

NA session today
ISLAMABAD: The first sitting of the National Assembly (NA) will be held here at the Parliament House in Islamabad today (Thursday) at 10:00 am. According to a notification issued by the National Assembly Secretariat on Wednesday, the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs requested the Prime Minister for the approval of making arrangements to convene the maiden session of the newly elected Lower House.



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KP Assembly MPs take oath amid ruckus

Ali Sheikh

PESHAWAR: Amid ruckus and uproar 116 newly elected members of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly took oath on Wednesday. Speaker KP Assembly Mushtaq Ghani administered the oath.

The session which was supposed to start at 11 am started with an hour delay after large number of PTI workers sitting in visitors gallery chanted slogans against the opposition members calling them 'mandate thief.' On the other hand, PML-N MPA Sobia Khan held a watch in her hand showing it to the PTI workers to symbolize the Imran Khan's alleged selling of watch from Toshakhana. This created some unwanted scenes as workers threw water bottle and lota on Sobia Khan. Later Speaker Mushtaq Ghani warned the PTI workers and directed them to remain silent.

It is pertinent to mention here that the KP Assembly resumed its proceedings after an unprecedented more than 13 months. The previous assembly was dissolved in January 2023 and KP had been functioning in the absence of the provincial legislature since then. The House also offered Fateha for father of Ali Amin Gandapur and other martyrs of security forces.

The election of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Provincial Assembly would be held on Thursday, February 29 while the election of the Chief Minister would be held on the following day. Ali Amin

Gandapur who has been nominated as KP Chief Minister by PTI also took oath. He was warmly welcomed by the newly elected members and the workers of PTI as he entered the assembly with a PTI flag draped across his shoulders.

Speaker Mushtaq Ghani also announced that polling for the speaker and deputy speaker will be held today (Thursday) at 10am. The session of the assembly was adjourned to meet on Thursday 10 am.

APP adds: Before taking the oath, the newly elected members of the provincial assembly chanted slogans against each other and threw shoes and pitchers on opposition benches. The Speaker took notice of the slogans of PTI workers in the house and directed them to remain silent. The house offered Fateha for father of Ali Amin Gandapur and other martyrs of security forces.

Special arrangements including multimedia screens were installed inside and outside of the assembly hall for special guests and party members. The internet service was closed in the assembly premises due to security reasons as more than 4000 guests visited Assembly. Despite strict security measures, workers of political parties managed to enter the assembly hall. The election of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Provincial Assembly would be held on Thursday, February 29 while the election of the Chief Minister would be held on the following day.

Later talking to media outside



Assembly Hall, Dr Ibadullah leader of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) criticized the uproar and said that the opposition parties have unanimously decided to nominate Ehsanullah Miankhal for the slot of Speaker, and Arbab Wasim of PTI Parliamentary has been nominated for the Deputy Speaker post in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly. Similarly, opposition parties have filed the name Hisham Inamullah Khan PML-N for Chief Minister, and Dr. Ibad of PML-N will be the opposition leader in the KP Assembly. He said that we offer JUI-F to support them as Maulana Fazlur Rehman and Akram Khan Durrani have a good political role in the country. JUI-F

leader and former opposition leader in KP Assembly Akram Khan Durrani talking to media outside the Assembly Hall, said that his party members would not take part in election of speaker and deputy speaker as well as chief minister of the provincial assembly.

Akram Durrani said the party would sit in the opposition in National and provincial assemblies, adding that JUI-F would not be the part of any strategy of the PML-N and PPP. Criticizing the situation during the oath taking in the assembly here, he said that for the first time in the province, there was an unprecedented situation. Despite political and ideological differences in the past,

there was respect for others which was not seen on the first day of the assembly proceeding.

"Today, the assembly was presenting the picture of bus stand or a market," he deplored. He said the house was disrespected as much so that no one could even think of coming to assembly. Durrani predicted more chaos and unrest in the province in the coming day, adding that the caretaker Chief Minister informed a week ago that there was no money in the provincial kitty even for payment of salaries at the time of his swearing-in ceremony. Currently, the province has only 100 billion rupees and the people would face inflation in coming days, said Akram Durrani.

He said that the results of the general elections was unacceptable to JUI-F and the party leadership has decided to protest against the results inside and outside the assemblies. "I have the video of stamping the ballot papers of the candidate against me," he told media. Durrani said that JUI-F has taken two main decisions; first not to become part of the government and second, that if religious parties are kept out of the elections, the party would stage countrywide protests.

The results of two MPAs Abdul Munim and Laiq Muhammad Khan of Sunni Ittehad Council were not issued by the Election Commission. 21 women seats and four seats of minorities are remain vacant. 91 members of Sunni Ittehad Council, 7 members of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F), 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 Wehdad-ul-Muslamin took oath. Two women members of JUI, two of PML-N and one member of PPP took oath on reserved seats and the remaining 21 seats would remain vacant.

Ali Amin Khan Gandapur and Babar Salim Khan were nominated for slots of CM and Speaker while newly elected member from Chitral PK-I Suraya Bibi would likely to be nominated as Deputy Speaker. Around 67 winning candidates in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa out the total 111 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.

Among the newly elected members who took oath, Ali Hadi is the youngest parliamentarian that won the provincial assembly seat in recent elections. Ali Hadi who won elections from PK 96 district Kurram is of 27 years and the youngest member of KP assembly. He took oath as an independent in first session of newly elected assembly. At present, Mushtaq Ahmad Ghani, Speaker KP assembly is the senior most member of provincial legislature having age of 68 years.

‘Shehbaz is best choice’, says Nawaz

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif has expressed hope that Pakistan will come out of difficulties in the next two years by taking difficult decisions as his party is all set to form a coalition government in the Centre.

"I believe the next 1.5 or 2 years will be difficult but we have to stay united [during the difficult times] and face our opponents," he said while addressing the parliamentary party meeting on Wednesday.

"Pakistan will come out of the difficulties in the next 1.5 to 2 years," he added. The three-time former premier said Pakistan is "badly injured" and the difficult decisions were the need of the hour to resolve the country's woes. He said the upcoming government will have to provide relief to the masses by bringing down inflation and food prices and stabilising local currency value against the US dollar.

The PML-N supreme also heaped praise on his younger brother and party president Shehbaz Sharif, saying he dealt with immense challenges during his brief stint in power. Nawaz said that he would not have completed his time in power had he been nominated to lead the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government instead of his younger brother.

"In the current circumstances, Shehbaz Sharif is the best choice," he said while officially declaring him the candidate for the prime minister's slot. Nawaz said party leader Sardar Ayaz Sadiq will contest the election for the National Assembly speaker.

Six terrorists killed in operation

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in North Waziristan District, on reported presence of terrorists. During the conduct of operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and the terrorists, as a result of which six terrorists were sent to hell, while one soldier also got injured.

Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities including target killing as well as extortion & abduction of innocent civilians.

Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area. Locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism.

PM appears before IHC in Baloch students case

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday appeared before the Islamabad High Court in compliance of the court orders in the case of Baloch missing persons.

Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani heard the case pertaining to the missing students. Caretaker Interior Minister Dr. Gohar Ejaz Khan and Attorney General of Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan were also present on the occasion. During the court proceedings, PM Kakar said the government was working in line with the constitution and the law.

"Being from Balochistan, I have more knowledge about the situa-

tion where people face armed resistance in the province," he said. The caretaker PM said the activities of non-state elements were reported in Balochistan, and added a former Chief Justice of Balochistan, who was heading an inquiry, was martyred by militants.

Balochistan, he said, had been facing terrorism for two decades and stressed that the issue needed to be addressed. "All political parties should come together and find a solution to this issue," he said. Kakar said the Constitution assures the security of all citizens and in return binds them for demonstrating an unconditional loyalty towards the State.

Justice Kayani remarked

that the court in two years held several hearings in the case of missing persons and pointed out that the arrests by the authorities needed to be put on record. He said the credit goes to the government and relevant institutions for the recovery of the missing persons.

In a report submitted by the Attorney General for Pakistan, the court was informed that 11 more students had been recovered. Nine were in the custody of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) following cases registered against them and two people had gone to Afghanistan. The court directed the authorities to provide the details of the cases against the persons in the custody of CTD to the petitioner.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar arriving to appears before High Court.

China ‘rolls over’ \$2b loan to Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a major development, China has rolled over a \$2 billion debt to Pakistan, Ministry of Finance sources told media on Wednesday. Pakistan has borrowed \$2 billion from China on a 7.1% interest rate, the sources said, adding that the loan was maturing in the week of March.

The sources said Pakistan paid Rs26.6 billion in the last fiscal year to China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on the \$9 billion deposits that these three nations placed with the State Bank of Pakistan. The rollover will support the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) depleting foreign reserves which stand at \$8 billion.

Last month, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar wrote a letter to his Chinese counterpart Li Qiang, seeking the rollover of a \$2 billion loan. In his

letter to China's premier, the interim prime minister has requested that Beijing roll over Pakistan's \$2 billion loan for a year, sources had told media.

PM Kakar, in his letter to the Chinese premier, also thanked the Chinese government for financial support, the finance ministry sources said. The sources, citing the letter, stated: "China gave a loan to the government of Pakistan in a difficult economic situation." A total of \$4 billion worth of funds in loans, as per the sources, has been kept as a safe deposit, which has reduced Pakistan's external payments burden.

Last year in May, Beijing came to Pakistan's rescue during its struggle to secure the critical pending loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as the Chinese government rolled over more than \$2 billion in debt. The friendly neighbour had committed to help Islamabad meet two crucial

debt repayments in June worth \$2.3 billion by providing fresh funds immediately after Pakistan was to make the payments.

ECP to announce Presidential election schedule on Friday

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will issue the schedule and public notice for election of the President on Friday. According to the proposed program, candidates will be able to submit their nomination papers to any presiding officer by 12:00 pm on Saturday.

All the aspiring candidates can get their nomination papers from Election Commission Secretariat Islamabad and Provincial Election Commissioners of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

Balochistan PA's newly elected MPAs sworn in

F.P. Report

QUETTA: With the Balochistan Assembly lawmakers sworn in on Wednesday, all provincial assemblies of the country have now come into effect.

A total of 57 newly-elected lawmakers were administered oath by Zamrak Khan Achakzai, who was appointed the presiding officer for the maiden session of the provincial legislative. As the assembly convened, the authorities barred the entry of guests during the session in light of expected protests and the prevailing law and order situation in the province.

As many as 51 members among those who took oath today, included the elects from Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) and others. Later, the assembly session was adjourned till tomorrow 3pm.

The newly sworn-in assembly will vote for the election of the House's speaker and deputy speaker in tomorrow's session. Nomination papers of the candidates for the House's custodian and deputy custodian can be submitted to the assembly's secretariat by 12pm on Thursday. With a divided provincial assembly, where no political party managed to secure a simple majority in the February 8 polls, the PPP and the PML-N might join hands to form government in the province as they already have agreed to form a coalition government in the Centre.

Balochistan Assembly's inaugural session took place on the same day newly-elected members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly took office. On the other hand, members of Sindh and Punjab Assemblies have already taken the oath of office, followed by the election of speakers, deputy speakers and chief ministers.

ECP throws out Nawaz's plea

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announced the reserved decision and rejected the application of Nawaz Sharif's application challenging the verdict of NA-15. "The petitioner may approach the Election Tribunal," the verdict said.

The ECP ordered the Returning Officer RO to complete the results in three days. Election Commission of Pakistan member Sindh Nisar Durrani wrote the decision.

Matthew not aware of ‘TTP resurgence’ report by US State Dept

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: The US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller stated that was not aware of the report which the U.S. State Department has sent to SIGAR (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction), which states that "Taliban takeover fuels TTP resurgence" in neighboring Pakistan.

When asked by The Frontier Post to comment on this report, Matthew Miller said that he has not seen the report so therefore he can not comment on it.

To another question by The Frontier Post that whether the U.S. is aware that it was China that provided the Taliban with

weapons especially the Chinese made AK 47 while the U.S. was in Afghanistan; Matthew Miller said that he was not in the government at that time therefore he can not comment on this question.

It is important to mention here that in recent months TTP has conducted several attacks in different parts of Pakistan killing hundreds of uniformed men of Pakistan. These terrorist activities continues to deteriorate Pakistan's relations with the self recognized government of Taliban in Afghanistan. It is important to mention here that China is the only country which has allowed the Taliban Ambassador to work and operate their embassy in

Beijing.

It is important to mention here that President Joe Biden has been accused several times by his staunch opponent former President Donald Trump that he (Biden) has taken a soft stance on China despite knowing that China has been involved in several hostile actions against the United States. Former President Donald Trump has also mocked President Joe Biden several times for his forgetfulness due to dementia.

Former President Donald Trump is leading in the primary elections from the Republican Party and is expected to face President Joe Biden in upcoming elections in America.

PTI urges IMF to focus political instability in talks

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the party of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan, has asked the International Monetary Fund to factor in the country's political stability in any further bailout talks, two people familiar with the matter said on Wednesday.

The PTI has sent a letter to the IMF detailing its position, two senior sources in the party said, adding more details would be made public in due course. The IMF has yet to receive the letter, the lender said in an email to foreign news agency. Last week, the PTI founder Imran Khan decided to write a letter to the IMF urging it to call for an audit of the February 8 election before it continues talks with Islamabad.

"Imran Khan will issue a letter to the IMF today. The charter of IMF, EU, and other organizations stipulates that they can function or provide loans to a country only if there's good governance," the incarcerated PTI founder chairman's counsel Barrister Ali Zafar told reporters at the Adiala Jail last Thursday. He had said Imran will write a letter to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) today, in which the IMF will be asked to call upon the Government of Pakistan to conduct an audit of the rigged constituencies through an independent audit team.

Last week, the IMF declined to comment on the country's political situation after Imran's aides said they would urge the lender to call for an independent audit of Pakistan's disputed Feb 8 elections before engaging in further talks with Islamabad. Sohail Ahmed of Karachi-based Topline securities said the letter was unlikely to have a major market impact. "The IMF will do its own due diligence," he said.

Later in the day, the PTI released a letter addressed to IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva. In the letter, PTI spokesperson Raof Hasan said February 8 general elections were subjected to "widespread intervention and fraud in the counting of votes and compilation of results".

"In view of the policies and principles the IMF stands for, there should be no doubt that the abuse of power by a small number of holders of public office to impose their likes and dislikes on Pakistan's populace as aforesaid, and thus to ensure their continuing personal gain, would not be promoted or upheld by the IMF," Imran-led party alleged. Moreover, it said not just the PTI,

but several other political parties in Pakistan, along with several western governments, Commonwealth observers, local civil society organisations, and international print and electronic media, have called for an independent probe into claims of intervention and electoral fraud.

"We, therefore, call upon the IMF to give effect to the guidelines adopted by it with respect to good governance as well as conditionalities that must be satisfied prior to the grant of a finance facility that is to burden the people of Pakistan with further debt. An audit of at least thirty percent of the national and provincial assemblies' seats should be ensured, which can be accomplished in merely two weeks," the letter added. There are at least two indigenous organisations in Pakistan namely the Free and Fair Election Network (Fafen) and PAT-TAN-Coalition38 that have proposed comprehensive methodologies to conduct an audit of the elections which, with some modifications, could be implemented locally to the satisfaction of all stakeholders, read the letter.

"Such a role by the IMF would be a great service to Pakistan and its people, and could become the harbinger of enduring prosperity, growth, and macroeconomic stability in the country." Pakistan's cash-strapped economy is struggling to stabilise after securing a \$3 billion standby arrangement from the IMF last summer, with record inflation, rupee devaluation and shrinking foreign reserves.

Salman Akram Raja's petition against NA-128 RO dismissed: The Lahore High Court (LHC) Wednesday dismissed contempt petition filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Salman Akram Raja against the Returning Officer (RO) of NA-128. Salman Akram Raja's contempt petition against Returning Officer NA-128 has been dismissed as inadmissible.

The Lahore High Court issued a written decision containing three points in this regard. The case was heard by Justice Ali Baqir Najafi. It was contended in the petition that the Returning Officer had assured that a notice would be issued to the candidate before preparation of Form-48, however no notice was issued. In his petition, Salman Akram Raja requested the court to initiate contempt of court proceedings against the returning officer. The petitioner said that the Returning Officer should be punished according to law.



CM for launching joint operation against dacoits, street crime, drug mafia

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Wednesday directed the police and other Law enforcement agencies to improve law and order situation in the province with launching of joint operation against dacoits in Kacha areas, drug mafia and street criminals in the cities. He issued the directives while chairing first meeting regarding law and order situation in Sindh here at CM House.

Sindh Chief Secretary Fakhre Alam, Principal Secretary Agha Wasif, DG Rangers Sindh Major General Azhar Waqas, Inspector General Police Riffat Mukhtar, Additional IG Karachi Khadim Hussain Rind, Commissioner Saleem Rajput, all DIGs of Karachi Region were present in the meeting while DIGs of other Divisions attended the meeting via video link.

Addressing the meeting, the chief minister said he was not satisfied with the prevailing law and order and street crime situation in the province.

He said law and order situation in Sindh's Kacha area was deteriorated since long time and there was need of giving special focus to improve the

situation by eliminating dacoits from these areas so that people could be secured and they could live a peaceful life. The chief minister said after formation of all provincial governments, an operation would be launched in Kacha areas of Sukkur and Larkana Divisions with coordination of Punjab and Balochistan governments. As far as drug peddling is concerned, his policy is clear, he said and added the Police and Rangers would initiate joint action to make Sindh narcotics free province.

Home Secretary Iqbal Memon briefed the chief minister about law and order situation and informed that in Karachi there were 48000 Police cops, of them 12000 were deployed in the Police Stations.

He suggested that number cops in Police Stations would be increased to ensure elimination of the street crimes from mega city.

Syed Murad Ali Shah directed the IGP to enhance number of cops from 12000 to 25000 in the Police stations of the city and make sure that street crime must be eliminated.

The IGP Sindh informed the meeting that in January and February this

year, 23 people were killed while resisting the dacoity bids.

The chief minister directed that Police Force be increased in hotspot areas of the street crimes and ensure its elimination.

The IGP further informed the meeting that during first two months of the new year, 3953 mobile phones, 46 cars and 1537 bikes were snatched by robbers from the city.

Syed Murad Ali Shah said the zero tolerance policy be adopted to stop incidents of the street crime.

He also ordered the improving of prosecution of cases of the street crimes so that culprits could be convicted properly.

The IG informed that till to date, 14 people were still in the hands of the kidnappers. The CM said all kidnapped persons be released without any delay. The DG Rangers also briefed the meeting regarding intelligence based joint operation against drug mafia. The chief minister asked DG Rangers and IGP that Rangers and Police must jointly launch operation against dacoits in kacha area and street criminals in cities so that these menaces could be wiped out.



LAHORE: Director Urdu Science Board Lahore Ziaullah Khan giving a briefing to caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah.

LESCO's anti-power theft operations in Wahga, Shahpur

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) conducted successful anti-power theft operations and detected a number of power pilferers in its sub-divisions of Wahga Road and Shahpur, according to the company's spokesman here on Wednesday.

He said that on the instructions of LESCO Chief Executive Officer Engineer Shahid Haider, operations against electricity thieves was going on across the region of five district -- Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara.

The spokesman added that Wahga Road Sub-Division's SDO Siraj-ud-Din Kaakar along with his team detected power pilferage for a tube-well and a Dera. The accused was stealing electricity by hooking on LESCO transmission line. The LESCO team disconnected immediately the illegal connection and confiscated the wires used in the power theft. The LESCO has also submitted an FIR application against the accused with the local police station,

besides charging him with 187,000 detection units.

Similarly, he added that Shahpur Sub-Division's SDO Muhammad Hassan Raza along with his team found electricity theft at 20 quarters (residential units) owned by Mazhar Rasheed. The LESCO team also noticed that no approved connection/meter was installed on any of the residential units and the accused was pilfering electricity by hooking on LESCO's main supply line. The inspection team seized all the connections and taken into its custody the wires used in the theft, besides submitting an FIR application against the accused with relevant police station. The LESCO also charged the accused with 3,500 units of detection bill.

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) detected a total of 395 connections from where consumers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts: Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara, on the 168th

day of the anti-power theft campaign.

A LESCO spokesman told the media on Wednesday that the company also submitted FIR applications against electricity thieves, out of which 160 cases had been registered in respective police stations. 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.

On the 168th consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, the spokesman added, large commercial consumers were also found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected and charged with detection units.

Rangers, ANF eradicate opium cultivation

KARACHI (APP): In a coordinated effort between Pakistan Rangers Sindh and the Anti-Narcotics Force, a significant operation has been conducted against drug cultivation in the interior Sindh region.

Acting on intelligence reports, the joint operation targeted opium cultivation in the village Bajak area of police station Ghaibi Dero, resulting in the destruction of 21 acres of illicit crops.

According to a spokesperson for the Rangers on Wednesday, this operation was prompted by confidential information indicating large-scale opium production by criminal elements in the region.

Since February 24, the joint forces have relentlessly pursued their mission, successfully clearing a total of 74 acres of land from opium cultivation. Concurrently, efforts to apprehend the culprits behind these operations are underway through targeted raids.

City traffic police divided into 3 divisions

LAHORE (APP): In a move aimed at enhancing operational efficiency and management, the Lahore Traffic Police has been divided into three divisions, and Chief Traffic Officer Ammara Athar has issued directions for restructuring of the department.

The Traffic Police has been divided into City Division, Sadar Division, and Cantonment Division, and SP Headquarters Sohail Fazil has been appointed as SP Cantonment Division, SP Shahzad Khan in City Division, while SP Malik Akramullah has been assigned to Sadar Division. The Lahore Traffic Police now comprises three divisions, 10 circles, and 34 traffic sectors, while formation of the new division is expected to improve working environment significantly, said CTO Ammara Athar.

DC reviews cleanliness arrangements

LAHORE (APP): Implementation of the vision of a neat and clean Punjab, initiated by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, has begun. Lahore Deputy Commissioner Rafia Haider made a sudden visit to Outfall Road here on Wednesday and assessed cleanliness and maintenance arrangements. The presence of Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) staff in the field was also checked.

