

Quake jolts parts of KP
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A 5.3 magnitude earthquake jolted parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Wednesday. According to the National Seismic Monitoring Centre, the earthquake occurred at 8:24pm PST. The epicentre of the earthquake was in the Hindu Kush region at a depth of 130 kilometres. Its longitude and latitude were 70.19 East and 36.25 North, respectively.



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Gas leakage blast kill three
F.P. Report

QUETTA: A powerful explosion triggered by gas leakage in a house in Quetta killed at least three people in the wee hours of Wednesday. The explosion occurred in a house located on Airport Road, killing two children and a woman on the spot and critically injuring two other persons. Rescue teams reached the spot and shifted the dead and injured to the BMC Quetta.

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ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Reserved seats plea hearing PHC asks SIC a political party or not

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A five members larger bench of Peshawar High Court comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim, Justice Ijaz Anwar, Justice SM Attique Shah, Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Syed Arshad Ali asked whether the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) is a party or not, on Wednesday.

A five-member larger bench of the PHC, which is hearing the case of reserved seats for the SIC, asked the attorney general to argue on Article 51(d) of the Constitution so that it could be established whether it is a political party? Can it participate in the presidential, senate, speaker and deputy speaker elections?

Qazi Anwar and Azam Swati represented the SIC in the court while Nayyar Bukhari, Faisal Karim Kundi and Farooq Naik appeared on behalf of the PPP. Attorney General Mansoor Awan told the court that the petitioner party did not participate in the general elections. The court said that there is no procedure laid down for providing lists for reserved seats in the Election Act.

The attorney general said that there is a law for women and minorities

under which they are given representation in the assembly. Political parties have to submit a list of nominees against reserved seats before the elections, he added. The court remarked that there is no provision of submission of list in the law. The court asked him whether SIC is being considered a political party.

The attorney general submitted that under the law, a party which contested elections is entitled to reserved seats. The court again asked him whether the SIC is a political party or not? Can it name an opposition leader? The attorney general replied that the law provides that a party must have won a seat in general elections. Reserved seats are for those parties who have representation in the assembly. The head of the SIC himself contested elections as an independent candidate, he continued.

The court remarked that there is another law under which independent candidates have to join a party within three days. What will happen if an independent candidate joins a party that has no representation in Parliament? The court asked the attorney general if an independent candidate

joins a party, can't he be given reserved seats?

The attorney general replied that seats can be given if there is any representation of that party in the Parliament. In the meantime, SIC's counsel Qazi Anwar argued that since the PTI did not allow to contest election on a symbol, its members contested as independent candidates. The PTI candidates joined the SIC as directed by the Election Commission (ECP). However, PHC asked him whether any member of the SIC had won the election? When the list of nominees for reserved seats was submitted?

Advocate Anwar said that the SIC is entitled to reserved seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan. Is there any provision in the Constitution to distribute reserved seats of one party among other parties? The court said that the ECP has to take a decision on reserved seats. If these are not given to a party, the seats remain vacant. PHC's larger bench adjourned further hearing till today (Thursday) on Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shah Faisal plea to prepare for arguments in this regard.

PM summons SIFC Apex body today

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the apex committee of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has been called under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday.

According to the details, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir will also attend the Apex Committee meeting. Apart from this, former Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and Caretaker Cabinet have also been invited to the meeting.

In the meeting, a detailed briefing will be given to the members related to SIFC and issues related to investment in the country will be reviewed. The meeting will be held today (Thursday) at 12:00pm in Prime Minister House in Islamabad.

Nine die in Balochistan recent rains

F.P. Report

QUETTA: As many as nine people, including children, lost their lives in recent rain-related incidents in Balochistan. According to a report released by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), those who died belonged to Kharan, Kech, Barkhan, Chaman and Pishin on Wednesday.

The report says 259 houses were completely destroyed, while 1,40 were partially damaged. Similarly, it says that four roads were completely destroyed while one of the bridges was washed away by floodwaters. The PDMA says 80 boats of fishermen were also destroyed due to rains.

The Authority says more rain and snow are expected in different districts of the province, including the provincial capital Quetta, during the next 24 hours. Giving further details, it says thundershowers are expected in Chaman, Ziarat, Pishin, Kalat, Chagai, Sorab, Sibbi, Naseerabad, Mastung, Noshki and Loralai.

Similarly, it says rain and snow are likely in Harnai, Sheerani, Zhob, Musakhel, Kohlu, Qila Saifullah and other areas of Balochistan. The report says that Pakistan Army, Pakistan Navy, PDMA, and district administrations are together carrying out relief activities in the affected areas. "Food, tents, dewatering pumps, water coolers, gas cylinders and other relief goods have already been provided to people in the flood-affected areas," reads the report.

PTI, PML-N break ice as KP CM calls on PM Shehbaz assures of resolution of KP's feasible demands

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday assured that all justified demands of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province would be met while keeping in view the current financial situation of the country.

Welcoming Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, the prime minister said that all the four provinces were the components of the federation and when they moved together, the country achieved progress and development. The chief minister who called on the prime minister also briefed him on the administrative affairs of the province in detail, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ishaq Dar, Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for States and Frontier Regions Amir Muqam and other relevant senior officials. The prime minister stressed to sit together to resolve all issues, adding the public welfare would be the top priority of their collective efforts.

The federal government believed in working in harmony with all the provincial governments including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and would foster the strong bonds. The chief minister also expressed the resolve that the provincial government wanted to move with good intentions and was committed to play its positive role in the national development.

PM visits USC outlets to inspect Relief Package implementation: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif paid surprise visits to different Utility

Stores across the federal capital to inspect the execution of the Prime Minister's Ramadan Relief Package.

During the visit, he interacted with the beneficiaries of the scheme and inquired whether they faced any issues while benefiting from the package. He instructed the authorities concerned to ensure that entitled beneficiaries of the Relief Package faced no problem in availing the facility.

Speaking on the occasion, the prime minister said the federal government had announced a historic Ramadan Relief Package worth Rs 12 billion under which eatable items would be provided to the deserving families at subsidized rates during the holy month of Ramadan at the Utility Stores outlets across the country. Besides, he said under the package, additional stipend will also be given to the families registered in Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). PM Shehbaz Sharif said under the federal government's Ramadan Relief Package, Rs 77 per kg subsidy was being given on wheat flour while Rs 100 per kg subsidy was being offered on ghee besides a subsidy of 20-30% on other food items such as rice, pulses, sugar etc for the deserving families.

He informed that under the package, the BISP beneficiaries would get additional stipend worth Rs 10,000 each, while under Kafalat programme, thousands of families from Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and Balochistan will get additional amount of Rs 2000 each. The prime minister said he had appointed several teams that would pay surprise visits to various USC outlets to check the availability and quality of the food items adding that strict action would be taken against

those involved in selling low quality items at the stores.

During his visit, he expressed satisfaction over the availability of the subsidized items at the stores in sufficient quantity. He was of the view that the blessed month of Ramadan would bring peace, prosperity and development for the country.

He also thanked the ministers and all the concerned officers and departments for making this relief package possible. Federal Ministers Ishaq Dar, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Attaullah Tarar and Khawaja Muhammad Asif accompanied the prime minister.

Pakistan, China to march toward shared development, prosperity: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan and China will march toward shared development and prosperity with joint investments in diverse projects.

In an interview with Xinhua news agency, PM Sharif said the friendship between Pakistan and China spanned more than 70 years and has been nurtured by both countries' leadership to promote friendly relations. He added that the two countries have developed as all-weather, "Iron Brothers" and have unique associations of friendship that have stood the test of time. "This friendship now must achieve higher heights," he added.

Chinese President Xi Jinping had congratulated Sharif on his election as prime minister of Pakistan on March 3. In his response, Sharif deeply appreciated Xi's warm message of facilitation and continued support for Pakistan. "I deeply value his sentiments not only for the people of Pakistan, for our friendship, but

(Continued on Back Page)

Pakistan all set for IMF's second review

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: As the newly elected government hinted at acquiring a new loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the global lender will visit Pakistan for the second review of the ongoing Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) — commencing from March 14-18 in Islamabad.

"Pakistan has met all Structural Benchmarks, Qualitative Performance Criteria and Indicative Targets for successful completion of the IMF review. This would be final review of SBA, and staff level agreement is expected after this appraisal," a statement issued by finance ministry read. The ministry stated that once the agreement is reached the final tranche of \$1.1 billion under the SBA will be disbursed, following the approval from IMF's Executive Board.

Islamabad secured the last-gasp rescue package last summer, averting a sovereign debt default, Reuters reported. The last review, if successful, will release a tranche of around \$1.1 billion, the ministry said. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has already directed his finance team, headed by newly installed Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, to initiate work on seeking an Extended Fund Facility (EFF) after the standby arrangement expires on April 11.

The global lender has said it will formulate a medium-term programme if Islamabad applies for one. The government has not officially stated the size of the additional funding it is seeking through a successor programme from the fund. New Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb shared that the government would engage with the IMF for a "large and long programme" under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF). The News reported earlier today.

In his first media briefing after assuming charge, the newly appointed minister laid out his plan for economic stabilisation. Aurangzeb also hinted at the reduction in the policy rate but added that the MPC is the domain of the SBP, which currently enjoys autonomy.



GAZA STRIP: A Palestinian woman speaks with a worker as she waits to receive aid from an UNRWA distribution center which was hit in an Israeli strike in Rafah.

Tarar: GSP Plus status of Pakistan to remain intact

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Wednesday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was conspiring against Pakistan by giving a false narrative to the European Union.

"The spokespersons of PTI are getting instructions from jail to harm the country, but no one will be allowed to harm the economy," he said while addressing his maiden press conference after assuming charge as Minister for Information and Broadcasting here. Lashing out at the PTI leadership, the minister said its conspiratorial elements were again trying to attack the country's economy as in the past too, PTI did a heinous act by writing a letter to the International Monetary Fund asking it not to enter into a loan agreement with the Pakistan government.

He said that the PTI spokespersons were getting instructions from Adiala jail to harm Pakistan. Tarar alleged that the founder of PTI had tried to make this country default but with the grace of Allah and Shehbaz Sharif's personal interest, Pakistan entered into an agreement with the IMF. He said now again the PTI leadership

wanted to sabotage the agreement with the IMF through another letter.

He asked the question as to in what capacity were they writing this letter to the IMF. "Protecting the state of Pakistan and the national interest is our first responsibility. Strategies and steps are being taken for revival of the economy," Tarar maintained. The minister said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was working day and night for the improvement of the economy and daily he chaired three to four meetings on the economy only.

He said that the prime minister was working to end inflation and unemployment in the country. The minister said on the other hand there was a political party which did not see anything beyond itself, and it did not care about the national interests or integrity of Pakistan. He said Pakistan could earn precious foreign exchange if GSP plus status from EU continued, it would help create more job opportunities and strengthen rupee as a currency.

"If Pakistan has GSP plus status, foreign exchange will come, our exports will increase, rupee will become stable, inflation will be reduced and employment opportunities will be provided", Attaullah Tarar

remarked. At the start of his press conference he assured that he would try his best to take measures for the welfare of media workers and journalists. "The doors of the Ministry of Information are opened for journalists and will try to play the role of a bridge between the government and the media," he added.

He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had started working on a strategy to deal with the challenges faced by the economy as soon as he assumed office. He said it was an honour that yesterday, Bloomberg magazine mentioned Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif regarding his potential for betterment of Pakistan's economy. The minister said that Bloomberg also termed the choice of Muhammad Aurangzeb as finance minister as the best choice who as an economist had vast experience at global level.

Tarar said that Bloomberg also mentioned the policies of the Prime Minister for revival of the economy. Replying to a question, he said that these elements were contacting the European Union and asking them to withdraw the GSP plus status, which was tantamount to a conspiracy and nefarious attempt to make the poor people of Pakistan suffer.

By-polls for 23 vacant NA, PA seats on April 21: ECP

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday announced April 21 as schedule for by-elections on 23 vacant seats including six National and 17 Provincial Assembly constituencies.

It should be mentioned here that on February 8, election on these National and Provincial constituencies were postponed due to the death of contesting candidates and candidates running for multiple seats. Additionally, some constituencies were vacated by winners of dual seats.

According to the schedule released by the Election Commission of Pakistan, by-elections will be held in six National Assembly and 17 provincial assembly constituencies including 12 in Punjab, two in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, two in Balochistan, and one Sindh Assembly constituency. Polling will be held in NA-08 Bajaur, NA-44 Dera Ismael Khan-I, NA-119 Lahore-III, NA-132 Kasur-II, NA-196 Kamber Shahdadt-I, and NA-207 Shaheed Benazirabad-I

constituencies. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly comprises PK-22 Bajaur-IV and PK-91 Kohat-II constituencies, while the Balochistan Assembly includes PB-20 Khuzdar-III and PB-22 Lasbela constituencies.

A by-election will be held in the Sindh constituency PS-80 Dadu-I. The elections were being held in various Punjab Assembly constituencies, including PP-22 Chakwal-Cum-Talagang, PP-32 Gujrat VI, PP-36 Wazirabad-II, PP-54 Narawal-I, PP-93 Bhakkar-V, PP-139 Sheikhupura-IV, PP-147 Lahore-III, PP-149 Lahore-V, PP-158 Lahore XIV, PP-164 Lahore-XX, PP-266 Rahim Yar Khan-XII, and PP-290 Dera Ghazi Khan-V.

According to the schedule, a public notice will be issued on March 15, 2024. Nomination papers can be filed with the returning officers from March 16 to March 18, 2024. The names of nominated candidates will be published on March 18, 2024.

The deadline for the returning officer to conduct scrutiny of nomination

papers is March 21, 2024. On March 25, 2024, appeals can be lodged against the decision of the returning officers regarding the acceptance or rejection of nomination papers. The deadline for the appellate tribunal to decide on appeals is March 28, 2024. Revised lists of candidates will be published on the same day. March 29, 2024, marks the last date for withdrawal of candidature and publication of the revised list of candidates. Election symbols will be allotted to contesting candidates on March 30, 2024, with polling scheduled for April 21.

Contesting candidates who have previously submitted their nomination papers are not required to file new papers or make deposits under relevant laws if election proceedings were halted due to the death of a contesting candidate in constituencies such as NA-8 Bajaur, PK-22 Bajaur-IV, PK-91 Kohat-II, and PP-266 RY Khan-XII. The respective District Election Commissioner will coordinate the transfer of original records from the former Returning Officer to the newly appointed one.

gram, with economic stability serving as a mutual goal for both parties.

Reflecting on the caretaker government's efforts in economic improvement, Aurangzeb commended Fawad Hasan Fawad's diligent handling of privatization issues and expressed a commitment to digital tax revenue collection. Furthermore, Aurangzeb mentioned the potential for environment funding discussions within the IMF loan program, citing instances where the IMF has extended loans beyond quotas to support environmental initiatives in other countries.

Finance Minister aims for transparency

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Finance Minister, Muhammad Aurangzeb, reiterated the government's commitment to enhancing transparency within the tax system, aiming to increase the tax revenue's share in the national income to 10%.

Addressing the media in Islamabad on Wednesday, Minister Aurangzeb emphasized the priority placed on transparency within the tax framework. He expressed the government's intention to pursue a significant and long-term program with the International

Monetary Fund (IMF), aligning with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision for economic improvement.

"We want to take a substantial program according to our quota with the IMF, ensuring continuity and economic discipline," stated Aurangzeb, highlighting the goal of economic stability beyond IMF requirements. Regarding the current IMF program, Aurangzeb assured that there are no obstacles in receiving the last tranche, amounting to 1.1 billion dollars. He also outlined the government's preparation of an initial outline for a new IMF loan pro-



Minister reviews mining, quarrying issues

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Mines and Minerals Department (MMD) Sardar Sher Ali Gorchani reviewed various aspects of mining and quarrying at a meeting, held here on Wednesday.

The meeting was attended by officials from the Mines and Minerals Department, which particularly focused on enhancing transparency in revenue generation and leasing processes. Additionally, directives were issued for expediting completion of iron ore and coal projects in Chinot. Sardar Gorchani expressed gratitude towards Punjab chief minister for choosing him as the MMD minister. He reiterated his commitment to serving the province without personal agenda and ensuring unhindered progress in legitimate mining activities.

Highlighting the potential of southern Punjab's mineral-rich areas, the minister proposed utilising revenue from salt mines to bolster the province's economic condition. The minister commended the diligent efforts of all officers and emphasised collective endeavours for advancing societal welfare through governmental initiatives.

Director General of Mines Rana Abdul Shakoor, Commissioner of Mines Labour Welfare and Chief Inspector of Mines, Riaz Ahmed Chaudhry, Additional Secretary Ashfaq Khan, and MD Punjab Mineral Zubair Hussain Kharral attended the meeting.

Pirzada emphasizes importance of upholding rule of law

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada Wednesday emphasized the importance of upholding the rule of law and maintaining the integrity of the allocation process of government accommodations.

Chairing a high level meeting of Estate Office, he directed the concerned to conduct a thorough review of all previous allotments to identify any instances of illegality or irregularity and strict action will be taken against those found guilty.

The meeting was held to focus on devising strategies to curb the previous practice of illegal allotments and ensure transparency in the allocation process, said a news release.

During the meeting, Riaz Pirzada was apprised by Director General, Estate Office Obbaud ud Din about the management and working of the department.

The minister also directed to implement strong mechanisms to prevent future occurrences of illegal allotments and to streamline the allocation process to ensure efficiency and fairness. Riaz Pirzada reiterated the government's commitment to providing affordable housing solutions to the federal employees and general public while ensuring that all transactions are conducted in a fair and transparent manner. Secretary Housing and Works Dr. Shahzad Khan Bangash and other senior officers of the ministry were also present during the meeting.

CM witnesses agreement signing between PSCA, NRTC

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz witnessed the agreement signing between Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) and National Radio and Telecommunication Corporation (NRTC) on Wednesday to implement smart safe cities project.

The PSCA will implement Smart Safe City projects in 18 cities of the Punjab in collaboration with NRTC. An agreement in this regard was signed between the two organisations. PSCA MD Ahsan Younis and Syed Amir Javed, a representative of NRTC signed the Agreement. Under the Agreement, Air quality index monitoring environment sensors will also be installed in these 18 cities.

Earlier, it was briefed that Safe City Projects in Gujarat, Jhelum, Sheikhupura, Okara, and Taxila will become functional by the end of May, whereas in Multan, Bahawalpur, Sargodha, Rahimyar Khan, Muzaffargarh, Sahiwal, Jhang, Attock, Hasan Abdal, DG Khan, Sialkot, Murree, Okara, and Mianwali, it would also be completed by the end of this year. Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Chief Secretary, Chairman Planning & Development, Home Secretary, IG Police, Finance Secretary and other senior officers also attended the ceremony.

CM orders to revamp TEVTA on modern lines: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed to prepare a 5-year comprehensive plan to revamp Technical and Vocational

Training Authority (TEVTA) to impart modern skills to youth so that they could tap rewarding employment opportunities, not only in the local but in the international labour market as well.

Chairing a meeting on technical education and vocational training in Punjab, here on Wednesday, the CM said that qualified instructors should be employed in the training institutes. TEVTA Master Trainers should be trained as per requirements of the industry. Old labs of TEVTA institutes should also be upgraded accordingly, she underscored. She directed to reconstitute TEVTA Board after including vibrant professionals from the private sector.

The CM said that skill mapping is vital to know true potential of human resource export. She directed the authorities concerned to conduct a complete mapping of the skillset required by the local and international labour market. She said "We should tap the huge potential in high-end technologies like integrated circuits and microchip design by training our youth in these technologies." She said that training courses should be designed according to the market demand.

Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Minister for Industries Chaudhry Shafey Hussain, Chief Secretary, Chairman Planning & Development, Secretary Finance, Secretary Industry, Chairman TEVTA, CEO TEVTA and other senior officers concerned attended the meeting.

Ali Gillani extols Punjab's Cultural heritage in PA address

LAHORE (APP): Ali Haider Gillani, the parliamentary leader of the Pakistan People's Party, took the floor in the Punjab Assembly on Wednesday to extend heartfelt congratulations to the entire Pakistani nation on the occasion of Punjab Culture Day.

In his address, Gillani eloquently emphasized the rich tapestry of culture and tradition that the land of the five rivers, Punjab, embodies.

Highlighting Punjab's renowned hospitality and cuisine, Gillani underscored the global recognition of its traditional flavors and warmth. He paid tribute to the province as the cradle of revered Sufi saints, including Data Ganj Baksh (RA), Baba Bulleh Shah, Ghulam Farid,

and Shah Rukn-e-Alam, whose teachings continue to inspire millions worldwide. Gillani shed light on Punjab's vibrant cultural landscape, emphasizing the significance of traditional sports such as kabaddi, wrestling, and the colorful festival of Basant, which are deeply ingrained in its societal fabric.

In a fervent call to action, Gillani urged citizens to unite in celebrating Punjab's cultural heritage and to collectively promote and preserve its unique identity.

As Punjab Culture Day unfolds, Gillani's impassioned plea resonates with a shared commitment to honor and cherish the rich heritage of Pakistan's most populous province.

Officials from the Department of Transport calls on Sharjeel



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Officials from the Department of Transport, Mass Transit, and Excise & Taxation met with Senior Minister of Sindh and Provincial Minister for Transport, Mass Transit, and Excise & Taxation, Sharjeel Inam Memon, at his office in Archives Complex, Clifton, Karachi.

During the meetings, Senior Minister of Sindh, Sharjeel Inam Memon, directed revolutionary measures and reforms in the Department of Transport and Excise and Taxation. Secretary Excise Atif-ur-Rehman and Secretary Transport Asad

Zamin briefed the provincial minister regarding their departments. DG Excise Aurangzeb Panhwar, along with DG Excise Admin Riaz Hassan Khoso, headed by Secretary Excise and Taxation Atif-ur-Rehman, met with Sharjeel Inam Memon. During the meeting, Senior Minister of Sindh, Sharjeel Inam Memon, instructed the excise and taxation officials to take revolutionary steps to make the taxation system effective and organized.

He also instructed them to enhance the efficiency of the taxation system by equipping it with more advanced technology. Senior Minister Sharjeel

Inam Memon called an important meeting of the excise and taxation department for tomorrow, where crucial decisions are expected. Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon also met with Transport Secretary Asad Zamin and Managing Director of Sindh Mass Transit Authority Kamal Daiv. During the meeting with the transport officials, Provincial Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon emphasized providing the best travel facilities to the people. He instructed that the provision of the best travel facilities to the people should be ensured during the holy month of Ramadan.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Social Welfare and Baitul-Mal Sohail Shaukat butt Visits Qasr e Behood. —APP Photo

Salman vows comprehensive health sector improvement

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Minister for Specialised Healthcare and Medical Education Khawaja Salman Rafique reiterated the government's commitment to enhancing the health sector.

In a series of meetings held at his office on Wednesday, he emphasised the inclusion of all stakeholders in the process to ensure effective reforms.

Under the directive of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Minister Rafique affirmed the government's dedication to providing better health facilities to the public. Improving the conditions of government hospitals across Punjab stands

as a top priority on the agenda.

He pledged to present a comprehensive report to the chief minister after conducting thorough visits to government hospitals, aiming to address public concerns and enhance service delivery. Expressing gratitude for the trust bestowed upon them by the people, the minister vowed to uphold his faith and deliver on the government's promises of genuine public service.

Furthermore, the minister highlighted the government's proactive approach towards addressing the issues faced by the medical community, promising swift action on priori-

ty matters. In a separate development, Minister Salman Rafique met a delegation from the Young Doctors Association (YDA), comprising Dr. Atif Majid, Dr. Shoaib Niazi, Dr. Jafar, Dr. Kashif, Dr. Hamza, Dr. Salman Hasib, and others. This collaboration underscores the government's commitment to leveraging international expertise in its efforts to enhance healthcare services. As the government embarks on its mission to improve the health sector, the minister expressed hope for divine guidance in serving Pakistan and its people with sincerity and dedication.

Shaza calls for completion of all IT projects

ISLAMABAD (APP): State Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, on Wednesday, called for the completion of all Information Technology projects within specified timelines. Presiding over a meeting, she directed the efficient utilization of funds for all projects.

She pledged efforts to accelerate the promotion of the IT and Telecom sector and attract investments in the sector. The meeting was attended by IT Secretary Hassan Nasir Jami, Additional Secretary Aisha Humera Moriani, and senior officials of the Ministry of IT. Various subsidiary departments of the Ministry of IT, including NTC, PTA, Universal Service Fund, and other government entities, were present in the meeting. During the session, detailed presentations were given on the workings of the Ministry of IT, the IT sector landscape, Telecom Ecosystem, and the Ministry's projects.

Officials from NTC, PTA, and Universal Service Fund also briefed the attendees about their respective projects and initiatives.

SFA, retailers to take action

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Food Authority (SFA) and All Milk Retailers Association (AMRA) on Wednesday unanimously decided to take action against milk adulteration.

