

Quake jolts Balochistan F.P. Report

QUETTA: An earthquake measuring 2.6 on the Richter scale jolted Harnai and its adjoining areas in Balochistan province on early Friday. According to the National Seismic Monitoring Center, the epicenter of the earthquake was 36km away from the Harnai area at a depth of 24 kilometers, a private news channel reported.



@thefrontierpost

First national English daily published from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore, Quetta, Karachi and Washington D.C

www.thefrontierpost.com

Vol. XXXIXI

No. 40

Regd. No. 241

SHABAAAN 20 1445 -- SATURDAY, MARCH 02 2024

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

PML-N's Ayaz Sadiq elected NA speaker

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) lawmaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq was elected as the speaker of the National Assembly on Friday after the conclusion of the voting process. The PML-N politician defeated the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-backed independent lawmaker Malik Aamir Dogar, who was supported by the Sunni Ittehad (SIC) Council lawmakers in the House.

Sadiq won the speaker's contest with 199 votes, gaining a majority from the members of the PML-N, PPP and other lawmakers backing his nomination in the lower house. This is the second time that he has become the speaker. Sadiq had served as the speaker from 2013-2018 in the 14th National Assembly.

The polling for the election of the National Assembly speaker has been completed and the counting of votes is underway in the session that has been marred by protests of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) lawmakers. Sadiq will now be administered oath by outgoing Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf. After the oath-taking, the new speaker will then take charge of the house forthwith. Ashraf will, subsequently, step down from his position. As the first order of business Sadiq will now hold elections for his deputy. Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Syed Ghulam Mustafa and SIC's Junaid Akbar will contest for the slot.

The NA session was convened today to elect the speaker and deputy speaker during which opposition lawmakers chanted slogans against alleged rigging in the Feb 8 polls. Before the session started SIC's parliamentary party meeting was held in the house's lobby, where they vowed to continue their protest in the assembly.

This is the second consecutive day that SIC has been protesting in the National Assembly over "rigged" results. As the ses-



sion began, Speaker Ashraf asked if there were any new members present who had missed the oath-taking a day earlier. As no new members came forward, the speaker then gave the floor to PTI-backed Omar Ayub Khan to speak on a point of order.

The lawmaker alleged that foreigners were present in the house. "People who got fake mandate have entered the house, hence, they should be expelled," said Omar, adding that "prisoner number 804", the number assigned to PTI founder Imran Khan in Adiala Jail, should be brought to the Assembly. The MNA, who had a sore throat, said they would raise their voice even if their throat is sore or slit.

Ayub reiterated that the House was incomplete as the ECP is yet to announce the allocation of reserved seats in the National Assembly. After Ayub spoke, the speaker informed him that the lawmakers that were sitting in the House were those who were declared as winners by the Election Commission of Pakistan after the February 8 elections. He also added that if they had an objection then they should approach the ECP.

The speaker's comments infuriated the SIC members. Following this, the speaker began the process for the speaker's election. The voting lasted for at least two hours and chants and slogans could be heard during the process. SIC lawmakers that cast their votes chanted slogans in favour of incarcerated PTI founder

Imran Khan as they put their ballot paper in the box set up near the speaker's seat.

During the proceedings today, a drama unfolded when the MQM-P surprisingly walked out of the house and boycotted the polling process for the speaker. PML-N leaders including the nominee for speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq went after them in Committee Room No. 2 to win over them to return to the house and participate in the voting process. In return, the MQM-P demanded a constitutional amendment to empower the local bodies.

After negotiations, the PML-N acceded to MQM-P's demand and agreed to a constitutional amendment in Article 140. Ahsan Iqbal and Mustafa Kamal signed the agreement on PML-N and MQM-P's behalf respectively.

Raising serious reservations over the 2024 election results, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has announced that his party would not participate in the elections for the top political slots — president, prime minister, and the National Assembly (NA) speaker.

The JUI-F leader, speaking to journalists in Islamabad Thursday, said his party would sit in the opposition and its lawmakers would abstain from voting during the upcoming electoral events in the assemblies. In response to a question regarding JUI-F's strategy for a protest movement, he said: "Wait for it. We will represent the nation soon."

Pakistan will continue support to Kashmiris: FO F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch has said that Pakistan will continue to extend moral, political and diplomatic support to Kashmiris for the just and peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch addressing the weekly press briefing on Friday said Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi delivered a statement at the ongoing 55th Session of the Human Rights Council, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to making 2024 pivotal for human rights.

She said that the Foreign Secretary urged the High Commissioner's Office to closely monitor the situation in IIOJK, to establish a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the human right situation there. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that Pakistan denounces the decision by the Indian authorities to ban the Muslim Conference Jammu and Kashmir (Bhat faction), and Muslim Conference Jammu and Kashmir (Sumji faction), while extending the current ban on the Jamaat-e-Islami, Jammu Kashmir for five more years.

She said that with this decision, a total of eight Kashmiri political parties have been outlawed in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Their leadership and cadres are also facing persecution. She said that these oppressive measures reflect a vicious intent by India to stifle dissent and freedom of expression in IIOJK in complete disregard for international human rights and humanitarian law.

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that India should immediately lift the curbs on the banned Kashmiri parties; release all political prisoners and dissenters; and forthwith implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir.

ECP announces schedule for presidential election F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday issued the notice and schedule for the presidential election slated for March 9.

"In pursuance of the provisions contained in paragraphs 1 and 3 of the Second Schedule of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973 read with clauses (3) and (4) of Article 41 of the Constitution, Public Notification for election to the office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is hereby issued and in relation thereto the following programme for receipt of nomination papers, scrutiny of nomination papers, withdrawal of candidature, publication of list of validly nominated candidates, retirement and the polling day," read the notification issued on Friday.

According to the ECP, the candidates for the country's top constitutional office can submit nomination papers by March 2 before 12:00pm with the presiding officers in Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta. The scrutiny for the nomination papers by the returning officers will be held on March 4, the notification said, adding that the candidature can be withdrawn the next day.

Afterwards, the commission will publish the list of validly nominated candidates the same day and March 6 has been fixed as the date for retirement. The polling for the next president will be held on March 9 at the National Assembly and all the provincial assemblies from 10:00am to 4:00pm.

Parliamentary Affairs Ministry's performance hailed

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi Friday appreciated the performance and cooperation of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs during the caretaker government's tenure.

This he said while speaking at a farewell ceremony organized in the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs in his honour. The minister said with the grace of Allah Almighty, the democratic process was going on in the country. Murtaza Solangi said he had been reiterating the commitment of the government since the first day that the elections would be held at time schedule given by Election Commission of Pakistan.

"The caretaker government organized timely elections and today new assemblies have come into being in the country", Murtaza Solangi maintained. Democracy could not succeed without people's participation, Murtaza Solangi said and expressed the hope that the new government would meet the expectations of the people. He said as the Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, it was an honour for him to participate in the meetings of the Parliament.

He also thank the Members of Parliament and all the political parties who had cooperated with him during the tenure of the caretaker government. On this occasion, the Additional Secretary and Senior Joint

Secretary of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs informed the minister about the performance and initiatives of the ministry during the caretaker period. At the end of the ceremony, Murtaza Solangi met all the staff personally.

Meanwhile, Caretaker Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Murtaza Solangi on Friday bid farewell to the Upper House of the Parliament after receiving acclaim from the Deputy to Chairman Senate on behalf of the House for his cooperation.

During the sixth meeting of the 355th session of the Senate, the Minister requested the Chair to defer the question hour session for the next meeting so that the upcoming Minister should take up the queries of the Senator after the new regime comes into power.

Solangi said the Prime Minister's election was going to held on Sunday and the new government would be formed consequently. Therefore, the House must take up its question hour in the next session so that the newly elected regime and minister shall better reply to the queries to the members of the House.

Deputy Chairman Senate, Mirza Muhammad Afridi extended his gratitude to the interim Minister for his cooperation and time. "The Minister for Parliamentary Affairs used to give time to the House but the interim minister gave his due time and attention to the Upper House. The House thank you for your efforts," he said.

Earlier Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians on his supplementary query to his question pertaining to audit of Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) raised his concern over the reply provided by the Minister.

Senator Tangi said he had sought the details of audit of WAPDA whereas some 557 observations were raised in the audit report but no details pertaining to the nature of objections made and any action made against it. He regretted at the reply submitted in the house was not satisfactory and he also expressed dissatisfaction over the report.

The caretaker minister for Parliamentary Affairs said the Senator's queries demanded details of audit accounts of WAPDA in the last year and its second part shed light on irregularities surfaced in the said audit report. "A total of 557 audit paras have been made under the report observations, out of which 402 have been discussed in the Departmental Audit Committee (DAC), 175 DAC directives have been complied with and 39 observations' response was awaited, 179 replies to reaudit demands received, three DAC directives compliance was under process, compliance awaited from Water Resources Ministry on 5 observations and one para was settled and some 155 observations were yet to be discussed in the committee," Solangi told the House.

The Frontier Post

Uzair Baloch acquitted

KARACHI (INP): An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Uzair Baloch and other suspects in a case pertaining to an attack on policemen to kill them during the Lyari operation. The ATC pronounced the verdict to acquit Uzair Baloch after the prosecution failed to establish the charges against him and three others. The other acquitted suspects included Muhammad Salam alias Mullah Nisar, Zakir alias Dada and Ghulam Muhammad.



QUETTA: Unopposed elected Chief Minister of Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti talking to media persons.

KP CM elect vows to work for welfare of masses

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The newly elected 16th Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur on Friday said that he was unhappy to become the Chief Minister in the capacity of an independent candidate but vowed to serve the people of the province with determination and honesty.

Addressing the assembly after being elected as the Chief Minister, Ali Amin Gandapur demanded an open and free trial of chairman PTI. He underlined the need for a change in the overall system of the country to provide justice to the people, end corruption and work for the welfare of the people.

Gandapur claimed that PTI leadership was kept away from the election and were not provided with a level playing field. "We were not given a field nor were allowed to campaign, protest even on the issues of blasphemy, Kashmir and Palestine." While giving his first direction as the elected Chief Minister, Gandapur said that all the FIR which had no evidence should be closed within a week, no matter who it was against. I am giving a chance to all and if such FIRs are not closed he should be ready for punishment."

Calling for a fair trial of the alleged rigging in the polls, he said that people should not be forced to raise voice for their right. It is duty of the state to give the people their right." He offered to start recounting from his own constituency, followed by other members and give people their right as per Form-45. Gandapur expressed gratitude to the people of



the province and the members of the parliament for giving him mandate.

He said he had been a worker of the PTI for 17 years. "But, today I became the chief minister as an independent. It is painful for me," said the newly-elected chief minister. The treatment meted out to the PTI has been unprecedented. There could be no precedence of such a treatment to a political party anywhere in the world, he added.

"Our leader has been jailed. There should be an open, fair and transparent trial of the PTI founder and he should be released immediately. Our women workers are still in prison. The injustice done to them should be addressed. We don't want to exact revenge." "Our leader spoke of Pakistan. He was right when he said we are not free but slaves. True freedom was, is and will always be our need."

On Thursday, Babar Saleem Swati was elected the speaker and Surriya Bibi deputy speaker. As the house has a majority of the PTI-backed members, the session was calm. However, pro-PTI founder slogans continued to echo in the house throughout the session. Swati defeated Ehsanullah Khan, the joint candidate of the PPP, ANP, PML-N and the PTI-Parliamentarians. In the 106-strong house, he bagged 89 votes while Khan polled 17 votes. Outgoing speaker Mushtaq Ghani administered the oath to newly-elected speaker Swati.

Later, voting for the deputy speaker slot was held. Surriya Bibi, who won the election from Chitral on a general seat, defeated PTI-P's Arbab Muhammad Waseem by securing 87 votes against her rival's 19 votes. The session was boycotted by the JUI-F.

Hamas, Palestinian groups stress 'unity' in Moscow

GAZA (AFP): Palestinian factions including rivals Hamas and Fatah said on Friday they would pursue "unity of action" in confronting Israel after representatives met at Russia-hosted talks.

The meeting in Moscow on Thursday brought together Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Fatah and other Palestinian groups for talks on the war in Gaza and an eventual post-war period. It came on the heels of the resignation of the Palestinian Authority government, which is led by Fatah and based in the occupied West Bank.

Outgoing prime minister Mohammad Shtayyeh called for intra-Palestinian consensus as he announced the resignation, and some analysts said the development could pave the way for a government of technocrats that could operate

in the West Bank and Hamas-run Gaza after the war. Arab and Western leaders have been pushing for reforms to the Palestinian Authority as they discuss possible reconstruction efforts.

A statement on Friday by the Palestinian factions represented in Moscow said there would be an "upcoming dialogue" to bring them under the banner of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Thursday's "constructive" talks saw agreement on points including the need for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the creation of a Palestinian state, the statement said.

While Hamas and Islamic Jihad are considered "terrorist" entities by Western powers, the PLO is internationally recognized as representing Palestinians in the Palestinian territories and diaspora. Discussions

in recent years about integrating Hamas into the PLO have ended in failure.

In recent years, Moscow has strived to maintain good relations with all actors in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including Fatah and Hamas. Russia's relations with Israel have become strained amid Moscow's criticism of Israeli actions in Gaza and rejection of a Palestinian state.

The war in Gaza was triggered by Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel that resulted in the deaths of about 1,160 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures. At least 30,228 people, mostly women and children, have been killed in Israel's retaliatory military offensive in Gaza, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

Four killed as car falls into ditch

F.P. Report

KOHISTAN: At least four people were killed and one injured when a car fell into a ditch after its driver lost control over the vehicle due to slippery road conditions in Tor Kamr area of Batan tehsil in Kohistan district on Friday.

According to District Emergency Officer Lower Kohistan, Sajid Ali, a car on way to Islamabad from Gilgit fell into a ditch due to slippery road. As a result, four people identified as Muhammad Ali, resident of Charsadda, Muhammad Imran, resident of Fateh Jhang and two unknown people were killed while another sustained injury. The injured was identified as Ehtesham, resident of Gilgit. The Rescue workers and locals retrieved the bodies and injured from the wreckage of the car and shifted them to hospital in Abbottabad.

Exports witnesses 30% growth

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The exports from the country during the month of February 2024 grew by 30 percent and were recorded at \$2.575 billion as against the exports of \$1.984 billion in the corresponding month of the last year.

According to the Pre-Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) Customs-based data released by PRAL, the trade balance improved in February 2023-24, narrowing by 18.2 percent compared to the same month of the previous fiscal year.

This positive development is attributed to a significant increase in exports and a moderate rise in

imports, it added. The data also showed that the trade deficit narrowed to \$1.628 billion in February 2023-24, compared to \$1.990 billion in February 2022-23.

During the period from July-February 2023-24, the exports increased by 14.2 percent as it was recorded at \$20.341 billion as compared to the exports of \$17.815 billion in the same period of the last year. Meanwhile, the imports decreased by 14.1 percent and reached \$34.213 billion as compared to the imports of \$39.810 billion in the same period of the last year.

The government is committed for implementing policies that promote

export-oriented industries, diversify export markets, and attract foreign direct investment.

These efforts are expected to further improve trade balance in the coming months, it added. Commenting on the positive development Minister for Commerce Dr Gohar Ejaz said that exports from the country witnessed about 30 percent growth during three consecutive months as they grew by 28 percent in December, 27 percent in January and 30 percent in February. Manufacturing and engineering exports grew by 15 percent, whereas the exports of agriculture and food commodities increased by 70 percent respectively, he added.



No drug crisis in Punjab: health secretary

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Health Secretary Ali Jan has refuted claims of a drug crisis in government hospitals, including in Multan, saying that essential medicines were readily available there.

In a statement issued here on Friday, he emphasised that reports of medicine scarcity were false and misleading, clarifying that there were sufficient budgets and stocks for medicines.

Ali Jan highlighted that, in line with Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's vision, free medicines were being provided in government hospitals to ensure access to healthcare for all.

LDA demolishes several illegal construction

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Development Authority (LDA), during its ongoing crackdown against illegal construction, demolished and sealed several structures and properties here on Friday.

On the directions of the Director General LDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa, the team took action in Ferozepur road areas, Johar Town, Nasheman Iqbal and Controlled Area.

An illegal commercial hall, service station, workshop, shops, double story building and some other illegal structures were demolished while more than 25 shops were sealed.

The operation was supervised by Chief Town Planner II Azhar Ali, Director Town Planning IV and Director Town Planning VII, while the properties seized/demolished had multiple notices issued against them.

Rs 428.6mln spent on police welfare

LAHORE (APP): On the direction of IGP Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, historic measures for welfare of the police force are continuing without any interruption.

According to details, during the current year, more than Rs 428.6 million were spent on welfare of the force. More than 5800 police employees and their families got relief in various categories. Rs 92.2 million were given as wedding gifts to the daughters of police officers and martyrs, while more than Rs 195 million were given as scholarships to the children of police officers.

Similarly, in the category of medical financial assistance, Rs 51.8 million was given to police employees. For funeral charges more than Rs 14 million were given to the force. In the Last Basic Salary category, police employees were given more than Rs 39.6 million. In maintenance allowance Rs 35.5 million were given to the police force.

Safe City cameras identify 79 stolen vehicles

LAHORE (APP): Under the Punjab Safe City Project, executed by the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB), in collaboration with the Punjab Police Department, the Artificial Intelligence (AI) based Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) System captured data from 74,949 vehicles and identified 79 as stolen ones, and 52,125 vehicles with non-standard number plates.

This was highlighted during a progress review meeting, presided over by PITB Chairman Faisal Yousaf here on Friday. PITB Additional Director General (ADG) Qasim Ifzal, Chief Technology Officer (CTO) Adil Iqbal Khan, and other senior officials were also present.

The participants in the meeting were apprised that the AI-powered Facial Recognition System had proven highly effective, capturing 190,867 faces.

The faces captured were compared with a vast database comprising 20.4 million records and pictures from different government departments to identify anomalies. The Safe City Project leverages Artificial Intelligence (AI) to deploy a Facial Recognition System, Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) System, and Tag and Trace System.

CM Maryam imposes ban on transfers, postings in Punjab

LAHORE (PPI): Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Friday imposed a ban on transfers and postings across the province.

As per details, the spokesperson said that important transfers will be carried out after permission from the Chief Minister House via a summary. After taking charge as Chief Minister (CM) of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz gave one month to the administration to remove encroachment from Lahore markets. Maryam Nawaz passed the orders after taking notice of the problems faced by the citizens due to keeping goods in front of the shops.

The citizens complained to the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz that the shopkeepers had kept the goods outside. They are facing serious problems in traffic due to the encroachment of the stalls and carts that also lead to everyday accidents.

Separately, the newly elected Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz issued orders to suspend 800,000 arms licenses.

She issued these directives while chairing a high-level meeting. While suspending the licenses, the Punjab chief minister said that only courts will issue new arms licenses going forward.

Punjab govt to establish digital database for comprehensive population records

LAHORE (INP): Under the leadership of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, the provincial government has taken a historic step by deciding to create a digital record of every neighborhood and population in Punjab for the first time. This initiative,

known as the Punjab Digital Database, aims to compile an accurate count of the entire population, including details such as number, location, contact information, and addresses of vulnerable segments.

Headed by Marriyum Aurangzeb, a 13-member technical working group was constituted in a meeting chaired by the Punjab chief minister. The group includes Bilal Azhar Kiyani, a member of the party's central economic team and member of the National Assembly, along with senior officials and statisticians. The Punjab Digital Data Bank will serve as the foundation for planning education, health, and development initiatives across the province, ensuring equitable resource distribution among all residents. It will also establish a transparent system for monitoring progress on development projects and delivering financial assistance to beneficiaries directly.

The availability of accurate data and information will facilitate economic policies and informed decision-making. The data bank will also support the social security of the elderly, widows, orphans, needy families, and students. Moreover, the digital system will automatically register newborns in Punjab and collect information on individuals who have settled in Punjab from other regions. This population data collection will aid in formulating both short-term and long-term policies. In a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Punjab, the progress of the Punjab Socio-Economic Registry Project was also reviewed.

Governor presented Punjab govt audit report

LAHORE (APP): Deputy Auditor General (Central) Tariq Bashir Chatha called on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman and presented the Accounts and Audit Report of the Punjab government for the year 2023-24 during a meeting at the Governor's House here on Friday.

Governor Balighur Rehman said the Auditor General's Department had an important role in

improving transparency and governance in the government departments. He said those departments that are not being audited for any reason should be made part of the audit system. The governor said the use of modern technology including management information system is indispensable for increasing the efficiency of the institution.

DAG (Central) Tariq

Bashir told the governor about the steps taken to improve the institution. He said that Auditor General's organisation would review legal organisation requirements and make a strategy to include those departments in the audit system, which were not being audited for any reason. He told governor that staff trainings were being conducted in the institution on a regular basis.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah meets American Ambassador Donald Blome at CM House. —APP Photo

Rs 428.6mln spent on police welfare

LAHORE (APP): On the direction of IGP Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, historic measures for welfare of the police force are continuing without any interruption.

According to details, during the current year, more than Rs 428.6 million were spent on welfare of the force. More than 5800 police employees and their families got relief in various categories. Rs 92.2 million were given as wedding gifts to the daughters of police officers and martyrs, while more than Rs 195 million were given as scholarships to the children of police officers.

Similarly, in the category of medical financial assistance, Rs 51.8 million was given to police employees. For funeral charges more than Rs 14 million were given to the force. In the Last Basic Salary category, police employees were given more than Rs 39.6 million. In maintenance allowance Rs 35.5 million were given to the police force.