The DC said strict action would be taken against supervisors in case of field workers' absence from duty. All temporary

waste collection points would be maintained waste-free on a daily basis, he added. It was further emphasised that Lahore is the heart of Pakistan, the city of gardens, and cleanliness of the highest standard should be ensured.

There should be no compromise on clearing debris from roads, streets, and alleys, he said and added that dust and dirt, accumulated on roads and footpaths, should also be cleared. According to the directives of the Punjab chief minister, Lahore would be made dust-free.

KMC cancels leaves of staffers in view of rain forecast

KARACHI (APP): Deputy Mayor Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad on Wednesday said that in view of the forecast of rain in Karachi, leaves of all relevant officers and staff have been cancelled and they have been directed to remain alert.

The Department of Municipal Services has established an emergency desk, he said this while presiding over a high-level meeting. Salman directed the officers of the relevant departments of KMC to adopt a joint action plan with the Town Municipal Corporations and Water

and Sewerage Corporation for drainage works during rains in the city.

All the machinery and pumps used for drainage should be kept in proper condition and in case of rain, the process of draining water from the roads should be started immediately so as to provide convenience to the citizens.

He said that special attention should be paid to the roads, streets and low-lying during rains.

The departments of Engineering, Municipal Services, Parks and Horticulture and other related departments should

ensure mutual cooperation and direct their officers to ensure immediate implementation of the instructions given.

The Deputy Mayor Karachi said that providing convenience to the citizens is the primary responsibility of local bodies.

He said that every possible effort is being made to solve the municipal problems wherever the people are facing in the city by doing immediate work.

We did work to save the citizens from difficulties during the rains in Karachi and still doing this before the coming rain, he added.

Speakers highlight importance of 2nd SMIU Global Research Congress

KARACHI (APP): The speakers, at the inauguration ceremony of the 2nd SMIU Global Research Congress, held at Sindh Madressatul Islam University on Wednesday, said the nations of the world were facing many challenges including environmental change, poverty, social issues and terrorism at regional as well as at the world level, therefore, we have to collectively overcome these challenges and research scholars should

find solutions of the issues through their research.

Chairman, Higher Education Commission Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed congratulated Vice Chancellor of SMIU Dr. Mujeeb Sahrai and his team for organising the most valuable Global Research Congress and said that he was delighted and honoured to be participating in the congress.

Addressing the inaugural session virtually said this congress is a very important initiative because

Consul Generals of the two best friendly countries of Pakistan China and Turkiye are participating in it along with other foreign speakers, hence we all have to think about the collective solutions to the challenges being faced by the humanity. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed said this Congress is the most important initiative in the life and history of SMIU. These congresses are providing opportunities to learners, researchers, faculty and students.

PFA takes action against five food business points

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) imposed the emergency prohibition orders (EPOs) on five food points and penalised 13 eateries with Rs 327,000 cumulative fine during an inspection drive in Gowlamandi, Wagha Town and on Sheikhupura Road.

The food safety teams visited several points to ensure provision of healthy, hygienic and adulteration-free food to consumers. He said that the raiding teams thoroughly inspected the production area, kitchen premises, food quality parameters and safety standards in a daylong operation.

The authority stopped production of five food points including meat processing units and restaurants by imposing emergency prohibition orders till further orders. He said the food authority took action over poor storage system, preserved food in dirty freezers, usage of rusty vessels and an abundance of insects.

Further, dirty water was being used to wash meat. The food points also failed to present the necessary records and medical certificates of the workers to the raiding teams on the spot, he added. Muhammad Asim said steps were being taken to bring all stages from food preparation to delivery in line with international standards. He requested people to support the Punjab Food Authority to eliminate counterfeit and adulteration mafia.

DC reviews polio drive on third day

LAHORE (APP): The second anti-polio drive of 2024, led by the district administration, continued its momentum on the third consecutive day in the provincial capital on Wednesday. Lahore Deputy Commissioner Rafia Haider visited Bilal Ganj area, overseeing the anti-polio campaign, evaluating the performance and attendance of polio workers, and emphasising strict action against any falsification of polio entries. Demonstrating commitment, the DC personally administered anti-polio drops to children under five years of age, verifying markings on their fingers and checking door markings in the area.

She received updates from Assistant Commissioner City Rai Babar and relevant

health authorities about team presence, polio drop administration, and documentation.

During the briefing, it was highlighted that over 452,112 children had received anti-polio drops during the campaign so far. As many as 124 reluctant parents were convinced to administer polio vaccination drops to their children. Special seven-day anti-polio drive would continue till March 3. DC Rafia Haider urged polio workers to execute the campaign diligently, aligning with the directives of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. Providing further instructions to the teams, the DC encouraged parents to collaborate with polio workers, emphasising the crucial role of ensuring children receive the two necessary polio drops for their future wellbeing.

Jamal Shah visits Urdu Science Board, reviews literary activities

LAHORE (APP): position and address challenges. Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Syed Jamal Shah paid a visit to the Urdu Science Board (USB) here on Wednesday.

Director of Urdu Science Board Zia Ullah Khan Toru with other officials welcomed the minister.

During a meeting chaired by Minister Syed Jamal Shah, Director Ziaullah Khan Toru briefed about the board's objectives, performance, literary activities and future plans. Zia Ullah Khan Toru said under the guidance of the federal minister, secretary and director general National Language Promotion Department took steps to enhance the institution's

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER PHE DIVISION KARAK -II.

CORRIGENDUM

Tender for the work "Solarization of Water Supply Schemes under, ADP funds" was advertised through Information Department Peshawar in daily "Aaj INF (P) 243/2024" and other newspapers of the province, the tender submission year has been wrongly mentioned in NIT i.e: 2023 instead of 2024 so therefore the correction may please accorded/changed from 2023 to 07/03/2024.

Executive Engineer
Public Health Engg: Division Karak II



LAHORE: Workers busy in dyeing (coloring) women clothes at their workplace at Kashmir Bazar.



Funeral prayer of martyred police constable offered

PESHAWAR (APP): The funeral prayer of police constable Tauseef Khan who embraced martyrdom in an encounter with criminals here last night was offered in Police Lines.

CCPO Syed Ashfaq Anwar, SSP Operations Kashif Aftab Abbasi, family members and relatives of the martyred cop and police personnel attended the funeral prayer.

Tauseef Khan was martyred in Peshawar's Badha Baer area in an encounter

Governor condoles with family members of martyred Ejaz Khan:

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali on Wednesday went to house of martyred Superintendent Police, Ejaz Khan in Sherpao and expressed condolence to his family members.

Governor offered fateha and prayed to rest the departed soul in eternal abode with peace. He said that nation is proud of the sacrifices offered by KP

police for defense and sovereignty of the motherland. He added that sacrifices offered by police would not go vain and always be remembered.

Later, he visited the Umerzai, district Charsadda and met with family members of renowned religious scholar, late Moulana Subhanullah. He prayed to rest the departed soul in peace and granting courage to family members to bear the irreparable loss with patience.

Buildings Energy Research Center inaugurated at UET Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): Vice Chancellor University of Engineering Technology (UET) Peshawar Prof. Dr. Qaisar Ali on Wednesday inaugurated the Buildings Energy Research Center (BERC) in presence of officials from NEECA and GIZ for enhancing national capabilities towards energy conservation in buildings.

The Center is a joint venture of UET Peshawar and National Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority (NEECA), Islamabad, funded by the German Federal Ministry

for Economic Cooperation and Development through GIZ Pakistan.

The Center will be a leading research hub to focus its energy conservation efforts to the "Building Sector", aimed at developing innovative approaches to optimizing building performance through latest research and best practices from across the world.

Dr. Naveed Ahmad, Director BERC informed that the Center will encourage designs that reduce energy consumption based on sustainability, low cost

Food Authority taken action

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority Peshawar team raided a factory in Mian Gujjar that was manufacturing tea leaves from unhealthy ingredients, said the spokesperson of the Food Authority here on Wednesday.

He said more than 2000 kg of unhealthy and sub-standard tea leaves were seized after exporting them. Tea leaves were being prepared from non-food coloring, bran, used tea, gypsum powder and molasses syrup in very poor sanitary conditions, said the spokesman.

The owners fled after seeing the Food Authority officials, spokesperson said, adding initiation of action under Food Safety Act against factory owners was taken.

FIA arrests suspect

PESHAWAR (APP): The FIA Banking Circle here on Wednesday arrested an accused involved in running an illegal exchange of hawala, hundi, and currency during an operation in the Firdous Sabzi Mandi.

Under the directives of Peshawar Zone Director, Nisar Tanoli, a crackdown was initiated against individuals involved in hawala transactions.

During the raid, suspect Naseemullah was arrested for running an illegal money exchange, and an amount of Rs 13.90 million was recovered.

The team also seized records related to hawala transactions and foreign currency transactions.

The FIA authorities stated that the arrested suspect had failed to give satisfactory answers about the source of the recovered currency.

A case has been registered against the suspect, and further investigation is underway.

Lady thief arrested

PESHAWAR (APP): A woman trying to escape the Bus Rapid Transit station with stolen goods was arrested by the staff on Wednesday and handed over to police for legal action.

A woman stole cash amount and a mobile phone from a lady passenger and tried to escape the BRT Hayatabad Phase-3 Station but the staff took her into custody in a prompt action.

In the CCTV footage, the woman was seen crossing the fare gate in haste by going beneath it and running in the corridor to escape with the stolen goods. The staff at the gate succeeded in catching an on-the-run lady thief and later handed her over to the police.

SCCI delegation visits Fort Balahisar



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation comprising of fifty members from the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) visited the historic Balahisar Fort. The delegation was warmly welcomed by Inspector General Frontier Corps North, Major General Noor Wali Khan, on Wednesday.

The delegation was provided insights into the rich history of Frontier Corps North and highlighted ongoing peace and welfare

initiatives across various areas including Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Swat, Malakand and Chitral. During the interactive session, IGFC Major General Noor Wali Khan commended the pivotal role played by the Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry in driving the economic development of the country.

IG FC further elaborated on the resources available to bolster trade activities along the Pak-Afghan border, particularly at Torkham, emphasizing the

need for collaborative efforts to enhance trade prospects in the region.

The delegation expressed gratitude towards the Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps for their relentless efforts in establishing peace and fostering development in KPK. The delegation presented proposals aimed at facilitating smoother cross-border trade operations, including initiatives to streamline merchandise movement between Torkham and Nawapars premises.

LRH establishes smoking cessation clinic

PESHAWAR (INP): A smoking cessation clinic has been established at Lady Reading Hospital (LRH) Peshawar with an aim to facilitate the cigarette addicted people.

According to Dr Ehtesham of LRH's Pulmonology Department, "The clinic has been established at the OPD (Outdoor Patient Department) and services are provided from 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. on every Monday."

He said the consultation meeting on the draft action plan proposed legislative reforms regarding e-cigarettes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He apprised participants that the smok-

ing cessation clinic is in its initial phase and focusing on staff members of the hospital.

Dr. Ehtesham said the smokers are treated with two separate medicines, depending on the level and addiction to nicotine besides judging withdrawal severity.

He said that about 23 percent of the total population of Pakistan was smoker. According to World Health Organization (WHO) in 2018 there were around 24 million smokers in the country, however the number has surged to 27 million, he added.

Chairing the meeting, Deputy Director of Public

Health, Dr. Majid appreciated the efforts of the hospital management, staff and praised the idea of center.

The participants of the meeting stressed the awareness about hazards of smoking, especially the modern form of addiction including e-cigarettes, nicotine pouches, and sheesha. The participants also suggested holding seminars in educational institutions to sensitize the students.

It was suggested that anti-smoking messages be displayed as graffiti on the backs of rickshaws, buses, bus stops, and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stations.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Special Assistant for Transport Zafar Ullah Khan Umarzai giving a shield to Director Zeeshan Abdullah.



PESHAWAR: Workers of Awami National Party protesting outside KP Assembly against election rigging.

PHC issues transfer orders of 80 judicial officers

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) issued posting and transfer orders of 80 judicial officers across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Wednesday.

In the regard, PHC's Registrar Inam Ullah Wazir issued a press release stating that Arshad Ali is transferred from Haripur to Dargai, Ijaz Mehsud posted at PHC from Mardan court, Aziz Ahmad transferred to Malakand, Adnan Iqbal is transferred from Abbotabad to Peshawar and Iram Noreen is posted as Deputy Registrar Legal.

Moreover, Sareer Shah has been transferred from Takhtbhai to Upper Dir, Syed Furqan transferred to Hawalyan, Murtaza Khan posted at DI Khan, Muhammad Ikram at Tangi, Muhammad Waqar, Abdul Qayyum Khan & Muhammad Anwar transferred to Peshawar, Nazima Shah to Bannu, Tanveer Ahmad & Riaz Ahmad to Swabi and Zulfiqar Ahmad Khan posted at Chakdarra courts.

Although, Jameel Faqir transferred to Peshawar from Chitral, Tariq Khan to Battagram, Syed Wajah Ali Shah to Swabi, Muhammad Lateef Shah to Takhti Nasrati, Atta Rafiq to Malakand, Sanam Khalid to Mardan, Khurram Shahzad to Matta, Abdul Kaleem Khan to Karak, Faraena Mehreen to Charsadda and Kanza Shaukat transferred from Lakki Marwat to Bannu's courts.

Muhammad Haris Nasir transferred from Swat to Pahari Pur (DI Khan), Haroon Rasheed to Mansehra, Muhammad Kashif Khan to Swat, Waheed Alam to Swabi, Maryam Atta to Manshera Mashal Lateef to Kohat, Khadija Raheem to Mardan and Atizaz Hassan transferred from DI Khan to Takhti Nasrati courts, Karak district.

One killed, two injured in accident

PESHAWAR (APP): A terrible collision between a motorcycle and a truck at Pishtakhara Chowk, killed one child and two other injured, Rescue 1122 officials said here on Wednesday.

As soon as the rescue control room received the information about the accident, the medical team of Rescue 1122 reached the accident site along with the ambulance. As a result of the accident, a 9-year-old child died and two other injured including 38-year-old Sajjad and 22-year-old Jahangir. The Rescue team provided medical aid to the injured and shifted them to HMC Hayatabad.

Attack on female MPA condemned

PESHAWAR (APP): The provincial spokesman of PML-N Ikhtiar Wali on Wednesday strongly condemned an attack by PTI workers on a female Member of Provincial Assembly in the Assembly Hall.

In a press statement issued here, he said PTI workers gave a demonstration of their filthy training on the first day of assembly session.

The nominated Chief Minister of the province had invited all the goons in the assembly hall, he remarked.

Anti-polio campaign: Meeting reviews preparations

PESHAWAR (APP): The Commissioner Peshawar Division, Muhammad Zubair here Wednesday chaired a meeting to review preparation for upcoming anti-polio campaign that was scheduled to start from March 3 to March 9.

The meeting was attended by deputy commissioners of all five districts of Peshawar Division, Khyber and Mohmand, District Police Officers, District Health Officers and representatives of local govern-

ments.

The meeting discussed and reviewed the preparations and finalized plan to achieve target of anti-polio campaign. The meeting also directed foolproof security arrangements for polio workers.

Chairing the meeting, Commissioner Peshawar Division directs district administrations to furnish report of the campaign on daily basis and take action against those who neglect their duties. He also

expressed pleasure over compliance of parents in Mohmand district who once refused vaccination to their children.

He also directed deputy commissioners to monitor the campaign under micro plan and utilization of available resources to achieve desired targets. He also directed to start awareness campaign from February 29 and said that elders and ulema should be engaged to placate refusing parents.

KP govt takes notice of substandard CNG cylinders

PESHAWAR (APP): The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has decided to take action against substandard compressed natural gas (CNG) cylinders to prevent explosions in all vehicles across the province.

According to an official statement released on Wednesday, the Home and Tribal Affairs Department

KP has ordered the district administration, transport administration, and related departments to start cracking down against vehicles with substandard compressed natural gas (CNG) cylinders.

Moreover, the Energy & Power Department KP has warned owners of public transport vehicles and private vehicles using substan-

dard CNG cylinders to immediately replace them with Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) approved standard cylinders.

The department stated that stern action will be taken against those who fail to follow these regulations and continue using substandard cylinders in buses, rickshaws, wagons, and private vehicles.

Youth Climate Education and Fellowship Program with UoP



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Transparency International (TI) Pakistan has launched a Youth Climate Education and Fellowship Program (YCEFP) under its Climate Governance Integrity Programme.

In the first phase, the fellowship has been launched in collaboration with University of Peshawar.

The main objective of this fellowship is to engage and enhance the capacity of university students in understanding and addressing climate change challenges by equipping them with skills and exposure on climate policies, advocacy, and social accountability.

The fellowship will provide educational enhancement regarding basic con-

cepts of climate change, impact assessment, mitigation strategies, adaptation techniques and social accountability, practical engagement, and training of youth in understanding climate policies and communication strategies. This year-long fellowship will engage students through workshops, innovation challenges, and community outreach programs.

In the launching ceremony at University of Peshawar, a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between TI Pakistan and UoP for enhancing students understanding on climate governance transparency, leadership development and participation in climate discourse.

Dr. Bushra Khan, Director Planning and

Development Department, Peshawar, Professor Dr. Muhammad Saleem, Vice Chancellor, University of Peshawar, Mr. Kashif Ali, Executive Director, TI Pakistan and Dr. Shakeel Khan, Lecturer, University of Peshawar were present at the MoU signing ceremony.

This partnership aims to foster a proactive approach in addressing climate change challenges by equipping students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and exposure. Through workshops, innovation challenges, and community outreach programs, the MoU sets the stage for a year-long fellowship that engages students in practical learning experiences related to climate policies, advocacy, and social accountability.

PESCO notifies power suspension

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Wednesday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from Warsak Power House on 29th February from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. resultantly, consumer of 132 KV Warsak, Peshawar Cantt, Regi Model Town, Shahi Bagh and Sakhi Chashma grid connected feeders will face inconvenience.

Likewise, it said power supply will remain suspended from Peshawar

Cantt Grid Station on 29th February from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Palosi, PAF Base and University Town feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will also remain suspended from Warsak Grid Station on 29th February from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of Kachori 1,2, Mathra 1, 2, Safdar Abad, Swat Scout, Shagai Industrial, Hajizai and Deri Kandi feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from

Mardan Grid Station on 29th February from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Nawa Kale, Sheikh Maltoon, Misri Abad, Basha Khan Medical Complex, Eid Gah, Bagh Iram and Rural 1 feeders will face inconvenience.

Power supply will also remain suspended from Haripur Grid Station on 29th February from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of T&T, Mirpur 1 and TIP feeders will face inconvenience.



In brief

Commissioner chairs meeting Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: A meeting to review the revenue situation held under the chairmanship of Commissioner Kohat Division, Muhammad Abid Khana at his office, on Wednesday. The meeting beside the Deputy Commissioner Kohat Dr. Azmatullah Wazir was also attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Kohat, Assistant Commissioners of Kohat and Lachi, Additional Assistant Commissioners and other relevant officers and officials of the Revenue Department. In the meeting, revenue officers informed in detail about the performance of their respective tehsils while the Deputy Director (Database) gave a briefing regarding land record computerization in Kohat. Commissioner Kohat directed the revenue officers to inform the public regarding the steps so far taken for their facilitation. He sternly directed the staff to take immediate steps for the welfare and facilitation of the people.

Cop martyred in Muridke firing

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): A police constable was martyred in firing of unidentified armed men in Muridke district Sheikhpura on Wednesday. Inspector General (IG) Punjab Police taking the notice of incident has sought a report from Regional Police Officer (RPO) Sheikhupura. According to details, unidentified gunmen sprayed bullets at Constable Bilal while he was routine patrolling at Narowal in jurisdiction of Muridke City police station. The police official was critically injured in the firing and succumbed to his wounds while being shifted to Tehsil Headquarter (THQ) Hospital Muridke. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar taking notice of the incident has sought a report from RPO Sheikhupura. On directions of RPO, the District Police Officer (DPO) Zahid Nawaz Marwat has constituted special teams to arrest the culprits.

UoM approves 5 new departments F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The University of Malakand (UoM) has approved the establishment of 5 new departments in the Faculty of Information Technology. A meeting of the Board of Faculty, chaired by Prof. Dr. Jamil Ahmad, Dean Faculty of Information Technology, University of Malakand after a thorough discussion and SWOT analysis, unanimously recommended the establishment of 5 new departments, under the Faculty of IT, UoM. The new departments included Department of Artificial Intelligence, Department of Bioinformatics, Department of Cyber Security, Department of Data Science and Department of Multimedia and Gaming. Meanwhile, the Directorate of Students Societies, University of Malakand in collaboration with Fatimid Foundation, Peshawar & Blood Chain Pakistan, Malakand Chapter organized a blood donation camp at the university here on Wednesday. The university spokesman said around 121 Students from various teaching departments of University of Malakand donated blood in the camp. The VC UoM Prof. Dr. Rashid Ahmad, Prof. Dr. Jamil Ahmad, Dean Faculty of IT & Deputy Director, Students Societies, Jamil Anwar Abbasi highly acknowledged the efforts of student organizers saying that blood donation is a noble cause to save the lives of patients suffering from thalassemia.

8 persons including 5 policemen injured in road mishaps

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: As many as nine people including five policemen were injured in separate road accidents in Lakki Marwat district, said police and rescue officials on Wednesday.

According to details, the policemen were injured when their van capsized on Indus Highway near Khankot Tajazai. The police van overturned in a bid to save a motorcyclist on the busy Peshawar-Karachi highway, said a police official. They identified the injured as Muhammad Niaz, Waqas, Hayatullah and Khursheed Alam, residents of Bannu and driver Barkatullah, a resident of Titerkhel Lakki Marwat.

A rescue official said that the injured cops were shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital located at Tajazai wherefrom driver Barkatullah was referred to Khalifa Gul Nawaz Hospital in Bannu.

After the accident, Lakki Marwat DPO Tariq Habib along with DSP Headquarters Muhammad Nawaz Khan visited the hospital and inquired after

the wounded policemen.

Separately, a truck overturned due to a brake fail on Lakki-Darra Tang section of busy Bannu-Mianwali road, inflicting injuries to four men onboard. A rescue 1122 official said that the injured included Naveed, a resident of Eesakhel (Punjab), Hikmatullah of Darra Tang (Laki Marwat), Saeed Anwar and Rehmanullah, residents of Karak. He said that the injured had been shifted to the Government City Hospital.