Director General SFA Agha Fakhar Hussain chaired the meeting held at SFA Office here on Wednesday. Office bearers of Milk Retailers including Sohail Naqvi, Amjad Bhatti, Abdul Waheed Gaddi and others also attended the meeting. On this occasion, the office bearers of All Milk Retailers assured full cooperation with the SFA.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION UNIT
GOMAL ZAM DAM COMMAND AREA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT, GOVT. OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Gomal Zam Dam Command Area Development Project (GZD-CADP) is jointly funded by Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa & USAID. The Project Implementation Unit (PIU), GZD-CADP invites sealed bids on Single Stage Two Envelop basis from eligible financially strong firms/contractors in accordance with KPPRA Procurement Rules 2014 (amended from time to time) for the following works on farmers' fields located at different sites in District D.I. Khan and Tank

#	Detail of Works /Sub Works				Estimated Cost (Million)	Earnest Money / CDR	PEC Relevant Category /Code	Completion Period
	Construction of Earthen & Lined Watercourses (WCs) along with Allied Structures							
	Package #	Wcs (Nos)	Disty / Minor	Location (District)				
01	Package-01A	03	D-6	DI Khan	16.793	336,000		
02	Package-02A	07	D-6	DI Khan	40.607	813,000		
03	Package-07A	08	D-08	DIKhan	34.187	684,000	C-05 or Above	
04	Package-11B	09	D-3	Tank	27.414	549,000		
05	Package-12A	05	D-5	DIKhan	32.852	658,000		
06	Package-12B	05	D-5	DIKhan	23.375	468,000		
07	Package-15A	09	D1R1	Tank	37.214	745,000	Field of Specialization	90 Days / (03 Month)
08	Package-15B	07	SS-Min	Tank	40.821	817,000		
09	Package-18A	06	O-4	DIKhan	36.500	730,000	CE-04 & CE-10	
10	Package-18B	06	D-4	DIKhan	31.371	628,000		
11	Package-31A	07	D-10 & D-6	DIKhan	24.491	490,000		
12	Package-53	07	D-3,4 & 6	DIKhan	36.795	736,000		

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- Bidding documents (separate for each package) containing all the terms & conditions and other relevant instructions for the works can be obtained upon payment of Rs. 3000/- (Pak Rupees Three Thousand only) per package (non-refundable/transferable) against a proper receipt from the office undersigned w.e.f. the date of publication of this tender notice in the newspaper till one day prior to bid opening date.
- Bidding documents shall only be issued to the original contractors/firms or their authorized representative(s) having authority on judicial stamp, upon production of attested copies of the following documents (A to G).
 - Valid registration/enlistment with any Works Department of public sector and/or On Farm Water Management Department(s).
 - Valid registration with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in relevant category (C-05 or above) and field of specialization (CE-04 & CE-10).
 - Valid Registration with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority (KPRA).
 - Valid Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) of the bidder or his authorized representative.
 - Proof of Income Tax & Sales Tax Registration/Active Tax Payer with concerned Authorities.
 - Tentative Agreement with certified / approved PCPS and Nucua manufacturing yards pertaining to supply/purchase subject to award of Contract.
 - Attested copy of affidavit stating that the original CDR-Call Deposit Receipt @ 2% of the bid cost, sealed and placed in the Financial Proposal. Moreover, the Original Affidavit shall be attached with the Technical Proposal, failing which the technical bid will be considered as Non-responsive.
- The eligible bidder(s) can apply for one or more than one package. However, the bidder(s) will be considered for award of single package only. For each package separate bid solicitation documents are to be submitted by the interested bidders.
- The eligible bidders shall send their bids in duplicate along with original call deposit and attested copies of the above-mentioned documents (A to G) through courier / or by hand in separate envelopes clearly marked as Original & Duplicate. Detailed bidding criteria is given in IB-2 of the bidding documents.
- The bidding system shall be based upon Single Stage Two (02) Envelope system namely:

(a) Technical Proposal of the bid

(b) Financial Proposal of the bid
- The Financial Proposals of only those bidders/firms will be open whose Technical Proposals declared as qualified by the duly constituted procurement committee / sub-committee in accordance with the scrutiny/assessment of the technical credentials/evaluation criteria mentioned in the bidding documents. The financial proposals of the technically accepted bids shall be open publicly at a time, date and venue announced and communicated to the bidders in advance, within the bid validity period.
- Financial Bid(s) must be accompanied with Bid Security @02% of the bid cost in the shape of Call Deposit Receipt (CDR), as per prescribed format given in the bidding documents (Form of Bid Security), from any scheduled Bank of Pakistan in the name of Project Director, PIU, GZD-CADP, D.I. Khan.
- Bidders/Contractors who have already been awarded contract(s) under GZD-CADP and they have still not completed their package(s) shall not be eligible for this contract. In case of completion of the awarded civil works; the firm shall provide the satisfactory performance certificate from Project's Design & Supervisory Consultants.
- Bid securities of 1st, 2nd and 3rd lowest bidders for the respective works will be retained by the Client till approval of tenders by the Competent Authority.
- All Government Notifications / Rules / Taxes updated from time to time shall be applicable.
- The undersigned reserved the rights to reject any or all bids as per provision contained in Rules-47 of KPPRA Procurement Rules, 2014 (amended from time to time).
- The award of contract shall be on the basis of above/below engineer estimate on MRS instead of item rate basis. Bidders should quote their rates on percent "Above/Below" of the engineer estimate (both in words & digits) and only two digits after the decimal point shall be considered for evaluation purpose.
- A pre-bid meeting will be held in the office of undersigned on **27.03.2024 at 11.00 AM**. Interested bidders are advised to attend this meeting at the schedule time, date and venue.
- Bids complete in all respect shall reach the office of undersigned by **11:00 AM on 02.04.2024** which shall be opened at **11.30 AM** on the same date & venue in the presences of bidders, who wish to attend.
- Error /omissions (if any) are subject to rectification.

INF(P)0487/24

PROJECT DIRECTOR
PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION UNIT (PIU), GOMAL ZAM DAM COMMAND AREA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (GZD-CADP), BANNU ROAD, NEAR SHIEKH YOUSAF ADDA DERA ISMAIL KHAN
 (0313-1714746, Email ID: pd.gzd.cadp@gmail.com)

Peace, security not to be compromised under any circumstances: Law Minister

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Minister for Home, Law, and Parliamentary Affairs, Zia ul Hassan Lanjar Wednesday affirmed that peace and security will not be compromised under any circumstances.

"We anticipate a significant change in this regard, and I am thankful to those who have entrusted me with their confidence," he said this while talking to media at Sindh Assembly. He said, "My foremost priority is to establish peace and maintain law and order throughout the province, from Karachi to Kashmore. Those involved in street crimes in Karachi will face strict repercussions, especially those who resort to violence over trivial mat-

ters." Lanjar said qualified and reputable police officers will be appointed, and with the cooperation of the public, we will ensure peace and maintain control

over the prevailing situation across the province, including Karachi.

Prior to this, Zia ul Hassan Lanjar, held an introductory meeting with

officers in the Department of Home government of Sindh.

تنسیخی ٹینڈر نوٹس
(Cancellation of Tender Notice)

تحصیل میونسپل ایڈمنسٹریشن تحصیل ڈومیل کی جانب سے جاری شدہ E-Tender نوش بسلسلہ تقریبی منصوبے جس میں تاریخ 2024-3-22 مقرر کی گئی تھی۔ بحوالہ صوبائی حکومت خیبر پختونخواہ پلاننگ اینڈ ترتیبی محکمہ جاری شدہ لیٹر نمبر C/RD/P/DD/2023-24/10-51/4252-58

موجودہ تاریخ 2024 تمام ٹینڈر عمل منسوخ کیا جاتا ہے۔

الشہر / تحصیل آفیر انفراسٹرکچر ایم اے ڈومیل
 بکرم / تحصیل میونسپل آفیسری ایم اے ڈومیل

INF/P519/24

PROVINCIAL HEALTH SERVICES ACADEMY
GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA PESHAWAR
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
CORRIGENDUM

ONLINE ADMISSIONS OPEN FOR TWO YEARS PARAMEDICAL DIPLOMA

With reference to the previous Online Admission Notice published in Daily Mashriq Peshawar on February 22,2024. All the concerned are advised to follow the given schedule for Online Admissions in Paramedical Institute attached to PHSA Network, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

S.No.	Re-Scheduled Process	Date
1.	Last Date of Online Apply	11th of March 2024
2.	List of Applied Candidates	12th of March, 2024
3.	Dead Line for Submission of Application / grievance for correction of data	14th of March, 2024
4.	Display of Shortlisted Candidates with Interview schedule	18th of March, 2024

DIRECTOR GENERAL PROVINCIAL HEALTH SERVICES ACADEMY, BUDNI ROAD, DURANPUR

INF/P519/24



Operation against encroachment conducted

PESHAWAR (APP): On the instructions of Peshawar Director East Rehman Khattak and Deputy Director Regulation Ziljuha Ilyas, Chief Demolition Inspector Fazal Mehmood along with the demolition staff conducted a grand against encroachment in various areas of Peshawar.

The demolition staff conducted a grand against encroachment including Hashnagri Rampura Gate, Ghanta Ghar, Church Road, Kohati Gate and Namkamundi. A raid was carried out in which a truck worth of goods lying outside the shops was seized.

On this occasion, the Capital Metropolitan Administration warned the shopkeepers to avoid trespassing and keep their valuables inside the shops and keep footpaths open for public traffic. Otherwise be ready for tough operation.

Minister visits soil, water conservation office

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Agriculture Minister, Muhammad Sajjad here Wednesday visited Soil and Water Conservation Office where he was briefed about ongoing projects.

Speaking on the occasion, he stressed measure to ensure conservation of water for improving agriculture output and directed the department to take necessary steps in this connection.

He also highlighted threats due to construction of residential societies on agriculture land and said that steps should be taken to control mushroom growth of societies.

The minister also directed proper planning to cope with the dangers arisen in back drop of climate change. He also suggested formulation of monitoring committee to protect agriculture land and directed department to take steps for achieving self-sufficiency.

KP minister, MNA visit hospital

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Minister, Pukhtun Khan, MNA Maulana Naseem Ali Shah and DC Bannu, Shah Saud on Wednesday visited District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital Bannu where they inquired about the issues being faced by the patients and their attendants.

Additional Director DHQ Hospital, Dr Muhammad Nauman gave a detailed briefing on the occasion.

Briefly talking to the media, Provincial Minister Malik Pukhtun Khan said the provincial government will ensure transparency in all the departments including the health sector and hoped that people would see a visible change in all the departments even during the month of Ramadan.

He said the provincial government was following a comprehensive strategy to provide all needed facilities of life to the people including the best health-care cover.

Dark clouds covered Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): Dark clouds circled provincial capital Peshawar with light drizzle started with the weather becoming pleasant as cold returned here Wednesday.

The weather has become pleasant and the cold has returned with the minimum temperature being between 11 and 13 degrees Celsius, the official of Meteorological Department said here.

A Westerly wave is likely to enter West Pakistan by night with rain, snowfall in hilly areas and hailstorm in some areas are expected, the official of Meteorological Department said.

Administration failed to control inflation wave

PESHAWAR (APP): The price of vegetables, fruits and live chicken has increased drastically, the citizens are worried and the district administration failed to control the inflation wave in provincial capital Peshawar.

The prices of the Onion Rs 300, Tomato Rs 160, Garlic Rs 650 and Ginger Rs 640, Potatoes 70, Kachalu 220, Green pepper 300, Capsicum 400, Eggplant 160, Cauliflower 130, Okra 340 rupees are being sold per kg.

It is difficult to eat fruit chaat in Ramadan, fruits are also out of purchasing

power of the general public with the Apple 430, Pomegranate 430, Malta 340, Strawberry 450, Amardo 350 are being sold per kg while banana 220 rupees per dozen sold. The price of live chicken has been reduced by Rs 10 per kg to Rs 440 per kg.

However, the District Administration has taken some steps to control the rates of food items by launching a crackdown against those violating the government rates.

Most of the shopkeepers have been arrested due to the absence of official price lists and poor cleanliness,

said an official of the district administration when contacted.

Other markets including Hayatabad, Warsak Road, Nasir Bagh Road, including interior City were inspected, the official of the District Administration said. As many as 455 shops were inspected during operations. He disclosed that 188 shopkeepers were arrested for poor conditions and selling expensive goods, while 123 shopkeepers were instructed to improve. The arrested shopkeepers include fruit sellers, vegetable sellers, general store owners, the official said.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister Arshad Ayub Khan presiding over Local Council Board meeting.

TMA, AD LGs and ADA directed to register

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Secretary of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Department has directed all TMAs, Assistant Director Local Government, And Local Area Development Authorities to register themselves with KPRA and start tax compliance with the authority.

The directions were issued during a meeting between the Secretary of Local Government, Mr. Dawood Khan, and the Director General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority, Miss Fouzia Iqbal, who visited his office along with her team to discuss issues related to TMAs, Local Area Development Authorities,

and AD Local Government. The Secretary of Local Government welcomed the KPRA team to his office.

DG KPRA informed the Secretary of Local Government about the domain of KPRA and mentioned that the majority of the TMAs, Local Area Development Authorities, and AD Local Governments are not yet registered with KPRA.

Additionally, those who are registered are not fully compliant with the withholding of sales tax on services and subsequent submission of the withheld tax to KPRA.

The DG KPRA thanked the Secretary of Local Government and his team for providing the opportunity and time for the KPRA team to come and present

their issues.

The Secretary of Local Government directed all TMAs, Local Area Development Authorities, and AD Local Government entities that are not yet registered with KPRA to complete their registration within three days and commence tax compliance.

Additionally, the Secretary instructed his team to enhance compliance levels and begin sharing data regarding revenue and expenditures with KPRA.

It was also agreed that KPRA will arrange training and awareness sessions for officials of the TMAs, Local Area Development Authorities, and AD Local Government on sales tax on services and withholding regulations.

14 DSPs reshuffled in DI Khan division

PESHAWAR (APP): The Regional Police Officer DI Khan Nasir Mehmood Satti on Wednesday notified reshuffling of as many as 14 Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSPs).

According to the notification issued here, SDPO Wana, South Waziristan Lower, Deputy Superintendent of Police Muslim Shah has transferred and posted SDPO Darazinda, DI Khan, DSP Shah Jahan Afridi who was awaiting posting at Range Office, DI Khan has been posted as SDPO Drabon, Deputy Superintendent of Police traffic DI Khan Muhammad Fayaz has been given additional charge of DSP HQrs DI Khan in addition to his own duties.

Similarly, Inspector Kifayat Ullah, Acting DSP Investigation South Waziristan Upper has been transferred and posted as Operational Staff, DI Khan, Inspector Muhammad Saleem Acting SDPO Saddar, DI Khan has been posted as Acting SDPO City, Tank, Inspector Gul Wali Operational Staff, South Waziristan Upper has been posted as Acting DSP HQrs, Tank, Inspector Asghar Ali Shah, Acting DSP HQrs, DI Khan has been posted as Acting DSO Investigation, South Waziristan Lower, Inspector Kashif Sattar Acting SDPO Paharpur, DI Khan has been posted as Acting DSP Investigation, South Waziristan Lower.

Waziristan Upper, Inspector Anes ul Hassan, acting SDPO Braban, DI Khan has been posted as acting SDPO, Kulachi, DI Khan, Inspector Syed Sagheer Abbas Gillani, Acting SDPO Kulachi, DI Khan, has been posted as acting SDPO Paharpur, DI Khan, Inspector Muhammad Adnan Acting SDPO City, DI Khan has been given additional charge of SDPO Saddar, DI Khan in addition to his own duties, Inspector Abdur Rasheed, acting DSP HQrs, Tank has been posted as operational staff, DI Khan and Sub-inspector Sher ullah SDPO Darazinda, DI Khan has been given look after charge of SDPO Wana, South Waziristan Lower.



PESHAWAR: People sit and wait for Iftar to break fast at a mosque.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur presiding over a meeting regarding law and order situation.

PHC issues arrest warrant of acquitted culprit

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Waqar Ahmad issued arrest warrant of an acquitted culprit allegedly involved murder over old rivalry, on Wednesday.

The complainant lawyer Syed Mubashir Shah advocate argued that the appellant father named Mustamar Khan in on 2nd June 2021 in the premises of Kalu Khan police station, Swabi district.

The deceased's son filed First Information Report against the offense in which Abdur Rauf along with one other while trial court had acquitted the accused from charges.

The counsel argued for vacating acquittal orders against the alleged murderer and issuance of arrest orders in murder case.

PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Waqar Ahmad issued bailable arrest's warrant over Rs1 lac along with two personal sureties after conclusion of arguments.

Shoaib condoles with Asfandiyar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Central Council Member, Awami National Party Muhammad Shoaib Khpalwak condoles with Asfandiyar Wali Khan and Aimal Wali on departure of his spouse and mother respectively, on Wednesday.

ANP central council member Muhammad Shoaib Khpalwak extended his heartfelt condolence with the bereaved family and offered prayers for highest ranks of departed soul in Jannat. He said that it is a unbearable loss for Wali Bagh especially for ANP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Aimal Khan.

Central Council Member Shoaib Khpalwak said that the deceased had loyal to Asfandiyar Wali Khan in every odd and hot situation during his political carrier for upholding voice for civilian supremacy in the country.

He added that showed his condolence to Wali Bagh and offered prayers for bereaved family to overcome this unbearable loss.

Govt to hold training for youngsters

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Science Technology, Khalid Latif Marwat has directed holding of district level information technology training programs for youngster to improve their capabilities and apprise them about emerging fields of science and technology.

He said this during his visit to KP Information Technology Board here on Wednesday. He said that capacity building of youngsters is necessary to prepare them to meet current challenges.

He also directed to complete ongoing projects of information technology and said that steps would be taken to strengthen information technology sector in KP and added that advancement in information technology would also help to control unemployment.

The minister also directed to make Information Technology Parks and focus the new fields of artificial intelligence and quantum computing.

Tree plantation drive in full-swing

PESHAWAR (APP): Tree plantation campaign in all economic zones of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is in full-swing across the province.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC) has planned the plantation of the saplings of 14400 trees, mostly fruit-bearing plants in its 11 economic zones and one export processing zone.

In this connection, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) KP-EZDMC, Javed Iqbal Khattak, an olive sapling at the Industrialists Facilitation Centre (IFC) of Peshawar Economic Zone to inaugurate the plantation drive in the zone here on Wednesday.

Besides, Fakhar-e-Alam (Chief Zone Management),

Ishfaq Afridi (Head Department of Planning & Support), Sajid Nawaz Khattak (Zone Manager) and other officials of Peshawar Economic Zone were also present on the occasion.

Similar tree plantation drives have already been launched at the Hattar and Jalozi Economic Zones. The purpose of the drive is the promotion of environmental friendliness and beautification of the zone.

The initiative not only aims to contribute to a greener and healthier Pakistan but also has garnered support from the Industrialists Associations of all Economic Zones for ensuring successful implementation of the drive.

Under the plan, 3000 saplings would be planted at D.I. Khan Economic Zone

ne followed by 2000 saplings at Peshawar, Hattar and Gadoon Economic Zones each and 1000 each at Nowshera, Jalozi and Mohmand EZs respectively.

Talking to this scribe, the CEO KP-EZDMC Javed Iqbal Khattak said that the company has planned the plantation of fruit-bearing trees in all economic zones to make them environment friendly and beautiful.

He said that plants would be planted on all roads and open spaces of zones.

He said that the said species of fruit bearing plants would be planted and roads would be named after their names. The company has planned the plantation of olive, guava, apples and citrus plants in economic zones.

FIA launches operations, 2 alleged accused arrested

PESHAWAR (APP): Crackdown continues against elements involved in Hawala hundi and illegal currency exchange with 2 alleged accused involved have been arrested here on Wednesday.

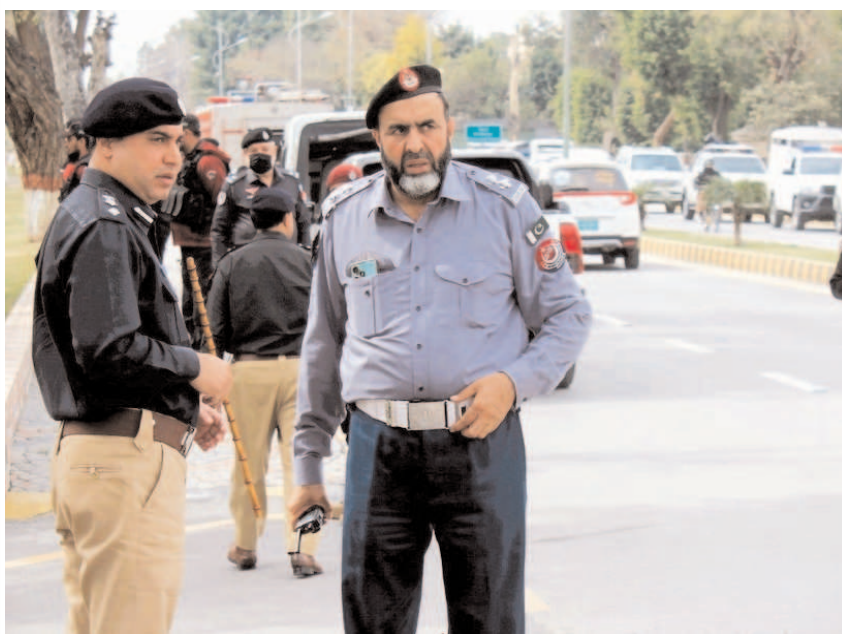
Among the arrested accused are Muhammad Arshad and Muhammad Safdar, the spokesman of the FIA said. Accused Muhammad Arshad was

arrested from Ghala Mandi Kohat while accused Muhammad Safdar was arrested from Faqirabad Peshawar, he informed. The accused were involved in illegal exchange of currency without license.

The accused could not satisfy the authorities regarding the recovered currency. The raids were conducted by Commercial

Banking Circle Peshawar and Composite Circle Kohat. A total of more than 1 million 48000 Pakistani rupees was recovered from the accused.

Mobile phones used for reference hundi and other evidence were also recovered from the accused. The accused have been arrested and investigation has been started.



PESHAWAR: Chief Traffic Officer Dr Zahidullah orders to ensure facilitating travellers during Ramadan.

PAJCCI hails by-road transportation of fruits

PESHAWAR (APP): Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) has highly hailed transportation of fruits from Pakistan to Russia through centuries old road link between Sub-Continent and Central Asian Republics (CARs) via Afghanistan.

"The news about sending of citrus in 16 trucks of National Logistic Cell (NLC) from Pakistan to Russia is very good omen for businessmen of the country and would open new vistas of trade and commerce in the region," observed Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, Coordinator PAJCCI Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a press statement issued here on Wednesday, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi said this trade route has great potential which if tapped would prove very valuable for country from commerce point of view and will create hundreds of thousands of livelihood opportunities in the whole region.

Zia informed that these 16 trucks of NLC carried citrus from Sargodha district in Punjab and reached Russia while passing through three different

countries, covering around 6000 kilometer distance.

He said such initiatives needs continuation and apart from fruit, other items could also be sent to Russia by facilitating business community of the country.

He said Pak-Afghan trade is on decline during the last several months due to different hurdles including a demand for visa for driver and cleaner of trucks carrying goods.

Zia said government should take measures for removing all the hurdles in Pak-Afghan trade and provide facilities for expanding this commercial dealing to CARs and Russia.

The recent transportation of fruit consignment to Russia is a testimony to the fact that we can utilize this potential market by providing ease of doing business to traders.

He said he has also presented a suggestion of issuing special passes after security clearance from concerned departments to truck drivers, allowing them to carry goods between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Obtaining visas for driv-

ers and cleaners and its renewing after few months expiry is a very cumbersome procedure while keeping in view rush at passport offices in the country.

Saima's death bereaves Faryal Talpur

PESHAWAR (APP): Central president PPP Women Wing, Faryal Talpur has expressed grief and sorrow over the sad demise of Deputy Secretary Information PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter Saima Omar.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, she said that the sudden death of Saima Omar has grieved all cadres of the party and added the services rendered by the deceased women political activist would not be forgotten.

Faryal Talpur has expressed condolence with the bereaved family and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and patience to her family to bear the loss with fortitude.



In brief

Women compels to que for edible items F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: The residents flayed unavailability of edible items in Utility Stores located in the premises of Takhtbhai while women are compelled to que for hours to obtain subsidized food for their livelihood during holy month of Ramadan, on Wednesday. According to details, the marginalized segments like women are compelled to que in open air on main Malakand road to obtain edible items alike sugar, pulses and flour from utility stores for their family. The situation had created sense of humility among masses and argued for provision of Ramzan package to deserving families at their doorsteps. Moreover, the residents argued Prime Minister and Chief Minister for provision of edible items to marginalized segments of society especially to women on priority basis otherwise it will create chaos among female folk.

Provision of ration hailed F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Former Chairman Municipal Committee Kamalia Malik Sharif said that the people are very worried because of poverty. It is a very good decision by Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif to distribute free ration keeping in mind the public's concern. This he said while talking to The Frontier Post and further added that due to the distribution of ration, the ration problems of the poor people have reduced. Malik Sharif said that the country is going through a very critical situation, Inshallah, the PML-N government will soon control the inflation and give relief to the people.

Crackdown against profiteers F.P. Report

KARAK: In the light of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Chief Secretary orders Deputy Commissioner Mujibur Rahman, Additional Commissioner One Karak Shamimullah has started operations against profiteers. Those who rob the poor people in the blessed month of Ramadan. By starting a large-scale crackdown against, the prices of Ghosht were reviewed in the Karak City market. Some of those who charged more than the official rate were fined on the spot, while others were handed over to the police and written a letter for legal action. On this occasion, Additional AC One Shamimullah made it very clear that in the light of the orders of the Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary, the supervision of DC Karak Mujibur Rahman is trying to provide relief to the people in Ramadan. Everyone will not be compromised. Strict legal action will be taken against those who violate the official rate list.

2 under custody robbers killed

NANKANA (INP): Two under custody robbers were killed after their accomplices attacked police van near Kale Mor in Nanakana Sahib. According to details, a police van taking two under custody robbers for recovery of cell phones and arms was ambushed by cohorts of the detainees. As a result of firing, both under custody robbers were killed on the spot and the attackers fled the scene after retaliatory firing of the police. The killed robbers were wanted by police in more than 20 cases of robberies and other crimes in Nankana and Sheikhpura.



CHARSADDA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif offering condolence over the demise of wife of Asfand Yar Wali, President of Awami National Party.

Residents flay price hike in edible items

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The butchers in different parts of the district are fleecing consumers as meat is being sold at Rs 800 and Rs 1000 instead of Rs 700 and Rs 750 in parts of the district. Talking to local journalists at Timergara, the consumers complained the butchers had rejected the government official rates as they were selling meat on their own rate at Chakdara, Talash, Timergara, Khall, Kumbhar, Munda, Samarbagh and Mayar.