OFFICE OF THE TEHSIL MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION DOMEL. (Bungalow No. 106, Block-B, Phase-I, Township Bannu) Phone# 0928-633350, Email: tmadomel1786@gmail.com E-TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders on MRS, Non MRS items for the below mentioned works are hereby invited on the basis of single stage envelope procedure from Government Contractors registered with PEC for the year 2023-24 as per centralized enlistment policy of the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as per the following schedule.

| S# | Name of Work | Estimated Cost (in Millions) | 2% Earnest Money (Rs) | Last Date / Time of submission of Tender Form | Date & Time of Opening of Bid |
|----|---|------------------------------|-----------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Construction / Rehabilitation of Road from Highway to Bandar kala in Tehsil Domel District Bannu. | 18.130 | 2% earnest money | 22-03-2024 12:00 PM | 22-03-2024 02:00 PM |
| 2 | Installation of Pressure Pumps and Solar System in Tehsil Domel District Bannu. | 49.460 | -do- | -do- | -do- |
| 3 | Construction / Rehabilitation of Road from Kohat Road to Akleem khan kala in Tehsil Domel District Bannu | 35.040 | -do- | -do- | -do- |
| 4 | Construction / Rehabilitation of Said Khel from GHS to Graveyard said Khel in Tehsil Domel District Bannu. | 30.660 | -do- | -do- | -do- |
| 5 | Construction / Rehabilitation of Road from Kohat Road to Eidai Khel Insaf House in Tehsil Domel District Bannu. | 19.810 | -do- | -do- | -do- |
| 6 | Construction / Rehabilitation of Said khel Road from BMC to GHS said khel in Tehsil Domel District Bannu | 46.160 | -do- | -do- | -do- |
| 7 | Construction of PCC street in area Tehsil Domel. | 0.740 | -do- | -do- | -do- |

Terms & Conditions:-

- Tender form / BOQ can be downloaded after publication in the newspapers by the registered contractors from Local Council Board website (ebidding.lcbkp.gov.pk).
- The Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Government Election & Rural Development Department (LGE & RDD) Peshawar to ensure maximum transparency In the process of the existing E-tendering system by Introducing E-bidding system circulate vide notification No. AOILCB/Estt/19-06-2017 dated 19.06.2017, that all the Local Council in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa shall offer their bids to the contractors through new E-bidding system.
- All the enlisted contractors of Local Council Board shall offer their bids by filling rates online w.e.f the date of publication.
- All the enlisted contractors have an option to withdraw their bids online up to closing time of tender if they intend not to participate in bidding. In case they have applied rates online then they shall be compelled to submit printed tender's documents along with requisite documents to TMA Domel otherwise will be liable to be declared as blacklisted.
- Any tender or offer of works made by any enlisted contractors without filling bids online shall be considered as null and void henceforth.
- The TMA Domel shall award and print work through new E-Tendering system. Any work awarded and work order Issued by TMA without E-Tendering system shall considered as null and void henceforth.
- The following documents must be attached, with the bid such as (I). 2% earnest money In shape of original call deposit in the name of TMO, TMA Domel from scheduled banks, (II). Enlistment copy of Local Council Board for the year 2023-2024 (III). Registration copy of Pakistan Engineering Council for 2023-24 and (IV). Copy of CNIC & (v). Copy of KPRA Registration for 2023-24 for each schemes in a separate envelope highlighting name of work (written over the envelope).
- Sealed bids must be sent through registered mail/courier service before or on dated fixed for opening and will be opened on the same date at 02:00 PM In the presence of bidders by the tender committee.
- Bidder who submitted their financial bids without a valid call deposit will be barred from participating in bidding process for one year.
- The tender shall be processed according to "above/below system" based on market rate system.
- The engineer estimate is framed on the current MRS 2022 2" bi annual. Tender forms and BOQs must be signed by the original contractor.
- The successful contractors have to pay stamp duty along with all applicable Provincial /Federal Government Taxes Issued from time to time.
- Tender form and BOQ must be signed by the original Contractor.
- Bid security of some or all the bidders will be retained by the employer till approval of tender/bid validity period.
- Complete bids both (original and duplicate) must reach to TMA Domel or before the fixed date by TMA Domel as per instruction of the Provincial Government.
- Incomplete/conditional or telegraphic tenders shall not be accepted.
- The Department will not bind to provide any machinery/testing laboratory and the total cost on it will be borne by the contractors themselves.
- Any bidders who provide Incorrect information shall be disqualified.
- In case of bids become tie the award of contract shall be decided through free toss which shall be bounded as final.
- The bidders should be enlisted with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue authority for current year, as per KPRA rules.**
- Other terms & conditions/guidelines, if required can be obtained from this TMA at any working day during official hours.
- In case of Solar Project, only those contractors bid shall be entertained, whose Firms have been awarded specified code of Solar and only approved/Registered Company Solar material will be installed.
- The contractors quoting their bids up to a limit of 10% below Engineer estimate shall submit bid security to the extent of 2% of Engineer Estimate only. The contractor quoting their bids more than 10% below up to 20% below on Engineers Estimate shall submit along with their bids s 8% Additional Security of Engineers estimated cost in addition to 2% bid security. If the bid is not accompanied with the required amount of additional security, then it will be considered as non responsive and the 2% bid security shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the second lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. Similarly, a contractor quoting bid more than 20% below shall submit with his bid an additional security on Engineers Estimated cost equal to the differential amount of submitted bid and Engineers Estimate along with detailed rate analysis. In case of more than 20% below bids, if the bid is not accompanied by the detailed rate analysis and / or required amount of additional security, then the said bid shall be considered as non-responsive. All the securities submitted along with such non responsive bid shall be forfeited in favour of Government and the 2nd lowest bidder and so on will be considered accordingly. Furthermore, all others terms & conditions / regulation notified by the KPRA vide notification No: S.R.O(14)/Vol:1-24/2021-22 dated 10-05 the 2022/6058-71 in letter, and spirit.
- The Competent authority has reserved the right to cancel the Tender at any stage with cogent reason.
- Note:- Work orders of the aforementioned schemes will be issued to the contractor subject To availability of fund.**

TO (I&S)
TMA Domel

Tehsil Municipal Officer
TMA Domel

INF(P)405/24

ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD

ADMISSION SPRING 2024

Last Date: 15th April 2024

BS Programmes (HSSC Based | Duration 4 Years)

- Accounting & Finance (ACCA Accredited)
- Economics
- Pakistan Studies
- English (Language & Literature)
- Gender & Women Studies
- Library and Information Sciences
- Mass Communication
- Islamic Finance
- Islamic Studies Dars-e-Nizami
- Islamic Studies General
- Islamic Studies Quran and Tafseer
- Islamic Studies Shariah
- Islamic Studies Hadith & Hadith Science
- Islamic Studies Seerat Studies
- Islamic Studies Interfaith Studies
- Arabic
- History
- Sociology
- Urdu

BS Programmes (BA/BSc Based | Duration 2.5 Years)

- Accounting & Finance
- Economics
- Gender & Women Studies
- Library and Information Sciences
- Sociology
- Islamic Studies Dars-e-Nizami
- Islamic Studies General
- Islamic Studies Quran and Tafseer
- Islamic Studies Shariah
- Islamic Studies Hadith & Hadith Science
- Islamic Studies Seerat Studies
- Islamic Studies Interfaith Studies
- Arabic
- English
- Pakistan Studies
- Urdu

BS Programmes (AD Based | Duration 2 Years)

For the applicants having AD in relevant discipline with minimum 60 Credit Hours.

- Accounting & Finance
- Economics
- Gender & Women Studies
- Library and Information Sciences
- Pakistan Studies
- Islamic Studies Dars-e-Nizami
- Islamic Studies General
- Islamic Studies Quran and Tafseer
- Islamic Studies Shariah
- Islamic Studies Hadith & Hadith Science
- Islamic Studies Seerat Studies
- Islamic Studies Interfaith Studies
- Arabic
- English
- Urdu

Associate Degree Programmes

- Associate Degree in Arts (BA General)
- Associate Degree in Commerce (BCOM)
- BA Open Courses

DIRECTOR ADMISSIONS

Email: adms@aiou.edu.pk

Web: <https://aiou.edu.pk>

Helpline: (051) 111 112 468

PID(I)5254-D/23



APPLY ONLINE

HOW TO APPLY

- Prospectuses of all the programmes are available at University Website, download for Eligibility and details.
- Submit online application at <https://fmbp.aiou.edu.pk>
- Manual forms for ADA, ADC & BED are also available in Regional offices and Swift Centers
- Continuing students can register courses for Spring 2024 till 22-04-2024 without late in CMS at following link: <https://enrollment.aiou.edu.pk>
- Fee can be deposited in any branch of ABL, MCB, FWBL and UBL OR Upaisa, Easypaisa and JazzCash.

Scientists call for promoting importance of ‘Science’

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Scientists in different fields have laid stress on promoting importance of ‘Science’ for socio-economic development in the country and for attracting the youth towards attainment of scientific education. The august gathering of scientists was held here at a convention organized by Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) at National Center of Excellence In Geology Peshawar University.

Titled as ‘Science for Socio Economic Development’, the Scientific Convention was a maiden event to kick off Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Pakistan Science Foundation in the field of Science and Technology. Outgoing Interim Provincial Minister for Education, Dr. Muhammad Qasim Jan was chief guest on the occasion.

The convention was attended by renowned scientists from across the country, Phd scholars, heads of Research and Development organizations and students from different educational institutions. Speaking on the occasion, Interim Minister for Education KP, Dr. Qasim Jan highly eulogized the role played by Pakistan Science Foundation in promotion of Science and Technology through serving as a platform for scientists of

the country.

Without attainment of scientific education, we can never enter into the comity of developed nations, Dr. Qasim remarked. He also informed convention participants that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is making huge spending, around 23 percent of its budget, on Education but still a lot of challenges are faced in shape of 4.7 million out of school children.

He also thanked PSF for selecting Peshawar University as first site for initiating celebration of 50 years of Excellence in the field of Science and Technology. Dr. Qasim said in our country, the importance and power of science is not realized and this mindset is needed to be changed by promoting awareness about importance of S&T in attaining development and progress.

He stressed for holding awareness sessions with people from different walks of life including policy makers, politicians, academia, media, parents and students. Chairman Pakistan Science Foundation, Dr. Muhammad Akram Sheikh apprised participants of the convention about services being provided by PSF in promotion of science and technology in the country. PSF has made remarkable contribution in development of S&T by serving as financing agency for the promotion of basic and funda-

mental research on scientific issues related to socio-economic development of the country. He also made detailed presentation of different projects completed by PSF, ongoing initiatives and future plans.

Dr. Akram Sheikh also laid stress on promotion of importance of scientific education, innovations in the field through involvement of media. He said science education cannot be achieved without public awareness about importance of S&T. In this regard, he continued, PFS is soon launching its own Y-Tube channel and will hold training of journalists on reporting of science and technology.

“Glorification of role of science is imperative for attaining socio-economic development in the country”, Dr. Akram stressed. Dr. Anisa Qamar, Chairperson Department of Physics also spoke on the occasion and made a presentation on ‘Plasma physics and its Applications’. Dr. Taza Gul, Director Science and Technology Khyber Pakhtunkhwa threw light on progress of his department in promotion of S&T. A panel discussion was also held wherein people from different walks of life including academic, Phd scholars, students of higher education and media person threw light on challenges in promotion of S&T in the country.

KPCSW launches findings of gender analysis health, education sectors

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women (KPCSW) with support from GIZ successfully launched the findings of the Gender Analysis of Health Sector Strategic Plan 2018-2025 and Education Sector Plans 2020-2025 in a one-day Seminar held here.

A press release issued here Friday said that the seminar brought together a diverse range of stakeholders committed to advancing gender equality in the province. Amna Durrani, Director Programmes, explaining the objective of the seminar said that gender analysis of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Sector Strategic Plan (HSSP) 2018-2025 and Education Sector Plan 2020-2025 aimed at incorporating gender lens into the HSSP’s policy actions, strategies, and programs.

Robin Haider Bokhari Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women said that the gender analysis exercise was an effort to translate the Commission’s statutory functions of reviewing plans of each department in the province to see if they adequately address the strategic needs of women.

The Guest of Honor, Rakhshanda Naz, Ombudsperson for Harassment of Women at Workplace Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said that redress of harassment in workplaces, institutions and in public places was essential to promote inclusion of girls and women in the education and mainstreaming their access to health.

The Additional Secretary

Elementary and Secondary Education Department (E&SED) Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Jehangir Azam Wazir addressing the audience said that E&SED was dedicatedly working on bringing back out of school children especially girls through a host of initiatives including involvement of community, parent teacher councils and introducing accelerated learning pathways.

The Special Secretary Health Department Habibullah appreciated the role of Women Commission in highlighting the areas needing further focus in Health Sector Strategic Plan to promote greater inclusion of women healthcare workforce and access to health services across the province. Participants in the interactive session endorsed the findings that a greater focus was required in the HSSP on services for gender-based violence in essential services, mental health and the need for greater focus on social determinants of women’s physical health.

These crucial findings are expected to play a pivotal role in fostering inclusivity and enhancing the quality of education and health services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Key participants included representatives from civil societies and provincial government departments such as Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Department, Elementary and Secondary Education Department, Health Department, Higher Education Department, LG&RDD, Planning and Development Department, Khyber Girls Medical University, Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar, Special

Education and Zamong Kor, Right to Information Commission, Right to Services Commission, Child Protection and Welfare Commission and representatives of United Nations World Health Organization.

The seminar participants expressed a collective commitment to take into account the recommendations of the gender analysis by KPCSW and to continue to drive meaningful change to pave the way for a more progressive society through gender-inclusive service delivery in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Sher Bahadar completes his PhD

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Sher Bahadar Afridi, a PhD scholar from the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Peshawar, and Subject Specialist (English) at Government Higher Secondary School Spin Dhand, District Khyber, successfully defended his research on ‘Educational Leadership’ under the supervision of Dr. Hakim Ullah.

External examiners included Professor Dr. Arshad Ali, Institute of Education and Research, University of Peshawar; Professor Dr. Carolyn M. Shields, Wayne State University USA, and Professor Tuba K. Gokminoglu, Turkey University. The scholar attributed this success to his hard work, teachers’ guidance, prayers of his deceased parents, family and friends.

PSN holds Conference

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The 14th Biennial Pakistan Society of Nephrology (PSN) conference is currently underway at the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT) Karachi, bringing together renowned nephrologists from across the globe.

The four-day event, held from February 29th to March 3rd, 2024, features esteemed delegates from the USA, UK, Canada, and Australia, sharing their expertise with Pakistani colleagues, says a press release here. The PSN represents all nephrologists in Pakistan, specialists dedicated to diagnosing and treating medical conditions affecting the kidneys.



PESHAWAR: Ombudsperson KP protection against harassment of women at workplace, Ms. Rakhshanda Naz addressing during a one-day seminar.

KP: The land of hospitality, home of traditional food cuisines

PESHAWAR (APP): Other than a hub of diverse cultural heritage, Ghandhara civilization and natural beauty, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is also famous for its unique and mouthwatering traditional food cuisines that are commonly used in almost every household and markets of the region. It is always hard for the visitors to resist the temptation, aroma and flavor of the delicious food items.

The traditional food delicacies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Chapli Kabab, Roush, Mutton Karahi, BBQ and Painda are on the top list of foreign bloggers and U-tubers including Trevor James, Mark Weins and many more who visited the region. Mughal rulers’ influence in the region had given birth to a number of kabab dishes, resulting in local recipes such as the chapli kabab that is served in thousands of kabab houses in the region for its delectable taste and spiciness.

The famous dish is fried in a specially designed pan prepared in pure

animal fat that gives special aroma, salty taste and flavor to the popular cuisine. Almost every city and bazaars had abundant cuisines shops where Chapli Kabab is prepared with minced meat of buffalo, special ingredients and spices on firewood in a cozy environment.

Though the origin of Chapli Kabab is unknown but Qari Javed Iqbal writes in his book ‘Saqafat Sarhad Tarikh Ke Ayeene Me’ (Frontier culture in the mirror of history) that Mughals, Turkish, Ghaznis and Afghans, who entered subcontinent through historic Khyber Pass had preferred meat in their dishes that led to introduction of Chapli Kabab in the region.

He writes that Chapli Kabab’s shops was found at in Nothia, Firdos, Charsdda Road, Tarrujabba on Grand Trunk Road and Bakhshi Pul at Peshawar where the travelers enjoyed it before migrating to sub-continent and Central Asian Republics for trade. Hazrat Ullah, the

owner of Mohmand Toray Kabab at Firdos bazaar Peshawar told APP that people from across the country come here to eat Chapli Kabab, especially during the winter season to enjoy purity of meat and freshness of the components being used in its preparation.

Despite the introduction of many Western foods and snacks varieties, he said the popularity of Chapli Kabab has not decreased in the province where its demand was increasing with each passing day especially during the winter season. “Chapli Kabab is my favorite cuisine due to its spiciness and we enjoy it with family members at Qisakhwani with sauces and Qehwa on every Sunday” said Zahid Shinwari, former President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry. “Mutton Karahi” also known as Karhi Ghost, Dumba Karahi, Balti Ghost and Dumpukhat Karahi are other famous dishes of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa attracting foodies from across the



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Higher Education, Qasim Jan in a group photo with participants of Pakistan Science Foundation during golden jubilee celebration.

7.7m children to be administered polio drops

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Emergency Operations Center Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has finalized all arrangements for National Immunization Days (NID) wherein more than 7.7 million children under the age of five will be vaccinated against polio across the province.

While the first phase of the campaign has already been launched in Lakki Marwat and D.I Khan from Feb 26 targeting over 0.6 million children, approximately 7.1 million children will be vaccinated in rest of the province in the second phase of the drive which is planned to be launched from March 3. A supplementary dose of Vitamin-A will also be administered to the eligible children during this campaign.

The decision to this effect was taken in a high-level meeting chaired by Special Secretary Health for Polio Eradication/EOC Coordinator Abdul Basit here in Provincial Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) on Friday. The meeting was attended by Deputy Coordinator EOC Muhammad Zeeshan Khan, team leads UNICEF, WHO & NSTOP, officials of health department and relevant officials from communications and operations.

Addressing the meeting, Special Secretary Health for Polio Eradication/EOC Coordinator Abdul Basit said that the government is fully committed to eradicate the menace of polio virus from the region and will leave no stone unturned to secure the future of our children.

Fayyaz laid to rest

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Irrigation Department worker Mohammad Fayyaz was laid to rest in his ancestral village Harichand Nehar Bungalow on Friday.

A large number of area people and relatives attended his funeral. Fayyaz was the younger brother of retired police officer Tahir Shah and schoolteacher Jehangir Shah.

KPIC, TIP join hands to promote open governance

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Commission (KPIC) and Transparency International-Pakistan (TIP) join hands to promote open governance. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Commission (KPIC) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Transparency International-Pakistan to extend collaborative efforts in ensuring merit and openness in public affairs perform by public entities. The MoU was signed by Mrs. Farah Hamid Khan, Chief Information Commissioner, KPIC and Kashif Ali Sheikh, Executive Director, TI-Pakistan in presence of other senior officers of the organizations.

Under the MoU both the organizations will collaboratively work in mass aware-



ness regarding Right to Information Act (RTI) and training of the Public Information Officers (PIOs) for the smooth flow of public information.

Both the institutions look forward to a fruitful partnership that will promote citizen integration into public affairs. CIC

affirmed the Commission’s dedication to facilitating a conducive environment and ensuring every possible assistance to further the objectives outlined in the MOU. The collaboration is anticipated to contribute significantly to the RTI growth in the educational institutions.

Ceremony of Disaster Risk Reduction Policy held

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, under the guidance of the Relief Department, has initiated efforts to make KP resilient against potential disasters.

In a momentous step, the PDMA has commenced the development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Disaster Risk Reduction Policy with the support of the Community Resilience Activity (CRA-N). A day-long activity was convened at Peshawar, chaired by the esteemed Secretary Relief, Inayat Ullah Wasim, and Director General PDMA, Muhammad Qaisar Khan. Representatives from CRA-N, Academia and other organizations were also present.

The forum, comprising key stakeholders and disaster management experts, unanimously agreed that the forthcoming policy would be comprehensive, addressing a wide range of challenges and vulnerabilities faced by the province. Scheduled to be drafted within a stringent timeline of six months, the policy will reflect the unwavering commitment of the authori-

ties towards safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of the populace, speakers told participants.

Inayat Ullah Wasim, Secretary Relief, commended the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders involved in this monumental endeavor. He stressed on the importance of proactive measures in mitigating disaster risks and emphasized the policy’s significance in fostering resilience and preparedness across society. As Khyber Pakhtunkhwa embarks on this transformative journey towards resilience-building, the PDMA remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering a safer and more resilient future for all inhabitants of the province.

Muhammad Qaisar Khan, Director General PDMA, echoed similar sentiments, underscoring the imperative need for a concerted approach in effectively managing disaster risks.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is prone to natural hazards like; floods, earthquakes, landslides, heavy winds/cyclones, heavy snowfall and GLOFs which results in extensive damages to both life and property.

The objectives of the DRR policy are outline a comprehensive and integrated approach to disaster risk reduction and management efforts, Identify and assess potential risks, while outlining risk reduction strategies and measures to mitigate the impacts of disasters. Besides, it ensures that emergency responses plans are in place and that critical infrastructure and services remain resilient to the effects of disasters; Ensuring that management frameworks are in place to identify roles for PDMA, Communities and Stakeholders on how to engage in disaster management, recovery, rehabilitation and preparedness; while strengthening coordination and communication between the various departments and agencies involved in disaster management.

He reiterated PDMA’s steadfast dedication to ensuring the policy’s efficacy and relevance in addressing the evolving dynamics of disaster management. He appreciated the support of the CRA-N and other partners for their support in the first ever DRR policy.

Dr. Khizar given additional charge of Coordinator MNCH

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Dr. Khizar Hayat, the young, energetic and dedicated Director Maternal and Child Health (MCH) and Reproductive Health (RH), has been given the additional responsibilities Provincial Coordinator for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (MNCH) Program Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Dr. Hayat, known for his commitment and innovative approach, brings a wealth of

experience to this new role.

Since assuming the position of Director MCH, Dr. Hayat has spearheaded various initiatives aimed at enhancing maternal and child health in the province. These initiatives include the implementation of Kangaroo Mother Care, establishment of Maternal and Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response (MPDSR) systems, revitalization of Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health (RMNCH) Technical

Working Group, and the establishment of Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (BEmONC) centers across multiple districts.

With his dynamic leadership and proactive mindset, Dr. Hayat is poised to propel the MNCH program to new heights. It is hoped that under his guidance, the program will make significant strides in improving the health and well-being of mothers and children throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Khalique Rehman, MPA-elect said that Nakim Mandi Peshawar will be converted into Food Street where all these traditional cuisines would be served at reasonable prices. He said another food street at Fawara Chowak would also be established in Peshawar where special outlets of these cuisines to be established. The land that is famous for its hospitality has also welcomed food items of invaders and developed these culinary dishes according to their taste buds and living environment. These traditional foods need to be promoted through digital technology and social media to promote tourism in the country.



In brief

Section 144 imposed
F.P. Report

HARIPUR: Taking notice of kites manufacturing, flying and use of metallic threads, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Haripur has banned kite flying and imposed Section 144 in the district for two months. According to details, following the imposition of Section 144, Haripur city police have initiated an operation against kite manufacturers, arresting many kite and thread sellers as well as individuals involved in kite flying activities. Meanwhile, a significant quantity of thread and kites were seized during the operation. It was pertinent to mention here that following a comprehensive ban on kite manufacturing in Punjab, individuals involved in this business have relocated their facilities to district Haripur, where kites and banned metal or glass-coated kite-flying threads are being produced. The notification specifies that to strictly enforce the ban, DC Haripur has imposed Section 144 for two months, and violators will be punished under the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) Section 188.

Two killed, five injured

BUREWALA (INP): Two including a child were killed and five injured in separate incidents in different localities of Burewala on Friday, police said. According to details, a landlord Hassan Chaudhry gunned down a citizen identified as Shehbaz in village 469 EB, Fateh Shah police station jurisdiction for moving court against his illegally occupying government land. The culprit fled the scene and heirs along with dead body held protest demonstration demanding arrest of the murderer. An over speeding car crushed to death six-year-old Faizan on Vehari road. Car driver sped the scene. A school van got of control after its steering got locked and it hit a tree at Luddan Road resultantly six two teachers and three students were injured. The bodies and injured were shifted to different hospitals.

Minor crushed, five injured

BOUREWALA (INP): In a two separate incidents, a minor was crushed to death while five others including two teachers were hurt on Friday. According to rescuer, the speeding car ran over six-year-old boy, Faizan was playing near vehari road resulting his death on the spot. The driver escaped the scene along with the car. In second incident, a car carrying two school teachers with as many children struck into the tree situated alongside luddan road. As per the eye-witness, steering of the car was locked which led to lose control of the driver on speed of the vehicle. Rescuers shifted the wounded persons to THQ hospital with further information is yet awaiting by the authority. Condition of the driver is said to serious in the hospital.

Three young doctors booked

FAISALABAD (INP): Three Young Doctors were booked for attacking Principal Staff Officer to Medical Superintendent, Allied Hospital Faisalabad. According to details, in FIR registered at Civil Lines police station, three Young Doctors including Dr Aurangzeb Gujjar, Dr Zulqarnain, Dr Ahsan Gujjar and three others have been nominated for attacking PSO Dr Naveed. In the FIR, Dr Naveed was of the view that Young Doctors pressurized MS to issue NOC against rules and regulations, over refusal got furious, attacked him, maltreated and ransacked.

