

PTI nominates Amir Dogar

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Tuesday nominated Amir Dogar as the party's candidate for the National Assembly speaker. The decision was announced by the PTI Secretary General Omar Ayub Khan while talking to media after meeting the PTI founder in jail today. The party also fielded Junaid Akbar as deputy speaker candidate.



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KARACHI: Governor Sindh, Kamran Khan Tessori administering the oath to the Newly-elected Chief Minister Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah.

Brave police officer martyred in Mardan

Syed Adnan

PESHAWAR : In the ongoing struggle against terrorism, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province mourns the loss of over 28 police cops who have laid down their lives in the line of duty in this year alone. Among the fallen heroes is Superintendent of Police (SP) Ijaz Khan, a valiant high-ranking officer who made the ultimate sacrifice in the fight against extremism three cops including DSP were injured in Mardan operation.

More than 40 security personnel, including 3 DSPs, have been injured so far in operations with terrorists across the province. .

SP Ijaz Khan exemplified courage and bravery as he fearlessly confronted terrorists, leading from the front. His gallantry in facing the adversaries resulted

in the killed of two key commanders affiliated with the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

To combat the scourge of terrorism, a crackdown is underway across the province, with Pakistan Army , police, and other security agencies successfully eliminating more than 25 militants thus far.

In light of these sacrifices, it is imperative that competent and dedicated police officers are appointed as District Police Officers (DPOs) and Regional Police Officers (RPOs).

Only those officers who demonstrate solidarity with their fellow soldiers on the battlefield should be entrusted with these crucial positions of leadership, ensuring effective coordination and unwavering commitment in the fight against terrorism

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly to meet today

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly will meet on Wednesday (February 28) at 11 a.m. here at the Assembly hall.

Exercising the powers under Article 109 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Governor

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa convened the meeting of the assembly on February 28. The newly elected members of the house would take the oath and elect the Speaker and deputy speaker of the house beside the leader of the house and the opposition leader.

The assembly secretariat issued invitations to the guests to witness the oath-taking ceremony while limited cards were issued to the media persons.

ECP to announce presidential election schedule on Friday

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Election Commission of Pakistan will issue the schedule and public notice for election of the President on Friday.

According to a report on Tuesday, candidates will be able to submit their nomination papers to any presiding officer by twelve noon on Saturday. All the aspiring candidates can get their nomination papers from Election Commission Islamabad and Provincial Election Commissioners of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan from today. For more information and guidance, the Election Commission Secretariat can be contacted on the telephone number 051-9219335.

PPP to join Punjab cabinet in 2nd phase

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is poised to join the Punjab provincial cabinet in its second phase, according to sources close to the development. This move comes after negotiations between the PPP and the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML-N).

The sources indicate that the PPP is likely to receive three ministries in the provincial cabinet, which will be offered after the Punjab budget is finalized. Negotiations are currently underway between the two parties to finalize the specific ministries and potential candidates.

PPP leaders from South Punjab are reported to have played a key role in advocating for their party's inclusion in the provincial cabinet. The names of PP Syed Ali Haider Gilani, Naeem Jabbar, and Raees Nabeel have emerged as potential candidates for ministerial positions.

This development signifies a potential shift in the political landscape of Punjab, as the PPP's inclusion in the cabinet could reshape the power dynamics within the province.

President Alvi has abrogated constitution again: Bilawal

ISLAMABAD (INP): PPP Chairman and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has accused President Arif Alvi of abrogating the Constitution twice, saying calling the National Assembly session is "not a matter for this head of state".

Talking to newsmen outside the Supreme Court building after attending hearing of presidential reference regarding death of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on Tuesday, Bilawal said "I think two cases can be filed against President Alvi for violating the constitution. One case will be for dissolving

the assembly during the no-confidence motion against Imran Khan and the other for not convening the National Assembly session." The PPP chairman said President Alvi is abrogating the Constitution and is not fulfilling his duty. "We will replace President Alvi through election," he added.

On the other hand PTI leader and counsel Babar Awan has said that the power to summon a session of the National Assembly only lies with President Arif Alvi and not with speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf. Talking

to reporters in Islamabad on Tuesday, Babar Awan said, "According to the Constitution, the president can summon the National Assembly session. The speaker has no authority to summon the session."

He further asserted that summoning the session would be equivalent to going against the Constitution. "If any government will be formed, it would be against the Constitution."

The verdict of the case about Qasim Suri's ruling is present; a speaker can only adjourn a session," he added.

Macron announces new steps to boost Ukraine, doesn't exclude troops

PARIS (AFP/APP): French President Emmanuel Macron announced Monday new steps to boost Ukraine in its fight against the Russian invasion, saying not even the sending of Western ground troops was ruled out to achieve Europe's goal of defeating Moscow.

Speaking after hosting a meeting of two dozen European leaders to discuss Ukraine, Macron painted a grim picture of a Russia whose positions he said were "hardening" both at home and on the battlefield.

"We are convinced that the defeat of Russia is indispensable to security and stability in Europe," he said. Russia, he said, was showing a "more aggressive attitude not just in Ukraine but in general". While there was "no consensus" on the sending of Western ground troops to Ukraine, "nothing should be excluded. We will do whatever it takes to ensure that Russia cannot win this war," he said. Macron said the new coalition would be set up to supply Ukraine with "missiles and bombs of medium and long range to carry out deep strikes".

There was a "broad consensus to do more and quicker", he added.

"Nothing can be excluded to achieve our objective. Russia cannot win that war," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Polish President Andrzej Duda were among around 25 European heads of state and government at the conference. Other states sent ministers, with foreign secretary David Cameron in Paris for Britain, and the United States and Canada were also represented. Macron said earlier as he opened the conference at the

Elysee palace that Ukraine's allies needed to jump-start their support as the war entered its third year. "We have seen hardening on the part of Russia, especially these past few months," Macron said. He said this had manifested itself in February 16 death in custody of President Vladimir Putin's top opponent Alexei Navalny, but also in a hardening of Russia's positions on the frontlines, where it was planning "new attacks".

Nato allies reject Macron idea of troops to Ukraine

LONDON (BBC): Several Nato countries, including Germany and the UK, have ruled out deploying ground troops to Ukraine, after French President Emmanuel Macron said "nothing should be excluded". Mr Macron said there was "no consensus" on sending Western soldiers to Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov has warned of direct conflict if Nato troops deploy there.

Russian forces have recently made gains in Ukraine and Kyiv has urgently appealed for

more weapons.

Mr Macron told a news conference on Monday evening: "We should not exclude that there might be a need for security that then justifies some elements of deployment. "But I've told you very clearly what France maintains as its position, which is a strategic ambiguity that I stand by." The French leader was speaking in Paris, which is hosting a crisis meeting in support of Ukraine attended by heads of European states, as well as the US and Canada.

The Frontier Post

Indian spy quadcopter

RAWALPINDI (INP): Pakistan Army has shot down Indian spying quadcopter that intruded into country's airspace along the Line of Control. Pakistani forces at 12:55 pm on Sunday last shot down an Indian Army quadcopter that was spying in the area near LoC, says in media reports. It is pertinent to mention that the remains of the quadcopter were found yesterday.

Murad Ali Shah takes oath as Sindh CM for 3rd consecutive term

KARACHI (INP): Syed Murad Ali Shah on Tuesday took oath as Sindh Chief Minister (CM) for a third consecutive term during a ceremony held at Governor House.

Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori administered oath to Murad Shah in a ceremony attended by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairperson Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, PPP MNAs and MPAs, representatives of business community and others.

During chief minister's election, presided over by Sindh Assembly Speaker Owais Qadir Shah, a total of 148 votes were cast, with Murad Ali Shah obtaining 112. His opponent, MQM-P candidate Ali Khurshidi, garnered 36 votes.

Lawmakers from the Jamat-i-Islami (JI) and the Sunni Ittehad Council, which was joined by PTI-backed independents who won seats in the Feb 8 polls, abstained from participating in the voting process.

The politico 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. Born in Sehwan Sharif in Jamshoro district, Murad Ali Shah is a civil engineer by profession as after his graduation from the NED University he joined the Water and Power Development Authority as an engineer. He joined the Port Qasim Authority as an executive engineer and later went to the United States

where he studied structural engineering and economic engineering from Stanford University. He also served as a director of the Fish Harbour Authority. He was elected as the chief minister for the first time in 2016 when the PPP decided to replace Syed Qaim Ali Shah. Before becoming the CM, he had served the province as irrigation and energy minister and finance minister.

Before 2013 general elections he was declared ineligible to contest the election as he possessed dual nationality. He later surrendered his Canadian nationality and after getting clearance from a court he contested a by-election and became a member of the Sindh Assembly again.

Pakistan resolved to safeguard its sovereignty, regional security: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday said that being a peace-loving country, Pakistan was resolved to safeguard its sovereignty and regional security.

The prime minister, in a message on the fifth anniversary of the Operation Swift Retort, paid tributes to the professional capability

and resolve of the Pakistan's armed forces. On February 27, 2019, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) had shot down two Indian planes that had violated Pakistani airspace. One of the Indian pilots was captured by Pakistan, but was later handed over as a gesture of peace.

The prime minister said that the Pakistani armed forces had proved

their operational superiority falsifying the Indian claims.

"No one should have doubt that Pakistan is a peace-loving country that was determined to protect its sovereignty as well as the regional security," he remarked. The prime minister reiterated the resolve that Pakistan would forcefully respond to any aggression against it.

PML-N, PPP oppose allocation of reserved seats to SIC

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan People's Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) on Tuesday opposed granting reserve seats to the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC).

According to details, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) heard the pleas regarding the inclusion of independent members in the Sunni Ittehad Council and the allocation of reserved seats.

A five-member bench of the ECP headed by CEC Sikandar Sultan Raja took up the plea. Barrister Gohar Ali, Farogh Naseem, Azam Nazir Tarar, and Ata Tarar, appeared before the electoral body.

Political parties opposed granting reserved seats to the Sunni Ittehad Council, citing the party did not win a single seat and got the members after PTI-backed independent candidates joined the party.

Farooq H. Naek said it should be clarified first whether the Sunni Ittehad Council has the right to special seats or not, to which Azam Nazir Tarar responded by suggesting

giving the seats to other parties including PML-N.

PTI's counsel, Barrister Ali Zafar stated that it cannot be allowed for anyone to challenge the request from outside. First, decide who the pleader is and why he has come to challenge.

Azam Nazir Tarar argued that the Sunni Ittehad Council did not provide a priority list, so what would happen to those who submitted the request first?. The Election Commission consolidated all requests against the Sunni Ittehad Council and adjourned the hearing until a later date.

US avoids commenting on Pak-Iran gas pipeline

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States (US) avoided commenting on the revival of the Pak-Iran gas pipeline project.

"US has not seen the reports on the Pak-Iran gas pipeline yet, I will respond on the matter later," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said while briefing the media in Washington. In a fresh push towards completion of a multibillion-dollar gas supply project, the outgoing federal cabinet on Monday gave the nod to complete the first phase of the 80-kilometre Iran-Pakistan (IP) gas pipeline project within the country's territory. Commenting on the formation of the government in Islamabad, Matthew Miller said that the formation of a new government is the internal affairs of Pakistan led by the people of Pakistan and the US is not a party to it.

Matthew Miller reiterated the US stance that there should be a transparent investigation into claims of rigging in general elections. Answering a question regarding massive rigging in elections, the spokesperson said: "For investigations into reported irregularities, we want to see those investigations proceed. We want to see them wrapped up as soon as possible. Replying to a question, Matthew Miller said: "We want to see a government move forward in a way that reflects the will of the Pakistani people."



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Murtaza Solangi Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting addressing a PeaceFLIX International Conference and Award Ceremony.

Two Holy Mosques-places of worship not arenas for politicking: Ashrafi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Tuesday urged the intending Hajj pilgrims to follow the codal formalities of Saudi Arabia in letter and spirit during the sacred journey.

Talking to the media, he emphasized that the Two Holy Mosques were the places of worship and not arenas for political expression or displays of nationalism.

"Raising slogans, flags, or engaging in any other irrelevant activity is not allowed at the Two Mosques," he proclaimed.

Ashrafi said that situated in Makkah and Madina - the heart of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Two Holy Mosques were revered by millions of Muslims as the holiest sites.

"Guarding their sanctity is not only a duty but also a responsibility of all of us," he maintained.

Reminding the purpose of Hajj, Ashrafi said it was a journey of spiritual enlightenment - a communion with the divine, not a platform for worldly agendas.

He stressed that through education, a deep reverence for the sacred places should be instilled in worshippers, reminding them of their duty to preserve and protect the sanctity of the two mosques for generations to come.

He reaffirmed that the Two Holy Mosques were beacons of light in a world shrouded in darkness.

"They are not just monuments of stone but symbols of hope, unity, and faith—a testament to the enduring power of devotion in an ever-changing world."

Haleem Adil files contempt of court petition against EC members, others

KARACHI (PPI): Former Opposition Leader in the Sindh Assembly and President of PTI Sindh, Haleem Adil Sheikh, has approached the Sindh High Court and filed a contempt of court application against the Returning Officer of NA-238, the Chief Election Commissioner, and members of the Election Commission from all four provinces and Islamabad as respondents.

Haleem said that all ROs who were involved in the scam of Form-47 would face three years of imprisonment, and their jobs will also be terminated," Haleem Adil Sheikh stated. "Not only have our seats been targeted, but there has also been manipulation of youth votes."

Halim Adil Sheikh highlighted, "We have won twenty seats in Karachi and two NA seats in Hyderabad, and 38 provincial seats.

He said: "The entire nation has demanded Imran Khan's removal from Jail. After the regime change, our entire leadership is in jails. The general elections have shown that Imran Khan is an honest and trustworthy leader of the nation."The entire Pakistani nation stands shoulder to shoulder with Imran Khan."

He said, "We have filed 46 petitions in the Sindh High Court. The Election Commission is responsible for violating the Constitution. They have snatched our rights. On the day of the elections, mobile phone services were suspended with intention."

Haleem said that they would pursue all cases, adding those ROs who had committed fraud would face three years of imprisonment, and their jobs would also be terminated. We have filed a petition of contempt of court in the Sindh High Court. We hope for relief from the Sindh High Court. He said we will go to the Supreme Court, tribunal, and people's court as well.

Haleem predicted that this fake government will not suffer more than five months, he added that there will be no opposition in Sindh. Just come, eat, and enjoy. (Ao Milkar Khaty hain).

Haleem's lawyer, Barrister Ali Tahir stated, "We have filed a petition in the Sindh High Court for NA-238, and has also submitted Form 45. The Returning Officer manipulated the numbers and favored the MQM's candidate. He said the SHC had ordered the Election Commission to resolve the matter before February 22. The Election Commission has violated the orders of the Sindh High Court.

2nd SMIU global research congress starts from Feb 28

KARACHI (APP): The two-day 2nd SMIU Global Research Congress (2nd SMIU GRC 2024) along with six International Conferences organised by Sindh Madressat-ul-Islam University will begin from Wednesday (February 28).

The Consul General of China Yang Yundong, Consul General of Türkiye Cemal Sangu, Vice Chancellor, SMI University Prof. Dr. Mujeebuddin Memon, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman, Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and others shall inaugurate the Congress at 9:30 am. The research scholars from the USA, UK, Russia, UAE, and Nigeria, vice-chancellors, academicians and experts of different fields from other parts of the country shall participate in the ceremony.

The Six International Conferences will also be inaugurated at different places of the Sindh Madressat-ul-Islam University. Vice Chancellor of SMIU Dr. Mujeeb Sahrai will deliver opening speech in the inaugural session. Thereafter, panel discussions and technical sessions will be held at the Main Building, Talpur House and I.T. Tower of SMIU.

A panel discussion on "Integrating Sustainability Across Teacher Education Curricula: Challenges, Opportunities and Practices" will be held at 11:30 am. Dr. Keith Casey Barton (USA), Dr. Shereen Mustafa Narejo, Secretary of School Education and Literacy Department, Government of Sindh, Dr. Sajid Ali, Professor at Aga Khan University, Karachi, Dr. Anjum Bano, Professor at Iqra University, Karachi, Dr. Abdul Sattar Almani, Professor at University of Sindh, Hyderabad, Salma, CEO Dubeen, Dr. Hina Kazimi, CEO TAF Foundation and Dr. Shahida Sajjad, Vice Chancellor Metropolitan University, Karachi will among the panelists. Hasnain Raza shall moderate it. Another panel discussion will be held on "Exploring Pakistan's Blue Economy: Opportunities, Challenges, and Strategies." Prof. Dr. Mohammad Aslam Uqaili, Pro-Vice Chancellor of Mehran University, Jamshoro, Dr. Shahazada Irshad Mohammed, ISWMS Expert, Waqar Hussain Phulpoto, Director (Technical) Sindh Environment Protection Agency, Saqib Ejaz Hussain, Chief Executive Officer at EHS Services and Riaz Ahmed Wagan, Chief Conservator of Forests, Riverine & Inland Forests, Sindh will be panelists. Ambreen Aziz, Lecturer, SMIU shall moderate the session. Likewise, a panel discussion on "Linguistics in Pakistan: Past Present and Future." In this session, Prof. Dr. Solnyshkina Marina Ivanovna of Russia, Dr. Asima Shehzad, Air University, Islamabad, Dr. Asadullah Larik, from Hamdard University, Karachi, Prof. Dr. Sajida Zaki, NED University, Dr. Ghulam Ali Burrio, Prof. Dr. Tariq Hassan Umrani.

LESCO detects 57,806 power pilferers in 167 days

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 57,806 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) in 167 day of grand anti-power theft campaign.

The LESCO spokesman told media here Tuesday that the company has also submitted FIR applications against electricity thieves, out of which 53,333 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations, while 17,666 accused have been arrested.

The LESCO has so far charged a total of 76,659,409 detection units worth Rs 2,934,186,637 to all the power pilferers.

Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the directives of the Federal Power Division and the LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider is supervising these operations.

The LESCO chief vowed that 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.

The spokesman added, the LESCO found 402 customers stealing electricity through various means and 154 cases have been registered against the accused during the last 24 hours. On the 167th consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, he mentioned that large commercial consumers were found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected and charged with detection units. Among the seized connections, he explained, 17 were commercial, 02 agricultural and 383 domestic, and all these connections were disconnected and charged with a total of 355,613 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 10.735 million.

Apprising the media about some major power pilferers, he mentioned that LESCO charged Rs 100,000 detection bills each to four electricity pilferers in areas of Bhati Gate, Tibbi City, Shahdara Town and Factory Area.



KARACHI: A boy using hand pump at community water well to collect drinking water. —APP Photo

ANF seizes over one ton drugs in seven operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting seven operations across the country managed to recover over one ton drugs and arrested nine accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday.

He informed that 1 kg Ice drug and 766 grams heroin were recovered from the possession of a passenger going to Bahrain at Faisalabad Airport.

969 grams Ice was recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Peshawar Airport. In the third operation, 192 kg hashish was recovered from an accused netted near Burhan Interchange. 4.8 kg hashish was recovered from Warsak Road Peshawar area and an accused was arrested during the operation.

1.5 kg hashish was recovered from two accused arrested from Scheme-3 Rawalpindi.

800 grams hashish was recovered from an accused nabbed near M-1 Toll Plaza Islamabad.

Huge quantity of intoxicated tablets containing 33.8 kg Lorazepam, 3.8 kg Clonazepam, 2.8 kg Zolpidem, 6.3 kg Diphenoxide, 3 kg Potassium Permanganate, 33 kg Xanax, 60 kg Alprazolam, 45 kg Mogadon, 360 kg Rivortril, 55 kg valium and 280 tablets of Lexotanil were recovered from the possession of two accused arrested from Super Highway Karachi area. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

He stressed that through education, a deep reverence for the sacred places should be instilled in worshippers, reminding them of their duty to preserve and protect the sanctity of the two mosques for generations to come.

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DC inspects bidding process of vegetables & fruits

LAHORE (APP): On the special direction of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Deputy Commissioner Rafia Haider conducted a visit to the fruit and vegetable market in Badami Bagh for ensuring the availability of commodities and food items at regulated prices.

She thoroughly inspected various sheds and stalls, assessing the stock of vegetables and fruits, and overseeing the auction process for items such as onions, potatoes, and tomatoes. Additionally, the DC evaluated the presence of employees in the market and inquired about facilities for vendors.

The DC directed the Secretary Market Committee to enforce public rates for food items through bidding.

Assistant Commissioner Cantt, Nabeel Memon, was directed to maintain regular monitoring, overseeing the bidding process of vegetables and fruits. Stressing the significance of curbing profiteering, the DC reiterated a zero-tolerance policy against it. Stringent supervision was cautioned for both open markets and fruit and vegetable markets in Lahore, with immediate action against any profiteering. In preparation for coming rains, the DC directed the administration to make necessary arrangements in all markets and instructed the Lahore Waste Management Company to enhance cleanliness and organisational measures in fruit and vegetable markets.

CM pays tribute to martyred SP Ijaz Khan

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif paid tribute to the martyred SP Ijaz Khan Sherpao in Matta Katling, expressing deep sorrow over his death.

She extended her condolences to his family, praising his bravery in fighting against the enemies of Pakistan and its people.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif acknowledged the sacrifices made by the officers and personnel of the armed forces in combating terrorism. She prayed for the elevation of the ranks of Shaheed Ijaz Khan Sherpao and for patience for his family members.

She also expressed sympathy for the injured policemen Mansoor and Saleem, praying for their speedy recovery.

CM reviews recommendations for data bank of deserving individuals: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif chaired a special meeting at the Chief Minister's Office on Tuesday to review suggestions and recommendations for the development of a comprehensive data bank of deserving individuals residing in Punjab.

The meeting also discussed the "Provincial Socio-Economic Registry" program aimed at creating an authentic data bank.

Karwan-e-Hayat announced fundraiser event

E.P. Report

KARACHI : Karwan-e-Hayat (KeH), a leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to mental health care in Karachi, proudly announced its recent fundraiser event, "A Tribute to Nayyara Noor," which aimed at raising crucial funds for the treatment of individuals suffering from mental illness in Pakistan.