Four alleged culprits including one PO held: Police arrested four suspects including a proclaimed offender during a search and strike operation in Shahbazkhel town of Lakki Marwat district on Wednesday.

An official said that a police party led by SHO Zaman Shah launched the operation on receiving credible information about the presence of wanted men and drug traffickers in the rural localities. He said that the cops raided a hideout of criminals in the Masha Mansoor area and captured a proclaimed offender Zakirullah there.

"The arrested man was

wanted by police in as murder case", he claimed, adding that another suspect identified as Hidayatullah who was a facilitator of criminals was held during a raid in Jhangkhel and a pistol and bullets were seized from him. He said that the law enforcers also raided a suspected hideout of a dreaded outlaw in Sherikhel village and seized arms and ammunition from the place.

The official said that during the raids, police also arrested a suspect Fazal Waheed who was facing charges of torturing a citizen Junaid in Badnikhel area. "Police also came hard on narcotics sellers and captured a drug trafficker identified as Abdul Samad and recovered a small quantity of ice drug from him", he added.

Meanwhile, DPO Tariq Habib appreciated Shahbazkhel police for their result-oriented actions against anti-social elements and drug barons. He said that the subordinate police officials should follow the footprints of their colleague SHO Zaman Shah to purge their respective area of jurisdictions of all sorts of crimes and vices.

Traders observe shutter down in Bara

F.P. Report

BARA: Business centers in Qamberabad, Bara, Bazaar suspended against allegedly unjustified taxes imposed by the Tehsil Municipal Officer. It is to be mentioned here that on refusal of paying tax, traders' leader Said Ayaz Wazir was put behind the bars following the First Information Report (FIR) lodged by Tehsil Municipal Officer (TMO), Bara.

The local shopkeepers and businessmen closed down their trading centers and refused to resume their

trade till release of their leader and transfer of the TMO, who embezzled million rupees funds, collected from the Bazaar on a daily basis.

Addressing on the occasion leaders of the trading union, Bara said that they had suffered a lot in the last two in militancy and hardly resumed their businesses however the unfair taxes implemented by the TMO, a deliberate effort to compel the traders to close their businesses.

Instead of providing relief to the traders, the government imposes vari-

ous kinds of taxes on the militancy hit trading centers of merged tribal districts, they lamented.

They went on that the Bara Bazaar lacked basic facilities like supply of electricity, potable water, poor drainage system, security, street lights etc. while the concerned authorities put into practice several taxes that looked illogical. The traders demanded of the government to abolish taxes and adopt necessary initiatives for the relief and security of the local business community.



QUETTA: Security personnel blocked the main road going towards Balochistan Assembly for public during oath taking ceremony of newly elected members.

Students hold protest for transport facilities

F.P. Report

LARKANA: The students protested against the lack of buses in the campus of Sindh University in Larkana, in front of the main gate of the university. Sarang Abro, Bilal Jatoti, Vicky Jagirani and others while addressing the protestors on this occasion said that one-point bus is not enough for more than 200 students studying in the university due to which they are facing problems.

The speakers said that the university's vice-chancellor Zahid Hussain Kahand has caused the university to run into problems even before it was activated, due to which there are no point buses in the university, which has led to all the students are suffering from problems, he demanded from the governor of Sindh that the vice chancellor of the university, Zahid Hussain Kahand, should be transferred and an honest vice chancellor should be appointed to ensure the solution of the problems faced by the students in the university.

Meanwhile, District Sessions Judge of Larkana Syed Ashrafuddin Shah has resigned from his post for making allegations against Bi Court Larkana Bench Judge Chastity Saleem Jaysar, was recruited by Justice Salim

Jaisar's secretary Muhammad Malik on my refusal. I was threatened while coming to the office, while I have been a part of the judiciary for the last 27 years, so I cannot perform my duties in such an environment of humiliation. situation has arisen.

Meanwhile, the Education Department protested in front of the Larkana Press Club against not issuing the offer order to the candidates who were successful in the interviews by the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) 20 years ago to appoint the vacant posts of primary and junior school teachers in Larkana.

The protestors were holding placards with the slogans of "Issuing offer order to test pass candidates". On this occasion, while addressing the protestors, the candidates of Larkana, Baqrani, Dokri, Ratodero, Nadeem Laghari, Sohail, were addressing the protestors. Kahuso, Athar Soomro, Batul Tahira and others said that on September 2021, interviews were conducted by IBA Sukhar for the appointment of primary teachers and junior elementary school teachers. Even after passing, the offer order was not issued, which is a complete excess, while the orders of the preferred candidates were issued on August

2023, which are still against the approved policies of the cabinet.

He appealed to the elected Chief Minister of Sindh and the Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court and said that justice should be done to more than three thousand test pass candidates of Larkana district and while issuing the offer orders for the recruitment of teachers, the puzzle was the period of restlessness.

Eight held

SARGODHA (INP): The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) task force arrested eight accused involved in power theft during crackdowns here on Wednesday.

According to details, the task-force of FESCO conducted raids against power pilferers in various areas of Sargodha. During separate actions, eight accused involved in power theft from main lines and meter tampering including Nisar Ahmad, Khadim Hussain, Deewan Ali, Arshad, Abu Obaida, Dost Muhammad, Ishfaq and Aoun Muhammad were arrested. The police registered separate cases against the nabbed power pilferers and started investigations.



LARKANA: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah offering Fateha on grave of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh.

Right to Information key for democratic norms Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: University of Swat has officially entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Media Matters for Democracy. This collaborative effort aims to enhance capacity-building activities within the Department of Media and Communication Studies.

The MOU was signed by Mr. 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 environment 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.

One killed, 26 injured in armed clash F.P. Report

SUJAWAL: A fierce armed clash between Rajo and Bhatti communities left a man dead and 25 others critically injured near Jati town of district Sujawal on Wednesday morning.

Unabated use of guns and hatchets made people of Jati city witness rarest blood-shed of its history.

According to sources the two groups were at draggers-drawn over a piece of land located in Deh Khantiyo of Taluka Jati district Sujawal. Area police besieged the place where the howling skirmish broke out. Station House Officer of Jati Police station said that the incident has created fear in the locality, while strong contingents have been deployed there to prevent any flare-up.

The injured were shifted to Taluka Hospital Jati where an emergency was declared by the district health officer. Lack of facilities at the hospital made it tough for the staff to deal with the situation. The concerned SHO revealed that out of 27 victims a man identified as Aslam Rajo succumbed to his injuries while he was being transported to the hospital.

The injured included four women and two children. The doctors who received victims at the hospital said that the condition of 9 injured was critical following which they had been referred to Karachi. Police had cordoned off the area of registering initial report of the incident.

School killed

MIAN CHANNU (INP): A speeding car crushed a school student to death in Mian Channu, Khanewal, Punjab, police said on Wednesday.

Price hike hits public before Ramazan

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Even before the arrival of the month of Ramazan the genie of inflation came out of the bottle, which has made people cry, stockiest and wholesalers have become active, the prices of essential items have been increased before the arrival of Ramazan. No package has been announced by the federal government for the month of Ramazan, no steps have been taken by the district administration to set up a Sasta Bazar, while the market committee is also inactive.

According to the details, before the arrival of Ramazan, the month of blessings, the stockiest and wholesalers have become active, hoarders have created an artificial shortage by hoarding food items on a large scale, due to which sugar, pulses, rice, gram flour, milk, yogurt, cooking oil, vegetables, fruits are in short supply even before the month of Ramazan, the prices of beverages, chicken meat, beef and mutton,

dates and items used in Iftar have doubled many times.

The federal government has not yet announced any package in the month of Ramadan, on the other hand, no steps have been taken by the district administration to set up a Sasta Bazar to provide relief to the fasting people, while the market committee is also inactive, people say that the genie of inflation has come out of the bottle even before the arrival of Ramadan. People have demanded from the rulers and the district administration to take action against hoarders and wholesalers and provide relief to the fasting people by controlling the artificial inflation.

Right to Info stressed: Saiban Development Organization organized a one-day training and awareness session for youth on access to services, access to information program with the support of CPDI and Individual land apart from youth, disabled people and others participated in the session.

Speaking at the training

and awareness session, Muhammad Arif (President Saiban Development Organization) and Farhan Zaid (District Monitoring Officer) said that the youth should be empowered and they should have access to information related to various departments and youth should be given opportunities to express their opinions.

He said that the cooperation of the youth is necessary for better governance and it is necessary to raise their voice to solve the problems. He further said in one-day session that for governance, the youth should perform their duties with their best and professional skills. He said that only representative elected and accountable local governments can ensure direct expenditure on the provision of basic human rights related to human development such as education, health, water and sanitation facilities. The majority of people believe in the importance of local governments in providing basic services.

Peshawar Literature Festival 2024 concluded

F.P. Report

KARAK: The 3rd Dosti Peshawar Literature Festival 2024 concluded at Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak. The event, hosted by the university in collaboration with University of Peshawar, featured a multitude of literary activities, including panel discussions, poetry sessions, and engaging dialogues.

The Chief Guest for the concluding ceremony was the Vice Chancellor of Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, Prof. Dr. Naseer-ud-Din. Addressing the attendees, Prof. Dr. Naseer Ud Din expressed his enthusiasm for such events, emphasizing their crucial role in enriching literature and culture. He highlighted the importance of mental refreshment and change in the lives of individuals, considering them



inevitable for survival.

"I appreciate the organizers for their commendable efforts in putting together such a rich festival. These events play a pivotal role in fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of our literary heritage," remarked Prof. Dr. Naseer Ud Din during his speech.

The festival brought together a diverse range of literary enthusiasts, including students, faculty members, and guests. The Registrar of Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak, Dr. Rafi Ullah Khan, along with other faculty members, actively participated

in the concluding ceremony.

The festival has the vibrant literary landscape of the region, featuring thought-provoking discussions on various subjects, poetry, and interactive sessions that captivated the audience. It served as a platform for fostering intellectual growth and promoting a love for literature and culture. The organizing committee expressed their gratitude to all participants and sponsors for their support in making the 3rd Dosti Peshawar Literature Festival a resounding success.

Spring plantation drive kicks off in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The administration launched the spring plantation drive in the Lower Dir district here the other day. The deputy commissioner Wasil Khan along with divisional forest officer Shahid Noor Khattak, sub divisional forest officer Muquid Khan SDFO Wasil Khan and other officials planted several saplings at Balambat during a function and kicked off the drive. Speaking on the occasion the DC said that 75000 saplings would be planted during the drive. He directed the forest and environment departments to take local farmers, social activists and volunteers into confidence for making the drive a success.

He said that awareness sessions regarding tree plantation and its importance would be organized in educational institutions in the district. The DC said that

evergreen trees would also be planted at offices, schools, colleges, sport grounds and barren hilly areas. He said that special sessions would be held for local farmers and volunteers regarding spring plantation so that more trees could be planted this year. He also asked the local communities to play their active role in forest preservation as trees had great importance for keeping the environment clean and healthy.

Meanwhile the directorate of religious education, federal education and professional training center Islamabad arranged a function at the deputy commissioner's office regarding the seminary's registration certificate. Seminaries' heads from different areas of the district attended the function.

The National Commission for Human Development (NCHD)'s assistant director

Muhammad Asad Khan briefed the participants about the objectives and process of seminaries' registration. The district registration and facilitation officer Murad Ali and NCHD district monitoring officer Ashfaq Ahmad also spoke. The DC Wasil Khan awarded registration certificates to seminaries' heads. He lauded the efforts of ulema and seminaries for maintaining peace and brotherhood in the area.

Senior teachers: Senior secondary school teachers would soon be promoted to the posts of subject specialists and headmasters as the provincial directress has promised to prepare working papers for promotion within days. This was stated by the president of the SST association Lower Dir Ikram Khan while addressing a meeting held at Timergara here on Tuesday. Senior SSTs awaiting their promotion attended the meeting.



Russian defeat in Ukraine vital for security in Europe

PARIS (BBC): French President Emmanuel Macron has said it is key for Europe's security to defeat Russia in Ukraine, amid urgent pleas for more weapons from Kyiv. He was speaking in Paris where he said that European leaders had agreed to set up a coalition to give Ukraine medium- and long-range missiles and bombs.

He added that there was "no consensus" on sending Western troops to Ukraine but "nothing should be excluded". Russian troops made recent gains in Ukraine which faces big arms shortages. Kyiv is critically dependent on modern armoury supplies from its Western allies, particularly the US, to be able to continue fighting Russia - a far bigger military force with an abundance of artillery ammunition.

But the approval of a much needed \$95bn (£75bn) US aid package - including \$61bn for Ukraine - faces an uphill battle in the House of Representatives. Last weekend, Ukraine's defence minister said half of all Western aid for Kyiv had been delayed, costing lives and territory. Hungary blocked a statement sent to EU member countries by the European Council President Charles Michel, pledging "unwavering" support for Ukraine. Prime Minister Viktor Orban - the only EU leader who maintains warm relations with Russia's President Vladimir Putin - has been repeatedly at odds with the bloc over measures to help Kyiv since Russia's invasion. Hungary's foreign minister reiterated that Budapest is

not willing to send weapons or troops to Ukraine. Péter Szijjártó said: "The war in Ukraine must be finished, not expanded." As Kyiv struggles to secure more aid and weapons to continue fighting Russia, the Kremlin's need for extra ammunition has reportedly taken it to an unlikely player in this war. South Korea says that North Korea has shipped as many as three million shells to Russia, for use in its war in Ukraine. Its defence minister, Shin Won-sik, said that in return, Moscow had sent thousands of containers of food. Both Moscow and Pyongyang deny North Korea is supplying Russia with munitions. A full-scale invasion of Ukraine launched by Russian President Vladimir Putin is now in its third year, with no signs that the biggest war in Europe since World War Two could end soon. Crisis meeting in support of Ukraine was attended by heads of European states, including German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, and top government officials like UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron. Delegations from the US and Canada were also present. President Macron said: "We are convinced that the defeat of Russia is indispensable to security and stability in Europe."

Describing Russia as the "sole aggressor", he said, "We are not at war with the Russian people. We just don't want to let them win." Mr Macron announced that a coalition would provide Ukraine with "missiles and bombs of medium and long range to carry out deep strikes". He did not say when such

weapons would be delivered. And he did not rule out sending Western ground troops to Ukraine but acknowledged that differences remained among the allies. "There was no consensus today to send troops on to the ground in a manner that's official, assumed and endorsed," he said. "But on the dynamic, nothing should be excluded. We will do everything so that Russia can't win this war." "We should not exclude that there might be a need for security that then justifies some elements of deployment," he added. "But I've told you very clearly what France maintains as its position, which is a strategic ambiguity that I stand by." Czech Prime Minister Petr Fiala earlier said his country had no intention of deploying its forces to fight in Ukraine. He was reacting to comments by his Slovak counterpart Robert Fico, who was quoted by Reuters news agency as saying: "I can confirm there are countries that are prepared to send their own troops to Ukraine, there are countries that say never, among which Slovakia belongs, and there are countries that say this proposal needs to be considered." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, who also took part in meeting by video link, said that "everything we do together to defend against Russian aggression adds real security to our nations for decades to come". Russia has repeatedly warned that any Western troop deployment in Ukraine would trigger a direct conflict between Moscow and the Nato military alliance.

Latvia extends an entry ban on Russian tourists

HELSINKI (AP): Latvia's government has extended restrictions on the entry of Russian citizens into the Baltic country until next year, citing Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine which officials say is "still posing a threat to the internal security of Latvia." The Cabinet of Prime Minister Evika Siliņa decided to lengthen the entry conditions on Russian citizens until March 4, 2025.

Russian citizens will continue to be banned from entering Latvia, a European Union country, for the purposes of tourism and leisure, the government said in a statement. However, some Russians will be permitted to enter, including those with residence permits valid in Latvia or another EU member state, or Russians whose entry is related to humanitarian considerations like political dissidents. In September 2022, Poland and the Baltic states - Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - reached a joint agreement to restrict the numbers of Russian citizens coming to their countries to prevent alleged security risks amid Russia's war in nearby Ukraine. NATO member Latvia, a country of 1.9 million people that borders Russia, is home to a sizable ethnic Russian minority that makes up about 25% of the country's population. The Baltic Sea nation previously has been a popular vacation venue and its capital, Riga, a popular weekend destination for Russian tourists.

Two people shot dead in Guinea

GUINEA (AFP): Two youths were shot dead in Conakry as Guinea's capital was paralysed on the first day of an open-ended general strike against the military government that seized power in 2021 stands accused of stifling dissent. A confederation of the main unions has urged public and private sectors to strike for the release of a prominent media activist, lower food prices, and an end to media censorship.

Schools, shops, markets, and roads were empty in Conakry and hospitals only offered skeletal services as youths set up barricades on arterial thoroughfares. Sporadic clashes broke out in some outskirts and two young men were shot dead. "They killed our son, they targeted him and shot him in the neck," Adama Keita, a relative of an 18-year-old who was caught up in clashes with security forces, told the AFP news agency. This was confirmed by a witness and a police source, speaking on condition of anonymity. "I saw the motionless body of this teenager, I had tears in my eyes, and I immediately left the scene so as not to be associated with this type of crime," the police source told AFP. Another young man died elsewhere in similar circumstances, a doctor at the hospital where he died told AFP. The strike comes a week after the military unexpectedly dissolved the transitional government - which had been in office since July 2022 - without providing a reason or announcing when a new one would be installed. The military also ordered that the passports of government members be seized and their bank accounts frozen.

Protests have become rare under General Mamady Doumbouya, leader of the military government that took power in a September 2021 coup. Doumbouya has not spoken publicly since the start of the year, despite a deadly explosion at the country's main oil depot in December that left at least eight people dead, paralysing Guinea for several weeks. The military leaders banned all demonstrations in 2022 and arrested several opposition leaders, civil society members, and journalists. Television channels have been removed and radio frequencies disrupted in a crackdown on media outlets. The unions have called for the immediate and unconditional release of Sekou Jamal Pendessa, secretary-general of the Union of Press Professionals of Guinea (SPPG), who was arrested at the end of January for "participating in an unauthorised protest".



GAZA: A child holds an empty pan as he waits with others to receive hot food distributed by a charity in Gaza City.

Catalonia's farmers demand more help over drought

BARCELONA (BBC): The smell of barbecued artichokes wafts along a row of dozens of tractors parked in central Barcelona, as rock music blares out of speakers, and wine is poured into plastic cups. The scene is festive, but this is a protest, not a party. Hundreds of Catalan farmers have driven into their region's capital to voice their grievances, central to which is the climate.

"We're now in a situation where we have a full-on drought," says Xavier Oliva, an artichoke farmer who owns land just outside the city. "If it doesn't rain you can't plant anything." Oliva and his colleagues are protesting about a range of issues, including what they see as overly tight EU farming regulations. But the most immediate threat to their profession is posed by lack of water, and they are calling for more direct help from the regional government. In late January, the water level of reservoirs supplying Barcelona and the towns surrounding it in the Ter-Llobregat basin system had dropped on average to below 16% of capacity.

The regional government of Catalonia responded by declaring a state of emergency affecting around six million people. That triggered the introduction of a range of restrictions on water use. For livestock farmers that means only being allowed to consume half the water they would normally use, and for crop farmers like Mr Oliva, it means reducing water use by 80%. "We'll plant 80% less crop than normal, or even less than that," says Mr Oliva, who is part of the El Prat farming cooperative, as he looks ahead to the coming months. "It's pushing us closer and closer to a situation where we'll have to shut down our farms." Other measures introduced as part of the state of emergency include capping the amount of water town halls allow for consumption per day to 200 litres per person, with water pressure being reduced in towns where consumption has been particularly

high. Also, river flows are being regulated, with their flows heavily reduced. A number of restrictions have already been in place over the last year or so, with decorative fountains switched off, and tight controls on the watering of gardens and parks and the use of water for cleaning streets. However, the new measures, which will include the arrival of boatloads of water from other Spanish regions if the drought continues, are much more drastic. "We wanted to be cautious and then begin to anticipate, plan and be prepared for the worst-case scenarios, like the one we have now," says Meritxell Serret, Catalonia's minister for foreign action. Catalonia had a drought in 2007-08, but it only lasted around half the duration of this one, which began in the autumn of 2020, and is the worst since records began more than a century ago.

A 2021 drought plan drawn up by the regional government has sought to manage the impact of the current period of abnormally low rainfall. Irrigation systems have been modernised, leaks in water pipelines mended, and a total of 2.4bn (\$2.6bn; £2bn) is scheduled to be invested in increasing water production capacity in the region by 2027. There has been a major drive to diversify Catalonia's water sources away from rainfall, meaning that 55% of consumption in the area affected by the drought is covered by desalinated and recycled water, with those sources due to double their output in the next three years. "What we've been trying to stress for the last three years is how to prepare for these drought scenarios, how to be more resilient regarding the negative expectations regarding climate change in the Mediterranean," says Ms Serret. Temperatures are rising in the Mediterranean region 20% faster than the global average, according to the UN's Climate Programme. Other areas of Spain, such as the southern region of Andalusia, are also suffering drought, although so far

only Catalonia has declared a state of emergency. On the outskirts of Barcelona, Canaletas, a company that makes and exports drinking fountains, is implementing the new norms imposed by the regional government, including a 25% reduction in water consumption by industries. "That 25% reduction in water use, I think industry can adapt to it - not all but most industry, at least - if it's for a short time," says the company's owner, Jordi Morera. "But if this goes on indefinitely it's going to be a serious problem."

Canaletas, which employs 45 people, is installing water counters in its factory to gauge where savings can be made. Mr Morera says that toilets and bathrooms are where a lot of water use will be reduced. However, he is concerned about the viability of the new guidelines. "If your company increases its output or its personnel, reducing [water consumption] is going to be impossible," he says. Other business leaders believe that industry should be compensated for the impact of the drought and the restrictions on water use. "Measures need to be taken to offset the damage caused to companies in the form of formal financial help," says Jaume Roura, president of UPM, Barcelona's metal industry association. Mr Roura also says that the Catalan government should have acted more promptly with regard to issues such as leaks in the region's pipelines. His association is currently evaluating the possible effect of the drought on industry.