DPO established DRCs in 3 tehsils of Khyber District

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: In a significant move towards strengthening community-based easy justice mechanisms, the Khyber District Police Office, after Landikotal, has successfully established Dispute Resolution Councils (DRCs) in all three tehsils of District Khyber, namely Tehsil Bara, and Tirah. This commendable initiative, executed in accordance with the Police Act of 2017, is aimed at providing an accessible, effective, and alternative justice response within the community.

In a press release issued on Friday, CSOs, EVAW/G Alliance and Blue Veins. Local NGO from Peshawar, applauded the office of DPO Khyber for exemplary leadership and commitment towards the betterment of justice systems, particularly in regions where tribal values often heavily influence legal proceedings.

CSOs appreciating the progressive move commended the initiatives as unprecedented action

which will enhance the access to easy justice system and promote community engagement particularly empowering women voices and increasing their access to justice mechanism, ensuring their participation in the societal and legal processes.

Sana Ahmad, Program Coordinator at Blue Veins, expressed her enthusiasm for the initiative, stating, "The establishment of the DRCs in Khyber is a crucial step towards strengthening effective justice mechanism and equally is important of women inclusion in these platforms." It is pertinent to highlight here that DRC Landikotal has woman membership from Khyber and Police department is committed to promote women inclusion in all established DRCs.

"EVAW/G Alliance is pro-actively making efforts and working closely with DPO Khyber to mainstream women-inclusive justice mechanisms especially DRCs, which not only aligns with EVAW/G Alliance' mission to pro-

mote gender equality but also ensures a more diverse and representative approach to conflict resolution."

Irfan Afridi, a representative from the EVAW/G Alliance in Khyber, emphasized the importance of community involvement in the justice process. "The establishment of DRCs in all tehsils is a testament to the commitment of the Khyber District Police Office towards fostering a community-driven approach to dispute resolution. By collaborating with police department, EVAW/G Alliance and Blue Veins, are collectively working towards building a justice system that is inclusive, fair, and reflective of the needs of our diverse society."

The DRCs are anticipated to play a pivotal role in mitigating disputes and fostering a sense of empowerment within the community particularly women and girls, aligning with the broader goal of creating a fair and accessible justice system for all.

World Civil Defence Day observed in Hafizabad

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: World Civil Defence Day was observed in Hafizabad, on Friday. A seminar and walk arranged at government high school No. 1, Hafizabad in this regard.

Additional Deputy Commissioner General Hafizabad Hamadullah was chief guest on the occasion. District Officer Civil Defiance Shahid Pervaiz, students and employees of Civil Defence department attended the seminar. Addressing the seminar, ADCG Hamadullah said that Civil Defence always play key role in saving precious liver of people in case of natural calamity and other emergency situation.

He said that officers and other personnels were ensure protection of people to stake their own lives and bomb disposal department of Civil Defence was always remind at frontline for defusing bombs.

This day was being observed to create awareness among people about importance of Civil Defence and training of Civil Defence, he said. He urged the students to get training of civil defence so that they could play their vital role to save lives of people in any kind of emergency.

DO Civil Defence said that Civil Defence department is well equipped with necessary equipment requisite for combating emergency and training of Civil

Defence also being imparted to students. Civil Defence department displayed equipment provided by the government for coping with emergency situation.

Woman's head shaved off

LODHRAN (INP): Culprits shave off head of a woman over property dispute here Friday. Police arrested three accused including husband of woman and his two brothers. According to details, one kanal land was transferred in the name of a woman of Lodhran at time her nikkah some 10 years earlier.



SEHWAN: Devotees presenting Dhammal at Shrine of Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar during Urs.

Malam Jabba's snow blanketed as tourists throng hilly stations

MALAM JABBA (APP): Malam Jabba, the famous skiing resort of Swat was snow blanketed on Friday after receiving heavy snowfall that attracted tourists and adventure sports lovers in droves. Besides Kalam, Madain and Bahrain, the upper Swat has received moderate to heavy snowfall that continued lashing the hilly stations turning the weather cold and muggy due to torrential rains continued since last night.

Following the Met Office's forecast report of rains and snowfalls over the hills in upper/central parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Swat, Dir, Chitral, Abbottabad and Mansehra, the snowfall and skiing lovers from across the country especially Northern Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa thronged to Kalam, Bahrain and Malam Jabba on weekend. Besides Kalam and Malam Jabba, the snowy mountains peaks of Gabin Jabba, Miandam, Matiltan, Kalam, Utror, Gabral, Matiltan, Mahodand, Loye Sar resorts also drew influx of snowfall lovers along with families and children amid great fun and laughter despite muggy weather.

"I came from Nowshera to my favorite tourists' destination MET for snowfall following MET's Office predictions besides enjoying its brown trout fish available at reasonable

rate," said Qaiser Khan of Wapda Town Peshawar while taking to APP. Advising tourists to bring warm clothes, he said the cold breeze along with snowfall have increased chill in Upper Swat forcing tourists to wear additional cloths and wollen sweaters.

Tourists from Peshawar, Nowshera, Mardan, Charsadda, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad were seen in large numbers at Kalam, Malam Jabba and Bahrian on Sunday to get pleasures from snowfall, trekking and brown trout fish found in abundance following Govt successful projects in fishery sector. Known for a combination of its seven distinctive features including snowfall that was hard to find together in any tourist destination of Pakistan, Swat is also a home to primitive Gandhara civilization and ice skiing at Malam Jabba.

Besides river rafting, adventure sports, snow-clad mountain peaks and trout-fish, he said Swat motorway has made it an ideal destination for winter tourism and adventure sports in Pakistan. "I have visited many countries but could not find such a distinctive features together as being found in Swat" said Manzoorul Haq, former Ambassador while taking to APP.

He said the 150-kilometers long long freshwater of the river Swat originating from dif-

ferent glaciers and lakes including Mahodand and Gabral mountains offers unique opportunities for adventure and snow sports to explore in a single day trip. Fazagut, Fatehpur, Barikot, and Chakdara are most suitable for water rafting in river Swat and if developed on modern lines could attract a large number of tourists during winter, he maintained.

Ambassador Manzoor said River Swat was ideal for 'fish jumping and disappearing water sports' and introduction of such sports would help bolster the rural economy and promote tourism and transport industries in KP. Bestowed with more than 50 high-altitude small and big lakes, Swat's Mahodand lake is an exceptional source of attraction for tourists enjoying its blue- waters and boats riding amid cold breezes and snow-falls.

With umbrella in hands, Misal Khan, a retired Govt employee, told APP on Sunday that he came from Nowshera to enjoy snowfall in Kalam, trout fish of River Swat and Mahudand lake. "Mahudand and Gabriel lakes carried unique charm and clean air besides nearby birds chanting valleys take tourists into a lap of serenity." "I ordered 5 KG trout fish to enjoy it with my family members," he said, adding green trout of Swat attract foodies at Kalam,

Madain and other areas of the district in droves.

Besides its famous Deodar trees and precious wildlife, the Swat's snow-clad tall mountain ranges of Falakser, Mankial and Elum peaks offer great challenges to mountaineers and trekkers to explore especially during winter. Likewise, its extensive plains and orchards that bear fruits and vegetables carried a unique comparative advantage than other tourists destination of the country. Attracting Buddhists, monks and archaeologists from across the world throughout the year, the Swat's archaeological treasures and ancient artifacts housed at Saidu Sharif Museum become a distinctive feature taking tourists to the glorious history of Swat.

He said the Buddhist sites of Swat including Saidu Sharif Museum and Stupa besides Buthkara Buddhist monastery attract tourists from across the world. Ambassador Manzoor said Swat was very important in terms of Buddhist history in Pakistan and should be showcased on digital media to attract followers of Bhuddism from all around the world.

"Another striking feature of Swat is skiing sports being played at Malam Jabba every year during winter and it should be promoted to bolster rural economy KP tourism department officials told APP that a

mega project was prepared for organizing different winter sports and tourism events in various districts including Swat.

Kalam's winter gala and tour-de-cycle race would be organized in Swat while first-ever sports rafting at River Swat to be held besides an international paragliding event at Saidu Sharif. To reduce tourists' load at Kalam, Malam Jabba and Bahrain, new tourists spots would be developed at Sola Tanar, Puchar and Jargo valleys while walking tracks to promote ecotourism in Swat.

To maintain natural beauty and avoid pollution at tourist spots in Swat, he said camping pods would be established at new tourists' destinations besides Kalash culture events in Chitral. To link new tourist destination with Swat Motorway, he said that huge amount were being spent on development and construction of new roads. Work on the world bank's assisted KP Integrated Tourism Project was underway in the province to promote tourism, he added.

The construction of 15 jeepable tracks was also proposed in Malakand and Hazara divisions while six tourist facilitation centers established and work on seven others started. The ground breaking of 23 km long Mankyal-Bada Sarai Road has been performed for rehabilitation.

The project also includes the

construction of four bridges and two rest areas. He said that an Integrated Tourism Zone at Mankyal Swat would be established where modern facilities would be provided to tourists under the KITE project. He said a mega project for feasibility studies for identification of new tourist spots was planned. To promote ecotourism in southern districts of KP.

A road to Sheikh Badin tourist resort located at the confluence of DI Khan and Lakki Marwat districts would be constructed while a tourist wing for merged areas was established to monitor and oversee tourism-related activities there. Director General, Galyat Development Authority, Shahrugh Ali Khan inaugurated Galyat Snow Festival at Abbottabad.

Shahrugh Ali Khan said that the event was aimed to attract tourists and inform people about the tourism potential of Galyat. The festival would also impact socio-economic conditions of area people by creating growth opportunities. The festival would include various snow sports events, musical concerts, hiking, horse riding, zip lining and tracking. Tourism police was made operational at Malakand and Hazara divisions to facilitate tourists. He said Tourism police were deployed on key places of Swat to facilitate tourists and snowfall lovers during winter season.



QUETTA: A view of accumulated water on Imdad Chowk after heavy rain.

Spring tree plantation inaugurated

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Additional Assistant Commissioner Mardan, Khaula Haqdar on Friday inaugurated Spring Tree Plantation.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by area elders, officials and local government representatives. On the occasion, hundreds of samplings were distributed for plantation. Talking to elders, Additional Assistant Commissioner Khaula Haqdar said that tree planting is a charity that would help minimizing effects of climate change and making environment clean and healthy.

Police arrest man: Mardan police on Friday during snap checking recovered 3344 gm of hashish and 41gm ice from a drug peddler near Sher Garh.

Police said during snap checking SHO Sher Garh, Latif Khan offloaded a suspected man from a passenger vehicle and recovered 3344gm hashish and 41gm ice from his possession. The drug peddler identified as Tauseef, resident of Jalala was shifted to Sher Garh police station and a case under Narcotics Act was registered against him.

Man dies in accident

F.P. Report

SWABI: A 50-year-old man was killed when two mini loader vehicles collided near Karnal Sher Khan Interchange on Motorway on Friday.

Rescue 1122 officials said a loaded truck hit another truck in the back due to slippery road conditions near Karnal Sher Khan Interchange. As a result, a man sitting in the back truck sustained critical head injury and died on the scene. The man was identified as Sultan Hakeem, son of Gul Damat, resident of Barikot, Swat.

Commissioner urges to promote Pashto literature

F.P. Report

SWABI: Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai while addressing the function organized under the title of Swabi Cultural Evening in Recreation Hall Right Bank said that Pashto literature is our valuable asset and it is our responsibility to promote Pashto literature and culture.

It is a duty, he said, adding, as a commissioner, this effort has always been, and will continue to be, to promote Pashto culture.

Explaining his ideas about Swabi district, he said that Swabi district has its own history and customs. It is a very fertile district in terms of civilization and culture.

Pashto poets and singers here are the asset of our culture, he said. It is the responsibility of all of us to provide them a platform. Let me spend time,

Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai, Deputy Secretary Education Mutasam Billah Shah rode in a traditional "Tanga" and visited the venue. On this occasion, Commissioner Mardan Division distributed traditional sweets among the participants. The Commissioner visited various stalls in which old-time pots and various items, traditional chador chael, and other stalls took special interest.

On this occasion, famous poets of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Munir Khan Buner, Aziz Manariwala, Andalib, Nurul Amin Yousafzai and others presented their poetry in the ceremony. Shiraz Akram Bacha - Association of Traders was also organized. Journalist Salim Ali, District Reform Jirga President Faiz Al-Hayat, Fazal Khaliq, Gul Bhadra

and Mir Alam, Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai, Deputy Commissioner Swabi Tariqullah, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Secretary Education, Mutasam Billah Shah, AC Topi Adnan Mumtaz, AC Swabiullah Nawaz and others were dressed in traditional chador.

At the end of the ceremony, Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai congratulated Deputy Commissioner Swabi Tariqullah, Gauhar Khan, District Sports Officer Tariq Khan, Adnan Mumtaz on the successful program of Dah Swabi culture. Parvez Khan, Journalist Salim Ali Zai, Siraj Baja, Sherfarzand. Awarded to Arif Shah, Munir, and Aziz Manariwala, Nurul Amin Yousafzai were also present.

Scholar defends M. Phil thesis in computer science

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A Scholar, Adnan Khan successfully defended his M.Phil thesis in the field of computer science with the title "Factors influencing software reliability aspect of safety-critical cyber-physical system (SCCPS) at the University of Malakand here the other day.

Dr Numan Ali, assistant professor, department of

computer games development, faculty of computing Air University Islamabad was his external examiner for his viva voce examination. Dr Muhammad Ilyas, assistant professor, department of computer science and information technology, UoM was the scholar's internal supervisor.

Accused sentenced: The court of additional session judge Chakdara

sentenced two accused Muslim Khan and Qadar Khan for life imprisonment and Rs one million fine each on their conviction under 302 crpc here the other day. The convicts were also awarded five year jail and Rs 50,000 as fine each under 15AA. The senior public prosecutor Muhammad Inam Khan pleaded the case as a prosecutor and proved the accused guilty in the court.

Murderer killed

SHEIKHUPURA (INP): Murderer of police constable was killed in a police encounter here on Friday. According to details, a three-member gang of robbers were engaged in looting citizens when DSP Muridke

Circle Malik Tahir Siddique and SHO Sadder Muridke Zaheer Alam Shah along with heavy contingent of police reached the scene.

An exchange of fire took place in which notorious robber Abid alias

Billa Dakoo was killed while his two accomplices managed to escape. The killed robber had martyred police constable Bilal three days earlier and was also wanted in various serious criminal cases.



Putin warns West against sending troops to Ukraine

MOSCOW (BBC): Russian President Vladimir Putin has warned Western countries against sending troops to Ukraine. The consequences of such a decision would be "tragic", he said. In his annual state of the nation address, President Putin accused the West of trying to drag Russia into an arms race.

At the same time, he said that Russia needed to strengthen its defences on its western border now that Sweden and Finland were joining Nato. President Putin said the West "provoked" the conflict in Ukraine and "continues to lie, without any embarrassment, saying that Russia allegedly intends to attack Europe". Probably referring to comments by French President Emmanuel Macron earlier this week that sending Nato ground troops to Ukraine "could not be excluded", President Putin said: "The consequences for possible interventionists will be... tragic." "We also have weapons that can hit targets on their territory," he added. "All this really threatens a conflict with the use of nuclear weapons and the destruction of civilisation. Don't they get that?" Several Nato countries, including the US, Germany and the UK, ruled out deploying ground troops to Ukraine. The US has criticised the Russian president's latest remarks regarding the possibility of nuclear warfare.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said it was "not the first time we have seen irresponsible rhetoric from Vladimir Putin". "It is no way for the leader of a nuclear armed state to speak," he said, adding that the US has seen no evidence that Moscow is planning to launch such weapons. President Putin also boasted about Russia's sophisticated weapons - like hypersonic aircraft and unmanned underwater vehicles - and said that Russia's strategic nuclear forces are in a "state of full readiness".

Notably, President Putin explicitly referred to the two years of fighting in Ukraine as a "war", despite his repeated insistence that Russia's invasion should be described as a "special military operation". He said that an "absolute majority" of Russians supported his decision to invade Ukraine, and that the Russian people were now united against what he called Western attempts to weaken the country.

He also hit out at accusations from the US that Russia is developing nuclear weapons for use against satellites in space. The speech came just over two weeks before Russia's presidential election, in which President Putin is widely expected to win a fifth term in office. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the address could "to a

large degree be seen as [Putin's] election programme". Indeed, much of the address focused on domestic issues ranging from the modernisation of the tax system to pensions and incentives aimed at boosting Russia's dwindling birth rate. He also talked about the need to improve the health of the nation, announcing a series of measures aimed at boosting Russia's life expectancy, which at 70 is currently one of the lowest in Europe. Urging people to focus on physical activity and cut down alcohol consumption, he joked: "Stop drinking and start skiing!" The speech lasted a record two hours and was attended by all senior politicians, the CEOs of oil and gas firms Rosneft and Gazprom, as well as religious leaders of all denominations.

It was broadcast on giant screens across Moscow, and several cinemas in Russian cities reportedly screened it free of charge. As expected, there was no mention of the death of Alexei Navalny, the opposition leader who died in a Siberian penal colony two weeks ago and who many saw as President Putin's greatest opponent. Navalny, who will be buried in Moscow on Friday, died under circumstances yet to be fully established on 16 February. His widow Yulia has insisted that President Putin was responsible.

Far right makes gains in Israeli municipal polls

JERUSALEM: Far-right and ultra-orthodox Zionist parties made significant gains in Israel's municipal elections this week, raising fears among secular Israelis and Palestinians in Israel. Analysts believe that liberal freedoms could be threatened in some cities and that discrimination against Palestinians - already having risen acutely following Hamas's October 7 attack - could grow even more.

Jerusalem saw one of the largest victories for Israel's far right, which captured a majority of local municipal seats. Centrist mayor Moshe Leon won a landslide victory to remain mayor. But Leon will be at the mercy of the far-right bloc in the municipality, which could lead to significant tension with Jerusalem's roughly 362,000 Palestinian residents. "The municipal results are highly significant in disclosing ongoing trends," said Daniel Seidmann, an Israeli attorney who specialises in legal and public issues in Jerusalem. "Indeed, the ultra-orthodox or extreme right wing won a majority, but they pretty much ran things [in Jerusalem] already." The majority of Palestinian residents in Jerusalem live on the east side of the city. The global community has considered East Jerusalem occupied territory ever since Israel annexed the city after capturing Arab lands in 1967. Since then, Palestinians in East Jerusalem have been permitted to participate in local elections, but not in a national vote. However, most Palestinians in East Jerusalem boycotted the municipal elections to protest the occupation, as they have traditionally done in the past. In Tel Aviv, residents re-elected Ron Huldai for another term as mayor. Huldai has been the city's chief executive for more than two decades, indicating that most voters were looking to protect liberal norms and spaces, according to Oren Ziv, an Israeli commentator and journalist.

In December 2022, Huldai was one of several mayors who opposed the decision of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to give far-right politician Avi Maoz authority over Israeli school curriculums. At the time, Huldai vowed not to let homophobia into the school curriculum and warned that Israel was becoming a fascist theocracy. Ziv told Al Jazeera that residents in Tel Aviv previously blamed Huldai for gentrifying the city, which has made it unaffordable for many. However, many people still supported him in this election to thwart the advance of the right-wing candidates. "Many people feel that the government or regime in Israel could affect Tel Aviv, and that Huldai is the only one that will stand up to them and to Netanyahu. — Aljazeera



BANGKOK: Smoking wreckage of the jet fighter that crashed in a field is seen near Kyo Wun village, Salin township in Magway region, Myanmar.

Spain opens ‘street terrorism’ probe into Catalan separatist leader

MADRID (AFP): Spain's top court said it was opening an investigation into Catalan separatist leader Carles Puigdemont on "terrorism" charges over protests linked to Catalonia's failed 2017 independence bid. The Supreme Court said it had decided "to investigate and, where appropriate, prosecute" Puigdemont "for terrorism offences in relation to the Democratic Tsunami case".

Democratic Tsunami is a secretive Catalan group that spearheaded a string of protests after Spain jailed 13 pro-independence leaders, two years after their botched bid to separate the rich northeastern region from Spain. Led by Puigdemont, who was Catalan regional leader at the time, the failed independence bid sparked Spain's worst political crisis in decades. Although Puigdemont fled Spain to avoid prosecution, his fellow leaders were put on trial and on the day their sentence was handed down in October 2019, thousands of activists blocked access to Barcelona airport for several hours. The unprecedented protest prompted the cancellation of more than 100 flights and 115 people were injured during clashes between police and protesters. In its decision, the court referred to the crime of "street terrorism". The aim, it said,

was to "undermine law and order, to seriously breach the peace, to cause serious harm to the functioning of an international organisation or to cause a sense of terror within the population or part of it". There was "evidence pointing to Carles Puigdemont's participation in the events under investigation", it added, citing his involvement in the group's creation "to subvert law and order and to seriously destabilise democratic institutions". Puigdemont, who lives in self-exile in Brussels and is a member of the European Parliament, reacted drily. "The same day they accuse me of receiving a 7,000-euro Rolex watch, they charge me with being a terrorist. All I need now is a secret bank account in Panama," he wrote on X, formerly Twitter. He was referring to an article published in El Confidencial newspaper which said he had been given a Rolex watch by a company behind a string of separatist events, including the Democratic Tsunami protests.

The court's decision will complicate life for Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, whose minority left-wing government relies on Puigdemont's hardline separatist JxCat party for parliamentary support. Spain's government is currently

in the process of drawing up an amnesty law that was demanded by Puigdemont's party in exchange for crucial parliamentary support in a November vote to reappoint Sanchez as premier. The draft law, which was shot down by lawmakers in late January, is currently being reformulated but will essentially offer an amnesty to those wanted by the justice system over the failed independence bid, notably Puigdemont. JxCat spokesman Josep Rius accused the Supreme Court of "descending into the political arena and trying to interfere with the will of the legislator", an allusion to the amnesty bill due to be put to a new vote in parliament shortly.

"In no case can the free exercise of the right to demonstrate be called terrorism, and we want to make this very clear," he told a Barcelona news conference. The planned amnesty has sparked fury among Spain's right-wing opposition, which sees Puigdemont as public enemy number one. It has also stoked opposition from within Sanchez's Socialist party. Puigdemont is already wanted in Spain for his role in the secession bid, and the courts will need the European Parliament's permission to question him in this latest case.

Violence rocks Haiti as prime minister visits Kenya

PORT-AU-PRINCE (Reuters): A wave of panic swept through downtown Port-au-Prince as violence and heavy gunfire broke out, in what a gang leader said was a demonstration against authorities. The armed clashes involving gangs, police and vigilantes took place on the same day Haiti's Prime Minister Ariel Henry arrived in Kenya for talks on the deployment of a multinational security mission in the country backed by the United Nations.

By midday, most institutions and businesses in the city had closed and thousands of people were trying to flee the downtown area on foot or public transport, witnesses said. Special police units were deployed throughout the city and national police trade union SYNAPPOHA said

four officers had been killed, including a chief inspector. Haitian airline Sunrise Airways halted flights as violence flared, a company spokesperson said, adding shootouts near the capital's airport had put people in danger.

"We have chosen to take our destiny in our own hands. The battle we are waging will not only topple the Ariel (Henry) government. It is a battle that will change the whole system," said former cop and gang leader Jimmy Cherizier, also known as Barbecue, in a video shared on social media. Henry, who came to power after the assassination of the country's last president in 2021, had pledged to step down by early February, but later said security must first be re-established in order to ensure free and fair elections. Violent

gangs have since expanded their territory and are now estimated to control most of the capital. The UN estimates the conflict killed close to 5,000 people last year and has driven some 300,000 from their homes, while the fighting has blocked off access to food and medical services. A UN spokesperson said five countries had formally notified the United Nations of their intent to contribute personnel to the international force, which Henry had urgently requested back in 2022. No numbers have yet been given for the potential force and a deployment date has yet to be announced. Henry, who has said security must be reestablished to hold fair elections, told regional leaders this week he would hold a vote by August 2025.