The residents said that cow and buffalo meat was being sold at Rs 800 while calf's meat was being sold at Rs 1000 in all markets of the district. The consumers complained that rates of vegetable and fruits had also soared with the start of Ramadan. They demanded of the district administration to keep a strict check on items especially those

things which are being used commonly in Ramadan.

Meanwhile the assistant commissioner Timergara Dr Nisa Iqbal visited the city markets and checked the rates of meat, fruit, vegetable, and rice and wheat flour. She also raided a godown on the report of the price monitoring team and confiscated substandard 'qeema' on the spot. The AC said the administration had banned the sale of 'qeema' and the violators would be punished accordingly.

The AC Hazrat Billal also raided different markets at Khall bazaar and checked the prices of meat, vegetable, fruit, rice and wheat flour. The official directed the shopkeepers to strictly follow the official price list. The AC said the violators would be dealt with iron hands.

JUI-F demands registration downpour's victims: The Jamiat Ulema

Islam Fazl district chief Sirajud Din demanded the federal and provincial government to extend the date for receiving applications from the rain-hit people from hilly areas.

Talking to local journalists the JUI-F district chief said that recent rains and heavy snowfall had badly affected the masses in the Lower and Upper Dir districts. He said that several houses had collapsed during which three people had died and several others had been injured only in Lower Dir.

JUI-F activist said that the majority of the victims had submitted their application for ransom but there were still several affected families which had not submitted applications. He said the government should extend the last date for submitting the applications with the concerned authorities, so that all the victims could be compensated alike.

Bugti dismisses absentee doctors of BMC hospital

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti ordered to dismiss absentee doctors for the past several years and suspended medical staff of Bolan Medical College (BMC) hospital Quetta over negligence in duty. The Chief Minister passed these orders during his surprise visit of BMC for reviewing the health facilities for the patients on Wednesday.

During his visit the Chief Minister expressed

his anger over the cleanliness situation in BMC. He directed that the damaged medical machinery should be repaired within three days and facilities should be provided to the patients.

The process of sending patients from one hospital to another for medical tests should be stopped and all medical test and treatment facilities should be ensured under one roof, Balochistan Chief Minister directed. The Chief Minister also met with attendants of the patients and inquired about

the treatment facilities in BMC.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti said that he will encourage doctors and medical staff who perform their duties with integrity. Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Bugti instructed the Health Secretary to transfer the doctors and medical staff who neglect their duties to remote areas. Secretary Health Balochistan will give a detailed briefing tomorrow at the CM Secretariat on the instructions of Chief Minister Balochistan.

IG FC opens police martyrs' memorial in Bajaur

F.P. Report

KHAR: Inspector General (IG) Frontier Corps (FC) North, Major General Noor Wali Khan, inaugurated a memorial dedicated to the martyrs of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police in Bajaur district, on Wednesday.

The ceremony, held to honour the sacrifices of the police force, was attended by senior officials from the district administration and security forces. Major General Noor Wali Khan, while addressing, paid tribute to the bravery and commitment of the Bajaur Police.

IG FC highlighted the invaluable contributions of



the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police over the past two decades, emphasizing their role in maintaining peace alongside the Pakistan Army and other law enforcement agencies. He remarked that thanks to their sacrifices, peace prevails in the tribal areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including Bajaur.

During the ceremony, Fateha was offered for the eternal peace and elevation of the police martyrs. The inauguration of the police memorial underscores the unity and solidarity among various security agencies in Pakistan in their shared commitment to safeguarding the nation and its people.

SBB Press Club elects new cabinet

F.P. Report

LARKANA: The new body of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Press Club was elected. President of PPP Shaheed Bhutto Liaquat Ali Umrani also congratulated the President of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Press Club Larkana by garlanding them. He said that he hope that the elected officials and members of the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Press Club will convey the voice of the poor to the highest positions.

Syed Rustam Ali Shah, City Liaison Secretary

Sadrudin Baladi, Wajid Ali Bhanger, Saeed Ahmed Syal, Babu Abbas, Senior Journalist Mahmood Anwar Abro, Waseem Ahmed Jagirani, Noman Abbasi, Amjad Memon were present while on this occasion

Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Press Club Among the officials of Larkana are President Muhammad Nawaz Umrani, Senior Vice President Muhammad Ayub Soomro, Vice President I. Abdul Khaliq Jagirani, Vice President Sahil Land Ilyas Ambert L, General Secretary Muhammad Mashuq Khoso,

Deputy General Secretary Sarfaraz Saleem Phalputto, Information Secretary Abdul Majeed Odhana.

Moreover, Finance Secretary Mohammad Bakhsh Umrani, Executive Committee Chairman A. Hameed Sheikh, Syed Noor Wagan, Sulaiman Memon, Joint Secretary Adeel Jarwar and members include Fida Hussain Sheikh, Barkat Jaskani, Mujtaba Jatoi, Shiraz Ali Sheikh, Ajit Kumar Bashani, Dalmurad Khoso, Abdul Hafeez Mirani. And there were others.

Admn arrests 7 butchers, fine shopkeepers Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: The district administration of Nowshera imposed fines on various shopkeepers and arrested seven butchers for overcharging customers and sales of substandard items.

According to the district administration, Assistant Commissioner Jahangira, Muniba Fatima inspected various markets in Muhajir Bazaar, Akora Khattak, Jahangira Bazaar and Station Road. She inspected prices and quality of various commodities and imposed fines on profiteers. During inspection she also ordered the arrest of seven butchers for selling meat at exorbitant prices.

During her visit, she warned the traders to refrain from profiteering otherwise further stern legal action will be initiated against them.

Accused of murder held with weapons

ATTOCK (INP): The police arrested an accused of murder and recovered arms from his possession here on Wednesday. According to details, during crackdown in Attock Khurd police station jurisdiction, murderer Muhammad Luqman s/o Sher Wali hauling from Lower Dir was arrested.

The police also recovered murder weapon and other arms from possession of the detainees. Separate cases were registered against the nabbed accused and investigations were in progress.

Action against profiteers demand F.P. Report

SAKHAKOT: District Food Controller and Special Price Control Magistrate Noor Hayat Khan had imposed fines several traders including butchers as well as put them behind bars for violation of official price list and provision of adulterated edible items to the public, on Tuesday.

Assistant Food Controller Ali Akbar Khan, Assistant Shahid Khan and Azmat Ullah Khan along with others accompanied DFC during raids to ensure provision of edible items on official price list during the month of Ramadan.

Meanwhile, the residents claimed that butchers, fruit, vegetable and edible item stores had hike prices every item on 1st day of Ramadan. They argued competent authorities for stern actions against looters and profiteers.

Afzal Qadri passes away

GUJRAT (INP): Tehreek Labbaik Pakistan's (TLP) former leader Pir Muhammad Afzal Qadri passed away in Gujrat on Wednesday. According to the channel, the deceased was suffering from heart disease for a long time.

He was one of close friends of Allama Khadam Hussain Rizvi and active leader of the party. The funeral prayer of the deceased will be offered in Mararian today (Thursday) at 2 pm.

US commits for preservation of cultural heritage

Saqib Mushtaq

BAHAWALPUR: United States of America is steadfastly committed to protecting and preserving cultural heritage around the world. In Pakistan, the United States provided more than \$8.4 million to support cultural heritage preservation projects.

This was claimed by US Consul General Hawkins and added that we are proud to partner with Pakistan to preserve historical sites that reflect this country's rich cultural heritage and religious diversity. U.S. funded preservation projects have included the conservation of Gandhara archaeological treasures and Mughal architectural heritage, documentation of historic manuscripts, the digitization of museums, and the restoration of historically significant mosques like the wazir khan mosque in Lahore, Sufi shrines and Hindu monuments, among other projects.

The recent visit by us consulate general of Lahore for Derawar Bahawalpur reflects the commitment of American government in preserving the cultural heritage of Punjab. The people



of Punjab harbour hopes on the American government in helping shaping these historical sites in to international tourist resorts to promote tourism in Pakistan. The tourism sector has long been neglected by the USA government and under the auspices of the US aid Pakistan can put the crippled tourism industry on track.

The mere participation of the American consulate dignitaries in events like Cholistan jeep rally will help a lot in revival of tourism in Punjab. The civil society really commends the measures of the American government in preserving the historical and heritage site situated in

Pakistan.

If we delve deep in to the history it will become evident that U.S always invested on projects like poverty elevation, education for all, fighting gender discrimination, flood relief support, supporting economic growth, green revolution, help in constructing tarbela and mangla dams, smart irrigation systems and bilateral trade, energy, governance and rule of law, refugees and refugee-hosting communities, law enforcement, civil society, people-to-people exchanges, and countering infectious diseases such as COVID-19 and above all military aid to combat terrorism.

Admn confiscates adulterated milk in Mardan

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Additional Assistant Commissioner Headquarters Mardan along with a team raided a secret warehouse and confiscated thousands of liters of milk made with dangerous chemicals were recovered the district officer destroyed it on the spot the owner was arrested, fined one lakh rupees on the spot, on Wednesday.

According to details, warehouses and machinery were seized and sealed the accused has been fined several times. During the crackdown against chemical milk, Additional Assistant Commissioner Headquarters Mardan Junaid Khalid raided a secret warehouse in Mardan urban area yesterday where thousands of liters of milk are prepared and marketed daily from dangerous chemicals in the name of healthy milk was supplied to the citizens. Two thousand liters of

chemical-made milk was recovered from the chillers and destroyed on the spot by the district officer.

On this occasion, the district officer clarified that the grand operation will continue against the elements selling unhealthy milk. He said that the arrested counterfeiter had arrested several times before but he kept changing the fake milk manufacturing centers. The forger was fined one lakh rupees and the machinery, chillers and warehouse were sealed.

Meanwhile, fire broke out at the only historical and recreational place of Takhtbhai, due to unknown reasons. The men of Rescue 1122, despite being in a state of fasting, managed to control the fire after five hours of continuous struggle and saved the nearby population and Buddhist archeology from damage.

According to reports, the flames of fire once again erupted due to unknown

reasons in the archaeological mountains of Budhmat, the only historical and recreational place in Takhtbhai. On receiving the information, the fighters of Rescue 1122 reached the spot and started extinguishing the fire. After five hours of continuous struggle, the fire was brought under control and the nearby archaeological population and Budhmat archeology were saved from damage.

District Emergency Officer Imran Khan Yousafzai and the general public of the area have praised the efforts of Rescue 1122 for the successful operation in the hot flames despite being in a state of fasting. The historical and recreational site of international importance has seen many incidents of fire in the archaeological mountains for a long time due to unknown reasons, but the administration has not been able to find out whether the fire is self-inflicted or set.

Excavator operator dies in mishap

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: An excavator operator died while removing snow from the road of Arkari so that people can travel easily. On the direction this private excavator machine was engaged for snow clearance from Arkari road. Meanwhile, the excavator machine suddenly overturned and Ameer fell under it and died on the spot.

According to details, Amir son of Ghulam Shah, who was the operator of a private excavator, was going for work to remove snow from the road of Arkari. The deceased was a young boy who was the only supporter of his parents. Due to his death, the family has been deeply affected.

Former Nazim Union Council Shughor Abdul Majeed told our correspondent on phone that on his request, MPA Fatehul

Mulk Ali Nasir had asked the Deputy Commissioner Lower Chitral to clear the snow from the road of Arkari so that people can travel easily. On the direction this private excavator machine was engaged for snow clearance from Arkari road. Meanwhile, the excavator machine suddenly overturned and Ameer fell under it and died on the spot.

Abdul Majeed says that Amir's father Ghulam Shah, who is a sick man, has no one to buy medicine for him. He said that due to the recent torrential rains and heavy snowfall, Arkari valley was badly affected and all the roads leading there were closed. Women, children, old people and students are facing a lot of difficulties in going to school, college or people going to hospital.

He said that due to the

closure of roads in this valley, food shortages have also occurred and the people there have been badly affected and are waiting for government assistance. Abdul Majeed has appealed to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the district administration to provide financial assistance to the family of the late Amir and to open the road of Arkari as soon as possible and also deliver relief goods there so that people do not suffer from starvation. He said that due to the lack of health facilities including hospital in the valley, most of the patients try to come to Chitral Hospital, but due to the closure of the roads, these people are forced to travel by foot over the avalanches and snowdrifts, which is also very dangerous. He appeal for opening of roads of entire valley of Akari.

Fair price shops setup for facilitation of public

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad has said that fair price shops have been setup for providing 13edible items including potato, onion, fruit, pulses and dates etc. to people at 25 percent discount price of wholesale market during the holy month of the Ramzan besides Chief Minister's Negheban Ramadan Package.

While visiting fair price shop established at model bazar, she reviewed availability of essential commodities and other arrangement made for supervising and providing necessary facilities to consumers in the modal bazar.

Meanwhile, Special Price Magistrates expedite crackdown against shopkeepers involved in selling essential commodities on arbitrary prices and magistrates imposed

Rs.940000/= fine to 351 profiteers while 6 shopkeepers arrested during last 11 days in the district Hafizabad.

DC also visited fruit and vegetable market and checked prices and quality of vegetable. She directed the all price magistrates and officers of market committee to take steps for ensuring sale of edibles items on cheaper prices under public relief vision of the Punjab government.



Ukraine encouraged to vote in Russian election by armed men

KYIV: Moscow has launched a wide-ranging campaign telling residents of occupied parts of Ukraine to vote in Russia's presidential election. For the first time, the national vote is taking place over three days (15-17 March), but additional early voting has already begun in the occupied parts of four Ukrainian regions: Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Donetsk and Luhansk.

One resident complained of pro-Russian collaborators with ballot boxes going from house to house looking for voters accompanied by armed soldiers. Vladimir Putin will certainly win another term of office, but a high turnout would help the Kremlin's efforts to legitimise his continued rule. It would also be used to justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Vladimir Putin is one of four candidates on the ballot, but none of the others poses a realistic challenge.

All of his most outspoken critics have either been forced into exile, jailed, or have died. Voting normally starts early in remote parts of Russia, but the procedure has been extended to the four partially occupied regions of Ukraine "for security reasons". There are a variety of ways in which Ukrainians under occupation are being coerced into voting. Even though occupation authorities have set up polling stations, voters are not required to visit them as those same authorities have dispatched people with ballot boxes to their homes.

"Dear voters, we worry about your safety! You do not have to go anywhere to vote - we will come to your home with ballots and boxes!" the Russia-installed electoral commission in the Zaporizhzhia region said on social media. Ukrainians under occupation are also put under pressure through a pro-vote campaign called InformUIK, ostensibly designed to inform them about the procedure of voting, as well as all the candidates. It seeks to visit all remaining residents of Russian-occupied regions at home - and its representatives are often accompanied by armed men. They collect personal data to compile lists of voters, and sometimes film local residents during such visits. Russia's electoral chief in the partly occupied Zaporizhzhia region acknowledged that locals were worried about the filming. Ukrainians have already come under considerable pressure to take Russian passports, but Ukrainian passports are being accepted as proof of ID to make voting even easier. Residents have been sent text messages informing them of the dates of the vote and tried-and-tested Soviet methods are also being deployed to attract them to polling stations, such as free concerts



and food. Ukraine has dismissed the vote as an illegitimate sham, and those involved in organising it have been targeted by attacks. The day early voting started in occupied parts of the Kherson region, on 27 February, there were two explosions in Nova Kakhovka: one targeting the offices of the Kremlin's United Russia party, and the other near a polling station. Then last week Ukraine's Main Intelligence Directorate said a local woman helping the Russian administration hold the election had been "liquidated" in a car bombing on 6 March in the occupied town of Berdyansk in the Zaporizhzhia region. Asked about who carried out the attack, the Ukrainian governor of the Zaporizhzhia region, Ivan Fedorov, told the BBC: "Somebody did it. Somebody who showed great resistance. Some heroes who do it on temporarily occupied territories. Our resistance shows that it is abnormal when our citizens collaborate with Russians. Somebody did not understand. That's why this somebody got killed." When asked to clarify if people behind the attack were linked to the Ukrainian state, Mr Fedorov added: "Yes, of course. There is great co-operation between our resistance inside the temporarily occupied territories and our secret services." While Russia-installed officials and media in occupied parts of Ukraine are busy promoting the vote, they do not focus too much on drumming up support for any particular candidate - and they don't need to. Vladimir Putin is the mastermind of these regions' annexation by Russia, and nationally the vote is being presented as an endorsement. The official symbol of the 2024 presidential election is the V-sign associated with his "special military operation" in Ukraine. The official slogan adopted by Russia's Central Electoral Commission is "Strong together - vote for Russia!"

Both the V symbol and the slogan appear in posters dotted around occu-

pied parts of Ukraine, including at polling stations. Kremlin media have already trumpeted early voting in Ukraine as a resounding success. "It was a real holiday! With music, balloons and Russian flags!" the Komsomolskaya Pravda tabloid said of the early voting campaign in the Kherson region, which concluded on 3 March. "Tens of thousands of people!" Kremlin propaganda is using the election to paint a picture of unanimous support for Russia's invasion and annexation of Ukraine. But these carefully choreographed images come at the expense of thousands of critics silenced, deported, jailed or killed. Many have left - especially young people - unwilling or unable to live under Russian occupation because of their views.

Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia governor, Ivan Fedorov, says local residents of his partly occupied region are being intimidated into voting: "They go to every flat and every house and ask - would you like to vote?" Our citizens are very afraid. Of course if Russians with soldiers come to their flat and ask if they'd like to vote for Putin, everyone will say: OK, yes. Because everyone wants to save their life. But it does not mean that our citizens want to support Putin." One resident of the Kherson region - the south-eastern part which is occupied by Russian forces - described to the BBC how voting was organised in his village. We are unable to disclose his name or location due to security concerns.

Pro-Russian locals visit households with ballot boxes, accompanied by armed military men. If they knock and no one opens, they move on to the next house. They don't break into houses, but they do visit," the local resident said. They added: "This is ridiculous. What kind of election is it when there are two locals - one holding a list of voters and the other a ballot box - and a military man with a machine gun? This isn't democracy. It's a comedy show." — Aljazeera

Wastewater discharge at Fukushima nuclear plant is safe: IAEA

TOMIOKA (AP): The head of the UN atomic agency told local Japanese representatives at a meeting in Fukushima that the ongoing discharge of treated radioactive wastewater at the ruined nuclear power plant has met safety standards and that any restrictions on products from the region are "not scientific."

International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Rafael Grossi joined local officials and representatives from fishing and business groups and reassured them that the discharges are being carried out "with no impact to the environment, water, fish and sediment." Grossi, who arrived in Japan, returned to Fukushima for the first time since the release of the treated water began in August.

Grossi will examine the discharge and sampling facility later Wednesday. He last visited the plant in July after issuing an IAEA review predicting only negligible impact from the discharges. The IAEA comprehensive report later concluded that the discharges meet international safety

standards. The 2011 disaster damaged the Fukushima plant's power supply and reactor cooling functions, triggering triple meltdowns and causing large amounts of radioactive wastewater to accumulate. After more than a decade of cleanup work, the plant began discharging the water after treating it and diluting it with large amounts of seawater on Aug. 24, starting a process that's expected to take decades. The discharges have been opposed by fishing groups and neighboring countries including China, which banned all imports of Japanese seafood immediately after the release began.

"There is no scientific reason to impose any restriction on products coming from us," Grossi said at the meeting in Iwaki, south of the Fukushima Daiichi plant. "This is very important in particular to be said in this forum here in Fukushima," he said. He noted a "political dimension to this activity since ... some neighboring countries are also manifesting concerns." Despite

earlier fears that the water discharge would further hurt Fukushima's hard-hit fishing industry, it has not damaged its reputation domestically. China's ban on Japanese seafood mostly hit scallop exporters in Hokkaido. Tokyo has earmarked a fund of more than 100 billion yen (\$680 million) that includes compensation and other support, including measures to help find other export destinations. The discharges are at the beginning of a long process, Grossi said, stressing the importance of "transparency, technical accuracy and wide open, honest dialogue and consultation." He stressed that the IAEA has its own office and lab at the Fukushima plant to independently monitor the process. Grossi said he met with residents not only to highlight the main points about the discharges but "to learn from you." He said he would keep coming back to Fukushima and that he is open to hearing residents' concerns and needs. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government has reversed earlier plans for a nuclear

phaseout and is accelerating the use of nuclear power in response to rising fuel costs related to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and pressure to meet decarbonization goals.

Grossi expressed support for increasing Japan's nuclear capacity as the country looks to it as a stable, clean source of power. Grossi, at a meeting with Economy and Industry Minister Ken Saito, offered Japan technical assistance to improve the idled Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant in Japan's northcentral region of Niigata, run by the Fukushima Daiichi operator, to address concerns about its past problems with safeguarding measures. It and the government are keen to restart it soon. IAEA is sending a team of experts to the plant later this month to assist Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings' effort to gain public trust. The restart remains uncertain because it is subject to the host community's consent. The Jan. 1 earthquake in the nearby Noto region rekindled safety concerns.

Swiss refer Syrian president's uncle to trial for alleged war crimes

GENEVA (AP): Swiss federal prosecutors said they have indicted former Syrian Vice President Rifaat Assad, the uncle of the war-battered country's current president, on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity for allegedly ordering murder and torture more than four decades ago.

The attorney general's office said Assad, 86, is accused of directing the crimes in Syria in February 1982 while serving as commander of defense brigades that carried out an attack in the city of Hama during a conflict between the military and the Islamist opposition. Security forces killed thousands to crush a Muslim Brotherhood uprising in the city that year.

Even if convicted, Assad is unlikely to serve time in Switzerland. After he was convicted in France of illegal use of Syrian state funds and sentenced to four years in prison, his nephew, Syrian President Bashar Assad, allowed him back into Syria, ending his over 30 years of exile in France, where he lived in an opulent, marble-floored mansion near the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

The case was brought by the advocacy group Trial International under the principle of "universal jurisdiction," which allows prosecution of heinous crimes in a country that may not have been where they took place. Authorities say there is no statute of limitations for war

crimes, meaning that as long as he's alive, Assad could be held accountable. Swiss authorities determined that Assad was in Switzerland when the official probe was launched by Swiss investigators. Prosecutors will present their case to the federal criminal court in the southern city of Bellinzona, the attorney general's office said, without specifying a date. Benoit Meystre, legal adviser for Trial International, acknowledged there's little chance that Assad will stand trial in person in Switzerland. But he said the indictment "in itself is a victory for all the victims of the (Assad) regime" that remains in power.

"This indictment, and the trial that will be held, really

Morocco earthquake: Hull man helps build shelters

RABAT (BBC): A man from Hull who got caught in the Morocco earthquake in 2023 has been building shelters to help locals. Steve Sleight, a plumber who lives near the Atlas Mountains, said it was a "real joy" to provide temporary homes for people. A 6.8 magnitude quake on 8 September caused thousands of deaths. Mr Sleight was "gazing at the stars" on a friend's roof when the earthquake happened.

Mr Sleight, 50, moved to Morocco in 2019 to become a mountain guide. His new home in the town of Amizmiz is around 34 miles (55km) south of Marrakesh and about seven miles (12km) away from the epicentre of the earthquake. Currently back in East Yorkshire for work, Mr Sleight described the earthquake as "like a train that was coming towards me", and said it lasted for around 20 seconds. He said no one was injured, but three or four houses in the village were flattened. But with nearby villages being reduced to rubble, Mr Sleight teamed up with some friends to help distribute food, water, sanitary products and basic first aid kits. After around two weeks of delivering aid, Mr Sleight said it "became apparent" that the tents families were in were not waterproof, and could be ripped apart in storms. Over the past three months, Mr Sleight has volunteered with a temporary-shelter building project to build around 800 shelters in 20 villages up in the mountains. They have been built using local materials with a layer of tinfoil on the outer parts and polystyrene insulation and could last two years. Mr Sleight said: "It gives people enough time to hopefully start rebuilding their houses." Mr Sleight said he will always remember the "wailing of the women and the grief" that he witnessed when people were being pulled from the rubble. Reflecting on the locals, he said: "They live simple lives but they're very resilient people. They've been through a lot of trauma which will take them a while to recover from. It puts life into perspective. To be able to help practically is a real joy."

Army retakes broadcaster's HQs in Sudan
KHARTOUM (BBC): Soldiers from Sudan's army have recaptured the headquarters of the state broadcaster in Omdurman, the city just across the Nile from the capital, Khartoum, the army has said. This is a symbolic breakthrough for the army in its 11-month civil war with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The RSF had held the headquarters since just after a fighting broke out. The conflict in Sudan has led eight million people to flee their homes and there are warnings of growing hunger. Videos being shared on social media show soldiers celebrating outside the state broadcaster in Omdurman. In a statement, the army called it a "major victory". But despite taking the building last April, the RSF had not been able to transmit from it and state television continued to show pro-army content, which was broadcast from elsewhere in the country. Ever since the war broke out, the army and the RSF have battled for control of Khartoum and the nearby cities. Despite the United Nations Security Council's call for a ceasefire during the holy month of Ramadan, intense fighting has continued in several parts of the capital. "People are very rejuvenated - there is a lot of sentiment attached to national radio," says the BBC's Mohanad Hashim who previously worked for Sudan's state broadcaster. "It's also a major defeat for the RSF because they were using the radio HQ as their stronghold. The Sudanese Armed Forces are going to milk this - it is a big victory for them." The conflict erupted last April following a disagreement between the army's head, Gen Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, and RSF chief Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, better known as Hemedti, over an internationally backed political plan to move towards civilian rule.

Nigeria kidnap crisis: Schoolboy recounts daring escape from bandits

ABUJA (BBC): Musa Garba, 17, had to slither on the ground like a snake to avoid being detected by his kidnappers as he made his escape through the bush of northern Nigeria. Earlier, camouflaged by his school uniform, the teenager had managed to hide in a heap of cut grass as the group of schoolchildren he was abducted with were taking a break from their forced trek.