"Apart from industrial output itself, water is necessary for the whole working of industry - healthcare, personnel, food - and so we're trying to understand exactly how big the impact of this will be," he says. However, one consequence he is sure of is that less water will mean higher prices. "The consumer of the end product will have to pay for the increase in costs caused by the lack of water in the production chain," he says.

Syrian regime is stepping up its use of suicide drones

IDLIB: Syrian government forces have stepped up their use of FPV (first-person view) suicide drones of late, using them to hit military sites belonging to opposition forces as well as civilian areas in villages and towns along the front lines. The White Helmets, formally known as the Syrian Civil Defence, says there were 13 drone attacks this year up to February 22, which injured seven people, including two children.

FPV drones are classified as loitering munitions for their ability to hover near a target until it is time to strike. They are relatively cheap to make and offer a high degree of accuracy in their hits. Munir Mustafa, deputy director of the White Helmets, said the use of FPV drones by the Syrian forces, as well as Russian and Iranian allies, against civilians is a dangerous escalation, threatening lives and destroying livelihoods. "These attacks are not limited to direct loss of life and property damage, but also extend to targeting agricultural areas and the Qarqur Dam area, which threatens the livelihoods of many many families," he said. "These deliberate attacks will exacerbate food insecurity and further hinder

access to basic services, worsening the challenges faced by communities already devastated by 13 years of war," Mustafa added. The state of panic and terror that such attacks create among the people being targeted is likely to escalate and push already vulnerable communities - some who have been displaced already - to flee.

The Syrian Network for Human Rights has said with its drone attacks, the Syrian government is violating the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 2139 and 2254 and international humanitarian law regarding the distinction between civilians and fighters. "As has been the custom for 13 years, targeting civilians is the Assad regime's primary objective," Abu Amin, who monitors Syrian and Russian military and warplanes to warn civilians in Idlib of incoming attacks, told Al Jazeera. FPV drones give the operator the advantage of an aerial view that is transmitted from the camera mounted on the aircraft to virtual reality goggles or a portable monitor. The use of such drones has risen recently in the Russian war on Ukraine. And in Syria, military sources say, gov-

ernment forces make as many of the aircraft as possible domestically and use different technologies but, ultimately, the objective is the same. "The FPV suicide drones used by Assad regime forces are manufactured in research labs south of Hama under the supervision of both Russian and Iranian forces," said Abu Amin. Abu Amin believes that, in the coming days, the Syrian government forces will use more suicide drones as they improve the technology and train more operators to fly them. "The military units responsible for the drones are the 25th Division, supported by Russia, and the Republican Guard, supported by Iran," he said.

The drones, Abu Amin explained, can carry about 2kg (4.4 pounds) of explosives and have a control range of about 3.5km (2 miles) at an altitude of no more than 30 metres (100 feet). Iranian militias installed a main system for suicide drones at Hama airport as well as two affiliated points in Maarat al-Numan in Idlib countryside and the Ghab Plain, Colonel Mustafa Bakour, a defecting Syrian officer who is now a leader in the Syrian opposition forces,

told Al Jazeera. Since the systems were put in place several months ago, he added, testing of the drones and training of the operators began. "These drones have high accuracy and low cost compared to other types of weapons, such as warplanes, artillery, and missiles," Bakour said. "They have good destructive power, especially if the hit is accurate."

The attacks so far, Mustafa said, have been along the front lines between government and opposition forces, hitting "the Qarqur Dam area in northern Hama countryside, the villages of Afs and Maaret Elnaasan in western Idlib countryside, and Kafr Amma in western Aleppo countryside". Suicide drones are not new in Syria's war, Bakour said, adding that they have been used by Russia since its direct intervention in Syria in 2016, but in a limited manner. Opinions have varied on which of the Syrian government's foreign backers - Iran or Russia - are guiding this increased use of suicide drones, with Bakour believing strongly that it is Iran that is providing them and training Syrian soldiers to operate them. — Aljazeera

2 Serbs sentenced over an attack on NATO-led peacekeepers in Kosovo

PRISTINA, Kosovo (AP): A Kosovo court sentenced two ethnic Serbs to six-month jail terms for attacking NATO-led peacekeepers a year ago. But one of them will be released for time served, and the other can avoid jail time if he pays a 6,000 euro (\$6,500) fine.

Local media named them as Radosh Petrovic and Dusan Obrenovic, who had attacked KFOR troops in Zvecan, a municipality in Kosovo's north, where most of the ethnic Serb minority lives. In May, in a dispute over the validity of local elections in the Serbian minority-dominat-

ed part of northern Kosovo, Serbs clashed with security forces, including NATO-led KFOR peacekeepers working there, injuring 93 troops. In September, a Kosovo police officer and three Serb gunmen were killed in a shootout after about 30 masked men opened fire on a police patrol near the Kosovo village of Banjska. Serbia doesn't recognize Kosovo's formal declaration of independence in 2008. Both countries want to join the European Union, which is mediating a dialogue between the former foes. Brussels has warned both

that refusal to compromise jeopardizes their chances of joining the bloc. In 1999, a 78-day NATO bombing campaign ended a war between Serbian government forces and ethnic Albanian separatists in Kosovo. Serbian forces were pushed out but Belgrade still considers it a Serbian province.

The EU's brokered negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo to normalize their relations have showed slow progress, while occasional violence has fueled fears of instability in the Balkans as Russia full-scale war rages in Ukraine.

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Menace of terrorism

ANOTHER brave son of the soil, SP Ijaz Khan embraced Shahadat during an Intelligence Based Operation (IBO) against terrorists in the Katlong area of Mardan. According to the details, the encounter erupted as Law Enforcement Agencies engaged in a fierce exchange of fire with terrorists, leading to the martyrdom of a Valliant Police Officer and injuries to three Police officials. A fierce battle between the outlawed terror outfits and KP Security Forces has continued over the past months after the banned Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) called off its ceasefire in November 2022. The security forces are haunting down the terrorist groups in Erstwhile FATA and settled districts adjacent to the Pak-Afghan border. The banned outfits are on the run and trying to regain their foothold by continuous attacks against the LEAs and Police. The nationwide death tally reached over 400 including security personnel when it comes to terrorist activities across the country in the last year. The Law Enforcement Agencies were carrying out intelligence-based operations against the militants to eliminate the scourge of terrorism from the province and the Country as well.

The recent upsurge in terrorism and loss of precious lives has not only rocked the entire nation but also dispelled an unbeatable national resolve to eliminate the menace of terrorism from society. Realistically, the state and people of Pakistan have always paid a heavy price for the wrong and irrational decisions of its civilian and military leaders throughout the past that led the nation to the current economic default and meek security situation in the country. Pakistan's participation in the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was the beginning of this peril while Zia-ul-Haq's involvement in Afghan jihad and Musharraf's alliance in the US-led war on terrorism were crucial decisions in making up for this catastrophe in the country.

In 2024, Pakistan continues to grapple with the persistent menace of terrorism. The toll on human lives remains tragically high, and the country faces the grim reality of ongoing violence. Historically, the recent wave of terrorism in the country is not solely attributed to external factors. A deep-rooted ideological problem, Communal thinking, and exclusionary mindsets have contributed to the perpetuation of violence in society. Addressing religious extremism remains crucial for curbing terrorism within Pakistan. Pakistani strategists ignored two important factors during their decades-long machismo against terrorism. First, they failed to fully implement the National Action Plan (NAP) against Terrorism in the post-APS tragedy later they reconciled with the terrorist groups without considering the deep-rooted ideological conflict and agenda of the militant leaders who wanted to constitute a Khilafat in Pakistan's tribal area in pursuance of their long-held agenda behind violence and terrorism.

Pakistan's fight against terrorism is a tough and long-term endeavor, whilst, consistent efforts, sustained political will, and public support are essential to overcome that scourge. The development of targeted programs to counter radicalization and promote moderate interpretations of religion will also contribute significantly to that end. The country needs a comprehensive approach that combines military action, intelligence sharing, community engagement, economic development, and legal reforms to effectively combat terrorism in the country. Unfortunately, all successive governments put off this essential task to their successors while the catastrophe multiplied over the years and reached an almost irreversible peak. Therefore, the incumbent government must initiate full-fledged counter-terrorism and counter-extremism campaigns across the country so these perils can be eliminated from our soil once and for all.

The CASA-1000 energy project

THE World Bank has expressed its willingness to finance the Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project (CASA-1000) amid concerns among the participating countries including Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Pakistan, who feel the risk of \$ 1 billion 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. Meanwhile, the Bank demanded the appointment of international consultants to supervise progress and third-party monitoring to verify progress and contractors' payments.

The decades-old CASA-1000 (Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade Project) is a multilateral project aimed at transmitting surplus electricity from hydropower plants in Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan to Afghanistan and Pakistan. The project is a magnificent endeavour to overcome energy shortages and reduce dependency on fossil fuels in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The project attaches bulk economic benefits, job opportunities, regional connectivity and cooperation not in all participating nations but will perform a bridging role in economic and trade integration of South Asia with Central Asian Republics (CARs) and broader Eurasia regions at a later stage.

There is an acute shortage of power in South Asia, wherein the CASA-1000 project has been a ray of hope for both south asian nations to fulfil their biting energy requirements on ready to use basis. However, the project is subject to political and security risks in the region, which could impact its operation and effectiveness. Meanwhile, high construction cost, security hazard, geographical concerns and availability of financiers remained major hurdles in construction of the project. 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 in the wake of the return to power of the Taliban regime. Fortunately, the World Bank Group (WBG) has announced its readiness to restart construction work on the CASA-1000 energy project while the Islamic Emirate also lauded the World Bank's decision and ensured security of the project within the premise of its country. Historically, the Pak-Afghan region is one of the most backward territories and power deficiency has seriously obstructed the pace of development in both countries. As all parties are currently ready to implement the project on ground. Hopefully, the CASA-1000 project will be the commencement of economic revival, social development and affluence in the AfPak region in the future.

Important Notice

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



German guiltwashing in times of genocide

Omar Sabbour

ON December 14, we, a group of students at Freie Universität Berlin, occupied a lecture hall in an act of solidarity with the Palestinian people. The occupation was the first of its kind in Germany. It was peaceful although a group of counterprotesters tried to disrupt it.

The reaction of the university, however, was to call the police to clear the protesting students. Twenty of us were detained, including myself. Although both the police and the university said there were no anti-Semitic attacks or discrimination at the protest, the latter tried to justify its actions in a subsequent statement with its policy of zero tolerance on anti-Semitism. Last week, we received letters from the police notifying us that the university administration has pressed criminal charges against us for "trespassing". Meanwhile, a petition has gathered more than 26,000 signatures calling for our expulsion. Federal Minister of Education Bettina Stark-Watzinger has also publicly called for the expulsion of "the most severe cases" while the Berlin Senate is planning to push through legislation to make such disciplinary action easier.

The events of December 14 and the subsequent legal and media harassment we have faced are happening amid a society-wide assault on anyone expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people in Germany. There has been a relentless campaign to harass, scare, intimidate, silence, fire, dismiss and defund people and organisations who have dared go against the German government's and institutions' staunch support for Israel. At the heart of this vicious persecution is the nationwide guiltwashing - or the cover-up of authoritarian state policies through the pretense of addressing Germany's historical guilt for the Holocaust.

The message of the guiltwashers is clear: Germany alone is exceptional in its stance against anti-Semitism. Germany alone is fit to judge anti-Semitism. Germany, in opposing the exceptionalism of the Nazi era, is today exceptional once again but, of course, in a different and supposedly progressive way. The sheer lack of self-awareness would be amusing if it were not so tragic and if its consequences

were not so disastrous. Various Jewish authors and scholars have repeatedly pointed out the anti-Semitic nature of this guiltwashing approach.

"We have a form of anti-Semitism ... that is not even addressed as anti-Semitism, and it is the collective silencing of Jewish voices that do not abide by the dominant discourse in Germany," Emilia Roig, a Jewish French scholar and writer, said at a December event in Berlin. According to Jewish writer and researcher Emily Dische-Becker, a third of those who have been "cancelled" in Germany for alleged anti-Semitism (i.e. expressing solidarity with the Palestinians) have been Jews, including descendants of Holocaust survivors.

Guiltwashing does not fundamentally care about the safety of Jews. Otherwise, it would not be pushing a discourse that is so recklessly increasing societal tensions at a time when hate crimes against Jews, Arabs and Muslims are spiking and when inter-communal solidarity is what is most necessary. Indeed, guiltwashing is leaning in the direction of anti-Semitism - as well as anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia - because it operates on a superficial level and does not genuinely internalise the lessons of the past. It seeks to transpose anti-Semitism onto the Arab and Muslim communities to deny and cover up the persistence of German anti-Semitism in the social and political arena.

Guiltwashing does not allow Germans to take a principled stance against state terrorism, genocide and the systematic violation of human rights - something that should be the historical responsibility of any state, but especially so for the German state. Instead, Germany has adopted a robotic, mindless, unidimensional reactive position. "Never again" is promoted in the narrowest sense - which is not altogether surprising considering the lack of education within Germany about its colonial past and other victim communities of the Nazi regime. It refuses to accept that never again should mean never again for genocide against any people. Israeli government and military officials have repeatedly made clear their geno-

cidal intentions openly and unabashedly. In any context, such repeated statements would be seen as the type of rhetoric that have typically accompanied historical episodes of genocide.

And yet German officials and public figures continue to ignore them. They have also disregarded the ruling of the International Court of Justice that Israel is plausibly committing genocide, and the practical unanimity of human rights groups and most of the international community on the apartheid character of Israel and its serial historical violations of international law. Guiltwashing does not only mean acting due to a national guilt pathology. It is also a power tool. It postures as regret, but it works to further an ideal of German exceptionalism in the world and provide a cover of legitimacy for the German desire to remain a world power.

Guiltwashing allows Germany to maintain an expansionist foreign policy that reflects a racist view of the world and involves continued support for Israel and other brutal regimes throughout the Middle East. Until recently, it also included close relations with authoritarian Russia, willingly making the German economy dependent on Russian gas through the now infamous Nord Stream 2 project while the Russian army and mercenaries committed war crimes in Syria. Guiltwashing also allows Germany to cover up the increasing structural and institutional racism against various minority groups. It now easily dismisses criticisms of anti-Arab and Muslim discrimination with its supposed anti-Semitism agenda.

German exceptionalism appears to have merely substituted one form of racism for another, making use of the more permissive international environment towards that anti-Muslim and anti-Arab prejudice today. It has basically created a replacement victim community. A recent display at a carnival in Cologne illustrated well the dynamics of this process. It featured a figure of a woman wearing a keffiyeh with the well-known anti-Semitic caricatured nose, holding two dogs with Palestinian flag leashes named "hate" and "vio-

lence". The transposition of an anti-Semitic trope onto what in the German mind constitutes Palestinianness represents perfectly the racist essence of guiltwashing.

Meanwhile, in a shocking example of historical revisionism, Berlin schools are being told to distribute leaflets describing the Nakba of 1948 as a "myth" - despite even Israeli lawmakers using the term. Amid this societywide assault on international law, history, human decency and basic liberties, German academic institutions have done almost nothing. Although they should act as society's moral conscience and oppose the current distorted, deeply pathological public discourse, they are shirking away from their responsibilities.

In meetings we have had with university officials, we have heard that speaking up would be too political or "polarised", that it is beyond the mandate of academia and that the autonomy of universities is limited by their status as public institutions. This appeasing stance is in sharp contrast to the historical lessons being taught at German universities about past failures of German institutions to push back against discourses of collective demonisation.

Until this state of affairs changes, the German state and institutions will continue to delude themselves that they are trying to atone for past sins. They will continue trying to escape responsibility for the consequences of that past by failing to recognise the multiple victimhoods which arose out of it. The space we claimed last month was fundamentally a plea for a basic human recognition of the atrocities being committed in Gaza. But it was also an attempt to try to shake Germany awake, to force it to open its eyes to the blatant reality unfolding before its eyes, to force it out of its self-centred pathology of guilt and to recognise the reality for what it is.

In this context, we should emphasise clearly: Germany owe reparations not only to the Jewish people, but to the Palestinian people as well. In a historical moment of genocidal violence, we will not be deterred in our mission by vexatious legal complaints, threats, harassment, assault or libel. We will continue our struggle no matter the costs.

Aljazeera

Israeli right will blame left for anything, including October 7

Yossi Mekelberg

MORE than four months into the war in Gaza and with no end in sight, it has become apparent that this ongoing tragedy is tearing Israeli society apart. There is an expectation that a country in the midst of a war, particularly after the shock followed by the trauma of Hamas' Oct. 7 attack, will unite in grief and a shared sense of purpose.

This did happen for a very brief period, but then the cracks started showing. Much of this should be attributed to the discordant character of the current coalition government. Chief of those who rule by driving wedges into society is Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who aims to serve his own vested interest by holding onto power indefinitely.

For Netanyahu and his allies, nothing is sacred anymore and, between them, the motivation is either to remain in power despite their colossal failure to prevent the disaster inflicted by Hamas or to use the war as a springboard for applying the most extreme far-right religious ideology, which does not shy away from demanding that Israel reoccupy Gaza and resettle it, as well as annex the West Bank. Retaining the most powerful office in the land makes it easier for Netanyahu to derail his corruption trial by constantly undermining the justices. His thirst for power matches that of his coalition partners who ideologically oppose the independence of the judiciary and despise the idea of a liberal democracy cherished by the more liberal-progressive minded. Hence, the latter have become a target for accusations of not being Jewish enough, of being generally decadent and, in relations with the Palestinians, being either naive or plainly traitors.

Shamelessly, the very government that failed to defend its citizens on the day that has become known as the "black sabbath" is now turning the blame for it on those who protested in support of the independence of the judiciary. It is also turning against the families of the hostages for their demand that the government advance a deal with Hamas for the release of their loved ones. The government accuses both of preventing the army from completing its task in Gaza. The war has brought the worst out of the unscrupulous chorus of the right - its government and its loyal media - as it shamelessly attacks the leaders of opposition parties and those who have led the pro-democracy protests. On one occasion, a Likud MK - yes, an elected lawmaker - revealed on X that the husband of one of the leaders of the protests, Shikma Bresler, is a senior Shin Bet official and, against the law, published his name. Without offering any evidence, the MK claimed that just days before the Hamas attack, he spoke on the phone with Yahya Sinwar, the leader of Hamas in Gaza, implying that there was a conspiracy between Hamas and the Israeli security forces to allow this attack, with the sole aim of toppling the current government.

In other words, accusing them of treason and putting them and their families at

risk by revealing their names.

As a result of such constant and vicious incitements flooding social media, it is not surprising that a recent survey concluded that one in five Israeli Jews believe that the Israeli left is to blame for the failure to stop Hamas from committing atrocities against the communities along the border with Gaza and is also preventing the Israeli armed forces from achieving its objectives. If this trend continues, political violence, even civil war, will be within the realm of possibility. Attempts to delegitimize the liberal-progressive social and political forces in Israel are nothing new and, since Likud came to power in 1977, right-wing extremists have not refrained from political violence either. Admittedly, actual political violence has been sporadic, although in 1995 it claimed the life of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated by an extreme right-wing assailant who admitted that he committed this act in order to stop the peace process following the signing of the Oslo Accords.

But if political violence is not common, vitriolic language of the worst kind, intimidation and delegitimization have reached fever pitch since the sixth Netanyahu government, the most ultranationalist, messianic and religious administration in the country's history, was formed just over a year ago. It has, after a short hiatus following Oct. 7, resumed such behavior with even more venom.

For example, controlling the narrative enables Netanyahu and his government to promote their anti-democratic legislation and falsely portray it as a reform to improve Israel's democracy. Controlling the narrative enables him to legitimize the vilest ultranationalist-religious version of Zionism, including violent groups of settlers, bring them to the heart of his government and depict it as forming the first true right-wing government to be immune from foreign influence. Controlling the narrative is also to deflect the blame for Netanyahu's total failure to avert Hamas' deadly attack and to release the hostages or to defeat Hamas onto the opposition, while depicting the prime minister as blameless. This ignores the fact that it was his idea to allow vast amounts of money to be transferred to Hamas and, by that, strengthening the group.

Whenever Netanyahu has his back to the wall, he resorts to the oldest and dirtiest trick in the far-right's playbook: finding a scapegoat in the form of a fictitious enemy within by viciously smearing his political opponents and questioning their loyalty to the country. Inevitably, Netanyahu will soon be democratically forced out of office, but his divisive legacy will be much more difficult to uproot. It is threatening the already fragile fabric of Israeli society. Hence, the overriding task of the next government will be to heal this fragmentation, while also striving for peace with the Palestinians; both mammoth tasks that are closely related and equally important.

Arab News

France seeks to rekindle an old flame

Zaid M. Belbagi

THERE has been in recent years a rift in the longstanding and complex relationship between France and Morocco. There have been signs however that the two countries are working toward a reset. Earlier this week, France's First Lady Brigitte Macron hosted Morocco's Princesses Lalla Hasna, Lalla Asmaa and Lalla Maryam at the Elysee Palace. The sisters of King Mohamed VI undertook the visit under special instructions from the monarch.

This high-level visit took place shortly after France's Ambassador to Morocco Christophe Lecourtier's recent comments that "France had looked at Morocco through an outdated lens" stressing the importance and potential of enhancing ties. Lecourtier's work has been

relentless, echoing the efforts of his government. Notably, in October 2023, France's Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire visited Marrakech to discuss economic relations with his counterpart Prime Minister Aziz Akhannouch. In a gift to the scriptwriter on Valentine's Day, France's Foreign Affairs Minister Stephane Sejourné reiterated the country's commitment to bolstering ties with Morocco while speaking in France's National Assembly. Despite President Emmanuel Macron choosing Rabat as his first overseas visit as leader, a growing rift in ties has become particularly evident since 2021 when France announced a visa restriction for nationals from Maghreb countries due to a reported increase in illegal immigration. Tensions increased as France steadily improved its relations with Algeria. Morocco and Algeria hold

opposing positions on the status of Morocco's southern provinces and Rabat rightly took this to mean Paris was rejecting its claims and indeed the cordial ties that had existed previously.