‘A legend for our people’: Inside an Indigenous activist’s death in Brazil

URUCUCA: Mukunã Pataxó remembers his aunt began to sing moments before the gunfire rang out. Maria de Fátima Muniz, 52, was a spiritual leader among the Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe, an Indigenous group in northeastern Brazil. A short, serious woman with dark, shoulder-length hair, she was known to lead her people in prayer and song, her voice deep and steady.

But on January 21, that voice could not quell the violence about to erupt in the rolling green hills outside Potiraguá, a town in the state of Bahia. About 50 members of Maria's village had gathered there to set up camp one day prior, in an effort to reclaim part of their ancestral homeland. She, her brother Chief Naiton Muniz and the other Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe activists had planned to plant traditional crops in the area: beans, cassava and corn, alongside medicinal herbs.

But their presence generated backlash among the local landowners. A social media message soon circulated on WhatsApp, calling on merchants, farmers and landholders to "take back" the parcel. More than 30 vehicles arrived the next morning, blocking access to the roads. The Brazilian government later estimated there were 200 non-Indigenous "ruralists" present. Some came armed. Mukuna said police on the scene had assured the Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe of their safety. Video showed the group chanting at the top of a dirt path, while officers stood metres away.

Law enforcement did nothing, however, as the ruralists raised their guns to shoot, Chief Muniz and his stepson Mukunã allege. The ruralists opened fire and attacked the group, wounding at least five people and setting fire to Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe vehicles. Chief

Muniz was shot in the kidney. And his sister was fatally injured. She died on the way to the hospital. "The police were watching everything," said Mukunã, "as if we were nothing to them." Maria became the second Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe leader to be shot dead in northern Bahia in the past three months. Her death has raised lingering questions about the ongoing violence against the Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe community - and whether Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva can follow through with his promises to defend Indigenous rights. Lula himself responded to the shooting by pledging federal support to "resolve this situation". "I want to make the federal government available to help Indigenous peoples find a solution so that we can resolve this peacefully," he told Radio Metropole after the attack.

Lula has publicly sought to expand protections for Brazil's Indigenous groups, a population of nearly 1.7 million people. Last April, four months into his term, he announced the creation of six new federally recognised Indigenous territories - the first such recognition in years. "We are going to legalise Indigenous lands," he said in an accompanying address. "I won't leave a single Indigenous territory unprotected." The number of land demarcations was lower than expected, however, falling short of the 14 territories his government had pledged to recognise - one of which was Pataxó territory in the south of Bahia. Critics say the president has also failed to defend Indigenous groups from an onslaught of recent court cases and legislation, designed to weaken their claims over their ancestral lands. One of the most recent efforts has been to implement a "marco temporal" or "time marker" to cut off Indigenous land

claims. Any land they did not inhabit on October 5, 1988 - the date of Brazil's most recent constitution - would not be recognised as Indigenous territory under the policy.

Advocacy groups have blasted the policy as a dangerous rollback of Indigenous rights, one that ignores the legacy of displacement many tribes have endured. A United Nations human rights expert warned the legislation could "legitimise violence against indigenous peoples", and the Climate Observatory, a Brazil-based advocacy network, nicknamed it the "Indigenous genocide law". But the "marco temporal" enjoys strong support from Brazil's agricultural lobby, which seeks access to natural resources on Indigenous lands. The lobby is powerful, and its reach extends to Brazil's Congress. A majority of lawmakers in both congressional chambers identify as part of the "Bancada Ruralista", a voting bloc that advocates for farming interests. That broad base of support allowed Congress to ultimately pass the "marco temporal" in December, sidestepping a Supreme Court decision that previously declared the policy unconstitutional - and even overriding a partial veto from Lula himself.

Joelson Ferreira - who works with Chief Muniz as co-founder of Teia dos Povos, a national alliance of Black, Indigenous and working-class Brazilians - believes that part of the blame for the bill's passage lies with leftist leaders. Ferreira accused them of making too many concessions to the agricultural lobby. "The left likes to negotiate with agribusiness to keep itself in power," he said. For Ferreira, there is a direct line between Maria's death and the lobby's sway in Congress. The ranchers accused of shooting Maria

were allegedly part of an armed militia called Invasion Zero, founded in April last year by Luiz Uaquim, a politician and landowner in southern Bahia. Invasion Zero boasts ties with other conservative legislators in Brazil's Congress. An eponymous legislative coalition was formed in October to promote legislation like the "marco temporal" and counter Indigenous land claims. "If you mess with these militias, you mess with agribusiness," Ferreira said. In response to Al Jazeera's request for comment, Invasion Zero denied responsibility for Maria's death.

In a public statement, Invasion Zero also said it "deeply laments the confrontation" and "has never incentivised acts of violence", instead prioritising the "peaceful resolution of land disputes". According to an interview Uaquim gave Al Jazeera, there is "no connection between this movement and the death of the Indigenous woman. There are farmers all over Brazil, and each is responsible for what he does." Two people - the son of a rancher and a retired police officer - were ultimately arrested as suspects in Maria's death. Police have confirmed that the bullet that killed Maria came from the gun of the rancher's son. The Bahia military police told Al Jazeera that, in addition to arresting the two suspects, it has opened investigations into the actions of its police officers. Invasion Zero considers itself a "movement of rural producers" that aims to mount a "firm defence of private property". Its existence, however, reflects the ongoing conflict between Brazil's Indigenous peoples and the businesses that seek to expand into their ancestral lands. The government considers about 13 percent of Brazil to be Indigenous territory, a designation that

protects the land from outside development. Much of that territory overlaps with the Amazon rainforest, a key ecosystem in the fight against climate change. Yet Indigenous territory is not the only point of struggle for land reform activists, who point to an eye-popping statistic: Land distribution in Brazil is among the most unequal in the world, with one percent of landowners owning nearly half of all land in the country. The ranch land at the centre of January's violence was part of the territory the Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe say was awarded to them in a 2012 Supreme Court decision.

That ruling nullified nearly 200 private titles in Bahia, transferring ownership of the land back to the Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe - at least, in theory. Indigenous activists say instead that the process has stalled, leaving their land in the hands of farmers. Chief Muniz and Mukunã told Al Jazeera that camps like the one set up at the ranch in January provide a means of reclaiming the territory. The Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe were some of the first Indigenous people to encounter Portuguese colonists and have since suffered centuries of displacement. "This occupation is really a question of honouring our ancestors," said Mukunã. "Of honouring those who have fought and spilled blood on this territory." His stepfather explained that, since 1982, their village has succeeded in retaking 54,000 hectares (about 133,400 acres) of land, although 100,000 hectares (about 247,100 acres) remain in the hands of private ranchers. "Over time, our land has been reduced and reduced," said Chief Muniz. He believes the occupations will eventually force the Brazilian government to conduct a study proving that this land belongs to

Indigenous people. The Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe are not the only group to deploy this tactic. The Marxist-inspired Landless Workers Movement (MST) - considered by some to be the largest social movement in South America - has used the occupation and cultivation of unused land to push for social reform. Supporters of the Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe, like Ferreira, are longtime members of the group. MST families also blocked highways in protest after Maria's death. But Indigenous activism to reclaim land - or protect existing territory - has prompted a violent backlash. The advocacy group Global Witness estimates at least 1,910 "land and environmental defenders" have been killed worldwide between 2012 and 2022, many of them Indigenous. In Brazil, 34 "defenders" lost their lives in 2022 alone. The Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe have experienced this spate of violence firsthand. In December, just weeks before Maria was shot, another Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe leader was gunned down: 31-year-old Lucas Santos de Oliveira. According to media reports, his assailants were two men on a motorcycle. In addition to reclaiming ancestral territory, Mukunã believes land occupation is also a tool to protect the environment. He points out that, under Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe's care, forests have grown back in Bahia. The United Nations has also noted that Indigenous stewardship corresponds with lower rates of deforestation in general. A 2021 report examining multiple countries found that "intact forest" declined by only 4.9 percent in Indigenous areas, compared with 11.2 percent elsewhere. Mukunã explained that protecting the environment can have tangible benefits for the Pataxó Hä-Hä-Häe, too. — Aljazeera

The Frontier Post

Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town, Peshawar.

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

Is Ukraine war turning global?

PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin recently warned the Western nations that they risk provoking a nuclear war if they deploy ground troops to fight in Ukraine. According to Putin, Western nations must realize that Russia has weapons that can hit targets on their territories. All this threatens a conflict with the use of nuclear weapons and the destruction of civilization. Putin prefaced his nuclear warning with a specific reference to an idea, floated by French President Emmanuel Macron suggesting that the NATO members send ground troops to Ukraine to fight Russia.

The war in Ukraine has triggered the worst crisis in Moscow's relations with the West since the Cuban Missile Crisis in the early sixties. Putin has previously told his adversaries of the dangers of a confrontation between the North Atlantic Alliance and the Russian Federation, but his recent warning about nuclear conflict surely indicates the volume and gravity of the tension that exists between the two warring factions in East Europe. Russia recently captured Ukraine's border town of Avdiivka, following a weeks-long deadly battle between the two armies. The Russian Army is pressing forward into the large chunk of the 1000 km frontline on the Russian-Ukraine border.

The war in Ukraine has entered its third year with Russian forces now in the best position on the battlefield in Ukraine and advancing on multiple fronts. Russia has stepped up its defenses to its western borders with the European Union after Finland and Sweden decided to join the NATO military bloc. Ukraine's war efforts are gradually weakening and Kyiv's troops are sliding back in multiple places due to a scarcity of troops, arms, and ammunition. Ukraine largely relied on Western support during its war against several times bigger enemy which in turn became over-fatigued and burdened due to a prolonged indiscriminate battle. Unfortunately, the EU assistance package for Ukraine faced staunch opposition from multiple European community members at the EU Parliament wherein the \$ 60 billion proposed Ukraine aid package of the Biden administration met the same fate in US Congress. Ukraine faces the worst scenarios in its years-long war against Russia, with a destroyed economy and infrastructure, exhausted military, and depleted arms reserves. Recently, French President Emmanuel Macron put forth a suggestion to deploy NATO troops in Ukraine which was sharply declined by several bloc members but this idea met a resolute response from the Kremlin.

The strategic impact of the Russia-Ukraine war continues to evolve, and its long-term consequences will depend on how the conflict ultimately plays out and the actions of various stakeholders including Russia, Ukraine, the United States, and its allies, which are resolutely stood beside Kyiv and adding to the hostility through all possible means. If Western nations pour their latest weapons or deploy their troops in Ukraine that will further intensify the conflict by adding Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) from both sides, Russia most probably will use its first-strike option to avoid backlash at a later stage. All these developments surely have grave consequences for global peace and stability. Hence, the warring blocs, the global community, and the UN play their due role in the Ukraine war. Hence, diplomacy and dialogue must be used to find common ground and pave the path for a peaceful settlement of the disputes between Russia and Ukraine. Otherwise, the Ukraine conflict has the potential to transition into a global nuclear conflict that will perish the whole world into ashes.

Leadership merits responsible conduct

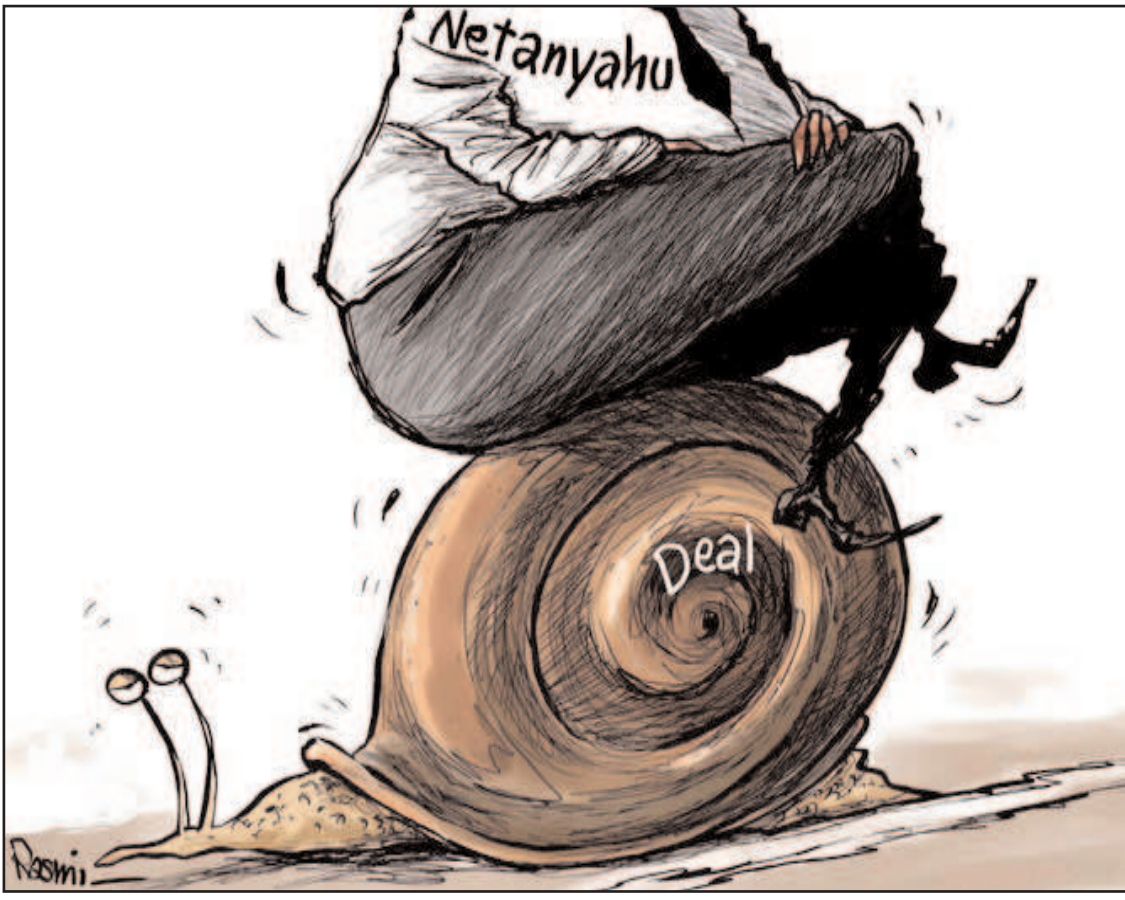
THE PPP Senior leader Makhdoom Ahmed Mahmood has reiterated the party's long-standing stance on the importance of adherence to constitutional limits by all institutions of the country. He emphasized that such adherence was crucial for democracy, economy, federation, and overall stability of the country.

Starting with the first Military intervention imposed by former President Iskandar Mirza and then Army Chief General Ayub Khan in late 1958, the state of Pakistan ever witnessed highly unconstitutional and self-centered conduct of its leaders including Politicians, bureaucrats, and military Generals throughout the past. Similarly, these top government functionaries disputed and corrupted the institutions they governed leading to overall dysfunctions of the system which we see all around in almost every sector of our national life from politics to governance, finance to education and healthcare, internal security to foreign policy. Whereas, all governmental affairs, trade, and businesses are influenced by the individuals, cartels, or global market manipulators whom our leaders often term as friendly countries. Historically, the constitution of the country has set clear jurisdictions for each government leader and institution that needs to understand and respect their political, legal, and operational boundaries that guarantee smooth governance and could prevent constitutional crises like those that occurred in October 1958, December 1971, July 1977, October 1999, and on May 9. There is a dire need for mutual respect among politicians, media, judiciary, and other institutions, instead of resolving personal animosities and ego clashes through public offices that could contribute to addressing the nation's challenges.

The economy is on the brink, society is politically polarised, terrorism is on the upsurge, as inflation soars ever higher, masses are struggling hard to feed themselves and their families. As the country suffers, the politicians have been pulled into a power struggle over who should rule the country. The current situation merits responsible conduct from across-the-board stakeholders by acknowledging past mistakes and fostering consensus on important issues including the national economy, democracy, electoral reforms, governance, and political system in the country. This is the only way forward to building the nation and attaining due prestige in the comity of nations.

Important Notice

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



Blame Joe Biden for President Trump come November

Andrew Mitrovica

IT is over. I wrote a column a few months ago expressing the sincere hope that Joe Biden would lose the upcoming presidential election. Now, I can confidently predict that this craven, self-anointed "Zionist" will join the roster of presidential has-beens; an unremarkable one-term commander-in-chief who will be remembered chiefly for abetting a genocide instead of stopping it.

That will be Biden's permanent and disgraceful epitaph. Biden's sorry fate was confirmed earlier this week after more than 100,000 enlightened Americans voted "uncommitted" in Michigan's Democratic presidential primary. Their act of tangible resistance delivered a blunt rebuke not only of Biden but the whole, decrepit Democratic Party establishment that has enabled, supported, and encouraged a diseased apartheid regime to commit genocide against imprisoned Palestinians in Gaza and beyond. Biden and company will be unable to resuscitate his fast-eroding prospects among enlightened Americans who are motivated by one, defining moral imperative: to repudiate through their suffrage the complicit perpetrators of the deliberate, wholesale destruction of Palestine and its desperate people.

It is too late. The deep damage cannot be undone. Gaza is gone. Reduced by methodical and cruel design to a wasteland at the foul hands of a ruthless, occupying army. More than 30,000 innocents, mostly infants and children, have been killed. Blown to scattered bits. Their small, dismembered bodies left hanging like grotesque ornaments on a bloodied wall in Rafah. Families erased. Children orphaned. Parents grieving over the remains of their beloved dead wrapped tight in white shrouds and buried by hand in shallow pits. Thousands more have been maimed or injured - in mind, body, and spirit. Starvation, thirst, and disease run rampant in the makeshift camps where millions of homeless Palestinians have sought - in vain - refuge from Israel's "killing rage". All of it, every inhumane measure of it, is a man-made catastrophe engineered by irredeemable sociopaths in tailored suits, like President

Biden. So, enlightened Americans in Michigan - many of them Arab and Muslim Americans - did what I knew they would do. No longer content to be ghosted by an administration addicted to empty, per-

100,000 "uncommitted" voters and Michigan is lost and likely with it, the presidency.

The calculated leaks and rhetorical chicanery aimed at convincing enlightened Americans of Biden's "frus-

- my apologies, diplomats - at the United Nations to veto another ceasefire resolution, Biden attended a lucrative fundraiser in Los Angeles co-hosted by the billionaire honorary vice chairman of the Anti-Defamation League, Haim Saban.

Prior to the up to \$250,000-a-plate fete-a-tete, Biden's gushing super fan described the president's steadfast support of Israel as "pristine". "There's never been a president as supportive in facts, not only in words, of Israel," Saban said. "And most specifically, in these dire times for Israel, he's been pristine." Saban is right. Biden has long been a "pristine" backer of an apartheid state that the International Court of Justice at the Hague accepted the "plausibility" of having committed genocide as defined by the Genocide Convention. In instructive contrast to Biden's rich benefactors, the organisers of Michigan's "uncommitted" campaign reportedly earned their astonishing success on a paltry budget of \$200,000. Their principled, people-driven initiative will, no doubt, be a template for enlightened Americans in other toss-up states to follow honourable and necessary suit. The disgust and anger that fuelled Michigan's "uncommitted" voters to turn out in such extraordinary numbers may soon be replicated throughout the daunting electoral college map that Biden confronts. That is the fatal reality. It's the genocide, stupid. When he is obliged, by tradition, to leave behind a congratulatory note on the Oval Office desk wishing President Donald Trump every success, one person will be to blame: Joe Biden. The faux "progressive" and "liberal" cognoscent will wait at the impending demise of America's sham "democracy". In their quest for an easy scapegoat, they are bound, of course, to point an accusatory finger at the "short-sighted protest vote" that "condemned" America to the horror of a second Trump presidency. As always, they will be wrong. Enlightened Americans are no longer willing to tolerate the egregious status quo by offering, as expected, for the "lesser of two evils". The only evil is genocide. Period.

Aljazeera

formative acts of "solidarity", they organised. They mobilised. They staffed phone banks. They went door to door. They persuaded other enlightened Americans to join them in their resolve to be heard and counted. Together, they told Biden that his complicity and cowardice will not stand. They translated their anger and disgust into a potent political force while an old, dithering president licked an ice cream cone and donned his aviator sunglasses for an agreeable late-night talk show comic.

This was not a "warning" or a "protest". It was a statement. A verdict. A judgement. Worse, for Biden, it was a commitment. The "uncommitted" are committed to defeating Biden and depriving him of what he values most: power, position, and prestige. Michigan's "uncommitted" voters will exercise their franchise in November. Biden will have his comeuppance because, without Michigan's crucial 16 electoral votes, his already precarious bid for re-election will be doomed. In 2020, Biden prevailed in Michigan by a little more than 100,000 votes. Recent polls show the state tipping into Trump's favour. The math is simple. Subtract the

tration" with a recalcitrant Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and the president's "determined efforts" at arranging a ceasefire are a choreographed pantomime. Biden is no more interested in a ceasefire than Netanyahu and his rabid, evangelical cabinet which has made it plain that their goal is to obliterate Palestine and plot a second, decisive Nakba. Just as lunatic is the suggestion that a "miffed" Biden is poised to withhold America's purse and lethal munitions to "pressure" Israel into bending to its phantom will to "protect" Palestinian civilians and enact his "grand" geostrategic plans to establish a "two-state solution". All of it, every disingenuous ounce of it, is a familiar lie. Biden has not been and never will be a "peacemaker".

He is a 100 percent-proof warmonger practised at backing US invasions of sovereign country after sovereign country and damn the disastrous human consequences. Enlightened Americans won't be fooled again. Still, Biden and his surrogates believe that money will be their salvation from the genocidal quagmire of their making. After ordering his quislings

Post-Brexit immigration surge was an accident

Fraser Nelson

HOW can any country accidentally let in a million immigrants? Brexit was supposed to dial it all back, ushering in a new economic model where employers would be forced to rely on the domestic workforce. Care homes would, finally, have to recruit locally - and pay properly. Instead, real-term salaries plunged and immigration doubled - leading to the panic now underway. The number of health and social care visas has risen fivefold in just three years, according to figures out yesterday. So what went wrong? And how?

So often, the policies that most shape societies - for good and ill - come about by mistake rather than design. This is a classic example. Immigration has changed the face of Britain: newcomers account for one in five workers (a higher ratio than the US) and almost one in three new mums. A higher birth rate means the UK is one of the few major countries not fretting about a fall in the working-age population. So this is not the story of disaster: for all of the current tensions, Britain can still claim to be Europe's most successful melting pot. But this wasn't intentional.

Everyone thought that Brexit would lead to less immigration. It was seen to be obvious, which is why so many Remainers portrayed Brexit as a xenophobic, anti-migrant project. The economic scare studies from Remain saying we'd be poorer usually included the assumption that immigration rates would plummet. "What about GDP per head?" said the Brexiters. But all sides agreed that numbers would drop, which is partly why Boris Johnson loosened the migration rules. He felt he could afford to: numbers were sure to fall. Covid arrived just weeks after Britain left the EU, so the new visa system was not properly tested. When lockdowns ended, the urgent mission was rebuilding the economy and it had become horribly clear that the Great British workforce was not rushing back to the office. Immigrants who came to study were allowed to stay for two years to job hunt. The salary threshold for a visa was lowered from £30,000 to £25,600. Rules on bringing dependants were loosened.

The first odd sign came from the UK Visas authority, which prides itself on issuing paperwork in good time and submitted a request for more staff to handle a quadrupling of demand. This wasn't seen as alarming but, instead, the start of the post-Brexit visa era and the unwinding of lockdown. The finest minds in England thought things were still on track. As late as November 2022, the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) said net migration would be 230,000 the next year. The actual figure was three times higher.

