly assess looking after the numbers of players in the National Senior and National Junior teams. He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also made a request for financial support to Directorate Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but since long they reply was all the time in negative, saying no money.

He also lauded Pakistan Army for holding Volleyball League recently and gave handsome cash prizes to the players before short-listing players for three different age groups like U16, U18 and U21. The selected players would be trained and coached under qualified coaches.

Messi grabs late leveller for Miami at Galaxy

LOS ANGELES (AFP/APP): Lionel Messi scored a last-gasp stoppage time equalizer as Inter Miami escaped with a 1-1 draw at the Los Angeles Galaxy in Major League Soccer on Sunday.

The Galaxy dominated for long stretches of the game and had taken the lead in the 75th minute through Dejan Joveljic. But the home side ended the game with ten men after midfielder Mark Delgado was sent off for a second yellow card in the 87th minute.

Jordi Alba then combined with Messi down the left, the Spaniard delivering a killer pull-back into the path of Messi who, at full stretch, found the target with the outside of his left foot.

It was a rare moment of impact from Messi who had been mostly ineffective in the game where Miami, with seven starters over the age of 30, struggled with Galaxy's tempo. Miami had all four of

their former Barcelona stars in their starting line-up with Alba, Sergio Busquets and Luis Suarez alongside Messi.

But it was the Galaxy's former Barca player, 24-year-old Spaniard Riqui Puig, who was the dominant player on the field, especially in the first half when the California side had a series of chances.

Confident on the ball and incisive in his passing, Puig was dictating play but he should have given the home side the lead in the 13th minute from the penalty spot.

The lively Joseph Paintsil, a recent signing from Genk in Belgium, had been pulled down in the box by Busquets but Puig's low free-kick was well-saved by Drake Callender.

The Miami keeper then produced fine saves to keep out efforts from Paintsil and Puig and apart from a deflected Messi effort which was parried by Galaxy keeper John

McCarthy, Miami created little.

Busquets and Suarez looked particularly off the pace and with their contributions limited, Messi received little space or service.

It was better after the break as Miami pushed into a more offensive shape but McCarthy did well to keep out two good efforts from Gomez and deal with routine shot from distance from Messi.

The Galaxy finally got their reward when Paintsil burst at the creaking Miami back-line, Puig's shot was parried by Callender and Delgado squared to Joveljic who tapped home.

After Delgado's dismissal, Alba found Messi whose first time shot flashed just wide, an effort which proved to be a dress rehearsal for the equaliser.

Miami have four points after winning Wednesday's season opener against Real Salt Lake 2-0.



In brief

Police arrest two bike lifters

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two bike lifters and recovered five stolen motorcycles from their possession, said a Police spokesman here on Monday. He informed that a team under the supervision of SHO, Pirwadhai Police Station managed to net two bike lifters namely Hamad and Tanveer and recovered five stolen motorcycles, weapons and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is underway. Superintendent of Police, Rawal Faisal Saleem said the accomplices and facilitators of the accused would also be sent behind bars.

10 illegal arm holders nabbed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested ten illegal arm holders and recovered arms, ammunition from their possession during crackdown here on Monday. According to police spokesman, Bani police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Kamal. Similarly, Naseerabad police held Haseeb and recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from his possession. While, R.A Bazar police 01 pistol 30 bore from Abdul Wahab. Following the operation, Airport police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Abdul Rahman. Saddar Wah police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Shahzeb. Jatali police recovered 01 Kalashnikov from Shahid. Dharmyal police recovered 01 pistol 9MM from Adil. Kahuta police nabbed Umar and recovered 01 rifle 12 bore from his custody and 01 pistol 30 bore from Humayun while 01 pistol 30 bore from Faisal. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. SSP Operations commended police teams adding that strict action will be taken against those carrying illegal weapons.

Liquor supplier arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): District police have arrested a man accused of supplying supplies in the Wah Cantt area, here on Monday. According to a police spokesman the accused identified as Yusuf, was involved in liquor supply. The police team arrested the accused and recovered 312 bottles of liquor. The vehicle used by the accused has also been taken into possession by the police. SP Pothohar Nasir Nawaz lauded the police operation and instructed increased vigilance on criminals involved in inducing drugs into youth.