The event, which took place on February 24 and 25, 2024, at the prestigious Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in Karachi, delivered an enchanting musical celebration of Pakistan's cultural heritage while championing the cause of mental health awareness and support.

With an estimated 15 million people grappling with mental health issues in Pakistan, KeH's steadfast commitment to providing free mental health care to the underprivileged for over four decades underscored its vital role in the community.

Through outpatient, inpatient, rehabilitation, and community services offered at its facilities in Keamari and Korangi, as well as through its twenty-one outreach camps, KeH has been a beacon of hope for countless individuals and families.

Mr. Arshad Mahmud, a renowned musical director and producer, conceptualized and presented "A Tribute to Nayyara Noor." This two-evening program was a captivating homage to the legendary singer Nayyara Noor and her immortal melodies, serving as both a cultural celebration and a call to action for mental health support.

Funds raised from the event enabled KeH to expand its services and outreach, making a tangible difference in the lives of those affected by mental health challenges across Karachi and beyond.

Despite the setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, KeH remained steadfast in its mission to provide essential mental health care to those in need.

In the past year alone, KeH facilitated over 175,000 patient visits, a testament to the organization's sunwaving dedication and the generous support of philanthropic donors and well-wishers. The "A Tribute to Nayyara Noor" fundraiser represented an opportunity for individuals and businesses alike to contribute to this vital cause and make a meaningful impact on mental health care accessibility and quality in Pakistan.

Punjab Job Center enrolls 300,000 job seekers

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Job Center, a collaborative initiative of the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) and the Labor & Human Resource Department (L&HRD), enrolled over 300,000 job seekers and 60,000 employers since its launch in August 2022.

This was revealed during a progress review meeting presided over by PITB Chairman Faisal Yousaf here on Tuesday.

The Job Center, acting as a vital link between employers and job seekers, has played a crucial role in fostering connections between 60,000 employers from both the public and private sectors and potential candidates. This online platform acts as a bridge between employment exchange agencies, potential job seekers and employers alike.

The applicants can also receive registration link by sending their CNIC number at 8900.

Individuals looking for employment opportunities or seeking to fill job positions in both the public and private sectors are encouraged to register on the platform as business owners or citizen workers. The Job Center's commitment extends beyond mere registration as it actively maintains a robust database of available human resources across Punjab.

The online job portal, accessible at jobcenter.punjab.gov.pk, houses a comprehensive database encompassing a wide range of human capital from both public and private sectors. This includes skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled individuals, creating a dynamic platform for potential job seekers and employers alike.

اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى نَبِيِّكَ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلَى آلِهِ وَارْحَمِهِمْ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The mother of ANP leader Izhhar Khalil has been passed away.....

Her namaz-e-janaza will offer today 27-2-2024 at Khatham-e-Nabawat Chowk, Sufadairy, Peshawar

She was the mother of Hidayatullah Khalil, Ibrar Khalil, Saifullah, Nazeem Ullah Advocate, Obaid Ullah and she also the mother-in-law of Rizwan Ullah.

Outgoing caretaker CM presented guard of honour

KARACHI (APP): The Outgoing Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar was presented a guard of honour here at the Chief Minister House on Tuesday. The Guard of Honour, which is part of the farewell ceremony was attended by the Sindh Chief Secretary Dr. Fakhre Alam, Provincial Secretaries, Additional IGP Karachi and other senior officers.

The Caretaker Chief Minister received the saluted by the active police cops. The Caretaker CM Baqar thanked all the officers and staff of CM House.

Railways facilitates citizens with stop-overs

LAHORE (APP): In a move to accommodate people during the Urs at Astana-e-Aalia Chora Sharif, the Pakistan Railways administration has granted permission for three trains to halt at Chora Sharif Railway Station for two minutes each.

According to the PR spokesperson on Tuesday, Mehr Express (127Up, 128Dn), Thal Express (129Up, 130Dn) and Kohat Express (133Up, 134Dn) will make brief stop-overs from February 28 to March 2, 2024, providing convenience to travelers attending the event.

The decision aims to enhance accessibility and ensure smoother transportation for the public during a significant period.

LDA, MCL remove illegal structures

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Development Authority (LDA) and Metropolitan Corporation Lahore (MCL) on Tuesday launched a joint crackdown in LDA Avenue One and Jubilee Town, and removed encroachments and evacuate dozens of livestock from residential areas.

On directives of Commissioner and Director General LDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa, prompts action was taken in various blocks of the residential societies and demolished number of illegal structures and sheds besides handing over a dozen buffaloes to the corporation during the joint operation. The operation was supervised by Director LDA Venue One Rehan Athar.

Traffic police intensify crackdown on violators

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Traffic Police decided to intensify the crackdown against traffic violations in the city. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Ammara Athar had issued directive to wardens regarding the crackdown. According to a spokesman for the department, effective measures will be taken against individuals driving without a license, underage drivers, one-way violators and bikers without helmets.

To ensure road safety and prevent accidents, the crackdown will persist and parents would have to take responsibility for their children's driving behavior.

CTO Ammara Athar emphasized the importance of not granting driving privileges to underage individuals aiming to create a safer environment for road users.

CORRIGENDUM

Tender Notice for Installation of 60 x Water Supply Scheme In the Tribal Districts, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber & Orakzai

With reference to the advertisement published in Daily Mashriq, Jang & Frontier Post on **16 February 2024**, the opening date for the tender of documents considered to be as **19 March 2024** instead of **04 March 2024**. Our terms and conditions will remain the same as mentioned in the tender documents.

Lieutenant Colonel GSO-I (Works)
For Inspector General Frontier Corps KP (North)

Governor praises role of KP caretaker government



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali here on Tuesday praised the performance of caretaker government and said significant improvement has been

witnessed during their tenure relating to good governance and financial discipline. He was talking to KP Caretaker Chief Minister who called on him at Governor House. The governor also lauded the per-

formance of caretaker cabinet for fulfilling their constitutional responsibilities. He also praised caretaker government for its support and cooperation.

Speaking on the occasion, caretaker CM said that provincial government

worked in a dedicated way to resolve issues of the people and to steer province out of financial problems. He also appreciated role of KP Governor in developing a best working relationship between federal and provincial government.

Meanwhile caretaker minister for social welfare, Irshad Qaisar also called on governor and informed him about the achievements of social work department.

Later, a delegation of South Waziristan led by Moulana Jalal-ud-Din also called on KP Governor and informed him about their problems.

Governor listened to their problems and assured cooperation to resolve problems being confronted by the people. He also praised efforts and sacrifices of tribal people for security and sovereignty of the country.



PESHAWAR: Workers clean the KP Assembly ahead of the Oath taking of the newly elected provincial legislators. — INP photo

118 newly elected KP MPs to take oath today

PESHAWAR (APP): A total of 118 newly elected members would take oath in first session of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on Wednesday.

21 women seats and four seats of minorities would remain vacant.

Governor KP has summoned the session of newly elected provincial assembly.

On first day 91 members of Sunni Ittehad Council, 7 members of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUIF), 5 members of Pakistan Muslim League, 4 members of Pakistan People

Party, 2 members of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarians, one member of Awami National Party and one members of Wehdat-ul-Muslamin would take oath.

Two women members of JUL, two of PMLN and one member of PPP would take oath on reserved seats and the remaining 21 seats would remain vacant. The seats are vacant as independents still did not fulfill the criteria to provide list of women and minority seats.

Ali Amin Khan Gandapur and Aqibullah Khan were nominated for

slots of CM and Speaker while newly elected member from Chitral would likely to be nominated as Deputy Speaker.

Around 67 winning candidates in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa out the total 113 notified from 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 from 13 districts of the province. While 47 winning candidates have remained MPAs in previous terms.

Power suspension on various KP feeders notified

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Tuesday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from Peshawar University Grid Station on 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, Ghrib Abad, Rahatabad 1, CMB and Abdara feeders will face inconvenience.

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

The power supply will remain suspended from Peshawar Cantt Grid Station on 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 Ghari, Marble Industry, SAA, Palosi 1, Behri Colony, Tehkal Payan feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from Mardan Grid Station on 29th February from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. resultantly, consumer of Shah Dandh, Rural 1,2, Zando, Ghari Daudzai, Turo, Tawas Babini, New Turo, Ahmad Abad feeders will face inconvenience.

Commissioner directs formulation of plan to control price hike in Ramzan

PESHAWAR (APP): Commissioner Peshawar, Muhammad Zubair has directed district administration of the province to devise oriented strategy for the relief of masses and to control artificial price hike in holy month of Ramzan.

He was chairing a meeting being convened to control price hike in month of Ramzan. He stressed to devise a plan to bridle the profiteers in Ramzan

besides revising price lists of edible for relief of a common man.

He also directed assistant commissioners to visit markets in morning and fix the prices of essential food items including poultry, vegetables and fruits keeping in view financial position of people. He also directed to constitute raiding teams to visit markets in sehar and iftar timings. Commissioner also

directed to hold meeting of price review committee after fifteen days and said that profiteers would be sent to jail for thirty days. He also sought daily reports of efforts made by concerned officials to control price hike.

The meeting was attended by all the deputy commissioners of Peshawar Divisions who submit monthly report of their activities and plan against price hike and hoarding.

Obituary F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The mother of ANP leader Izhar Khalil has been passed away. Her namaz-e-janaza will to offer today 27-2-2024 at Khatm-e-Nabawat Chowk, Sufaidairy, Peshawar. She was the mother of Hidayatullah Khalil, Ibrar Khalil, Saifullah, Naqeeb Ullah Advocate, Obaid Ullah and she also the mother-in-law of Rizwan Ullah.

Agriculture University holds 117th syndicate meeting

PESHAWAR (APP): A 117th special syndicate meeting of the University of Agriculture Peshawar was held under the chairmanship of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Jehan Bakht here on Tuesday wherein he welcomed all the syndicate members. Registrar Dr. Rizwan Ahmed presented the agenda of the syndicate meeting after recitation from the Holy Quran.

On this occasion, the syndicate members Justice (retired) Peshawar High Court Irshad Qaiser, Director IM Sciences Prof. Dr. Usman Ghani (HEC Nominee), Deputy Secretary Agriculture Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Akhtar, Deputy Secretary Higher Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Dr. Mohsin Habib, Deputy Secretary Establishment Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Jamshid Khan, Deputy Secretary Finance Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Aneela Fahim (online), Dean Faculty of Management and Computer Sciences Prof. Dr. Dawood Jan, Dean Faculty of Nutrition Sciences Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ayub, Dean Faculty of Crop Production Sciences Prof. Dr. Iftikhar Hussain Khalil, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Idrees, Associate Prof. Dr. Sartaj Alam, Assistant Prof. Dr. Bashir Ahmad, Dr. Saleem Ullah, Director Quality Assurance Dr. Khurram Nawaz, Treasurer Dr. Abdul Salam and Director Administration Dr. Muhammad Ilyas participated.

The ASME EFx 2024 organized by ASME

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR : The ASME EFx 2024 was organized by ASME, UET Peshawar chapter in collaboration with Matrix Pakistan under the supervision of Dr. M Alam Zaib Khan, Department of Mechanical Engineering from 24th - 25th February, 2024. Prof. Dr. Hamidullah, Chairman, Department of Mechanical Engineering, UET Peshawar was the chief guest of the opening ceremony.

The event brought together students from various backgrounds and disciplines to showcase their technical

skills, build a community and foster relationships. The event included various competitions such as Students Design Competitions (Robotics Competition), IAM3 (Drone Rules) oral competitions, technical poster painting competitions and elevator pitch competitions, designed to challenge the students and push them to reach their full potential. Leading universities from all over Pakistan participated in the event included NUST Islamabad, NED Karachi, COMSATS Islamabad, UET Lahore, UET Taxila and UET Mehran.

The event also included

interactive seminars on "Emerging Technologies: Shaping our Future and Career Prospects" by Dr. Nasru Mina Ullah and "Sustainable Sparks: Illuminating Energy Conservation with Green Nudges" by Prof. Dr. Abdul Shakoor. Later on, an Urdu-Pashto Mushaira was also arranged presided by renewed Pashto poet Dr. Abaseen Yousafzai. The event was an amalgamation of passion for engineering and commitment to pushing the boundaries of what is possible evident through different skills and knowledge.

Widespread rains, snowfall in KP from Feb 29 to March 3

PESHAWAR (INP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tuesday issued an alert for widespread heavy torrential rains and snowfall with windstorm, thunderstorm and isolated hailstorm in the province from February 29 to March 2.

The PDMA, in its advisory to all the deputy commissioners (DCs) of KP, said that the Pakistan Metrological Department (PMD), Regional Weather Forecasting Centre,

Peshawar had informed that a strong westerly wave "is likely to approach western parts on 29th February and may grip most parts of the province on 1st March, and persist till 2nd March".

Under the influence of the weather system, it said, a heavy to extremely widespread rain with windstorm/thunderstorm (heavy snowfall over the hills) was expected in Chitral (Lower & Upper), Dir (Lower & Upper), Malakand, Buner, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Torghar, Battagram,

Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, Hangu, Karak, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, D I Khan, and North & Sought Waziristan districts from February 29 to March 3.

The PDMA warned that the weather system might cause flash flooding in hill torrents and local nullahs as well as urban flooding in main cities of the province during the forecast period.

PIC to share primary angioplasty expenses with heart patiensts

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Institute of Cardiology's (PIC) Board of Governors takes a step towards cooperation in the expenses of primary angioplasty for patients suffering from heart attacks in emergencies.

A group of donors called Friends of PIC have been established, and on the first day, over Rs5 million were raised for this noble cause. Friends of PIC consists of renowned businessmen and organizations in the province.

In this regard, an event was organized at Peshawar Institute of Cardiology on Tuesday, attended by prominent businessmen and representatives of prominent organizations, to raise funds for providing financial assistance in primary PCI in the hospital's emergency department.

Chairman of the Board, Professor Dr. Hafeez Ullah stated that excellent performance of its treatment and staff have made PIC-MTI an internationally recognized hospital. He said that some patients

who arrive in emergencies require primary PCI on an urgent basis, which can save their lives. However, hospitals are facing financial difficulties due to the current economic situation in the country.

He further said that the cost of this treatment is high, which some patients cannot afford. Therefore, this assistance will prove to be a ray of hope for them.

The Advisor to the Chief Minister for Health, Professor Dr. Riaz Anwar said that the government's mission is to provide better facilities to the people of the province.

However, providing financial assistance to deserving patients like those in PCI is commendable. Chief Executive and Medical Director of PIC-MTI, Professor Dr. Shahkar Ahmad Shah, welcomed the guests and expressed gratitude for their contributions. Professor Shahkar briefed the members of the business community about the hospital and informed them about the achievements that have been accomplished in a short period of time.

Encroached tikka shops, structures removed

PESHAWAR (APP): Officials of the Capital Metropolitan Government here on Tuesday conducted a grand anti-encroachment operation in city areas and removed scores of encroached structures and items from roadsides and footpaths.

According to the Capital Metropolitan Government, the operation was carried out

on the instructions of Director East, Rehman Khattak and Deputy Director Regulation, Zilhajja Ilyas.

The Chief Demolishing Officer, Fazal Mehmood along with his staff and police force removed encroachments from areas including Nishtar Abad, Ramdas, Circular Road, Bhana Mari and Kohat Road. During the operation

conducted on public complaints scores of charpoys, benches, tikka stalls and illegal structures were removed from footpaths.

On the occasion, the administration warned the shopkeepers and traders to keep the fronts of their business places clear for pedestrians otherwise further legal action will be initiated against the violators.

Small dams must to address water woes, combat desertification

PESHAWAR (APP): Emerged is one of the major environmental and agricultural development problems across the globe, desertification and drought have started eating up fertile lands in globe including Pakistan in the wake of climate change challenges.

Out of 195 countries having eight billion populations, about two billion people in 110 states including Pakistan and two-thirds of the world's agricultural land were highly prone to land degradation, drought and desertification mainly due to scarcity of water.

An estimated USD 42 billion of economic loss and six million hectares of productive land was being lost every year due to land degradation, drought and desertification in the world, thus affecting overall agricultural productivity and posing threats to food security in the aftermath of weather patterns.

Dr Ikram-ur-Rehman, former Provincial Coordinator, Sustainable Land Management Program (SLMP

Phase-II) said out of 79.6 million hectares of land in Pakistan, about 70 percent was arid to semi-arid, 50.88 million hectares were rangeland and only 22 million hectares were under cultivation.

He said around 1.5 to 2.5 million hectares of irrigated land, 3.5 to four million hectares of rain-fed agricultural and 35 million hectares of rangelands were either becoming barren or non-productive annually due to drought, land degradation and desertification.

SLMP-II program, which was started with co-partnership of Federal and Provincial Governments with financial assistance from UNDP and Global Environment Facility (GEF), has revealed that underground water resources in the western dry mountains of Sindh and Balochistan were shrinking due to heavy exploitation of aquifers without any natural recharge.

The National Water Policy 2018 has disclosed that Pakistan was gradually heading towards water stress due

to shortage of dams, which might lead to food insecurity for all living creatures in near future.

According to the policy, per capita surface water availability has declined from 5,260 cubic meters per year in 1951 to around 1,000 cubic meters in 2016 and this quantity would likely further drop to 860 cubic meters by 2025.

It warned that the groundwater situation was expected to further drop in the country mostly in Punjab and Sindh, where one million tube wells were currently pumping about 55 million acres feet (MAF) of underground water for irrigation, which is 20pc more than that available from canals.

Terming the findings of the policy alarming, Ikhtair Wali, spokesman of PML-N KP and MPA accused the PTI's government for its poor energy and economic policies that plunged the country into energy and gas crisis besides increasing an import bill to \$ 27 billion.

He said work on Mohmand dam with capacity of 800

MW and Diamir Bhasha dams with a 4500 MW capacity was unnecessarily delayed by the PTI government, resulting in a sharp increase in demand and supply gap of electricity and gas that plunged the country into load shedding.

Had Diamir Bhasha and Mohmand dams constructed and gas and alternative power resources were developed, Pakistan would have achieved 50,000MW affordable electricity today.

Ikram said in the second phase, 200 more villages were included in 2015 under which around six lakh acres land was brought under sustainable rain-fed agriculture and water conservation programs before closure of the project in June 2020.

"We have shared the project's models with KP agriculture, forest and others relevant departments with special recommendations for water conservation, rains water harvesting and construction of small dams," he said.

At Komara Sitam in Tank and Ratkoi DI Khan, he said structures for small dams

were constructed for storage of rainwater and averting flash floods from Koh-e-Sulman mountains range.

The Spokesman of Small Dams, Irrigation Department said that Allah Almighty had blessed Pakistan with plenty of natural sites on its different rivers for construction of large, medium and small dams.

He said Pakistan was bestowed with more than 24 big and small rivers including five in Punjab, four in Sindh, eight in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and seven in Balochistan with numerous suitable natural sites for construction of small, medium and big dams.

These rivers are endowed with a number of potential sites at Diamir Bhasha, Dasu Kohistan, Kalabagh on River Sindh, Mohamad and Kalam on River Swat, Shalman Khyber on River Kabul, Tangi on River Kurram in North Waziristan, Kaghan-Naran on River Kunhar for construction of dams.

He said that in the world, about 46,000 big and small dams were constructed

including 22,104 dams by China, 5,334 by India and only 150 dams by Pakistan since its independence.

He said small dams could easily be constructed in a short span of two to three years while big dams mostly require 10 to 15 years, adding that Pakistan would require additional 76 MAF water by 2050 which was only possible by constructing small and medium dams.

He said that 37 small and medium dams were constructed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including 15 operated by the provincial government while 11 supervised by WAPDA and ten were constructed in merged districts having 0.1377 million-acre cultivated (CCA) and 0.3414 Acres Feet (AF) water storage capacity. He said 24 small dams with accumulative water storage capacity of 75,008 AF having 49,523 acres CCA were being built in different districts of KP under Federal government's PSDP program.

Besides completion of Pezu dam in Lakki Marwat, Khattak Bandhan dam in

Kohat, and Makh Banda dam in Karak by the federal government, he said Ichar and Manchura dams at Mansehra, Chashma Akora Khel dam in Karak, Sarozai dam in Hangu, Sanam dam in Lower Dir, Bada dam and Ulta dam in Swabi were also constructed jointly by the federal and provincial governments.

He said that seven medium dams including Bara dam in Khyber, Tank Zam in Tank, Shiekh Haider Zam, Chaudwan Zam, Daraban, and Kora Nullah in DIKhan and Larzan small dam in Tank with water storage capacity of 520,884 AF covering 171,748 CCA besides 31.5-megawatt power generation capacity were in design stage and practical work on it would start soon.

The designs of seven medium dams including Barwasa and Sher Dara Swabi, Sumri Payan Kohat, Surkhaway Mardan, Naki Nowshera, Shaheed Banda Charssadda and Tora Warae Hangu having a total accumulative water storage capacity of 13,014 AF with 14,935 acres CCA were completed.



In brief

Anti-polio campaign

PESHAWAR (APP): Commissioner Mardan Division, Shoukat Ali Yousafzai has directed relevant authorities to devise a targeted strategy to achieve the goals of upcoming anti-polio campaign. He was chairing meeting of Polio divisional task force that was also attended by Deputy Commissioner Swabi, District Health Officers of Swabi and Mardan and representatives of police and World Health Organization. The meeting was told that 2041 teams have been constituted to vaccinate about 466000 children of district Mardan while 1188 teams would administer polio vaccine to 302000 children of district Swabi. It was said that new case of polio has not been surfaced in Mardan Division since November 30 and the sample collected from the division are cleared. Speaking on the occasion, commissioner stressed to make coordinated efforts against polio utilizing all the available resources. He directed foolproof security arrangements for anti-polio campaign that is scheduled to start from March 3.

Martyred SP Ejaz Khan laid to rest

PESHAWAR (APP): Superintendent of Police (SP) Rural, Ejaz Khan who was martyred during an encounter with terrorists in Katlang area of Mardan was laid to rest at ancestral graveyard in Sherpao, Charsadda on Tuesday. The funeral prayer of martyred SP Ejaz Khan was attended IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Akhter Hayat Gandapur, DIG police, provincial chairman of Quami Watan Party (QWP), Sikandar Sherpao, police officials, relatives and large number of people from different walks of life. A smartly turned-out contingent of police presented a salute to the coffin of the martyred SP before burial. Cogent security measures were adopted on the occasion to avert any untoward incident.