More than 280 of them were snatched last week from a school in the town of Kuriga, in Kaduna state, traumatising a community. "We saw motorbikes on the road. We thought they were soldiers, before we realised they had occupied the school premises and started shooting," Musa tells the BBC as he recalls Thursday morning's terrifying events. We have changed his name for his own safety, along with that of another kidnapped boy mentioned in the article. "We tried to run away, but they chased us and caught us. They gathered us like cows into the bush."

These armed men on motorbikes - referred to locally as bandits - had been menacing the community for some time, with the security forces apparently unable to deal with the threat. Kuriga had been persistently attacked by gangs seeking to kidnap people and make money from ransom payments. The scale of this latest abduction and the fact that it involved children as young as seven has been overwhelming for many here. "We watched them carrying our children away just right here and there's nothing we could do. We don't have military, we don't have police in the community," a distressed Hajiya Hauwa says, through tears. Musa was one of those taken away. "While we were moving in the bush, at some points, we were all thirsty, but there was no water. Some girls and boys were just falling as we moved because they were all tired," he says. "The bandits had to carry some of them on the bike."

At one point, deep into the bush, they were able to quench their thirst at a river which came as a big relief for the children who had not had breakfast and had been forced to walk for several hours under the hot sun. Musa kept looking for ways to escape and tried to encourage others to join him but they were too afraid.

He saw his chance as the sun was setting. Looking around to ensure he was not being monitored, he hid in one of the heaps of grass and lay still. "After all was quiet, [to avoid detection] I started dragging myself like a snake on the ground." Once it was totally dark, he got up and walked off until he got to a village where he got help. He took a huge risk that could have led to him being killed at the slight-

est mistake, but some are saying that God protected him.

When he appeared the next day in Kuriga, his parents were jubilant, but he came with harrowing tales of the children still in captivity. The parents of 10-year-old Sadiq Usman Abdullahi are still waiting for news about him. The last time the family saw the jovial and much-loved boy was when he had dashed back home on Thursday morning saying he had forgotten his pencil for school - shortly before the kidnappers drove into the town. "He came to ask me: 'Hassan do you have a pencil?'" his 21-year-old brother says. "I told him to check my bag. Sadiq was in a rush, so he scattered my things. He found the pencil. I told him to tidy my bag. Then he took his socks and ran out." His mother, Rahmatu Usman Abdullahi, says she has not been able to sleep since that day. "I always think about him. I can't sleep. What kind of sleep can I even have? Look at my eyes! What kind of sleep? May God just help us," she says, looking up to seek divine intervention. But Musa and Sadiq are just two among the more than 4,000 people who have been kidnapped in Nigeria in the past eight months, according to one estimate. In the last decade and a half, people in northern Nigeria have come under intense attack by armed militant groups. At first, this mainly happened in the north-eastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, where the Islamist group, known as Boko Haram (meaning "Western education is forbidden") is active.

A second force, linked to the Islamic State group, has also emerged. Both sets of jihadist groups were involved in kidnapping, targeting farmers, travellers and even razing villages to the ground. Schools, seen as the home of Western education, became a target. The notorious attack on the girls' school in Chibok 10 years ago set a template. "There has been an escalation in attacks on schools in northern Nigeria. Primary schools, secondary schools and universities have come under attack," says Shehu Sani, a former senator for Kaduna state. He argues that the aim is to discourage parents from sending their children to school. "At the same time, when they attack and kidnap, they do it with the intention of raising funds - to buy more arms and also to continue their criminal activities."

But their methods have spread across the north with the criminal gangs known as bandits adopting the same approach, as they have seen that kidnapping schoolchildren often attracts attention, and therefore ransoms. "They are motivated by money. They simply kidnap people, and once ransom is paid to them, they release their hostages."

Colombia names new attorney general

BOGOTA (Reuters): Colombia's Supreme Court of Justice chose Luz Adriana Camargo as the country's new attorney general, following weeks of political tensions over delays in naming someone for the role. Camargo, a former judge who worked for the attorney general's office for 12 years in the 1990s and early 2000s, was also an assigned prosecutor at the Supreme Court of Justice, where she investigated ties between lawmakers and right-wing paramilitary groups.

Delays by the court in naming a replacement for Francisco Barbosa, whose term ended in February, has caused tensions with leftist President Gustavo Petro, who said it was a rupture in institutional practice and denounced attempts to remove him from power. Both the United Nations and the

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights asked for a swift process without pressure on the court. "With eighteen votes, Luz Adriana Camargo Garzon was elected as the country's new attorney general," Gerson Chaverra, president of the Supreme Court of Justice, told journalists. Camargo, chosen over one other candidate after a third hopeful named by Petro pulled out at the last minute, worked for the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala between 2014 and 2017, where she directed the investigations team and worked with current Colombia defense minister Ivan Velasquez. She also consulted with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in the case of three Ecuadorean journalists kidnapped and killed by a Colombian

armed group. Camargo will direct delicate investigations - including into accusations of illegal financing of Petro's 2022 presidential campaign. Petro's eldest son Nicolas, a former provincial lawmaker, is being prosecuted by the attorney general's office for alleged illicit enrichment and money laundering, in an investigation begun over a year ago.

According to the charges, Petro received money from accused drug traffickers in exchange for including them in his father's peace plans, though the elder Petro has denied awareness of any illegal activities. Also on Perez's slate is the long-running case against right-wing former President Alvaro Uribe for alleged witness tampering and fraud, apparently carried out to discredit accusations he had ties to paramilitaries.

Russian elite expects Putin to reshuffle some positions

MOSCOW (Reuters): Russia's elite is expecting President Vladimir Putin to reshuffle government positions to bring in younger people after what it sees as the formality of his resounding election victory this weekend, four sources close to the authorities said.

In control of all state levers and with no serious political competitors, Putin - in power as president or prime minister since the last day of 1999 - is widely expected to win what will be his fifth presidential term and another six years in power. The four sources, who declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the subject, said they expected younger people to be brought into more senior government positions, including perhaps as deputy ministers and heads of ministerial departments, and for an older generation of government officials to be demoted or retire after the election.

One of the sources said ministerial portfolios were being reviewed too and that the reshuffle was expected to take place in May. Changes at major state corporations,

state energy behemoths and in Russia's more than 80 regional governorships are also seen as possible, the sources said. The Kremlin says it never comments on planned personnel changes ahead of time. At a time when Russia is waging war with Ukraine and needs continuity, two of the sources said they did not expect Putin to change his defence and foreign ministers, however. "You don't change horses mid-stream," said the first source, who added that it would be surprising if Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, 68, and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who turns 74 later this month, did not keep their posts. In office since 2020, Mikhail Mishustin, the 58-year-old technocratic prime minister, is also expected to keep his job, they said. So is Central Bank Governor Elvira Nabiullina, three sources said. Planned changes at the top of major ministries and in security agencies will only take place after the end of what Putin calls his special military operation in Ukraine, the first source said. The second source also

expected a post-election reshuffle that would bring more younger people into play. Putin has not made major changes to the government since 2020. Changes made to the constitution that same year allowed Putin, 71, to remain in power until 2036 if re-elected and again in 2030. But the tightly-controlled political system he has built and consolidated under his control over more than two decades affords less job security to his subordinates, even those of the same generation, given the need to renew the ranks to prepare for the future. Apart from Shoigu and Lavrov, some of the older members of the current government include Energy Minister Nikolai Shulginov, 72, Transport Minister Vitaly Savelyev, 70, and Deputy Prime Minister Yuriy Trutnev, 68. In the meantime, a younger generation of officials, some of them the sons and daughters of serving ministers and bureaucrats - nicknamed red princes and princesses by some Russian political analysts - are rising through the ranks.

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

Population outbreak and family planning

THE KP Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for the Population Welfare Department has emphasized the importance of providing access to family planning and reproductive health services as a top priority for the provincial government. According to the newly appointed policymaker, the correlation between population growth and socioeconomic development is widely recognized. A majority of neighbouring states and the comity of Muslim nations have made significant progress by investing in family planning and reproductive health services. Overcrowded living, a lack of essential facilities, and an uncondusive environment hurt the health of mothers and infants, which is one of the consequences of unchecked population outbreak in our society.

The rapid increase in the population of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has raised concerns among the intelligentsia and policy-making circles, leading to significant changes in the province's demographic landscape. The unchecked increase in the population has reduced provincial resources and conversely affected socio-economic development in the province. The bombshell increase in the populace is not a problem for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa only but this explosion of population has nationally squeezed our resources, reduced space, and caused diverse issues in the country. The fast-paced population growth has outpaced the country's resources in almost all sectors including education, health, housing, employment, and division of liquidity and property among the members of the society.

Pakistan faces a significant population challenge, which stands at approximately 243.6 million people with a 2% growth annually. It is predicted that the country will surpass the 300 million mark by 2030. The rapid population increase is putting immense pressure on available resources. Pakistan has consumed around 81% of its available crude oil reserves and 69% of cumulative gas deposits so far. The rising population exacerbates water scarcity, affecting agriculture, industry, and daily life. Meeting the energy needs of a growing population is becoming increasingly difficult. Overcrowding strains transportation, healthcare, and educational facilities. Providing employment opportunities for the expanding workforce remains a challenge, wherein, law and order, health services, education, and social activities are stretched thin due to population pressure. Amid such conditions, a lack of funds, policy lethargy, and shortages of healthcare, schooling, and housing facilities, coupled with social and gender disparities consistently multiply the issue every passing day.

As the world nations have implemented diverse strategies and gained significant success in population planning, our nation could not mark any single achievement in family planning, population control, and social management of its human capital which seriously exacerbates overall development and social security in our country. Although population growth poses both opportunities and challenges, necessitates thoughtful planning and proactive measures to ensure a better future for its citizens. If, it is a priority of leaders and the state. Meanwhile, the youth must be well-informed about family planning to prevent further population growth and better life planning in the time to come.

Addressing population growth is a multifaceted challenge, and a comprehensive approach involving government policies, community engagement, and individual awareness is necessary for effective results. Raising awareness about family planning and reproductive health is essential. Access to quality healthcare services, including family planning clinics, can help individuals make informed decisions about family size. Providing affordable and accessible contraceptives by the government can contribute to effective population control. Although, Pakistani leadership recognizes the importance of demographic planning, yet there is a dire need for sincere efforts such as capacity-building, implementing population control strategies, and promoting responsible family planning in all parts of the country. Public-private partnerships and community involvement are critical for successful implementation. A lot has been said on the subject, however, leaders need to practically implement their words on grounds so our society can be able to grasp new challenges in the contemporary world.

IT industry and need for regulation

PRIME Minister Shehbaz Sharif has recently convened a high-level meeting to review the performance of the IT and Telecommunication Sectors in the country. The Premier emphasized the swift resolution of all issues being faced by start-ups, freelancers, and IT companies relating to banking, registration and other legal and administrative formalities. According to him, the government would take steps to fully avail potential for IT exports, besides, the young people would be provided with the required facilities of education, skills development, start-ups and entrepreneurship. Prime Minister Shehbaz directed the formulation of a roadmap to harness Pakistan's billion-dollar potential in IT exports.

Pakistan's IT sector has tremendous potential for growth, innovations, and exports wherein Pakistani youth have the talent to achieve their due space in the current increasingly competitive environment in the world. The concerted efforts of policymakers, industry stakeholders, and educational institutions are contributing to its positive trajectory. Initiated by the PTI government in mid-2021, the successive Pakistani governments have made concerted efforts to develop Pakistan's IT infrastructure and boost Pakistani exports in this lucrative field. Presently, Pakistan IT exports stand at \$ 2.6 billion, which is likely to reach \$5 billion next year through addition of another 200,000 skilled workforce in this field. Pakistan unveiled its first-ever IT export strategy last year, which aims at substantial growth of IT Products and services worth over \$10 billion annually in the upcoming years. Pakistan's IT industry showcased its talents on the global stage at the Leap 2024 Saudi-Pak Tech Exhibition, which is currently underway in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This high profile forum was organized by Pakistan Software Houses Association in collaboration with Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) and Pakistan Embassy in Riyadh. Wherein, Pakistan IT Industry is being represented by 74 companies and over 800 delegates from across the country.

Currently, Pakistan IT Industry is at its outset, while the government and concerned departments are making concerted efforts to achieve excel in this domain. There is a need for strict compliance of international standards, quality control and branding at the global level through recognition from the global IT Industry. So, this national endeavor earns great fame and acceptance worldwide.



Love in the time of genocide

Susan Abulhawa

FOR weeks in southern Gaza during a recent visit, I collected stories of women admitted to hospital, each of them there to recover from what they call "war wounds". But it's not a war, because only one side has an actual army. Only one side is a state with full military wares.

These victims were mothers, wives and babies, whose slight bodies were pierced, torn, broken and burned. Their deeper injuries aren't visible, until they open up about their lives over the past five months. Initially, they relay the broadbrush strokes: A bomb struck their homes, they were pulled from the rubble, they had severe injuries, family members were martyred, and the situation was terrible. That is the extent of what they have ever said about unimaginable horrors they endured and continue to endure.

But I probe for details. What were you doing moments before? What was the first thing you saw, the first thing you heard? What did it smell like? Was it dark or light outside? I nudge them to zoom into the molecular structure of every fact - the gravel in the mouth, dust in the lungs; the weight of something; the warm liquid running down the back; the twisted finger seen but not felt; the moment of realisation; the waiting to be rescued and the fear that no one will come; the ringing in the ears; the strange thoughts; the things that moved and the things that could not; the expectation of death and the wish that it be quick; the longing for life.

In the months or weeks since one of the world's most powerful militaries targeted their lives, they had yet to visit, much less verbalise the minutiae of this genocide. As they venture beyond the outlines of their stories, their eyes darken and sometimes they begin to shiver. The slightest unexpected sound startles them. Tears pool and tears might fall, but only a few allow themselves to cry. Few let the horrors in their minds through the gates. It is not for some superhero strength. Quite the opposite. They are numbed in a way, as if they've yet to comprehend the enormity of what they have endured and continue to endure.

One young mother, Jamila (not her real name), cried for the first time since

she held her six-year-old son's lifeless body in the dark, her fingers accidentally sinking into his brain. She's one of the few who sobbed, surrendering to the memory. Their family had been targeted by tank fire, not a missile. A drone, perhaps with heat-sensitive sensors she thinks, hovered outside their building, and shelling followed them as they ran from one side of their apartment to the other, unable to exit.

She was sure someone behind a screen was toying with them before delivering one final blow that went through both the boy and injured his father. The world went silent after that. The tank fire stopped, "as if they had come just to kill my beloved son", she said. She didn't cry then. She didn't make a sound, in fact. "My husband was worried and told me to cry but I didn't. I don't know why," she said. Two weeks later, after fleeing from place to place, an Israeli soldier shot her three-year-old daughter Nour in her arms, shattering both of her tiny legs as they cowered in terror inside a hospital they thought would be safe.

When I met baby Nour, she had metal bars sticking out of her tiny shins, with a long scar running the length of her right calf, where the bullet had exited. The doctors had discharged her days prior but had allowed her and her mother Jamila to stay a few more days until they could secure a tent somewhere somehow. Jamila's husband, barely able to walk from his injuries, has been living in a tent with a group of men, the most he is able to accomplish is to secure meagre food and water each day. He visited once when I was there after he was able to save up 10 shekels (approximately \$3) for transportation and a small gift for his daughter. Display of the smallest physical intimacy between lovers is a private matter in Gaza, but there is no privacy in a hospital where 40 patients and their caretakers share a single room, rows of beds pushed end to end with just enough walking space between them.

Jamila was over the moon to have spent an hour with her husband after over a month of not seeing or hearing from him (her phone had been destroyed in the bombing). But she told me later that she would have liked to embrace him,

maybe even kiss him on the cheek. "He is suffering so much," she said, carrying his pain with her own and that of a whole nation on her small shoulders. Nina (not her real name) has a disarming smile and effusive generosity about her. She is eager to tell me how she saved her husband from the clutches of Israeli soldiers. She was married barely a year when Israeli bombing near their house intensified. The recordings that have emerged online from some of those nights are unimaginable. An army of dragons stomping and burning everything around them, shaking their buildings, breaking the glass, terrorising young and old; thunder and earthquakes, demons from above and below closing in.

Nina's husband Hamad (also not his real name) made the decision to leave along with several members of his family - his parents, uncles, aunts, and their spouses and children - and a few of their neighbours. Together they were about 75 individuals, moving from town to town, unable to find a safe place to hunker down for more than a few days at a time. Within a week of leaving, Nina learned that her family home had been bombed. In that single instant, at the push of a button by some 20-something-year-old Israeli, 80 members of her family were murdered - father, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, nieces and nephews. She was initially told her mother had been martyred, but thankfully it turned out she had survived. She was badly injured and transferred to a hospital, where Nina had become her beloved caretaker. This is how I came to meet this extraordinary young woman.

Nina, her husband and the rest of the group eventually made it to a temporary stop in Gaza City, from where they moved along fencing walls to reach a shelter. They went one at a time, on the logic that if Israel fired on them, they would not all die. Losing one was better than 75 at once. One person was indeed shot by a sniper after nearly half of them had made it, splitting the group for a while until they again mustered the courage to run for it, again, one at a time. Children were split up between the parents. Half a family killed is better than

all of it. Such were the choices they had to make, not unlike "Sophie's Choice". Before long, their shelter was surrounded by tanks. A "quadcopter" - a new Israeli terror invention - flew into the rooms, spraying the walls above their heads with bullets. Everyone screamed and cried, "even the men", Nina said. "It broke my heart to see the strong men of our family cowering in fear like that."

Eventually, soldiers entered. "At least 80 of them," she said. They separated the men from the women and children, stripping the former to nothing but their boxers in the dead of winter. The women and children were crammed into a small storage room, the men split into two classrooms. For three nights and four days, they listened to the screams of their husbands, fathers, and brothers being beaten and tortured in the other rooms, until finally, soldiers ordered the women, in broken Arabic, to take their children and "go south". All the women complied, except Nina. "I didn't care anymore. I was ready to die but I wasn't going to leave without my husband." She ran into the rooms where the men were being held, calling Hamad's name. None dared respond. It was dark and soldiers were pulling her away. She fought them as they laughed, seemingly amused by her hysteria. "Crazy," they called her. She recognised her husband's red boxers in the second room and rushed to him, pulling his blindfold off, kissing him, hugging him, promising to die with him if that's what it took. She alternated between cursing the soldiers and begging them to release her husband.

Eventually, they cut the plastic ties and let him go. But she wasn't done. As Hamad walked away, she went back inside to gather clothes for him and for her uncles sitting naked in the cold. They wouldn't be released yet for weeks. Some of those men would be executed.

She and Hamad made it out together. When they finally arrived somewhere safe, they realised his leg had been broken, his wrists were cut by the plastic ties, and his back bore the Star of David. Among the screams Nina had heard over the previous days had been her husband's, as a soldier used a knife to carve the Jewish symbol into his back.

What has Super Tuesday taught us about race to White House?

Eyad Abu Shakra

HAVE the Super Tuesday results presented us with any new insights? In terms of the detailed results that commentators and analysts enjoy noting, most of them did not defy expectations. But they are worth mentioning nonetheless. However, that is not the case for a deep reading of a battle whose political scene and whose images have been developing for some time.

On March 5, primary elections and caucuses were held in 15 states, as well as the American Samoa archipelago in the Pacific Ocean - a self-governing territory inhabited by about 45,000 people - and it was the last day that Democrats in Iowa could send mail-in ballots. In terms of the results, Democratic President Joe Biden and his Republican rival, former President Donald Trump, both won overwhelming victories in the elections and caucuses through which the delegates who vote in the national party conventions are elected. Each party officially announces its candidate for the upcoming presidential battle scheduled for early November, meaning that neither party has an obvious alternative to Biden or Trump.

Biden did not face any real competition, sweeping every state that was in play, although voters in American Samoa surprisingly gave a worthless victory to an obscure candidate. Trump also achieved an emphatic victory, winning the race in every state except the small state of Vermont, which voted for his rival, Nikki Haley.

Thus, Biden tightened his grip on the Democratic nomination, but concerns about disgruntled Democrats who voted "uncommitted" in swing states like Michigan and Minnesota remain. The reason for their protest, as we now well know, is that many Muslim, Arab and leftist Democrats are opposed to the Biden administration's unequivocal support for the displacement war in Gaza and its refusal to impose a ceasefire. As for the Republicans, although Haley - the former governor of South Carolina and UN ambassador - broke the consensus around Trump within the Republican camp, her defiant stance was weak and it came too late, forcing her to withdraw from the race after the dust settled, as many had expected.

In terms of the number of delegates that each candidate will send to his party's national convention, Biden was not faced with any noteworthy challenge. As for Trump's majority, it seems overwhelming; he has practically ensured that he will win.

The former president has now amassed, after Super Tuesday, 893 of the 1,215 delegates required for his party's nomination. On the other hand, Haley could only count on the support of 66 delegates when she suspended her campaign. Despite these results, analysts see obstacles in both men's paths. These include both obvious and less apparent obstacles, even before delving into the other risks each of them face - health issues for Biden and legal issues for Trump, who is defending himself in four criminal trials.

One of the obstacles that could harm the Democratic campaign is the number of "uncommitted" voters, which could undermine Biden's chances. Losing these voters - who amount to 12 percent of Democratic primary voters in some states - would pose a significant threat, particularly since they are concentrated in pivotal states that are home to large Arab and Muslim minorities and disgruntled radical groups. Here, observers might argue that Biden could still save himself, but only if he makes adjustments - even nominal adjustments - to his approach to the Palestinian question and capitalizes on Trump's even more robust support of Israel and its war on Palestinians and his disgruntled opponents' enthusiasm waning over the coming months.

Moreover, Biden's advisers are convinced that Trump's Middle East policies - particularly his hostility to the Palestinian cause - do not promise the "uncommitted" voters an acceptable alternative that is more aligned with their goals. Additionally, since Biden is the sitting president, he still has more room to maneuver in his dealings with the relevant Arab states and he could recalibrate his positions to soften the current discontent through appeasement and carefully crafted deals. On the Republican side, Trump has to contend with an array of sentiments and considerations.

One advantage Trump undoubtedly enjoys is that he understands his audience. He is now convinced that the more he indulges in populist attacks and defiance, the more he ramps up his rhetoric and the harsher his positions, the more he stands to gain in a polarized public arena, with his supporters ready to follow him to the end, regardless of any obstacles. In my opinion, this is where Trump's strength lies: notions like democracy, the rule of law, constitutional principles and broad national consensus mean nothing to him. They are at the bottom of his list of priorities, as he is a relentless narcissist who sees himself as being above accountability and scrutiny. Rather, he cannot do any wrong or lose, ever.

However, on the other hand, Haley's protest campaign has proven that some of Trump's strengths are also weaknesses in many Republican circles. Despite the crazed loyalty of certain segments and groups (the less-educated, Christian fundamentalists, anti-immigrant groups and rural white voters), Trump enjoys significantly less support among other segments of the electorate (the educated, urban and suburbanites and young voters).

This was particularly evident in the key states of Virginia and North Carolina. Even more worryingly for Trump, between 30 and 40 percent of Haley voters in these states believe that he would be ineligible if convicted. In fact, only 21 percent of her voters in North Carolina said they would vote Republican regardless of the candidate. In conclusion, we are now facing a rematch. Doubts about who will contest the race are diminishing, but the conclusion has yet to be written.

Precious samples from Mars have been collected

Jonathan I. Lunine

HOW tenuous is our planet's ability to support life? The answer might come from one of our nearest planetary neighbors. Orbiting spacecraft and rovers deployed on Mars over the past twenty years have found strong evidence for conditions billions of years ago that were very different from the dry, cold environment of today. When and why did Mars change? Understanding Mars' past can give important clues to our own planet's future.

Today, we are on the threshold of answering these questions. Since 2021, NASA's Perseverance rover, designed and built by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), has been collecting samples to be returned to Earth in a technologically daring mission called Mars Sample Return (MSR) that is currently under development.

And yet, the political storms that have hit Washington, DC, threaten to

leave those valuable samples stranded on Mars, by giving NASA far less than it needs to design and build the spacecraft that will return the samples. Unless Congress restores that funding, scientists may never see them. To understand the samples' inestimable value, we need only look at where Perseverance has landed: a crater named Jezero. At the crater's western end is a river channel and a huge pile of sediments resembling what geologists call river "deltas," places on Earth where rivers meet the sea. Today the river channel holds no water, and the delta sits on a dry and barren crater floor. But both are a testament to an ancient time when water flowed on Mars, breaching the crater wall and dumping sediments in a vast crater lake.

Did water flow on Mars long enough for life to have begun? Why did this and other oases dry up, and when? To answer these questions, Perseverance has been col-

lecting samples of the crater floor, the delta and the hills above it. It is guided carefully by a large team of scientists who are the world's experts in the geology and climate of ancient Mars. The rover itself is a mechanical marvel, drilling into rock and packing the pulverized material into over 30 sample containers the size and shape of laboratory test tubes. Within these tubes are priceless samples of Mars that hold the clues to when and how Mars went from Earth-like habitability to uninhabitable desolation.

To tease from these rocks the history of Mars and its climate requires analyzing them in massive, power-hungry and user-intensive instruments here on Earth. These instruments can determine the presence of materials at concentrations unreachable by the much smaller devices carried directly to Mars inside a spacecraft. Terrestrial laboratories are also uniquely

capable of precisely measuring the rocks' ages using a technique called radioisotope dating. Finding the precise ages of moon rocks was among the most important outcomes of the Apollo missions, placing the earliest history of the Earth and moon on an absolute timetable. To be able to construct such a chronology for Martian history as well would be a profound scientific result.

Mars Sample Return is among the most challenging and complex robotic missions ever attempted, requiring the largest lander ever put on Mars, which would carry a rocket to launch the samples off the surface into Martian orbit. Another spacecraft - to be built by the European Space Agency - would pick up the sample capsule in orbit and shuttle it toward Earth. This mission has been named the highest priority in US planetary exploration for the next

decade in two major strategic plans by the US National Academy of Sciences. And yet, the return of the samples may never happen.