Commissioner visits Ring Road project

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engr. Aamir Khattak here on Monday visited the Ring Road project and inspected the construction work. The Commissioner also visited the Ring Road project camp office at Khasala Khurd where he was briefed about the project. The Commissioner was informed that the length of the Rawalpindi Ring Road project is 38.3 km and there would be a total of five interchanges on the Rawalpindi Ring Road at Banth, Chak Beli Khan, Adiala Road, Chakri Road and Thalian. A railway bridge would also be constructed with five overpasses and 21 subways. Overall physical progress of Rawalpindi Ring Road is 25 percent, the Commissioner was briefed. The ring road project would be completed within stipulated time frame, the Commissioner said adding, there would be no compromise on the quality of the construction work.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Blind Cricket team called on the President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr. —APP Photo

President's actions damaging credibility of his office: Sherry

ISLAMABAD (PPI): People's Party leader Sherry Rehman said on Monday that President Arif Alvi's actions damaging credibility of his august office. Talking to media, Sherry questioned, "Why the President wants to commit violation of the constitution?"

"President Alvi has still not summoned the National Assembly's session", former federal minister said and added that the constitution is very clear over the matter, see Article 91 (ii).

The matter of the

reserved seats has been in the hand of the Election Commission, she said. "The Sunni Ittehad Council should go ahead and work," Rehman said.

"We have numbers and have joined hands with PML-N for government formation," she said.

"We will not join the cabinet," PPP leader said. "We want progress of the constitutional and democratic process in the country," she added.

Yesterday PML-N leader Ishaq Dar said that the President has to summon

the National Assembly session upto February 29 at any cost.

Former finance minister talking to media said that it is mandatory to convene the NA session within 21 days of the election.

"The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs has forwarded summary for the session on February 17, but the President has yet to sign it," Ishaq Dar said.

"If President Arif Alvi didn't sign the summary, the NA session will mandatorily be held on Feb 29," Dar said.

IT Minister forecasts bright future as Pakistan's IT exports surge

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications, Dr. Umar Saif on Monday said that IT exports have seen a steady increase over the past five months, with a notable 13% surge observed in the last 30 days.

In an interview with a private news channel, he expressed confidence in the trajectory of the IT sector, suggesting that if this momentum continues, the country may soon achieve its target of reaching \$10 billion in IT exports.

Acknowledging the vital role of the IT industry in the national economy, Dr. Saif emphasized the importance of providing ample incentives, facilities, and rewards to support its growth. Over the past five months, various initiatives have been implemented to boost IT exports and facilitate industry growth, he added.

One crucial aspect highlighted by Dr. Saif was the necessity for quality educa-

tion and skill development among the youth to compete effectively in the global market. To address this, significant investments have been made in skills training, with new courses introduced in universities, backed by approximately 5 billion rupees in funding.

Dr. Saif revealed that over 75,000 IT students graduate annually from universities across the country. Plans were underway to test and qualify these graduates, aiming to integrate 30,000-35,000 of them into the industry each year, with a broader goal of adding 100,000 individuals to the workforce annually.

Highlighting Pakistan's strong presence in the global online freelancing market, Dr. Saif noted that the country boasts over 1.5 million registered freelancers, ranking second globally after the United States. To further bolster this sector, initiatives like the 'e-rozgar' program have been launched, intending to

establish 10 thousand 'e-rozgar' centers nationwide.

Addressing challenges related to international transactions, Dr. Saif discussed efforts to enable freelancers to receive payments through PayPal, streamlining the process of earning from the USA.

On the question of 4G and 5G, Dr. Saif outlined current infrastructure and future plans. Pakistan currently has 176 thousand kilometres of fiber, with an additional 200,000 kilometres required. Moreover, out of 56,000 cellular towers, only 6,000 are connected to fiber, he added.

To address this, the 'National Fibrization Policy' has been introduced and approved by the Cabinet. Additionally, plans are in place to auction 300 megahertz bandwidth spectrum to telecom companies by July-August, aiming to enhance internet speed nationwide, with the potential introduction of 5G technology, he said.

DC reviews progress on multiple public safety initiatives

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) on Monday, reviewed multiple public safety initiatives, including the arrangements for the security of PSL matches, polio drive, and operations against kite flying and beggars.

The meeting was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, and various officers concerned. The meeting commenced with a thorough assessment of the security protocols earmarked for the upcoming Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches, underscoring the paramount importance of ensuring a safe and secure environment for all attendees and participants.

Furthermore, the DC was briefed on the meticulous arrangements put in place for the forthcoming polio vaccination campaign which has been started from today. With the aim of eradicating the crippling disease, the DC emphasized the need for robust community engagement and parental support to

safeguard the health and well-being of children.