Four police officials injured

PESHAWAR (APP): At least four police officials were injured when their vehicle met with an accident near Khan Kot, Tajazai near Lakki Marwat district on Tuesday. According to police, a vehicle in a police convoy carrying the coffin of a martyred police official to Dera Ismail Khan from Peshawar overturned while averting a motorcyclist from hitting in Tajazai area. As a result, four police officials identified as Muhammad Niazi, Hayat Ullah, Khurshid Alam and Barakat Ullah were injured. The injured police officials were shifted to District Headquarters Hospital, Lakki Marwat for treatment.

Four crushed to death

OKARA (INP): Four including two children and a woman were crushed to death by tractor trolleys in different areas of Hujra Shah Muqem district Okara on Tuesday. According to details, an over speeding tractor trolley ran over 8-year-old Ali Husnain at Hujra-Basirpur road near village Chandor killing him on the spot. A 10-year-old girl Kinza d/o Imran was crushed by a tractor trolley while playing by Jalalan Wali road in Mandi Ahmedabad town. Two over speeding motorcycles collided at Akhtarabad road and fodder laden tractor trolley coming from behind crushed to death 20-year-old Amir and his sister Uzma Bibi 25. Wedding of deceased Amir was scheduled to be held next week.



GILGIT: An attractive and eye catching view of fresh snow covered Nalter valley in the catchment area of Pakistan. — APP photo

UoS, MMD join hands for media studies

PESHAWAR (APP): The University of Swat (UoS) has officially entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Media Matters for Democracy (MMD) aimed to enhance capacity-building of journalists and other related activities within the Department of Media and Communication Studies.

The MOU was signed by Imtiaz Ali, Registrar, University of Swat and Zafar Ullah Nizamani,

Manager Mobilization & Outreach, in the presence of Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Hassan Sher.

This partnership is poised to provide valuable resources and opportunities for students pursuing studies in media and communication.

Professor Dr. Hassan Sher, Vice Chancellor University of Swat, affirmed the institution's dedication to facilitating a conducive learning envi-

ronment and ensuring every possible assistance to further the objectives outlined in the MOU.

The collaboration is anticipated to contribute significantly to the academic growth and professional development of students within the realm of media and communication studies.

Both institutions look forward to a fruitful partnership that will positively impact the education landscape in the region.

CM GB committed to combat unemployment in region

GILGIT (INP): Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan along with his cabinet was taking solid measures to overcome unemployment in region.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the GB government spokesperson Faizullah Faraq said that the chief minister was making concerted efforts to tackle unemployment.

He said that by prioritizing the local workforce, Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan aimed to foster healthy competition among the youth, ultimately leading to the eradication of unemployment in the region. Faizullah Faraq said this resolute stance underscored the seriousness with which the government was tackling the pressing issue.

Tree plantation drive 2024 inaugurated

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (INP): A tree plantation drive 2024 was launched at Lakki Marwat here on Tuesday. Deputy Commissioner Lakki Marwat Rahmat Ali inaugurated the campaign by planting a sapling on the premises of Town complex. Officials of the forest department and district administration were present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, the DC said coordinated efforts should be made to educate people about the importance of trees. He said that people should be encouraged to come forward and take an active part in the campaign for a better environment and the country's bright future.

He said that currently several countries were facing environmental challenges posing a potential threat to the survival of mankind, thus effective measures were needed to be taken to overcome the issue. He also underlined the need for relevant departments to cooperate with the forest department to make the country clean and green by making plantations successful.

Five outlaws held

SARGODHA (INP): The police arrested five outlaws, recovered arms and narcotics during separate actions in different areas of Sargodha on Tuesday.

According to details, teams of different police stations of Sargodha conducted operations against criminals in respective areas. During separate actions, five outlaws including Tahir, Kamran, Waheed, Shakoor and Nauman were apprehended with three guns, four pistols, 2 kilogram hashish and 1 kg opium. The police confiscated the recovered weapons, narcotics and after registering separate cases at respective police stations started investigations.

One killed, two injured

FAISALABAD (INP): One person was killed while two others were injured in a road accident, here on Tuesday. Rescue-1122 spokesperson said that a speeding loader van collided with a car (IDS-3094) near Ghaseetpura stop on Sheikhpura road.

Unique death rituals of Kailash tribe draw attention

CHITRAL (APP): The Kailash tribe, nestled in the remote valleys of majestic mountains of Chitral, has once again attracted global attention interest due to its unique death rituals. The tribe is currently mourning the death of its prominent figure and Pakistan Peoples Party worker Durrom Shah Kailash, who has passed away after prolonged illness.

In accordance with the Kailash customs, members from all the three valleys of Birir, Bumborat, and Rumbor gathered in Rumbor to observe his three-day funeral rites. The funeral rites, deeply rooted in the Kailash traditions, involve a blend of mourning and celebration. While women sing religious songs and perform solemn dances around the deceased's pillow, men, including young boys, partake in drumming and dancing to commemorate the departed. One of the distinguishing rituals is the sacrifice of numerous goats, cows, and bulls, symbolizing respect and honour for the deceased.

Family members of the



departed offer hospitality to guests, presenting three canisters containing Desi ghee, cheese, and indigenous bread. Close relatives, such as daughters, wives, and sisters, gather around the bed of the deceased to mourn, while others join in the dance. The deceased's body is placed in the sacred Kalash site known as Jastakan, where it lies on a cot adorned with monetary notes and accompanied by cigarettes, naswar, and various fruits. The rituals, which continue uninterrupted for three days, culminate in a procession to the cemetery, marked by aerial gun-

fire as a final salute.

Traditionally, the deceased is buried alongside items reflecting their daily life, although modern practices exclude the inclusion of firearms. Following the burial, the widow of the deceased observes a period of mourning inside the home, receiving separate provisions for sustenance. Despite the financial strain posed by the sacrifice of numerous animals, the Kailash people steadfastly uphold the age-old customs, considering them integral to their cultural identity.



SARGODHA: A health worker administering polio drops to child at Nori Gate.

National immunization drive begins

Hafiz Muhammad Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: National Immunization campaign launched in Hafizabad, on Monday. Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad inaugurated the campaign to administer drops of polio vaccine and supplements of vitamins A to children at district headquarter hospital Hafizabad. She also marked finger of children after giving polio vaccine drops to children.

Talking of this occasion, she said that health department was constituted 998 polio teams for administering polio drops to 238551 children to visit door to door in the district while special arrangements were also made to give polio drops to children at hospital, railway stations, bus stands, parks, schools, shopping centres and other public places so

that to ensure hundred percent coverage of target children up to five-year-old.

She said that it was national obligation of parents, ulema, teachers, traders, media and civil society to cooperate health workers for administering polio vaccine and supplements of vitamins A for saving children from any everlasting physical disability.

Later, she inspected different wards of the DHQ hospital to review provision of medicines and other treatment facilities to patients.

While visiting pharmacy, she directed the Medical Superintendent of the hospital to increase medicine counters and made sufficient sitting arrangements for patients.

HAFIZABAD: Fiazan Global Relief Foundation of Dawat-e-Islami Hafizabad has arranged

20th blood donation camp for collecting blood for thalassemic children on the eve of Shab-e-Braat at Hafizabad and more than three thousand bags of blood have been collected in these camps so far.

A large number of people donated blood with the passion of serving the ailing humanity.

District Caretaker of Dawat-e-Islami Waseem Attari said that serving the ailing humanity and saving lives of patients was a worship.

He said that we could save precious human lives to donate blood and it was a big means to get blessing of almighty Allah. Goodness never wastes and blood donation is such goodness which return to us tenfold in this world, he said and added that all youth should come forward to donate blood for thalassemic patients voluntarily to their lives.



HYDERABAD: A view of sewerage water at cant graveyard need the attention of concerned authorities.

Two of a family killed, seven injured in Swat Expressway accident

PESHAWAR (APP): At least two people were killed and seven others injured when a HiAce van carrying a family collided with road-side guardrail on Swat Expressway near Katlang, Mardan district on Tuesday. Police said, a family was

going to Dir Upper after receiving its Saudi-returned relative from Islamabad Airport.

The vehicle, when reached near Katlang area on Swat Expressway, collided with a guardrail after one of its tires burst.

As a result, two members of the family were killed on the scene while seven others including women and children sustained critical wounds.

The Rescue 1122 officials shifted the dead and injured to nearby hospital.

Balochistan reshuffles two secretaries; Tehsildar dismissed

QUETTA (PPI): After general elections across the country, Government of Balochistan has reshuffled administrative secretaries.

A notification issued by Services and General Administration Department, Government of Balochistan received today says that Arshad Hussain Bugti (B-20), awaiting posting order in SandGAD, has been transferred and posted as Secretary Women Development Department vice Sardar Khan Bugti while Sardar Khan Bugti (20) was transferred and directed to report to Services and General Administration Department.

Meanwhile, the services

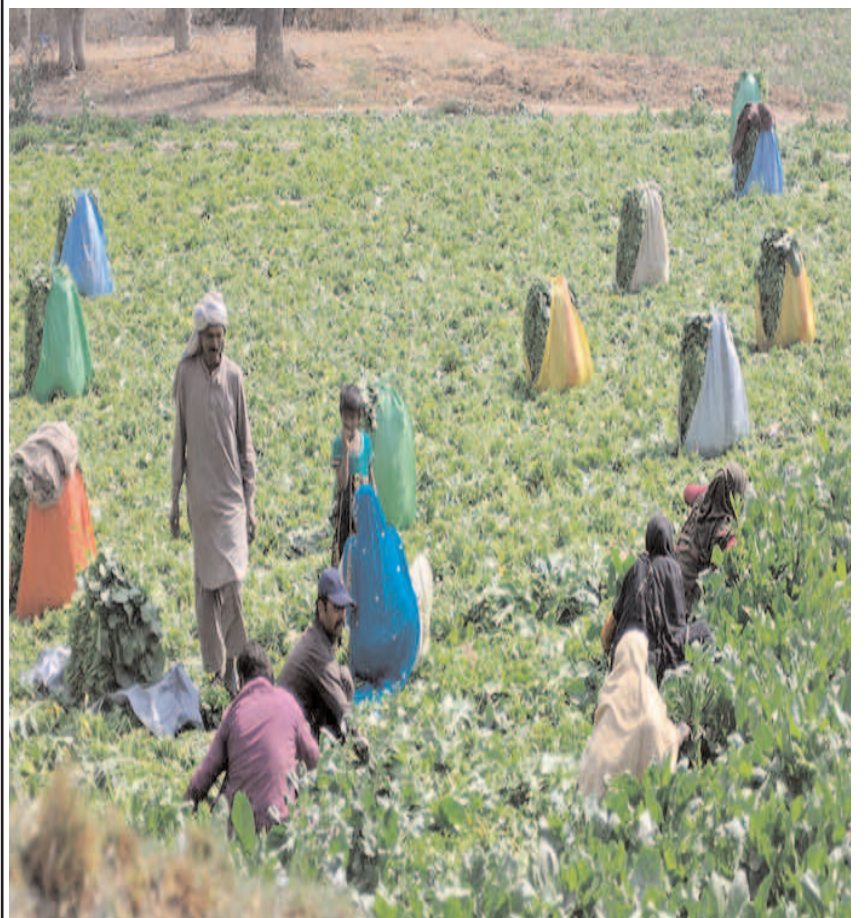
of Murad Muhammad Marri, presently under transfer as Tehsildar Dera Murad Jamali, have been placed under suspension.

An order issued by Board of Revenue Balochistan says under the provision of Section 6 (1) of Balochistan Employees' Efficiency and Disciplinary Act 2011 and in compliance of interim order dated 13.02.2024 passed by learned Full-Board, the services of Murad Muhammad Marri are hereby placed under suspension on account of following charges:

That he in the capacity of Tehsildar Settlement Quetta and Kuchlak submitted conflicting reports which led to serious impli-

cations in settlement operation of Mouza Karak. These conflicting reports led to an unending controversy.

Initially, creation of ownership title of approximately 4882 acres of land in the name of Deputy Commissioner Quetta in settlement operation conducted under the supervision and attestation by him (in the capacity of the then Tehsildar Kuchlak), resulting in re-titling of the subject land to various individuals through judicial orders.



MULTAN: Farmer's family cutting fresh vegetable spinach in their farm field. — APP photo



Italy’s Meloni suffers first electoral setback in Sardinia

ROME (AFP/APP): Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's hard-right government on Tuesday suffered its first electoral setback since taking office, as the centre-left opposition gained a narrow victory in a regional vote in Sardinia.

Alessandra Todde, an MP from the once anti-establishment Five Star Movement who also had the backing of the centre-left Democratic Party, becomes the island's first woman president after winning Sunday's election. She defeated Paolo Truzzu, a member of Meloni's far-right Brothers of Italy party who was chosen to represent the coalition government, according to near-final official results. Her victory was only by a whisker -- 45.4 percent of the vote against 45 percent for Truzzu -- but it is the first such defeat for Meloni since she took office in October 2022.

The vote also marked a breakthrough for the opposition, which had been divided until now but came together to field a joint candidate.

"Today we've shown that the right can be beaten," said Elly Schlein, leader of the Democratic Party.

Former premier Giuseppe Conte, leader of the Five Star Movement, added: "Sardinian citizens have

closed the door on Meloni and company and opened it to the alternative. The air has changed."

Experts caution about reading too much into a regional vote heavily influenced by local factors, from healthcare to a corruption investigation against the right-wing incumbent. Nationwide, Meloni's party has been leading opinion polls ever since her election. The latest YouTrend collation of polls puts Brothers of Italy at 28 percent of support, compared to 19.6 percent for the Democratic Party and 16.2 percent for the Five Star Movement.

"Every regional election is regional, you shouldn't extrapolate too much," Daniele Albertazzi, a professor of politics and expert on populism at Britain's University of Surrey, told AFP. But the vote underscored how "either the Democratic Party and Five Star find a way to win together, or it's very, very unlikely that either of them can prevail."

Todde, 55, who served as a junior minister under Conte and under former premier Mario Draghi, now takes the helm in Sardinia for five years.

Truzzu, the mayor of Sardinia's capital Cagliari, took personal responsibility for his defeat, noting he

failed even to take victory in his own city. "The truth is that Meloni is not responsible. They were not national elections," the 51-year-old told reporters. But Meloni had pressed hard for his nomination, and many commentators characterised it as her personal failure.

Her main coalition ally, Matteo Salvini of the far-right League, had wanted a new term for incumbent Christian Solinas, elected in 2019.

But Solinas withdrew his nomination just weeks before the vote after coming under investigation for corruption. "Overall, Meloni has made few mistakes so far... but this will be used by Salvini to say that she is not invincible," said Albertazzi.

He said she was still on course to do well in European Parliament elections in June -- but the setback may allow her allies to assert themselves, particularly in the choice of candidates for upcoming regional elections. Albertazzi predicted no serious trouble from the League or her third coalition partner, the right-leaning Forza Italia, as "there is no choice for them" but to stay.

But after the defeat, they can "take back the covers on the bed a little".

S. Korea empowers nurses as doctors’ strike continues

SEOUL (AFP/APP): South Korea granted nurses new powers and legal protections Tuesday, and launched an investigation into a patient's death, as hospital chaos caused by striking trainee doctors entered a second week.

Major hospitals are struggling to provide services after thousands of junior medics handed in their resignations and stopped working last week to protest against government plans to sharply increase medical school admissions in the face of a rapidly ageing society.

The government said Tuesday it has launched an investigation after a patient died of a cardiac arrest in an ambulance after struggling to find a doctor. Emergency services contacted seven different hospitals but "were told there were no trainee doctors", the daily JoongAng Ilbo reported.

"The government is conducting an on-site probe with related agencies into the death," Health Minister Cho Kyoo-hong said.

The government has set a Thursday ultimatum for doctors to return to work, saying that legal action -- including prosecution and the suspension of medical licences -- will be taken against those who refuse. The ministry also requested on Tuesday that police launch a probe into people connected to the strike, including five linked to the Korean Medical Association.

The mass work stoppage has

resulted in cancellations and postponed surgeries for cancer patients and C-sections for pregnant women, with the government raising its public health alert to the highest level.

Nurses will now be allowed to perform some medical procedures previously reserved for doctors, and offered immunity from potential lawsuits linked to their new scope of work, Second Vice Health Minister Park Min-soo said.

This "will legally protect the nurses who are filling the medical vacuum created by trainee doctors' walk-outs at hospitals", Park said.

The government said it needed to protect nurses because there were some "grey areas" about what medical treatments could be performed by particular staff.

Each hospital's administrators can work with nurses to decide which tasks they can perform.

Nurses told AFP that the changes did not offer enough protection to them in life-or-death cases.

"Although it is claimed that legal protection is provided, I do not find it specific enough to feel safe," said Lee Hye-ok, a nurse at one of the five biggest hospitals in South Korea.

"Legal protective measures need to be much more specific and comprehensive." Other nurses said they had no option but to perform certain tasks if no doctors were working.

"We nurses cannot refuse when they are told to help the patient on the spot when there is no one else available," said Park Na-rae, a nurse and union member of the Seoul National University Hospital.

"The worrying part is whether they will be held accountable if the patient's condition worsens."

Doctors are restricted from strikes by South Korean law but the medics have said they have no option but to stop working to show their fierce opposition to the government's plan.

The Korean Intern Resident Association said in a social media post Tuesday they believed the medical reforms would "destroy medical care". South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol said Tuesday "medical reform cannot be subject to negotiation or compromise".

"No reasons can justify acts that hold lives and health of the people hostage," he said at a meeting.

Polls suggest up to 75 percent of the South Korean public supports the increase in medical school admissions. Seoul says South Korea has one of the lowest doctor-to-population ratios among developed countries and the government is pushing hard to admit 2,000 more students to medical schools annually from next year. Junior doctors say the reforms are the final straw in a profession where they already struggle with tough working conditions.

Dutch drug kingpin gets life for leading ‘murder organization’

A M S T E R D A M (AFP/APP): Dutch drug kingpin Ridouan Taghi received a life sentence on Tuesday over a series of murders committed by his gang that shocked the Netherlands.

Taghi, 46, is the alleged mastermind of the Amsterdam-based group called the "Mocro-maffia" that is thought to be one of the Netherlands' largest cocaine distributors.

Security around the trial has been extremely tight with judges and prosecutors asking not to be identified.

At least three people directly connected to the mega six-year trial, have been killed. "We are sentencing all 17 suspects. Ridouan Taghi gets life in prison," said a judge at the Amsterdam District Court.

Taghi was the "undisputed leader" of what the judge called a "murder organisation." "He decided who would be killed and he spared no-one," said the judge, whose face was not shown on a television feed. Sixteen other suspects were handed sentences ranging between life and one year and nine months.

Taghi's sentence can be reviewed after 25 years, but

it did not mean he was automatically eligible for parole, public prosecutors told AFP. Taghi was not present in the courtroom.

A lawyer for another suspect, named Said R., said his client would appeal a life sentence.

Once the Netherlands' most-wanted fugitive, Taghi was arrested in Dubai in 2019. Despite being held at an ultra-secure prison, prosecutors say he continued pulling the strings, sending secret messages to henchmen on the outside.

Heavily-armed police on Tuesday threw a ring of steel around the courthouse nicknamed "The Bunker", on the outskirts of Amsterdam. Officers armed with automatic rifles and wearing face masks to protect their identities were guarding the court, while drones and a police helicopter circled overhead, AFP correspondents saw.

Taghi and 16 other accused did not face charges for the three murders that occurred during their trial.

They faced six other counts of murder and attempted murder -- including ordering some 13 hits - carried out between 2015

and 2017 mainly against people suspected of becoming police informants.

On Tuesday, Taghi was convicted on five murder counts, including on a man called Hakim Changachi, who was gunned down in Utrecht in 2017, in what prosecutors say was a case of mistaken identity.

"Taghi was responsible for the mistake," said the judge. Shortly afterwards police made a breakthrough in the case, when one of the suspected gang members named "Nabil B." handed himself over and agreed to become the prosecution's main witness.

A new wave of violence followed after Nabil B. turned state witness, leaving three people dead in scenes that shocked the nation. Nabil B.'s brother was murdered in 2018, his lawyer Derk Wiersum was shot dead outside his house in 2019, and the prominent Dutch crime journalist Peter R. de Vries was killed in 2021. De Vries acted as Nabil B.'s confidant at the time of his murder and had said before he was on Taghi's hit-list.

Taghi has denied all charges, and has said money spent on a "sham

trial could rather have gone to employing more teachers and police and healthcare."

None of the suspects made any statements during the trial, which was delayed by several dramatic developments. Taghi's lawyer Inez Weski, was arrested in April last year, with prosecutors accusing her of passing messages between her client and the outside world. New lawyers were appointed for Taghi, but they too have since resigned. The prosecution's case consisted of more than 800 pages with evidence not only from Nabil B., but also conversations from encrypted telephones called "Pretty Good Privacy" (PGP) phones, often favoured by criminal organisations. "We would like to take a moment to remember the three people murdered during the hearings," the judge said on Tuesday.

"All of this has given this trial a pitch-black edge." Dutch MPs hailed the conviction, with far-right politician Geert Wilders' -- whose PVV party won last year's elections -- saying on X, formerly Twitter, "it's a beautiful day for the Netherlands."

Disturbing surge in anti-Muslim hate speech in BJP-ruled India

WASHINGTON (APP): Instances of anti-Muslim hate speech more than doubled across India last year, a Washington-based research group said Monday, amid accusations of Islamophobic tendencies against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

"The proliferation of hate speech in India is particularly concerning given its clear connection to the upsurge in communal violence against minorities," the group 'India Hate Lab' said in a report.

It said that the devastating Israeli war against Gaza played a key role in the escalation of anti-Muslim hate speech over the last three months.

'India Hate Lab' documented 668 hate speech incidents targeting Muslims in 2023, 255 of which occurred in the first half of the year while 413 took place in the last six months of 2023, the research group said in a report released Monday. About 75%, or 498, of those incidents took place in states governed by the Hindu nationalist BJP of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to the report. The states of Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh accounted for the most hate speech. Between Oct. 7 and Dec. 31, there were 41 incidents of hate speech against Indian Muslims that mentioned the Gaza situation, the report added. It

accounted for about 20% of hate speech in the last three months of 2023.