The dots were there, but no one had joined them. The number of dependent visas rose fourfold. Just one in four visas issued was for work. The 2019 Tory target to have 600,000 foreign students by 2030 was hit in 2021, an astonishing nine years early. But this didn't cause alarm or make people ask whether a scam may be going on where colleges were offering Mickey Mouse degrees so foreign students could bring their

family and exploit a loophole. Political attention was elsewhere (mainly on the emerging small boats crisis).

Three factors had blinded ministers to what was happening. The first was the wildly-wrong modelling: the OBR was no more accurate with migration than Sage was with Covid. Next, the OBR's crude calculation: that every 100,000 immigrants would mean £17billion more "headroom" to lift spending or cut taxes. It didn't properly factor in the cost of public services or the rise in dependants' visas. Worst of all, ministers had started to take such figures as gospel - when the OBR has always stressed that its figures are simplistic and "subject to significant uncertainty".

That is an understatement. Immigration and population projections have been wrong for decades - and with big consequences. Enoch Powell gave his "rivers of blood" speech using official figures predicting that the population was about to surge. It didn't. Before Tony Blair gave full employment rights to workers from new EU member states in 2004, the Home Office published a report saying no more than 13,000 a year would come. In the end, 50,000 a year did. So post-Brexit migration forecasts belong in this tradition of statistical fiction. There were dissenters. Suella Braverman, Robert Jenrick, Theresa May all questioned the economic benefits suggested by the Treasury and warned that getting it wrong would put pressure on everything from school places to community cohesion. "But that didn't bother Rishi, Liz or Boris," says one minister who worked under all three. "They are liberals. They wanted the GDP. They knew far more may end up coming but they'd say 'oh dear, never mind, let's bank the extra cash'".

The wiring of government has always had an inherent pro-migration bias. Look around the Cabinet table and ask: who has a vested interest to control numbers? Not HM Treasury: they want every penny of what their models say is extra revenue. The education secretary wants foreign students and their fees. The health secretary needs nurses and care workers to fill huge vacancies. Transport needs lorry drivers and agriculture the farm workers. A housing minister might be anxious: where might they all live? But attempts to model the accommodation pressures fell flat. Then there were the liberal commentators, like me, relaxed about mass immigration. I was (and remain) keen to see a successful, liberal model of Brexit where borders stay open but the intake is controlled.

Remainers were wrong to say Brexit would hoist up the drawbridge. Leavers were wrong to say there'd be a better mix of fewer, higher-skilled people. We instead ended up with something no one envisaged: the unintended trebling of immigration, covering up what may soon be the worst welfare crisis in history. I'd still argue that we have the tools to get the balance right between migration, welfare and wages. But hopes for this will lie with a Labour government, it seems, given that the Tories really do seem to have blown it.

The Telegraph

Even if Ukraine announced mass mobilization, who is left to fight?

Michael Bociurkiw

FEW places ooze the pain Ukrainians have been subjected to over the decades more than Lychakiv Cemetery in the western city of Lviv. Among its rolling hills you'll find the final resting places of many of the figures of Ukrainian independence - from renowned poet Ivan Franko, to composer Volodymyr Ivasiuk, whose mutilated body was found hung from a tree in 1979, a widely-believed victim of KGB brutality.

These days, Lychakiv has become the burial ground for hundreds of service men and women killed in the most recent wave of Russian aggression. The sense of pain is palpable. When I visited the cemetery a few weeks ago, howling winter winds competed with the heartbreaking sound of wailing mothers and wives mourning the loss of their loved ones. Many of the downed fighters are in their 20s - in the prime of their lives. I've been coming to

Lychakiv since the early weeks of the war to get a better sense of the human cost. Amid the high-level diplomatic wrangling over long range ATACMS missiles and F-16 jets, this is the true face of the conflict that often gets neglected in international headlines.

Here in Ukraine, the losses are so vast that they touch pretty much every family, contributing to the sense of weariness that has covered the country like a cold blanket of snow. It's time the West recognized the human cost of the war - not only the deaths but also the injuries, displacement and tearing apart of the social fabric brought by massive displacement. My friends in the medical profession speak of a coming catastrophic tsunami of mental health problems once soldiers return from the battlefield en masse.

With no end in sight to the war and with Lychakiv and other cemeteries bursting at the seams, officials

are forced to make room for fresh graves. While the number of war dead has, until recently, remained a tightly-held state secret - President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Sunday pegged the number at 31,000, far below the 70,000 cited by US officials last August - it is those who've been silenced who remind us of the amount of blood spilled in the fight to push back Russian forces.

There are such cemeteries as Lychakiv all over Ukraine," Lviv resident and community activist Lesia Krepyakevych told me. "While the pain is great, so is the pride since those who voluntarily went into battle went to protect us. Now it's become a place of pilgrimage, where we gain strength of spirit." Several people told me that small villages around Lviv have been completely depleted of men. The wave of volunteer fighters who flooded recruiting centers at the start

of the war have all but gone. It makes me wonder: between those who've died, been permanently put out of action by injuries, have fled overseas or have paid off officials to have their names disappear from draft lists, who's going to be left should a mass mobilization be introduced?

(Under Ukrainian law, men between the ages of 18 to 26 can't be drafted, though they can volunteer.) Now, as Republican lawmakers return to work after a two week recess it remains unclear whether Speaker Mike Johnson will allow the mega supplementary bill - which includes \$60 billion in aid for Ukraine and approved by the Senate - to come to the House floor. For weeks it's been tangled up in political gridlock under the direction of former US President Donald Trump. In considering the way forward, Johnson and his Republican colleagues

should note the number of Ukrainians who paid the ultimate price to not only defend Ukraine, but also to slow the onslaught of Russia's land-grabbing, creeping authoritarianism. The battleground is in Ukraine, but the stakes for democracy go beyond borders.

There's a dangerous disconnect between those who argue against aid for Ukraine and what the reality could be, should Putin have his way. While millions of Americans feel that they are suffering economically, the pain could be even more acute if the Russians disable Ukrainian ports such as Odesa - a crucial component of the global food supply chain. Just look at how bottlenecks created in the Red Sea by the Iranian-backed Houthis rebels have thrown supply chains into disarray. Perhaps that's why French President Emmanuel Macon didn't rule out the idea of sending European troops to Ukraine, when asked

Tuesday. Even though other European nations quickly threw cold water on the idea and Russia responded with threats, it's an indication that if the US slides in its commitment to Ukraine, Kyiv will feel it has no better friends than its immediate European neighbors. Tying Ukraine's hands in this David and Goliath fight will exact horrific costs, far beyond the amounts paid out by Washington since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion two years ago. In fact, along the 1,000 km frontline, guns pointed towards advancing Russian forces have already fallen silent due to lack of ammunition.

For the US to give up on Ukraine now, as some Republican lawmakers wish to do, is to give up on America itself and what it stands for. In many ways, this is also America's war - except that the Ukrainians are the ones fighting and dying in it.

CNN

Haley’s 2024 presidential bid will soon be over

THE dynamics of the 2024 US presidential race were set into motion last year when nine Republican politicians threw their hats into the ring, each harboring aspirations of securing their party's nomination to challenge President Joe Biden.

With the field initially crowded, optimism abounded among several contenders, who each believed they possessed the potential to emerge as a front-runner. However, as the primary season began and the competition intensified, the landscape shifted dramatically. Amid the vibrant contest, the ranks of contenders began to thin, with seven candidates ultimately deciding to withdraw from the race. Despite their initial ambitions, they concluded that the path to victory was no longer viable and they opted to step aside, reshaping the dynamics of the Republican primaries.

In the midst of this winnowing field, Nikki Haley remained steadfast in her determination to pursue the party's nomination, undeterred by the formidable presence of former President Donald Trump. As one of the final two remaining contenders, Haley continues to campaign vigorously, seeking to distinguish herself and articulate her vision for the future of the Republican Party and the nation at large. Yet, despite her tenacity and efforts to gain traction, Haley has encountered challenges in her quest for the nomination. The specter of Trump's enduring influence within the party looms large, casting a shadow over her candidacy and presenting a formidable obstacle to overcome.

In the face of this daunting reality, Haley has found herself engaged in

an uphill battle, striving to carve out a path to victory against formidable odds. As the primary race progresses, the dynamics continue to evolve, with Haley's campaign navigating a landscape marked by shifting alliances, strategic maneuvering and intense competition. Ultimately, despite her valiant efforts, Haley's bid for the Republican nomination looks destined to be unsuccessful, as Trump has emerged as the party's standard-bearer once again. However, her participation in the race has served to underscore the broader dynamics at play within the Republican Party and the enduring influence of key figures such as Trump on its direction and future trajectory.

Despite experiencing continuous setbacks in her presidential campaign, Haley has remained undeterred. Her decision to stay in the presidential race until next week's Super Tuesday, when Utah and 15 other states and territories will cast their votes, underscores her determination and resilience. But who exactly is Haley and what motivates her to persist despite the many challenges?

On Feb. 15, 2023, the former governor of South Carolina and US ambassador to the UN officially launched her presidential bid. Surrounded by supporters waving American flags and campaign banners, she emphasized that it was time for a new generation of leadership. During her campaign, Haley emphasized her humble beginnings as the daughter of Indian immigrants and highlighted her rise to prominence as a successful governor and diplomat. She spoke passionately about her vision for America, calling for unity,

Dalia Al-Aqidi

economic prosperity and national security.

The former diplomat positioned herself as a pragmatic conservative with a record of bipartisan cooperation. She touted her accomplishments in South Carolina, where she successfully navigated contentious issues such as the 2015 removal of the Confederate flag from the state-house grounds following the tragic church shooting in Charleston. One of her main issues is the creation of a robust national defense, pledging to rebuild America's military capabilities and allowing it to stand up to its adversaries abroad. Drawing on her experience at the UN, she vowed to restore America's leadership on the world stage and promote democratic values and human rights. So far, Haley's bid for the presidency has encountered setbacks in every primary, with former President Trump emerging victorious in each contest, even in Haley's home state of South Carolina. This pattern persisted this week, as Trump secured another resounding triumph in a Republican primary, this time in Michigan. With this victory, Trump extended his winning streak to an impressive six consecutive Grand Old Party contests.

The significance of Trump's continued success cannot be understated, as it amplifies the doubts surrounding the prospects of his last remaining challenger, particularly in the lead-up to the pivotal Super Tuesday showdown. As Trump maintains his dominance within the Republican Party, Haley faces mounting pressure to demonstrate her ability to effectively challenge him and rally support from within the party's ranks. The outcome

of the Michigan primary underscores the formidable challenge that Haley faces in her quest for the nomination and highlights the enduring strength of Trump's support base. As the race intensifies and the stakes escalate, the dynamics of the Republican primaries will continue to evolve, leaving Haley and her supporters to strategize and regroup in preparation for the critical contests that lie ahead.

Despite encountering setbacks in the electoral contests thus far, Haley has maintained a defiant stance. She has articulated her determination to persist in the presidential race. The uncertainty lies in whether Haley will extend her campaign beyond the pivotal date of March 5. Haley's continued presence in the race seems primarily strategic, amid speculation that she is positioning herself as a potential nominee should Trump be rendered ineligible due to his ongoing legal entanglements.

There is also speculation that Haley may position herself for potential candidacy in the 2028 presidential election. This strategy could leverage her status as the final contender against Trump in the current race, bolstering her narrative and fundraising potential. By initiating fundraising efforts immediately after the winner is announced in November, she could lay the groundwork for a future presidential bid, capitalizing on her perceived resilience and prominence within the Republican Party. It is also possible that Haley does not have a grand strategy in mind; she might simply be driven by a desire to persevere and hope for a favorable outcome. However, Haley will inevitably need to conclude her persistent efforts before too long.

Mitch McConnell’s unconditional surrender

Julian Zelizer

MITCH McConnell has bowed to political reality and announced that he is relinquishing his role as leader of Senate Republicans. McConnell took to the floor of the Senate on Wednesday and made public his plans to give up one of the most powerful positions in Washington.

In his speech, he mentioned the tragedy that recently struck his family with the death of his sister-in-law, sister to his wife Elaine Chao. (Chao served as transportation secretary under former President Donald Trump, before quitting the post following the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol.)

McConnell noted as well that he had turned 82 just last week and suggested that his time at the helm had simply run out. "One of life's most undervalued talents is to know when it's time to move on to life's next chapter," he said. It's also important to take note of the recent health challenges McConnell has faced - including episodes in which he froze mid-sentence in front of television cameras - which might also have hastened his decision to step aside.

But make no mistake: The announcement that he's leaving his powerful perch also reflects McConnell's realization that he is no longer in step with his increasingly fractious and Trump-oriented Republican caucus. News that he is stepping aside comes just a few weeks after suffering an embarrassingly large number of defections on a vote he had backed to fund aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan. A clear-eyed assessment of the political landscape surely would have accelerated his decision. McConnell didn't overtly say so, but it wasn't hard to read the message between the lines of his speech. "Believe me, I know the politics within my party at this particular time. I have many faults. Misunderstanding politics is not one of them," he told his fellow senators.

McConnell's education about the changes has not been subtle. In addition to his difficulty moving funding for Ukraine through his own caucus, he has been the target of Trump's invectives for years. The former president has called him a "piece of s**t" and mocked him as an "old crow." Nor has his wife been safe from Trump's merciless barbs. The Kentucky senator, for his part, has greatly displeased the former president by withholding - at

least so far - an endorsement of his presidential candidacy. His decision to cede the Senate minority leader's position should provide a clear answer to skeptics who doubted that the MAGA wing of the GOP had reached a tipping point in terms of the power it wields in the upper chamber of Congress. No one should doubt Trump and his acolytes, whose political muscle has led to a takeover of the GOP.

The truth is now painfully apparent: Trump and the GOP are one and the same. The anti-Trump coalition within the Republican Party is small and hanging on by a thread, and there is little chance of that changing in the short term. McConnell's decision to cede the leadership position is part of a broad and consistent pattern: Every major figure who tries to take on the Trump-oriented GOP faction ends up losing. Now add McConnell to the list of the vanquished. A wily Republican partisan who has shown no reluctance over the years to weaponize the levers of power, as well as a stalwart defender of a conservative agenda, McConnell was no match for Trump and his party's brash young upstarts. The former president and the rest of what once was the anti-establishment are now the new Republican establishment.

And yet, McConnell has had no shortage of triumphs over the years. As a result of his tough approach to judicial confirmations - including, famously, his refusal to take up the Supreme Court nomination of Merrick Garland, then-President Barack Obama's pick for a vacant seat on the high court - McConnell has been largely responsible for the conservative shift on the federal courts. When SCOTUS knocked down Roe v. Wade in its Dobbs decision last year, McConnell had achieved his ultimate goal. As fellow Senate conservative Lindsey Graham succinctly put it, "through sheer force of will, he has shaped the federal judiciary in a conservative fashion."

Taking a far less sanguine view of McConnell's legacy, Sen. Dick Durbin bemoaned the way he has reshaped the courts. "Probably the most lasting political move he's made as a leader - changing the Supreme Court - has resulted in [overturning] Roe v. Wade. Now, we live in the Dobbs era, and we see the chaos that's created." But despite that crowning achievement by McConnell, the party now belongs to

Trump. He has been able to move Republican party positions on foreign policy and the budget wars, and has shown he is willing to withdraw the US from the world, while playing brinkmanship with the fiscal stability of the country - all in pursuit of more power.

Trump also has been a staunch opponent of funding for Ukraine, skeptical about the importance of NATO, and stoked Republicans in Congress to weaponize the debt ceiling in budget negotiations. Just as the Tea Party supplanted Newt Gingrich's generation of Republicans, who had already shifted the GOP to the right, now the MAGA wing is doing the same.

Former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley is learning the same hard lessons as McConnell, although her continued ability to win the support of a sizable minority of voters in primaries and caucuses has given a home to those who want to move in a different direction other than following the former president. But the bottom line is that Haley keeps losing and Trump keeps winning. Despite an enormous flood of donor cash and the consolidation of the non-Trump vote behind her, she couldn't even win in her own home state of South Carolina.

The most dramatic example of this was his decision to vote in favor of convicting Trump during the former president's second impeachment. Even Trump's failed attempt to overturn an election was not enough to change the hearts and minds of Romney's Republican colleagues in the Senate. And now, like other Trump opponents, Romney finds himself heading for the exit at the end of his current term. McConnell, Haley and Romney: These three conservative stalwarts offer perhaps best evidence that traditional GOP loyalists are just not radical enough for the MAGA base. And any illusion that that will change anytime soon and that the party will revert back to the way it was in the pre-Trump era should be seen as just that.

The new reality of politics in Washington favors instability and dysfunction. One of our two major parties - the Grand Old Party - will continue to play partisan politics, without adhering to any kind of rulebook and they will keep pushing the policy agenda even further to the right. Voters later this year will have a chance to demonstrate whether they believe our democracy can sustain this fraught and chaotic new status quo in our politics.

Why Germany shields Israel from legitimate criticism

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheh

WHEN Israel's government equates criticism of its Gaza policies with antisemitism, it is understandably self-serving, as it has no other defense of its genocidal campaign. But why do other, more responsible governments censor critics of Israel's deliberate, methodical and cruel destruction of Palestinians and anything that could support their life in Gaza or the West Bank in the future?

Germany is a case in point. Here, any honest evaluation of Israel is labeled antisemitic and the country's guilt over the Holocaust is weaponized to serve Israeli interests and silence its critics. According to Andreas Krieg, a German scholar of the Middle East, there appears to be a "criminalization of discourse on the Middle East in Germany."

The uproar this week over the prestigious 74th Berlin International Film Festival illustrates the extent to which the antisemitism label is used to dismiss criticism of Israel. The Berlinale, as it is commonly known, concluded on Sunday with a controversy that should not have been about the screening of a film made by a collective of Israeli and Palestinian filmmakers. The documentary, "No Other Land," was awarded both the Panorama Audience Award (decided by audience vote) and the Berlinale Documentary Award (decided by the festival's jury). The film documents the half-decade-long relationship between Basel Adra, a Palestinian activist from the West Bank, and Yuval Abraham, an Israeli journalist. It highlights how the residents of Adra's village, Masafer Yatta, have fought for years against the destruction of their homes by Israeli soldiers and armed Jewish settlers.

Adra, Abraham, Rachel Szor and Hamdan Ballal co-directed the film. In their directors' statement, they

called for an end to the occupation and to "resist the reality of apartheid we were born into - from opposite, unequal sides." They added: "Reality around us is becoming scarier, more violent, more oppressive, every day - and we are very weak in front of it. We can only shout out something radically different, this film - which at its core is a proposal for an alternate way Israelis and Palestinians can live in this land - not as oppressor and oppressed, but in full equality." During the awards ceremony, Abraham and Adra condemned the Gaza war, calling for a ceasefire and an end to German military aid to Israel. Adra said it was hard for him to celebrate while his compatriots in Gaza were being "slaughtered and massacred" and he called on Germany "to respect the UN calls and stop sending weapons to Israel."

Abraham pointed out that, even though the two stood as equals on stage in Berlin, they would soon return to a country where his Palestinian colleague would face institutionalized discrimination, without any voting rights and restricted in his movements based on his Palestinian license plate. Abraham then called for an end to "this apartheid, this inequality." Adra and Abraham were not the only critics of Israel at the Berlinale awards ceremony. Another speech that prompted strong reactions from German politicians came from US filmmaker Ben Russell, who accepted an award while wearing the keffiyeh, a symbol of Palestinian solidarity. He said: "Of course, we also stand for life here and we stand against genocide and for a ceasefire in solidarity with all our comrades."

There was nothing racist or antisemitic about any of this. Yet, there was unbridled criticism by German and Israeli officials of the Berlinale.

Berlin Mayor Kai Wegner criticized on X what he described as "intolerable relativization," stressing that "Berlin is firmly on Israel's side. There is no doubt about that ... There is no place for antisemitism in Berlin and that also applies to the arts." A lawmaker from German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democratic Party, Helge Lindh, described the audience's applause as "shocking," adding: "I am ashamed to see that in my country people today applaud accusations of genocide against Israel." Frank Mueller-Rosentritt, another member of parliament, went for the jugular: "All federal funds for Berlinale must be stopped immediately and monies paid out for this year's festival must be reclaimed." German officials have indicated that they may take action to punish Israel's critics at the Berlinale. Claudia Roth, federal commissioner for culture and the media, issued a statement describing the speeches given by the directors of "No Other Land" as "shockingly one-sided and characterized by deep hatred of Israel." She said on Monday there would be an investigation into the criticism of Israel's war in Gaza during the awards ceremony. Germany Justice Minister Marco Buschmann also criticized the screening of the film, calling it antisemitic, and threatened criminal prosecution under laws meant to fight antisemitism.

Abraham and his family have received death threats after Israeli media accused him of antisemitism. "To stand on German soil as the son of Holocaust survivors and call for a ceasefire - and to then be labeled as antisemitic is not only outrageous, it is also literally putting Jewish lives in danger," he told The Guardian. "I don't know what Germany is trying

to do with us. If this is Germany's way of dealing with its guilt over the Holocaust, they are emptying it of all meaning." He accused German officials of appropriating a term, "antisemitism," that was designed to protect Jews, in order to silence Israel's critics. "This is also dangerous because it devalues the term antisemitism," he said. There has been criticism everywhere of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policies in Gaza and the West Bank, as voiced by the UN, human rights organizations and prominent writers, artists and political leaders in Israel and elsewhere. None of this should be dismissed as antisemitic.

Charges that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza and practicing apartheid in the West Bank are now being adjudicated by the International Court of Justice, where two cases have been filed by South Africa. The lawsuits have demonstrated that criticisms of Israel's conduct are factually based and well documented, not derived from antisemitic racism. Thomas Friedman, The New York Times columnist and no foe of Israel, said on Tuesday, "So the whole Israel-Gaza operation is starting to look to more and more people like a human meat grinder whose only goal is to reduce the population so that Israel can control it more easily."

While German attitudes have been explained by Holocaust guilt, they are also self-serving: Germany is coming under increasing scrutiny for its complicity in Israel's actions, as it has continued to provide Tel Aviv with arms used in the invasion of Gaza and the suppression of Palestinians in the West Bank. Dismissing criticisms of Israel's actions as antisemitic is meant to also absolve Germany of complicity in its breaches of international humanitarian law.

Arab News

Tuvalu reaffirms Taiwan relations as China works to increase influence in Pacific

William Yang

TUVALU'S new government released a statement of priorities Wednesday, reiterating the Pacific island nation's intent to maintain its "long-term and lasting special relationship" with Taiwan, while vowing to review a security pact that the previous administration signed with Australia in November.

The announcement comes after some lawmakers hinted before last month's parliamentary election that the new Tuvalu government might review the country's ties with Taiwan. That kicked off weeks of speculation that the Pacific island nation might switch diplomatic recognition to Beijing. The new government "intends to reassess options that would strengthen and lift [its relationship with Taiwan] to a more durable, lasting and mutually beneficial relationship," the new government under Prime Minister Feleti Teo said in the statement shared by Transport, Energy, Communication and Innovation Minister Simon Kofe on social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

Some analysts told VOA that Wednesday's statement can be viewed as Tuvalu's effort to push back against Beijing's influence campaign. "This is a strong sign of Tuvalu's intent to thwart what I must assume are strong offers from Beijing," Timothy Rich, a professor of political science at Western Kentucky University, said in a written response.

Other observers say the announcement, which is a welcome message to

the United States and its democratic allies, can shore up Taiwan's remaining diplomatic footprint in the Pacific region while serving as a temporary setback for China. "I see this development as a setback for Beijing as they were hoping to lure Tuvalu into their camp but China [still] has other mechanisms through which they can increase their influence [in the Pacific region]," Parker Novak, a nonresident fellow at the Atlantic Council's Global China Hub told VOA by phone.