In a bid to tackle social issues head-on, the meeting discussed the ongoing operation against kite vendors ahead of Basant festivities.

The DC emphasized public safety and reiterated the imperative of enforcing regulations without bias, signalling a resolute stance against any illegal activities. Additionally, the meeting scrutinized efforts related to price monitoring, ensuring fair practices in commercial transactions to safeguard consumer interests.

The concerted drive against beggars in the city also came under discussion, and the DC directed intensified action to address this societal challenge. In the conclusion, the DC called for a sense of urgency and determination, reflecting the steadfast commitment of the administration to uphold public safety and welfare. He said with a proactive approach and community support, the progress of these initiatives would be achieved.

DC directs ACs to inten-

sify action against kite-flying: The Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad on Monday directed all Assistant Commissioners (ACs) to intensify actions against kite-flying in their jurisdictions for the safety of the public.

In a proactive move to safeguard citizens, the Deputy Commissioner called to initiate a robust campaign against kite-flying. Meanwhile, the Assistant Commissioner City, accompanied by Abpara police, executed a targeted operation against kite-flying enthusiasts. Ten individuals involved in the illicit trade of kites were apprehended, with a cache of dangerous materials, including metal ropes, seized.

Similarly, in the Industrial Area, four offenders were promptly detained and handed over to law enforcement authorities. The crackdown comes in response to the imposition of Section 144, a measure aimed at curbing the alarming trend of kite-related incidents.

Maryam's victory to ensure economic stability

RAWALPINDI (APP): President of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan on Monday congratulated Mohtarama Maryam Nawaz Sharif for being elected as the first female Chief Minister of Punjab.

In his congratulatory message, Sardar Attique said "This victory augurs full assurance for greater progress and prosperity of the people in Punjab and robust socio-political and ideological stability and strength of Pakistan."

The AJ&K former Prime Minister said that All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference will happily extend all cooperation to the newly elected Chief Minister and her administration in the Punjab in all politico-ideological spheres.

"Jammu and Kashmir people feel enhanced pride in the victory of Mohtarama Maryam Nawaz Sharif as Chief Minister in the historic ideological context and bonds of Punjab with Jammu and Kashmir state", he added.

AIOU to improve examination system

ISLAMABAD (INP): Vice Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood on Monday launched a new initiative to improve the examination system of the university.

According to the AIOU, the aim of this initiative was to digitalize the process of creating question papers. This will help to prevent duplication, eliminate unfair means and save time.

To implement the new system, a training workshop was organized for faculty members from the Faculty of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Sciences. During the workshop, the faculty members were trained on the creation of an "item bank" of question papers.

Items (question papers) for BS (ODL) programs will be created in the first phase, followed by the development of an item bank for Matriculation, FA, Associate Degree, Post Graduate Diploma Programs, Teachers Training Programs, MPhil and PhD programs in the second phase.

Alvi lauds blind cricket team for bringing fame to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The members of the Pakistan Blind Cricket team on Monday called on President Dr. Arif Alvi here wherein he lauded them for bringing laurels to Pakistan besides highlighting globally the capabilities of differently-abled persons.

In the meeting held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, the president said that through their participation in tournaments,

the team also inspired other blind cricketers.

He said that during the recent years, blind cricket got special attention and recognition in Pakistan. The active role of the Pakistan Blind Cricket Board in promoting and holding contests is welcoming, he added.

Calling for the encouragement of the blind cricket team, the president also

called for acknowledgement of the cricketers' impressive role to highlight the team's efforts and achievements.

The team management briefed the president about the team's performance.

The team members thanked President Alvi and First Lady Samina Alvi for their encouragement.

First Lady Samina Alvi was also present in the meeting.

PTI leader responsible for destroying innocent young minds: Mian Latif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-N senior leader Mian Javed Latif Monday said that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders are responsible for fostering negative trends among the youth and in politics within Pakistan and destroying innocent young minds.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that PTI has misled the entire country, especially the youth by telling lies and sowed hatred in their minds, adding, that patience, tolerance, knowledge and awareness should

be promoted among the nation and especially the youth.

He said PTI leaders were involved in attacking national institutions, adding, that our party leadership opposed revenge politics and expressed the commitment to initiate a grand dialogue among leaders of various political parties.

He underscored the need for political unity, especially in light of the upcoming National Assembly session scheduled for February 29, where the election of the speaker, deputy speaker,

and prime minister will take place.