The research group said it used the United Nations' definition of hate speech - prejudiced or discriminatory language towards an individual or group based on attributes including religion, ethnicity, nationality, race or gender.

Rights groups have alleged mistreatment of Muslims under Modi, who became prime minister in 2014 and is widely expected to retain power after the 2024 elections.

They point to a 2019 citizenship law that the U.N. human rights office called "fundamentally discriminatory;" an anti-conversion legislation that challenges

the constitutionally protected right to freedom of belief; and the 2019 revoking of Muslim majority Kashmir's special status.

There has also been demolition of Muslim properties in the name of removing illegal construction and a ban on wearing the hijab in classrooms in Karnataka when the BJP was in power in that state.

The Indian embassy in Washington and India's foreign ministry did not respond to a request for comment. India Hate Lab said it tracked online activity of Hindu nationalist groups, verified videos of hate speech posted on social media and compiled data of isolated incidents reported by Indian media.

Australian police investigating Taylor Swift's dad for alleged assault

SYDNEY (AFP/APP): Australian police said they were investigating a 71-year-old man for the alleged assault of a photographer in Sydney in the early hours of Tuesday. The accuser identified the man as Taylor Swift's father.

"Police have been told a 71-year-old man allegedly assaulted a 51-year-old man at Neutral Bay Wharf about 2:30 am (1530 GMT Monday), before leaving the location," police

spokeswoman Alicia McCumstie told AFP.

"The younger man reported the incident and inquiries are now under way by officers attached to North Shore Police Area Command." The alleged victim, Ben McDonald, told AFP the man was Swift's dad, Scott Swift.

McDonald said he had been photographing the US pop icon on a "super yacht" in Sydney Harbour after the last of her four gigs in the

city.

McDonald alleges Swift's security put an umbrella in his face to prevent him from taking photographs of Taylor Swift, who was walking down the jetty to a waiting vehicle.

After Swift departed, McDonald claimed a man confronted him and "he punched me in the chops".

"I didn't know who he was, but I looked at photos and saw him holding hands with Taylor, and it was her

dad." "It was a shock. That's never happened to me in 26 years," he said.

Australian police do not usually publicly identify people accused or alleging crimes. Taylor Swift is currently in the midst of her worldwide blockbuster Eras Tour. She heads to Singapore this week for the next leg of what is expected to be the highest-grossing musical tour of all time at over \$1 billion, according to Pollstar.

Senegal leader announces amnesty bill to end poll-linked turmoil

D I A M N I A D I O (AFP/APP): Senegal's President Macky Sall has proposed a general amnesty bill for political protesters arrested since 2021, as he holds talks to end fresh turmoil over delayed elections.

The West African nation is facing its worst political crisis in decades after Sall abruptly deferred the February 25 presidential vote just hours before campaigning was due to begin.

The Constitutional Council overturned the delay and Sall, whose second term is scheduled to end on April 2, launched two days of talks to set a new poll date.

He announced the amnesty bill at the start of what he called a "national dialogue" on Monday, suggesting it could reunite the country. "In a spirit of national reconciliation, I will put before the National Assembly this Wednesday a bill for a general amnesty for acts relating to political demonstrations that took place between 2021 and 2024," Sall said Monday.

"This will make it possible to pacify the political arena," he added.

According to some rights groups, over 1,000 people have been arrested

since 2021 during the power struggle between opposition leader Ousmane Sonko and the state.

Sonko and his party's substitute candidate, Bassirou Diomaye Faye, are both in prison.

Authorities have released hundreds of detainees in the past 10 days. Cheikh Anta Diop University in the capital Dakar also reopened its campus on Monday after being closed for months.

The idea of an amnesty has proved divisive among both government and opposition supporters.

Some critics suggest it would excuse violent crimes committed by demonstrators, while the opposition camp fears it will be used to exonerate government and security officials for the deaths of protesters. The February 3 decision to postpone the presidential elections plunged traditionally stable Senegal into turmoil, with four people killed in the resulting clashes.

Sall, in power since 2012, said he called off the vote over disputes about the disqualification of potential candidates and fears of a return to unrest as in 2021 and 2023. The opposition called it a "constitutional

coup".

In his opening speech on Monday in the new town of Diamniado, about 30 kilometres (19 miles) from Dakar, Sall reiterated he has no plans to seek re-election and no "personal agenda".

"I'd like to leave," he said. "I have only one concern -- to find a consensus on the date of the next presidential election so that the ballot can take place under the best possible conditions."

However, Sall cast doubt on the feasibility of staging polls before the end of his term. He proposed the vote could be held by the start of the rainy season in June or July. He also acknowledged that only two of the 19 qualified candidates had accepted his invitation to the dialogue -- including his hand-picked successor Prime Minister Amadou Ba. One of the boycotters, Cheikh Tidiane Dieye, described the meeting as "theatre". He and several other would-be presidential contenders have asked the Constitutional Court to formally hold Sall accountable for not fulfilling his duty to organise the poll.

The Aar Sunu Election (Protect Our Election) collective of over 100 civil society groups also boycotted the talks and has

who was to have delivered a reading, had called the Greek royal family to let them know he was unable to attend, the palace said.

This year has seen a sudden shortage of frontline royals, after the almost simultaneous hospitalisations of the king and Catherine earlier this year.

Charles was admitted for surgery for a benign prostate condition last month but subsequently diagnosed with an unrelated cancer.

He has withdrawn from public-facing duties while he undergoes treatment.

Catherine underwent abdominal surgery at the same time and is expected

to be out of action until at least the end of March, following a two-week hospital stay. In the absence of Charles, the king's wife Queen Camilla led members of the royal family at Tuesday's memorial service at Windsor's Saint George's Chapel. Dozens of foreign royals including Spain's King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia also attended.

Charles, who has been staying at Windsor Castle, was not expected to meet them privately.

King Constantine of Greece, Charles's second cousin, died aged 82 in January 2023.

The last member of a century-long dynasty,

Constantine had reigned for just three years when the army seized control of the country in 1967.

Nearly eight months after the junta seized power, Constantine organised a military counter-coup that failed.

He fled to Rome with the rest of the royal family, and later to London.

The junta abolished the monarchy in 1973 and Greeks voted not to restore the royal family after the restoration of democracy in 1974. The British Crown was represented by Princess Anne, King Charles III's sister, at Constantine's funeral in Greece last year.

Italian Jehovah's Witnesses seized by jihadists in Mali freed

MALI (BBC): An elderly Italian couple and their son, who were kidnapped by jihadists in Mali in May 2022, have been released, Italy's government has said.

The three were in good health, and due to return to Rome, it added.

The family were Jehovah's Witnesses who were reportedly planning to set up a church when they were abducted from their home outside the southern city of Koutiala.

Their domestic worker, a Togolese national, was abducted along with them.

The worker's fate is unclear. The release of the couple, Rocco Langone



the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (JNIM), it said. The couple are reported to be in their 60s and their son in his 40s.

Mali has been hit by an insurgency for more than a decade, with jihadists often kidnapping foreign nationals for ransom or to demand the release of fellow fighters. The military seized power in a coup in 2021, accusing the government of failing to do enough to quell the insurgency. It expelled French troops and UN peacekeepers and brought in Russia's Wagner group to help fight the jihadists, but there is no sign of the insurgency ending.

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The Dilemma of State-Owned Enterprises

Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, and Parliamentary Affairs has recently informed the Upper House that the government had taken multiple steps to reduce losses in State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs). The Minister claimed that there is consensus on the need to end losses in State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs); wherein some believe that privatization is the sole solution, while others argue for reforms and professional management to enhance their efficiency. Minister told the lawmakers that the caretaker setup has left the final decision on this matter to the elected government and the parliament which will shortly take control of the country.

Pakistan has a total of 212 State owned Entities (SOEs), 85 out of those are commercial. A recent World Bank report revealed that Pakistan's State Owned Entities eat up more than Rs. 458 billion from public funds on an annual basis just to stay afloat without any productivity and profit. The situation becomes more worst when SOEs combined loan and guarantees climbed to more than 10 percent of the annual GDP or Rs. 5.4 trillion in Fiscal Year 2021, up from 3.1 % of the GDP (Rs. 1.05 percent) in 2016. The World Bank Group (WBG) declared Pakistan's SOEs the worst Enterprises in entire Asia. In addition, the fiscal damages becomes higher and higher on yearly basis without any signs of improvement in operation/ service delivery as well as any reduction in loss or institutional depletion. According to government statistics, the South Asian economy experienced a cumulative total of Rs 286 billion in net losses incurred by the State-Owned entities in FY 2018. Meanwhile, almost all of the state run institutions earned no profit except in a few cases.

There had been a nationwide debate regarding dysfunctional state run entities including the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Pakistan Railways, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation, Pakistan Post, Pakistan Tourism Corporation, Pakistan Steel Mills and several other Corporations that have now become unproductive and floating on subsidies from the government to pay salaries of their employees, and fulfills over expensiveness. Unfortunately, the majority of the institutions could neither overcome their infrastructural drawbacks nor can address their operational deficiencies despite swap of administrations, institutional reforms and frequent funding from the government over the past decades. The public is annoyed of the current situation because those State-Owned Enterprises eat up a big chunk of government resources which can otherwise be utilised on public well-being, education, health and social security to improve living standards of the masses.

There are diverse opinions regarding the future of the bedridden, dysfunction and non productive institutions. Some asked for the privatization of the loss-making SOEs to avoid more burden on the national exchequer. While others argue for professional management, restructuring and reforms to enhance their efficiency and improve their performance. The World Bank and Global experts recommend informed policy decisions based on strategic importance, Financial performance and social impact to decide retention, dispose off or restructuring of a particular institution. Historically, Pakistani leadership fails in formulating a rational policy, wherein important economic and business decisions fell victim to caste pressure, self perceived security risk throughout the past. Today, a majority of official sensitive correspondence transport through TCS but government resists privatization of Pakistan Post due to attached security hazards, over 90 percent cargo moves through the NLC and private transport companies but Pakistan Railways is not handing over to private sector based on national interest. The same is the case with the PIA, Pakistan Steels, PNSC, and other Corporations including DISCOs, GINCOs etc.

Pakistan is passing through a crucial period of history while economic frailty has become an unceasing impediment for sustainable growth, social uplift and National sovereignty of the country. The newly formed elected government must adopt thorough and prudent policies regarding the fate of State-Owned entities without conceding to pressure groups, bureaucratic hurdles and other delaying tactic. If Pakistani leadership intends to rescue the country from economic crises, debt traps and uncertainty of an unforeseeable future once and for all.

Rising Intolerance in our society

An unfortunate incident occurred in Lahore on Sunday when an angry mob surrounded a woman spotted in Lahore's Ichhra Bazar wearing an Arabic calligraphy embroidery dress. Disturbing videos of the incident quickly circulated online, showing the mob confronting and shouting at the woman while she was dining at a local restaurant. The assault was triggered by allegations that Quranic verses adorned her attire, leading to angry protests and threats from bystanders who were unaware of the true content of the inscription. Luckily, a police party reached the spot and rescued the frightened woman from the violent mob tactfully. This shocking incident largely shattered the Pakistani society as the footage also showed the woman denying the allegations of insulting the religion, saying she belongs to a religious family and the clothing with Arabic calligraphy was commonly used in Gulf states. After the revelation of Arab calligraphic dress, the mob got divided into groups having different views, still, some people kept on insisting on blasphemy charges and were ready to attack unarmed innocent woman.

Pakistan is a Sunni Majority state, with significant religious and sectarian minority populations, including Shia Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists, who live in urban as well as rural areas across the nation. The country has witnessed a sharp rise in religious intolerance whilst incidents of target killings, misuse of blasphemy laws, vigilantism, lynching, and personal vendettas including lighting entire communities and targeting places of worship. These rigid behaviors manifest collective social disorder, ignorance of religion, and an abuse of Islamic teaching which categorically asks the preservation of minorities' rights, and stresses peaceful coexistence and respect for weak and marginalized segments of society.

Historically, Pakistani political institutions and the criminal justice system failed to address serious societal issues, despite the repeated occurrence of mob violence, and vigilantism one after the other in recent years. Although, the government and parliament categorically acknowledge this serious issue but failed to address this problem satisfactorily so far. There is an urgent need for reforms in the education, social, and criminal justice systems along with enforcement of concerted practical measures to curb growing militancy, and extremism through awareness campaigns, suitable legislation and stern punishment of the offenders. Meanwhile, religious seminaries and Ulema-o-Mashaikhs can play a pivotal role in curbing extremism and intolerance from our society.



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 par-

ticular 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 administration 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 that this was a bilateral dispute and therefore outside the court's jurisdiction.

Such rhetorical gymnastics will hardly appease global publics horrified that Israel's genocidal campaign continues to be fueled by US arms, US funding and US diplomatic cover. One Palestinian American activist accused Biden of bankrolling genocide, and said his policies were "like showing up to a five-alarm fire with a cup of water while giving fuel to the arsonist." China's usually tight-lipped UN Security Council envoy categorized the US's ceasefire veto as "giving a green light to the continued slaughter."

With European nations besieged by similar pressures, a growing nexus of states have sought to steer the EU in a markedly less pro-Israel direction. Spain and Belgium's prime ministers jointly denounced "indiscriminate killings of innocent civilians." Ireland has sought to build consensus toward recognizing a Palestinian state. Even reflexively pro-Israel governments

in Germany and 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 serves to mischaracterize much of their assessments on UNRWA, which has resulted in distortions." This raises questions about those states that rushed to slash life-saving aid to the UN's Palestinian refugee agency, despite Israel's failure to produce evidence in support of its allegations against a tiny number of staff members.

Nothing signals Israel's growing international isolation more strongly than counter-productive attacks on UN institutions and Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who himself warned that Israel's "clear and repeated rejection of the two-state solution" was unacceptable and would prolong the Gaza conflict.

Since day one of this conflict, Benjamin Netanyahu's regime has seized every opportunity to cut off all humanitarian support. The UN's humanitarian office last week described Gaza as "a textbook formula for epidemics and a public health disaster" due to the collapse of its health system. With Nasser hospital in Khan 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 presidency 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.

The US is jeopardising the open Internet

Natalie Dunleavy Campbell and Stan Adams

Last October, the United States Trade Representative (USTR) abandoned its long-standing demand for World Trade Organisation provisions to protect cross-border data flows, prevent forced data localisation, safeguard source codes, and prohibit countries from discriminating against digital products based on nationality. It was a shocking shift: One that jeopardises the very survival of the open Internet, with all the knowledge-sharing, global collaboration, and cross-border commerce that it enables.

The USTR says that the change was necessary because of a mistaken belief that trade provisions could hinder the ability of US Congress to respond to calls for regulation of Big Tech firms and artificial intelligence. But trade agreements already include exceptions for legitimate public-policy concerns, and Congress itself has produced research showing that trade deals cannot impede its policy aspirations. Simply put, the US — as with other countries involved in WTO deals — can regulate its digital sector without abandoning its critical role as a champion of the open Internet.

The potential consequences of America's policy shift are as far-reaching as they are dangerous. Fear of damaging trade ties with the US has long deterred other actors from imposing national borders on the Internet. Now, those who have heard the siren song of supposed "digital sovereignty" as a means to ensure their laws are obeyed in the digital realm have less reason to resist it. The more digital walls come up, the less the walled-off portions resemble the internet.

Several countries are already trying to replicate China's heavy-handed approach to data governance. Rwanda's data-protection law, for instance, forces companies to store data within its border unless otherwise permitted by its cybersecurity regulator — making personal data vulnerable to authorities known to use data from private messages to prosecute dissidents. At the same time, a growing number of democratic countries are considering regulations that, without strong safeguards for cross-border data flows, could have a similar effect of disrupting access to a truly open internet. Without a strong commitment on crucial internet protections from the US and the 90 WTO members involved in the joint e-commerce initiative, there is a real risk that many more countries — including the more than 100 developing countries without an approach to data governance — could be swayed to choose a regulatory path that veers away from an open internet.

As more barriers to information flows are erected, the risk of harm to people, businesses, and countries rises. Consider data-localisation mandates, which may require all information about citizens or residents to be stored, collected, or processed within their country's physical borders. Far from protecting individual privacy and security, such mandates compromise it. For starters, the mandates could leave data more

vulnerable to direct seizure by authorities that do not respect human rights. Over the last decade, the Wikimedia Foundation — the nonprofit that hosts Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia created and maintained by volunteer editors around the world — has received dozens of requests for user data each year, many of which have had little or no legal basis.

There have been cases, for example, where a government or wealthy individual has sought to obscure accurate public information or even to take retaliatory action against the volunteer who published it. The Wikimedia Foundation refuses such requests, but data-localisation requirements could make this more difficult, as governments assume greater control over information stored within their borders. Then there are the economic implications. Establishing data-collection and storage facilities in countries around the world would be expensive — so expensive, in fact, that it could threaten the economic viability of non-profit and commercial entities alike. Smaller players would have an even harder time competing with big global tech platforms.

Finally, forcing Internet-based services to establish multiple, redundant data centers in different countries will create new security vulnerabilities, which leave sensitive personal and corporate information in greater danger of intrusions and data breaches. People's access to information could also be hampered.

Following the US announcement last October, G7 ministers were quick to reaffirm their commitment to open digital trade and digital markets, and their support for the Data Free Flow with Trust initiative, which promotes coordinated approaches to privacy and data governance amid increasing digital protectionism. But the G7, on its own, is ill-equipped to counter the misguided policies and geopolitically-driven efforts that could carve up the Internet beyond recognition. To preserve an open, globally connected, and secure internet, all countries — including the US, with its enduring global clout — must reassert strong support for the policies that underpin it.

But the sustained effort needed to prevent the global erosion of the Internet goes beyond trade negotiations. People everywhere must urge their leaders to protect the internet from aggressive digital-sovereignty measures at the WTO's joint initiative on e-commerce negotiations, in other international engagements, and at home. For their part, policymakers taking decisions or designing legislation must be diligent to assess potential impacts to online data flows and prevent harm to internet openness.

In some ways, the internet is a victim of its own success: it has become so integral to our lives that we take it for granted. But the survival of the internet as we know it today is far from guaranteed. Only with a concerted global effort can we ensure that it does not become increasingly fragmented, insecure, and under the control of governments and corporations.

Experts' take on China's fiscal and tax reform

Jia Kang

The Central Economic Work Conference of 2023 emphasized the need for a new round of reform measures, including new fiscal and tax reforms.

Since the launch of reform and opening-up in the late 1970s, several significant reform measures have been initiated at the macro level, with fiscal policy being chosen as the "foundation and important pillar of national governance", and its institutional reform serving as the vanguard. The imminent implementation of the reform measures has once again placed the deepening of fiscal and tax system reform on the agenda.

A brief review of China's more than four decades of reform and opening-up shows a shift in the fiscal system toward serving the overall situation, starting from the early 1980s with the "division of revenue and expenditure, and graded contracting" ("separate kitchen for each family") system.

The most significant milestone in this transition from "administrative sharing" to "economic division" was the establishment of the "tax-sharing system" in 1994. This breakthrough reform, which essentially involved economic division, addressed not only the relationship between the central and local governments, but also that between the government and enterprises, the central and local governments, and various levels of government and taxpayers, thereby ensuring that these three major relationships were properly handled.

Following the establishment of the tax-sharing system framework, all enterprises, regardless of size, administrative level and economic nature, were treated equally when it came to tax laws. This key institutional reform established a "level playing field for fair competition" for all enterprises.

Subsequently, the administrative levels of State-owned enterprises became less important, allowing for mergers and

reorganizations across different administrative levels and economic structures. This reform made possible the previously inconceivable mixed-ownership reform of SOEs and non-SOEs, as well as cross-administrative-level mergers and reorganizations.

To move toward a modern tax system, the 1994 reform provided a relatively standardized framework, consolidating the previously fragmented individual income taxes (for foreign experts), personal income taxes for affluent Chinese nationals, and income taxes for individual industrial and commercial households into a relatively standardized personal income tax system. This could be further deepened through subsequent reforms.

In summary, the proper handling of the three relationships — between the government and enterprises, between the central and local governments, and between various levels of governments and tax payers —

has been institutionalized since the 1994 reform which in turn has facilitated modernization.

However, due to various constraints, the 1994 reform had to compromise on several issues. The government has taken a series of measures to deepen fiscal and tax system reform since 1994, which have improved China's economic and fiscal conditions, and to this day, the tax-sharing system framework between the central and provincial governments remains intact.

However, the tax-sharing system below the provincial level is yet to be fully implemented. It is still complex and variable, and is subject to negotiation and bargaining, including dividing revenues.

To build a high-level socialist market economic system, as required by the central government, it is imperative to explore and timely introduce a new round of comprehensive fiscal and tax system reforms.

Therefore, there is a need to fully adhere to the basic institutional achievements of the 1994 tax-sharing system reform, recognize the root causes of the financial difficulties at the grassroots level, local hidden debts, and "short-term behavior of land finance", which are not due to the tax-sharing system per se but because of the inadequate deepening of the tax-sharing system reform both horizontally and vertically, especially below the provincial level.

The overall approach for this new round of fiscal and tax system reform should be to rationalize the functions of the governments at all levels, help their transformation and standardization, and align them with the "flattening" of government levels by streamlining

institutions. The higher authorities should rationally allocate the powers and expenditure responsibilities of the central, provincial, municipal and county governments, and improve the transfer payment system.

The higher authorities should also deepen the reform of the budget management system, build a reasonable local tax system, promote tax reform for "structural adjustment and mode transformation", and strengthen and optimize comprehensive budget management.

This approach will enable the fiscal and tax system, and fiscal allocation to play their rightful roles in helping realize the strategic goal of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through modernization.

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Will Red Sea trigger a new supply chain crisis?

Jean-François Arvis

In the near term, the global container shipping industry will likely absorb the shock to capacity caused by attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, because demand is generally soft in January and February. However, should the attacks persist into March and April, when global trade experiences a seasonal rebound, capacity constraints could trigger a supply-chain crisis like the one that occurred in 2021-22.