Since Tuvalu's new government highlights climate change and connectivity as important areas for development, some experts say Taiwan needs to consider how it can constructively contribute to Tuvalu's priorities. "As China looks to two countries that have ties with Taiwan onto its side, the Tuvalu government needs to demonstrate to the Tuvalu community that its relationship with Taiwan is delivering something for the people while it passes the potential benefits of a relationship with China," Mihai Sora, a research fellow in the Pacific Islands program at Lowy Institute in Australia, in a phone interview. He said Taiwan needs to consider how it can elevate its relationship with Tuvalu.

"The ball is in Taiwan's court to elevate the relationship with Tuvalu [as] the language [in the statement] indicates that Tuvalu is interested in upgrading its relationship with Taiwan and getting more out of it," Sora added. In response to the new

Tuvalu government's commitment to maintaining diplomatic ties, Taiwan's Foreign Affairs Ministry said Wednesday that it treasures the "special relationship" with Tuvalu and hopes to continue to work together with the Pacific island nation. While Taiwan and Tuvalu reaffirmed their bilateral relationship, Beijing emphasized that "upholding the One China principle," which designates Taiwan as a part of China, is "where global opinion trends."

"A handful of countries who still have so-called 'diplomatic ties' with the Taiwan region should choose to stand on the right side of history and make the right decision that truly serves their fundamental and long-term interests," Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said during a regular press conference on Monday. Three Pacific island nations have switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China since 2019. Beijing has also increased efforts to deepen relations with regional countries, signing security deals with countries such as the Solomon Islands while promising a large amount of aid. To counter Beijing's influence campaign, the United States and its allies have stepped up engagement with Pacific island nations, signing new agreements to deepen cooperation and increase support for regional countries. However, some of the efforts have been met with caution or stalled by domestic politics. In the Wednesday statement of priorities,

the new Tuvalu government said while it supports the broad principles and objectives of the security and migration pact that the previous administration signed with Australia in November, it acknowledges "the absence of transparency and consultations" in informing the general public about the deal. The government vowed to address the "process issues."

While analysts say the deal between Tuvalu and Australia will not be completely scrapped, the US Congress has been unable to pass new funding packages for several Pacific island nations, forcing leaders from several countries to warn about Beijing's attempt to seize the opportunity to shift their allegiances. Sora in Australia said the US congressional failure to pass the aid package, the Compacts of Free Association, or COFA, agreement, hurts US credibility as a reliable partner to Pacific island nations. "COFA is a core Pacific interest for the US and if it can't make that, how could it credibly expand its engagement and presence in the rest of the Pacific?" according to Sora.

Rich from Western Kentucky University said failure by the US and its allies to provide economic support to Pacific island nations, who rely heavily on foreign aid for their development, could give China an opportunity to present itself as an alternative. "My concern is that without aid, the Pacific islands have no choice but China, and China could use these relations [to increase its presence in the region,]" he said.

VOA

To its own back yard

AFTER the 2008 Gong Xiaofei & Yuan Zheng didate, has vowed to repeat the electric vehicle tax credits enacted in the Inflation Reduction Act on his first day in office if he is elected, which would surely hurt the development of the nation's electric vehicle industry. Second, the US is plagued by a shortage of workers. According to data by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the private sector had a deficit of 8.01 million workers at the end of December, 2023, with 601,000 manufacturing jobs unfilled. After the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act came into effect, the US has witnessed an increasing shortage in clean energy and semiconductor wafer factories, with 1.4 million positions estimated to be vacant by 2030. The lack of interest in blue-collar jobs among the younger generation is complicating the hiring difficulties in the manufacturing sector in the long term.

The numbers prove that "bringing manufacturing back to the US" policy has not addressed the income inequity of the country, and failed to raise the share of earnings of the middle class. Third, "bringing manufacturing back to the US" has strengthened the resilience of US supply chains, but has not changed its dependence on China. Since measures to revive manufacturing were put in place, made-in-the-US products have hit a record high, with less foreign goods imported. Meanwhile, the sources of US imports have become more diversified, with more goods that used to be bought from China now coming from Mexico, Canada or Vietnam. That being said, the US' reliance on China remains strong: most of the goods the US now imports from Mexico, Canada and Vietnam have upstream trade and investment ties to China.

That the "bringing manufacturing back to the US" strategy has failed to reach the desired target can be attributed to three reasons. First, the two parties' divergence on the approach to revitalizing manufacturing has had an adverse impact on policy implementation. While the Democrats prefer bigger government and advocate boosting domestic manufacturing through increasing public investment and government subsidies, the Republicans want smaller government and seek to lure manufacturing companies back and reduce the costs of made-in-the-US by lowering taxes and raising tariffs.

Since the Republican Party regained control of the House of Representatives in the 2022 midterm elections and the 2024 presidential election is right around the corner, the Biden administration's manufacturing initiatives will face stiff opposition from the Republican camp. Donald Trump, the leading Republican presidential can-

didate, has vowed to repeat the electric vehicle tax credits enacted in the Inflation Reduction Act on his first day in office if he is elected, which would surely hurt the development of the nation's electric vehicle industry. Second, the US is plagued by a shortage of workers. According to data by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the private sector had a deficit of 8.01 million workers at the end of December, 2023, with 601,000 manufacturing jobs unfilled. After the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act came into effect, the US has witnessed an increasing shortage in clean energy and semiconductor wafer factories, with 1.4 million positions estimated to be vacant by 2030. The lack of interest in blue-collar jobs among the younger generation is complicating the hiring difficulties in the manufacturing sector in the long term.

First, China needs to capitalize on its huge domestic market, relatively high productivity, complete manufacturing system, sound supply chain infrastructure, and an ever-improving business environment to increase its appeal to foreign capital. Second, China should keep to the right direction of globalization, deeply participate in the global industrial division of labor and cooperation, and strengthen cooperation in industrial chains and supply chains with third parties.

Last but not least, China should double down on its efforts to boost independent innovation in manufacturing by promoting industry-academia-research cooperation and improving the innovation ecosystem in manufacturing. The country also needs to build research platforms of key generic technologies to elevate the manufacturing industry to the middle and higher ends and strengthen the core competitiveness of the manufacturing sector.

The China Daily



Weekly inflation up by 1.27 pc

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 1.27 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on February 29, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 319.30 points as compared to 315.31 points during the past week.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 32.73 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, increased by 1.36 percent and went up to 311.92 points from last week's 307.73 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs. 17,732-22,888, Rs. 22,889-29,517; Rs. 29,518-44,175 and above Rs. 44,175, increased by 1.75 percent, 1.86 percent, 1.27 and 0.66 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 14 (27.45%) items increased, 12 (23.53%) items decreased and 25 (49.02%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included tomatoes (11.48%), pulse mash (0.97%), lpg (0.85%), cooking oil 5 litre (0.44%), bread plain (0.35%), gur (0.33%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (0.22%), pulse masoor (0.21%) and mustard oil (0.20%). The items that recorded an increase in their prices included gas charges for q1 (15.52%), bananas (5.25%), onions (2.87%), eggs (1.32%), tea prepared (0.84%), potatoes (0.68%), garlic (0.62%), beef (0.32%), pulse moong (0.27%) and georgette (0.07%).

The commodities that witnessed decrease in the prices on Year on Year

basis included vegetable ghee 1 kg (19.43%), bananas (19.33%), mustard oil (16.28%), cooking oil 5 litre (15.28%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (12.50%), lpg (8.51%), chicken (1.28%) and cigarettes (0.05%).

The commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices on year-on-year basis included average prices on a week-on-week basis included gas charges for q1 (570.00%), tomatoes (167.08%), chilies powder (81.74%), wheat flour (63.51%), gents sponge chappal (58.05%), gents sandal (53.37%), sugar (49.52%), gur (45.52%), garlic (43.22%), salt powdered (39.30%) and tea packet (31.10%).

Pakistan International Culinary Championship 2024 Pearl-Continental Hotel, Bhurban, wins top honours

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pearl-Continental Hotel, Bhurban's exceptional culinary team, consisting of seven professional chefs, garnered notable recognition at the Pakistan International Culinary Championship 2024, receiving several awards across various categories, including Beef Practical Category, Seafood Practice Professional, Chicken Practical Professional, and many others. The Pearl-Continental Hotel, Bhurban, secured four trophies, eight gold medals, five silver medals, and three bronze medals.

The Pakistan International Culinary Championship (PICC) is an event endorsed by the prestigious World Chef Association and was held recently in Lahore with culinary enthusiasts and professionals from Maldives, Malaysia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, and several regions across Pakistan. PICC 2024 hosts seasoned professionals worldwide and is a remarkable opportunity for young upcoming chefs to hone their skills and learn from skilled professionals.

Sharing his thoughts on the remarkable victories, the Chief Operating Officer Hospitality and Education Division, Hashoo Group, Haseeb A. Gardezi, said, "We are humbled by this recognition from the World Chef Association and look forward to consistently



enhancing our service standards to meet the varying needs of our guests, who remain at the core of our business strategies.

Thank you, and well done, team Bhurban!" Pearl-Continental Bhurban is renowned for its excellent hospitality services and diverse signature restaurants, offering an extensive range of culinary delights from authentic Chinese cuisine and traditional Shinwari to classic Continental dishes.

Additionally, the hotel prides itself on its exceptional food safety standards. It has recently attained ISO-22000 & HACCP Food Safety Management Recertifications with 100% Compliance for a second year running, underscoring its commitment to quality and excel-

lence in culinary services. Cluster General Manager, Pearl-Continental Hotel, Bhurban, Pearl-Continental Hotel, Muzaffarabad, and Cecil Hotel by Pearl-Continental, Nadeem Riaz Chaudhary, remarked, "It is a wonderful experience to have one's hard work recognized and rewarded on a global stage. We are humbled by our victories at PICC 2024 and will continue to do our utmost to facilitate the best and finest culinary experiences for our valued guests."

On a related note, the Pearl-Continental Lahore team also achieved significant success at the championship, showcasing their culinary expertise and further establishing the Group's reputation for culinary excellence.

These awards signify Hashoo Group's longstanding legacy of nurturing the finest talent within its walls across numerous nationwide touchpoints, facilitating gold-star hospitality services for an ever-changing guest base.

Hashoo Group is Pakistan's premium conglomerate with a diversified business portfolio spanning national and international markets. The Group owns and operates the Pearl-Continental Hotels & Resorts, PC Legacy, and Hotel One brands in Pakistan and has business interests encompassing Hashoo School of Hospitality Management - Pakistan's premier hospitality and tourism education institution, information technology, investment, travel & tourism, and real-estate sectors.



SIALKOT: A vendor extracting orange juice for customers at his roadside setup.

Shipping Activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships namely, Clemens Schulte, APL Qingdao, Maritime Gisela, Al-Fuwairit and African Baza, carrying Containers, Palm oil, LNG and Coal, berthed at Container Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Elengy Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively on Friday.

Meanwhile another ship 'Eagle' scheduled to load/offload Rice is also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on same day. A total of twelve ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them five ships, APL Qingdao, Clemens Schulte, Sunny Bay, Chemroad Aqua and Dravin left the Port on today morning, while four more ships, Fast, Maritime Gisela, Xin Han Tong and Chemtrans Baltic are expected to sail on same day.

Cargo volume of 236,341 tonnes, comprising 201,430 tonnes imports cargo and 34,911 tonnes export cargo carried in 2,697 Containers (1,574 TEUs Imports and 1,124 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours. There are 10 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them four ships, Ice Fighter, Evriali, Asia Liberty and Al-Diab-II & another ship, APL Addison scheduled to load/offload Condensate oil, Wheat, Palm oil, LPG and Containers are expected to take berths at FOTCO, MW-I, LCT, EVTL and QICT respectively on today, 1 st March, while two more container ships, Maersk Pittsburgh and MSC ABY are due arrive at Port Qasim.

PSX stay bullish, gains 747.16 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Friday, gaining 747.16 points, a positive change of 1.16 percent, closing at 65,325.69 points against 64,578.52 points the previous trading day. A total of 344,227,410 shares valuing Rs13.385billion were traded during the day as compared to 424,043,562 shares valuing Rs 17.053 billion the last day.

Some 348 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 172 of them recorded gains and 156 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 20 remained unchanged. The three top trading compa-

nies were Kohinoor Spinning with 71,357,500 shares at Rs.5.36 per share, K-Electric 19423756 shares with 4.87per share and Treet Crop 17,473,574 shares at Rs 18.02 per share.

Rafhan Maize Products witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 450.00 per share price, closing at Rs 8.850, whereas the runner-up was Mari Petroleum Company Limited with a Rs113.50 rise in its per share price to Rs2,462.05.

Khyber Tobacco Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs26.32 per share closing at Rs 324.68, followed by Mehmood Textile Mills Limited with Rs17.72 decline to close at Rs4160.

UK delegation members visit LCCI, hold B2B meetings

LAHORE (APP): A 40-member UK delegation visited the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) here on Friday and had B2B meetings with their Pakistani counterparts.

Regional Trade & Development Advisor, British High Commission, Islamabad Fabian Hartwell was heading the delegation.

LCCI President Kashif Anwar warmly welcomed the delegation and presented the address of welcome. President Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce Nasir Awan, Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry, former President Shahid Hassan Sheikh and Executive Committee Members were also present on the occasion.

Head of UK delegation said that British High Commission wants to introduce UK's commercial buyers to Pakistani market to promote the mutual trade. Fabian Hartwell said that due to numerous reasons, the bilateral trade remained level for a number of years. He said that as a trade development advisor, his mandate is to develop trade and help Pakistan to grow its export to UK and to other countries. He said that trade is the only tool which can be used to eradicate poverty, create jobs and better the image of the country.

He said that one of the purposes of our visit to this beautiful country is to find cheap quality products

which can be exported to UK. We are very hopeful that this visit will enhance the bilateral trade between Pakistan and UK besides successfully changing the perception of Pakistan.

LCCI President Kashif Anwar said that being the premier business support organization of the country, LCCI has always accorded great importance in cementing good working relations with the private sector in United Kingdom. He said that business to business contacts are imperative for enhancing bilateral relations.

He said that United Kingdom has been one of the major trading partners of Pakistan and is currently the third largest export market for Pakistani products.

US stocks rise on inflation report as Nasdaq hits record

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Wall Street stocks rose Thursday after a key US inflation measure brought investors some relief, though global markets were mixed over questions of when interest rates might start coming down.

The personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index -- the US central bank's favored measure of inflation -- rose at an annual rate of 2.4 percent in January, down from 2.6 percent in December, the Department of Commerce said. A slowing headline inflation number could encourage the Federal Reserve to start cutting interest rates from their 23-year high sooner rather than later.

But the closely watched "core inflation" measure, which strips out volatile food and energy costs, increased by 0.4 percent from a month earlier, indicating an uptick in underlying inflation from December to January. Still, the tech-focused

Nasdaq Composite Index set a new record, surging 0.9 percent to surpass a 2021 high -- while the two other major US indices logged gains as well.

Investors had started the trading day "very worried about the PCE," nervous that the inflation measure could come in hotter than expected, said Steve Sosnick of Interactive Brokers. "But it came in as expected and we ended up with a decent rally," he added. "It's a bit of a relief rally."

Yet, the "collective sigh of relief" from financial markets is masking evidence that shows the disinflation trend is slowing, which could keep the Fed on pause for some time, said Kathleen Brooks, research director at XTB.

Expectations for rate cuts had already shifted to later this year after data showed inflation in the world's biggest economy was stubbornly above the Fed's target.

The stock market mean-

while has been supported by healthy profits at major corporations.

"At one point, the bond market was pricing in the first rate cut in March," said Bret Kenwell, an analyst at eToro. "Currently, that consensus has shifted to June and this report likely doesn't do much to change that outlook." In Europe, data showed inflation eased further in Germany, France and Spain. Eurozone inflation figures are due Friday. Stocks ended higher in Frankfurt and little changed in London, while the Paris CAC 40 index reached a fresh intra-day high before falling.

New York - Dow: UP 0.1 percent at 38,996.39 (close)

New York - S&P 500: UP 0.5 percent at 5,096.27 (close)

New York - Nasdaq Composite: UP 0.9 percent at 16,091.92 (close)

London - FTSE 100: UP 0.1 percent at 7,630.02 (close)

Paris - CAC 40: DOWN 0.3 percent at 7,927.43 (close)

Frankfurt - DAX: UP 0.4 percent at 17,678.19 (close) EURO STOXX 50: DOWN 0.1 percent at 4,877.77 (close)

Tokyo - Nikkei 225: DOWN 0.1 percent at 39,166.19 (close)

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: DOWN 0.2 percent at 16,511.44 (close)

Shanghai - Composite: UP 1.9 percent at 3,015.17 (close)

Euro/dollar: DOWN at \$1.0808 from \$1.0840 on Wednesday

Dollar/yen: DOWN at 149.93 yen from 150.70 yen

Pound/dollar: DOWN at \$1.2624 from \$1.2661

Euro/pound: DOWN at 85.59 pence from 85.60 pence

Brent North Sea Crude: DOWN 0.1 percent at \$83.62 per barrel

West Texas Intermediate: DOWN 0.4 percent at \$78.26 per barrel

OGDCL rolls out its ESG policy to promote sustainable practices

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) has taken a significant stride towards sustainability by announcing its Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) policy.

In response to the growing demand from investors and stakeholders for transparency and accountability in ESG factors, OGDCL's Board of Directors released its comprehensive ESG policy statement on February 27, 2024.

The OGDCL ESG policy underscores the company's commitment to environmental stewardship,



social responsibility, and effective corporate governance practices. By

embracing these principles, OGDCL aims to create shared value for sus-

tainable development.

The policy outlines OGDCL's strategic approach to managing environmental impacts, fostering social inclusivity, and upholding high standards of corporate governance.

OGDCL view the ESG Policy as a crucial first step in embracing more sustainability practices and becoming a responsible, adaptable, and resilient organization.

The OGDCL ESG policy is aligned with international best practices and reflects the company's commitment to transparency, integrity, and ethical conduct.

Exports witnesses 30% growth in February

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports from the country during the month of February 2024 grew by 30 percent and were recorded at \$2.575 billion as against the exports of \$1.984 billion in the corresponding month of the last year.

According to the Pre-Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) Customs-based data released by PRAL, the trade balance improved in February 2023-24, narrowing by 18.2 percent compared to the same month of the pre-

vious fiscal year.

This positive development is attributed to a significant increase in exports and a moderate rise in imports, it added.

The data also showed that the trade deficit narrowed to \$1.628 billion in February 2023-24, compared to \$1.990 billion in February 2022-23.

During the period from July-February 2023-24, the exports increased by 14.2 percent as it was recorded at \$20.341 billion as compared to the exports of \$17.815 billion

in the same period of the last year.

Meanwhile, the imports decreased by 14.1 percent and reached \$34.213 billion as compared to the imports of \$39.810 billion in the same period of the last year.

The government is committed to implementing policies that promote export-oriented industries, diversify export markets, and attract foreign direct investment. These efforts are expected to further improve trade balance in the coming months, it

added. Commenting on the positive development Minister for Commerce Dr Gohar Ejaz said that exports from the country witnessed about 30 percent growth during three consecutive months as they grew by 28 percent in December, 27 percent in January and 30 percent in February.

Manufacturing and engineering exports grew by 15 percent, whereas the exports of agriculture and food commodities increased by 70 percent respectively, he added.

Pakistan Society of Nephrology holds 14th Biennial conference at SIUT

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The 14th Biennial Pakistan Society of Nephrology (PSN) conference is currently underway at the Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT), bringing together renowned nephrologists from across the globe. The four-day event, held from February 29th to March 3rd, 2024, features esteemed delegates from the USA, UK, Canada, and Australia, sharing their expertise with Pakistani colleagues.

The PSN represents all nephrologists in Pakistan, specialists dedicated to diagnosing and treating medical conditions affecting the kidneys. This conference serves as a platform for international, regional, and national experts to share their knowledge and advancements in the field. Through plenary talks and symposia, participants gain valuable insights to enhance patient care.

Furthermore, the conference will play a vital role in promoting collaboration

and networking among specialists, facilitating easy consultations and referrals. Additionally, hands-on workshops equip participants with practical skills, further strengthening their professional development.

The 14th Biennial PSN conference appreciated the endorsement of international and regional societies, with sponsorship provided by the pharmaceutical industry. Pre-conference workshops were held at the Tabba Heart Institute (THI) and SIUT, setting the stage

for the main event.

Professor Adib Rizvi, Director of SIUT, inaugurated the conference on Friday, emphasizing the importance of collaboration within the medical community to effectively address the unique healthcare challenges faced by the Pakistani population. He said that health care is the birth right irrespective of cast, color, creed, and religious believes. The philosophy behind the SIUT is: "We don't let anyone die because they cannot afford to live".

**In brief****Shoaib blessed with baby girl**

RAWALPINDI (Web Desk): Legendary pacer Shoaib Akhtar and his wife were blessed with a baby girl on Friday. Akhtar, who is nicknamed "Rawalpindi Express" over his bowling speed, made the announcement on social media. He said the newborn was named as Nooreh Ali Akhtar. "Mikaeel & Mujaddid have a baby sister now. Allah taala has blessed us with a baby daughter. Welcoming Nooreh Ali Akhtar, born during Jumma prayers, 19th of Shaban, 1445 AH," read the post.

De Minaur solves Tsitsipas puzzle

MEXICO CITY (Agencies): Defending champion Alex De Minaur claimed his first career win over Stefanos Tsitsipas on Thursday to reach the semi-finals OF the ATP hardcourt tournament in Acapulco, Mexico. Australia's De Minaur had come up empty in 10 prior meetings against Tsitsipas, and it looked like more of the same when the Greek raced through the first set 6-1. But third-seeded De Minaur, coming off a runner-up finish to Australian Open champion Janik Sinner in Rotterdam this month, rallied for a 1-6, 6-3, 6-3 victory and booked a last-four clash with Britain's Jack Draper. "Every time I've got to play him I get reminded about my (record in the) match," De Minaur said. "I'm glad I got one on the board." Tsitsipas, seeded fifth, broke De Minaur three times in rolling through the first set. The Australian came out on top in an exchange of five service breaks in the second set and saved the only break point he faced in the third. "I would like to say that no one beats me 11 times in a row, but, hey, Stefanos has had my number for a very long time, so I'm glad I was able to get one back," De Minaur said. Draper cruised past Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic 6-2, 6-2. The 22-year-old has dropped just 11 games in three matches on the way to a fifth tour-level quarter-final – his first above the ATP 250 level.

Promes arrested in Dubai

THE HAGUE (AFP): Convicted former Ajax and Dutch international winger Quincy Promes has been arrested in Dubai, two weeks after a court in the Netherlands sentenced him to six years for smuggling more than a tonne of cocaine. Dutch prosecutors confirmed the arrest on Friday, but said it was for an alleged offense committed in the United Arab Emirates city and not on a Dutch request for extradition. "We have verified the media reports about Promes' arrest," said Franklin Wattimena, a spokesman for the public prosecutor's office. "We understand from our contact person there that Promes was arrested for a local offense and not for the Dutch case," Wattimena said in an email to AFP. "We will not comment at this time on whether we will request his extradition or not," Wattimena added. Dutch public news-caster NOS however reported that Dutch prosecutors "were in talks with the UAE" about the Promes detention. Quoting Russian media, the NOS said Promes was arrested for leaving the scene of a traffic accident in Dubai. The 32-year-old, now playing for Spartak Moscow, was believed to have been arrested at the airport as his club was flying out after a training camp.