These diplomatic concerns have been exacerbated on the personal level, with the uppity and somewhat presumptuous style of Macron stonewalled by the rigid protocol of Morocco's palace. In 2022 Macron announced to waiting reporters in Algiers that his next trip was to Morocco, only for Rabat to officially communicate that an invitation had not been extended. Last year was particularly challenging for France-Morocco relations. In January, the EU Parliament held a discussion and vote on freedom of expression and journalism in the country. This motion was

reportedly led by President Macron. On the same day, Morocco recalled its ambassador to France Mohamed Benchaaboun as it perceived this vote to be an interference in its domestic matters, and an attempt to defame the country.

This ambassadorial position remained vacant until November, when Samira Sitail was appointed. Similarly, Morocco delayed the accreditation of Ambassador Lecourtier for almost a year. His eventual audience was late in the afternoon following those of a dozen other foreign emissaries to Morocco. The most notable sign of this rift was in September, following the devastating earthquake in the Atlas that killed and injured over 7,000 people. As international aid and rescue support poured into the country, Morocco was

quick to decline France's offers, with Macron having again breached protocol by seeming to address Moroccans directly. Following this snub, Morocco simultaneously accepted similar assistance from other Western nations including the UK and Spain.

This tension comes amid the wider context of France's waning influence in Francophone Africa, a region that for long shared deep ties with France during and after colonial rule. Since 2020, the Sahel region has seen at least six coup d'etats including in Mali, Chad, Niger, Guinea, and Burkina Faso.

There is no doubt that as Morocco's regional and global status expands, domestic appetite to accept France's traditional paternalistic approach toward the country has reduced. However, despite these growing differences, both countries realize the vitali-

ty of their shared economic and cultural ties. France remains the leading foreign investor in Morocco, and with over 800,000 people of Moroccan origin in France, they form the country's second-largest immigrant community.

While France's renewed effort to work with Morocco is partly economically motivated, it is also an attempt by Paris to retain influence over FranceAfrique - France's traditional sphere of influence in postcolonial Africa.

Morocco offers economic and political stability as well as a business environment that is lucrative for France. France will also begin to draw on Morocco's capacity to power Europe from renewables, a geopolitical reality which will temper Paris' fascination with Algiers and indeed prompt a review of its stance on the Saharan issue.

In border visits, Biden and Trump will focus on different priorities

Rob Garver

ON Thursday, US President Joe Biden and former US President Donald Trump will separately visit the United States' southern border, highlighting their competing short-term priorities for dealing with what both agree is a serious migration crisis. Biden will travel to Brownsville, a city of 187,000 at the extreme southern tip of Texas and one of the major legal ports of entry for migrants seeking asylum and permission to live and work in the US.

While there, he will meet with federal immigration enforcement officers, law enforcement officials and local leaders. He will likely also call on Congress to pass a bipartisan immigration reform bill negotiated in the Senate, which has been blocked by Republicans. Trump will travel to Eagle Pass, another Texas town a few hundred kilometers north that has been overwhelmed by migrants attempting to cross the border illegally. Many of them also seek asylum and often wind up sheltering in and around the town before they can move farther into the country's interior to await processing.

Trump is expected to deliver remarks decrying the state of border security and blaming the problem on Biden. Trump may also address the bipartisan immigration proposal drafted by the Senate, which he has criticized and which he has demanded that Republican lawmakers refuse to support. Migration across the southern border has surged sharply in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic. Full-year data for 2023 indicate that Customs and Border Protection officials had more than 2.4 million encounters with migrants on the southern border last year, a record number. CBP also tracks what it refers to as "gotaways" - individuals observed crossing the border by CBP officials or surveillance equipment but who are not apprehended. Since 2021, the agency has identi-

fied a minimum of 1.7 million got-aways.

Of the millions who made contact with border officials while crossing, many have requested asylum, triggering a process that requires immigration officials to assess their claims. The current backlog of asylum cases is years long, and large numbers of asylum-seekers are released into the US interior while they wait for their cases to be heard. Public opinion polls indicate that the situation on the border is a serious concern for many Americans. The Pew Research Center recently found that 77% of Americans believe the situation at the border constitutes either a "crisis" or a "major problem." While that feeling was most prominent among respondents who identified as Republican, at about 90%, it was also true of a majority of those identifying as Democrat, at 66%. In recent months, possibly in response to public concern, Biden has strengthened his rhetoric on the topic, labeling the situation as a "crisis" and demanding new legislation to strengthen his ability to restrict people from entering the US.

Many Republicans have argued that the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952 authorizes the president to deal with the immigration crisis. Under the law, the president can "suspend the entry of all applicants or any class of applicants as immigrants or non-immigrants, or impose on the entry of applicants any restrictions he may deem to be appropriate." However, the Biden administration points out that the more recent Refugee Act of 1980 obligates the president to provide due process to an individual in the US requesting asylum, "regardless of that person's immigration status or whether the person lawfully entered the country." For a brief moment a few weeks ago, real progress on the immigration issue appeared possi-

ble in Washington. With Democrats desperate to pass a supplemental funding bill to support Ukraine's fight against Russia, Republicans had indicated that any such bill was a nonstarter unless it was paired with significant immigration reform. In the Senate, a bipartisan group of lawmakers crafted a bill that provided funding for Ukraine. In exchange, Democrats acceded to a number of Republicans' major requests on border security.

Among other things, it would have made it more difficult for migrants to make asylum claims, greatly increased border agencies' capacity to detain migrants, and given the president authority to block all border crossings on days when migrant flows rise above specified limits. However, Republican opposition to the deal appeared in January, bolstered by Trump, who criticized the deal on his social media network Truth Social as insufficient, writing, "I do not think we should do a Border Deal, at all, unless we get EVERYTHING needed to shut down the INVASION of Millions of Millions of people, many from parts unknown, into our once great, but soon to be great again, Country!" It quickly became apparent that many in the Republican Party, including Trump, viewed the border as a potent issue in the 2024 elections and were reluctant to pass any legislation that Biden could use to demonstrate that he was taking action on the issue. Republican unwillingness to pass immigration reforms in Congress leaves Biden with few options to demonstrate that he is taking action on the issue, said William A. Galston, a senior fellow in the Brookings Institution's governance studies program.

"He's between the proverbial rock and a hard place," Galston told VOA. "Because if he wants to do something quickly, it will have to be an executive action of some sort,

and that limits his options." Galston added, "Biden's challenge is to find administrative measures that will move the needle on encounters at the border - and equally important, that will be seen by the American people as moving the needle - without running up against the limits of the existing law." For example, Biden could issue an executive order making it difficult or impossible for individuals entering the country illegally to claim asylum. However, similar executive actions taken by Trump during his time in office were quickly blocked by federal courts.

Treatment of the border crisis as a political football comes with real human costs, said Greg Chen, senior director of government relations for the American Immigration Lawyers Association. He said the US is now on the receiving end of a historically unprecedented surge in migration across the Western Hemisphere, as millions flee countries where both the economy and the rule of law are collapsing, making the flight north to the US the only viable option for many. "Without improved capacity to process people arriving at the southern border, and also for the broader immigration system, we see major backlogs across the board," Chen told VOA. "Asylum-seekers and other migrants who are hoping to get legal relief and the opportunity to demonstrate that they should be able to stay in the United States are waiting much longer periods of time."

Chen said many asylum-seekers trying to enter through legal ports of entry spend days sleeping in lines that extend into areas of Mexico that are racked by violence and often under the control of drug cartels. "The border now needs urgent attention to ensure more efficient and orderly processing of people coming to the US, and so that it can be done in a fair and humane way," he said.

VOA

Does Trump think he can win Black voters by offending us?

Sophia A. Nelson

IT'S always been a hard sell for Donald Trump to claim that he is getting strong support among Black voters. In 2016, he garnered a dismal 6% of the Black vote and only managed to increase that to 8% in 2020, according to an analysis of "validated voters" conducted by Pew Research. It's not a great boast for a political party founded as an anti-slavery, pro-abolition party in 1854. And a party that, up through the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower in 1956, carried the lion's share of Black voters in the south and around the nation.

Fast forward to 2024, and the former president seems to be courting Black voters to return to the party - well kinda - in a very unusual and very offensive way to this Black female conservative former Republican. At the Black Conservative Federation gala in South Carolina last Friday, Trump received the "Champion of Black America" award. In his lengthy address, Trump went into a monologue of unorthodox - and some would say outright racist - comments about Black people and his supposedly unique connection to them. "I got indicted a second time and a third time and a fourth time, and a lot of people said that that's why the Black people like me, because they have been hurt so badly and discriminated against, and they actually viewed me as I'm being discriminated against," Trump said. "I'm being indicted for

you, the American people. I'm being indicted for you, the Black population."

He said of his Fulton County mug shot, "You know who embraced it more than anyone else? The Black population." The crowd, which was not entirely made up of Black conservatives but White attendees too, seemed to applaud his remarks and laugh with him as well.

That truly offended me and many other Black Americans. Wheew. Trump's remarks are a lot to unpack. I'll try. Do I think Trump is right that there are some Black voters of a certain age and socioeconomic demographic in America who feel unfairly targeted, profiled or vilified by the criminal justice system in America? Absolutely. Do I think that those same voters, or those who have lost their voting rights due to having felonies on their record, feel some sympathy for Trump's plight? I do. I heard it firsthand this summer in the Black hair salon I go to weekly.

But that is where this bogus effrontery argument begins and ends. I can't see how the Republican nominee, whoever he or she is, will fare well with Black voters writ large - particularly those of us who were Republicans, conservatives and center-right independents who have since abandoned the GOP and now define ourselves as never-Trumpers. Why did many principled Black conser-

vatives in the vein of historic Republican Sen. Edward Brooke of Massachusetts or the late Gen. Colin Powell and others abandon the GOP? Because, in my opinion as a Black Republican for over 25 years, tea party radicals, White nationalists and culture warriors railing against DEI, wokeism and even voting rights have plagued the party that once rallied behind former presidential nominee Mitt Romney.

Earlier this month it was "Trump sneakers," and now it's Black people who love his mug shot and wear it on their T-shirts. How crude and ignorant of him to think that Black voters would care about his mug shot. We care about taxes, education, reproductive rights, voting rights and the other things all voters care about. We do not give a darn about T-shirts or sneakers, and mostly don't care about or relate to his claims of being treated unfairly by the criminal justice system. Recent polling data shows that Black voters still overwhelmingly support President Joe Biden. We do not, as a whole, support Trump. Why on Earth would we?

Let's be honest about who Trump is. He is the man who took out ads in New York newspapers calling for the state to adopt the death penalty after the arrest of the "Central Park Five" - the now-exonerated five men of color accused in the 1989 rape. When

Trump was asked in 2019 about their vacated convictions and whether he would apologize, he replied, "They admitted their guilt." This is the real estate mogul whose family's company was sued by the Justice Department in the 1970s after allegedly discriminating against Black renters. This is the man who allegedly called our military men and women "suckers" and "losers." In 2020, Black soldiers comprised approximately 21% of the active-duty Army, 15% of the Army National Guard and 21% of the Army Reserve, rates that are higher than their representation in the US population. Is Trump really the commander-in-chief they want? Bottom line: Biden has my vote, not because I stopped being a center-right conservative but because he has been a great president for Black women and America.

Biden gave us the first female vice president (who happens to be a Black and South Asian woman) and first Black female Supreme Court justice. He has canceled student debt, which helped me and millions of Black Americans who are disproportionately affected by staggering predatory student loans. He is a strong leader on international matters, and he is a devoted supporter of American democracy. To any of my fellow African Americans who might be considering voting for Trump, I would simply say, "Caveat emptor." Buyer beware.

CNN

Suicide vs genocide: Rest in power, Aaron Bushnell

Belén Fernández

ON Sunday, February 25, 25-year-old active duty member of the United States Air Force Aaron Bushnell set himself on fire outside the Israeli embassy in the US capital of Washington, DC, in a one-arm revolt against the US-backed slaughter currently being perpetrated by the Israeli military in the Gaza Strip.

Over the past 143 days, Israel has killed nearly 30,000 Palestinians in the besieged coastal enclave. In video footage recorded prior to and during his self-immolation, Bushnell states that he will "no longer be complicit in genocide" and that he is "about to engage in an extreme act of protest - but compared to what people have been experiencing in Palestine at the hands of their colonisers is not extreme at all".

To be sure, Palestinians have long been accustomed to, well, burning to death at the hands of Israeli weaponry, ever since the state of Israel undertook to lethally invest itself on Palestinian land in 1948. The Israeli military's use of skin-incinerating white phosphorus munitions in more recent years has no doubt contributed to the whole Palestinian "experience". After pertinently observing that US complicity in the genocide of Palestinians is "what our ruling class has decided will be normal", Bushnell plants himself directly in front of the Israeli embassy gate - in full US military fatigues - and proceeds to

douse himself with flammable liquid. As he rapidly burns to death, he repeatedly shouts: "Free Palestine", while security personnel order him to get "on the ground". One particularly helpful individual points a gun at the blaze.

In the aftermath of Bushnell's self-immolation, the New York Times announced: "Man Dies After Setting Himself on Fire Outside Israeli Embassy in Washington, Police Say" - a rather strong contender, perhaps, for the most diluted and decontextualised headline ever. One wonders what folks would have said in 1965 had the US newspaper of record run headlines like: "Octogenarian Detroit Woman Dies After Setting Herself on Fire, Police Say - An Event Having Nothing Potentially To Do With Said Woman's Opposition To The Vietnam War Or Anything Like That". Speaking of Vietnam War-related self-immolations, recall renowned US historian and journalist David Halberstam's account of the 1963 demise in Saigon, South Vietnam, of the Vietnamese monk Thich Quang Duc: "Flames were coming from a human being; his body was slowly withering and shriveling up, his head blackening and charring. In the air was the smell of burning flesh; human beings burn surprisingly quickly... I was too shocked to cry, too confused to take notes or ask questions, too bewildered even to think".

And while such an intense and passionate form of suicide is no doubt bewildering to many, genocide should be all the more appalling; as Bushnell himself said, self-immolation is nothing "compared to what people have been experiencing in Palestine", where people know all too well how quickly human beings burn. In Bushnell's case, the US political-media establishment appears to be doing its best to not only decontextualise but also posthumously discredit him. Time Magazine's write-up, for example, admonishes that the US "Defence Department policy states that service members on active duty should 'not engage in partisan political activity'" - as though actively abetting a genocide weren't politically "partisan".

Furthermore, the magazine specifies, US military regulations "prohibit wearing the uniform during 'unofficial public speeches, interviews', and other activities. Perhaps Bushnell's ashes can be tried in military court.

At the bottom of the Time article, readers are charitably given the following instructions: "If you or someone you know may be experiencing a mental-health crisis or contemplating suicide, call or text 988" - which naturally implies that Bushnell was simply the victim of a "mental-health crisis" rather than someone making a most cogent and defiant political point in response to

an extremely mentally disturbing political reality.

At the end of the day, anyone who is not experiencing a serious "mental-health crisis" over the genocide going down in Gaza with full US backing can be safely filed under the category of psychologically disturbed. Of course, the US also perpetrated its very own genocide against Native Americans - another bloody phenomenon that has not been deemed worthy of diagnosis as a severe collective mental disturbance or anything of the sort. As per the official narrative, if you think it's crazy for the US or its Israeli partner in crime to commit genocide, you're the crazy one.

Coming from a family of US Air Force veterans myself - both of my grandfathers participated in the carnage in Vietnam - I have personally witnessed the psychological fallout that can attend service as empire's executioners. Aaron Bushnell was meant to be a cog in the killing machine, but his principles cost him his life. Indeed, according to a former colleague of Bushnell's who worked with him to support the homeless community in San Antonio, Texas, he was "one of the most principled comrades I've ever known". And while we journalists are supposed to be the ones speaking truth to power, suffice it to say that Bushnell has put Western corporate media to shame. Rest in power, Aaron Bushnell.

China's diversified and deepened engagement with Africa

Mercy Tedeku

IN the dynamic landscape of Sino-African relations, the year 2024 is unfolding as a pivotal chapter, marked by the impending Ninth Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in China. FOCAC 2024 signifies not only a renewed commitment to enhance collaboration between China and Africa but also a year of looking ahead, where the outcomes of various initiatives in the Africa-China space are expected to be reviewed and the way forward discussed.

Amid this pivotal event, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi recently concluded his first foreign trip of the year to Africa as part of the established tradition. Wang's visit marked the 34th consecutive year Africa has been the chosen destination for the Chinese foreign minister's first overseas visit. His visits to Egypt, Tunisia, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire are of great diplomatic importance in the context of broader Africa-China engagement. Beyond the formal platforms of the FOCAC and the Belt and Road Initiative, the visits not only serve as a dynamic channel to deepen bilateral cooperation, address issues of mutual benefit and set the stage for a future characterized by strengthened diplomatic ties but also send a powerful signal regarding the future trajectory of Africa-China collaboration.

During Wang's latest visit to Africa, China's diplomatic relations with the four countries were reviewed, with the focus being on key areas such as the economy, infrastructure, healthcare, agriculture, education and culture. The China-Togo relationship, spanning over half a century, and the China-Tunisia relationship, which completes 60 years this year, were highlighted for their importance and for China's firm support and continuous enhancement of political mutual trust. As for Wang's visit to Cote d'Ivoire, the emphasis was on the two countries' friendship and partnership for development, which are yielding some tangible, mutually beneficial results - notably, China's contribution to Cote d'Ivoire as it hosted and won the just-concluded 34th Africa Cup of Nations showcasing the diverse facets of collaboration.

Egypt, on the other hand, was congratulated for becoming a new member of BRICS from Jan 1. Wang's discussions in each of the four countries focused on strengthening economic ties and promoting development

initiatives. Discussions revolved around increasing trade volumes, diversifying trade products and promoting investment in key sectors such as infrastructure, manufacturing, agriculture and the implementation of the Belt and Road projects with special, renewed emphasis on environmental sustainability. The visits also showcased China's commitment to promote peace and stability in the African continent. Wang emphasized China's support for Africa-led initiatives and China's willingness to contribute to resolving regional conflicts.

In Egypt, hotspot issues especially the Israel-Palestine conflict and its spillover effects on the region, the Red Sea turmoil, for example, were discussed, with the two sides asserting there is a need for an immediate cease-fire, in order to prevent the further escalation of the conflict. Wang emphasized that China supports African countries' efforts to safeguard their sovereignty, territorial integrity and national security. It also supports African countries in their quest for strength and to choose their respective development paths with African characteristics, so that they continue to develop further while maintaining their independence and stability.

The fact that Africa has been the chosen destination for the Chinese foreign minister's first overseas visit for 34 consecutive years shows the importance China attaches to its diplomatic ties with African countries. The China-Africa friendship has withstood many challenges, is proud of its accomplishments and is looking forward to a promising future. It demonstrates China's commitment to maintain and deepen its relationship with the continent, highlighting the long-standing and enduring nature of their partnership.

Wang's annual tour to Africa not only reinforces the long-standing diplomatic relationship between China and African countries but also demonstrates China's dedication to further boost collaboration and cooperation with Africa. The visits therefore have significant implications for the future trajectory of Africa-China relations. Also, the emphasis on continuous enhancement of political mutual trust, as seen in the case of China and Togo, suggests a commitment to a stable and supportive political relationship. In fact, this trust is the founda-

tion for deeper cooperation in various domains.

The commitment to advance pragmatic cooperation and opening up new prospects for bilateral relations, guided by the consensus reached by the heads of state, implies a forward-looking approach. Both China and Togo asserted they are committed to exploring new opportunities and adapting their collaboration to the changing circumstances, while China envisions greater collaboration in emerging fields such as green development, digitalization and healthcare. As Africa's economic and technological landscapes undergo transformation, China aims to support its partners in leveraging these opportunities to achieve sustainable development.

This strategy promotes inclusivity and allows for a more comprehensive and robust collaboration in various fields. By visiting countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire, Wang has taken bilateral relations beyond traditional partnerships, which reflects China's intention to engage with a diverse range of African nations and highlights China's recognition of Africa's growing importance on the global stage and its desire to forge stronger relationships with a broader array of African states.

That China has helped build three of the six soccer stadiums that hosted the just-concluded Africa Cup of Nations shows the diversification of collaboration and cooperation between China and African countries. China's engagement with African countries goes beyond the traditional areas to cover the cultural and sporting fields as well. In conclusion, Wang's visits to Africa highlight China's commitment to deepen cooperation in key areas such as the economy, infrastructure, healthcare, agriculture, education and culture. It signifies a forward-looking approach, the enduring nature of diplomatic ties and a dedication to explore new opportunities. The result will be a strengthened partnership, deeper bilateral cooperation and a shared commitment to achieve development goals. The visits serve as not only a testament to the diplomatic relationship between China and African countries but also a proactive step toward shaping a future characterized by strengthened diplomatic ties, mutual benefit and shared prosperity.

The China Daily

Up in a puff of smoke: Western moral credibility

John Queripel

AND then, as quickly as a magician makes a watch disappear, it was gone. Western moral lecturing and hectoring has been exposed for what it is, a sham, based on duplicity, double standards and self-interest. Cracks had been appearing in it for a long time, suspicions growing as to its actuality, but suddenly, it has been starkly exposed as non-existent. The whole edifice on which it has imposingly stood, unquestionably, seemingly so secure, had been shown to be a house of cards, suddenly clattered out by most of the world.

There were inklings of its vacuous nature earlier, the clearest case being the open lying around the 'Gulf of Tonkin incident,' which led to war in Vietnam, with millions killed, mainly Vietnamese in the subsequent bloodlust. A decades respite and then it took another hit as the US thumbed its nose at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling regarding its funding of the Nicaraguan Contras during the 1980s.

It is this century, however, which has seen the vacuous nature and cynical lying of 'Western morality' nakedly exposed. Within a few years of the century that self-serving 'morality' was on full display, Everyone at the time knew that Iraq neither had 'Weapons of Mass Destruction,' nor any involvement in 9/11. In the world's cities, hundreds of thousands marched, their cries and banners indicating they knew that the causes for war were naught but a concoction. Still, with the lies flowing fast, the triumvirate, Bush, Blair and Howard, joining in great moral cause as they called it, unable to secure support from the UN, who understandably believed

their own expert Hans Blix, decided to go to war. Years of hell followed, most graphically seen in the absolute destruction of Fallujah.