That crisis happened when container shipping proved unable to support the rebound of international trade starting in late 2020. COVID-19-related closures and staff shortages at ports kept ships waiting for days or weeks to unload their cargo, with the result that fewer vessels were available to ship goods. Competition for slots on ships sent on-the-spot shipping rates soaring; the increase was eightfold on routes between Asia and Europe or

North America compared with 2019.

The source of supply-chain stress is different today, but the outcome could be similar. Major freight carriers, including Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd, have suspended operations through the Suez Canal to avoid the Red Sea and are rerouting vessels around the Cape of Good Hope, adding 3,000 to 3,500 nautical miles (5,500 to 6,500 kilometers) and seven to 10 days to a typical trip between Europe and Asia. The extra distance could absorb from 700,000 to 1.9 million standard containers (twenty-foot equivalent units, or TEUs) of shipping capacity, depending on the estimate.

The higher figure is comparable to the stalled capacity of 2021 at the peak of the COVID-19-related crisis, as measured by the World Bank's Global Supply Chain Stress Index. The index is

an estimate of capacity tied up when excessive delays are observed over historical port-to-port lead times. The index is highly correlated with freight rates, which are sensitive to short-term changes in supply and demand. The Global Supply Chain Pressure Index jumped at the height of the COVID-19 supply-chain crisis, and it is forecast to rise again should the attacks on vessels in the Red Sea continue.

The additional costs of the trip around the Cape of Good Hope — which include up to \$1 million in fuel for every round trip — are being reflected in higher shipping rates. Maersk is adding a "transit disruption surcharge" of \$200 per TEU to books (both contractual and spot) for trips between East Asia, Northern Europe, the Mediterranean Sea, and the United States' East Coast. That's

on top of a "peak season surcharge" of \$300 and \$1,000 per TEU. MSC, another global container shipping company, said it will impose a "contingency adjustment charge" of \$500 per TEU on shipments from Europe to Asia and the Middle East.

Spot rates have risen even higher. The rate for a journey from Asia to Europe has jumped to more than \$3,000 per 40-foot container, a threefold increase over the lowest rate in 2023 (about \$1,000). This could mean that exporters in Asia are again competing for shipping slots in anticipation of major supply-chain disruptions. Fortunately, January and February are seasonally quiet months for shipping, so existing capacity probably suffices to handle the longer route in the weeks to come. But the attacks on ships lasting into March could again have a significant impact on global trade and global value chains.

Biden, Trump, and Gaza dynamic

Osama Al-Sharif

It is less than nine months before the US presidential elections in November and, according to recent national polls, it is a dead heat between Joe Biden and Donald Trump.

Despite his age, memory lapses, and controversial position on the Gaza war, Biden may yet survive despite a dismal approval rate of less than 40 percent and a vicious attack by the Republicans led by none other than Trump himself.

Tuesday's Michigan primaries will be crucial in many ways. The state is home to the largest Arab-American community in the country. The majority voted for Biden in 2020, but now a grassroots movement is calling on Arab-American voters to vote "uncommitted" on their ballot papers to send a strong message to the White House that come November, he cannot count on their vote. Even if Trump wins the presidency, they say, it is not on them.

Biden's unequivocal support of Israel's war on Gaza will be a factor in deciding his chances of winning a second term. According to polls, around 60 percent of Americans want a ceasefire in Gaza. Biden risks losing the support of young Democrats; including Generation Z, millennial voters, and progressives. They helped him defeat Trump in 2020.

Barring an unexpected event, Biden will contest the November elections as the Democratic nominee. The Arab- and Muslim-American vote will be key in helping him close the gap that separates him from Trump in national polls. Democratic pundits hope that his economic record and Trump-phobia will come to his rescue.

But he needs to address his record on Israel and its gross violation of human rights, the laws of war, international humanitarian law, the Geneva Conventions, and others concerning its belligerent conduct in Gaza.

The American people have no stomach for another month of genocidal war in Gaza, especially if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu goes ahead with an all-out ground offensive on Rafah, home to more than 1 million people, against US and international warnings.

The Biden White House has been trying to adjust its policy on the war. It is now admitting that far too many Palestinians have been killed and that Israel's response so far has been, in Biden's own words, "over the top." Still, his administration continues to arm

Israel and fund the war, and Netanyahu has ignored Biden's advice and pleas to bring the military operation to a swift end.

It also revived talk about the need for a Palestinian state through the two-state solution without specifying what that solution would look like or how it would be implemented when Netanyahu and his far-right partners adamantly rejected it. Biden's hands are tied because it is an election year where he faces an uphill struggle to get re-elected. He is avoiding a public quarrel with Netanyahu for fear that the Republicans and Trump will accuse him of abandoning Israel to its radical Islamist enemies. But such a clash will come sooner rather than later: Over Netanyahu's declaration that Israel will never withdraw from Gaza, settler rampage in the West Bank, approving building permits for new Jewish settlements, and even waging total war on Lebanon.

On the other hand, Trump appears to be close to clinching his party's nomination as soon as early next month. Israel's war on Gaza has not been a centerpiece of the former American president's attacks on Biden. He has focused on issues that matter most to his constituency — borders and illegal immigration, abortion, gender issues, and drugs, among others.

Republican pundits and conservative media have also focused on this while siding blindly with Israel and its decimation of the people of Gaza. When Trump was asked where he stood and what he would do if he were in charge, he offered incoherent and vague answers. Yes, he was behind Israel and would not have let Hamas launch the Oct. 7 attack. He suggested that the Israel-Hamas war would have to take its course. "So, you have a war that's going on, and you're probably going to have to let this play out," Trump recently told Univision.

Trump would go after Iran and its proxies and would argue that he would have secured the release of American hostages held by Hamas. He said he would reject refugees from Gaza from entering the US, and he has called for ideological screenings for those entering the country. And once again, he vowed to bar immigrants who supported Hamas from entering the US, and would send officers to pro-Hamas protests to arrest and deport immi-

grants who publicly supported it.

He avoided any reference to a Palestinian state or to his 2018 peace plan, which the Palestinians rejected and got tepid attention from Netanyahu back then. The fact of the matter is that while Trump cannot but declare his support for Israel, he has yet to deal with a divided America on the issue of Palestinian self-determination and Israeli atrocities. Will a second term for Biden change his approach to the conflict as he pushes to make the two-state solution happen?

One argument is that Biden would be free of pressure from Congress and lobbies and may want to repair his policy following the devastation incurred on the Palestinians, especially in Gaza. That depends on several factors, including how soon the war will end, what happens on the day after, the pressure from the international community and Arab allies to deliver a balanced approach to bring some justice to the Palestinians, and what happens in Israel itself after the war and whether Netanyahu and his extremist partners will prevail.

On the other hand, if Trump wins in November, he is unlikely to do anything quickly unless a regional war has erupted in the Middle East.

One should expect the unexpected from Trump. He may learn from Biden's foreign policy faults or opt to be the maverick that he is and decide that America has had enough of the Middle East and should focus on its real rival, China, instead.

Despite what "Genocide Joe," as Arab-Americans and young Democratic voters are now calling him, does from now until November, his chances of winning will not be easy.

The courts may decide Trump's fate, and if he is convicted, his fight to stay in will depend on his ability to finance his campaigns, and legal precedents.

The lesser of two evils will be Biden and a Democratic administration. Still, in all cases, the political chaos ripping America apart should come as a wake-up call to the leaders of the Middle East to chart their own course. No one in the region, apart from a handful of zealots and bigots in Israel, wants to see a regional war flare up. And no matter how the war on Gaza ends, the world is coming to realize that a just and lasting solution to the Palestine issue must be reached to avoid another Gaza-like catastrophe.

Arab News

The beginning of the end of the most dangerous agreement Lebanon has ever seen

Eyad Abu Shakra

May God be kind to Abu Nuwas, who wrote the following verse in one of his most renowned poems: "You are astonished by my illness? ... It is my health that should astonish you!"

It came to my mind as it became clear to me that the Mar Mikhael Agreement, which was signed in Mar Mikhael Church in the southern suburbs of Beirut, was coming to an end.

On that day, the Free Patriotic Movement (the Aounists), the most fanatical of the Maronite Christian forces, and Hezbollah, Khomeinist Iran's political and strategic proxy in Lebanon, announced that they had signed what was, by any logical standard, a perplexing memorandum of understanding.

This understanding was reached by the FPM — whose leader Gen. Michel Aoun had gone further in his refusal to compromise Christian political representation than even the Maronite patriarch and the Christian fighters during the Lebanese war and rejected the Taif Agreement — and a Shiite armed group that prides itself on its allegiance to Velayat-e-Faqih and striving to incorporate Lebanon into Iran's Islamic state.

Observers of Lebanese politics understood that the moment this understanding or "alliance of opposites" emerged, it could never amount to anything more than a fleeting pact of convenience. They knew that it would become redundant as soon as both parties had achieved enough of what they had hoped to get out of it.

Indeed, it was no secret, neither to them nor to keen foreign observers, that the understanding these polar opposite forces had

come to was grounded in particular circumstances.

Firstly, Aoun and Hezbollah were both grappling with what they considered a "Sunni moment," after the Sunni Muslims had achieved a decent degree of political influence domestically and in the Arab world thanks to the prominent political and economic role played by the country's late former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Secondly, Aoun, who had always aspired to monopolize Christian representation, was keen on breaking the Taif Agreement. It had dwarfed the Maronite Christians' share of political power, he argued, by stripping the presidency of its near-absolute powers, including its control of the executive authority, which the Taif Agreement had transferred to the Council of Ministers, in which Christians and Muslims were to be equally represented.

Thirdly, Aoun, who had once been the commander of Lebanon's army, was aware that for demographic, political, military, and economic reasons, Christians could no longer reverse the realities created by the Taif Agreement on their own. Thus, they needed to align with a significant domestic force that also had an interest in ending the "Sunni moment." Naturally, given the demographic realities of Lebanon, drawing on the strength of the Shiite bloc and leveraging its strength was inevitable.

Fourthly, if Aoun and his FPM were obsessed with reclaiming past privileges, Hezbollah was beginning to pursue its plan for future domestic hegemony, which paralleled Iran's pursuit of regional hegemony, a key milestone of

which was seizing control of Iraq in 2003. Indeed, in the spring of 2006, the party made its move, provoking a war with Israel that destroyed much of Lebanon's infrastructure and ended with a ceasefire that left Hezbollah's arsenal pointing north, at the Lebanese interior. That is precisely what we saw affirmed two years later with the domestic conflict of 2008.

The 2008 war (locally referred to as the "events of May 7") saw the invasion of the capital Beirut by the Hezbollah militia, which also tried to occupy the southern segment of Mount Lebanon. The party's dominance over the country began with this war, which allowed it to shape Lebanon's politics, security, and economic fortunes, especially through its "parallel army" and "parallel economy."

Later, in 2008, Gen. Michel Suleiman was consensually elected as president in the Qatari capital, Doha, in order to end the occupation of Beirut. But after his term ended in 2014, Hezbollah made sure to paralyze Lebanon for a whole two and a half years in a bid to impose its own ally Aoun as president — which is exactly what happened. The two parties to the Mar Mikhael Agreement continued to serve one another's interests.

Hezbollah granted Aoun enough electoral support to allow him to form the largest Christian bloc in parliament and make the lion's share of Christian appointments in the government and the public sector, while Aoun has unequivocally backed Hezbollah's military intervention in Syria since 2011, reinforcing the so-called "alliance of minorities." However, recent changes in

local and regional circumstances have shifted both parties' priorities. The Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon, which was exacerbated by Hezbollah's role in Syria, gave rise to resentment, particularly among Lebanese Christians. Moreover, the tacit approval that the US and Israel have granted to the Damascus regime to remain in power has revitalized the regime's hopes of reviving its influence and reinstating its cronies in Lebanon. Given that the Damascus regime has a reliable Lebanese ally in former minister Suleiman Frangieh, who is also closely allied to Hezbollah, Gebran Bassil, the head of the FPM and Aoun's son-in-law, who seeks to succeed him as president, became aware that his odds of becoming president were seriously waning.

Then came the Christians' apprehensions regarding Hezbollah's entanglement in Iran's "united battlefield," following the war in Gaza, which could have grave repercussions on Lebanon — including its Christian regions. In addition to all of this, there is a growing impression that leading Western powers are amenable to a deal with Tehran. Faced with all of these changes, both parties to the agreement no longer feel the need to appease a tactical ally with whom they share neither trust nor strategic interests. The Aounists have become convinced that the disadvantages of their agreement now outweigh the benefits, while the party, in my opinion, always knew that each side would eventually go its own way.

Thus came the psychological split, then the interest-based separation, ending one of the most dangerous and malicious deals in Lebanese political history.

Commons chaos aggravates tensions in British society

Chris Doyle

Winston Churchill once proclaimed that "MP" — as in, Member of Parliament — were the proudest two letters anyone could carry after their name. One has to wonder, after another shambolic week in British politics, how many of the 650 current MPs share that sentiment, let alone what the public think. Palestinians, meanwhile, have become all too familiar with British political failure to have any expectation at all.

What could be worse than politicians squabbling and shouting over procedural wrangles when debating a motion calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, in a situation where a possible genocide of the Palestinian people is occurring. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are being starved to death, ferreting around for grass, weeds and animal feed to survive, while facing the ravages of disease and a huge Israeli bombardment. Meanwhile, elected British politicians cannot muster the barest slither of decency required to put petty party squabbles aside so that the House of Commons can speak with one voice and call for a ceasefire.

As the UK's only ever British-Palestinian MP Layla Moran observed: "There I am, with my family trapped in that church in Gaza, desperately seeking some sort of resolution — and all I wanted to say to them was Parliament did you proud. But we just didn't. It was a complete failure of a day."

Last week's vote was triggered by the Scottish National Party, the third party in Westminster.

It had an opportunity to put down a motion to be voted upon, even though the outcome would not be binding. It did something similar in November, when it forced a vote on an amendment to the King's speech, which led to 10 Labour Party frontbenchers resigning.

Both the government and

Labour's positions had shifted before the vote from opposing any ceasefire to supporting humanitarian pauses. In Labour's case, Keir Starmer, the party leader and probable next prime minister, even talked of a cessation of hostilities, but could not bring himself to call for an immediate ceasefire.

So, as Palestinians were being slaughtered, British political parties engaged in a toe-curling battle of semantics. Should they be pushing for a ceasefire, a truce or a pause? Should these be bilateral, immediate, credible or sustainable? Last week's SNP motion wanted an "immediate ceasefire." The Labour amendment wanted an "immediate humanitarian ceasefire" and the government wanted an "immediate humanitarian pause."

The SNP motion reflected the party's long-term position. However, the Labour Party, the lead opposition, could not agree to it. Why? Because it accused Israel of collective punishment. However, anyone with even the barest scintilla of an understanding of the situation on the ground in the Occupied Territories knows that Israel has been using collective punishment not just over the last 141 days, but for years, notably with the 17-year blockade of the Gaza Strip. It is a clear breach of international law.

Just in case the formulation of the motion was not enough to fight over, the speaker also caused controversy by breaking with convention by allowing a vote on amendments to the SNP motion. In the end, due to arcane parliamentary conventions and the Conservatives and SNP walking out, only the Labour amendment was voted upon. The speaker, who later apologized to the Commons, has survived in his post for now but is massively weakened.

The SNP hopes to procure a debate this week. However, there is unlikely to be a vote on the motion, denying it the opportuni-

ty to embarrass Labour. Starmer had feared that he would face a huge rebellion in his Labour ranks. The Tories also worried that they too might have MPs voting with the SNP.

All of which leaves those who care about the carnage in Gaza holding their head in their hands. If you examine the various party positions, there is very little difference in terms of substance. Each leader has said that they want to see an immediate end to the fighting, the release of hostages held in Gaza and a political process leading to a two-state solution. They have all demanded that more humanitarian aid be allowed into Gaza.

It highlights the confrontational mode of British parliamentary politics. The two main parties face off against each other. The Commons does not do compromise. In most European political systems, due to their electoral voting systems, coalition governments mean that compromise is a daily feature of political life. Not so in Britain or indeed the US. In a grown-up, mature political system, a single motion that all the parties agreed to should have been drafted in advance. Where does this leave British politics related to the Middle East? From the outset, party leaders have all too often put domestic politics above statesmanship and responsible decision-making in the face of a serious international crisis.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak gave Israel his "unequivocal support" — something no leader should ever give to one party to a conflict.

As the Conservatives have done before, much of this was designed to create a problem for Labour, to exacerbate divisions within the leading opposition party.

These duly opened up as Starmer refused to call for a ceasefire and did not condemn Israel's use of a total siege on Gaza, denying civilians water,

food, power and medicines. No doubt Starmer was fearful over accusations that the Labour Party would get caught up in a new antisemitism crisis, following the one that bedeviled his predecessor. But the common feature was that neither of the two leaders took their position based on the situation on the ground. It is an election year and it seems like elections trump possible genocide.

All of this aggravates tensions in British society.

Anger is high and respect for politicians is low. One of the reasons the speaker gave when explaining his position was that he believed the Labour amendment had to be voted upon because the lives of MPs were under threat.

Was this the case? As yet, no evidence has been presented or any detail given, nor has anyone been reported as arrested for intimidating a politician. But it is true, many MPs are fearful. Some media reports claim Starmer told the speaker that, unless he called their amendment, Labour would not back him to continue after the next election.

The fear of attacks on MPs was the cue for yet another huge distraction. Tory politicians, in particular, started claiming that hard-line Islamists were threatening the British political system.

It triggered a further wave of appalling anti-Muslim comments from British politicians, with former Home Secretary Suella Braverman even claiming that "the Islamists, the extremists and the antisemites are in charge now." This rampant Islamophobia explains as much as anything why Britain has taken such an immoral and irresponsible stance on Palestine since Oct. 7. Too many politicians still do not see Palestinians as like them, as real humans who deserve the rights and respect accorded to others. Many of them do not deserve to have the letters MP after their name.

Preventing a war on Lebanon

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

Israel will intensify its attacks on Lebanon even if a ceasefire is reached in Gaza. This is the message that Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant delivered while visiting the northern command center. He added that Hezbollah will have to retreat to where it should be (beyond the Litani river) whether by force or through an agreement. Escalation reached a new level on Monday. Hezbollah shot down a Hermes 450 drone and in retaliation Israel bombed Baalbek. As usual, Israel is bullying its way through. However, the path Israel is taking is not really smart. Diplomacy is better for everyone. War is a risky business; there are a lot of unknown unknowns. Does Israel know for sure that it can achieve its goal of weakening Hezbollah? And what does it mean to weaken Hezbollah?

Pushing Hezbollah will not be easy. Hezbollah supporters live in the south. Pushing the militant group is not very realistic. Hezbollah does not have formal facilities where weaponry is manufactured and stored. It is impossible to check every home and every building. The more realistic option would be to keep Hezbollah under control and prevent the south from being used as a launch pad for missiles toward Israel. Basically, the best realistic option is to make sure Hezbollah keeps its missiles in the basement. A war will not make Israel safer; it will only prolong the survival of Netanyahu.

Here diplomacy needs to be activated. US special envoy Amos Hockstein is shuttling between Beirut and Washington. The US has one major drawback: It does not talk to Hezbollah. It is talking

to Abbas Ibrahim, the former head of the General Directorate of General Security in Lebanon, who is the link between the Americans and the militant group. However, this is not enough. Washington needs to delegate the task to a mediator. It needs to involve Qatar.

Qatar has established relations with some unsavory actors: Hamas, the Taliban and Hezbollah. However, those unsavory relations are very useful, even necessary, and valuable in times like these for everyone. The important question is what can be done to prevent a war?

The obvious answer is enforcing UN Resolution 1701, which calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon and the cessation of ground, maritime, and aerial violations. Unfortunately, there is no one to take decisions in Lebanon.

The country has no president, no prime minister and no government. No one has the authority to take any relevant actions and no one wants to take responsibility without having the adequate authority. Who will enforce 1701? The caretaker prime minister? The commander of the army?

The first step would be to elect a president and a credible government. Qatar had already started the mediation for presidential elections.

They were faced with the greed of Lebanese politicians. Everyone started asking them for money. This was a major turn-off for Doha. Perhaps today, as they are facing an imminent attack, those corrupt politicians might accept to cast their vote for free.

In this critical moment, Qatar can play a role in

Lebanon by resuming the mediation for presidential elections and extending their assistance to the enforcement of UN Resolution 1701. Qatar would be accepted as an impartial mediator in Lebanon. At the same time, it has the financial muscle to incur any payments that are required by any arrangement. Hence, it is well placed to conduct the mediation. Once a credible government is elected, the following step would be to come up with an agreement that would provide security guarantees for both Lebanon and Israel.

This will require commitments from both parties to avoid breaching any agreement. It is true that Hezbollah has been in breach of UN Resolution 1701 but so has Israel. Israeli planes have cruised into Lebanese airspace with impunity.

There should be a firm commitment from Israel that if an agreement is reached, it will stop these wild excursions.

More Lebanese forces should be deployed in the south to make sure Hezbollah keeps its weapons in the basement. The army is overstretched. It has no capacity to increase its presence in the south. This is why the military should recruit or deploy its reserve forces. However, someone needs to foot the bill as the state is bankrupt. In addition to increasing the number of Lebanese troops, UNIFIL forces should be increased and their mandate widened.

This should be an urgent matter for both Israel and the US as much as it is for Lebanon. A war on Lebanon will totally change the equation. Hezbollah is far more valuable to Iran than Hamas. The Iranians will not let the group go down.



PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 86 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Tuesday, losing 86.83 points, a negative change of 0.14 percent, closing at 63,219.10 points against 63,305.93 points the previous trading day.

A total of 409,962,895 shares valuing Rs 14.675 billion were traded during

the day as compared to 452,868,834 shares valuing Rs16.491 billion the last day. Some 355 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 111 of them recorded gains and 223 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 21 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were B.O.Punjab with

47,571,335 shares at Rs 6.27 per share, K-Electric Limited with 40,638,135 shares at Rs 4.52 per share, and WorldCall Telecom with 25,795,159 shares at Rs 1.27 per share.

Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 200.00 per share price, closing at Rs 7,780.00, whereas the runner-up was Mari

Petroleum Company Limited with a Rs 45.21 rise in its per share price to Rs 2,316.87.