Perseverance continues to fill its sample tubes, awaiting the day when a ship will come to take these priceless Martian samples home to Mother Earth. Will the US complete its mission or allow an emerging space power such as China to retrieve them? Or will the samples simply be abandoned on Mars? What would be the impact on the nation's long-standing leadership in deep space exploration if Mars Sample Return were to become the first major space mission we did not complete

because of a failure of will? Mars holds secrets about what makes it possible for a planet to support life, locked in the samples that await return to Earth. Just this month Congress reaffirmed MSR as the highest priority of the 2022 Planetary Science Decadal Survey of Planetary Science and tasked NASA with developing a realistic plan and funding profile that will achieve the return of the samples. NASA must provide that plan to Congress as soon as possible so that Congress can move forward with adequate funding. Leaving the samples stranded on Mars would be a national disgrace.

VOA

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Is Hochstein’s Lebanon-Israel peace mediation over?

Osama Al-Sharif

IN October 2022, Amos Hochstein, whose official title is deputy assistant to the president, senior energy and investment adviser and US special presidential coordinator for global infrastructure and energy security, brokered a historic maritime boundary agreement between Lebanon and Israel. Negotiations took months and were almost derailed many times. Still, Amos, a dual US-Israeli citizen, managed to seal the deal, which many thought was impossible to achieve.

And last September, less than a month before Hamas launched its deadly attack on Israel's southern settlements, he was again in Beirut, this time to undertake an even bigger task: the demarcation of a tricky and treacherous land border between Israel and Lebanon.

His mission never took off. Instead, President Joe Biden dispatched Hochstein to see if his experience and contacts could be put to use to de-escalate tensions along the Lebanese-Israeli border following Israel's post-Oct. 7 military retaliation against the Gaza Strip.

In response to Israel's war on Gaza, Hezbollah decided to break the lull on the shared border and fire rockets at Israeli towns and settlements in northern Israel in solidarity with the Palestinian resistance in Gaza. Israel responded by shelling southern Lebanon and targeting Hezbollah assets within a 5-km strip of land under what are vaguely called the "rules of engagement."

Biden was quick to send two US aircraft carriers to the Eastern Mediterranean in a stern message to Iran and its proxies not to open a new front. Hezbollah and Iran were defiant but also sent messages that they were not seeking a regional war. Still, Hezbollah and Israel continued to trade blows, resulting in the evacuation of tens of thousands of Israelis from northern Israel and the displacement of tens of thousands of

Lebanese in southern Lebanon.

In a bid to contain the tensions between the two sides, Biden again dispatched Hochstein to Lebanon; this time, his mission was to reach a truce between Hezbollah and Israel.

Last week, he ended his third trip to Lebanon in as many months without a deal. Israel could not meet Hezbollah's terms. According to various sources, the Lebanese group insisted on two conditions: no truce until Israel's war on Gaza ends and Hezbollah will not withdraw its forces from the border areas to an agreed-upon point to allow displaced Israelis to return to their homes.

Over the past few months, the two sides have broken the rules of engagement. In January, an Israeli strike killed a prominent Hamas military leader in a southern district of Beirut, Hezbollah's political hub, while the Lebanese militant group struck Safed in the Upper Galilee a month later. It did so again a few weeks later in retaliation for a rare Israeli raid on Baalbek, another Hezbollah stronghold in the Bekaa Valley.

The two sides have traded threats. Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah has warned Israel that the party's fighters are ready for war and that its aim remains "to wipe Israel off the map." Meanwhile, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant warned that Israel could turn Beirut into another Gaza. Hochstein's meetings with top Lebanese officials could change little on the ground. Lebanon has a caretaker government with limited authority and very little influence over the main political broker, Hezbollah, and its allies in the government. And Hezbollah is beholden to Iran. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has visited Beirut numerous times since Oct. 7 and met with Nasrallah, apparently to coordinate steps and deliver Tehran's instructions.

Hezbollah's engagement with the

Israelis is not to be underestimated. While Israel has not disclosed its casualties in the north, Hezbollah has been posting photos of "martyred" young fighters almost on a daily basis. The number is in the hundreds, including senior field commanders and, according to Israeli sources, the grandson of Nasrallah. Since Hochstein left Beirut, Hezbollah has increased its daily targeting of Israeli positions, firing hundreds of rockets and launching multiple drone attacks. This escalation coincided with the advent of the holy month of Ramadan and the collapse of ceasefire talks in Gaza. Israeli officials had set the beginning of Ramadan as a deadline for a possible ground offensive on Lebanon. Israeli analysts believe that only days separate us from a major Israeli military operation against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Washington and the Lebanese government want both sides to adhere to UN Security Council Resolution 1701. Israel claims that Hezbollah is violating the resolution, while the Lebanese group wants to make sure that the UN peacekeeping force, known as UNIFIL, does not hinder its ability to deploy its forces south of the Litani River. However, it also wants UNIFIL to remain in the region as a possible buffer.

Hochstein may no longer be able to get both sides to agree on a possible truce. For Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his war Cabinet, the situation in northern Israel is untenable. Even if the Gaza war comes to an end, Israel needs to neutralize future threats from Hezbollah. This will not happen through diplomacy and that is what the US special envoy has come to conclude. For Nasrallah and Iran, an inconclusive end to the current showdown is satisfactory. The Biden administration does not want a flare-up on the Lebanese-Israeli border, not during an election year and not

when ties between Biden and Netanyahu are strained over the high number of Palestinian casualties in Gaza.

Iran is using its proxies to put pressure on the West without giving it an excuse to confront Tehran directly. This is what is happening in Yemen through the Houthis, as well as through Hezbollah in Lebanon and southern Syria. This has not happened without a cost. Israel has continued to target Iranian assets in Syria and the US retaliated as a result of the lethal strike that hit its base in Jordan in January, which was launched by an Iraqi pro-Iranian group. But it is a game that Tehran can still afford to play with patience.

Hochstein is unlikely to make a breakthrough or prevent a sudden Israeli decision to launch a major attack on Lebanon. Biden needs to make it clear to Netanyahu that the US opposes a war with Lebanon. Hezbollah is unlikely to risk losing credibility by delinking its war effort in solidarity with Gaza. And Netanyahu says he is ready to go into Rafah during Ramadan, regardless of Biden's "red lines." This is a recipe for a regional disaster and the US is the only party that has some leverage over the Israelis to wind down their war in Gaza and to take an Israeli-Hezbollah war out of the equation.

No one wants to imagine what an Israeli war on Lebanon could lead to. The US knows that the solution to Lebanon's complex problems lies in Tehran. Washington is trying to take over from the French, who have failed to tackle the Lebanese conundrum. But Hochstein will not be able to surmount that obstacle, not now. What the White House should focus on is ending the war on Gaza, sooner rather than later. It has to subdue Netanyahu, whose war has crossed all red lines and now endangers the entire region. However, that does not seem likely and the worst possible scenarios may soon come true.

Arab News

Putin’s re-election must be deemed illegitimate

Vladimir Kara-Murza

THE radio in my prison cell is turned on all day, from the wake-up call at 5 a.m. to the lights-out at 9 p.m. And the closer it gets to the weekend of March 15, the more announcements I hear on the air about the so-called presidential election. I don't mean, of course, campaign ads that you would expect in democratic countries. No, the announcements are all simply telling listeners the different ways they can cast their vote, in-person and online.

Many people wonder why dictatorships even bother to hold "elections" when everyone knows that they are nothing but staged, meaningless rituals. But in the 21st century, the only broadly accepted source of legitimacy for any government comes in the form of a ballot box - and even regimes that don't have real legitimacy feel the need to create an appearance of it.

Sometimes they go too far for their own good. In 2020, Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko allowed opposition candidate Svetlana Tikhonovskaya on the ballot to make his term extension look more credible. The result, by most independent accounts, was an overwhelming victory for Tikhonovskaya that had to be undone by fraud. This, in turn, triggered the largest street protests of Lukashenko's rule. Vladimir Putin learned his neighbor's lesson. His strongest opponents have been eliminated - not figuratively but literally: Boris Nemtsov was murdered in February 2015, Alexei Navalny in February 2024.

But even cautious opposition was assessed by the Kremlin as too risky. When Boris Nadezhdin, a lawyer and a former member of parliament who had criticized the war in Ukraine, decided to run for president, his campaign got an instantaneous liftoff: long lines of (mostly young) people formed in cities and towns across

Russia to sign petitions for his nomination; his campaign received tens of millions of rubles in individual donations; and his support in the polls shot up into double digits. Not surprisingly, the Central Election Commission barred Nadezhdin from the ballot, using the usual technical pretexts. The only "competitors" Putin will face in the upcoming elections will be token candidates from the officially permitted "opposition" parties - all of whom go to great lengths to avoid any criticism of him and back his war in Ukraine. The same can be said of all the remaining major media outlets in Russia.

Meanwhile, those Russians who do publicly speak out against Putin and his war are punished with prison. By the most conservative estimates, the current number of political prisoners runs in the hundreds, while the total number of Russians who faced criminal or administrative punishment since 2018 for exercising free speech, according to a recent media investigation, comes to an astonishing 116,000 people. There have been more political trials during Putin's most recent presidential term alone than under Soviet leaders Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev combined. But it's not only the absence of opposition candidates, media censorship and large-scale repression that make Russia's upcoming election illegitimate.

One other reason is that Putin has no right to be on the ballot at all. Russia's 1993 constitution limited the president to two consecutive four-year terms. Putin - who has been in power since 2000 - found a way to go around this limit. Between 2008 and 2012, after his first set of two consecutive terms had ended, he ruled Russia as prime minister through a puppet de jure president (Dmitry

Medvedev, if anyone remembers his name). Putin's second set of terms (increased from four to six years) runs out on May 7. This time, he chose a different way of staying in the Kremlin: In 2020, he rammed through more than 200 constitutional amendments, including one giving him a personal exemption from the term-limit.

If the Medvedev ruse, though obviously undemocratic, was technically legal, the term-limit exemption is not. The hasty procedure for passing the amendments violated Russian law in several ways - a conclusion confirmed by Europe's top constitutional law panel in its detailed legal opinion. The European Parliament has called Putin's constitutional amendments "illegally enacted." The only logical, and the only honest, political response to this from the world's democracies would be to deny recognition of Vladimir Putin as the legitimate leader of Russia after May 7 - in the same way they have refused to recognize the legitimacy of, for example, Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela or Lukashenko in Belarus.

The first step toward such formal nonrecognition of Putin was taken by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in its overwhelmingly passed recommendation to European governments last October.

The same recommendation was made last month by Yulia Navalnaya, the widow of Russia's opposition leader, at a meeting of European Union foreign ministers. A similar initiative has been discussed in the US Congress. Western leaders often speak of their determination to stand up to the Kremlin. Sometimes the most powerful tool of all is simply telling the truth. Putin is not a legitimately elected president. He is a dictator and a usurper. It's time the free world finally said so.

The Washington Post

Biden misses chance to win over undecided voters

Dalia Al-Aqidi

MORE than 32 million viewers tuned in to catch US President Joe Biden's third State of the Union address last week. His demeanor was notably intense throughout the speech, as he spoke with vigor and anger. He appeared to be making a concerted effort to demonstrate his capability to lead the nation for another four years, despite the skepticism on both sides of the political aisle due to his age. Amid a politically charged atmosphere, the president, in his fiery delivery, tried to underscore his determination to resolve the pressing issues facing his administration and his commitment to addressing the concerns of the American people head-on. It was more of a campaign speech than anything else.

Biden's supporters cheered him on, seeing his spirited demeanor as a testament to his strong commitment to his duties. Through his loud and raging voice, he aimed to convey confidence in his leadership, reassuring the public of his ability to tackle upcoming challenges. Of course, not everyone was entirely on board. Some observers could not help but wonder if this was his only way to refute allegations that he is becoming unable to lead the country due to his old age. Instead of delving into a thorough review of his government's achievements over the past year and the prospects for the future, the president's speech writers strategically chose to pivot toward frequent criticisms of his predecessor. Consequently, the address focused on Donald Trump, the former president and Biden's likely rival in November's election, without mentioning his name. This shift in emphasis deviated from his purported aim of fostering unity among Americans.

Rather than embodying the spirit of unity he espoused, the Democrat leader dwelt on critiques of Republican Party policies and its members of the House of Representatives. His approach mirrored that of a teacher admonishing students for failing to complete their assignments. This rhetorical tactic risked further polarization, rather than bridging the ideological gap he promised to overcome. Therefore, his words reflected his failure to foster national cohesion and bipartisanship.

Biden's decision to open his speech by focusing on Ukraine and the call for heightened military support was unexpected. Foreign policy typically does not take center stage in State of the Union addresses, particularly without a US military presence in the conflict concerned and while Americans are facing numerous domestic challenges, from economic inflation to a surge in crime rates and unauthorized migration. It is crucial to assist in addressing the challenges posed by Russia and to support America's European allies in countering potential threats from Moscow in the event of it winning the war in Ukraine. However, the priorities of American citizens may not fully align with those of the current administration. The president ought to have recognized this disparity instead of seeming disconnected from the realities faced by the population. Biden's address took more than 40 minutes to broach the critical issue of the border crisis, along with the accompanying surge in criminal activity and drug addiction. However, his speech failed to offer a radical

solution to the pressing challenges of border security and illegal immigration. While many individuals around the globe patiently await the conclusion of official immigration procedures to secure approval from the US for migration or asylum, the ease with which illegal entry through the southern border can be gained has become alarmingly prevalent.

This issue is poised to become a primary focal point in the upcoming elections, as national security concerns loom large. The flood of unvetted individuals from diverse corners of the world underscores the urgent need for robust border control measures. Moreover, last year's apprehension of more than 100 individuals listed on the US terrorist watch list as they tried to cross the border raises significant concerns regarding the potential threat posed by those entering the country illegally. The uncertainty surrounding the number of individuals who have evaded detection and may be planning terrorist activities underscores the gravity of the situation and the imperative for decisive action. In addressing economic matters, the Democratic president sought recognition for outcomes for which he may not have been responsible. Specifically, he asserted that, under his administration, the economy has seen the addition of 15 million new jobs - a claim that is factually accurate. However, it is essential to put these job gains in the context of the broader framework of economic recovery following the substantial losses incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While creating these new jobs is indeed a positive development, it is crucial to acknowledge that they

represent just one facet of the broader economic rebound from the pandemic-induced downturn. The resurgence of employment is a natural consequence of the easing of restrictions and the gradual reopening of businesses. The discussion surrounding what was a purely political and electoral speech spans many topics and requires more space. Nevertheless, it is imperative to explore a key aspect: the distinct subset of voters who remain undecided between lending their support to Biden or Trump - a demographic that notably went unaddressed. The current president made no concerted effort to engage with or persuade this pivotal group, potentially overlooking a significant opportunity to broaden his support base.

Moving forward, the election landscape is poised to witness an intense struggle for the endorsement of former US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley. Her decision to withdraw from the 2024 presidential race, after clinching just two Republican primaries, without aligning herself with Trump has thrust her into the spotlight. Consequently, speculation abounds regarding the votes of her supporters - a sizable contingent that constitutes about a quarter of Republican primary voters. The looming question revolves around which candidate they will throw their support behind come November. This group of voters has much power to affect how the election turns out. So, both Biden and Trump need to work extra hard to get their support. This means they have to be really smart about how they campaign. It is all about understanding the complex game of politics and using the right tactics to win over these voters.

Civil society key to future of Israeli-Palestinian peace-building

Alistair Burt

THE agony of Gaza goes on. No one should mistake the well-meaning efforts of delivering aid through aidrops or the proposed construction of a temporary port for Gaza as anything other than a dramatic failure of conventional, efficient delivery, due to restrictions placed upon its access.

The Gaza crisis represents a grotesque failure of political leadership. Of those in Hamas who organized the brutal raid on Israel on Oct. 7, indifferent to the likely response to the stealing of men, women and children as hostages. Of those in the Israeli government who devised an incoherent plan to save the hostages, while at the same time seeking to destroy Hamas at immense civilian cost. And of the international community, which cannot seemingly prevent or end what is happening, just as it cannot in Sudan or Somalia. The victims of these conflicts are rarely the leaders; it is the poorest and most defenseless, disproportionately women and children, who pay the heaviest price.

It is not easy to see any light at present, but the UK House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee took evidence recently on the post-conflict future as part of an inquiry into the country's policy in the broader Middle East. It

heard from Israeli and Palestinian voices based locally, with one useful theme emerging that highlighted a road less travelled at present - the role of civil society.

Listening to these voices and others from the region, I believe the committee will recognize and agree that there is no going back to Oct. 6. There is a growing awareness that the trauma of Oct. 7 and the subsequent reprisals have been so severe that, while it is obvious a new Gaza must emerge, a new Israel must also emerge, such is the shock to an already fracturing political system. Both will require new leadership, as neither can ever be the same again.

Emerging voices are making the case that the failure of political leadership means that a top-down resolution of affairs - the classic conclusions of high-level negotiations of local and international leaders determining the compromises needed for the future - will not be possible to achieve without the greater engagement of civil society. This time, a bottom-up process must accompany the top-down for there to be lasting peace, justice and security for those whose lives have been so cruelly violated not just recently, but for too long before as well.

There are those who wish to build on the fact that one area of anticipated confrontation has not occurred. The fears that, post-Oct. 7, the intercommunal conflict in Israel that erupted in 2021 between the country's Jewish and Palestinian populations would resurface have not come to pass. Over the last few months, it has been striking that, despite the deep pain both communities have experienced, those who had been patiently working for many years to build common ground between Israel's different communities have so far seen their efforts contribute significantly to ensuring tensions have not spilled over and added to the catastrophe elsewhere. This deserves greater recognition.

None of this is simple. Efforts to promote coexistence are delicate and require skilled handling to minimize pain or guilt. New directions will also be needed, for the societies for which such peace-building were intended have been ripped away.

While the base of trust and confidence created this way is vital, more of the same sort of relationship-building is unlikely to be enough, post-Oct. 7. A new political horizon, dealing with the many component parts of the issues

between Palestinians and Israel, will be essential to underpin such work in the future, which is where the political process and civil society come together.

While relationship-building must be locally led, the international community has a role to play. The UK has long championed the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, which has brought together Jewish and a variety of Arab partners. The Alliance for Middle East Peace, a coalition of more than 170 Israeli and Palestinian peace-building organizations, whose voices have been so prominent in the heart of tragedy, proposes an international contact group, integrating civil society peace-building, convened by the UK and drawn from G7, EU and Arab states. Such a group could be invited to the G7 Summit in June, in what we all hope will be a time when the conflict has ended and serious negotiations have begun.

With the limitations of the existing political leaderships so apparent, it is not unreasonable to demand that civil society efforts be fed into the horizon of a revived peace process. Amid failure, their efforts have been a success. There are precious few other successes to which to point - they have earned their right to be heard.

Russia after Navalny

Leonid Ragozin

IN the first days of March, thousands of Russians flocked to Borisovskoye Cemetery in a far-flung corner of Moscow to pay their respects to the late opposition leader Alexey Navalny. He died in February in an Arctic prison from a blood clot - according to the official version of events.

In recent history, there has been no funeral of a Russian public figure of this scale, except perhaps that of the Soviet dissident Andrey Sakharov in 1989. The funeral processions of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and Russian President Boris Yeltsin also drew public attention, but the crowds in attendance were smaller. There is even less basis for comparison with the funeral of Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the maverick leader of the nominally opposition party, LDPR, in 2022. The crowds at Navalny's grave clearly demonstrate who led the opposition in Russia. Not that this wasn't obvious while he was still alive.

President Vladimir Putin wouldn't have gone to such lengths to destroy his movement, had Navalny been a mere nuisance who lacked support among the Russian public. He spent much of the last 10 years of his life in prison: he was barred from running in presidential elections; his supporters, close relatives and even lawyers were arrested and threatened. Then, on top of that, he barely survived an assassination attempt with a chemical agent. That said, it is also true that the Russian opposition is unlikely to effect political change now that Russia is tied up in a hair-raising confrontation with the West over its war in Ukraine.

The opposition movement against Putin peaked in 2011-12, at a time of peace and relatively good relations with the West. But he managed to successfully reframe his domestic political conflict in geopolitical terms during Ukraine's Maidan Revolution two years later which ended with the Russian occupation of Crimea. The ambiguity of the US-led West about its strategic goals with regard to Russia, its salami tactics of expanding its sphere of influence into the post-Soviet space while barring Russia from European integration, and its tacit support for ethnonationalist forces and policies in Eastern Europe helped Putin to polarise the Russian population and justify repression

against the pro-Western opposition.

Years of methodical suppression have taken their toll. In 2014 and 2015, Moscow still saw large marches against the war in Ukraine. These are impossible to imagine now that any criticism of the Russian military's actions can be punished with a jail sentence. The vast majority of opposition politicians, activists, independent journalists and civil society leaders have fled the country in the wake of Russia's full-out invasion of Ukraine. There are too few people left in the country who are experienced in organising public protests. The high attendance at Navalny's funeral may very well have been a one-off event spurred by the emotional shock at the perceived loss of hope for a better Russia which the ever-so-optimistic and stoic Navalny represented. The authorities are watching closely and will move quickly to suppress any sign of mobilisation. There are already reports about several people who attended the funeral getting arrested after being identified with the help of facial recognition technology.

The widow of the late politician, Yulia Navalnaya, has called on Russians to disrupt the presidential election, due on March 17, by showing up at polling stations en masse exactly at midday and voting for other candidates or spoiling their ballots. At a relatively low risk for the participants, the organisers hope, this would allow to demonstrate the scope of anti-Putin sentiment and cast even more doubt on the legitimacy of the election. However, there is no guarantee that many people will turn up and that is not just due to fear of reprisals. Russia's conflict with the West leaves the pro-Western opposition with no strategic narratives that could fire up not just its staunch supporters, but - crucially - the conformist and apolitical majority of Russians.

People would only rally to defend their own interest, not someone else's, in this case, that of the West or Ukraine. Claims that a Ukrainian victory will somehow improve the lot of the Russian people is going to fall on deaf ears unless it is backed up by a viable plan for integrating a democratic Russia into Euroatlantic structures, such as NATO and the EU. Otherwise, Russians, who experienced

turmoil and extreme insecurity at the time of close friendship with the West in the 1990s followed by a very significant improvement in the quality of life during Putin's decades in power, will remain perpetually mistrustful of the West. They will continue to suspect the West of attempting to turn their country into an impoverished wasteland in the European periphery, as the Kremlin's propaganda keeps asserting. As Ukraine's, Georgia's and Serbia's revolutions clearly showed, integration with the West is the only prospect that can mobilise millions and bring about tangible political change in Eastern Europe.

Essentialist narratives about Russian "imperialist" mentality, often employed in the Western and Ukrainian discourse, just won't work. People will point to Western imperialism manifested, as they see it, in its divide-and-rule policies in Eastern Europe and the support for toxic ethnonationalism. This fruitless argument can go on forever. The West spends considerable amounts of money on Russian-language media, hoping to deliver news coverage and political messaging free from the Kremlin's propaganda. But what happens in real life is that when Russians go online in search for news, they get swamped by insanely xenophobic messaging in the Russian language coming from pro-Ukrainian infowar outfits and troll farms. That's before they even get to read about Western politicians calling for a total strategic defeat of Russia and the dismembering of the country into a bunch of Western client states. The message they get is - once again - don't trust the West. In this context, the best thing the Russian opposition activists can do at the moment is to help the West understand the dangers of its shift to the far right and the need to repel its own version of Putinisation, whether in the shape of Donald Trump or East European illiberals. They can also advise the West on how to right the wrongs in its badly miscalculated policies towards Russia and its neighbours, which contributed to the conflict.

As Ukraine's victory looks more implausible than ever given the way things stand on the front line, this is emerging as the only viable strategy which could eventually bring about democratic change in Russia and thus help Ukraine restore its sovereignty.

Aljazeera



MULTAN: A large number of people in a queue to get flour on government subsidized rates from mobile Utility Store.

Policies in consultation with business community

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister of Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Wednesday said that the government is business friendly, will make all the policies in consultation of the business community and will take all the chambers of the country along with it.

The Minister expressed these views yesterday while talking to President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari, who congratulated him on assuming charge as Federal Minister of Commerce, said a press release issued by ICCI here.

The solution of the economic crisis is the first priority. We want the support of the business community for the stability of the business. We will provide facilities to the business community for ease of doing business.

The mission of fully

facilitating investment and local and foreign investors and under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has come with a strong determination to overcome the economic challenges facing the country. "I would like to thank President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari for coming to congratulate me."

Federal Minister of Commerce Jam Kamal Khan said, he expect increase the volume of trade, especially in key sectors such as mining, livestock, and textiles.

"We urgently need to align with global standards and adopt modern methods, Jam Kamal said that there is a need to move beyond the traditional trade approach and adopt proactive measures to improve Pakistan's position in the global market" he said.

Speaking on the occasion, ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that people across the country, including the business community, have many expectations from the government.

The business community also expects that the government will consult the businessmen, especially the Chambers, in policy making, because the policy made with their consultation will benefit the country and the economy, he said.

The Chamber will work together with the government to deal with the problem of inflation, reduce interest rates, improve exports, increase foreign exchange reserves and revive the economy.

He said that Pakistan has excellent potential to promote exports of IT, pharmaceuticals, textiles and other sectors, so the business community should work with the government to

solve the problems of the export sector and create a favorable environment for export promotion.

ICCI will fully cooperate with the Government in its efforts to improve business and economic activities in the country.

Ahsan said the government should start working on the budget proposals in consultation with all chambers of commerce and associations in the country so that a comprehensive document of proposals based on the views of the business community can be presented to the government for the next budget.

On this occasion, Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari said that the business community will provide its full support to the government for economic stability; the business community is playing the most important role in the development of the economy.

PSX stays bearish, loses 753 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Wednesday, shedding 753.26 points, a negative change of 1.16, closing at 64,048.44 points against 64,801.70 points the previous trading day.