Of course, afterwards, no WMDs were found. Few were surprised. The triumvirate, having cynically trashed international law, along with Iraq, walked free straight to the world speaker's circuit with its lucrative rewards. Punishment for breaking international law seemingly is reserved for Balkan despots and African warlords. Still nothing for the triumvirate though. Fast-forward through Afghanistan, with more horrors committed, with a final loss by the 'world's greatest military machine' to a group of theological students (I was one and I know we weren't that threatening) to the events of Gaza.

These are the death knell for an already badly shaken and exposed 'Western morality.' The acquiescence of the West to the massacre of, at this stage some 29,000 Palestinians has made absolutely clear the hollowness of any Western claims to morality. It has been left to South Africa, and their allies from 'the South' to do the heavy lifting, to remind the world that there is such a thing as ethics and international law, particularly when it comes to genocide.

The West of course was absent in its support of South Africa's charges, dismissing them as 'meritless' and 'galling.' (Antony Blinken), while Australian P.M. Anthony Albanese gravely intoned that the case was an unneeded sidetrack from the political task of a 'durable peace,' while doing nothing to secure that peace. These actions, or better non-actions,

stand in stark contrast to the West's rushing to support Ukraine in its case brought to the ICJ. But then, Western morality seems blind to double standards. 'What's good for us, is not good for you,' Then as the ICJ delivered its damning provisional measures, against Israel, on that very day, Israel alleged that the UNRWA is an organization with strong sympathies for Hamas. Without providing evidence they charged 190 of the UNRWA's more than 30,000 employees (13,000 of them in Gaza) have acted inappropriately, twelve even taking part in the October 7 events. Suddenly the 'moral antennas' of the West spring to life, and they determine that they will cut off their financial assistance to the UNRWA. Never mind that 25% of Gazans are starving, 75% have lost their homes, and there is no access to potable water, with disease rampant. These things rate far lower on the West's moral index than 30,000 bombs delivered into an area 40 by 10 kilometers by those that can 'do no wrong,' the most moral army in the world.

'Western morality' would no doubt be outraged by UN special rapporteur for the Occupied Territories? Francesca Albanese charging that states, 'cutting funding aid to UNRWA could violate states obligations to the Genocide Convention,' except that in their smugness they won't even hear it. Western moral standards have become in the sight of most of the world a laughable oxymoron. The sound heard next time the West delivers a moral pronouncement? The guffawing of the majority of the world. It shall be loud and sustained. The emperor is standing bare but seemingly oblivious to his state.



SCCI welcomes BVMW interest-free loan facility

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq welcomed BVMW – a German institution for extending interest-free loan facility to the business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Fuad Ishaq termed the move would boost business and industrialization and create employment opportunities in the province and will open a new era of economic prosperity and progress.

He made these remarks while talking to a delegation of German investors, which was led by country representative of BVMW Mathew D Shaw here at the chamber house on Wednesday.

The delegation consisted of chairman Max holdings

Max Shaw, senior advisor to chairman Riffat Pervaz, Business Consultant Amin Ahmad and Executive Assistant Areej Yousaf Ahmad and others.

The SCCI senior vice president Sanaullah Khan, vice president Ijaz Khan Afridi, former president Zulfiqar Ali Khan, secretary general Sajjad Aziz and other staff members were present during the meeting.

Mathew D Shaw, the country representative of the BVMW apprised the meeting about interest-free loan of 10million euro to business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under which the loan scheme, provision of technical assistance, skill training programs, equipment and machinery will be ensured.

Fuad Ishaq said SCCI wanted to improve bilateral

trade relations between Pakistan and Germany.

He said ample opportunities exist to make investment in various potential sectors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through which Pak-German bilateral trade relations would be enhanced by launching joint ventures.

He stressed the utilizing 10million euro interest-free loan on on-job training in the province.

The chamber president emphasized the need for bringing Pakistan's imported products to international level, so it will improve demand of our country's manufacturing products to the European market and would also increase imports.

He suggested the current exchange rate should be fixed as some companies were facing difficulties due

to the high exchange rate.

Fuad Ishaq said KP is the golden gate to Afghanistan and Central Asian Republic countries wherein foreign investors would get access to the CAR market through joint collaboration with KP companies and businessmen and can play role in enhancing mutual trade volume between the two countries.

The SCCI chief invited German investors to make investments in oil, gas, hydel power generation, mine and mineral, marble tourism, gems and other important sectors through joint ventures.

Later, the chamber office bearers and former president Zulfikar Ali Khan also spoke on the occasion and gave several proposals regarding improving bilateral trade between Pakistan and Germany.



LAHORE: A worker busy in roasting grams for customers at his workplace.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Maersk Hartford, Fast, MSC London and Coral Actinia scheduled to load/offload Containers, Cement, Palm oil and Chemicals, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Liquid Terminal and Engro Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile four more ships, Ice Fighter, Maratha polis, Xin Hai Tong 29, Chemtrans Baltic scheduled to load/offload Condensate, Containers, Coal and Mogas also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the last 24 hours.

A total of nine ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two shops, Shimanami Star and Maersk Hartford left the port on Wednesday and another ship, Coral Actinia is expected to sail on Wednesday.

A cargo volume of 95,601 tonnes, comprising 55,926 tonnes import cargo and 39,675 tonnes of export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,397 Containers (689 TEUs Imports and 1,708 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are fourteen ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them five ships, Marathapolis, Blue Cecil, Xin Hai Tong 29, Chemtrans Baltic and Chemroad Aqua scheduled to load/offload Containers, Corn, Coal and Chemicals are expected to take berth QICT, MW-1, PIBT, FOTCO and EVTL on Wednesday and two more ships Clements Schulte and APL Qingdao with Containers are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Thursday.

Fertilizer production increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): Fertilizer production in the country during the first half of the current financial year grew by 10.07 per cent as compared to the output of the corresponding period of the last year.

During the period from July-December, 2023, the output of phosphate fertilizers grew by 1.12 per cent as about 382,585 metric tons of phosphate fertilizers were produced locally as compared to the output of 378,343 metric tons of the same period of last year.

Meanwhile, local production of nitrogen fertilizer grew by 11.48 per cent as compared to the production of the same period of the last year, according to the data of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

During the period under review over 1.778 million metric tons of the nitrogen fertilizer manufactured in the country as compared to the output of 1.594 metric tons of the same period of last year.

On month on month basis, the overall fertilizers output grew by 4.65 per cent in December 2023 as compared to the output of the same month of last year.

During December 2023, local production of phosphate fertilizer grew by 67.89 per cent as 67,754 metric tons of the above-mentioned commodity were locally manufactured as compared to the production of 40,335 metric tons of the same month of the last year.

PSX turns bullish, gains 484 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned around to bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 484.35 points, a positive change of 0.77 percent, closing at 63,703.45 points against 63,219.10 points the previous trading day.

A total of 461,390,885 shares valuing Rs 16,000 billion were traded during the day as compared to 409,962,895 shares valuing Rs14.675 billion the last day. Some 355 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 180 of them recorded gains and 149 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 26 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Nergiyco PK with 62,181,107 shares at Rs4.39 per share, K-Electric Limited with 45,494,078 shares at Rs

4.79 per share, and Hascol Petrol with 30,485,000 shares at Rs 7.98 per share. Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 655.00 per share price, closing at Rs 21,800.00, whereas the runner-up was Premier Sugar Mills with a Rs 33.75 rise in its per share price to Rs 483.75.

Pakistan Services Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 50.00 per share closing at Rs 740.00, followed by Bata Pakistan Limited with Rs 25.00 decline to close at Rs1,700.00.

Rupee gains 16 paise against dollar

The Rupee on Wednesday gained 16 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.11 against the previous day's closing of Rs 279.27.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.2 and Rs 282.1, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs1.07 to close at Rs 302.11 against the last day's closing of Rs 303.18, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs185, whereas a decrease of Rs1.11 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 353.30 compared to the last closing of Rs 354.41.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 04 paise each to close at Rs 75.99 and Rs 74.42 respectively.

‘A Tribute to Nayyara Noor’: Karwan-e-Hayat announces fundraiser event

F.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.

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.

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 unwavering 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.

Luncheon hosted in honour of newly posted, outgoing officers



F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Member Public Relations of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Syed Ghulam Abbas Kazmi

hosted a luncheon in honour of the newly posted and outgoing officers of PR Wing. The outgoing officers comprised erstwhile Chief (PR) Mr. Ziaullah

Khan, Secretary Facilitation Syed Shoaib Raza and Second Secretary Faeza Zaeem. Whereas Ms. Durr-e-Maknoon has been posted as the new Chief

Public Relations and Ms. Kiran Zahra as new Secretary Tax Compliance.

All officers and staff of Public Relations Wing including Secretary Tax Education Muhammad Alam Zaib Khan also attended the luncheon.

Speaking on the occasion, Member Public Relations Syed Ghulam Abbas Kazmi commended the services of the outgoing officers.

Welcoming the newly posted Chief PR, the Member expressed optimism that the officers of PR Wing would continue to render their professional responsibilities with dedication and commitment for better Image building of FBR.

Asian shares muted ahead of Fed comments

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian stocks were largely muted on Wednesday after the release of lacklustre consumer confidence data, with comments from US Federal Reserve officials and fresh economic figures due later in the day.

Global equities mostly rose Tuesday, despite data showing pessimism among consumers in the United States and Germany.

The Conference Board reported a larger-than-expected drop in US shoppers' confidence in February, as survey participants expressed more con-

cern about the labour market and the American political environment.

In Germany, consumers also remained downbeat about the economy and their propensity to make large purchases was largely unchanged from a month ago, according to pollster GfK.

US stocks ended Tuesday with little change, “as investors remain grounded ahead of critical economic data, including the Federal Reserve preferred inflation gauge, which is expected to shed some light on the timing of the first Fed cut”, Stephen

Innes, managing partner of SPI Asset Management, said in a note.

Traders will be examining the US Personal Consumption Expenditure (PCE) price index due Thursday, as well as US consumer income and initial jobless claims data released the same day.

Later Wednesday, investors will be looking out for comments from three Fed officials, which could offer fresh insights into the US central bank's rate cut outlook.

Expectations on a timeline for cuts to US borrowing costs have gradually shifted to later this year, as inflation data has come in hot and policymakers have indicated they need to see more signs that inflation is moving towards their 2.0 percent goal.

“The rates market has shifted from an anticipated six rate cuts by the Federal Reserve in 2024 to just three, indicating that investors might find themselves on the wrong end of the stick if a top-side beat is big enough to threaten the 3 cut narrative,” Innes said.

Adding to the recent

chorus of officials, Fed governor Michelle Bowman said she expected inflation to continue declining with rates held at their current level, adding it was too early to begin reducing rates.

In Asia, Tokyo stocks opened flat on Wednesday, with the market “expected to start in a narrow range as US shares were mixed”, according to senior market analyst Toshiyuki Kanayama of Monex.

Better-than-expected Japanese consumer inflation data released a day earlier stoked speculation among analysts that the Bank of Japan might raise interest rates in April or potentially even next month.

Unlike other major central banks, the BoJ has stuck to an ultra-loose monetary policy, putting pressure on the yen.

Shanghai rose at the open, while Seoul, Wellington, Mumbai, Jakarta and Manila were also trading higher.

Hong Kong, Sydney, Taipei, Singapore, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur were down.

Gold rates decrease by Rs.1,100 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of per tola 24 karat gold decreased by Rs1,100 and was sold at Rs 214,800 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs 215,900 on the last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs944 to Rs184,156 from Rs185,100 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs168,810 from Rs169,674, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten-gram silver remained constant at Rs2,570 and Rs2,306 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$08 to \$2,048 from \$2,056, the Association reported.



In brief

Multan Sultans arrive in Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Multan Sultans have touched down in Karachi to resume their campaign in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season Nine. The team, Multan Sultans franchise, has arrived in Karachi to play their remaining matches of HBL PSL 9. Their upcoming clash is scheduled against Karachi Kings on March 3. Multan Sultans made their journey from Lahore to Karachi via a commercial flight. Following their arrival, the team will take a day's rest, with the training schedule in Karachi to be announced subsequently.

Mallorca reach Copa del Rey final

M A D R I D (Agencies): Mallorca midfielder Sergi Darder scored the decisive spot-kick in a shootout against Real Sociedad to book his side's place in the Copa del Rey final. After a goalless first leg, Sociedad's Mikel Oyarzabal cancelled out Giovanni Gonzalez's opener to force extra time. Oyarzabal was the only player to miss in the shootout and Darder held his nerve to send Mallorca through. It is the first time Mallorca have reached the final since they won the tournament in 2003. They will face either Athletic Bilbao or Atletico Madrid at Estadio La Cartuja in Seville on 6 April. Athletic Bilbao hold a 1-0 lead over Diego Simeone's side heading into Thursday's second leg. Mallorca's victory on Tuesday could boost morale for a side that sit 16th in La Liga and are trying to distance themselves from the relegation zone. Meanwhile, Real Sociedad will need to regroup for next week's Champions League last-16 meeting with Paris St-Germain, with the French champions leading 2-0 from the first leg.

Sri Lanka picks suspended skipper

C O L O M B O (Agencies): Sri Lanka's cricket board Wednesday named a 17-man T20 squad headed by suspended skipper Wanindu Hasaranga for the upcoming tour of Bangladesh. Officials said 26-year-old would not be included for the first two games in the three-match tournament, in line with his International Cricket Council ban last week. Hasaranga, a leg-break bowler, was penalised for abusing an umpire during a T20 match Sri Lanka lost to Afghanistan. He remonstrated with on-field umpire Lyndon Hannibal after the match, for his decision not to call a no-ball on a high delivery to Kamindu Mendis in the final over, with Sri Lanka needing 11 from three balls. The first T20 match will be played on March 4. Sri Lanka will also play three one-day internationals and two Tests during their tour of Bangladesh, which will end on April 3. Sri Lanka's T20 squad: Wanindu Hasaranga (capt), Charith Asalanka, Kusal Mendis, Sadeera Samarawickrama, Angelo Mathews, Dasun Shanaka, Maheesh Thakurana, Dhananjaya de Silva, Kusal Perera, Dilshan Madushanka, Nuwan Thushara, Matheesha Pathirana, Akila Dananjaya, Binura Fernando, Kamindu Mendis, Avishka Fernando and Jeffrey Vandersay.

Munro, bowlers lift Islamabad United to beat Karachi Kings

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Colin Munro's quickfire 82 after a combined bowling effort led Islamabad United to beat Karachi Kings by seven wickets in the 15th match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 here at National Bank Stadium on Wednesday.

Chasing 166, openers Munro and Alex Hales gave United a flying start to the pursuit with a century-plus partnership. The left-handed batter dominated the match-defining stand while Hales played an anchoring knock which lasted in the 12th over, bowled by Hasan Ali.

Hales struck seven boundaries on his way to a 35-ball 47. Meanwhile, Colin Munro stood his ground firm and carried his bat till the 15th over before falling victim to Mohammad Nawaz. He remained the top-scorer for the United with a 47-ball 82 with the help of eight boundaries and four sixes.

The United then lost another wicket in the pursuit when Tabraiz Shamsi struck in the next over to send Imad Wasim (0) back.

The back-to-back dismissals halted the flow of runs for the United but skipper Shadab Khan and Salman Ali Agha batted sensibly amid their unbeaten 30-run partnership and steered the two-time champions to an important victory.

Shadab scored a cautious 10 off 11 deliveries while Agha made a 17-ball 25 with the help of two sixes.

For the Kings, Nawaz, Shamsi and Hasan struck out a batter apiece. Put into bat first, the Kings registered 165/5 on the board, courtesy of an unbeaten sixth-wicket partnership between Pollard and Irfan.

The hosts had an unwanted start to their innings as Imad Wasim dismissed Tim Seifert (8) in the third over with just 17 runs on the board.

Following the early debacle, skipper Shan Masood was joined by Leus du Plooy and the pair briefly bolstered the total.

They added a brisk 40 runs in just five overs before Salman Ali Agha cleaned up du Plooy in the eighth over. He scored 24 off just 15 deliveries with

the help of four boundaries.

Kings' captain Masood attempted to anchor the innings before falling victim to Hunain Shah in the 10th over after scoring 27 off 30 deliveries, laced up with three boundaries.

The Kings then lost two more wickets in quick succession with Shoaib Malik and Mohammad Nawaz, six each, perishing cheaply and bringing the hosts down to 89/5 in 13.1 overs.

With half of the batters back into the dugout, Kieron Pollard joined forces with Mohammad Irfan Khan and put together a gutsy partnership.

Their unbeaten stand yielded 76 runs and lifted Karachi Kings to breach the 160-run barrier. Pollard, the core aggressor of the sixth-wicket stand, top-scored for the Kings with an unbeaten 28-ball 48 which featured two boundaries and a six.

Irfan, on the other hand, played a supportive role with 27 not out off 22 deliveries, hitting four boundaries. For the United, Imad, Naseem Shah, Agha and Hunain Shah made one scalp each.



KARACHI: Imad Wasim picked up the big wicket of Tim Seifert.

National Kabaddi Championship kicks off

ISLAMABAD (APP): A total of seven matches were decided on the opening day of Sarsabz 43rd National Kabaddi Championship here at the Jinnah Stadium of Pakistan Sports Complex on Wednesday. The 5-day championship was inaugurated by Secretary General, Pakistan Kabaddi Federation, Muhammad Sarwar Rana who is also the Secretary, World Kabaddi Federation.

In the matches played, Wapda beat POF Wah by 34-16 points; Higher Education Commission (HEC) outplayed Islamabad by 31-11 points; Pakistan Air Force (PAF) defeated Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by 36-19 points; Pakistan Army downed Sindh by 14-25 points; Police was victorious over Gilgit Baltistan by 12-26 points and POF Wah edged Balochistan by 8-25 points.

Meanwhile KP and Punjab got a walkover against Railway and Sindh, respectively. The fixtures for Thursday include Pakistan Police vs Islamabad, HEC vs Gilgit Baltistan, Army vs Punjab, PAF vs Railway, Balochistan vs Wapda, Police Vs HEC and Islamabad vs GB.

National Bodybuilding C'ship on Thursday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation (PBBF) has announced that Prime Minister National Bodybuilding Championship would be held on Thursday at Mehfil Theatre abbot road, Lahore.

According to President Pakistan bodybuilding federation Sheikh Farooq Iqbal, the championship contests include Mr. And Jr. Mr. Pakistan, Mr. And Jr. Mr. Punjab, Mr. Super Lahore, Mr. Pakistan Fitness Physique , Mr. Pakistan Classic Physique, Mr. Pakistan Master and Mr. Pakistan Grand Master.

Athletes from all over Pakistan will participate in this championship, he said.

Mian Marghoob Ahmad (MPA), Waheed Alam khan (ex-MNA) and Majid Zahoor(ex-MPA) will be the chief guests for the event.

Meanwhile, Abdul Jawad would inaugurate the event as Chairman Pakistan Bodybuilding Federation.

Mohammed Nawaz has yet to perform: Masood

KARACHI (APP): The Captain of Karachi Kings Shan Masood has expressed hope that the all-rounder Mohammad Nawaz will perform at his level-best in the upcoming matches of the HBL PSL 9.

While talking to the media persons on Wednesday, Masood said that Nawaz has yet to perform according to his potential but showed faith in the seasoned all-rounder.

"Mohammad Nawaz has not been able to perform according to his abilities and potential, but he has

shown glimpses of his talent," said Shan Masood.

"We are expecting more from him as an all-rounder, and I am hopeful that he will perform at his best in the upcoming matches," he added. Upon being asked about the inclusion of young all-rounder Arafat Minhas, the Karachi Kings captain praised the youngster and stated that he would get a chance according to the situation.

"Arafat Minhas is a talented player. We select our playing XI according to the conditions and he will get

the chance whenever the team needs his service."

The left-handed batter also acknowledged that he could not perform as per the expectations but expressed optimism that he would do better in the upcoming games. "I am not satisfied with my performance and I am getting good starts but have not been able to capitalize and perform well despite being set at the wicket," he said. "I am positive that I will perform better in the upcoming games and it will be more beneficial for the team", he concluded.

Amir highlights importance of PSL, player welfare

KARACHI (APP): Fast bowler Muhammad Amir expressed his satisfaction with his stint with the Quetta Gladiators in the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) Nine.

In a recent media interaction at the National Bank Stadium, reflecting on his priorities, Amir underscored his current focus on the PSL, emphasizing that thoughts about a return to the national team are on hold for now.

Speaking candidly, Amir stressed the need for a comprehensive approach

to player selection, advocating for a consideration of overall performance rather than solely relying on PSL achievements.

He commended the team's diligent preparation, affirming his commitment to delivering his best on the field.

Addressing the physical demands of cricket, Amir acknowledged the inevitability of player fatigue and advocated for investment in sports science to rejuvenate players. He praised Sarfaraz Ahmed's leadership tenure

with Quetta over the past eight years, highlighting the ongoing consultation with him on team matters.

Amir also lauded his rapport with Babar Azam, citing Azam's recent stellar performances. He suggested that replicating such form for the national team would be advantageous.

Looking ahead, Amir emphasized the necessity for the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to devise a rotation policy to mitigate the workload on fast bowlers and prevent injuries.

HEC Inter-Varsity Boys Tug of War C'ship begins in City

PESHAWAR (APP): The Higher Education Commission Inter-Varsity Boys Tug of War Championship began at Islamia College University Peshawar, with the participation of the top 12 teams from across the country.

Vice Chancellor of Islamia College University Peshawar Professor Dr. Gul Majeed Khan formally inaugurated the Championship whereas Director Sports Islamia College University Peshawar and former first-class cricketer Ali Hoti, teaching staff, Chairman Technical Committee Muhammad Akram Gujjar, President KP Tug of War Association Taj Muhammad, officials, players and a large number of spectators were present on the occasion.

The colorful ceremony began with the March Past, where all the participating teams paraded by. This was followed by a recitation of the Holy Quran by Qari Zohail from Superior University and the singing

of the National Anthem. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Gul Majeed announced the championship opening and praised 12 University teams for taking part in the championship.

He stated that the soft image of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be portrayed through the championship. He said Islamia College University Peshawar has been playing a key role in both academics and sports. He said Islamia College produced world-class hockey Olympians, cricketers, and other international players.