Rafhan Maize Production Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 339.00 per share closing at Rs 8,400.00, followed by Hoechst Pakistan Limited with Rs 61.40 decline to close at Rs 1,301.00.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia agree for increased investment in key sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have agreed to work towards increasing investment in key sectors, paving the way for sustainable economic growth and prosperity.

The agreement reached between the two countries during a recently concluded visit of Federal Minister for Commerce, Industries and Production, Investment, Interior and Overseas Pakistanis, Dr. Gohar Ejaz to Saudi

Arabia, where he held high-level discussions with Saudi authorities.

"The discussions were aimed at strengthening bilateral economic ties between the two nations," said a news release here on Tuesday.

During his visit, Gohar Ejaz met with key Saudi officials including Minister of Investment Khaled Al-Falih and Commerce Minister Majid Bin Abdullah Al-Qasabi in Riyadh.

These meetings were aimed at exploring opportunities for collaboration and investment between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Accompanied by a delegation of 20 Pakistani industrialists, Gohar Ejaz held productive discussions with Saudi ministers on various avenues for enhancing bilateral trade and investment.

The discussions emphasized the importance of increasing cooperation in sectors such as oil and

gas, construction, food, and agriculture.

Minister Gohar Ejaz highlighted the need to elevate trade and investment relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, underscoring the mutual benefits of closer economic cooperation. Saudi ministers expressed their commitment to strengthening trade relations with Pakistan, affirming their willingness to explore new avenues for collaboration.



FAISALABAD: Acting President FCCI Dr Sajjad Arshad is presenting FCCI shield to Federal Ombudsman Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi during his visit to Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI).

Jordan keens to expand trade relations with Pakistan: Envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP):

Jordanian Ambassador Dr Maen Khreasat on Tuesday said that his country was keen to expand its trade ties with Pakistan through enhanced bilateral cooperation across various economic sectors, which would be mutually beneficial for both countries.

Talking to the business community at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, he said that Jordan and Pakistan could cooperate in many areas, including tourism, information technology (IT), sports, vocational training for youth,

agriculture and others.

There was a good potential for cooperation between the women entrepreneurs of both countries to achieve mutual profits, he added.

Dr Maen Khreasat said that the bilateral trade volume of around \$50 million between Jordan and Pakistan was much less than the actual potential.

The two countries, he stressed, should establish direct air links to promote strong connectivity between their private sectors to explore all untapped areas of bilateral business and investment coopera-

tion. The envoy said that Pakistani investors could invest in the real estate sector of Jordan and assured that he would cooperate in developing business linkages between the private sectors of both countries to increase bilateral trade and economic relations.

Speaking on the occasion, ICCI Vice President Engineer Azhar ul Islam Zafar said that Pakistan and Jordan enjoyed cordial relations that should be transformed into growing trade and economic relations to achieve mutual benefits for their economies.

He said that Pakistan

produced many quality products, including textiles, food products, pharmaceuticals, sports goods, surgical items and leather goods and Jordan should enhance its imports from Pakistan to meet the needs of its consumers. He urged both the countries to focus on the regular exchange of trade delegations and facilitate B2B meetings between their private sectors to strengthen bilateral business cooperation, besides sharing the list of major imports of Jordan with ICCI so that the business community could increase its exports to that country.

Public confidence increasing on Wafaqi Mohtasib: Ejaz Qureshi

FAISALABAD (APP): Number of complaints filed with the office of Federal Ombudsman has recorded a phenomenal increase due to the confidence of people enjoyed by this institution, said Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, Federal Ombudsman.

Addressing a meeting in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) here on Tuesday, he said that during last year the federal ombudsman office resolved 194,000 complaints in addition to submitting 27 recommendations to provide free justice at doorsteps of the masses. He said that earlier Wafaqi Mohtasib was receiving only 20,000 complaints while its number has now jumped to 194,000 and it is expected to cross the limit of 2 to 2.5 lacs within the next year. These complaints are positively resolved within 60 days while the percentage of resolved complaints is 99.9 %, he added.

He said that 9 million expatriates are sending precious foreign exchange of \$ 30 bn per annum and efforts have been made to solve their problems on top priority basis.

He said that 150,000

complaints are also included in the total complaints resolved by this office. Appeals against the decisions of the federal ombudsman could be lodged with the President of Pakistan but its percentage is hardly 0.4 %, he added. He said that article 34 is being exploited to resolve the complaints which could not fall within the purview of the federal ombudsman. "In this connection Alternate Dispute Resolution mechanism has been evolved", he said and added that the consent of both parties is imperative for this system.

He said that five sector specific ombudsmen are working in Pakistan but their total complaints are far less than those received by the Wafaqi Mohtasib and this office provided much needed relief regarding 180 federal departments and divisions of the country. He said that he has been elected as President of Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) because of the excellent performance of this office.

He expressed satisfaction that the federal ombudsman office is working without any political

interference and his election as President AOA is a privilege for Pakistan.

He appreciated the contribution of the business community and said that he wants to digitize this system to facilitate businessmen. Earlier, Dr Sajjad Arshad Acting President FCCI welcomed the guests and introduced Faisalabad and FCCI. He said that Faisalabad is the second largest industrial hub of Pakistan which is contributing 60 % toward textile exports of the country in addition to providing jobs to the 40% workforce.

About FCCI, he said that it has 9300 members who belong to 118 different sectors and sub-sectors of the economy. He said that the chamber tries to resolve the problems of the business community at district, provincial and federal level. He said that FCCI members are also contributing their role in social welfare and very recently they built the damaged houses of the flood affectees.

He said that Faisalabad has renowned research institutions including University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF), National Institute for

Biotechnology & Genetic Engineering (NIBGE), Nuclear Institute for Agriculture & Biology (NIAB) and Ayub Agricultural Research Institute (AARI) which are playing a key role in the uplift of the agriculture sector.

He also congratulated Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi on his election as President AOA. Former Presidents FCCI Sheikh Ashfaq Ahmad, Rana Sikandar Azam, former President Faisalabad Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FWCCI) Madam Nighat Shahid, Sanaullah Khan Niazi, Muhammad Azhar Chaudhry, Malik Amin, Farooq Dogar and Dr Jaffar Hasan Mubarak participated in the question-answer session. Later, Vice President FCCI Hajji Muhammad Aslam Bhalli offered vote of thanks while Dr Sajjad Arshad presented FCCI memento to Federal Ombudsman Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi.

Qureshi also presented an insignia of Federal Ombudsman to Dr Sajjad Arshad Acting President FCCI. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi also recorded his impression in the FCCI Visitor's Book.

OGDCL earns Rs123.296 bln profit in first half of FY 2023-24

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Board of Directors of Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) in its meeting held on February 27, 2024, at OGDCL Head Office, Islamabad announced the financial results for the half year ended on December 31, 2023, of the fiscal year 2023-24. Net sales revenue clocked at Rs.235.375 billion translating to Profit after tax of Rs. 123.296

billion and earnings per share of Rs. 28.67.

The Board of Directors announced an interim cash dividend for the quarter ended December 31, 2023, @ Rs. 2.50 per share i.e. 25 percent. This is in addition to the interim dividend already paid @ Rs.1.60 per share i.e. 16 percent to its shareholders. The dividend will be paid to the shareholders whose names will appear in the Register of Members on March 11,

2024. During the period under review, the Company paid Rs. 35.019 billion on account of Taxation. On the exploration and development side company recorded significant enhancement in seismic efforts and drilling activities.

The Share Transfer Books of the Company will be closed from March 12, 2024, to March 14, 2024 (both days inclusive). Transfers received at the CDC Share

Registrar Services Limited, CDC House, 99-B, Block "B", S.M.C.H.S., Main Shahrah-e-Faisal, Karachi 74400 at the close of business on March 11, 2024, will be treated in time for the purpose of above entitlement to the transferees.

The Board of Directors appreciated the efforts of the management for taking effective steps for the implementation of the company's aggressive exploration program.



LARKANA: A vendor displaying colourful bangles and jewelry and items to attract the customers at his roadside setup near Shahi Bazar.

Renewing a pilot's license continues

F.P Report

KARACHI: According to the regulations outlined in the CAA Act 2023, the procedure for obtaining or renewing a pilot's license continues. The current regulations are strictly adhered to during the license issuance or renewal process. It is an exaggeration to claim that pilots are unable to fly or that the license issuance/renewal process has stopped.

Local airlines have the authority to hire foreign pilots, as permitted by the CAA regulations. Once approved by the ministry, foreign pilots are granted a work visa and subsequently issued a validation certificate. The PCAA-ANO rules and regulations are diligently followed, ensuring that foreign pilots' licenses are validated and renewed upon the airline's application.

Gold rates up by Rs 100 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of per tola 24 karat gold increased by Rs100 and was sold at Rs 215,900 on Tuesday compared to its sale at Rs 215,800 on the last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs86 to Rs185,100 from Rs185,014, whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs169,674 from Rs169,596, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

Asian markets mostly lower as traders await fresh data

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets began Tuesday mostly lower after record-setting gains last week, with traders eyeing the release of fresh economic data this week that could offer a better sense of when central banks may cut rates.

Last week's rallies -- including an all-time record close for Tokyo's benchmark index -- were fuelled by solid earnings from US chip titan Nvidia, a bellwether for artificial intelligence. But US markets fell on Monday, and Asian equities started this week with a "more cautious demeanour", Stephen Innes, managing partner of SPI Asset Management, said in a note.

"This subdued tone suggests a moderation in investor sentiment following the recent tech-driven buying spree," he said. Investors were looking ahead to the Federal Reserve's preferred measure of inflation, the US Personal Consumption Expenditure (PCE) price index due Thursday, as well as comments from several Fed officials on Wednesday and Friday, which Innes said could supply insights into the central bank's rate cut outlook. Expectations for when the Fed may start

lowering rates have gradually shifted to the second half of the year, as inflation data has come in hot and policymakers indicate they need to see more signs that it is moving towards their 2.0 percent target. "Economic data will return to center stage," Chris Larkin at E*Trade from Morgan Stanley told Bloomberg. "After hotter-than-expected (consumer price index) and (producer price index) readings earlier this month, more people may be looking to the PCE for insight into the reflation threat -- and how it may influence the Fed's timing of rate cuts." In Asia, Tokyo stocks advanced at the open on Tuesday, helped by a slightly cheaper yen and rises in US chip-linked shares, according to senior market analyst Toshiyuki Kanayama of Monex. Analyst Takuma Ikemoto of the Tokai Tokyo Research Institute said this month, bargain-hunting was moving from chip-linked stocks to other major shares. New government data showed Tuesday that Japanese consumer inflation slowed for the third straight month to 2.0 percent in January.

The better-than-expected reading has stoked speculation that the Bank

of Japan might raise interest rates "as early as next month, although April remains the favoured timeline", Innes said. "The prevailing theory suggests that the BOJ might find it easier to proceed with policy normalization, with inflation surpassing the target."

COURT NOTICE

In the court of sidra jalal civil judge-III. Matta Swat/Judicial Magistrate II. matta swat. Case # 150/1 institution Year 05/09/023. Next Hearing date 16/03/2024. Barkat Ali khan VS Mst. Jamala etc. Notice to:- 3) Fazal Qudus.4) Mahboob ali.5) Muhammad Saeed 6) Salah uddin sons sakhi jan.7) Mst. Rahmat Sultana 8/1) Abdur Rehman 8/2) Fazal Rehman 8/3) Gul Mehmood 8/4) Haider ali r/o koz sherpalam Tehsil Matta swat. In above mentioned case the respondent can't be served in the ordinary way, it is therefore proclaimed that if said respondents will not appear personally or through duly authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8:30 am dated 16/03/2024. ex-parte proceeding will be held against the mentioned respondents under my hand and seal of this court.



In brief

PCB board of governors

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar Ul Haq Kakar has appointed Punjab Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman to the Board of Governors of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). Mr. Zaman, a BPS-21 officer of the Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS), has been chosen for this prestigious position. The PCB, previously under the Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination, has now been placed under the cabinet division following cabinet approval. Amendments to the PCB Constitution allow the prime minister to appoint three members instead of two to the PCB Board of Governors. Mr. Zaman's appointment is a significant development for cricket governance in Pakistan. His extensive experience in administration and public service positions him well for this role.

Commissioner visit stadium

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engr. Aamir Khattak here on Tuesday visited Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium and inspected arrangements finalized for Pakistan Super League 9 (PSL) matches. On this occasion, Deputy Commissioner, Rawalpindi, Hassan Waqar Cheema, DG, PHA, Ahmed Hassan Ranjha and other officers concerned were present. The Commissioner during the visit reviewed all the arrangements in detail and said holding PSL matches in Rawalpindi would provide positive entertainment to the citizens. PSL matches would be held in Rawalpindi from March 2 to March 10, he informed. Engr. Amir Khattak said nine PSL matches would be played in Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium adding that foolproof security arrangements had been made for the PSL matches. The Commissioner said a special shuttle service for the stadium would be provided to the spectators from the parking areas and Food Street would remain closed during PSL matches. A control room had also been set up at Shehbaz Sharif Sports Gymnasium to monitor security and other arrangements, he said.

Inaugural edition of Lanka T10

COLOMBO (INP): The inaugural edition of the Lanka T10 League will be held from December 12 to December 22, 2024. The tournament, which was initially planned to be held in 2023, will now be held in December this year, which provides us with an ideal window to conduct a successful competition. Lanka T10 League, Sri Lanka's newest addition to its annual cricket calendar will feature some of the finest international stars. The action-packed competition will also provide opportunities for the brightest young talents in the country to mix, mingle, and play along with international stars. The tournament will feature six men's teams covering regional cricket epicenters, with each team consisting of a squad of 16 players, along with six foreign players. The matches will be played in some of Sri Lanka's top international cricket venues and under lights.

Usman Khan, Usama Mir power Multan Sultans to thump Lahore Qalandars

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Usman Khan played a commanding 96-run knock, followed by Usama Mir's six-fer to help Multan Sultans register a thumping 60-run victory over Lahore Qalandars during the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 here at Gaddafi Stadium on Tuesday.

Multan Sultans solidified their position at the top of the PSL 9 points table, while Lahore Qalandars are lying at the bottom after losing six consecutive matches this season.

While chasing a mammoth 215, Lahore Qalandars bundled out at a meagre 154 with three overs to spare. Lahore Qalandars got a flying start to the pursuit as they raised a 54-run opening pair between Sahibzada Farhan (31) and Fakhar Zaman (23) inside the power play.

However, Multan Sultans' bowlers removed both batters in six deliveries spanning over two overs to reduce the home side to

56-2 in 6.3 overs.

Rassie van der Dussen and Kamran Ghulam attempted to help Lahore Qalandars recover with a 33-run partnership.

However, Faisal Akram spoiled the party as he dismissed Ghulam (12) in the 10th over with 89 runs on the board. Sikandar Raza then came out to bat and smashed two sixes to score 17 off seven before he also fell prey to Akram.

Lahore Qalandars' captain Shaheen Afridi promoted himself up in the order but could not help his side get out of the trouble and became the first victim of Mir. Van der Dussen top-scored for Lahore Qalandars with a cautious 30 off 22, which featured one boundary and one six before he also fell to Mir courtesy of a brilliant catch by Mohammad Rizwan in the outfield.

Van der Dussen's wicket was followed by the dismissals of George Linde and Jahandad Khan in the

same over of Mir, reducing the home team to 132-8.

Mir struck twice in his next over to complete his six-wicket haul and bundle Lahore Qalandars in 17 overs. Carlos Brathwaite remained unbeaten at 14 off seven. Mir's bowling figures read 6-40 in four overs, while Akram claimed 2-25.

Earlier, Multan Sultans opted to bat first but Lahore Qalandars drew first blood with captain Shaheen Afridi casting opposing captain Mohammad Rizwan in the first over. But the Sultans made a comeback quickly with a brilliant 70-run partnership between Reeza Hendricks and Usman Khan before Sikandar Raza struck to dismiss the former.

Hendricks scored a 27-ball 40 with the help of seven boundaries including one six. Khan continued his onslaught and was involved in a one-sided partnership with Tayyab Tahir, raising 77 runs in only 40 balls for the third wicket.

Sweden midfielder on ventilator in hospital

STOCKHOLM (Agencies): Sweden midfielder Kristoffer Olsson has been placed on a ventilator in hospital after losing consciousness at home.

Midtjylland said the ex-Arsenal player, 28, is "suffering from what appears to be an acute brain-related illness". The Danish club announced he was taken to Aarhus University Hospital on 20 February.

Midtjylland said they felt "compelled" to release an update due to "increasing rumours and speculation about Kristoffer Olsson's recent absence".

"Everyone in FC Midtjylland is of course deeply affected by Kristoffer's sudden illness," the club said in a statement on Tuesday. "Kristoffer Olsson is suffering from what appears to be an acute brain-related illness, which is neither due to self-inflicted harm of any kind nor due to external factors."

"A team of leading



Midtjylland.

"Keep fighting Koffe!" the Swedish football association said on X, formerly known as Twitter. "The entire Swedish football family are thinking of you and hope you soon recover. Our thoughts also go to Kristoffer's loved ones at this difficult time."

Olsson has missed Midtjylland's two most recent Danish Superliga matches and last featured for the club against Fredrikstad in the Atlantic Cup on 9 February.

"Since being admitted, Kristoffer has been surrounded by his immediate family and FC Midtjylland staff members, as well as specialists in the field," the club added.

"FC Midtjylland urges the public to show respect and understanding so Kristoffer, his family and doctors are allowed the peace of mind to ensure Kristoffer gets better and recovers as successfully as possible."

Neil Wagner retires from international cricket

WELLINGTON (AFP): An emotional Neil Wagner announced his retirement from international cricket Tuesday, after the fast bowler was left out of New Zealand's team for the first Test against Australia this week.

Wagner fought back tears as he told reporters he had decided to call time on a 64-Test career after New Zealand Cricket said he would not be in the side for Thursday's match in Wellington.

"It's never an easy time to do something like this, but the time has obviously come," said the 37-year-old Wagner, who has taken 260 Test wickets. "It's been amazing to represent the Black Caps. It's been some of the proudest moments of my life."

Fiery short-ball specialist Wagner said he would leave the squad before the start of next week's second Test in Christchurch.

"I'm looking forward to one final week in camp and will be doing everything I can to help prepare and support the boys," he said.

Wagner cited last year's one-run victory over England in Wellington, where he took the last wicket to draw the series, as among his career highlights along with winning the inaugural World Test Championship in 2021.

"I've enjoyed every single moment of playing test cricket for the Black Caps and am proud of everything we've been able to achieve as a team," he said.

Wagner made his New Zealand debut in 2012

after arriving from his native South Africa four years earlier. "To the New Zealand public and the fans, I can't thank you enough, for your support, for making me feel welcome, for making me feel like a Kiwi," said Wagner.

Only Richard Hadlee, current captain Tim Southee, Daniel Vettori and Trent Boult have taken more Test wickets for New Zealand than Wagner.

New Zealand head coach Gary Stead said on Tuesday that Wagner was "one of the greats". "He has been through an incredible era and been a huge cog of the bowling attack over the years. "We'll remember his lionheartedness, the way he just kept finding a way to make something happen."

Three Test cricketers to take part in Level-1 coaching course

LAHORE (PPI): Three Test cricketers Aamer Malik (14 Tests, 24 ODIs), Naved Latif (1 Test, 11 ODIs) and Saleem Elahi (13 Tests, 48 ODIs), are among the 32 participants to take part in a four-day Level-1 coaching course in Multan from 27 February. The course will take place at the Inzamam-ul-Haq High-Performance Centre in Multan and will conclude on Friday, 1 March.

The course will be conducted by ICC approved tutors, Hafiz Sajjad Akbar, Imran Abbas, Kamran Hussain and Rahat Abbas. The participants will be taught the basics of coaching skills including, communication, coaching phi-

losophy, planning and preparation.

At the conclusion of the course, the participants will be given three months to complete their assignments. The successful participants will be awarded Level 1 coaching certificates.

The Level-1 course in Multan, will be fourth Level-1 course organised this year by the Coach Education Department of National Cricket Academy, headed by Shahid Mahmood, former Test cricketer. Last month, the department conducted level-1 courses in Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Karachi between 8 to 22 January.

Participants (in alphabetical order): Aamer Malik,

Abdul Wahab, Adeel Basit, Ali Mustafa, Ali Zohib, Arslan Ali, Asif Ali Khan, Asif Ghafoor, Asif Mahmood, Azeem Ahmad Akhter, Babar Ali, Inam Javed, Mohammad Arsalan Khan, Mohammad Hassan Jamil, Mohammad Shahid Iqbal, Muhammad Dilawar, Muhammad Imran, Muhammad Javed, Muhammad Shabeer, Muhammad Waris, Muhammad Riaz Amin, Naeem Uddin, Naved Latif, Naveed Khan, Saadat Ullah Khan, Saleem Elahi, Shahid Nawaz, Sohail Fazal, Syed Kumail Abbas Naqvi, Tanzeel Ismail, Zakir Ali and Zawwar Ahmad.



LAHORE: Fakhar Zaman was bowled by Aftab Ibrahim for 23.

Two state-of-the-art High-Performance Centres handed over to PCB

LAHORE (PPI): 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, Hanif 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."

National Kabaddi C'ship from Wednesday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Kabaddi Championship organized by Pakistan Kabaddi Federation would be held here at the Jinnah Stadium of Pakistan Sports Complex from Wednesday. "All preparations for the championship have been completed and teams from thirteen departments, provincial and regional associations affiliated with the federation from across the country will participate in the championship," Pakistan Kabaddi Federation (PKF) Secretary General Muhammad Sarwar Rana told APP.

He said teams including Pakistan Army, Pakistan Air Force, Wapda, Railways, Pakistan Police, Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) Wah, Higher Education Commission (HEC), Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan and Islamabad would feature in the championship.

"The championship will continue till March 3. Prizes will be distributed among the winning players at the end of the championship," he said.

Masood hopeful of giving best performance in PSL at home ground

KARACHI (APP): Karachi Kings Captain Shan Masood on Tuesday while expressing his hope of giving one more best performance in HBL PSL 9 said that his team was very much excited to play in Karachi.

He said, 'All players were desired to play before their home fans.'