A total of 252,751,968 shares valuing Rs 9.247 billion were traded during the day as compared to 321,709,242 shares valuing Rs 10.857 billion the last day.

Some 329 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 52 of them recorded gains and 257 sustained losses,

whereas the share prices of 20 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Cnergyco PK with 19,852,025 shares at Rs 4.63 per share, Bank of Punjab with 18,744,663 shares with 6.02 per share and K-Electric Limited with 14,394,256 shares at Rs 4.40 per share.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 200.00 per share price, closing at Rs 21,400.00, whereas the runner-up was Bata Pakistan Limited with a Rs 20.00 rise in its per share price to Rs1,670.00.

Allawasaya Textiles and Finishing Mills Limited

witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 108.00 per share closing at Rs 1,352.00, followed by Mari Petroleum Company Limited with Rs 74.57 decline to close at Rs 2,357.60.

Rupee gains 29 paise against dollar

The Rupee on Wednesday gained 29 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 278.78 against the previous day's closing of Rs 279.07.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 278.8 and Rs 281.5,

respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 98 paise to close at Rs 304.47 against the last day's closing of Rs 305.45, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen lost 02 paise to close at Rs1.88, whereas a decrease of Rs 1.85 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 356.66 compared to the last closing of Rs 358.51.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 08 paise and 07 paise to close at Rs 75.90 and Rs 74.33 respectively.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships namely, Melody, Rhine and Dravin, scheduled to load/offload Rice, Palm oil and LPG, berthed at Multi-Purpose Terminal, Liquid Terminal and Engro Terminal respectively on Wednesday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Maersk Cape Town, Spar Octans and Fuwairit with Containers, Coal and LNGs also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim.

Seven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them a containers ship, MSC Aria-III left the Port on today morning, while two more ships, Madison Eagle and Menomonee are expected to sail on same day.

Cargo volume of 81,281 tonnes, comprising 64,323 tonnes imports cargo and 16,958 tonnes export cargo carried in 998 Containers (729 TEUs Imports and 499 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

EPCL empowers women in training program

F.P.Report

KARACHI: The Engro Polymer & Chemicals (EPCL), a subsidiary of Engro Corporation, along with Engro Foundation partnered with Descon Technical Institute to train the first batch of women forklift operators of Pakistan. This initiative is in line with Engro's commitment to cultivating an inclusive culture, extending its impact to a broader community spectrum.

The training program, Umeed-e-Nouh, is a first-of-its-kind initiative aimed at empowering and equipping women with the knowledge and expertise for challenging technical roles. This 7-week training program focused on training women to operate forklifts at manufacturing and supply chain sites. After a thorough selection process, 21 out of 172 candidates were selected.

Regarding this groundbreaking initiative, Jahangir Piracha, CEO of Engro Polymer & Chemicals, emphasized, "Engro remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing diversity through a dedicated focus on inclusion, particularly within technical domains. Beyond offering training opportunities, our priority was to establish a nurturing environment that empowers and facilitates



tates women, enabling them to concentrate fully on their learning and gaining financial stability. We are dedicated to instigating transformative change that extends its impact to a broader societal level."

To support the candidates, they were also provided with necessary resources including weekly stipend for financial support, lunch during training

sessions, and safe commute to and from the location. A third-party certification was also given, from a testing facility Inspectet, verifying their operational skills and certified their training as sufficient for operational roles. Engro along with other manufacturing facilities, will now look for opportunities to get these women employed in technical roles.

Benish joins Begin.Watch

F.P. Report

KARACHI: After over three years as chief operating officer of Brainchild, Benish Irshad has joined premium SVOD/TVOD OTT platform Begin.Watch in the same role.

As COO of Brainchild, Benish was instrumental in winning various new business pitches. She launched Publicis Media in Pakistan and has grown it into a power brand in the media investment management industry. In her new role as COO of Begin.Watch, she will be responsible for overseeing product development and licensee relationships.

Begin.Watch has secured sports streaming deals with the Professional Golfers Association, Saudi Premier League, All Elite Wrestling. Representatives from the SVOD/TVOD OTT platform are in talks with the Grand Slam tournaments, F1, soccer, and volleyball leagues for legal and licensed streaming deals.

On the entertainment side, Warner Brothers



Discovery, Sony Pictures, and NBC Universal are reportedly on board as well. The content will become available once the mobile app is live. A subsidiary of MHL, Begin.Watch is quietly acquiring content across sports and entertainment for its launch across Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

Backed by venture accelerator Z2C Limited, MHL is a technology company building the rails for a transparent media supply chain. Begin.Watch represents the first business to consumer (B2C) venture directly backed by Z2C Limited, with both Pakistan Super League (PSL) and Coke Studio being indirectly backed through specialist advertising agencies.

TurPak Ticaret Dernegi launches Islamabad Chapter at IMARAT Builders Mall

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The TurPak Ticaret Dernegi (TurPak trade Association), in a landmark collaboration with Mooui Home, has inaugurated its Islamabad chapter, strengthening Pakistan-Türkiye business relations. This event, hosted at the iconic IMARAT Builders Mall, marks a new chapter in international

business relations between the two brotherly countries, and promises new business opportunities for enterprises in both nations

The Islamabad chapter of TurPak ticaret dernegi will be strategically housed within IMARAT Builders Mall, Islamabad's premier one-stop shop for all construction and renovation needs. The official opening ceremony, held at IMARAT Builders Mall, witnessed the signing of MoU between the two parties.

Shafiq Akbar, Chairman of IMARAT Group, expressed his enthusiasm for TurPak ticaret dernegi's



presence within the mall, stating, "We are delighted to welcome TurPak ticaret dernegi to IMARAT Builders Mall. This initiative will not only foster stronger business ties between Pakistan and Türkiye but also positions our mall as a central hub for facilitating these connections."

Farhan Javed, Group Director of IBM, echoed Mr. Akbar's sentiments, adding, "The launch of TurPak ticaret dernegi's Islamabad chapter within IMARAT Builders Mall is a

significant development for the business landscape in Pakistan. This platform will provide valuable resources and connections for Pakistani businesses seeking to expand into the Turkish market and vice versa."

The MoU was signed by Miss Hülya Selazgi Chairperson of Turpak Trade Association from Türkiye, and Abdul Jamil Faisal, CEO of Mooui Home, setting a solid foundation for future collaboration and success.

Abdul Jamil Faisal, CEO

of Mooui Home, commented, "We at Mooui Home are incredibly proud to partner with TurPak Ticaret Dernegi in establishing their Islamabad chapter. This collaboration opens exciting new avenues for businesses in both Pakistan and Türkiye, and we are confident that IMARAT Builders Mall will serve as a springboard for this growth. We are committed to providing a platform that fosters innovation and facilitates connections between businesses from both countries."

With the TurPak Ticaret Dernegi's Islamabad chapter now active at IMARAT Builders Mall, an exciting future lies ahead for Turkish and Pakistani businesses. This initiative stands as a key driver in not just bolstering commercial ties but also in contributing significantly to the economic prosperity of both countries.

Automobile sale increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sale of cars in the country witnessed an increase of 118.36 per cent in February 2024 compared to the same month of the preceding year, a data released by the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association said on Wednesday.

Sale of cars rose to 7,953 units in February 2024 compared to 3,642 units during the same month of the previous year.

Sale of cars during the first eight months (Jul-Feb) however decreased by 40.92 per cent when compared to the sale during the same period of the year 2022-23.

Integration of MHM in Provincial Policies and Strategies & Tax Reforms on Sanitary Products: IBA, Water Aid Pakistan organize a provincial dialogue

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Center for Business and Economics (CBER), Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Karachi, in collaboration with Water Aid Pakistan unveiled its Provincial Dialogue on 'Integration of MHM in Provincial Policies and Strategies & Tax Reforms on Sanitary Products' at the IBA City Campus. The event witnessed influential voices discussing policies, strategies and tax reforms on sanitary products. Master of the ceremony, Madu Malla introduced the agenda for the insightful event.

Muhammad Khaliq, Provincial Manager, Water Aid Pakistan extended a warm welcome to the participants, focusing on the integration of Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) into provincial policies and strategies, alongside discussions on tax reforms concerning sanitary products. The event shed light on the organization's impactful work, particularly in regions including Thatta, Malir, and other marginalized areas across the nation. Mr. Khaliq underscored Water Aid's unwavering commitment to providing vital support and dedication to integrating MHM into provincial policies and strategies. He emphasized the importance of this inte-

gration in ensuring the well-being and dignity of women and girls across the province.

Raheema Panhwar, Gender Advisor at WaterAid Pakistan, presented critical insights on the gap analysis of MHM and tax reforms. Ms. Panhwar highlighted the challenges within governmental policies at both provincial and national levels, emphasizing the need for comprehensive revisions to address MHM needs effectively. She underscored the importance of addressing issues of dignity and stigmatization along with MHM service provision.

The presentation emphasized the significance of international commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in driving the policy revision process and integrating MHM into provincial mandates.

Dr. Lubna Naz, Director CBER-IBA conducted a panel discussion. She emphasized the significance of understanding menstrual cycle at various points of reproductive age among women, creating awareness about menstrual hygiene using institutional support, and issues with affordability and sustainability of MHM in Pakistan. Distinguished panelists included Sadiqa Sallahuddin, Executive Director, Indus Resource Centre; Zofeen T.

Ebrahim, Freelance Journalist; Dr. Naima Shaikh, Additional Director, RMNCH, Health Department, Government of Sindh; and Paras Shahab Memon, Assistant Commissioner, Regional Tax Office/Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

Ms. Sallahuddin emphasized the necessity of incorporating MHM into educational curricula and ensuring the availability of girlfriendly washrooms in schools. She advocated for the nationwide implementation of comprehensive MHM educational policies, stressing the importance of inclusivity in project design to benefit vulnerable groups. Ms. Ebrahim highlighted the evolving discourse around menstrual hygiene in the media and emphasized the need for open discussions on national platforms to challenge stereotypes. She underscored the nexus between Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), climate change, and vulnerable groups, urging policy implementation and public-private initiatives. Emphasizing the importance of awareness campaigns, Dr. Shaikh underscored the critical role of clean water in preventing health complications associated with unhygienic menstrual practices. While, Ms. Memon, highlighted international pressure



affecting tax policies and advocated for duty-free access to essential menstrual products.

Concluding remarks were given by Rana Ansar, Member of the National Assembly. She emphasized the critical need for comprehensive strategies and political will to address societal issues effectively. She acknowledged the valuable contribution of Water Aid in addressing pressing societal issues, particularly in the realm of menstrual hygiene management. Ms. Ansar stressed the imperative of efficient policy implementation to ensure equitable access to essential services. She reiterated the importance of collective efforts from both governmental and non-governmental

sectors to drive positive change and create a more inclusive and progressive society.

Dr. Abdul Haq Chang, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Department of Social Sciences and Liberal Arts, SESS, IBA Karachi, delivered a vote of thanks, expressing his gratitude to the attendees for their active participation. He particularly acknowledged the youth, including the students from IBA Karachi, for their enthusiastic involvement in discussions concerning vital societal issues like MHM. He also highlighted the importance of youth involvement in breaking barriers and driving positive change towards fostering a more inclusive and progressive society.

Court Notice

In the Court of Kaleem Ullah Civil Judge-II Malakand at Bathkela, Case No. 14/1 of 2024, Next date 18/03/2024, Mrs. Safia Bibi Versus Mr. Muhammad Riaz and others, Proclamation Against Legal heirs: (10) Asim S/O Muhammad Afzal resident of Saman Abad Canal Road Bathkela District Malakand. In the above title case the service of you above named defendants is not possible with ordinary means, hence you are hereby informed through this proclamation to attend this court on 18/03/2024 at 08:00am in person or through appointed agent/attorney or through counsel, otherwise you shall be place and proceed against ex-parte.

Court Notice

In the Court of District Judge/Alia Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Family Appeal No. 55/FCA Institution 22/7/2023. Date of hearing 26/4/2024. Mst Asma Bibi Vs. Mohamad Essa. Notice to No. 1. Mohamad Essa s/o Aasem Khan resident Kingargalai Tehsil Gadezai Buner at Building No. 318 Plot 09 Industrial Area 04 Sharjah (UAE). Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8 a.m. dated 6/4/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.



In brief

National Netball Championship

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Netball Championship under the auspices of Pakistan Netball Federation (PNF) would be played here at the Liaquat Gymnasium of Pakistan Sports Complex in June. According to PNF President Mudassar Arain the preparations for the championship have begun. As many as 17 men and women teams from across the country will participate in the championship, he said. Arian said the participating teams include Pakistan Army, Wapda, Police, Pakistan Air Force, Pakistan Navy, Railways, Pak Boards, Higher Education Commission, Punjab, Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Elite Academy, Rose Academy and Islamabad.

Usman Tariq cleared to bowl

KARACHI (APP): Quetta Gladiators' spinner, Usman Tariq, has been given the green light to participate in the upcoming matches of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season nine, where he will resume his bowling duties. This decision comes after concerns regarding the accuracy of Usman Tariq's bowling action arose, prompting him to undergo an assessment at the National Cricket Academy. Following the assessment, Usman Tariq received specific guidelines to rectify his bowling action. It's worth noting that Usman Tariq bowled four overs during Quetta Gladiators' match against Multan Sultans at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi on Tuesday night, where he conceded 38 runs at an average of 9.5, yet failed to secure any wickets.

North announces retirement

L O N D O N (Agencies): Wales centre George North has announced he will retire from international rugby after the Six Nations on Saturday. The home game against Italy will be his 121st and final Wales appearance. North, 31, is Wales' third most capped player in history behind only Alun Wyn Jones and Gethin Jenkins. He will continue playing club rugby having announced he will move from Ospreys to French side Provence for the 2024-25 season. North is the latest Wales player to announce his retirement within the last year following Jones, Justin Tipuric, Rhys Webb, Dan Biggar and Leigh Halfpenny. North had initially said he wanted to continue his international career despite his club move to France. He stated in November 2023 he had no intention to quit Wales and gave no indication in February 2024 of this decision before his 50th Six Nations game, against England. However, Wales head coach Warren Gatland said he held "honest discussions" with North about how he could get through to a potential fifth World Cup. North was not selected for the opening match against Scotland, but returned against England and Ireland before being dropped for the defeat by France last weekend. He has been recalled for this weekend's final match of the campaign against Italy - his 121st cap - with Wales looking to avoid finishing bottom for the first time since 2003. "I have decided that the game on Saturday will bring my international career to an end," said North.

PCB announces NZ cricket team's tour to Pakistan

LAHORE (PPI): The Pakistan Cricket Board today announced that New Zealand men's cricket team will tour Pakistan from 14 April to play five T20Is. The Blackcaps will arrive in the capital city on 14 April and will play three T20Is at the Pindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi on 18, 20 and 21 April. Following that, both sides will move to Lahore, where they will play the remaining two T20Is of the series on 25 and 27 April, respectively. All five matches of the T20I series will begin at 7pm PKT. Ticket prices for the series will be set at affordable rates for the fans to watch their favorite players in action. Tickets will be available at selected TCS outlets and online at pcb.tcs.com.pk. An

announcement regarding ticket sales will be made in due course. The coming tour of the Blackcaps will mark their third visit to Pakistan in the span of 17 months. Previously, they had traveled to Pakistan in December 2022/January 2023 to feature in two Tests and three ODIs - part of ICC Men's Championship. Later that year in April, they traveled to Lahore, Rawalpindi and Karachi to feature in 10 white-ball matches. Usman Wahla, Director - International Cricket: "In a testament to the unwavering camaraderie between Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and New Zealand Cricket (NZC), we are delighted to present the schedule for New Zealand men's team tour

to Pakistan 2024. "This tour symbolises the deep-rooted ties and mutual respect that define the relationship between our two cricketing nations. "Our avid cricket fans and the people of Pakistan will welcome the New Zealand team again and we hope to have yet another competitive series which is a key part of our buildup to this year's ICC T20 World Cup." **Series schedule** 14 April - New Zealand arrive in Pakistan 16-17 April - Training/practice 18 April - 1st T20I, Rawalpindi 20 April - 2nd T20I, Rawalpindi 21 April - 3rd T20I, Rawalpindi 25 April - 4th T20I, Lahore 27 April - 5th T20I, Lahore.

Pak Army wins National Shooting C'ship



ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): The 31st National Shooting Championship 2024, held in Karachi, was a showcase of exceptional talent and skill. The event saw participation from various teams, including the Pakistan Army, Navy, Air Force, Sindh, Punjab, WAPDA, Police, and the Federal Rifles Association. The championship was a spectacle of precision and accuracy, with male and

female shooters demonstrating their prowess with different types of pistols and rifles. The Pakistan Army emerged victorious, demonstrating their superior shooting skills and strategic prowess. They topped the leaderboard with an impressive tally of 16 gold medals, along with 11 silver and 9 bronze medals. The Pakistan Navy followed closely, securing the runner-up position with 15 gold, 16 silver, and 6 bronze

medals. The Pakistan Air Force, WAPDA, and Sindh secured the third, fourth, and fifth positions respectively. Commander Coast Vice Admiral Raja Rab Nawaz graced the event as the special guest and had the honor of distributing the awards to the triumphant players. The event not only celebrated the spirit of sportsmanship but also highlighted the dedication and discipline of the participants.

Klopp vows no U-turn on Liverpool exit despite return of Edwards

LIVERPOOL (AFP): Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said on Wednesday the return of Michael Edwards as Fenway Sports Group's chief executive of football would have no bearing on his decision to leave Anfield at the end of the season. The German has spoken to Edwards, with whom he had a successful relationship as the club's sporting director until he left in 2022, but there will be no dramatic U-turn. Edwards spent more a decade at Anfield in a variety of roles and owners FSG targeted him for a new position to oversee the huge transition that will take place when Klopp leaves. Asked whether Edwards has asked him about reversing his decision, Klopp told reporters: "No, because -- and it's very important in his job -- he's not dumb. "That was not a subject to talk about. Can you

imagine if I changed my mind now? Can you? Of course not. "It would be like when I said I'd never (move to) another club in England and next year I signed for our neighbours or a club who needs a coach." The German, who described Edwards as a "top choice", said he had thought long and hard about his decision to step down as Liverpool boss. "I don't say these things without thinking about them before," he said. "It would mean I realise only now how great this club is -- I have known about it all the time. "For me it is the best club in the world and I am still leaving anyway. That's what I've been trying to explain." Klopp, 56, was speaking on the eve of the second leg of Liverpool's Europa League last 16 match against Sparta Prague, when they will be defending a 5-1 scoreline from the first leg. When

he announced his decision in January to leave Anfield, he spoke about laying the foundations for his successor. With the League Cup already secured, Liverpool are targeting four trophies - they are involved in a three-way Premier League race, have an FA Cup quarter-final against Manchester United on Sunday and appear certain to progress to the Europa League quarter-finals. "The club is in a really good place," said Klopp. "People will only measure that at the end of the season when they have a look at what we really achieved, but that's not that important for the future -- what we achieve this season is for now. "What's important for the future is how good is the team, how good are the players, how good is the structure, how good is the organisation? That's where my optimism comes from."



NOKERE, BELGIUM: Bert Van Lerberghe of Belgium and Team Soudal Quick-Step competes during the 78th Danilith Nokere Koerse 2024, Men's Elite a 188.1km one day race.

Usama Mir emerges as leading wicket-taker in PSL-9

KARACHI (APP): In a thrilling display of spin bowling prowess, Usama Mir of Multan Sultans has claimed the spotlight as the leading wicket-taker in the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) season nine. With an impressive tally of 21 wickets to his name, Usama Mir has surpassed the previous record set by Rashid Khan during season eight.

His stellar performance was showcased in the recent match against Quetta Gladiators at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi. Usama's economical spell of 3.5 overs yielded three crucial wickets for just 22 runs, solidifying his position as a formidable force in the league.

While Usama Mir's feat is commendable among spinners, it's essential to note the historical context. Hasan Ali's remarkable achievement of 25 wickets in 2019 and Abbas Afridi's 23 wickets in 2023 stand as notable milestones among fast bowlers in previous PSL seasons.

Iftikhar Ahmed fined for code of conduct breach

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Multan Sultans' all-rounder Iftikhar Ahmed has been fined five per cent of his match fee by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Wednesday for using inappropriate language during the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 9.

Iftikhar Ahmed was fined for a Level 1 breach of PSL's code of conduct during his side's PSL 9 fixture against Quetta Gladiators at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi. Iftikhar was found to have violated Article 2.5 of the HBL PSL Code of Conduct, which reads as: "Using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon his/her dismissal during a match".



The incident happened in the third over of Quetta Gladiators' batting, when Iftikhar used inappropriate language towards the batter (Jason Roy) who was dismissed. Since Iftikhar pleaded guilty to the charge and accepted the sanctions proposed by match referee Ali Naqvi, there was no need for a formal hearing. The charge was imposed by on-field umpires Rashid Riaz and Richard Illingworth. During the match, an all-round performance led Multan Sultans to ease past Quetta Gladiators to reclaim the top spot in the PSL 9 standings with 14 points and also booked their Qualifiers clash with Peshawar Zalmi, who moved to second with a point less.



CHATTOGRAM: Najmul Hossain Shanto and Mushfiqur Rahim crafted a big fifth-wicket stand, Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka, 1st ODI.

Swiatek and Wozniacki win at Indian Wells

INDIAN WELLS (Agencies): World number one Iga Swiatek eased through to the quarter-finals at Indian Wells with a straight sets win over Kazakhstan's Yulia Putintseva. Poland's Swiatek needed one hour and 12 minutes to seal a 6-1 6-2 win. The 22-year-old will next play former world number one Caroline Wozniacki, who beat Angelique Kerber 6-4 6-2. For Wozniacki, who came out of retirement last year, it will be a first WTA 1,000 quarter-final since 2019. Wozniacki retired in January 2020 but returned last August after giving

birth to her two children. "I don't take anything for granted," said the 33-year-old Dane. "I took a long time off, more than three and a half years - for me to be back here on this court and playing against the best players in the world is a special feeling. "I'm just enjoying myself and I'm just thrilled that I get another match in front of all of you guys." Wozniacki added that she will have to play her "best tennis to compete" with Swiatek. "I think I have obviously commented some of her matches," she said. "I know how she's playing. Obviously she's playing good tennis, play-

ing powerfully. "I practised with her as well a few times after I have come back, during the US Open as well. I know how she plays, but it's one thing knowing how she plays and also playing against her in a full match." Also in California, 16th seed Elina Svitolina lost 6-1 4-6 6-3 to American Emma Navarro, while her Ukrainian compatriot Marta Kostyuk reached the last eight with a 6-4 6-1 over Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova. Kostyuk will face Russia's Anastasia Potapova, who beat Italian 13th seed Jasmine Paolini 7-5 0-6 6-3.

Alcaraz marches on in Indian Wells title defence

INDIAN WELLS (Agencies): Carlos Alcaraz clinched a straight-set victory over Fabian Marozsan to reach the quarter-finals and continue his title defence at Indian Wells. The Spaniard needed 75 minutes to wrap up a 6-3 6-3 win against the Hungarian. World number two Alcaraz is bidding to become the first player to defend the title since Novak Djokovic in 2016. He will face Alexander Zverev in the last eight after the German sixth seed recovered from a slow start to beat Australia's Alex de Minaur 5-7 6-2 6-3. After taking the first set, 10th seed De Minaur broke serve in the first of the second set. However, Zverev immediately broke back and did not lose serve for the rest of the match, converting five of his seven break opportunities and saving eight of 11 break points faced. "I don't remember having a better match in wind than I did today," Zverev said. "When you're down a set and a break, you have to figure it out if you're going to continue, or you're going to be off the court in 20 minutes. I had to play differently from both sides, and I managed it well today." Also in California, Greek 11th seed Stefanos Tsitsipas fell to a surprise 6-2 6-4 defeat by Jiri Lehecka. The Czech 32nd seed won his

first ATP title in January by beating Britain's Jack Draper in the final of the Adelaide International. Lehecka will play Jannik Sinner in the quarter-finals after the Italian third seed beat American Ben Shelton 7-6 (7-4) 6-1. Sinner has won 18 successive matches stretching back to last season and is chasing a third tournament victory of 2024 after lifting the Australian Open and Rotterdam Open titles. Two-time major winner Alcaraz said he was "nervous" before his meeting with Marozsan, having lost to the world number 58 in straight sets at last year's Italian Open. "I was nervous before, I'm not going to lie. Playing against someone who beat you easily, I remembered I had no chances to win the game in Rome so it was difficult for me," he said. "Today I knew what I had to do better than I did in Rome." Alcaraz broke twice in the opening set and claimed the decisive break in the sixth game of the second to seal his place in the last eight for a third consecutive year at Indian Wells. The 20-year-old added: "I did a few mistakes that I didn't want to make so that's what I want to be better. I want to serve better. It doesn't mean today I served bad but I want to keep improving and putting good tennis on the court."

Match officials for playoffs, final announced

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board has announced umpire and match referee appointments for the HBL PSL 9 three playoffs and the final, to be played from March 14 to 18 March at the National Bank Stadium, Karachi. The March 14 Qualifier involving table-toppers Multan Sultans and Peshawar Zalmi would be refereed by Roshan Mahanama. Aleem Dar and Richard Illingworth will be the on-field umpires, while Rashid Riaz and Faisal Afridi will be the third and fourth umpires, respectively. Match Referee Muhammad Javed would lead the playing control team for the 15 March Eliminator 1 between Islamabad United and Quetta Gladiators. Ahsan Raza and Chris Gaffaney would be the on-field umpires, while Asif Yaqoob and Rashid Riaz will be the third and fourth umpires, respectively. The March 16 Eliminator 2 featuring the loser of the March 14 match and the winner of the March 15 fixture would be refereed by Muhammad Javed. Richard Illingworth and Asif Yaqoob would perform on-field umpire responsibilities, while Ahsan Raza and Faisal Afridi will be the third and fourth umpires, respectively.