Replying to a question, he made it clear that the upcoming federal government led by his party would have to make difficult decisions, adding that, keeping in view the current economic situation, Pakistan will have to approach the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

"All PTI and other elected lawmakers of political parties should play a positive role in the National Assembly and should take the country out of current crises", he added.

First Pakistani Astronaut wins scholarship for space exploration

ISLAMABAD (APP): Borderless Labs Inc (BLINC) has awarded First Pakistani Astronaut, Namira Salim with a scholarship to train as an orbital scientist

Astronaut, to further her path in space exploration.

"By partnering with Borderless Labs Inc. (BLINC), Namira Salim will be embarking on an ambitious journey and will train at esteemed US institutions, including the International Institute of Astronautical Sciences (IIAS)," said Mac Malkawi, Founder, CEO and President of BLINC.

"I will undergo rigorous training as a scientist Astronaut, designed to prepare me for future private orbital missions around the Earth and beyond, as they become available, at the advent of commercialization of space, which makes the final frontier Accessible to All," said Namira Salim who

will also be trained for Extra Vehicular Activity (EVA or spacewalks) and survival in Lunar and Martian gravity.

According to the press note, Namira Salim is a Pakistani polar explorer and artist known for becoming the First Pakistani Astronaut and a pioneer astronaut with Sir Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic on 6th October 2023.

Namira Salim is the first Pakistani to reach both the North and South Poles, as well as the first Asian to skydive (tandem) Mount Everest, during the First Everest Skydive 2008.

Namira's contributions go beyond her spaceflight and polar exploits. She is also an advocate for Space Diplomacy via her non-profit, Space Trust and promotes STEM/STEAM Education for capacity building in developing countries.

"My upcoming training

will inspire space enthusiasts and propel future Astronauts on private missions, particularly from Pakistan and South Asia," Namira Salim said.

"Namira Salim is a role model for space generation leaders to push boundaries of human spaceflight not only in Pakistan but also in developing and new space nations," said Mac Malkawi.

"Her unwavering commitment to human space exploration will propel future Pakistani astronauts to space via the partnership between BLINC and Space Trust," he added. Borderless Labs Inc (BLINC) is bridging the gap in bringing Space and STEAM fields to untapped markets through investment, Media, and inclusion.

For further information and partnership opportunities, please contact: Mac Malkawi, Founder CEO & President of Borderless Labs Inc (BLINC).

ANF recovers 109 kg drugs in 11 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 11 operations across the country managed to recover 109 kg drugs and arrested 12 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday.

He informed that 1 kg Ice was recovered from a passenger going to Qatar at Islamabad Airport.

663 grams and 352 grams Ice were recovered from the possession of two passengers traveling to Qatar on two different

flights from Lahore Airport.

592 grams heroin was recovered from the possession of a Doha-bound passenger while 84 kg opium was recovered near M-2 Motorway Lahore.

15 kg heroin was recovered near Swabi Interchange.

1.7 kg heroin and 130 grams Ice were recovered from an accused arrested in Orangi Town Karachi.

2 kg hashish was recovered from an accused netted in Tando Thoro area in

Hyderabad while 1 kg Ice and 952 grams opium were recovered from two suspects rounded up on Sukkur Road.

1 kg hashish was recovered from Scheme-3 Chaklala in Rawalpindi and two accused were arrested.

1 kg hashish was recovered from two accused netted in Jhelum.

Separate cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.



ISLAMABAD: A girl on the way driving a Scooti on the Islamabad Expressway. —APP Photo

KABUL (Ariana News): The vice president of Da Afghanistan Bank (Central Bank) said the afghani (AFN) has strengthened this year by 15.42% against the US dollar. Noor Ahmad Agha also said new banknotes have been printed and have been sent to the country. He added that these banknotes will be put into circulation as needed. According to him, old banknotes worth 4.7 billion afghanis have been destroyed in five zones of the country over the past year.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

JAWZJIAN (Ariana News): The Supreme Court has announced that a man, convicted of murder, was executed in northern Jowzjan province on Monday. The court said in a statement that Nazar Mohammad had killed Khal Mohammad with a knife. Nazar Mohammad was publicly executed in a stadium in Sheberghan, the capital of Jowzjan province. This comes four days after two other murderers were executed in Ghazni province.

Precious stones exported worth \$2m

This university professor criticizes the performance of the Taliban administration and the United Nations regarding support for pregnant women, suggesting that more effective strategies need to be pursued. He proposes that the enrollment of girls in medical fields should be increased, and the United Nations should concentrate its support programs on educating girls in health care sectors in all provinces of Afghanistan.