While talking to media persons at National Bank Stadium here, he said that it was a special occasion for Karachi Kings and it had taken a good start in the

Pakistan Super League (PSL).

Masood said that a good team learnt from its mistakes and built with their positive actions.

Replying to a question, the Kings Captain said that when anyone performed well in a team that was called its speciality and small things matter in T20.

Replying to another question, he said that Tim Seifert had reached just now and they could merely play four foreigners.

He said that they would hold a meeting to analyze competing teams as they had not reviewed even the pitch so far.

Shan Masood, answering a question about his performance, said, 'I hope my performance will be witnessed when the team feels his need very much.'

He said that the team had given small performances at an individual level and no outstanding performance had been given so far, he added.

Misbehave with family, Mohammad Amir demand action against DC

LAHORE (INP): Left-arm pace bowler Mohammad Amir on Tuesday criticizing Punjab Police during a Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 match in Multan has demanded action against the deputy commissioner over misbehavior with family terming it "unacceptable".

Taking to social media platform X, the pace-bowler wrote, "I am astonished by the unacceptable behavior of Multan's Deputy Commissioner, who allegedly misbehaved with his family and unjustly claimed ownership of the

ground during a match."

Mohammad Amir addressing Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, demanded action against the police, saying, "This misuse of power is intolerable! I demand immediate action from the authorities."

Pakistan was currently hosting the 9th edition of the PSL. The opening matches of the current season were being held simultaneously in Lahore and Multan.

Amir was picked by Quetta Gladiators for PSL 9 after being released by

Karachi Kings. Amir retired from international cricket in December 2020.

He was actively playing leagues around the world and has no plans for international cricket comeback as revealed by former team director Mohammad Hafeez, who personally spoke to him and encouraged him to engage in domestic cricket if he wishes to represent Pakistan again. During media conversations last year, Amir reiterated his retirement, stating it's time for the younger generation to come forward.

Loftie-Eaton smashes fastest T20I hundred



KIRTIPUR (Agencies): Namibia's all-rounder Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton broke the record for the fastest T20I hundred by hammering a 33-ball ton against Nepal.

In the opening game of a tri-series also featuring the Netherlands, Loftie-Eaton came down to bat at 62-3 in the 11th over and smashed 19 boundaries, including eight sixes before being dismissed for 101 from 36 deliveries.

The previous record was held by Nepal's Kushal Malla, who reached a T20I hundred from 34 balls against Mongolia during last year's Asian Games.

For the unversed, Nepal broke a plethora of T20I records during that match against Mongolia, including the highest-ever total

in a men's T20I (314-3). Loftie-Eaton and Malla's fastest tons are followed by South Africa's David Miller and India's Rohit Sharma, who scored 35-ball centuries.

Meanwhile, Loftie-Eaton also made a new record for the most runs scored in boundaries in T20I cricket as he accumulated 92 runs in boundaries.

Courtesy of Loftie-Eaton's onslaught, Namibia posted 206-4 in their allocated 20 overs. Loftie-Eaton also took two wickets to help his side book Nepal for 186, winning the game by 20 runs.

The three teams competing in the tri-series have all qualified for the T20 World Cup to be held in June in the Caribbean and United States.

Tim Seifert arrives in Karachi

KARACHI (APP): The New Zealand Cricketer Tim Seifert has arrived in Karachi here on Tuesday.

He has reached to join the squad of Karachi Kings to play the Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches.

It is pertinent to mention here that Karachi Kings is scheduled to compete against Islamabad United at the National Bank Stadium on February 28.

Young Star Club qualifies for Football Tournaments

ISLAMABAD (APP): Young Star Club has qualified for the quarterfinals of the Muhammad Shah and Muhammad Aslam Memorial Football Tournament at the Municipal Stadium, Rawalpindi.

In the pre-quarterfinals Young Star Club defeated Zamindar Club by 3-0 and moved in the quarterfinals. Young Star Club had a 1-0 lead at the first half while they scored two more goals 3-0 break in the second half of the game.

A total of sixteen teams were participating in the tournament, which have been divided into four groups. One team from each group would qualify for the semifinals.

Team include Young Star Club, Wanderers Club, Zamindar Club, Muslim Club, Al Hamra Club, Nishtar Club, Young Man, USGC Club, Young Muslim, Dharmyal Club, Al Muslim Club, Al Falah Club, Galactxo Club, Chaklala Club, Pak Shaheen and Lalpal Club.



In brief

SP hold “Khuli Kutchery”

RAWALPINDI (APP): Superintendent of Police (SP) Saddar, Muhammad Nabeel Khokhar on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi held a 'Khuli Kutchery' on Tuesday in Police Lines Headquarters to address grievances of the people. According to a police spokesman, police officers under Punjab's open door policy were holding 'Khuli Kutcheries' to provide relief to the citizens. He informed that the SP issued directives to the officers concerned to take action and submit a report on the complaint submitted by the citizens in 'Khuli Kutchery'. The SP said the 'Khuli Kutcheries' were being held to provide the citizens immediate relief and address their complaints besides it also helped in improving standards of policing. The SP issued orders to the officers concerned to complete inquiries and send reports within the given time frame. He said all-out efforts were being made to ensure the dispensation of speedy justice purely on merit to the people and improve service delivery standards.

Leopard found dead in Kashmir

ISLAMABAD (APP): A leopard was reportedly found dead in Haryala area of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, said Wildlife Department on Tuesday. According to the postmortem report the leopard succumbed to hypovolemic shock. The distressed animal attempted to free itself but ended up caught in a tree's branch, suspending itself upside down throughout the night, a private news channel reported. The Wildlife Department received information from concerned villagers about the plight of the leopard.

Man gets 12 years' imprisonment

RAWALPINDI (APP): A District and Sessions Court on Tuesday awarded 12 years' imprisonment to an accused in a drug smuggling case. According to a Police spokesman, the accused Muhammad Ayub was found guilty of possessing 2,400 grams of opium and was arrested by Pirwadahi police in 2023. After recording evidence from the witnesses and final arguments by the defense and prosecution counsels, the judge also imposed a fine of Rs 300,000 on the convict.

AIOU Rawalpindi shifted to main campus

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Regional Director Rawalpindi, Nasreen Akhtar Mirza Tuesday announced that the regional campus has been shifted to the University's Main Campus, Sector H-8, Islamabad. She thanked AIOU Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Nasir Mehmood and Director General Regional Services Dr Malik Tauqeer Ahmed Khan for taking this initiative to lead in providing more facilities for students, teachers and regional staff, said a press release issued here. Nasreen Mirza said the problems of the students related to the regional office as well as the various departments in the main campus will be easily handled and resolved on a priority basis.

Driving License branch established

RAWALPINDI (APP): On the directives of I.G Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, the Punjab Highway Patrolling Police has achieved a significant milestone by establishing a Driving License Branch in Bahria Town Phase 8, Rawalpindi.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people submitting visa forms for Korea at Manpower office.

Mushaal urges world to take notice of rising incidents of custodial rape by Indian troops

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick has urged the world community and human rights organizations to take notice of the rising tendency of custodial rape and using rape as a weapon of war by Indian troops in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to Kashmir Media Service, Mushaal, who is also the wife of illegally detained Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik, in a statement said that the brutal Indian forces had been using sexual abuse of women in IIOJK as a weapon of war for over last seven decades but the international community and world powers observed criminal silence

in this regard.

She pointed out that the dirty and ugly face of India was exposed by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which revealed that India had recorded 275 cases of custodial rape between 2017 and 2022, adding that these incidents, documented across various states, involve perpetrators from law enforcement, armed forces and other custodial facilities, reflecting a misuse of power under the guise of state protection.

The SAPM recalled that incidents such as the gang rape in Kunan Poshpora in 1991, the double murder and rape in Shopian and the gang rape of young Asifa Bano are among the most harrowing examples of the nightmare faced by

women in Kashmir.

She stated the NCRB showed that even Indian women were not saved from these mentally sick Indian forces, which indicated that they were not human beings rather they were beasts, who did not even know anything about humanity and women's rights. Mushaal highlighted that the gravity of the situation could be judged from the fact that over 11,000 cases of sexual violence have been reported since 1989 in IIOJK, leaving nearly 23,000 women widowed and over 107,805 children orphaned.

She said Indian fascist forces could cross all limits of brutalities and inhuman acts but they could not dampen the courage of Kashmiri freedom fighters.

‘PPP not considering any names for governor’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Central Leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Palwasha Khan Tuesday said that her party was not considering any names for the slot of governorship in the provinces.

In a statement issued by the party secretariat, Palwasha Khan clarified that the news circulating in the media regarding the appointment and finalization of names for governors in the provinces was not true.

She further mentioned that President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), Asif Ali Zardari would shortlist names for the governors of the provinces after assuming the office of the President.

Punjab Ombudsman provides relief to 53 petitioners

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Punjab Ombudsman Major (R) Azam Suleman Khan had cleared the outstanding dues of the 53 petitioners to provide relief to the civil employees and citizens of the province.

According to the details, on the orders of the Ombudsman Punjab Major (R) Azam Sulaiman Khan, Punjab Government Servants had created the Valant Fund Board comprising the Secretary Punjab Workers Welfare Board, Secretary Labor and Human Resources Department Punjab, Welfare Fund Board, District Monitoring Officer Education and Punjab Social Protection Authority in various districts.

More than 758,000 rupees had been provided to 53 petitioners whose cases including educational scholarships, farewell grants, death grants, monthly grants and marriage grants were pending due to various reasons for long.

Educational grants worth Rs. 852,000 were also provided to the 22 citizens.

The civil employees of the Punjab government and citizens from different districts lauded the effort of the Ombudsman Punjab Major(R)Azam Suleman Khan for playing an effective role in resolving their grievances.

Pakistan wins war against terrorism with support of entire nation: Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday said that Pakistan has won a big war against terrorism with support of Pakistan armed forces, law enforcement agencies, security and other civil institutions.

Addressing at the International Peace Conference, the former minister said that eco-

nomic development could not be achieved without peace and stability in this region.

He added that lasting peace could only be established by promoting tolerance and harmony among each others.

He said, we will have to endorse partnership and mutual respect in politics to put the country on path of speedy progress and prosperity. Ahsan Iqbal said that

attitude of hatred lead to extremism, adding that ending backwardness, intolerance and lawlessness, was essential for peace in the country. Commenting on Pakistan's sacrifices in war against terrorism, he said, the Pakistan armed forces, security agencies, police and member of every society, had rendered matchless sacrifices to wipe out terrorism from this country.

DC directs ACs, magistrates for complete supervision of polio teams

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon on Tuesday directed the Assistant Commissioners (ACs) and magistrates to actively supervise the polio teams across various subdivisions of the federal capital.

Talking to APP, the spokesman of ICT, Dr Abdullah Tabassum said that like other parts of the country, an anti-polio drive is being continued in Islamabad vaccinating children under the age of five years which commenced on February 26 and will continue till March 3.

In the inaugural phase of the campaign, the Assistant Commissioner City conducted on-site visits in the subdivision to evaluate progress and implementation strategies.

This included assessments of micro-plans and target coverage, ensuring that every aspect of the vaccination effort was meticulously executed. On the occasion, the Assistant Commissioner issued directives to the campaign teams and emphasized the importance of comprehensive coverage, particularly in areas with high rates of resistance and

denial cases. AC was briefed on the meticulous arrangements put in place for the polio vaccination campaign to eradicate the crippling disease. He emphasized the need for robust community engagement and parental support to safeguard the health and well-being of children.

Encouraging parental participation, the Deputy Commissioner of Islamabad appealed to the masses to ensure their children receive both doses of the polio vaccine, emphasizing the collective responsibility in achieving a polio-free Pakistan.

Railways face only six minor accident in last four months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has beefed up precautionary measures to reduce passenger train accidents and only six minor accidents with no causality took place on the entire railway network in the country during the last four months.

“Only two train accidents have taken place in September, no accident happened in October and four train accidents occurred in November due to effective steps of the department,” an official in the Ministry told APP.

The drastic decrease in accidents has been witnessed due to the efforts being undertaken to reduce trespassing at unmanned level crossings and unauthorized locations, he added.

“Our staff is continuously monitoring the railway tracks across the country and conducting thorough inspection of the trains as the safety of the passengers is the top priority of the department,” he said.

The official said the department was taking several steps to improve the Railway services including the issues related to tracking maintenance that was given top priority.

He said that the punctuality of trains was improved and all the trains were being monitored, reviewed, and rectified while to facilitate the passengers, a mobile application “Pak rail live” has also been launched for real-time tracking of trains.

To a question, he said that first aid posts were established in Assistant Station Masters offices and Police Help Line Centres at all Railway Stations where paramedical staff/staff trained in first aid was available along with first aid box/emergency kits round the clock.

He said the first aid box/emergency kits were available with In-charge Guards in all running trains who were trained in first aid and provided first aid to ill passengers.

The official said that Pakistan Railways was also set to introduce the 'Train Driver Assistant System' (TDAS) to help train drivers a clear view of the railway tracks up to an impressive distance of 700 meters.

“The technology aims to enhance the safety and efficiency of train operations during adverse weather conditions, particularly in the presence of dense smog and fog.”

The system, he said the TDAS is set to revolutionize the way trains navigate through foggy landscapes. It promised not only to avert potential accidents but also to facilitate smooth rail travel when visibility is severely compromised.

He said the capabilities of this digital system extended beyond improved visibility; it can also identify and monitor vital elements such as signals, level crossings, gates, track obstructions, and other potential hazards within the same 700-meter radius.

CDA to digitalize parking facilities in capital

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has signed an agreement with a private company, M/S AJCL, to digitise the parking facility in Islamabad on a revenue-sharing basis.

“An important milestone has been achieved, and this decision has also been ratified in the 9th meeting of the CDA Board on October 5, 2023,” said a press release issued by CDA on Tuesday. It said that this step will help CDA eliminate problems like traffic jams in the city of Islamabad, along with promoting the economy.

“Under this agreement, the installation of the latest parking equipment and the latest parking management system will be introduced in all car parking lots in Islamabad city.

Similarly, in this project, the implementation of automatic and smart parking system at all parking sites of Islamabad is also included,” it said, adding that in the bidding process, eight firms submitted technical and financial proposals until the last date of November 30, 2023, and the financial bids were opened transparently on January 9, 2024.

M/S AJCL was declared the successful bidder with a 75% revenue share. That is, 25% of the revenue received for parking will be given to M/S AJCL, while 75% of the revenue will be given to CDA.

Islamabad achieves ‘Zero Out-of-School Children’ campaign targets

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Institute of Education on Tuesday launched a report on its campaign “Zero Out-of-School Children (ZOOSC)” in Islamabad in collaboration with JICA and the Ministry of Education and Professional Training, successfully achieving its targets.

Under this campaign, more than 70,941 children have been enrolled in schools in Islamabad, bringing the number of out-of-school children in the capital to zero. Federal Secretary for Education Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry was the chief guest at the report launching ceremony.

Director General of Pakistan Institute of Education Dr Muhammad Shahid Sarwar, Vice Chancellor of Allama Iqbal Open University Dr Nasir Mehmood, JICA repre-

sentatives, and representatives of other NGOs were also present at the ceremony.

Secretary Education said the successes achieved have been documented and would help serve as a guide for the provinces in the future. He appreciated the field workers of the partner organizations working with the Ministry of Education for their fast-paced work.

He said that Islamabad was brought forward as a model and that there were many challenges at the start of the campaign as educational facilities are not equal. If any work is to be fast-tracked, the field team has a key role to play. It is difficult to achieve such good results when there are different stakeholders, he added.

Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry said that 49% of the 70,000

out-of-school children brought to schools are girls. Two transgender schools have been opened and added that the children working in workshops and shops also have dreams, we have tried to make their dreams come true.

He said that an 18-month professional development program has been started which also includes NCHD and others, this is a journey that has been started together, and I am sure that the teachers and field workers will continue to work with the same spirit.

He said that the 11,000 children identified out of school are being brought to school through private schools.

Director General Pakistan Institute of Education Dr. Muhammad Shahid Sarwar said that Secretary Education Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry gave

us a target of bringing 50,000 children to schools within two months. Under his leadership, PIE and all departments responded, we identified 81,000 out-of-school children and managed to bring 70,000 children back to schools.

He said on the instructions of the Secretary Education, we documented this campaign.

A regular research report has been prepared, and no additional expenses were incurred on it.

A team of officials from Sindh and South Punjab has come to us and has reviewed this process and document in detail.

He said the research report prepared by the Pakistan Institute of Education on the campaign states that the campaign was launched in January last year. In the first phase of

the campaign, the number of out-of-school children in Islamabad was determined. For this, the data of the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) was used. In the second phase, the parents of these children were contacted and convinced to send their children to schools.

For this, he said the help of local communities, religious scholars, and elected representatives was taken. In the third phase, arrangements were made for the admission of these children to schools. For this, additional classes and shifts were started in government schools, while cooperation was also made with private schools and non-formal education (NFE) centers.

Director General of Pakistan Institute of Education Dr Muhammad Shahid Sarwar

said various strategies were used for the success of this campaign.

These include multi-level planning and regular review meetings, data-based identification and targeted interventions, full participation of the local community, provision of various educational opportunities, real-time monitoring, and tracking. It has been resolved to replicate the success of this campaign in other provinces of the country as well.

The success of this campaign has paved a new way for the promotion of education in Pakistan.

It is hoped that in the future, the number of out-of-school children in the country will be significantly reduced, Director General of Pakistan Institute of Education Dr Muhammad Shahid Sarwar added.

1,000 prisoners transferred

KABUL (Khaama Press): Officials from the Iranian Ministry of Justice said that over the past year, more than 1,100 Afghan prisoners have been transferred to Afghanistan to serve their sentences. According to the Iranian news agency ISNA, the head of the transfer committee of the Ministry of Justice in Iran said that in the past year, 1,136 Afghan prisoners were transferred to Afghan prisons to continue their sentences.

Canada rejects IEA request

KABUL (Arina News): Ottawa has rebuffed the Islamic Emirate's attempt to take control of Afghanistan's embassy and consulates in Canada, local media reported. The government, in fact, did not even respond to the IEA's 2022 letter, said Global Affairs Canada spokesman Jason Kung, Ottawa Citizen reported. "Canada does not recognize the Taliban (IEA) as the legitimate government of Afghanistan, and will never do so," said Marlyne Guèvremont, another Global Affairs official.

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

World Bank agrees to restart Afghanistan CASA-1000 power project



KABUL (ARINA News): The World Bank has announced that it has agreed to restart the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000) in Afghanistan amid concerns among the other participating countries -Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Pakistan – that they risk \$1billion of stranded assets.

However, the WB said the resumption would only take place within a ring-fenced structure that would ensure all construction payments and future revenue are managed outside of Afghanistan and do not involve the Islamic Emirate government.

The structure would also mean a strengthened commitment to the use of inter-

national consultants to supervise progress and third-party monitoring to verify progress and certify contractor invoices, it said. The \$1.2bn CASA-1000 regional power project is designed to interconnect the power grids of the four participating countries, allowing for hydro power-generated electricity to be exported from the two Central Asian states to Afghanistan and to Pakistan via Afghanistan.

The project was approved by the World Bank board in March 2014 with financing from the International Development Association (IDA), but in Afghanistan it was paused, with all implementation activities stopped, in the wake of the return to power

of the Islamic Emirate.

Before the project was paused, about 18% of the towers for the Afghanistan portion of the CASA transmission line had been erected and about 95% of the materials and equipment needed to complete the project in the country had been supplied, according to the World Bank. Despite the Afghanistan pause, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Pakistan continued with the implementation of CASA-1000 and construction activities are nearly complete in all three countries, it added.

The ring-fenced resumption, said the World Bank, would be in two phases: construction, expected to take three years, and operations after that.

Its statement concluded: "During the project construction phase, the World Bank will make payments directly to the offshore accounts of international contractors and consultants, based on verification of invoices by the independent monitoring agency.

"For the operations phase, Offshore Account Bank (Abu Dhabi) arrangements are in place to ensure that payments and revenue are ring-fenced offshore as per commercial contractual agreements with requirements for no objection for use for specified purposes, including purchase of electricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic under the CASA-1000 and other existing power purchase agreements." The IEA has repeatedly called for the resumption of stalled development projects in the country by international organizations and countries. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) says that, any project that is implemented in Afghanistan should be done once the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has been informed. The IEA also said Afghanistan's conditions should be taken into consideration.

"We are ready to cooperate. There is security in Afghanistan and there are facilities to implement the project and the system cooperates in the necessary sectors and will not be an obstacle," said Zabiullah Mujahid, IEA's spokesman.

South Korea donates \$4 million to WFP's life saving operation in Afghanistan

KABUL (ARINA News): Korea's office of the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) said Monday Seoul's Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently donated \$4 million to WFP Afghanistan.

Donations will be used to provide emergency food and nutrition support to save lives and prevent famine in Afghanistan, where the food crisis is severe, the organization said. "WFP remains the last lifeline for millions of Afghans struggling to make a living in an economy rife with unemployment and uncertainty; Afghans are seeing their savings shrink as they exhaust their last resources," said Hsiao-Wei Lee, WFP Afghanistan Country Director.

"Generous contributions from our donors like the government of the Republic of Korea have always been crucial to reach the most vulnerable across the country with lifesaving assistance and to support their livelihoods," he said.

WFP supported nearly 19 million people across Afghanistan in 2023. Families who were extremely food insecure were targeted for support, and food or cash was provided. Last year, a global humanitarian aid funding crisis resulted in an unfortunate situation where 10 million people were reduced from support.

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Journalists assured solution to problems at Kabul award event

KABUL (Pajhwok): Hundreds of journalists, directors of media outlets and government officials attended the Annual Best Media Awards ceremony in Kabul organized by the Afghanistan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA) on Monday.

Government officials, who attended the event, assured that problems being faced by journalists would

be resolved gradually, calling the media a bridge between the people and the system. Naeem-ul-Haq Haqqani, head of the Government Media and Information Centre (GMIC), said the media served as a bridge between the government and the people. "We need the media to know and everyone knows its importance."

He assured that all officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan supported the work and activities of journalists and problems they were facing would be resolved over time.

He added currently the media worked under the umbrella of the government in a dignified manner: "There are those who are committed to national interest, there are sisters proving they can fulfill their responsibilities by observing the Hijab. We and you have examples to follow."