Russia rules out Paris Olympic Games boycott

MOSCOW (Agencies): Russia's sports minister on Wednesday said Moscow would not boycott the upcoming Paris Olympics despite the severe restrictions on its athletes over the Kremlin's offensive in Ukraine. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) in December suspended Russia from the 2024 Games, but gave the green light for Russian athletes to compete as neutrals as long as they do not actively support the Ukraine campaign. "We should not turn away, close ourselves off, boycott this movement," Sports Minister Oleg Matytsin said according to the state-run TASS news agency. "We should as much as possible keep the possibility of dialogue and take part in competitions," he added. Matytsin is not holding his breath for a softening in the IOC's stance when its executive commission

meets next week. "We will see what the final decision of the International Olympic Committee will be (...) but so far the position is that there will be no new recommendations and regulations," he ventured. The IOC has always presented its decision as final, but still has to rule on the presence of Russian or Belarusian athletes at the opening ceremony. They have already been banned from attending the opening ceremony of the Paralympics on August 28. Until Matytsin's intervention it had been unclear whether Russia would recommend its athletes to go to Paris anyway. Russia had slammed the IOC suspension for the July 26-August 11 Olympics but failed in an appeal to get it overturned last month at the Court of Arbitration for Sport. Matytsin said Moscow could not give "general recommendations" to all of

its athletes because "each international federation has different approaches". "Some completely ban taking part (like World Athletics), some leave the right to take part in a neutral status," he said. He said despite the ban, the Olympic Games remains important to the country. "For athletes and our society it is very important to keep the dialogue and give our guys a possibility in a just fight to show what a great sporting country we are," he said. Russia has previously attacked the restrictions as humiliation" and "discrimination" but stopped short of telling the country's sportsmen if they should go to Paris. Russian President Vladimir Putin has held off giving his advice on their participation this summer. "To go or not to go?... The conditions must be closely analysed," Putin said in December when

only eight Russians and three Belarusian athletes met the IOC's criteria. In December, the IOC announced unprecedented restrictions on athletes from Russia and its ally Belarus hoping to compete in Paris. Not only must they take part as neutrals, they must also not "actively support the war" nor be "contracted to the Russian or Belarusian military or national security agencies". The IOC also outlawed any display of the two countries' flags and anthems at the 2024 Games. And no Russian or Belarusian government or state officials are being invited to the quadrennial sporting feast. Even before Moscow's offensive in Ukraine with Belarus's support in February, 2022, Russia's participation in the Olympic movement was limited due to a series of state-sponsored doping scandals, denied by the Kremlin.



In brief

Supply of essential items

RAWALPINDI (APP): Additional Commissioner Coordination (ACC), Syed Nazarat Ali on Wednesday asked the business community to increase the supply of essential items to bring down the prices. He said this while chairing a meeting with trade bodies of the city here at Commissioner office. Nazarat urged the traders to ensure the maximum supply of four items in particular including Onion, potato, banana and tomatoes for at least one week and identify those wholesalers who could provide these items at Ramzan Bazaar and Agriculture fair price shops at low cost. Syed Nazarat Ali said that the administration and trader's joint efforts were needed to provide relief to the people during the holy month. He added that the legitimate profit it was the right of the seller, however strict action would be taken against hoarders who create artificial price hikes. On the occasion the additional commissioner was briefed that during the last 24 hours, the district administration raided 2,773 outlets and imposed a fine of Rs 300,000 on 140 violations while 31 violators were also arrested. Director Agriculture Shahid Bukhari, ADCG Mujahid Abbas, Chaudhry Muhammad Jabbar Special Magistrate, representatives of trade bodies were also present.

Environmental challenges

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) on Wednesday said that environmental challenges can be effectively addressed through green financing. While talking to the Director General of the Environment Department, Punjab, Imran Hameed in a Zoom meeting, Saqib Rafiq informed that RCCI was the first Chamber in Pakistan who adopt the Green Building concept and implement the Green Initiatives at Chamber. He urged the government to make it possible for the business community to obtain soft terms and interest-free loans from banks for the installation of solar systems in offices and industries. He added that RCCI was the first ever Green Chamber in Pakistan by installing Rainwater Harvesting and Recharge Systems and Solar Panels at chamber buildings aiming to promote green culture in the community. Saqib Rafiq said that as cities grow and the demand for energy increases due to the expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and large-scale industries, solar is an important source of clean and green energy supply.

RCH registered as filter clinic

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Localized Hepatitis Elimination and Prevention Programme (LHEAP) Dr Ansar Ishaq on Wednesday said that the Punjab government had registered the Red Crescent Hospital (RCH) Rawalpindi as urban Hepatitis Filter Clinic. He told APP that free of cost check-up, screening and treatment facilities would be provided to the people at the RCH filter clinic. Meanwhile, he informed that around 36,847 persons had been screened for Hepatitis B and C so far during the second phase of the LHEAP drive started on July 10, 2023. He said that initially the project was launched in four union councils of the Rawalpindi city which was later extended to nine union councils of the district including UCs 6, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 32, 33 and 116.



ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of Faisal Mosque during rain in the Federal Capital.

45,000 deserving people provided Ramazan Negahban package

RAWALPINDI (APP): Ramazan Negahban Package Committee Chairman, Bilal Yameen Satti here on Wednesday said that over 45,000 deserving people had been provided Ramazan Negahban Package in Rawalpindi district. Addressing a press conference, he informed that the district administration Rawalpindi had been provided data lists of 164,000 eligible households by Benazir Income Support Program and NADRA, out of which, the data of 115,000 households was

found to be correct.

The second session of Ramazan Negahban Package is being held today, he said adding that a new database system was being created under the direction of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz. Maryam Nawaz had taken oath as Chief Minister on March 6 and instructed the administration and political leaders of the party to work day and night to provide relief to the citizens. Bilal Yameen Satti further informed that the deficiencies of Rawalpindi Waste Management

Company would also be rectified. The cleanliness work under Punjab Suthra project was also going on and no negligence would be tolerated in this regard, he said. A new database system would be developed in 90 days, he said and informed that 150,000 deserving persons had been verified in first seven days of the Punjab government. He informed that there were many deserving people who were not registered with Benazir Income Support Program or NADRA, they could not be provided the package.

290,000 youth to be trained for climate action curriculum

ISLAMABAD (APP): As many as 290,000 youth from universities and communities will be trained for the Climate Action curriculum jointly started by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and British Council Pakistan. According to the sources, among them, 60,000 young individuals will undergo specialized training under the Prime Minister's Green Youth Movement.

In that regard, the British Council of Pakistan in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission

(HEC) has the Pakistan Youth Leadership Initiative (PYLI) and Digital Learning Portal to support the Green Youth Movement (GYM) project. PYLI, an integral component of the GYM project supported by the British Council, aims to empower young women and men across Pakistan with the necessary skills and knowledge to combat climate action. Through this initiative, the British Council will oversee the execution of capacity-building programmes. These trained youth will then take their

knowledge and skills back to their communities, spearheading Youth Led Climate Actions (YLAs), engaging in policy dialogue and advocacy, participating in national and international climate events, and showcasing their successful projects. The sources from HEC said that HEC's commitment to youth development and climate action under the Prime Minister's Youth Programme, highlighting the significance of initiatives like PYLI in fostering leadership and addressing climate-related challenges.

Legal Commission on Blasphemy to mark March 15 as 'Youm-e-Tahafuz-Namoos-e-Risalat'

ISLAMABAD (APP): To prevent the spread of blasphemy content on social media and raise awareness about it, a non-governmental organization 'Legal Commission on Blasphemy Pakistan' has announced to observe "Youm-e-Tahafuz-Namoos-e-Rasalat" on March 15.

The commission has appealed to the public to participate in this awareness campaign actively.

According to a statement issued by the commission, there has been an increase in the spread of blasphemous content by some malicious elements on various social media platforms. Also, an increase in sharing of such content in specific groups on various websites has been reported.

In this regard, the commission said, educational institutions, mosque imams, intelligentsia, lawyers, media representatives, social media activists, and religious, and political leaders can play an important role to sensitize the masses about the negative impacts of blasphemous content on social media.

To control this phenomenon, the commission urged that all sections of society including governmental and non-governmental organizations, must play their part.

The statement mentioned that Anti-Blasphemy Cells had been established in FIA cybercrime stations where complainants could lodge their complaints, and assistance could also be sought

from the Legal Commission Against Blasphemy issue. The FIA has arrested multiple individuals involved in blasphemy and cybercrimes related to this matter. The individuals engaged in profanity, whether through apps, sharing profane content on websites, or using VPNs, will be traced through cybercrime technology and dealt with according to the law of the land. If anyone encounters any obstacles or difficulties, they can file a complaint with the FIA for legal action at 111345786-051.

Additionally, to block blasphemous content, the public can approach the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority's (PTA) platform at <https://complaint.pta.gov.pk>.

ANF recovers 451 kg drugs in 11 operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in its crackdown against drug trafficking conducted 11 operations across the country and managed to recover 451 kg drugs and arrested 17 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that 5.2 kg Ice was recovered from a parcel booked for Japan at a courier office in Lahore. 450 grams ice was recovered from the possession of a passenger going to Doha at Multan Airport. 66 grams weed was recovered from a parcel booked for the UK at a courier office in Rawalpindi. 220 kg hashish was recovered from Rughni Road, Chaman while 195.6 kg

opium was recovered from the possession of four suspects including a woman netted from Shalimar Town Lahore. 15.6 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of four accused rounded up in two operations near Turki Toll Plaza Sohawa. The spokesman informed that 7 kg hashish was recovered from an accused arrested near Islamabad Toll Plaza. 6 suspects were arrested in Kasur, from whom 5 kg heroin and a drone were recovered while 2.4 kg hashish was recovered from an accused arrested from Murree Road Rawalpindi. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

DG CAA to hold E-Kacheri

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Flt Lt (R) Khaqan Murtaza on the directions of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will hold an E-Kacheri to resolve issues of passengers at airports in Pakistan. DG Khaqan Murtaza will be available online on Thursday from 10:30 am to address the complaints of passengers. According to the statement, this virtual event will be streamed live on the Facebook page of the Civil Aviation Authority. Participants who wish to raise complaints during the E-Kacheri were asked to provide their name, mobile number, email address, and the name of the airport in the comment section. It is encouraged to include as much detail as possible regarding the complaint. Alternatively, complaints can be sent via email to pmdu@caapak-istan.com.pk, accompanied by any supporting documents for proper resolution.

IFA committed to ensure safe, quality of food

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Director Operations of the Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) Dr Tahira Siddique on Wednesday said that the authority has made significant strides in ensuring the safety and quality of food for the citizens of the capital in the last year. Talking to APP, she said that the IFA organized 12 seminars aimed at enlightening citizens about the significance of consuming healthy food in last year, recognizing the importance of awareness and education. These seminars served as a platform to engage with the community and disseminate crucial information regarding food safety practices.

Meanwhile, the authority prioritized the training of its staff, conducting three comprehensive sessions to enhance their capabilities in enforcing food safety regulations effectively. This investment in staff development reflected the IFA's commitment to fostering a competent workforce dedicated to upholding food safety standards, she added. Furthermore, IFA conducted nearly 16,000 raids, over 5,500 notices issued, and numerous awareness seminars conducted, to promote healthy food practices and cracking down on substandard food establishments.

Interior minister visits FIA HQs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister of Interior and Anti-Narcotics Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday vowed to crack-down on corruption and improve the agency's efficiency. He was addressing officer after reaching Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Headquarters where he was welcomed by Director General (DG) FIA.

He said corruption will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Corruption is the evil of our society, there will be zero tolerance on it.

He said that FIA is a very important institution of national security and safety, it has to be upgraded and brought to international standards.

The minister directed, pending promotion cases should be disposed of within thirty days, to encourage officers.

He said like promotion were given in every department in Punjab, In the same way, promotions should be given to eligible employees in FIA.

The efficiency of the institution will be proved when the big fish are caught, said the interior minister adding that through effective measures, the scourge of fake medicines will also have to be eradicated from the country.

Naqvi urged the FIA to play a more active role in preventing power theft and human trafficking.

He sought a comprehensive report on the Greece boat capsizing.

The performance of the officers posted in different countries should also be reviewed, he said. A comprehensive plan should be formulated to stop the smuggling of dollars getting out of the country, the minister directed the officials. Hundi & Hawala businesses will

also have to be addressed with effective measures and entry and exit from the country on fake documents should also be stopped, Naqvi said. Good work has been done with respect to Interpol, it can also be improved, he said adding that it is also very important to enhance the efficiency of the officers and align them with the modern requirements through training. The condition of police stations will also have to be improved, the minister said adding that all resources should be utilized to improve public service delivery.

Mohsin Naqvi visits Ministry of Narcotics Control: Federal Minister of Interior and Anti-Narcotics Mohsin Naqvi visited the Ministry of Anti-Narcotics on Wednesday. On his visit, he announced not to use his office in the Ministry of Anti-Narcotics saying office in the ministry of interior is enough for him because offices in two ministries are a waste of resources.

He ordered to post his personal staff in the ministry of narcotics control in another department. The staff of my office in the Ministry of Anti-Narcotics should be posted in another department. The manpower of the Minister's Office should be used in other necessary places in the Ministry, said Mohsin Naqvi.

Federal Minister of Interior and Anti-Narcotics Mohsin Naqvi was given a special briefing regarding the affairs of the Ministry.

The minister said that drug eradication is the need of the hour to secure the future of future generations and for this purpose the government will use all resources to get rid of the scourge of drugs.

NDMA announces Prize Competitions for Pak Int'l Expo

ISLAMABAD (APP): As part of Pakistan's International Expo on Disaster Risk Reduction (PEDRR) 2024, NDMA announces a series of prize competitions open to students nationwide and will feature categories in painting, photography and disaster-resilient model creation. The themes for the competitions are designed to reflect Pakistan's resilience in the face of natural disasters, the impact of climate change, human-induced disasters, disaster risk reduction strategies, and the role of technology and innovation in preparedness, a news release

said. The top three participants in each category will be awarded substantial cash prizes of PKR 100,000, PKR 75,000, and PKR 50,000 respectively. The deadline for project submissions is March 25, 2024. Eligible participants must be at least 18 years of age and enrolled in an educational institution. For more details, please visit the NDMA's social media platforms. PEDRR 2024, a first-of-its-kind event, is set to take place from April 23 to 25, 2024, at the Pak China Friendship Center, Islamabad. The expo will host delegates from 44 countries, including members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and NDMA's partner nations. The expo is expected to be a convergence of international and bilateral partners, high-level dignitaries, government officials, policymakers, experts, emergency responders, global academia, and think tanks. It will showcase a variety of capacity displays, seminars, group discussions, ignite sessions, and global simulation exercises, fostering a collaborative environment for innovation in disaster risk reduction.

Parents' awareness helpful to control harmful effects of e-cigarettes, vape pens use

ISLAMABAD (APP): Health expert Wednesday while expressing his serious concern over the new trend of electronic nicotine delivery systems like e-cigarettes or vape pens' harmful effects on youngsters' health stressed parents' major role for helping children' as every year around 7 million people die an early death due to smoking.

Talking to PTV news channel, a renowned Consultant, Anti Drugs/Narcotics Campaign Syed Zulfiqar Hussain remains extremely troubled about the rapid increase in the number of youth using these products, and have repeatedly called upon the authorities concerned to increase their oversight and scrutiny in this regard.

He stressed that the students should protect themselves and contribute to saving their surroundings from the curse of drugs. Parents and teachers are encouraged to collaborate in preventing youth from falling victim to drugs, he said, adding, the younger generation is not paying heed to anti-smoking and anti-drug campaigns. He explained that many harmful chemicals, including nicotine, were being used in the composition of this harmful e-cigarette which was toxic to humans and could cause health issues. "Vaping definitely is a very big issue, and it is problem at secondary schools nationwide and statewide," he added.

He said children with a nicotine dependency may have difficulties concentrating in class, difficulty sleeping, anxiety, irritability, restlessness, frustration, anger and strong cravings to relieve symptoms with repeat nicotine exposure. "Academics and policymakers must gather data and should conduct research to show a causal relationship between e-cigarette experimentation by the youth and later tobacco addiction in the context of Pakistan," he demanded. "There is not much awareness of teachers and Parents where we need for a massive campaign against e-cigarettes like the campaign against sheesha and vape pen use", he added. We have decided to involve the civil society in order to raise awareness," he added. Replying a question, he said chemicals in vaping fluid also can cause acute lung injuries and contribute to lung and cardiovascular disease down the line. He added more rigorous anti-tobacco campaigns that focused on tobacco cigarettes and on the rising trend of e-cigarettes among youth to create awareness about the harmful effects of smoking.



RAWALPINDI: Madrasa Students reciting Quran e Pak during Holy Fasting Month of Ramadan at Jamia Masjid Qazi Nizamuddin near Bani Chowk.

Over 400 people rescued

KABUL (BNA): Around 400 people who were stranded due to flash floods on the Herat-Islam Qala highway have been rescued. The rescue operation was carried out by Al-Farooq Army Corps and the flood survivors were transferred to secure locations. The Ministry of National Defense continues to state, with the ongoing rainfall in the country, its teams are prepared for emergency operations to rescue those affected by natural disasters.

Afghan athlete, Farzad Mansouri wins Bronze at Paris Olympics
PARIS (Khaama Press): Farzad Mansouri, a former Afghan taekwondo athlete, secured a bronze medal in the Tokyo 2024 Olympic Games quota competition with three wins and one loss.
The World Taekwondo Federation announced that Mansouri secured the Paris Olympics quota by defeating opponents from Serbia, Austria, and Bosnia, with a loss to a Danish rival.

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

Operation starts to eradicate drugs

KANDAHAR CITY (TOLOnews): To combat drugs, a house-to-house operation has begun in the Daman district of Kandahar province. According to the officials, after the ban on drug cultivation, some farmers have secretly cultivated drugs in their houses. The Afghan counter-narcotics forces in a campaign have destroyed the crops of farmers who had secretly cultivated in the Daman district of this province. "Security forces are searching house to house, of course with people's permission, and they destroy any opium they find," said Qari Burhan, the head of

counter-narcotics operations in Daman. "This is the seventh location where we have destroyed poppy cultivation in one and a half acres of land," said Ahmad Omar, a counter-narcotics officer. "In these four days, we patrolled in the Daman district and destroyed the poppy fields that were cultivated in homes," said Shah Faisal, another counter-narcotics officer. A number of Kandahar residents urged officials to seriously combat the cultivation, production, and smuggling of drugs. "You know, and I know

that drug use harms individuals, and those in our country who have become addicted are so because of its cultivation. If it is eradicated, that would be very good," said Abdul Malik, a Kandahar resident. "It is very good to stop the youth from getting intoxicated," said Jamaluddin, another resident. According to information from the Kandahar security command, since the beginning of this year, they have cleared 648 acres of land from poppy cultivation and more than 57 acres of land from marijuana cultivation in the center and districts of this province.

Afghan trade deficit widens

KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Bank says Afghanistan's exports dropped 5% to \$140.5 million from last January. According to this World Bank report, recently published under the title "Afghanistan Economic Update," the country's exports were \$148.1 million in January of the previous year. However, the World Bank report states that Afghanistan's imports have increased by 37% compared to January last year, rising from \$600 million in January of the previous year to \$830 million in January 2024, thereby increasing the trade deficit. The World Bank has estimated Afghanistan's annual imports at a total of \$5.5 billion, which, according to the bank, indicates a trade deficit of \$3.5 billion.

The World Bank says Afghanistan faces an economic recession due to reduced economic activity and ongoing inflation. In its report, the bank stated that the annual inflation rate in the country reached -10.2% in January of this year. The report from the World Bank indicates that this inflation resulted from a sudden decrease in the price of food items (-15.1%) and non-food items (-4.8%). The World Bank added that while the decrease in the price of goods might provide short-term relief for financially vulnerable families, according to the bank, this situation could lead to significant economic damage.

The World Bank report states that long-term inflation could delay consumer purchases, reduce merchants' investments, and halt economic growth. The bank further reminded in its report that the value of the Afghan currency had been maintained against foreign currencies over the past 18 months but had depreciated in January this year, including against the dollar and most other foreign currencies. The World Bank also added that revenue collection in Afghanistan was also 2% less than the set target, totaling 189 billion Afghanis in the fiscal eleven months (March 2023 – February 2024).

The interim government of Afghanistan has not yet reacted to this World Bank report, but economic sector officials always consider maintaining the value of the Afghan currency against foreign currencies and collecting revenues as among their achievements. However, Afghanistan is facing a dire humanitarian crisis. The country's healthcare system is on the brink of collapse, with a significant shortage of medical supplies and healthcare professionals.

Uzbekistan to invest in coal extraction, electricity production and cement



KABUL (Khaama News): The Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan stated in a meeting with the Acting Prime Minister that his country intends to invest in establishing a cement factory, coal extraction, and producing 200 megawatts of electricity from coal in Afghanistan. The office of the Acting Prime Minister announced that Bakhtiyar Sahidov, the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan and his country's special representative for Afghanistan affairs, met with Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund on Tuesday.

The statement said that the Uzbek Foreign Minister expressed his country's desire to share its experiences in adapting economic and agricultural projects with Afghanistan. Sahidov also said that a technical delegation from Uzbekistan

will soon travel to Afghanistan to assess the Afghanistan-Trans railway project. Mullah Hasan Akhund, said that Kabul is cooperating to align Uzbekistan's projects in Afghanistan. He instructed relevant departments and officials to coordinate and fully cooperate with Uzbekistan in implementing these projects. Meanwhile, during his visit to Kabul, Bakhtiyar

Sahidov, the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, also had separate meetings with other officials in Kabul, including Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Deputy Economic Minister of the Acting Prime Minister, Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Administrative Deputy of the Prime Minister's Office, and Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Taliban.

Haqqai meets with Uzbekistan's minister



KABUL (Ariana News): The Ministry of Interior says Sirajuddin Haqqani, acting minister of interior, met with the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan Bakhtiyar Saidov for talks on various issues including security. Both sides discussed bilateral relations, common cultural and historical issues and economic projects. Saidov expressed his satisfaction with the efforts of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in ensuring the security of the country, the fight against drugs and the stability of the region. Haqqani assured Saidov that security has been provided and called for the start of economic projects that are important for the

stability of the region. Before meeting with Haqqani, Saidov met with the Islamic Emirate's Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund. Saidov said in this meeting that his country will never leave Afghanistan alone, but wants to expand relations with Afghanistan. He also said his country wants to invest in Afghanistan by establishing a cement factory, coal mines and a project to produce 200 megawatts of electricity from coal. Referring to the Trans-Afghan railway, he added that in the near future, the professional and expert team of Uzbekistan will travel to Afghanistan for the technical review of this

project. Akhund emphasized the need to strengthen all-round relations between the two countries. He also assured the Uzbek side that the necessary guidance will be given to the relevant departments and officials in terms of implementing projects. Saidov and his delegation also met with Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the economic deputy prime minister. In a newsletter, Baradar's office quoted Saidov as saying that Tashkent will in the near future accept credentials of a new ambassador of the Islamic Emirate to Uzbekistan. The Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan also said while in Kabul that his country is ready to cooperate with the Islamic Emirate on technical aspects of the Qosh Tepa Canal. According to the newsletter, Baradar emphasized that Afghanistan and Uzbekistan have common interests in various sectors and solid ground has been provided to achieve these interests.

200 schools have no buildings in Baghlan

P U L - I - K H U M R I (Pajhwok): The Afghan Education Department officials in northern Baghlan province say more than 200 out of 570 schools in the province have no buildings and their students face serious problems. Education director Maulvi Mohammad Noor Azizi told Pajhwok Afghan News 209 schools had no buildings and more than 51,000 students attended classes under the open sky. He said this year surrounding walls were constructed for 63 schools and classrooms for 9,476 students in some schools. He did not say when the problem of lack school buildings will be solved. He said some schools had been provided tents and they were striving to solve all problems crippling the education process. Mohammad Rasoul, a local representative in Akakhel area of Pul-i-Khumri, said they had no school in their area and their children were deprived of education. He said they had frequently asked the previous government to build a school building in their area, but their demand remained unfulfilled. He urged the Islamic Emirate Afghanistan (IEA) to build schools for hundreds of children deprived of education in Akakhel village. Meanwhile, Karimdad, a resident of Khush Dara village in Khost district, said there was a high school in Hazarabai area, five kilometers away from their village, but it did not have a building.

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KABUL (Pajhwok): Physicians have warned against the use of some homemade traditional ear infection treatment methods such as dripping oil or breast milk in the newborn baby's ear and urged people to refer patients to the doctor for proper treatment. **Homemade remedies** Ear infection is more common in newborn babies compared to elder people and in some families, homemade methods of ear infection treatment such as dripping two drops of breast milk, onion juice, oil, smashed garlic mixed with oil and others are applied. Feroza Mohammad, a resident of Kabul City's Taimani locality and the mother of two children, told Pajhwok Afghan News in their family ear infection of a newborn baby is treated through homemade remedy. She said: "When my baby complains about ear pain my mother-in-law says that I should drip two drops of breast milk in the baby's ear, if I don't do this they get angry with me."

Palwasha, not a real name, is another mother from Nimroz province and she said: "My first baby suffered a lot from an ear infection, when the baby shook his head my mother-in-law said that it was due to ear pain, she said that breast milk is the treatment for thousands of infections and order me to pour my breast milk in the baby's ear, I did this two time but had no benefit." She said that not only her mother-in-law but her mother used homemade remedies for the treatment of ear infections. She said: "My mother says pour two drops of water on the opium, rub it and put two drops of the black water in the baby's ear and rub the back sides of the ears and it will calm down, I applied this remedy two times but proved ineffective and finally we have to go to the doctor."