LAHORE: Newly-elected Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz gives congratulatory hug to her father former mrime minister Nawaz Shaif after taking oath at Governor House.

Reserved seats ECP to ‘hold open hearing’ on PTI-SIC plea

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: After much deliberation, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has decided to hold an open hearing on the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) application seeking allotment of reserved seats after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed law-makers joined their ranks. The decision comes amid expectations that the electoral watchdog would decide on the matter of awarding leftover reserved seats today. However, the ECP announced that a five-member bench of the electoral body will hold the open hearing tomorrow. It also issued notices to Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, SIC, Mahmood Khan, Maulvi Iqbal Haider and Kunz-us-Saadat.

The development comes shortly after it emerged that President Alvi reportedly refused to sign a Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs summary seeking the convening of a National Assembly session. President Alvi has maintained that the remaining reserved seats should be allocated before summoning the NA session which is

supposed to be held within 21 days of the elections under the Constitution.

Following his refusal, National Assembly's outgoing Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf "decided" to convene the inaugural session of the new lower house of parliament on February 29, well-placed sources confirmed Monday. The PTI-affiliated independent members joined the SIC in a bid to retain reserved seats since the Constitution entitles parliamentary parties present in the different houses to have a quota of reserved seats for women and minorities.

These PTI-affiliated independents joined the SIC in the National and Punjab assemblies last week. The idea behind this alliance was for the PTI independents to become a parliamentary group in the houses so they could avail the reserved seats. Well-placed sources told The News that the SIC had approached the ECP and asked it to accept their contention of entitlement of reserved seats but ironically hadn't submitted the list of its nominees for reserved seats till Sunday; the ECP was open on Sunday,

despite it being a holiday.

The SIC chief was approached on Sunday evening to ascertain the reasons for not filing a list of its members but he wasn't available. Sources have quoted the constitutional obligations of the ECP in the matter. Article 219 says: "The Commission shall be charged with the duty of: (a) preparing electoral rolls for election to the National Assembly, Provincial Assemblies and local governments, and revising such rolls periodically to keep them up-to-date; (b) organizing and conducting election to the Senate or to fill casual vacancies in a House or a Provincial Assembly; and (c) appointing Election Tribunals; (d) the holding of general elections to the National Assembly, Provincial Assemblies and the local governments; and (e) such other functions as may be specified by an Act of Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament)."

The sources have also indicated that the SIC could knock at the door of the superior judiciary regarding its claim on the reserved seats, once the ECP makes a decision and if it declines to oblige its submission.

Live missiles fired in Navy's firepower demo in Sea

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Navy put up a powerful show of its firepower during Seasark 2024 exercise in Arabian Sea by successfully hitting air targets with FM90 missiles.

According to an ISPR statement released in Rawalpindi on Monday, during Pakistan Navy's successful demonstration of firepower in the North Arabian Sea at the end of Exercise Seasark 2024, Navy ships successfully hit air targets with surface-to-air FM 90 missiles. The successful demonstration of live missile firing is a testament to the operational capability and tactical preparedness of the Pakistan Navy

Commander Pakistan Fleet Vice Admiral Mohammad Faisal Abbasi witnessed the firepower display. Commander Pakistan Fleet expressed full satisfaction on the operational readiness of Pakistan Navy. Pakistan Navy is always ready to make the country's maritime borders impregnable, said Vice Admiral Mohammad Faisal Abbasi on the occasion.

Israel strikes deeper into Lebanon

BEIRUT (Reuters): Israeli warplanes struck Lebanon's Bekaa Valley on Monday, killing at least two Hezbollah members in its deepest attack into Lebanese territory since hostilities erupted with the Iran-backed group last October, sources in Lebanon said.

Underlining the risks of escalation, Hezbollah responded by firing 60 rockets at an Israeli army headquarters in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, the group's Al-Manar television reported. An Israeli army spokesperson said dozens of rockets were fired toward the Golan Heights from Lebanon. The attacks marked an intensification of the worst violence between the heavily armed Hezbollah and Israel since their 2006 war, fueling concern of the potential for further escalation and regional spillover of the Gaza war.

The Israeli army said its fighter jets had struck Hezbollah air defenses in the Bekaa Valley in response to the downing of an Israeli drone, which Hezbollah said it had shot down with a surface-to-air missile earlier on Monday.

Govt takes multiple steps to reduce losses in SOEs, says Solangi

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaz Solangi informed the Senate on Monday that the government had taken multiple steps to reduce losses in State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs).