Ireland beat Afghanistan to claim maiden Test victory

ABU DHABI (AFP/APP): Ireland finally won their first Test match on Friday when they defeated Afghanistan by six wickets in Abu Dhabi, ending a streak of seven successive losses.

Captain Andy Balbirnie led from the front with an undefeated 58 as Ireland reached their modest target of 111 in the final session of the third day. Ireland had played their first Test back in 2018 when they were defeated by Pakistan.

"We're absolutely excited. We've created history. The monkey is off the back and it's very special to do that," said Balbirnie whose team were wobbling at 13-3 at one stage. "Obviously there were nerves; we were chasing our first win. You ask this whole group how special this is. A lot of our guys didn't get to play Test cricket. Hopefully people back home want to be Test cricketers."

Afghanistan resumed their second innings Friday on 134-3 before they were dismissed for 218. Skipper

Hashmatullah Shahidi top scored with 55 while Rahmanullah Gurbaz, making his Test debut, hit 46.

Mark Adair picked up three wickets to finish with eight for the match. Craig Young and Barry McCarthy also claimed three apiece.

Gurbaz, better known for his flamboyant and explosive shot-making in limited overs cricket, clubbed the only two sixes of the innings. Chasing just 111 for victory, Ireland were in trouble with three wickets down for just 13 runs with 18-year-old fast bowler Naveed Zadran clean-bowling opener Peter Moor and Curtis Campher, both without scoring.

Balbirnie denied the teenager a hat-trick but Harry Tector was soon caught behind by Gurbaz off Nijat Masood for two.

Balbirnie and Paul Stirling, who both played in Ireland's debut Test in 2018, briefly steadied dressing room nerves.

Stirling was then caught

in the slips off left-arm spinner Zia-ur-Rehman for 14 as Ireland slipped to 39-4 just after tea.

However, Balbirnie moved watchfully to his fourth Test half-century, which came from 86 balls, ably supported by Lorcan Tucker (27 not out) in a crucial winning partnership of 72. "I think the first day, when we were batting, we let ourselves down," said Shahidi. "The Irish seamers were bowling very well but we threw our wickets away."

He added: "We have some positives. Gurbaz was very positive on debut. Naveed had had a good Test against Sri Lanka, and in this match also he did very well." Irish fast bowler Adair said he was "buzzing" with the victory. "Test cricket is pretty difficult. I think we've got a really good bowling group," he said. The two teams will now play three one-day internationals and three T20 games as part of their multi-format series.

PSA World C'ships qualifying events announced

ISLAMABAD (APP): The qualification criteria for the 2023-24 PSA World Championships has been announced, with five tournaments set to take place across Oceania, Europe, Asia, Pan America and Africa during April and May.

The PSA World Championships would bring 128 of the world's best male and female squash players to Egypt between May 9-17, 2024.

Of the 64 spots in the men's and women's draws, 57 of them would be taken up by the highest ranked players at the time of entries closing. The reigning men's and women's World Junior Champions would also qualify, with one further spot going to

wildcards selected by the PSA World Championships Tournament Promoter.

The final five spots would go to the winners of the following PSA World Championship Qualifying Events: April 4-7 Oceania: Gold Coast, Australia (Carrara Squash Centre); April 10-13 Europe: Nantes, France (La Maison du Squash); April 13-16 Africa: Cairo, Egypt (Black Ball Sporting Club); April 18-21 Asia: Seremban, Malaysia (S2 Sports Complex); April 18-21 Pan America: Columbia, United States (Play Squash Academy).

Each World Championship qualifying event would feature a 16-man and 16-woman draw, with prize money and rank-

ing points available. Where the winner of the tournament qualifies for the PSA World Championships as a result of their own ranking, that spot would be given to the runner-up.

"The PSA World Championships represents the pinnacle of global squash and it was important for us to give our players around the world the best possible chance of qualifying for the tournament," said PSA Head of Tour Claudia Schurmann.

"We've chosen key territories across several continents to host the tournaments and I'd like to thank our fantastic tournament promoters for their support and hard work in putting these tournaments on."

10th colourful University of Swabi Annual Sports Gala-2022 begins in great fun

PESHAWAR (APP): The 10th edition of the Annual Day Sports Gala of the University of Swabi (UoS) got under way here at newly constructed University Campus premises in a colourful opening ceremony with male and female students wearing multi-colour costumes hailing from all 24 departments are taking part.

VC UoS Professor Dr. Nasir Jamal Khattak was the chief guest on this occasion who formally inaugurated the 10th edition of the Annual Sports Gala-2022. Speaking on this occasion, Nasir Jamal Khattak lauded the 100 percent participation of the both male and female students in Games and termed it a very healthy sign.

Flanked by Prof. Dr. Mian Saeed, Pro-Cice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Alam, Deans of Sciences, Dr. Khalid Zaman, Prof. Dr. Mukhtiar Shah, Department of Pharmacy, Director Sports Iltaf Hussain, former international gold medalist athlete, Dr. Nasir Jamal

Khattak said the administration of the University is very keen to involve its students in healthy activities.

He said the University aims to raise awareness and importance of sports activities among its students so that they could fit both physically and mentally as a healthy mind resides in a healthy body.

Mr. Khattak said that the department of environment has been tasked to plant 50,000 saplings. He said the target would be achieved during this spring season. He said under PM Plantation drives the UoS has decided to plant as many saplings as the students can in the newly constructed Campus of the University.

He said the Department of Environment established a green club organization, which works for awareness and sustainable development. He said we are working for the clean and green Pakistan program. He said the University has given free hands to Director Sports and former interna-

tional record holder athlete Altaf Hussain to hold games on a regular basis and involve both male and female students.

He also appreciated the department of political science for presenting a theme in a march of contingent through which the students portrayed the role of the international leaders such Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Mahatma Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghafar Khan (Bacha Khan), Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir Bhutto and other leaders of the world who had their role in fighting against dictators and work for the democracy. They also expressed solidarity with the innocent children and women of Palestine and Indian forces atrocities in held Kashmir.

He also thanked the Higher Education Commission for providing substantial funds for the development of sports infrastructure in UoS, which will soon be able to build international standard sports infrastructure.



ABU DHABI: Andy Balbirnie holds aloft the series trophy.

Multan Sultans cancel practice session due to heavy rain

KARACHI (APP): The Multan Sultans, a prominent franchise in the Pakistan Super League (PSL), had scheduled a crucial practice session for Friday, only to be thwarted by the relentless downpour that engulfed Karachi. Despite their arrival in the city on Wednesday, the team refrained from practicing on Thursday as well.

Initially slated to convene at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi on Friday evening, the Multan Sultans' plans were abruptly derailed by the weather conditions, forcing them to reschedule their training for Saturday.

Currently leading the points table with 10 points from 6 matches, the Multan Sultans find themselves in a formidable position in the ongoing tournament.

However, their aspirations for further success have been momentarily put on hold as Karachi braces for continued rainfall, as predicted by the Meteorological Department until Saturday night.

National Kabaddi C'ship matches postponed due to rain

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Kabaddi Federation on Friday postponed the 43rd National Kabaddi Championship matches due to heavy rain in the Federal Capital.

According to Secretary General of Pakistan Kabaddi Federation Muhammad Sarwar Rana, the matches would now be played from March 5 to 8 at the Jinnah Stadium of Pakistan Sports Complex.

He said that two matches would be played on March 5. In the first match, Pakistan Air Force would compete against Higher Education Commission while in the second, Wapda would face Pakistan Army. The league matches would be played on March 6 and 7, and the final and third place matches on March 8.

National Under-20 Volleyball C'ship begins in city

PESHAWAR (APP): National Under-20 Junior Volleyball Championship got underway here at the indoor hall of the PSB Coaching Center on Friday.

Former Provincial Sports Minister and President of KP Olympic Association Syed Aqil Shah, Secretary General of Pakistan Volleyball Federation Shah Naeem Zafar were the special guests along with them for organizing. Secretary and Secretary KP Khalid Waqar Chamkani, Secretary Punjab Volleyball Association MB Javed, Secretary Sindh Shahid Masood, Secretary AJK Sardar Farooq and other officials were present.

Eleven teams are participating in this volleyball Championship being played in the indoor hall of the Pakistan Sports Board Coaching Center Peshawar. Army, WAPDA and Air Force teams are included along with teams from Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, AJK, Islamabad and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to Khalid Waqar Chamkani Secretary General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Volleyball Association, the U20 players will be selected based on their performance in the Junior Volleyball Championship, for which a camp will be held and they will be trained by Brazilian coaches.

Karachi Kings' Tim Seifert eyes top-four finish in PSL 9

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Home side Karachi Kings' wicketkeeper batter Tim Seifert on Thursday, asserted that the team is confident and is focused on finishing the group stage of the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 in the top four.

Seifert addressed the post-match press conference after Karachi Kings' narrow five-wicket defeat against Quetta Gladiators and stated that winning or losing is part of the game but his team's prime goal is the top-four finish.

"In this tournament, we have some close games. And obviously, we get a bit of a break now, a few trainings which would be good for the lads. But looking at the table, we are still very much in the tournament," said Seifert.

"And that is cricket, [especially] T20 cricket,

sometimes it does come down to the last ball and there has to be a winner or a loser. So, unfortunately, we are on the wrong side.

"But boys are still very confident and we're still in the running to make the top four which is the main thing."

Tim Seifert further praised Sherfane Rutherford's brilliance with the bat which lifted the Gladiators to snatch a narrow victory from the Kings but at the same time acknowledged that the Kings' bowlers made a few mistakes in execution.

"They hit the ball very cleanly but I think at the same time we probably didn't quite execute to them. Potentially gave them too many balls that they could hit for a six.

"And, you know close games like that, it does come down to one ball. I

think, yeah, it was one of those games, where we were on top and then they came back.

"But, obviously, you take the hat off, they hit the ball very cleanly."

Tim Seifert further opened up about the different conditions but asserted that he now has a good understanding of the wickets and foresees a big score for Karachi Kings in the coming matches.

"Yeah, a bit different from back home in New Zealand, the wickets. But, I've played enough around the world like India and CPL [West Indies] which have similar conditions.

"But yeah, it always takes a little bit of time to adjust and now two games here for myself. So, now I have a good understanding of the wickets and hopefully going forward I can put up a big score on the board.

Malik Umar Khattab Khalil Memorial KP Junior Tennis Champion concluded

PESHAWAR, Mar 01 (APP): Shahwar Khan won the second Haji Malik Umar Khattab Khalil Memorial KP Junior Tennis Championship, defeating Shayan Afridi by 2-0 in the final, the score was 6-3 and 6-4.

Former Provincial Sports Minister and President of the Provincial Olympic Association Syed Aqil Shah was the special guest. He was accompanied by Malik Umar Daraz, Professor Haji Iqbal, Malik Hidayatul Haq, Vice President of

Provincial Tennis Association Umar Ayaz Khalil, Arshad Hussain, Coaches, Coaches Shaharyar Khan, Zakirullah, Nouman, Roman Gul and other personalities.

In the last U18 final, Shah Sawar Khan won the trophy by defeating Shayan Afridi by 6-3 and 6-4, in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Junior Tennis Championship held in Peshawar. In the U10 final, Faizan Afridi defeated Ryan Umar Khalil by 6-3 m 6-4. In the U-14 final,

M. Shayan won the title by defeating Mohammad Junaid by 6-2 and 6-3.

Similarly, in the U10 doubles, the duo of Ryan Turki Al Faisal said claims of sportswashing against the country are "very shallow". "Any country has room for improvement, no-one's perfect. We acknowledge that and these events help us reform to a better future for everyone," he said.

It is widely expected that the 2034 tournament will be in winter to avoid the country's extreme summer temperatures, as with the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

It will also be the first time the expanded 48-team tournament will be hosted by just one country. Morocco, Portugal and Spain are set to co-host the 2030 World Cup, with the opening three matches taking place in Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay.

The 2026 World Cup, the first to feature 48 teams, will take place in the US, Mexico and Canada.

2034 World Cup Saudi Arabia launches bid for tournament as sole contender to host

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia, the only contender to host the 2034 World Cup, has formally launched its bid for the tournament.

The Gulf Kingdom became the sole bidder in October when Australia pulled out of the race hours before Fifa's deadline for declarations of interest.

A Fifa congress will confirm the hosts later this year. Saudi Arabian Football Federation (Saff) president Yasser Al Masehal says the bid is only possible because of the country's "rapid transformation".

Al Masehal added: "Telling our football story to the world is of massive importance. "We've made unprecedented progress in both the men's and women's game and our bid is an open invitation to the world to join us on this exciting journey."

Despite being the only bidder, Fifa regulations require Saudi Arabia to formally bid for the tournament. The bid uses the slogan "Growing. Together", which Saff says captures the bond between the "Kingdom, its people and world football".

Saudi Arabia has invested around £5bn in sport since 2021, when the country's Crown Prince made it a key part of his strategy to diversify the economy.

It has hosted several major sporting events, including in football, Formula 1, golf and boxing, while the country's Public Investment Fund has launched the break-away LIV Golf series, taken control of four Saudi Pro League clubs and purchased Newcastle United.

However, the Gulf kingdom has been accused using its investment in sport and the hosting of high-profile events to improve its international reputation - a process known as 'sportswashing'.

It has been criticised for its human rights violations, the 2018 murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, women's rights abuses, the criminalisation of homosexuality, the restriction of free speech and the war in Yemen. The Saudi government says the investment is boosting the economy, opening it up to tourism and inspiring people to be more active.



WELLINGTON: Kane Williamson, Will Young and Mitchell Starc all get into a tangle, New Zealand vs Australia 1st Test 2nd day.



In brief

ICP strengthens security measures

ISLAMABAD (APP): In response to the directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr Akbar Nasir, the security of the federal capital Islamabad has been strengthened in order to deal with any untoward situation and Section 144 has been imposed, prohibiting demonstrations and any gatherings within Islamabad. Moreover, no political activities are allowed in the Federal Capital, and only individuals with invitations were permitted to go towards Parliament House. The invitees were also directed to verify their invitations for the National Assembly session before arrival, as some invitations have been canceled, a public relations officer on Friday said. Additionally, SSP Operations need to be requested for any activity in the High-Security Zone. While strict monitoring of all matters is being carried out from the Safe City. He further said that legal action will be taken against those engaging in any unlawful activities. Islamabad Capital Police is taking all possible measures to ensure the safety of citizens' lives and property. The citizens are urged to cooperate with the police and report any information about suspicious items or activities to the relevant police station or call "Pucar-15" or at ICT-15 app.

Notorious dacoit gang busted

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police Anti Robbery and Dacoity Unit (ARDU) police team arrested three wanted members of a notorious dacoit gang involved in numerous activities and recovered cash, batteries and truck worth Rs 4.8 million from their possession. Following the directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police have intensified their crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate crime from the city, according to a press release issued here. The Anti-Robbery and Dacoity Unit (ARDU) police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending three wanted members of a notorious dacoit gang involved in numerous dacoit activities in various areas of Islamabad. The accused were identified as Javed, Anar Gul and Umair Khan. The police team also recovered cash, batteries and a truck worth Rs 4.8 million from their possession. The cases were registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.

CDA, PITB sign agreement

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) Friday signed an agreement to digitise all office working of the authority. Under the agreement, a modern property management system will be introduced to computerise the property record of the citizens. According to the details, the e-office will be established as per the agreement between the Capital Development Authority and PITB. In order to ensure transparency in all information related to the property, it is possible to get rid of record tampering, including record missing or record leaking and the land or property record can also be saved in a modern way, an official of the CDA said.



ISLAMABAD: Managing Director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal Syed Tariq Mahmood-Ul-Hassan exchanging views with H.E Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al Maliki Royal Saudi Arabia Ambassador in Pakistan.

Afridi directs NDMA, PDMA Balochistan to expedite relief efforts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Chairman Senate, Mirza Muhammad Afridi on Friday directed the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Balochistan to expedite relief and rehabilitation efforts in the flood-hit Gwadar with core focus on extending assistance to the deserving victims.

National Party (NP)'s Senator Muhammad Tahir Bizinjo on a public attention notice raised the issue of calamity-hit Gwadar that has been recently ravaged by torrential rains causing flooding in the entire port city.

Senator Tahir Bizinjo said that the coastal areas

of the country particularly Balochistan have been badly impacted by the recent heavy rains and left Gwadar submerged under rainwater including houses, businesses, public property and infrastructure.

He alleged that the relief and rehabilitation efforts were slow and accused the NDMA, PDMA Balochistan and district administration of Gwadar of poor performance and conduct in the disaster-hit area. He also raised his concerns pertaining to looting of relief money, resources and relief items to be sent for the flood victims of Gwadar and alleged that the relief assistance would not reach the genuine victims or impacted

population.

The Senator mentioned that as per his sources, there was already shortage of food items leading to epidemics break out in the impacted areas.

He vehemently demanded the quarters concerned to ensure provision of relief items to the impacted population and make proper measures in this regard.

The Deputy Chairman Senate on the occasion said that Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani also informed him via phone call about massive rainfall in Chaghi and directed the PDMA Balochistan and NDMA to make necessary arrangements and ensure proper efforts to assist Gwadar flood victims.

ANF recovers 776 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 776 kg drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that 994 grams hashish was recovered from the possession of a passenger going to Sharjah at Islamabad Airport. 20.5 kg Xanax tablets, 26 kg Rivotril, 49.8 kg William, 344 kg Tramadol tablets were recovered from Karachi and an accused was arrested. In third operation, 216 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of five accused arrested from Faisalabad Road, Okara. 63 kg hashish was recovered from Zakhakhel Khyber.

In fifth operation, 49 kg heroin was recovered near Western Bypass Quetta and in sixth operation, 1 kg heroin was recovered from Khanna Kasur Road area in Lahore. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

Police arrest eight gamblers

RAWALPINDI (APP): The district police arrested eight gamblers and recovered Rs 220,000 stake money, nine mobile phones, charras and other items from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that New Town police conducted a raid and arrested eight gamblers namely Tufail, Muhammad Ali, Babar, Zafar, Riasat, Abdul Rashid, Haider and Zahoor, who were allegedly involved in betting while playing cards.

The police recovered Rs 220,000, nine mobile phones, charras and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is under process. Superintendent of Police, Rawal Faisal Saleem said that gambling was the root cause of other evils and those involved in such crimes did not deserve any concession.

Saudi embassy, PBM join hands for Ramadan ration distribution

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Saudi Embassy on Friday agreed to collaborate with Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) to distribute ration bags during Ramadan ul Mubarak and take responsibility for the care of 100 orphans supported by Pakistan Sweet Home, with formal documentation to follow soon.

Managing Director of Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, Syed Tariq Mahmood Al-Hassan, visited the Saudi Embassy in Islamabad upon a special invitation from the Saudi Ambassador, Nawaf Al-Maliki.

The Saudi Ambassador warmly welcomed him during the visit. He congratulated Syed Tariq Mahmood Al-Hassan on assuming the position of Managing Director of Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal.

In the meeting, the Managing Director of Bait-ul-Mal and the Saudi Ambassador reached an agreement to collaborate

on initiatives within Pakistan's social sectors.

The Saudi Ambassador assured the Managing Director of Bait-ul-Mal of seeking further cooperation for additional social projects in the country. Previously, Saudi relief agencies and other social organizations from Saudi Arabia have collaborated with Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal on numerous projects aimed at the welfare of the needy and vulnerable individuals.

The Saudi Embassy in Islamabad has consistently maintained positive and fruitful cooperation with Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal.

The Managing Director of Bait-ul-Mal recognized the Saudi Arabian government's particular focus on global social sectors.

Managing Director of Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, Syed Tariq Mahmood Al-Hassan, highlighted the enduring

support between the two brotherly nations during challenging periods, emphasizing Saudi Arabia's continual prioritization of Pakistan's economy and social well-being.

This commitment underscores the mutual trust shared between the two countries.

The Managing Director of Bait-ul-Mal acknowledged Saudi Arabia's keen interest in global social sectors.

He emphasized the enduring support and prioritization of Pakistan's economy and social welfare by the two nations, reflecting mutual trust.

Managing Director of Bait-ul-Mal Mahmood Al-Hassan also extended some gifts to His Excellency Saudi Ambassador and expressed gratitude for their full support of Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal's initiatives.

Ex-Ambassador highlights growing ties between Brazil, Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Ambassador Pedro Luis Rodriguez highlighted the growing relationship between Brazil and Pakistan, emphasizing significant strides made in fostering cooperation despite geographical distance. In a special interview with PTV on Friday, he acknowledged the proactive measures taken by the Pakistani Embassy in Brazil, with both countries eager to explore various avenues of collaboration.

He praised the efforts of the Pakistan Embassy in Brazil for their role in bridging the gap between the business communities of Brazil and Pakistan.

Rodriguez underscored Brazil's expertise in agriculture and livestock industries, noting a recent mission from Pakistan to procure cattle breeds tracing their lineage back to the region.

Brazil's historical experience with food scarcity and subsequent technological advancements in agriculture reflects Brazil's willingness to share its expertise with Pakistan to bolster food security efforts. Rodriguez emphasized the importance of leveraging technology

and expertise to meet the food needs of growing populations, both domestically and through exports. Being the representative of Compo Brasil Fertilizantes Ltd. (Brazil), he said that he was in discussions with Fongrow Corporate Farming aimed at exploring opportunities for collaboration in scaling up agricultural production in Pakistan.

Touching on cultural exchanges, Rodriguez highlighted the potential for sports diplomacy, particularly in football, to strengthen bilateral ties.

He said that he was optimistic that the issue of Kashmir would be resolved through dialogue and with the help of international cooperation.

In terms of practical steps, Rodriguez suggested enhancing communication and connectivity between the two countries, including establishing direct flights and fostering partnerships between national airlines. Rodriguez said that various workshops and collaborative platforms held significance in fostering mutual understanding and promoting innovative solutions between the countries.

SPARC to share statistics significant burden tobacco use

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) shared statistics highlighting the significant burden tobacco use imposes on Pakistan, both in terms of public health and economic costs.

Instead of increasing taxes on utilities such as electricity and gas, the government should prioritize increasing taxes on cigarettes to reduce the health cost burden and economic crisis, said in a press release issued here on Friday.

Malik Imran Ahmad, Country Head of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK), stated that Pakistan faced a considerable challenge in combating the tobacco menace. He also presented statistics showing a high prevalence of tobacco use in the country, with 31.9 million adults (15 years and above) consuming tobacco products, accounting for about 19.7% of the adult population.

He further added that tobacco-related illnesses, such as cancer, diabetes, and heart diseases, contributed to over 160,000 deaths annually in Pakistan.

These deaths not only affect individuals but also have broader impacts on families, communities, and the healthcare system.

Malik Imran proposed an immediate 30% FED increase in 2024, which could

recover 19.8% of costs, narrowing the gap between health burdens and tax revenues.

This tax proposal represents a clear 'win-win' in terms of health and revenue for the government and the people of Pakistan.

Moreover, the recently initiated track & trace system on cigarettes is expected to reduce counterfeiting, restrain tax evasion, and maintain accountability.

Dr. Khalil Ahmad, Program Manager at SPARC, highlighted that low cigarette prices were the reason of children and youth to initiate smoking.

He added that smoking-related illnesses and deaths incur substantial economic costs, amounting to 1.6% of Pakistan's GDP each year.

These costs encompass healthcare expenses, productivity losses due to illness and premature death, as well as other indirect economic impacts.

Additionally, he said that the tobacco epidemic required comprehensive strategies encompassing public health interventions, strong tobacco control policies, and awareness campaigns. By tackling tobacco use, Pakistan can mitigate economic losses associated with smoking-related illnesses, potentially alleviate the burden on its healthcare system, and keep youth safe from the harms of tobacco use.



ISLAMABAD: A girl on the way carrying her younger brother during rain that experienced the Federal Capital.