He said the management of the university is giving importance to healthy sports activities as a healthy mind resides in a healthy body. He said there is no dearth of talent in Pakistan but needs a proper platform to come and exhibit. Dr. Gul Majeed said sports play a vital role in students' development along with promoting mental and physical health. Participating in athletics

helps students build skills, gain experience, and develop confidence and character, he added. He stated that sports improve cardiovascular health, promote healthy growth of bones, muscles, ligaments, enhance coordination and balance. He said sports allow greater physical relaxation and, consequently, help avoid complications from chronic muscle tension.

He said, sports also help in developing discipline, dedication, and commitment, which are essential values for success in life. It is also a great way for people to socialize and make new friends, he said. Earlier, on the opening day, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan defeated the University of Swabi by 2-1, Superior University got a walk-over against Fast Islamabad, Agri University Faisalabad defeated UET Taxila by 2-0, University of Management and Technology Lahore beat the University of Peshawar by 2-0.

PTF's National Training Centre achieves ITF White Recognition Status

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) said on Wednesday that its National Training Centre (NTC) in Islamabad had been officially recognized by the International Tennis Federation (ITF) at the White Level. The ITF recognition comes after a thorough review of the facility based on established criteria and standards set by the ITF, said a press release.

The PTF NTC, which was inaugurated in 2019 and serves as the national tennis academy, has met all the necessary criteria to attain the prestigious ITF White Recognition

status. This recognition signifies that the NTC in Islamabad meets the quality standards set by the ITF for tennis training centres worldwide.

Executive Director of Development at the ITF, Luca Santilli, congratulated the PTF on achieving this milestone and formally recognized the Pakistan National Training Centre at the White level for four years, starting from the 27th

February 2024 until 26th February 2028. President of PTF, Aisam ul Haq Qureshi, and former President Salim Saifullah Khan expressed their gratitude to the ITF and Santilli for

acknowledging the PTF's NTC. They also commended Head Coach NTC Asim Shafiq, National Development Director, and the entire NTC team for their efforts in planning and implementing the programme as well as all the coaches and players associated with the NTC. Qureshi further emphasised the importance of expanding the NTC and improving the programme to benefit even more players in the future. The achievement of the ITF White recognition status is a testament to the dedication and commitment of the PTF in developing tennis talent in Pakistan.



FORT LAUDERDALE: Luis Suarez, Lionel Messi, Jordi Alba and Sergio Busquets of Inter Miami CF train during an Inter Miami CF Training Session.



In brief

Police arrest six gamblers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The district police arrested six gamblers and recovered Rs 34,000 stake money, five mobile phones, and other items from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that Pirwadhai police conducted a raid and arrested six gamblers namely Abdul Rehman, Abdul Majeed, Iftikhar, Shoukat, Gul Kareem, and Sher Daraz, who were allegedly involved in betting while playing cards. The police recovered Rs 34,000, five mobile phones, and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is under process. Superintendent of Police, Rawal Faisal Saleem said that gambling was the root cause of other evils and those involved in such crimes did not deserve any concession.

AIOU hold Int'l moot

ISLAMABAD (APP): A two-day 7th International Conference on Research and Practices in Education with the theme "Transforming Education: Empowering Learning for Life" started yesterday at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU). Chairman, of Akhuwat Foundation, Dr. Amjad Saqib was the chief guest at the opening session while Dr. Kiichi Oyasu, from Tokyo Healthcare University, Japan, and Dr. Fatima Rehan Dar from Karachi were the keynote speakers of the inaugural session. A large number of scholars from different universities of Pakistan were present at the session while foreign scholars joined the session online. Dr. Amjad Saqib said that the beauty of the universe is hidden in knowledge and that knowledge is useless which does not help us to explore hidden things around us. He emphasized the need to expand the canvas of thinking. Dr. Amjad Saqib explained in detail the factors and attributes of knowledge, practice, sincerity, and intransigence for research.

07 illegal arm holders arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 07 illegal arm holders and recovered arms, ammunition from their possession during crackdown here on Wednesday. According to police spokesman, New Town police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Khurram and 01 pistol 30 was recovered from Inam. Similarly, Naseerabad police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Haider and 10 round pistol 30 bore was recovered from Shahzad. Pivadhahi police recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from Ismail. Following operation, Airport police held Haroon and recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from his possession. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. Divisional SPs commended police teams and strict action will be continued against those carrying illegal weapons.

6 stolen motorcycles recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): The police have arrested three members gang involved in motorcycle theft and recovered six stolen motorcycles from their possession during an operation here on Wednesday. According to the police spokesman, Gujjar Khan police held a three-member bike lifter gang who were identified as Tassawar, Hamza and Abdul Rehman. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress.



ISLAMABAD: SAPM for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick addressing at an event organized by Pak Gulf Construction Pvt Ltd. in connection with International Women's Day.

HEC, DAAD sign MoU for Afghan refugees under EFFAL initiative

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has partnered with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) through an MoU signed on Wednesday for HEC's scholarship programme "Empower Future Female Afghan Leaders – EFFAL Pakistan track initiative."

The MoU, signed by Aayesha Ikram, Director General (Scholarships) HEC and Muhammad Khaskia, Head of DAAD Government Scholarship Programmes, MENA Region, has two components. It includes 150 scholarships for Afghan refugees for two-year Master's studies in HEC-recognised universities in Pakistan and 50 need-based scholarships for socio-economic marginalized areas of Pakistan.

The signing ceremony was graced by Ambassador of Germany in Pakistan, Alfred Grannas, Chairman of HEC, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, a delegation from DAAD, representatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and senior HEC officials.

In his welcome note, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed lauded the transformative initiative aimed at providing crucial assistance to Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

He underscored the longstanding history of collaboration between Germany and Pakistan, emphasising the need for further partnerships in various domains as well. He emphasised the necessity for increased collaborations, especially in the fields of climate change, technology, research, and

scholarships, recognising these partnerships as essential for peaceful coexistence. He deemed the two-year programme under the scholarship a great opportunity to foster positive developments in the marginalised regions. He also noted that HEC is already actively involved in providing academic and professional opportunities for Afghan students, along with offering technical training to students and bureaucrats from Afghanistan.

German Ambassador Mr. Alfred Grannas, while highlighting the substantial impact on academic pursuits in the region, emphasised that "beyond the celebratory aspect, the true importance lies in the effective implementation of the programme".

Rescue 1122 saves life of infant

RAWALPINDI (APP): A timely response by Rescue 1122 saved the life of a seven-month-old infant on Tuesday. According to a Rescue 1122 spokesman, the ambulance was transporting an accident victim to the hospital when a motorcyclist carrying an infant waved them down near the Jarrahi area. The infant, named Zain, had no pulse or breathing.

Paramedic Majid Abbasi immediately shifted the infant into the ambulance and performed Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) for 10 minutes while the ambulance rushed to the hospital. The infant was transported to Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology (RIC) with restored heartbeat and breath. The child's father Nasir Ali credited the 1122 team's swift response and expertise with saving his son's life.

District Emergency Officer Sibghat Ullah praised the 1122 team for their successful lifesaving operation and rapid emergency response.

Political activities prohibited at Makkah, Madina holy sites: Fatwa by PUC, Dar-ul-Ifta Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) and Dar-ul-Ifta Pakistan on Wednesday jointly issued a religious decree (Fatwa) strictly prohibiting political activism, sloganeering, and hoisting of banners or flags, in any form, at the holy sites of Makkah and Madina.

The Fatwa was announced by PUC Chairman and Dar-ul-Ifta Pakistan President Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi along with prominent religious leaders, during a press conference. Emphasizing the sanctity of holy sites, Ashrafi urged the intending Hajj pilgrims to spend their time there in worshiping and praying to the Almighty instead of indulging in petty political activities.

Expressing concern over attempts by some individuals to display banners and flags at the holy sites, he stressed that such actions were unacceptable and could lead to disturbance of peace in the holy precincts. He reiterated that adhering to the directives and laws of the Saudi Arabian government was imperative for all visitors and pilgrims, as otherwise they might land into trouble.

Ashrafi highlighted efforts by PUC, International Tazee-e-Harmain-e-Sharifain Council, and Hajj Organizers

Association of Pakistan to organize educational sessions for pilgrims across the country. They were also striving to involve representatives from the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in the training sessions, he added. He appreciated that all the arrangements made under the Government Hajj Scheme were in accordance with the Saudi instructions, while the private Hajj groups were also following suit. The cooperation of the Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, and the Saudi Embassy in Pakistan was also appreciable, he added.

To a query, Ashrafi underscored the historical cooperation between Pakistan and Islamic countries, particularly during the last government of Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif. He expressed optimism that with the establishment of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the cooperation would be strengthened further in the future, anticipating enhanced collaboration with Arab countries under the upcoming elected government. He strongly condemned the harassment faced by a woman wearing a Kurta inscribed with Arabic script in Lahore. He said the woman was reportedly subjected to verbal abuse and harassment by individuals who objected to the Arabic script on her attire.

Secy education agrees to revise teachers' service structure

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary, has agreed to revise the four-tier service structure for the teachers of Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) Colleges.

This decision came during a meeting held here last day with representatives of the Federal Government Teachers Association (FGCTA).

The meeting chaired by Secretary Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training

Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary. The representatives of teachers and professionals include Dr. Rahima Rehman, the president of FGCTA, Professor Farhan Azam, the vice president of FGCTA, and Anum Kaleem, the joint secretary of the association, also attended the meeting.

During the discussions, the FGCTA representatives addressed issues concerning Federal Government Colleges. The proposals outlining the necessary revisions to the four-tier service structure were presented that mark-

ing a significant step towards addressing the concerns raised by college teachers. The revised service structure aims to provide teachers with improved career progression and recognition for their contributions to the education sector. Dr. Rahima Rehman, while talking to this news agency said that secretary's commitment underscored the government's dedication to creating a conducive environment for teachers and fostering excellence in the nation's educational institutions.

Al-Shifa saves 1,500 premature babies from blindness annually

RAWALPINDI (APP): The majority of premature newborns born weighing less than 1.5 kg were at a higher risk of developing retinal blood vessel disorganization, which can result in visual issues, including lifelong blindness.

Chief of Medical Services, Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital Dr. Wajid Ali Khan, while talking to the media said that the development of the baby's eyes was one of the numerous challenges faced in those first few vulnerable weeks by premature-born babies that were born before 266 days. He said that the issue can be fixed with screening and surgery to help prevent major vision issues in children in the future.

Dr Wajid explained that an infant's eye development may be affected if delivered prematurely, adding the

retina's blood vessels start to expand three months after conception and finish at the time of normal birth.

The smallest and sickest were most at risk of developing Retinopathy of Prematurity (ROP), which was the primary cause of pediatric retinal blindness, he said and added that using extra oxygen to treat premature newborns in hospitals promotes aberrant vascular growth in the eyes. He informed that according to research, the rate of advanced retinopathy can be lowered by maintaining a lower oxygen saturation level. Dr Wajid stressed that to ensure that their premature infant receives the ongoing care of an ophthalmologist due to their increased risk of developing amblyopia, eye misalignment, and the need for glasses

to develop normal vision, parents should incorporate a vision screening into their schedule between the ages of six and twelve months.

He said that over 900,000 kids were delivered prematurely every year in Pakistan and 80 percent of them have vision issues. "Over 40 highly skilled eye surgeons, including most experienced eye specialists, work at the Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital pediatric department while the pediatric department was able to provide treatment facilities to more than 500 OPD newborns per day," he informed. Dr. Wajid Ali Khan added that "We have MoUs with the administrations of the Benazir Bhutto, Combined Military, and Fauji Foundation hospitals to provide all medical services, including screening, surgery and transportation."

Cardiac diseases in youth increasing like epidemic

ISLAMABAD (APP): Health expert Wednesday stressed public awareness for early detection and for adopting a healthy lifestyle to control cardiac diseases as reduced physical inactivity, sitting jobs, poor sleep patterns and unhealthy food habits are mostly responsible for the increasing heart diseases among youngsters.

Talking to a private news channel, a cardiologist, Dr.

Gulzar Ali said that heart diseases can be eliminated by simple lifestyle modifications, adding that early screening is very important in stopping the disease from progressing and with early detection we can easily beat heart diseases. He further said chewing tobacco, and cigarettes (Paan and Gutkha) are the main factors of heart disease in younger age in Pakistan.

He said that high blood pressure (hypertension) is not just a concern for the elderly but for the youth population which was increasingly falling victim to this silent threat. Youngsters should practice such as meditation, yoga, and mindfulness can be powerful tools in mitigating stress and promoting overall well-being and breakfast is mandatory for everyone.

ANF seizes over 31 kg drugs in nine operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover over 31 kg drugs and arrested 12 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed 900 grams Ice was recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Peshawar Airport.

He said, 580 grams Ice was recovered from two passengers going to Qatar at Lahore Airport. In a raid at a courier office in Rawalpindi, 58 grams weed and 70 MDMA were recovered from three different parcels sent from the Netherlands and

UK. 6 kg hashish and 4 kg Ice were recovered from the possession of two accused rounded up near Sher Shah Toll Plaza Multan. The spokesman said that 4 kg opium, 3.7 kg hashish and 1 kg Ice were recovered from an accused arrested in Bahria Town, Lahore.

6 kg hashish was recovered from 3 suspects arrested at Airport Chowk Quetta.

5 kg heroin was recovered from 3 suspects netted near Leal Kasur check post.

Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

Torrential rainfall, heavy snowfall may generate flash floods

ISLAMABAD (APP): Torrential rainfall and heavy snowfall, expected in most parts of the country from February 29 to March 2 and might generate flash floods and disrupt daily life in the vulnerable areas, Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) said on Wednesday.

Torrential rainfall and heavy snowfall with windstorm, thunderstorms and isolated hailstorm was expected in most parts of the country during the period, said a press release issued here.

The torrential rain and heavy snowfall may cause landslides in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Murree, Galiyat, Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan and affect the vulnerable points in the area. Wind-thunderstorm and hailstorm may damage loose structures like electric poles, vehicles and solar panels etc.

The PMD has advised the tourists not to travel unnecessarily and farmers to remain cautious about their crops during the period.

While all concerned authorities have been advised to remain alert and take necessary measures to avoid any untoward situation during the forecast period. A strong westerly wave was likely to approach western parts on February 29 and may grip most parts of the country on March 1 and persist till March 2.

Under the influence of this weather system, widespread heavy rain with windstorm and thunderstorm (snowfall over the hills) is expected in Balochistan including Nokkundi, Dalbandin, Chagi, Kalat, Khuzdar,

Lasbela, Awaran, Turbat, Kech, Gwadar, Jiwani, Pasni, Ormara, Panjgur, Kharan, Noushki, Washuk, Mastung, Sibbi, Naseerabad, Zhub, Sherani, Barkhan, Musakhel, Kohlu, Jhal Magi, Loralai, Ziarat, Quetta, Chaman, Pishin, Qila Abdullah and Qila Saifullah from February 29 to March 1. Isolated hailstorm is also likely during the period.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, heavy to extremely heavy widespread rain with windstorm and thunderstorm with heavy snowfall over the hills is expected in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur, Kohistan, Shangla, Buner, Bajaur, Karak, Khyber, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, Swabi, Mardan, Kurram, Waziristan, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan from February 29 to March 03. Isolated hailstorm is also likely during the period.

In Gilgit-Baltistan/Kashmir, heavy to extremely heavy widespread rain with windstorm, thunderstorm and snowfall is expected in Diamir, Astore, Ghizer, Skardu, Hunza, Gilgit, Ghanche, Shigar, Neelum valley, Muzaffarabad, Rawalakot, Poonch, Hattian, Bagh, Haveli, Sudhanoti, Kotli, Bhimber, Mirpur from February 29 to March 03. Isolated hailstorm is also likely during the period.

In Punjab and Islamabad, widespread heavy rain with windstorm and thunderstorm is expected in Murree, Galiyat, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Mandi Bahauddin, Gujrat, Gujranwala, Hafizabad, Sialkot, Narowal, Lahore,

Kasur, Okara, Faisalabad, Toba Tek Singh, Jhang, Khushab, Sardogha, Mianwali and Bhakkar on March 1 and 2. Heavy snowfall is also expected in Murree, Galiyat and surrounding areas during the period.

Rain-wind and thunderstorm is expected in Multan, Kot Addu, Layyah, Rajanpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Rahim Yar Khan, Sadiqabad, Khanpur, Sahiwal, Bahawalpur and Bahawalnagar from February 29 to March 2. Isolated hailstorm is also likely during the period.

In Sindh, rain-wind/thunderstorm is expected in Sukkur, Jacobabad, Kashmore, Larkana, Dadu, Shaheed Benazirabad Karachi, Hyderabad, Thatta, Badin, Khairpur and Mirpurkhas on February 29 and March 01. Isolated hailstorm is also likely during the period.

About the possible impacts, heavy rainfall may cause flash flooding in local nullah's of Gwadar, Ketch, Turbat, Panjgur, Awaran, Barkhan, Kohlu, Sibbi, Naseerabad, Dalbandin, Khuzdar, Dera Ghazi Khan on February 29 and March 1.

While heavy rainfall may cause flash flooding in hill torrents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir, Murree, Galiyat and local nullah's of Islamabad and Rawalpindi on March 1 and 2. Heavy rain and snowfall may cause closure of roads in Murree, Galiyat, Naran, Kaghan, Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Shangla, Astore, Hunza, Skardu, Neelum valley, Bagh, Poonch and Haveli on March 1 and 2.



ISLAMABAD: Gardener busy trimming mini plants at Peshawar Mor in the Federal Capital.

Iran invests in Afghanistan

KABUL (BNA): Zarghon Steel Asia, a company based in Iran, has announced its investment in mines of Afghanistan. Sayed Akbari Yaqoubi, chairman of the company, discussed their plans during a meeting with Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar, Minister of Mines and Petroleum. Expressing appreciation for the investment opportunities in Afghanistan, Chairman highlighted their interest in investing in Afghan mines, particularly focusing on deposits of precious stones and marble.

Minister hold meeting

KABUL (BNA): Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar, Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, recently held a meeting with the Chairman of B A Holding Group from Uzbekistan and their accompanying delegation. A statement from the Ministry highlighted discussions between both parties on potential investment opportunities in Afghanistan's plentiful mineral resources, the favorable investment conditions available, and the overall security situation in the country.

Iran to block border with Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The ambassador and special representative of Iran for Afghanistan stated that it is planned for the border blockade of that country with Afghanistan to be in the form of a concrete wall.

Kazemi Qomi, Iran's special representative for Afghanistan, in an interview with the Iranian news agency ISNA regarding the issue of physical blockade of the border between Iran and Afghanistan, said that studies are underway on how to physically block the border.

The interview was published on Wednesday, February 28th. He stated that the border blockade between the two countries is intended to be in the form of a concrete wall.

Qomi added that this action "is among the important tasks that need

to be done. Although it has high costs, the benefits derived from this blockade are very profitable because border security is essential for national sovereignty."

Iran's special representative for Afghanistan further stated that Iran has been working on this directive (border blockade) for years and initial designs have been made for it.

This Iranian diplomat reminded us that the border blockade with Afghanistan is not solely due to preventing the entry of illegal immigrants and combating human and drug trafficking etc.

He said, "Considering that the enemies of the people are seeking to strike us in various ways, including through the mobilization of proxy terrorist forces, we are not necessarily con-

fronted with the demarcated borders of the two countries but with various terrorist elements at the border, which are supported by major powers that currently use both soft and hard power simultaneously to strike at us; therefore, we must take our border security and control more seriously."

Qomi added that while Iran seeks security at the border with Afghanistan, it also aims to economically develop the border and is pursuing several complementary projects in this regard.

Iran's special representative for Afghanistan also discussed Iran's water rights and related issues in this exclusive interview, stating that receiving water rights is a demand for the rights of the Iranian people and government.

Darya oil basin output continues to rise

KABUL (Ariana News): The activation of six new wells in the Amu Darya oil basin in Afghanistan has increased the amount of oil extracted to 1,350 metric tons a day, the ministry of mines and petroleum said.

The total number of active wells in the oil basin is now 24, the ministry added.

The Amu Darya basin, spanning Afghanistan and Tajikistan. In Afghanistan, the oil is drilled in the northern provinces of Sar-e-Pol, Jawzjan and Faryab provinces.

It is estimated that the basin contains 962 million barrels of crude oil and 52,025 billion cubic feet of natural gas, according to a 2011 assessment by the US Geological Survey.

One metric ton of crude oil is equal to 7.46 barrels. Currently there are 15 wells in the Qashqari blocks, 6 wells in the Angot blocks and 3 wells in the Agh Darya blocks. The oil is then refined by the private sector in the country.

According to the ministry further surveys are being conducted in the areas, while roads are being built and other facilities developed.

The ministry said that by the end of this year, 12 new wells will be drilled in Qashqari, 8 wells in Zamrod Sai, one well in Bazar Kami and 2 wells in Agh Darya blocks.

This will bring the total number of wells to 47 wells and daily extraction will total 3,000 tons.

Currently, 1,500 people are employed directly and indirectly in the Amu Darya basin oil field but more jobs are expected to be created over the next few months.

US Chamber investing in Afghanistan

BAZARAK(BNA): The US Chamber of Commerce has expressed its intention to invest in the extraction and trading of emerald mines in Panjshir province, Afghanistan.

During the fourteenth Emerald Auction ceremony in Panjshir, Hafiz Mohammad Agha Hakim, the governor of Panjshir, announced that the US Chamber of Commerce is interested in investing in Panjshir emeralds. Governor Hakim also mentioned that French merchants, following a recent visit to Panjshir, expressed their willingness to collaborate in the emerald industry.

Furthermore, the Governor disclosed plans for a joint meeting to be held in the upcoming days by the American Chamber of Commerce with local merchants in Kabul.

He reiterated the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's support for the legal and transparent extraction of mines across the country, especially emphasizing the importance of transparency in the emerald mining process in Panjshir.

Mawlawi Mohammad Qasem Amiri, the head of the Mines and Petroleum Department in Panjshir, reported that 6,887 carats of emeralds were sold to national traders during the fourteenth auction, amounting to \$217,250.