Abdul Wahid Riyan, media monitoring and publication head at the Ministry of Information and Culture, promised that problems media and journalists faced would be addressed. "Some people may have complaints about MoIC and some journalists have faced problems, so we assure them what problems they are facing all will be addressed by the Media Complaints and Violations Investigation Commission," he explained. He said efforts should be made to assist female journalists who were currently unemployed and were at home. "Their rights should not be lost." Hujatullah Mujadidi, Afghan Independent Journalists Association head, said the Afghan media was moving towards professionalism, but financial constraints had made their work challenging.

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Badghis hospital lacks medicines, friendly staff



QALA-I-NAW (Pajhwok): Struggling with abject poverty, some residents of western Badghis provinces say they cannot purchase medicines from market, urging the government to supply medicines to the provincial hospital.

Jamila, mother of a three-year-old child who is suffering from pneumonia, told Pajhwok Afghan News that her daughter was hospitalized due to pneumonia, but she bought all medicines from outside the hospital. Haunted by economic problems, she asked the public health department to take serious steps towards provision of free medicines to patients.

She also complained about what she called 'inappropriate' and 'unfriendly' misbehavior of some hospital staff including nurses. Meanwhile, another

woman named Jamila, whose two-year-old child fell ill due to pneumonia two days ago, said she came from Muqar district to Qala-Naw city, but the hospital's personnel treated them unkindly.

She added: "We came here out of necessity, my child's condition did not get better in ten days, the hospital staff treats mothers whose children are sick very badly." She said she purchased all medicines from outside the hospital.

Halimah, another patient who had brought her one-year-old daughter from Abkamri district for treatment, said it was difficult for a poor family to buy medicines from the market.

She also said: "My child fell ill three days ago and we came from Abkamri district. I don't have money. My patient is not given medicines here

either. If I had money, I wouldn't have come here. I would have gone to a private clinic. Doctors don't treat us well. We ask the government to pay attention to solve these problems." At the same time, Dr. Ajab Khan Hamidi, deputy Public Health director, told Pajhwok that donor institutions used to supply medicines. However, the number of patients visiting the 100-bed hospital was very high.

He added: "Yes, there are problems in Qala-i-Naw Provincial Hospital, there are no enough medicines. There are 100 beds in this hospital, but the number of patients is very high... It is beyond our ability to reach out to all these patients."

He went on to say: "We have talked to the central public health authorities many times about solving our problems and increasing

the number of beds in this health facility."

He assured orthopedic, ear, nose and throat and eye departments will be activated in the hospital in future.

However, Dr. Ehsanullah, Shinwari, the head of the, told Pajhwok that all medicines patients needed were arranged in cooperation with donor institutions and distributed to patients in government hospitals for free.

Regarding complaints regarding improper treatment of hospital personnel with the patients, he said the number of patients was high and the personnel could not pay attention to everyone equally.

He added: "Qala-Naw provincial hospital has 100 beds and sometimes about 200 patients come here every day, which is beyond our capacity to reach out to so many patients."

Bamyan skiers complain lack of facilities, proper ground

BAMYAN CITY (Pajhwok): Some skiers in central Bamyan province have said that this province was a suitable place for skiing due to its mountainous nature but there were no proper ski resorts and other facilities. Abu Al Fazal Karimi, head of a ski club in the province, told Pajhwok Afghan News being a mountainous province Bamyan was suitable for ski sport and could attract hundreds of local and international athletes every year.

He, however, said the lack of a proper ski ground discouraged sky players and relevant authorities took not step to address this issue. He said if proper facilities and grounds are provided, there were talented ski players in the province who could compete at the regional level.

Bomanullah, one of the ski players, said the Bamyan ski resort was still attractive after initial leveling six years ago.

He added the ski field was facing serious problems, including the presence of mountain bushes, rocks, unevenness of the path and lack of safety



measures. Rajab Ali Fitrat, head of the provincial Ski Federation, said public interest with the ski sport had increased at provincial level and so far 20 ski clubs had officially registered.

He said before regime change a Chinese company was supposed to build the ski resort of Bamyan in a standard way and provide all the facilities needed by the skiers, but after that no organization has been willing to cooperate.

He said in previous winters, ski competitions were held in Bamyan with the participation of dozens of athletes from different provinces, but this winter, due to the lack of snow and the lack of support from relevant institutions, no competition has been held yet. Syed Kafel Mosavi, head of the Bamyan Sport and Physical Training Department, said Bamyan ski resort has limited facilities and athletes cannot

play in snow less than 40 cm high and the field is uneven. He said the Sport Department was struggling with the human resources and there were no personnel to protect the ski resort.

He said a big ski competition was going to be held in Bamyan in the next two weeks, and the Physical Training Department was trying to provide support for skiers and repair the ski resort in this province through partner departments.

China Seeks Access to Untapped Rare Metals and Minerals in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): 1 trillion, along with substantial amounts of crude oil and natural gas. However, due to limited infrastructure and technical capabilities, Afghanistan faces challenges in effectively harnessing these resources, presenting an opportunity for Chinese investment. Analysts have noted China's willingness to navigate challenging terrains and invest in regions where others might hesitate, as highlighted by Valerie Niquet, an analyst with the Paris-based Foundation for Strategic Research.

Reports suggest that China has pursued various strategies to secure access to Afghanistan's rare earth metals and minerals, including alleged collaborations with local figures. Australian author and investigative journalist Lynne O'Donnell reported

on Beijing's involvement with individuals like drug kingpin Bashir Noorzai to secure mining rights. Critics have raised concerns about the potential exploitation of Afghanistan's resources by China, citing fears of environmental degradation and limited economic benefits for Afghanistan. Despite these concerns, Chinese companies have increased their presence in Afghanistan, signing contracts for oil, gas, and mineral extraction.

China's dominance in the production and processing of rare minerals has led to investments in various regions worldwide, including South America and Africa. Afghanistan's potential as a significant lithium producer has attracted Chinese interest,

given its strategic importance for electric vehicle batteries and smartphone manufacturing. As China expands its presence in Afghanistan, observers speculate about its motivations and the potential consequences for Afghanistan's economy and geopolitical landscape. Concerns have been raised regarding Beijing's actions following the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in 2021, with reports indicating China's swift engagement in exploring lithium resources soon after. In conclusion, China's increasing involvement in Afghanistan's resources underscores its strategic interests in securing vital components for its industrial and technological sectors.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Pakistan National Heart Association (PANA) presenting a report on the activities and accomplishments of PANA to President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. —APP Photo

Alvi emphasizes early prevention of diseases

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday said that adoption of preventive measures against various diseases was prerequisite to ward off treatment which was expensive in Pakistan and such habits would also help reduce burden on the health system.

He expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of Pakistan National Heart Association (PANA) that called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr to present a report on the activities and accomplishments of the organization.

President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

The president stressed upon creating awareness among the masses about the significance of preventive measures against non-communicable diseases and heart diseases.

He also underscored the need about the role of media, local population, mosques and non government organizations to create such awareness, besides utilization of different latest platforms to spread awareness messages.

PANA President Major General (retd) Masud Ur Rehman Kiani briefed the president about the role of the organization and public awareness campaigns including holding of walks, seminars, lectures and training sessions.

He said that they were creating awareness among the people about healthy activities and lifestyle. President Alvi appreciated PANA for its contributions in the health sector.

Week-long anti-polio drive in full swing

ISLAMABAD (APP): A week-long nationwide anti-polio campaign was in full swing on Tuesday under which vaccinators were visiting door to door to administer anti-polio drops to children below the age of five. Forty-five point eight million children were expected to be vaccinated against the crippling disease during the second drive of this year.

Children would also be given Vitamin A supplements to boost their immunity. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the anti-polio drive started in the Lakki Marwat and Dera Ismail Khan districts in the first phase. In the second phase, an anti-polio drive would be conducted in thirty-three districts of the province from the 3rd to the 9th of next month.

Meanwhile, strict security arrangements have been made to provide security to the anti-polio workers.

NAB distributes cheques worth Rs 1.67b

LAHORE (APP): National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lahore, in a ceremony held on Tuesday, distributed cheques worth Rs 1.67 billion to the affected of the Pak Arab Housing scandal.

NAB Deputy Chairman Sohail Nasir graced the ceremony as Chief Guest. Other prominent guests include Commissioner Lahore Muhammad Ali Randhawa, DG anti corruption Sohail Zafar Chatha, Director FIA Sarfraz Virk, Joint Dir Intelligence Bureau Moeen Habib Kahn Lodhi, Secy Mines and Minerals Babar Aman Babarand VC University Of Poonch Dr. Zikriya Zakir, officers of NAB Lahore and affecteds of Pak-Arab Scam. The ceremony was arranged by Director General NAB Lahore Amjad Majeed Aulakh.

Addressing the ceremony, Sohail Nasir, Deputy Chairman NAB, highlighted that the Bureau's primary objective is to serve the Nation and the Country, as well. He emphasized that common people are beneficiaries of NAB policies, enabling them to recover their plundered money. He added that people think doing justice merely responsibility of courts which is not right, our social behaviors are the one which promote injustice in society.

Senate witnesses presentation of reports from 25 committees

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Senate witnessed the presentation of 25 Standing Committee reports on Tuesday. The standing committees included the report of the Committee on a Bill further to amend the Constitution [The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2022], the report of the Committee on a Bill further to amend the Constitution [The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2022], the report of the Committee on a point of public importance raised by Senator Sardar Muhammad Shafiq Tareen regarding Circuit Benches of Balochistan High Court, the report of the Committee on a Bill further to amend the Constitution [The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2022], the present report of the Committee on a Bill further to amend the Constitution [The Constitution (Amendment) Bill, 2023], the report of the Committee on a Bill further to amend the National Accountability Ordinance, 1999 [The National Accountability (Amendment) Bill, 2023], the report of the Committee on the subject matter of Starred Question No. 96, asked by Senator Gurdeep Singh, the report of the Committee on a Bill further to amend the Cutting of Trees (Prohibition) Act, 1992 [The Cutting of Trees (Prohibition) (Amendment) Bill, 2023], the report of the Committee on a Bill further to amend the Factories Act, 1934 [The Factories (Amendment) Bill, 2023], the report of the Committee on a Bill further to amend the Guardians and Wards Act, 1890 [The Guardians and Wards (Amendment) Bill, 2024], the report of the Committee on a Bill further to amend the Pakistan Penal

Code, 1860 and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 [The Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024], the report of the Committee on a Bill further to amend the Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking Ordinance, 2002 [The Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking (Amendment) Bill, 2024], the report of the Committee on a Bill further to amend the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 [The Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024], the report of the Committee on a Bill further to amend the National Database and Registration Authority Ordinance, 2002 [The National Database and Registration Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2024], the report of the Committee on the subject matter of Starred Question No. 94, asked by Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi regarding whether the Government established institutes for imparting training to the teachers, the report of the Committee on the subject matter of Starred Question No. 103, asked by Senator Mushtaq Ahmed on 5th January 2024, regarding the number of students studying in "A" and "O" levels under the Cambridge system in Pakistan at present indicating also the number of students appeared in "A" and "O" level examinations during the period from 2018 to 2021 with a year-wise breakup, the report of the Committee on the Bill to provide for the establishment of the International Institute of Technology, Culture, and Health Sciences [The International Institute of Technology, Culture, and Health Sciences Bill, 2024], the report of the Committee on the Bill

further to amend the Higher Education Commission Ordinance, 2002 [The Higher Education Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2024], the report of the Committee on the affairs/working and performance of institutions registered with Pakistan Nursing Council, their affiliations with the Hospitals and fake degrees/certificates issued to nurses, the present report of the Committee on a Bill to make provisions for the protection of breastfeeding and nutrition for infants and young children [The Islamabad Capital Territory Protection of Breastfeeding and Child Nutrition Bill, 2023], the report of the Committee on a Bill further to amend the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council Act, 2022 [The Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (Amendment) Bill, 2024], the report of the Committee on the subject matter of Starred Question No.41 asked by Senator Fawzia Arshad regarding whether it is a fact that the Benevolent Fund is granting reimbursement of semester's fee up to the University level to the dependent children of Government employees, and the report of the Committee on the subject matter of Starred Question No.51 asked by Senator Mushtaq Ahmed regarding the names and locations of residential projects/schemes initiated by the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority, the report of the Committee on a motion under rule 218, moved by Senator Dr. Zarqa Suharwardy Taimur regarding the issue of ways and means to control the non-developmental/recurring expenditure of the Government.

'Govt, international institutions, grassroots organizations contributing uniquely for peace promotion'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Tuesday that the Government of Pakistan, international institutions and grassroots organizations had been contributing uniquely for promoting peace, tolerance, and harmony in the country.

Delivering his speech on "Policymaking and peace process in Pakistan" at the opening session of PeaceFLIX international conference and awards ceremony, he said in the intricate tapestry of Pakistan's landscape, the pursuit of peace had transcended individual endeavors; it had become a shared responsibility. "We stand witness to the collective efforts of various entities that are shaping the bedrock of peace within our nation", he maintained.

"As our nation crosses the complex realms of economics, politics, and environmental concerns, the preservation of societal peace assumes paramount significance", the minister added.

Solangi said that national and international think-tanks, as well as peace organizations, had conducted invaluable research and facilitated dialogues to comprehend the nuanced dynamics of peace and conflict. He said that their endeavors extended supporting initiatives countering violent extremism, managing conflicts, and fostering a deeper understanding of conflict prevention and resolution.

He opined that media houses and journalists served as potent agents of change, challenging extremist ideologies and championing inclusivity.

"Their pivotal role in amplifying voices of moderation and facilitating dialogue across cultural divides is instrumental in forging connections between disparate groups", he remarked.

The minister said that in the pursuit of peace, political parties had to shoulder immense responsibility as their backing for reconciliation and mutual respect underscored the profound impact of politics in fostering peace.

He said that National Counter Terrorism Authority (NCTA) stood as a cornerstone institution, coordinating nationwide counter-terrorism efforts.

"The authority's commitment to combating extremism and preserving security demonstrates a steadfast dedication to safeguarding Pakistani citizens from threats posed by militant groups," the minister said. He said that expanding the realm of peace-builders, initiatives by the US Embassy Islamabad for sustainable peace and conflict prevention in Pakistani society were commendable.

Similarly, the East-West Center, bridging the gap between the East and West, contributed significantly to peace and tolerance in Pakistani society, Solangi added.

Russia says captured Ukrainian village near Avdiivka

MOSCOW (AFP/APP): Russian forces on Tuesday said they had captured another Ukrainian village as they seek to press their advantage following the capture of the town of Avdiivka this month.

The defence ministry also said Russian forces had destroyed an American Abrams battle tank, the first such claim since Washington delivered the vehicles to Kyiv.

In its daily update, the ministry said the village of Sieverne had been "liberated".

The ministry statement used a Russian name for the captured village -- "Severnoye".

Russian forces "have occupied more favourable lines and positions," it added. AFP could not independently verify the Russian claim and there was no immediate response from the Ukrainian army.

The Ukrainian army said on Monday it had withdrawn from the nearby village of Lastochkyne "to organise defences" further back after Russia claimed its capture. The battle for Avdiivka was one of the bloodiest of the two-year war, drawing comparisons with Russia's assault on Bakhmut, which it captured last May.

Facing manpower and ammunition shortages, Ukraine was forced to withdraw from the industrial hub in the eastern Donetsk region, handing Moscow its first major territorial gain since Bakhmut. In its statement on Tuesday, the Russian defence ministry also said it had destroyed "two tanks, including a US-made Abrams". Reports from Russian military bloggers showed unverified images purporting to show the vehicles on fire. Ukraine said the US tanks arrived in September. Asked on Monday about reports that an Abrams tank had been destroyed, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: "Our fighters have been saying from the beginning that these tanks will burn like the others."

Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu calls on General Fayyadh bin Hamed Al-Ruwaili

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force called on General Fayyadh bin Hamed Al-Ruwaili, Chief of the General Staff, Saudi Armed Forces and His Royal Highness Lieutenant General Turki Bin Bandar bin Abdul Aziz, Commander of the Royal Saudi Air Forces, during his visit to Saudi Arabia.

Meetings were focused upon further promoting Pak-Saudi defence ties, particularly between the two Air Forces through joint military exercises and technological collaboration. During the visit, the Air Chief was awarded

ed King Abdul Chief of the General Staff, Saudi the Excellent Class by Armed Forces.



CM Maryam orders to launch Smart Safe City Project in all districts

LAHORE (INP): In a bid to enhance security, newly-elected Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Maryam Nawaz on Tuesday ordered to launch Smart Safe City Project in every district of the province by December 31. Maryam Nawaz issued the order during her maiden visit to Punjab Safe City Authority headquarters in Lahore a day after swearing in as chief minister. She was accompanied by PML-N MPA Marriyum Aurangzeb

and provincial police chief Dr Usman Anwar. During the visit, the Punjab chief minister also inspected Safe City Authority's data center and digital wall. She also visited the Madadgar-15 call center and communicated with female police officers, present at their duty.

Maryam also called at Madadgar-15 and checked the response time of police. Meanwhile, the Punjab CM ordered the authorities concerned to launch Smart

Safe City Project in all districts by Dec 31st. She instructed to launch upgraded "Women Safety App" for protection of women. She directed the authorities to activate Women Safety App in two weeks, vowing to establish hostel for women police communication officers of Safe City. The chief minister was also given a detailed briefing on the test run of Safe City Crime Stopper app, aiming to prevent rising crime.

Inside the Democratic rebellion against Biden over the Gaza war

DEARBORN (REUTERS): The depth of Democratic Party anger over President Joe Biden's handling of the Gaza war has caught his campaign off guard and could depress support in November's election, according to Reuters interviews with more than a dozen senior party and campaign officials and five dozen voters and activists. The White House had expected Democratic unrest over Gaza to fade as Biden picked up his campaigning against presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump, the officials said.

Nine months before the election, the problem is worsening as Biden's opposition to calling for a permanent cease-fire continues to stir anger in a coalition of voters that propelled his 2020 victory, from Black Americans to Muslim activists in must-win Michigan to young voters, according to the interviews.

Democrats have been broadly divided over Biden's vocal support of Israel since the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks that killed 1,200 Israelis, polls show. Some Jewish Americans, who largely

vote for Democrats, have rallied behind Biden, a self-declared Zionist. Many younger Democrats and people of color oppose his approach, disturbed by a rising death toll from Israel's retaliation in Gaza that tops 29,700, according to Gaza's health ministry. Crucial parts of this coalition appear disillusioned, disappointed and angry.

In Michigan's Democratic nominating contest on Tuesday, Arab-American activists who backed him in 2020 have vowed to withhold their support, urging primary voters to check "uncommitted" at the ballot box in an early litmus test for how Biden's handling of Gaza could hurt him in the swing state.

Hoping to address their frustrations, Biden administration officials met on Feb. 8 with Arab-American community leaders in Michigan, and held an additional, previously unreported meeting in the state, said two sources with direct knowledge of the meeting.

Participants were asked not to make details public. Administration

officials discussed humanitarian aid for Gaza and noted that Biden was publicly being more critical of Israel, the sources said. In private conversations, officials have said Biden and some of his closest advisers remained opposed to calling for a permanent ceasefire, despite internal pressure to change course, one of the sources and three others said.

In response to questions from Reuters, Biden campaign spokesman Seth Schuster said: "The President is working to earn every vote and our campaign will continue engaging directly with voters on a range of issues," including on "lasting peace in the Middle East."

The White House in mid-February proposed a temporary ceasefire resolution at the United Nations Security Council, but vetoed a measure calling for a permanent ceasefire. Biden said on Monday he hoped to see a temporary ceasefire to release hostages within a week, although Hamas and Israel appear far apart on talks.

In Wisconsin, another swing state, Democratic activists plan demonstra-

tions over Biden's stance on Gaza, said Heba Mohammad, a digital organizing director on Biden's campaign in 2020 who is now organizing protests against him.

Beyond the election battlegrounds, the war has opened a fissure in the base of Democratic Party. Biden's winning 2020 presidential campaign was buoyed by new voters, Black activists and other progressive Democrats. Those groups flooded social media, manned phone banks and knocked on doors during the pandemic to flip Rust Belt states that Trump had won in 2016, sometimes by narrow margins.

Some Black Americans have expressed solidarity with Palestinians and see their cause as a reflection of their own experience of oppression. Some Gen Z and millennial Democratic voters, who voted for Biden in record numbers in 2020, see the Gaza war as evidence their voice isn't being heard in Washington.

While none of the five dozen Democrats interviewed by Reuters said they will back Trump, half said

they were considering sitting out the election or casting their lot with a third party. Biden's campaign has acknowledged the concerns. But it points to evidence of Democratic enthusiasm, such as a recent fundraising windfall. Last week, his campaign and Democratic Party allies said they raised more than \$42 million in January and have \$130 million cash on hand for a likely contest against Trump.

Still, Biden's campaign has been surprised by the depth of anger and frustration over Israel and other policies, according to about a dozen officials in his campaign, the White House and the Democratic Party. "We are getting hurt more than we anticipated" by Biden's support for Israel, one senior campaign adviser said.

Mitch Landrieu, the campaign co-chair, acknowledged the issue is "difficult" but said the campaign has time to dispel concerns. "You can expect a very, very aggressive outreach to all voters, young voters particularly, on all of these issues," he told Reuters during a campaign visit to Flint,

Michigan. "The President -- and we're going to have to follow his lead on this -- he has said many, many times, he's not thinking about this in terms of elections. He's thinking about this in terms of what the right thing to do is," Landrieu said. Underestimating these concerns could be a mistake, some Democratic strategists say.

"It's really dangerous," said James Zogby, a founder of the Arab American Institute and a longtime member of the Democratic National Committee. Former Democratic presidential candidates Al Gore and Hillary Clinton were both defeated after ignoring warning signs within their own party.

"We saw it in 2000, we saw it in 2016," Zogby said. In Michigan, the protest vote pushed by Arab American and Muslim political activists threatens to overshadow Tuesday's primary. Organizers of the "uncommitted" movement are seeking a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and an end to U.S. military aid to Israel in a campaign that has resonated with young voters and people of color from a variety of religions and backgrounds.