Winding up the debate on a motion moved by Senator Mushtaq Ahmed regarding the performance of SOEs, which according to a World Bank report is worse in Asia, he said further reforms, including the restructuring of the loss-making institutions would be decided by the newly elected government and the Parliament.

The minister said "There is consensus on the need to end losses in State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs); however, there are differing opinions. Some believe that privatization is the sole solution, while others argue for professional management to enhance their efficiency." He said "The final decision on this matter will be made by the elected government and the parliament," adding that more than 200 institutions were currently experiencing losses, including those in the power, communication sectors, and Pakistan Railways.

According to a report from the Ministry of Finance, he said, these institutions had incurred losses amounting to Rs730 billion. However, profitable institutions earned an overall income of Rs570 billion, he added. He informed the House that the net loss was approximately Rs160 billion, with sectors such as power, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), National Highway Authority (NHA), Railways and Steel Mills contributing to these losses.

He highlighted that losses incurred by the NHA alone were close to Rs170 billion. A policy regarding SOEs was approved in September

2023 to assess their performance, with the Ministry of Finance establishing a Central Monitoring Unit for this purpose. Furthermore, amendments have been made to laws for reforms in various institutions, including NHA, the Minister informed the Senate.

Senator Mushtaq Ahmed claimed that 50 percent of Pakistanis were living below the poverty line and facing high inflation. Senator Sania Nishtar asked for the privatization of the loss-making SOEs to avoid burden on the national exchequer.

Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi Monday informed the Senate that around 71,000 Out-Of-School Children (OOSC), out of 81,000, had been brought back in educational institutes of the federal capital, with 86 per cent enrollment.

Responding to a motion regarding the increasing number of out-of-school children and its impact on the country's future, he said, that last year during an inter-ministerial conference, which is one of the biggest forums, provinces had been asked to play their active role in increasing enrollment of the OOSC in educational institutes.

According to Pakistan Education Statistics, working under the Ministry of Education, the data about providing education to schoolchildren by provinces is compiled annually, he added. After every five years, he said, the survey was conducted regarding out-of-school children and the last survey was carried out in 2021-22.

In the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), he said, Rs700 million had been allocated for enrollment of out-of-school children in the federal capital, while Rs 25 billion for the rest of the country. Caretaker

Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaz Solangi informed the Senate on Monday that Higher Education Commission (HEC) had neither decided nor given any suggestion to the universities to eliminate any particular course of study, including the Pakistan Studies from their degree programmes.

Responding to a motion moved by Mushtaq Ahmed regarding the abolition of the subject of Pakistan Affairs by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) from the syllabus at the graduation level, he said, "As per the concerned ministry and HEC, no decision or proposal has been issued to abolish the subject of Pakistan Affairs or any other course from the syllabus at the graduation level." He further elaborated that all undergraduate policies recommended by the HEC encompassed the minimum standards required for such programmes, adding universities were operating autonomously within the framework of their respective laws.

He said a course on Pakistan ideology and the constitution had been introduced for all undergraduate degree programmes. The minister said this course was a blend of Pakistan Studies and the constitution. He said the HEC was also holding consultations with the concerned stakeholders to prepare a two-credit-hour compulsory course for all undergraduate degree programmes. Senators Walid Iqbal, Prof. Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani, Fawzia Arshad, Sania Nishtar, Syed Waqar Mehdi and Ali Zafar collectively called for the immediate reinstatement of the Pakistan Studies subject. They proposed incorporating the recently introduced subject on the Ideology and Constitution of Pakistan as an additional chapter within the curriculum.

OIC says two-state solution in Palestine imperative to peace

THE HAGUE: Representatives of Turkiye, the Arab League, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the African Union presented arguments on Monday, on the final day of proceedings at the UN's highest court, on the legality of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories.

Over one week, the judges of the International Court of Justice, also known as the World Court, heard arguments from more than 50 states and three international organizations following a request by the UN General Assembly in 2022 for the court to issue a non-binding opinion on the legal consequences of the Israeli occupation. African Union representative, Hajer Gueldich, told the ICJ that the "unspeakable suffering and horror inflicted on the population of Gaza" is the essence of the Palestinian tragedy for over a century.

She called Israel's ongoing war on Gaza as "nothing but a shameful attempt to create another Nakba, a further catastrophe destined to erasing the Palestinian presence in Palestine." "The history of Palestine is a history of dispossession, displacement, and dehumanization. It's a history of injustice." She said the ongoing Israeli aggression against Gaza demonstrates the tragedy of the Palestinians who have been "systematically subjugated and oppressed by the Israeli colonial project" for over seven decades.