Muttaqi discusses issues with Turkmenistan officials

KABUL (TOLONews): The acting foreign minister of the Islamic Emirate during his visit to Turkmenistan said that Afghanistan can now use the Lapis Lazuli Corridor, which would connect Afghan trade to Europe.

Amir Khan Muttaqi discussed a number of trade and diplomatic issues with Turkmenistan officials.

The TAPI project, the railway, and other issues were discussed during the meetings. "We discussed important issues such as TAPI, railways and the increase in importing electricity to Afghanistan," said Amir Khan Muttaqi, the acting minister of foreign affairs.

Amir Khan Muttaqi said that an agreement has been made with Turkmenistan to allow Afghanistan to use the Lapiz Lazuli corridor through Turkmenistan.

Lapiz Lazuli is a major international project that connects Turkmenistan with Europe.

"Both countries want to play an important role in



the region. And we can use the Lapiz Lazuli Corridor which passes through Turkmenistan," said Amir Khan Muttaqi, the acting minister of foreign affairs.

Officials at Afghanistan's business with Turkmenistan is of great importance and he added that the expansion of trade and economic relations with the country will benefit Afghanistan.

"Turkmenistan's experience with oil and gas is important. They can invest in the north of Afgh-

anistan," said Khan Jan Alokozay, a member of the ACCI's board of directors. According to the statistics of the ministry of commerce and industry, Afghanistan-Turkmenistan trade in 2023 reached \$481 million, of which \$477 million was in imports.

IE says UNSC meeting on Afghanistan 'failed'



KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate claims that the UNSC private meeting on Afghanistan did not result in any conclusion.

The private meeting of the security council, in which the appointment of a UN chief for Afghanistan was supposed to be discussed, convened behind closed doors.

The spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate said that the absence of consensus among the members of the council led to the meeting not resulting in any conclusion.

"We believe that the meeting did not result in a convincing conclusion. There was not a consensus on issues about

Afghanistan in the council. Second, because the meeting failed, the member countries may try to make a result of the meeting by themselves," said Zabiullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate.

Meanwhile, the spokesperson for the United Nations secretary general said that the process of appointing the special envoy is ongoing.

"That process is ongoing. My years of experience here have taught me not to pretend that I have a timeline. But I know the issue is being taken very seriously and expeditiously, and as soon as we have somebody to announce, we shall," said Stephane Dujarric, the UN

Secretary General's spokesperson.

Eleven member countries of the UNSC in a joint statement, asked the Islamic Emirate to protect all Afghans rights particularly the rights of women and girls.

The statement also called for the establishment of an inclusive government in Afghanistan.

"We strongly condemn the Taliban's continued systemic gender discrimination and oppression of women and girls in Afghanistan and demand that they immediately rescind all policies and decrees that repress women and girls including restrictions on education at secondary and tertiary levels, women's right to work, freedom of movement and freedom of expression," said Rosemary di Carlo, the Under Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs.

Regarding the joint statement of eleven countries, the Islamic Emirate said that the statement indicates the lack of information of these countries about Afghanistan.

3,500 tons of soybeans, wheat mix stuck at border

KABUL (Ariana News): The World Food Program (WFP) says that about 3,500 tons of soybean-wheat mixture is stuck on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

This United Nations agency said: "Further delay in transit [soybean wheat mix] is a significant risk for about 378,000 pregnant women who will be helped under the malnutrition treatment program."

The World Food

Program (WFP) said that based on forecasts, 15.8 million people will be severely food insecure between November 2023 and March 2024, of which 3.6 million people will be in an emergency situation.

This United Nations (UN) agency added that four million people, including 3.2 million children under the age of five, are suffering from acute malnutrition.

The World Food

Program added that it sent more than 25,000 metric tons of mixed food throughout Afghanistan, reaching 99 percent of its goal in January, and about 43,000 metric tons of food is now available in World Food Program (WFP) warehouses inside Afghanistan.

According to this department, there are 34,000 metric tons of food in the warehouses of the World Food Program abroad, which are being transferred to Afghanistan, or are supposed to be transferred to this country.

United Nations statistics show that 23.7 million Afghans need humanitarian aid this year, and aid organizations can only cover 17.3 million people.

No reason for the delay in crossing the border was however given.

Recruitment announced

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Ministry of Public Health of Afghanistan has announced the recruitment of girls for the leadership of public health in Logar province through an open competition.

The ministry recently stated on its official page that more than 20 vacant positions were filled through an open competition in Logar province, with approximately 200 girls and boys participating.

Although the ministry did not specify the exact number of girls participating in this competition, it emphasized in its statement that volunteers competed in various fields such as administration, nursing, social work, and psychological counseling.

It is worth mentioning that the Ministry of Public Health had previously announced the recruitment of girls in health centers in

several provinces, although officials in the ministry did not provide details about the nature and reality of this matter.

Qalandar Ebad, the acting Minister of Public Health, had previously stated that they were facing a shortage of female doctors in some provinces.

Tayyiba, one of the nursing girls in a public hospital, stated that they continue their duties as usual. She added that the shortage of female staff in this hospital is noticeable.

Furthermore, the lack of administration of "EXIT EXAM" for girls over the past two years has resulted in a shortage of female doctors in the health sector.

The Minister of Public Health reiterated that Logar, Zabul, Uruzgan, and Paktika are among the provinces where the number of female doctors and nurses is scarce.

8 families reconcile in Farah after 7 years

FARAH CITY (Pajhwok): A 7-year-old enmity between eight families in Farah City, the capital of western Farah province, has ended through the mediation of ulema, tribal elders and common people, an official said on Wednesday.

Abdul Qavi Haqqani, head of the Farah Ulema Council, told a gathering which was convened for the reconciliation purpose said a member of Sher Ahmad's family was killed seven years ago due to a clash between some youth in the Malang Jan Park situated in the limits of 4th Police District.

He said one youth is on

one side and seven are on another side and at the end the alone youth is got killed.

He said yesterday, this issue was address forever with the help of ulema, local authorities and tribal elders.

Abdul Hai Sabawon, head of the Farah Information and Cultural Affairs Department, said these families were engaged in enmity from the past seven years which was resolved.

He said the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) strived to resolve these types of issue through talk.

Haji Khdadad, tribal elders, said government officials and local elders strived to address this problem for ever.

He said: "These types of reconciliations are beneficial because public enmity are convert into friendship."

Feroz Barak, one of the family members that was involved in enmity earlier, said he was really happy that after seven years this problem had been addressed.

He said he was faced with multiple issues during these years due to this enmity. It is pertinent to mention



that recently several enmities had been resolved

through the mediation of local officials, ulema and

tribal elders in different provinces.

Allocation of women and minority seats ECP reserves verdict on SIC’s plea

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) reserved on Wednesday the verdict on the petitions filed by the Sunni Ittihad Council (SIC) seeking the allocation of women and minority seats.

A five-member bench, chaired by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, conducted the hearing on Wednesday. The electoral body took up the plea after President Alvi refused to sign a Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs summary seeking the convening of a National Assembly session.

President Alvi maintained that the remaining reserved seats should be allocated before summoning the NA session which was supposed to be held within 21 days of the elections under the Constitution. In the previous hearing, CEC Raja consolidated all the petitions filed by SIC, Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz’s (PML-N). MQM-

P’s Advocate Farogh Naseem, SIC’s Barrister Ali Zafar, PPP’s Advocate Farooq H Naek and PML-N’s lawyer Azam Nazeer Tarar appeared before the five-member bench.

At the outset of the hearing, Barrister Zafar presented his arguments saying that 86 independents, who won the National Assembly seats, joined the SIC. “A political party has the right to form a government and contest the elections and SIC is a political party which is registered and has an electoral symbol,” said Zafar. He said that SIC has the right to form a government if independent candidates join the party.

At this, a member of the commission said that SIC did not contest the February 8 polls. Barrister Zafar then said that the independents will play an important role in the presidential elections, adding that it has been written in the Constitution who will get the reserved seat. At this, the CEC assured that they would be allocated as per the Constitution.

Zafar said that a party can include independent

candidates and become a parliamentary party. At this point, CEC Raja said that they had a letter from the SIC which said that the party did not contest the polls and neither did it want the reserved seats. Barrister Zafar said that the PTI did not know about the letter.

PPP’s Naek said that the SIC has not submitted any priority list and the deadline has also passed away. Later, PML-N’s Tarar said that a political party must win a few seats to claim reserved seats, however, the SIC did not contest polls. “A reserved seat can be nominated when it becomes vacant due to death, disqualification or resignation of a member,” he added.

He said that the reserved seats cannot be given to independents as per the law. MQM-P’s lawyer Naseem said that SIC is not a parliamentary party, urging ECP to give the reserved seats to his party as per quota. “The head of the SIC also contested the elections as an independent,” he said. After the competition of arguments, the ECP reserved the verdict.

PTI founder, Asad Umar cleared of protest charges

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad District and Sessions Court has acquitted former prime minister PTI founder Imran Khan and former lawmakers Asad Umar and Faisal Javed, among others, of charges in a case of protest and vandalism.

The case, registered at Tarnol police station, had been registered over the alleged violation of Section 144 during the PTI’s supposed long march of May 25, 2022. Judicial Magistrate Muhammad Shabbir issued the decision to accept the acquittal petitions, which were filed separately by the suspects under Section 249-A of the law. The judgement highlighted that further trial would be a futile exercise as the suspects could not be punished in the case.

Among those acquitted are PTI Founder Imran Khan, Asad Umar, Raja Khurram, Shahzad Nawaz, Ali Nawaz Awan, Faisal Javed, Abid Hussain, and Zaheer Khan. Notably, suspects Asad Umar, Ali Nawaz Awan, and Faisal Javed were on bail, and the court ruled that they can now withdraw their bonds. The court’s decision was based on the argument that the suspects, including Imran Khan, were unaware of the implementation of Section 144, as no notification had been issued by the additional district magistrate. The court suggested that the case might have been politically motivated, indicating a potential act of revenge against the PTI leadership.

During the proceedings, the court remarked that according to the prosecutor, the PTI founder and other suspects had intentionally obstructed GT Road. However, the court emphasized that the government’s notification of Section 144 had not been made public. Furthermore, it noted that the SHO of Tarnol police station was the complainant in the case, and a police officer lacked the authority to do so. Despite the inclusion of 11 witnesses in the case file, the court revealed that not a single statement had been recorded.

Palestinian FM says Hamas knows it cannot be in new govt

GENEVA (AFP): Palestinian foreign minister Riyad Al-Maliki said Wednesday he believes Hamas understands why it should not be part of a new government in the Palestinian territories.

Maliki told a press conference that a “technocratic” government was needed, without the group which is fighting a bitter war against Israel. “The time now is not for a national coalition government,” Al-Maliki said. “The time now is not for a government where Hamas will be part of it, because, in this case, then it will be boycotted by a number of countries, as happened before,” he told the UN correspondents’ association.

“We don’t want to be in a situation like that. We want to be accepted and engaging fully with the international community,” he explained. Palestinian prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh announced Monday the resignation of his government, which rules parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, citing the need for change after the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza ends. A decree from Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas said the government will stay on in an interim capacity until a new one is formed.

Maliki said the priority was engaging the international community on to help provide emergency relief to Palestinians, and then looking at how Gaza could be reconstructed. “Later, when the situation is right, then we could contemplate that option. But what comes first is how to salvage the situation. How to salvage innocent Palestinian lives. How to stop this insane war and how to be able to protect Palestinian people,” he said. “That’s why I think Hamas should understand this, and I do believe that they are in support of the idea to establish, today, a technocratic government. “A government that is based on experts, individuals who are completely committed to take up the reins and the responsibility for this period — a difficult one — and to move the whole country into a period of transition into a stable kind of situation where, at the end, we might be able to think about elections.



QUETTA: Newly elected members taking oath during Balochistan Assembly session.

COAS lauds devotion, professionalism of ASP Shehrbano

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Assistant Superintendent of Police Syeda Shehrbano Naqvi called on General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at General Headquarters, on Wednesday.

COAS lauded ASP Shehrbano for her selfless devotion to duty and professionalism in diffusing a volatile situation. The fearless officer extricated a woman from the difficult milieu of Ichra Bazaar in Lahore on 26 February 2024.

COAS acknowledged the vital role Pakistani women are playing in all walks of life. Since independence, Pakistani women have distinguished themselves at home and abroad, by virtue of their talent, tenacity and commitment. COAS highlighted that the women are an invaluable part of Pakistan’s society and their respect is enshrined in our religion as well as our social ethos.

COAS also underscored the importance of social harmony and the need for nationwide consensus on



curbing intolerance. He emphasized upon the rule of law and advised against taking the law in one’s hands when legal avenues are available for addressing concerns and grievances. Noting that arbitrary actions on the basis of heresy undermine the out-

look of the society, COAS underlined Islam’s eternal message of kindness and benevolence. COAS appreciated the sacrifices rendered by the law enforcement agencies to ensure the safety and security of the citizens of Pakistan.

Gaza death toll nears 30,000 as aid groups warn of ‘imminent’ famine

GAZA STRIP (AFP): The Gaza war’s reported Palestinian death toll neared 30,000 Wednesday as fighting raged in the Hamas-run territory, despite mediators insisting a truce with Israel could be just days away.

Another 91 people were killed in overnight Israeli bombardment, the health ministry said. Mediators from Egypt, Qatar and the United States have been trying to find a path to a ceasefire amid the bitter fighting, with negotiators seeking a six-week pause in the nearly five-month war.

After a flurry of diplomacy, mediators said a deal could finally be within reach — reportedly including the release of some Israeli hostages held in Gaza since Hamas’s October 7 attack in exchange for several hundred Palestinian detainees held by Israel. “My hope is by next Monday we’ll have a ceasefire” but “we’re not done yet,” US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday.

Qatari foreign ministry spokesman Majed Al-Ansari said Doha was “hopeful, not necessarily optimistic, that we can announce something” before Thursday. But he cautioned that “the situation is still fluid on the ground.”

Doha has suggested the pause in fighting would come before the beginning of Ramadan, the Muslim fasting month which starts on March 10 or 11, depending on the lunar calendar. Hamas had been pushing for the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza — a demand rejected outright by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. But a Hamas source, speaking on condition of

anonymity, said that the deal might see the Israeli military leave “cities and populated areas,” allowing the return of some displaced Palestinians and humanitarian relief.

Israel’s military campaign in Gaza has killed at least 29,954 people, mostly women and children, according to the territory’s health ministry. The war was triggered by an unprecedented Hamas attack on southern Israel that resulted in the deaths of around 1,160 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of official figures. Militants also took about 250 hostages, 130 of whom remain in Gaza, including 31 presumed dead, according to Israel.

Since the war began, hundreds of thousands of Gazans have been displaced, with nearly 1.5 million people now packed into the far-southern city of Rafah, where Israel has warned it plans to launch a ground offensive. Those who remain in northern Gaza have been facing an increasingly desperate situation, aid groups have warned. “If nothing changes, a famine is imminent in northern Gaza,” the World Food Programme’s deputy executive director Carl Skau told the UN Security Council Tuesday.

His colleague from the UN humanitarian office OCHA, Ramesh Rajasingham, warned of “almost inevitable” widespread starvation. The WFP said no humanitarian group had been able to deliver aid to the north for more than a month, with aid blocked from entering by Israeli forces. “I have not eaten for two days,” said Mahmud Khodr, a resi-

dent of Jabalia refugee camp in the north, where children roamed with empty pots.

“There is nothing to eat or drink.” Most aid trucks have been halted, but foreign militaries have air dropped supplies including on Tuesday over Rafah and Gaza’s main southern city Khan Yunis. What aid does enter Gaza passes through the Rafah border crossing from Egypt, fueling a warning from UN chief Antonio Guterres that any assault on the city would “put the final nail in the coffin” of relief operations in the territory. Israel has insisted it would move civilians to safety before sending troops into Rafah but it has not released any details.

Egypt has warned that an assault on the city would have “catastrophic repercussions across the region,” with Cairo concerned about an influx of refugees. Israeli military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said Tuesday that Israel will “listen to the Egyptians and their interests,” adding that Israel “cannot conduct an operation” with the current large population in Rafah. Ahead of the threatened ground incursion, the area has been hit repeatedly by Israeli air strikes.

An AFP correspondent reported that overnight several air strikes hit the southern cities of Khan Yunis and Rafah, as well as Zeitun in central Gaza. The army said it had “killed a number of terrorists and located weapons” in Zeitun. It said two more soldiers had died in the fighting in Gaza, taking its overall toll to 242 since the start of the ground offensive on October 27.

Flights operation suspended as heavy rains deluge Gwadar

GWADAR (INP): The flights’ operation at Gwadar International Airport was stopped on Wednesday after persistent heavy rains, lashing different parts of Balochistan since Tuesday, flooded the airport as well as other parts of the port city.

According to the spokesman for the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the water level reached six inches at the apron and other parts of the airport, which necessitated the closure of the flights’ operation. The spokesman further said that all airlines had been informed about the decision. On the other hand, residents of the city continue to face difficulties

as not only low-lying but other areas of the city too were flooded till last reports came in. Rainwater could not be drained out from the areas like Mulaband and Fagir Colony. Rainstorms have brought routine life to a halt as several homes have been destroyed while boats anchored at the port have also been broken. Roads

and streets have been submerged and according to reports, at least seven were damaged while the downpour left many people out of their shelters and disrupted the power transmission system. Clips showed the coastal town inundated. Locals called upon the authorities concerned to step up relief efforts. The PDMA authorities too rushed to cope with the situation.

A rain-producing system entered the country through Balochistan on February 25, under which parts of the province and upper areas were expected to receive downpours and windstorms from February 27. The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) forecast rains, thunder and hailstorms in most parts of the country and snowfall in hilly areas, starting February 29 till March 2, under a new westerly wave. Meanwhile, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President and party nominee for prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif

KP Secretary Health gets appreciation letter

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah on Wednesday presented an appreciation letter to Secretary Health Mahmood Aslam in acknowledgment of his unwavering dedication and exemplary leadership in advancing healthcare in the province.

The letter said Mahmood Aslam, serving as Secretary Health, demonstrated prudent management in navigating numerous challenges within the health department. Notably, his initiatives included effective dengue control measures in 2023, the rationalization of social health protection initiatives, and the efficient utilization of resources, such as e-tagging and rationalization of stored equipment worth millions of rupees. His leadership also ensured the continuity of healthcare facilities in outsourced hospitals of merged districts.

Arrest of KP residents by Punjab police

PHC seeks explanation from IGP

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprised of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Waqar Ahmad seeks explanation from Inspector General Police (IGP), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Akhtar Hayat Khan Gangapur till 19th March regarding arrest of citizens by Punjab’s police in the premises of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Wednesday.

PHC ordered in detail order sheet on the plea of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) nominated Chief Minister for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Aminpur asking IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to provide legal grounds for

arrest of citizens held by Punjab’s police in the premises of Pakhtunkhwa province.

The plea argued that Elite Squad of Punjab’s police attempted to arrest PTI nominated candidate for Chief Minister slot Ali Amin Gandapur on 19th February despite PHC’s granted transit bail to him which is illegal. PHC observed that the High Court had stopped arrest of PTI nominated candidate for Chief Minister slot in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa till next hearing but Punjab’s police had violated the court’s order.

PHC’s divisional bench comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Waqar Ahmad order IGP for submission legal

grounds for arrest of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s residents by Punjab’s police in their province while issued notices to respondents for 19th March.

Meanwhile, PHC’s divisional bench comprising Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Syed Arshad Ali granted transit bail to PTI activist and In-charge Zaman Park Chaudary Bilal Ijaz while ordered to appear before concerned High Court within fortnight.

The counsel Khurram Zeeshan and Shah Faisal Ottomankhel advocates argued that petitioner is elected Member National Assembly from constituency NA-81 and as law abiding citizen will appear before concerned courts of law.



ISLAMABAD: A view of Parliament House decorated with colourful flags ahead of first session of National Assembly.

Fears for future as S Korea’s fertility rate drops again

SEOUL: South Korea’s fertility rate — already the lowest in the world — has fallen yet again, amid fears of “national extinction”, an ongoing debate about how to reverse the trend, and how the country’s work culture and gender relations could be to blame.

Data from Statistics Korea showed on Wednesday that there had been an 8-percent decline in the country’s fertility rate in 2023 compared with the previous year, while experts have said that the country’s population of 51 million may halve by 2100 based on current rates.

South Korea’s government has been spending billions of dollars to try and reverse the trend, as the population continues to shrink. The average number of babies a South Korean woman is expected to give birth to during her life fell to 0.72 from 0.78 in 2022, and previous projections estimate that this will fall even further, to 0.68 in 2024.

These levels are far below the 2.1 children needed to maintain a country’s population at its current level. The decline has been especially concentrated in the capital Seoul,

where the 0.55 fertility rate was the lowest in the country.

As the country gears up to head to the polls in April, parties have focused on population decline in their campaigns, while the current government has promised to come up with “extraordinary measures” to tackle the situation. A report from South Korea’s Central Bank showed that the root causes behind the country’s declining fertility rate include challenges around employment, housing, and childcare.

The government has tried some initiatives. More than 360 trillion won (\$270bn) has already been spent in areas such as childcare subsidies since 2006, and parents are given a cash payment of two million won (\$1,510) upon the birth of a child. But for many South Korean women, a workaholic culture and ultra-competitive pressure in the workplace means that taking time out to have a baby is too much of a risk, in a country that already has one of the worst gender pay gaps in the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD).

“Having a baby is on

my list, but there’s windows for promotions and I don’t want to be passed over,” said Gwak Tae-hee, a 34-year-old junior manager at a Korean dairy product maker who has been married for three years. Couples in South Korea also cited high financial burdens as a deterrent to marriage, which is seen as a prerequisite to having children in South Korea.

South Korean mother, Cha Ji-hye, said that she previously spent \$5,400 a month on two babysitters for her quadruplets, while her husband works overseas. “What family can spend that kind of money to raise children?” said Hye, who is on extended leave from her career in nuclear power plants, while her husband works overseas to support the family.

Other countries in the region are also struggling with declining birth rates. In neighbouring China and Japan, fertility rates hit record lows of 1.09 and 1.26 respectively in 2022. Japan had more than twice as many deaths as new babies in 2023, while the country faces growing labour shortages. — Aljazeera