Kalsoum, a resident of Shibberghan, the capital city of Jawzjan province, said: "My first child had a lot of earaches, he trembled his head a lot and could not rest, my mother-in-law and grand-mother-in-law applied a homemade remedy, they first warmed oil and pour it in the baby's ear, when it didn't get better, they put two drops of my breast milk in his ear, but it didn't help, and I had to take him to the doctor." Ayesha, the resident of Ferozkoh, the capital city of Ghor province, said not only in her house but in most houses in the province homemade remedies were used to treat ear infections. She said besides dripping breast milk people also used onion juice or oil to treat ear infections of

babies, sometimes it works but sometimes it has no benefit. Some internet websites also published some traditional methods of ear infection treatment. One of the internet pages published a topic titled 'Homemade traditional treatment of ear infection' which said: "Using a few drops of olive oil can help treat earache, just put two drops of olive oil in the child's ear, make sure to warm the oil a little... then wipe off the excess oil with a cotton swab, olive oil drains the ear infection." It maintained: "The combination of garlic and sesame oil is also useful for ear infection, smash the garlic and mixed it with sesame oil and heat it, filter it and put 2 drops of oil in the ear."

Fact Check: Dr. Mohammad Sharif Sailani, an otolaryngologist at Andria Ghandi Children Hospital in Kabul, said that self-medication could cause eardrum perforation in children. He said that ear infections are more common in children compared to elders. Dr. Sailani said that whenever a child suffers from flu or sore throat the first affected organ is the child's ears. He said Cough, sore throat, green diarrhea, shaking the head, crying a lot, not taking breast milk,

insomnia, mild and moderate fever are among the symptoms of ear infection. Dr. Sailani said: "Never try some customs that are popular in the villages and towns of our country, for example, there are some families who put a few drops of milk in the child's ear, onion juice, we even have cases where some poisonous substances such as mercury are put in the ear, these things do not help the child's earache, on the contrary, they cause eardrum perforation." He advised the families that if they see the initial symptoms of an ear infection in a child, they should take him to the clinic for check-up by a specialist. Dr. Mohammad Dawoud Yaquobi, an otolaryngologist at the French Medical Institute for Children, said: "In our country, arbitrary treatments and traditional treatments are mostly used, such as pouring Naswar, oil, breast milk, garlic and onion juice into children's ears, and even hanging garlic in children's ears, which caused the development of secondary infections." He added: "We removed Naswar from the ears of some patients, and most of the patients who visited us had used butter oil and drops of oil, which did not give any relief to the child, on the contrary, it also caused the eardrum to tear."

Afghan university teacher makes economic strategy

KABUL (Pajhwok): An Afghan teacher at California University hailed current economic efforts in Afghanistan and suggested a bailout strategy for the economic revival of Afghanistan when the situation deteriorated from inflation to deflation. Ustad Mohammad Alam Ahmadzai during an exclusive interview with Pajhwok Afghan News defined a bailout a strategy in which the state offers financial cooperation, prints banknotes and provides it to companies, producers and banks to work resulting in the overall economic development of the country. He said during the past regime there was emphasis on open market economy but he was against it because adaptation to an open economy needed a transition period and in the current circumstances, it was not suitable for Afghanistan. Ustad Ahmadzai said if the economic system of the US is observed it shows that this country also embraced open market economy gradually. He said currently, there

was a mixed economic system functional in Afghanistan because the government also interfered in the market. He said: "Currently, the economy is driven by internal revenue, although there are problems, but in any case, the work being done is admirable, the good news is that there is more trust and honesty, therefore, the money is collected and spent well. In the previous era, there was income but there was corruption and we could not collect money in a proper way, and spend it on the reconstruction and reconstruction of Afghanistan, this current situation is not good for the future we call it economic contraction because the pressure on the economy is high and the economy is shrinking, while we need to grow our economy, expand domestic production and have a visionary plan, we cannot achieve self-sufficiency in this economy, those who are policymakers, I hope they will try to get out of this situation and go to a better situation so that Afghanistan could have stable future and the Islamic Emirate also

achieve its economic goal." He recommended that Afghanistan should have a mixed market economic system at the moment because the private sector is not stable. Ustad Ahmadzai said: "We cannot use American and European economic plans in Afghanistan, Afghanistan is a separate country, therefore, it is useful for us to have some government intervention in the market, because we cannot move the economic wheel forward without the government, measures recently taken such as the revival of government enterprises and the allocation of budget for them were positive, but it should not be for a long-term and again we come to the point that embracing open market economy needed time." Referring to the economic situation in the previous regime, he said: "First, we should have ended mixed and uncertain situation, then we should have gradually made the laws, now we should have entered the free market, the decision made at that time did not have a fruitful outcome, another point is that corrup-



tion made a lot of damage and corruption is found where there are no laws, it turns free market a thief market, oil and gas mafias were incited, it was because there were no laws at that time, like many settlements were built, the money is lost, in other countries where the settlement is built, the money goes to the government account, then it is gradually paid, but in Afghanistan this law was not known, there was mafia and corruption, there was no will also therefore Afghanistan remained poor." He said he has made an economic strategy or the economic system of Afghanistan. "As I told you before, Afghanistan is in a state of contraction or under pres-



sure and this should not last for a long time and this situation should end. There is a term called bail out and it should be put into work. A country can never progress under many impositions such as restrictions on the banking sector, private sector, production, but still, I congratulate the government for its many achievements. People don't have savings; they earn only to avoid starvation. This is the best situation; we have gone from inflation to deflation. In the current situation it is useful for the government to [bail out], it should print money, provide it to companies, manufacturers, banks and institutions for work and investment," Ahmadzai added. Bailout: A bailout is the injection of money into a

business or organization that would otherwise face imminent collapse. Bailouts typically go to companies or industries which directly impact the strength of the overall economy, rather than just one particular sector or industry, according to investopedia. According to him, the bailout is for when the economy is under pressure, the private sector lacks money and the economic cycle is moving very slowly, then it is fruitful for the government to print money and devise a plan. He says currently thousands of young people are leaving the country due to unemployment and this phenomenon will be addressed if the private sector is strengthened and supported financially. About the print of new banknotes and inflation, Ahmadzai says: "Yes, now we are moving from inflation to deflation, and we have about a 15 percent chance. According to reports, our own economy's annual production is 15 billion, 15 percent of the annual amount of money that we print and inject into

the market. It will not have a negative impact. Inflation may rise by five percent, but 10 percent will be better than in the previous situation. But with this, the government should also have another program to find a way back, like in America, when one dollar leaves the bank, it circulates 100 times and goes back to the central bank." Unfortunately, in Afghanistan, it circulates five or eight times. People remain poor because of this. At that time, I also gave a plan to [former president] Ashraf Ghani, so that we can collect five billion per month from the market, and return it to the reconstruction projects. Let's invest, so let's separate it on that basis, so that such money goes to people and companies." He said that the bailout is also very beneficial to the common people, because the same people visit the companies, work there and earn money. Ahmadzai says that the government should make a regular plan to separate it in consultation with the private sector and with the cooperation of technical people and work on laws in

this area. He said that now a portion of the money of the Islamic Emirate goes to the poor people, thousands of people are registered with it, they pay cash, and with the bailout, the government's income is also increasing in addition to the development of economic activities. He says that in 2020 and 2021, the American economy has deteriorated greatly due to Covid-19, but the president at that time made a bailout, then the current president did, and as a result, the economy came to a standstill. Regarding whether he shared the bailout plan with the current Afghan government or not, Ahmadzai said: "No, I did not give this plan and I hope it reaches them through you." He adds that the government should pay attention to his plan, discuss it with professionals and implement it. According to him, with this, a good economic situation will come in Afghanistan soon, but if this does not happen in the next two years, Afghanistan may face inflation again.



RAWALPINDI: General Sheikh Mohammed Bin Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, Commander Bahrain National Guard, called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee.

Court moved against ban on meetings with PTI founder

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Sher Afzal Marwat today challenged the ban on meetings with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder in Adiala Jail. Marwat in his plea in Islamabad High Court (IHC) argued that the provincial home department has not been authorized to impose ban on meetings in jail, which it imposed yesterday.

He pleaded to the court to declare the ban order as void. He said that all parliamentarians will stage protest if the ban on meetings with the party's leader not lifted. The home department has imposed ban on meetings for two weeks the sources within the Punjab home department earlier said, while media coverage is also prohibited in front of Adiala Jail's gate no-5.

The security officers stated that media coverage has not been allowed and directed that the media teams should stay 2km away from the jail. It is to be noted that Tuesday and Thursday were reserved by Adiala Jail administration for the meetings with the PTI founder on the orders of the court, but now the meetings have been banned for two weeks. Last week, in a joint operation, Punjab Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and police foiled an alleged attempt to attack Adiala jail and arrested three suspects with explosives and the jail map.

KP IGP for fool-proof security steps

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan on Wednesday directed the top police officials to make fool-proof security arrangements to maintain peace and order in the holy month of Ramadan and prevent any untoward incident.

He issued these instructions in a special order from Central Police Office Peshawar to all Regional Police Officers and District Police Officers across the province. The police authorities have been asked to make their intelligence network more active, to keep a close watch on the activities of suspicious elements, banned outfits, and extremists to foil any terrorist incident.

The order further directed effectively monitoring of entry and exit routes and strict checking without causing inconvenience to the public besides making special security arrangements for all important installations, places of worship, markets, hospitals, petrol pumps, banks, financial institutions, railway stations, airports and other sensitive places.

The police chief directed all the SDPOs to be present on patrol during peak hours, especially during Iftar, to take better security measures and protect lives and property of the people at public and recreational places. He directed provision of meal for traffic police and other officials on duty to break their fast at the duty spot.

The IGP has also issued instructions to the police officials to take comprehensive action against those involved in street crimes, robberies, car lifting and other crimes. The police chief directed police personnel to take all safety measures including wearing helmets and bullet-proof jackets while on duty.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto case NA resolution demands overturning SC's verdict

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly passed a resolution Wednesday demanding the overturning of the death sentence given to Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, a former prime minister and founder of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). The demand was made in light of a recent Supreme Court's opinion which ruled that former prime Bhutto, who was hanged 44 years ago after being convicted of murder, didn't get a fair trial.

Bhutto was hanged in 1979 after a trial under the military regime of late General Zia-ul-Haq. "We didn't find that the fair trial and due process requirements were met," said incumbent Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa. The ruling came in response to a judicial reference filed by President Asif Ali Zardari, during his tenure as the head of state in 2011. It sought an opinion by the

top court on revisiting the death sentence awarded to the PPP founder.

All three provincial assemblies except the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa — where the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is in power — and the Senate have passed resolutions declaring Bhutto a national hero and martyr. The resolution, adopted by the National Assembly in today's session and moved by PPP's Shazia Marri, recognised the trial and subsequent conviction of Bhutto as a "gross miscarriage of justice".

"Salutes the struggles of Begum Nusrat Bhutto Sahiba, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and the Pakistan Peoples Party workers who sacrificed their lives to establish this truth," the resolution added. The NA also appreciated the determination of President Zardari who filed the presidential reference to reopen the case 12 years ago and PPP Chairman

Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, who "single mindedly pursued it".

The resolution lauded the Supreme Court of Pakistan for finally holding and accepting the glaring injustice meted out to Bhutto 44 years ago in its judgment. It mentioned that the proceedings of the trial by the Lahore High Court and of the appeal by the Supreme Court do not meet the requirements of the fundamental right to a fair trial and due process. It demanded that in light of this historic judgment, the unjust verdict given in the Bhutto case must be overturned.

Further demanded that the federal government officially declare Bhutto as a "shaheed" and "National Democratic Hero," and establish the "Nishan-e-Zulfikar Ali Bhutto" award for workers and activists who have fought and sacrificed their lives for true democracy in Pakistan.

KP CM holds meeting over law and order

E.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur Wednesday presided over the important meeting related to law and order here with all concerned authorities including Chief Secretary and Inspector General of Police attended.

The chief minister was briefed by the officials of the security forces on the overall law and order situation in the province with challenges, future action plans and other matters on behalf of the concerned authorities were also discussed.

The Chief Minister agreed to move to strengthen the police. The decision was taken to release a fund of three billion rupees for the purchase of armored vehicles, weapons and other modern equipment for the police.

Chief Minister's announcement to include the heirs of police martyrs in the Ramadan package. Chief Minister Ali Amin

Ghandapur said that Rs. 10,000 each will be given to the heirs of police martyrs under the Ramadan package of the provincial government.

Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has also taken big decisions for the children of police martyrs and directed the concerned authorities to fix a one-time quota for recruitment of children of all martyrs under Shahada Quota.

A case should be prepared for the approval of the Cabinet for this purpose, the Chief Minister directed the meeting. It is worth mentioning here that by setting a one-time quota, all the children of martyrs waiting for recruitment under the martyr quota will be able to be recruited simultaneously.

Children of police martyrs have been waiting for recruitment for many years due to the low quota of martyrs, the meeting was told. Work should be done to start the Safe City project

in all the divisional headquarters of the province, the Chief Minister directed.

The meeting also deliberated on issues related to the establishment of a security division within the police for the security of important personalities and installations. The instructions of the Chief Minister to the concerned authorities to formulate a workable policy regarding providing security to important persons. Law and order is top priority of the provincial government, the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur said. There will be no compromise on law and order, Ali Amin Gandapur said.

The police will be strengthened in all respects to enable them to better deal with the current situation, the Chief Minister said. For this purpose, the financial resources required by the police will be provided on a priority basis, Ali Amin Gandapur concluded.

Aid warehouse 'hit' in Gaza, wounding scores

GAZA STRIP (AFP): The United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees said one of its aid warehouses in the war-ravaged Gaza Strip was "hit" on Wednesday, wounding scores of people. "We can confirm that an UNRWA warehouse/distribution center in Rafah (southern Gaza) has been hit," agency spokeswoman Juliette Touma told AFP, adding there were "scores injured."

"We do not yet have more information on what exactly happened nor the number of UNRWA staff impacted," she said. "UNRWA uses this facility to distribute much-needed food and other lifesaving items to displaced people in southern Gaza."

The health ministry in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip said four people were killed in the "bombing of the warehouse." An AFP photographer saw victims of the incident arriving at Al-Najjar hospital in Rafah, at least one of whom was identified by other people at the hospital as a UN employee.

Wednesday's incident comes amid mounting concern about worsening humanitarian conditions in

Israeli strike on car in Lebanon kills Hamas member

DUBAI (AFP): An Israeli drone strike on a car outside the southern Lebanese city of Tyre on Wednesday killed a member of Hamas from the nearby Palestinian camp of Rashidieh, a source from the faction told Reuters. The source identified the member as Hadi Mustafa but said he was not a senior figure.

All three sources said the drone, which they identified as Israeli, hovered in the air above the site of the strike for several minutes after it was carried out. The official National News Agency reported that at least one person was killed and three others wounded in the Israeli strike. An AFP photographer saw rescue workers collecting human remains and the mangled wreck of a car engulfed by flames near the Palestinian refugee camp of Rashidiyeh, close to the coastal city of Tyre. Hamas, the Palestinian faction which carried out a deadly incursion into southern Israel from the Gaza Strip on Oct. 7, also has a political and military presence in Lebanon, largely based out of camps where Palestinian refugees have lived for decades.

Gaza, where Israel has carried out military operations since October intended to eliminate the Hamas militant group. The war was triggered by Hamas's unprecedented October 7 attack on southern Israel, which resulted in the deaths of about 1,160 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of Israeli official figures.

Israel's retaliatory military campaign in Gaza has killed at least 31,272 people,

mostly women in children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory. As of March 4, a total of 162 UNRWA employees had been killed since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war.

Gaza's dire food shortages after more than five months of war have resulted in 27 deaths from malnutrition and dehydration, most of them children, the ministry says.

Bahrain's Commander calls on CJCSC

E.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: H.R.H General Sheikh Mohammed Bin Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, Commander Bahrain National Guard, called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi.

Matters of bilateral professional interest and further strengthening of security and defence cooperation between the two countries were discussed during the meeting. Both sides reiterated the resolve to further strengthen security and defence cooperation between the two brotherly countries.

Earlier, upon arrival at Joint Staff Headquarters, a smartly turned-out tri-services contingent presented 'Guard of Honour' to the visiting dignitary.

4 dead bodies of fishermen found

E.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy and Maritime Securities search teams have found 4 more dead bodies of missing fishermen while the search of 2 others continued on Wednesday.

Earlier, Navy and Maritime Securities search teams found four dead bodies of missing sailors on yesterday. A total of 12 fishermen went missing when their boat capsized in Hijamaro Creek, area situated between Thatta and Badin few days back.

Rescue operation was started with the help of Pakistan Navy's fast boats and PMSA aircraft, helicopters. Dead bodies of four fishermen were found while search operation for 10 other fishermen still missing continued. According to officials, last week fishermen's boat capsized in Hijamaro Creek, area situated between Thatta and Badin. 31 sailors were rescued while 14 went missing during the sad incident.

Pakistan Navy, Sindh Fisheries and Fishermen's Cooperative Society were jointly searching for the missing fishermen. Officials announced financial help for the victim families. "Initially, 50,000 per person will be given for the burial of the dead," a Fishermen's Cooperative Society office-bearer said, adding that the society stands with the fishermen. Bodies were shifted to a Karachi morgue. The search for the recovery of remaining missing fishermen continued.

Crackdown against LPG hoarding

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has launched a crackdown on illegal hoarding and price manipulation in the LPG market. The move comes in response to a recent surge in LPG prices, which OGRA claims is artificially inflated. In a letter sent to provincial chief secretaries, OGRA spokesperson Imran Ghaznavi accused "unscrupulous elements" of creating an artificial shortage by illegally storing LPG gas. This hoarding, according to OGRA, leads to price gouging and difficulty for consumers in accessing essential cooking fuel.

Ghaznavi emphasized that OGRA enforcement teams are actively monitoring LPG stocks and price implementation across the country. The authority has vowed strict action against those involved in creating a black market for LPG and selling it at inflated prices. The crackdown comes amidst public outcry over a recent price hike of Rs. 30 per kilogram for LPG, implemented without OGRA notification. This second hike within a week resulted in LPG prices skyrocketing from Rs. 257 per kilogram to Rs. 310 in major cities like Lahore, and reaching as high as Rs. 360 in hilly areas.

OGRA has assured citizens that they will not tolerate price manipulation by the "wholesaler mafia." The authority has directed local governments to take all necessary measures to ensure the supply of LPG at the officially set prices, particularly in the lead-up to the holy month of Ramadan.

Putin warns West: Russia ready for nuclear war

MOSCOW (Reuters): President Vladimir Putin warned the West on Wednesday that Russia was technically ready for nuclear war and that if the US sent troops to Ukraine, it would be considered a significant escalation of the conflict.

Putin, speaking just days before a March 15-17 election which is certain to give him another six years in power, said the nuclear war scenario was not "rushing" up and he saw no need for the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine. "From a military-technical point of view, we are, of course, ready," Putin, 71, told Rossiya-1 television and news agency RIA in response to a question about whether the country was ready for a nuclear war.

Putin said the US understood that if it deployed American troops on Russian territory — or to Ukraine — Russia would treat the move as an intervention. "[In the US] there are enough specialists in the field of Russian-American relations and in the field of strategic restraint," said Putin, the ultimate decision-maker in the world's biggest nuclear power. "Therefore, I don't think that here everything is rushing to it (nuclear confrontation), but we are ready for this."

Putin's nuclear warning came alongside another offer for talks on Ukraine as part of a new post-Cold War demarcation of European security. The US says Putin is not ready for serious talks over Ukraine. The war in Ukraine has triggered the deepest crisis in Russia's relations with

the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis and Putin has warned several times the West risks provoking a nuclear war if it sends troops to fight in Ukraine.

Putin sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine in February 2022, triggering full-scale war after eight years of conflict in eastern Ukraine between Ukrainian forces on one side and pro-Russian Ukrainians and Russian proxies on the other. In a US election year, the West is grappling with how to support Kyiv against Russia, which now controls almost one-fifth of Ukrainian territory and is rearming much faster than the West and Ukraine.

Kyiv says it is defending itself against an imperial-style war of conquest designed to erase its national identity. Russia says the areas it controls in Ukraine are now Russia. Putin has sent a series of public nuclear warnings to the US aimed at discouraging greater involvement in Ukraine — a move the Kremlin says would mark a slide into world war.

Washington says it has seen no major changes to Russia's nuclear posture but Putin's public nuclear warnings — which break with the extreme caution of the Soviet leadership over such remarks — have sown concern in Washington.

Putin reiterated the use of nuclear weapons was spelt out in the Kremlin's nuclear doctrine, which sets out the conditions under which it would use such a weapon: broadly a response to an attack using nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction, or the use of

conventional weapons against Russia "when the very existence of the state is put under threat."

"Weapons exist in order to use them," Putin said. "We have our own principles." CNN reported on Saturday the administration of US President Joe Biden was specifically concerned in 2022 that Russia might use a tactical or battlefield nuclear weapon in Ukraine. Putin said he had never felt the need to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine. Putin said Russia was ready for serious talks on Ukraine.

"Russia is ready for negotiations on Ukraine, but they should be based on reality — and not on cravings after the use of psychotropic drugs," Putin said. Reuters reported last month that Putin's suggestion of a ceasefire in Ukraine to freeze the war was rejected by the US after contacts between intermediaries. US Central Intelligence Agency Director William Burns warned earlier this week that if the West did not provide proper support for Ukraine, Kyiv would lose more territory to Russia which would embolden Chinese President Xi Jinping. Burns, a former US ambassador to Russia, told the Senate Intelligence Committee it was in US interests to support Ukraine to allow it to get into a stronger position before talks.

Putin said he trusted no one and Russia would need written security guarantees in the event of a settlement. "I don't trust anyone, but we need guarantees, and guarantees must be spelt out, they must be such that we would be satisfied," Putin said.

China says mily team visit Maldives, S Lanka and Nepal

BEIJING (AFP): A Chinese military delegation recently visited the Maldives, Sri Lanka and Nepal to discuss further cooperation in defence issues, Beijing said on Wednesday. Beijing is seeking to build closer ties in South Asia in a push to counter its strategic rival India for influence.

Last week, the Maldives said it had signed a "military assistance" deal with China after ordering Indian troops deployed in the small but strategically-placed archipelago to leave. Beijing confirmed on Wednesday that a delegation had visited the country and met with pro-

China President Mohamed Muizzu during a trip that also took them to Sri Lanka and Nepal from March 4 to 13. In all three countries, "they exchanged views on military relations and regional security issues of common concern", the Chinese military said in a statement on its official WeChat account.

The delegation of officials from the military's international military cooperation department focused on "in-depth consultations on promoting bilateral defence cooperation." "A series of consensus was reached to further enriched defence cooperation between the PLA and

the relevant countries," it added, referring to the Chinese military by its official acronym.

India is suspicious of China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean and its influence in the Maldives, a chain of 1,192 tiny coral islands stretching around 800 kilometres across the equator, as well as in neighbouring Sri Lanka. Both South Asian island nations are strategically placed halfway along key east-west international shipping routes. Beijing also enjoys close ties with Nepal, led by Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, an ex-Maoist guerrilla known by his nom de guerre Prachanda.

Shehbaz assures

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our mutual cooperation," he said. "For me, it's a very good start." Highlighting Chinese modernization, a key term defining China's journey to rejuvenation, Sharif, who has served three terms as chief minister of Punjab province, stressed that Pakistan should emulate the model.

"It is a great success model and success story," the prime minister said, adding that generations of visionary Chinese leaders have led their people to create unprecedented development miracles, lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and providing vast rural populations with access to education, health, medical facilities, and employment. The Chinese modernization model created growth centers and sectors that produce competing products by procuring modern knowledge in science and technology, he said.

"Despite challenges in recent years, China's growth has still gone steadily compared to other countries, which is a remarkable achievement," he added. Pakistan should replicate this model in the country to alleviate poverty, provide jobs to the youth, and encourage small and medium entrepreneurs to kick-start businesses in villages, towns and cities in sectors of agriculture, industry, information technology and on other platforms, the prime minister said.

Citing Pakistan as one of the first batch of countries joining the Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative (GDI), PM Sharif said that

Pakistan fully and firmly supports China-proposed GDI and Global Security Initiative and believes the initiatives will further create strong connections between global communities. He commended the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a very visionary initiative, which spans continents and alleviates poverty and hunger in the countries, promotes investments, and boosts education and health. "There couldn't have been a better model for forging global societies together."

Pakistan is now ready to move toward the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of BRI, he said, adding that Pakistan will attract modern technology in information technology (IT), industrial, and agricultural areas as China is now moving towards high-tech, higher quality production. The PM said CPEC is dovetailing with the Pakistan-proposed Special Investment Facilitation Council, which aims to cut red tape and remove delays and inefficiencies, adding that the country is planning to build industrial parks and export zones and looking forward to attracting Chinese entrepreneurs to establish joint ventures in the areas of textile, steel or other with the combination of Chinese technology and Pakistan's comparatively cheap labor.

"Through those joint ventures, high-quality products in agriculture, industry, IT, etc., will be produced to create hundreds of thousands of jobs and wealth, and increase our production and exports," the prime

minister added. He said, "China has been extremely helpful in promoting Pakistan's economic progress, and CPEC has played a very important role which we really appreciate deeply."

The prime minister said Pakistan is expecting to shift its transport system towards electrification to control foreign exchange expenditures on imported fuel and to conserve wealth to build its economy. This will be done by acquiring the latest technology, which is available in China and other parts of the globe. Calling China Pakistan's second home, Sharif said he looks forward to visiting it when possible as there is a tradition of new Pakistani leadership always taking great pleasure and honor in visiting China at an opportune time. "We made solemn commitments that we would work together, and we would be together through thick and thin," he said.

PM visits Asfandiyar's residence: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited the residence of ANP leader Asfandiyar Wali Khan to condole over the death of his wife. The prime minister interacted with Asfandiyar Wali's son and ANP leader Aimal Wali Khan.

He offered Fateha and prayed for peace for the departed soul. He sympathised with the bereaved family and prayed for patience to them to bear the loss with fortitude. Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Minister for States and Frontier Regions Amir Muqam, former MNA and ANP leader Ghulam Ahmed Bilour and former MPA Ikhtiar Wali were also present.