The advisory proceeding, she noted, presents an opportunity to hold Israel accountable for attacks, put an immediate end to Israel's "impunity" and uphold international humanitarian law. Hussein Ibrahim Taha, Secretary General of the OIC, said "a just, lasting and comprehensive peace based on a two-state solution in Palestine is only way to ensure security and stability of all people in the region and protect them from the cycle of violence."

He urged countries to cease exporting arms and ammunition to Israel as "the army and settlers are using them against the Palestinian people" and called on the ICJ to condemn the accelerated colonization of East Jerusalem and the Israeli attacks against the Islamic and Christian holy places. Taha reiterated the organization's condemnation of Israel's attack on Gaza, which killed about 30,000 Palestinians and injured thousands more, as well as the escalated violence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

He also deplored the inability of the Security Council "to uphold international law to end the spiral violence and render

justice to the Palestinian people." Abdulhakeem Al Rifai, representative of the Arab League, said failure to end the prolonged Israeli occupation of Palestine "has led to the current horrors perpetrated against the Palestinians [in Gaza] amounting to genocide."

He said the occupation is an "affront to international justice." "There can be no moral or juridical justification for occupying lands, killing, terrorizing, and displacing their populations." He called Israel the "last oppressive, expansionist apartheid settler colonial occupation still standing in the 21st century", urging the ICJ to confirm the illegality of Israel's occupation and "unambiguously rule on legal consequences for all parties especially those who turn a blind eye, facilitate, assist or participate in any way in perpetrating this illegal situation."

"Only the rule of law not the prevailing law of the jungle will pave the way to peace in the region," he said. "Ending the occupation is the gateway to peaceful coexistence". He noted that the insistence of placing Israel above the law through the politicization of accountability and adopting double standards were "a direct threat to international peace and stability."

Ahmet Yildiz, the deputy foreign minister, told warned the UN top court of the risks of leaving Israel's 'indiscriminate attacks' on Palestinian civilians in Gaza unaccountable. "As the injustices and double standards that the Palestinians have been subjected to for decades continue, reactions from people in the region and beyond will multiply. In other words, we must hold accountable before the law those responsible for their attacks on civilians otherwise such outrageous behavior might be emulated elsewhere in the future." He condemned Israel's plans to limit access of Muslim worshippers in Al Aqsa Mosque during the holy month of Ramadan, noting that the rhetoric repeated by Israeli ministers "is worrisome."

Yildiz reiterated Turkiye's calls for the international community to address the root cause of Palestine-Israeli war as the only method to bring regional peace. He argued that the conflict did not start from Oct. 7, and wasn't "about a certain Palestinian faction or group. The conflict dates back to an earlier century." He added: "The real obstacle to peace is obvious - the deepening occupation by Israel of Palestinian territories and failure to implement the two-state solution." — Arab News

Palestinian Prime resigns

RAMALLAH (Reuters): Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said on Monday he was resigning to allow for the formation of a broad consensus among Palestinians about political arrangements following Israel's war against the Islamist group Hamas in Gaza.

The move comes amid growing US pressure on President Mahmoud Abbas to shake up the Palestinian Authority as international efforts have intensified to stop the fighting in Gaza and begin work on a political structure to govern the enclave after the war. Abbas issued a decree accepting the resignation and assigned Shtayyeh's government to continue "temporarily until a new government is formed," a statement said.

In a statement to cabinet, Shtayyeh, an academic economist who took office in 2019, said the next stage would need to take account of the emerging reality in Gaza, which has been laid waste by nearly five months of heavy fighting. He said the next stage would "require new governmental and political arrangements that take into account the emerging reality in the Gaza Strip, the national unity talks, and the urgent need for an inter-Palestinian consensus."

In addition, it would require "the extension of the Authority's authority over the entire land, Palestine." The Palestinian Authority, formed 30 years ago under the interim Oslo peace accords, exercises limited governance over parts of the occupied West Bank but lost power in Gaza following a struggle with Hamas in 2007. Fatah, the faction that controls the PA, and Hamas have made efforts to reach an agreement over a unity government and are due to meet in Moscow on Wednesday.

(Continued from Page 1)

quality of education between private and government schools; Implementation of a complete school transport system in Punjab; Plan for state-of-the-art hospitals in every city of Punjab; Provision of free medicines in emergency departments of government hospitals; Collaboration with Rescue 1122 for motorway ambulance service; Establishment of daycare centers at workplaces; Construction of hostels for working women; Reforms for transgender community inclusion; Vision for a digital Punjab with free Wi-Fi in major cities; Resumption of e-library project; Provision of more soft loans for females compared to males, working women hostels; Launch of Metro bus service in divisional headquarters; Focus on reforms for south Punjab; Expansion of Safe City project to 18 more cities in the first phase; Introduction of more model police stations; Establishment of special desks for women in police stations; Initiatives for agricultural reforms; Provision of free livestock for small farmers and businesses; Introduction of electric cars and bikes initiative; Initiative for 100,000 houses under

"Apna Ghar Apni Chath" plan; Establishment of more IT parks; Implementation of population scanning for diseases; Relief in utility bills; Launch of new housing schemes. Maryam Nawaz thanked the 125 million people of Punjab who voted her to the assembly and vowed to serve them indiscriminately. "My presence here is an acknowledgment of the services of a political worker who endures hardships," she remarked, adding that history had been created today, even if she was minused.

"This is an honour for every daughter of Pakistan, as the first woman chief minister of Pakistan is standing before them today. I pray that this continues after me," she added. "We have reached here after passing through a difficult phase"

The newly elected Punjab Chief Minister insisted that she did not have revenge against anybody in her heart, and said she thanked those who inflicted cruelty and vengeance upon her. "Despite the hardships, I think the opponents have done me a favour by passing me through the hardships

for which there is no substitute." She shed light on the large number of women in the Punjab Assembly, saying her victory was a win for every woman. "This is proof that being a woman can't be a hindrance to realizing your dreams," she stressed. She said a visionary leader like Nawaz Sharif has sat on this chair the same seat she has got, and from which he made a lot of progress. A three-time prime minister has sat on this chair, adding that he made Pakistan's defence impregnable for the times to come.

"After my nomination, Nawaz Sharif sat with me and prepared a five-year plan. The person whom Punjab remembers as Khadim-e-Ala has also been on this chair. Shehbaz Sharif's abilities, performance, speed are recognized by the whole world." Maryam acknowledged that most people are being crushed under inflation. "I am not competing with any opponent but the performance of the giants within my party."

She urged everyone to strengthen her beyond the political divide, saying together everyone could serve the

people of Punjab. "I want to say to the opposition, if there are any problems in your constituency, I am there just like I am for the PML-N," she said, adding that she was not just the chief minister of the PML-N. The chief minister announced that she will start implementation on her manifesto from today and go straight to her office from the assembly. She added that her agenda had been prepared, keeping the issues of the people at the front.

She said her vision included making Punjab an economic hub, adding that were the backbone of the economy who will be provided with facilities that had never been introduced before. She said the government's job was not to do business, but to make policy and provide a conducive environment for businessmen.

Further laying out her plans for the people of the province, the chief minister said there was a need to improve the curriculum of government schools, adding that her government will launch Punjab's first air ambulance service. Moreover, every district of Punjab should have at least

one Daanish school, Maryam believed, adding that they would restore the educational allowances of the children who worked at brick kilns.

She also said the quality of public school education will be on par with that of private schools. "We will also provide a complete school transport system in the entire province." She also declared that screening for diseases will be started in the province, adding that when she vacated her office after five years, she wanted a state-of-the-art hospital in every city. She also announced free medicines in all emergency departments of government hospitals from today. The Rescue 1122 service has been asked to launch a motorway ambulance service, while women will get special transport cards, Maryam insisted.

She further said women should get more loans than men and more hostels built for working women. Moreover, she declared that a daycare centre would be built at every workplace. "Women's harassment is my redline." Maryam also said that she

was working on a special package for transgender persons to bring them into the mainstream, adding that helping the needy who were earning less than Rs60,000 was obligatory. She also said she would pay attention to the sports ministry, which she said was only considered a formality till now.

The CM said a 'Digital Punjab' was her vision, and vowed that free Wi-Fi would be provided in big cities, adding that she would resume work on the e-library project. "We will also provide facilities to teach artificial intelligence, Maryam Nawaz." She said she wanted that after five years, there should be no dilapidated road left in the province. The Metro Bus service will be launched in all divisional headquarters. No road in Lahore will be without public transport."

She also vowed that she would pay special attention to south Punjab, which will be given equal opportunities. She believed that they would have to move towards electric vehicles, adding that in the first phase, the Safe City project will be started in 18 more cities. She said she would be personally visiting every police station.