DG stresses Civil-defense awareness, culture training to manage natural calamities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General of Civil Defense Niaz Muhammad Khan Friday stressed media for creating more awareness among the people about Civil Defense and to prepare volunteers and students who can help in case of any natural calamities. In an exclusive interview with PTV news channel, on eve of world Defense day highlight the achievements of national disaster-prevention services and to raises awareness about importance of self-defense. Civil defense training is a must for every man and woman, he said, adding, in order to save their own lives and the lives of others.

Civil Defense is the best organization for the service of the people, he said, adding, our volunteer training programs

are free of cost where interested citizens specially youth can actively participate.

He demanded of the provincial and center government for equipping the volunteers with the needed facilities so they could perform their tasks more efficiently.

Civil Defense staff and volunteers can took part in firefighting and first aid programs, he mentioned.

He said that the training of the Civil Defense was the need of the hour and it should be taken as common responsibility by all the citizens to make the country strong and stable.

The day also focuses on making volunteers more active participants in the evacuation, response and rescue efforts resulting from any disaster, he added.

Afghan Futsal player joins Al Tai FC

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan's renowned futsal talent, Hamid Reza Hossaini, is embarking on a new chapter in his career, as he officially signs with Saudi Arabia's Al Tai FC team. Hossaini's journey to Al Tai FC marks a significant milestone in his career, having previously showcased his skills both at the national level and in various club competitions. His past stints include playing for Farsh Ara Mashhad and representing Indonesia's Halos in the realm of club-level futsal.

Delegation leaves for Turkmenistan

KABUL (TOLONews): A delegation from the Islamic Emirate and the private sector, led by Nooruddin Azizi, acting Minister of Commerce and Industry, traveled to Turkmenistan(Friday). Azizi is set to participate in an exhibition being held in Ashgabat during this trip. The acting Minister of Commerce and Industry added that more than 300 Afghan traders will participate in the Turkmenistan exhibition and will display their products.

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

Bennet urges countries to initiate case against Afghanistan at ICJ over women's rights



KABUL (Ariana news): UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, called on countries Thursday to initiate a case against Afghanistan at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over the violation of women's rights.

“States parties to the convention on the elimination of discrimination against women possess authority to initiate a case against Afghanistan at the International Court of Justice for non-compliance with the convention and encourage state parties to consider this legal pathway to challenge these violations,” Bennett said at the

55th regular session of the Human Rights Council. He said that “women and girls are being erased from public life, peaceful dissent is not tolerated, violence and the threat of violence are used with impunity to control and instill fear in the population. “This is compounded by an economic and humani-

tarian crisis that results in the denial of economic, social and cultural rights,” he added. The UN expert stated that it is vital that the “international community is steadfast that normalisation will require significant improvements in human rights, including the situation of women and girls.” “To do otherwise would send a concerning message about their commitment to women everywhere”. Representatives of other countries also expressed concern over the situation of women's rights in Afghanistan and called on the authorities to lift restrictions in this regard. The Islamic Emirate, however, believes that the issue of human rights is being misused in Afghanistan. “Richard Bennett and other Westerners should stop violating the issue of human rights, but really support human rights and stop the oppression and brutality of Israel,” IEA's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said on X.

Only IEA can represent Afghanistan in international meetings: deputy PM



KABUL (Ariana news): The Deputy Prime Minister for Political Affairs Mawlawi Abdul Kabir in a meeting with Robert Chatterton Dickson, the Chargé d'Affaires of the UK Mission to Afghanistan, criticized the way Doha meeting held and said that only the Islamic Emirate can represent Afghanistan in international meetings. The deputy PM's office said Thursday in a statement that Kabir stressed the meaningful participation of the IEA in interna-

tional meetings. “In international meetings, only the Islamic Emirate can represent Afghanistan, and in the Doha meeting, those who were invited cannot represent Afghanistan, and Afghans do not accept them as their representatives. Non-participation in the Doha meeting does not mean that the Islamic Emirate does not want to interact with the international community, if the demands of the Islamic Emirate are considered in the future, it is ready to

have meaningful and useful participation,” the statement read. In this meeting, the chargé d'affaires of the British Embassy also said that London is interested in good relations with Kabul and is ready to work with the IEA to ensure the stability and prosperity of Afghanistan. Simultaneously, in a separate meeting with Dmitry Zhirnov, Russia's ambassador to Kabul, Abdul Kabir emphasized the expansion of relations between Kabul and

Moscow. At the meeting, Zhirnov, referring to the frozen assets of Afghanistan, said that Russia is asking the international community to remove these restrictions. Meanwhile, British Chargé d'Affaires also met with Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanakzai, Political Deputy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul, and the two sides discussed the relations between Kabul and London.

Afghan girl embraces creativity: Art integral to Marwa's life

Tabasum Nasiry

Marwa is one of thousands of girls who, despite possessing abundant creativity, have received less attention. She has infused her life with color through art and regards it as an integral part of herself. She dreams of learning English, studying abroad, painting, and participating in international competitions. Referring to current conditions, she adds, “We should not overlook all the experiences and hardships we gain on the way to achieving our dreams, as all those experiences are important and a learning part of life.” Marwa is 19 years old and succeeded in the Fine Arts department at Kabul University last year; however, one day she couldn't reach her lifelong dream of entering university. Alongside painting, she is also busy teaching language, believing that in today's world of technology, English is important and a gateway to entering a new world. She says, “I want to score high on the TOEFL and continue my studies in one of the foreign countries.” Just as colors in visual art carry different meanings, painters also perceive their lives in a dif-

ferent realm of colors. From Marwa's perspective, “Painting is my life; I've drawn all my troubles and sorrows on paper. Painting is a feeling of tranquillity, an escape from the difficult moments of life.” She attributes all her successes to the admiration and encouragement of her family, stating that she has embraced the art of painting in the style of realism and loves three-dimensional painting. She wants to paint it alongside walls with the charm and realism that this style offers. Engineering remains one

of Marwa's aspirations, for which she has pursued courses for years. Due to current circumstances, she feels compelled to pursue this field of study in another country. She emphasizes that every situation in life brings a sense of despair, a phenomenon that torments human beings, stating, “We must be driven by our own efforts, and in all the challenges of life, the result and the ways we reach our goal are important.” Foreign language education and online activities, including participation in seminars, creating invest-

ments, and online buying and selling, have flourished among girls in the country in recent years. While Marwa still considers learning English essential for understanding the world of technology, she also speaks of her work as an article writer on one of the online sites and computer technology. This comes as in recent years, girls' interest in painting has increased, and like Marwa, thousands of other girls engage in painting and learning foreign languages to pass their leisure time.



Snowfalls close most routes of districts in northern provinces

KABUL (Ariana news): Officials at the 209th Army Corps of Al-Fath said on Friday that following the recent snowfalls, the roads in most of the districts of the northern provinces have been blocked. Sediqullah Nasrat, the spokesperson of this Army Corps told Ariana News that efforts to solve the problems of the people, and to rescue the trapped ones continue by land and air. “It has rained and snowfall in most of the provinces, as a result of which a large number of people have faced problems,” said Nasrat. “Heavy snowfall in Faryab province blocked the road in most of the districts. Families who were nomads and lived in remote areas were stuck due to this heavy snowfall, and one person died on the border with Turkmenistan. Also, with these heavy snowfalls, we had traffic accidents, in Dawlat Abad district, two



cars deviated from the road due to frost, and as a result, three people died and twenty others were injured.” said Esmatullah Moradi Faryabi, the spokesman of Faryab governor. Meanwhile, the residents have asked the gov-

ernment to expand the process of assisting the people to prevent casualties and damages. “We want the government to pay serious attention to those who have suffered from these rains and snowfall,” said a Faryab

resident. Heavy snowfalls also caused livestock losses in some provinces of the country, and sources from different provinces said that a large number of livestock have perished due to the recent snowfalls in addition to other problems.

Respect for human rights key to expanding engagement with Taliban: UN Special Rapporteur

KABUL (Khaama Press): The UN special rapporteur for Afghanistan on Thursday emphasized prioritizing human rights, particularly women's rights, in engagement with the Taliban. Richard Bennett painted a grim picture of human rights in Afghanistan, criticizing widespread torture and discrimination against women and minorities.

Presenting his six-month report at the 55th session of the Human Rights Council, Bennett labeled the human rights situation in Afghanistan as “dire.” He stressed the importance of prioritizing the Afghan people and ensuring their inclusion in deci-

sion-making processes. Concerns are raised about countries normalizing relations with the Taliban without significant improvements in Afghanistan's humanitarian situation. Regarding women's rights violations, he urged the world to pursue legal avenues for gender, ethnic, and religious

justice in Afghanistan. Bennett highlighted the Taliban's systematic suppression and expulsion of women and girls, constituting “crimes against humanity.” Despite refraining from terming the situation as “gender apartheid,” Bennett condemned the Taliban's discriminatory actions against Afghan women. Bennett underscored the Taliban's “systematic discrimination” against Afghan women and girls in their quest for complete control. The UN special rapporteur called for accountability from the Taliban for their policies and actions, urging the world to find ways to support Afghan women and girls promptly. Suicide rates, depression, especially among youth, women, and girls, and the imposition of Taliban-prescribed dress codes on women were among the concerns Bennett addressed. His report shed light on the increased pressure on ethnic and religious minorities in Afghanistan, particularly the Hazara community, due to targeted ISIS attacks.

Challenges and recommendations for Afghan evacuees in the United States

KABUL (Khaama Press): A recent study by the Urban Institute has unveiled the complex challenges Afghan evacuees face in the United States, highlighting issues related to their integration and employment. This pioneering research, conducted in Chicago, San Antonio, and Northern Virginia, engaged Afghan evacuees and a diverse group of community stakeholders to evaluate their conditions one and a half years post-arrival. A significant concern identified was the adverse effects of humanitarian parole, notably the extensive delays in asylum case resolutions and the issuance of work authorization cards, which have critically impeded evacuees' ability to find stable jobs. During the initial stages of their arrival, evacuees encountered numerous obstacles, as reported by community stakeholders. Key issues included inadequate funding, restricted resources, limited staff capacity, and substantial language barriers, all of which severely limited support organizations' ability to address the urgent and continuous needs of the evacuees. Nevertheless, the

study also spotlighted several effective strategies and recommendations for improving Afghan evacuees' situations. Among these were empowering evacuees and other Afghan community members to serve as connectors during their resettlement, enhancing collaboration with governments and organizations to streamline urgent needs by removing or expediting bureaucratic hurdles, and nurturing social connections between evacuees, the local communities, and fellow Afghans. To address the ongoing needs of Afghan evacuees more effectively, the study advocates for several pivotal actions. It calls for the enactment of the Afghan Adjustment Act to ensure a more stable legal status for evacuees, the acceleration of family reunification processes, the provision of linguistically and culturally responsive mental health services, and improved access to educational and employment opportunities. An associated brief further examines the role of legal service providers, emphasizing the critical nature of legal support in helping Afghan evacuees navigate the intricate immigration system. The Urban Institute's comprehensive study and brief provide essential insights into the resettlement experiences of Afghan evacuees in the U.S., stressing the need for targeted intervention to support their successful integration.



Calls for probe, truce follow Israeli gunfire near aid convoy

GAZA STRIP (AFP): World leaders on Friday called for an investigation and a ceasefire nearly five months into the Gaza war, a day after dozens of desperate Palestinians were killed rushing an aid convoy. Israeli troops opened fire as Palestinian civilians scrambled for food aid during a chaotic incident Thursday which the Hamas-run territory's health ministry said killed more than 100 people in Gaza City.

The deaths came after a World Food Programme official had warned: "If nothing changes, a famine is imminent in northern Gaza." The Israeli military said a "stampede" occurred when thousands of Gazans surrounded the convoy of 38 aid trucks, leading to dozens of deaths and injuries, including some who were run over. An Israeli source acknowledged troops had opened fire on the crowd, believing it "posed a threat."

Gaza's health ministry called it a "massacre" and said 112 people were killed and more than 750 others wounded. The fatalities helped push the total number of Palestinian war dead in Gaza to 30,228 mostly women and children, according to the ministry's latest toll. Overnight Thursday-Friday 83 people were killed in strikes, the ministry said. The war began on October 7 with an unprecedented Hamas attack on southern Israel that resulted in the deaths of about 1,160 people, mostly civilians, Israeli figures show.

Israel's military says 242 soldiers have died in Gaza since ground operations began in late October. "The Israeli army must fully investigate how the mass panic and shooting could have happened," German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock wrote on social media platform X. Her French counterpart Stéphane Sejourne said: "there will have to be an independent probe to determine what happened," and Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani urged Israel "to protect the people in Gaza and to rigorously ascertain facts and responsibilities."

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen,

also writing on X, said "every effort must be made to investigate what happened and ensure transparency." The head of Libya's Presidential Council, Mohamed el-Manfi, appealed for "an urgent investigation" by the United Nations Security Council into the "unprecedented crime." US President Joe Biden — whose country provides billions of dollars in military aid to Israel — said Washington was checking "two competing versions" of the incident.

Aerial footage of the incident made clear "just how desperate the situation on the ground is," a US State Department spokesman said. Washington was pushing Israel to allow in more aid, he said. The Gaza City aid incident came with talks progressing toward a ceasefire, but would now complicate those efforts, Biden said. The White House later said it had asked Israel to probe the "tremendously alarming" deaths. Deputy press secretary Olivia Dalton said the event "needs to be thoroughly investigated."

Qatar's foreign ministry condemned "in the strongest terms the heinous massacre committed by the Israeli occupation" and called for "urgent international action" to halt the fighting in Gaza. Further afield, in South America, Colombian President Gustavo Petro announced the suspension of arms purchases from Israel after the "genocide" in Gaza City. While the situation is particularly acute in Gaza's north, Gazans are struggling for food, water and medical care throughout the territory including in far-south Rafah where around 1.4 million people have sought refuge from fighting elsewhere.

Israel is threatening to send in troops against Hamas fighters in Rafah. Information conflicted on what exactly unfolded in Gaza City. A witness, declining to be named for safety reasons, said the violence began when thousands of people rushed toward aid trucks, leading soldiers to open fire "people came too close" to

tanks. Israeli army spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said the military had fired "a few warning shots" to try to disperse a "mob" that had "ambushed" the aid trucks.

"Thousands of Gazans" swarmed the trucks, "violently pushing and even trampling other Gazans to death, looting the humanitarian supplies," he said. When the crowd got too big, he said the convoy tried to retreat and "the unfortunate incident resulted in dozens of Gazans killed and injured." Aerial images released by the Israeli army showed what it said were scores of people surrounding aid trucks in the city.

Ali Awad Ashqir, who said he had gone to get some food for his starving family, told AFP he had been waiting for two hours when trucks began to arrive. "The moment they arrived, the occupation army fired artillery shells and guns," he said. Hagari denied Israeli forces carried out any shelling or strikes at the time.

Looting of aid trucks has previously occurred in northern Gaza, where residents have taken to eating animal fodder and even leaves to stave off starvation. The chief of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said no UN agency had been involved in Thursday's aid delivery, and called the incident "another day from hell." Among its war aims, Israel says it is fighting to bring home 130 hostages captured by militants on October 7 who remain in Gaza, including 31 presumed dead. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has come under increasing pressure over the captives.

On Friday relatives and supporters of the hostages rallied outside the US embassy branch in Tel Aviv in a call for help to secure their release. At another protest in the city on Thursday night, Alon Lee Green, 36, said things were at a crossroads. "It's either we are going into an eternal war that will never stop," he said, "or we're going to a diplomatic agreement, an Israeli-Palestinian peace."

President calls for responsible use of technology

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi Friday said technology should be used positively and responsibly for ensuring protection of environment, human health and prosperity.

In a virtual address at an event of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Pakistan in Karachi, he said doctors and physicians should take benefit from the fast changes in the field of science and technology. He said in the present time, medical science was going through drastic changes and because of the progress made in the field of technology, research in medical science had become easy and less costly.

He urged the doctors and physicians to utilize information technology for the correct and timely diagnosis of diseases as now it was possible to make diagnosis before onset of diseases due to research on human cells and genes. He advised the students to develop the capacity for analysis instead of just memorizing information. He appreciated the standard of education of the College of Physicians and Surgeons and said the college took remarkable measures for the progress in the field of dentistry.

Bugti elected ‘unopposed’ as Balochistan Chief Minister

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) candidate Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has been elected as Balochistan chief minister (CM) unopposed as no other contestant had submitted nomination papers besides him.

Sarfraz Bugti, who served as former caretaker interior minister, submitted four nomination papers for Balochistan's chief minister's slot to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) office. The election for the Balochistan chief minister position was scheduled for tomorrow (Saturday). He has been elected unopposed as no other lawmaker has submitted nominations paper for the slot.

PPP and PML-N had jointly nominated Sarfraz Bugti as their candidate for the top slot of the leader of the house in line with the formula decided to form government at federal level and coalition government in Balochistan. The politician had resigned as the caretaker interior minister in December last year and joined the Bilawal Bhutto-led party.

Schools in Balochistan closed

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Schools in Balochistan will remain closed for a week due to mass destruction caused by heavy rains in Gwadar, Chaman and other areas of the province.

According to a notification issued by Balochistan's caretaker government, the schools in Balochistan will remain closed for a week due to inclement weather conditions. Heavy rains have wreaked havoc in Balochistan's Gwadar, Kech district and other parts, suspending normal life and traffic on the Coastal Highway.

Met Office had earlier informed that a westerly wave is likely to enter in Balochistan and may grip upper parts of the country on 26th February. Following the continued heavy rains in Gwadar, the district administration on Thursday declared a state of emergency in rain-hit areas of Gwadar while paramilitary forces were called in to help the district administration in rescue and relief operations.

Met officials said the coastal district received over 160mm rainfall in 12 hours. Flood waters entered residential and commercial areas and roads of Gwadar town were presenting a pond-like situation. Gwadar Deputy Commissioner Aurangzeb Badini, along with the chairman of Gwadar Municipal Com-mittee Sharif Maindand and other officials concerned, visited the affected areas and launched rescue and relief operations.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi inaugurating Building Material Exhibition and conference organized by Institute of Architects of Pakistan, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Garam Chishma road blocked for traffic due to heavy snowfall

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Snowfall is continue in Chitral and suburbs areas since last night. Two to three inches of snow has fallen in Chitral city, while two feet of snow has been recorded on Lower Tunnel Road. Garam Chashma road has been closed for all kinds of vehicular traffic due to heavy snowfall as a result 40 thousand people have been retrain and disconnected from other parts of Chitral.

After two days of continuous rain, snowfall has been started in Upper and Lower Chitral districts since last night. Due to snowfall, the intensity of cold has increased. There is no rush in the markets while the traffic on the roads is very less. The district administration has warned the public to avoid unnecessary travel to be saved from any inconvenience or mishap due to avalanches or landsliding.

Snowfall is also continuing in the three areas of Kailash Valley, Bomburit, Barir, Rambur and Shekhanandeh, where two feet of snow has been fallen. More than two feet of snow has fallen in Midgalshit and the road has also been damaged by avalanches at many places. The people of Chitral burn firewood to protect themselves from the cold during snowfall, which causing increases the burden on the forests. Chitral has

received snowfall for the second time in this season after a long drought, but local elders say that in March this is the first snowfall in 15 years.

According to local experts, when snow fall in November, December or January, it is long-lasting and freezes to a large extent, which is a major reservoir of water in summer, but the snow melts quickly during this season. While the people are happy with the recent snowfall, on the other hand, the peasants and farmers are also very hopeful that it will irrigate their fields in those areas where canal water is not available and people used to irrigate their crops with rain or snow water.

The elders of Garam Chashma say that the National Highway Authority has not yet started snow removing work from the road due to which the people of the entire valley are stranded and they are deprived of daily necessities, as well as fresh vegetables and chicken, meat, etc. are also can not be supplied in this valley.

Children are very happy during snowfall and they enjoy making snowballs and throwing them at each other. As people in Chitral burn fire wood for cooking purposes and keeping themselves warm, it is causing heavy burden on the forests and indiscriminate deforestation also has a negative impact on the environment due to climate change where other

areas are affected. Cold regions like Chitral also have adverse effects. This is the reason that neither rains nor snow fell for long time in this season.

The people of the area demand from the provincial and federal government to provide electricity to the people of Chitral at a cheap (subsidize) rate from the Golengol hydro-electric power station and also to launch the project for the gas plant here, for which government land was purchased on million of rupees.

A gas plant should be installed on it so that the people here use gas or electric heaters for cooking and heating purposes instead of burning firewood, so that this tourism spot can be protected from the negative effects of climate change due to indiscriminate deforestation. According to the latest report, snowfall is continue in Chitral dimensions and the temperature has also dropped below the freezing point. Passengers and tourists are requested to get information about the road before traveling on the Lowari Tunnel Road and must use snow chains to avoid slipping while traveling on the snow bound and icy road to continue their journey safely. It is worth to mention here that during the snowfall, a large number of tourists come to these areas and enjoy the snowfall and take selfies and pictures in it.

Islamabad deputy commissioner jailed for contempt of court

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has declared Islamabad Deputy Commissioner Irfan Nawaz Memon as guilty of contempt of court and awarded him six-month imprisonment and Rs100,000 fine.

Pronouncing its verdict on Friday, the court also found Islamabad police's SSP Operations Jamil Zafar also guilty and sent him to prison for four months and slapped with a fine of Rs100,000. A single bench of IHC comprising Justice Babar Sattar also awarded two-month prison sentence and Rs100,000 fine to SHO Nasir Manzoor.

IHC's Justice Sabar Sattar, however, suspended the jail sentence of the deputy commissioner, saying he is being given a chance to file an appeal against the court verdict. "The deputy commissioner will be arrested if his sentence was not suspended by filing an appeal in 30 days," the judge remarked.

In reaction, Islamabad police officers will challenge the IHC verdict, arguing that they and the deputy commissioner used their powers as per law to maintain law and order. They said that all are equal before the law and they will take next step in accordance with the law. The police officers

will continue to work until final decision of the court.

On the last hearing, the court had reserved the verdict in the contempt of court case, saying it will be announced on Friday, directing the accused to be present on that day, dismissing the plea for exemption from appearance. In September last year, the IHC had restrained the deputy commissioner from issuing MPO orders for an indefinite period. Justice Babar Sattar had ruled that the Islamabad DC cannot use the powers of Section 3 of MPO for an indefinite period. The order was issued during the hearing of a petition against the detention of PTI leaders Shehryar Afridi and Shandana Gulzar.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon on Friday challenged the six-month jail sentence awarded in contempt of court case by Islamabad High Court (IHC). As per details, the intra-court appeal was filed in Islamabad High Court challenging the single-bench verdict.

The appeal urged the court to declare the verdict null and void and acquit Deputy Commissioner Irfan Memon from the contempt case. The IHC single-bench verdict was also challenged by SSP operations Malik

Jameel Zafar.

Earlier today, the court ruled that DC Irfan Nawaz Memon has been held guilty of misconduct for taking actions that were beyond his authority. Moreover, the Islamabad police SSP (operations) was sentenced to four-month imprisonment besides a fine of Rs100,000. However, the Saddar SP was acquitted of the contempt of court charges. SHO Nasir Manzoor was also sent to jail for two months and fined Rs100,000.

Last year in August, IHC suspended PTI leader Shehryar Afridi's arrest warrants under maintenance of public order (MPO) and ordered his immediate release. On September 7, 2023, the IHC had indicted Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) operations Jamil Zafar, Superintendent (SP) Farooq Buttari and Station House Officer (SHO) Nasir Manzoor while presiding over the hearing of the case.

DC Memon and SSP Zafar pleaded not guilty to the charges and also apologised unconditionally to the court. The court also indicted SP Farooq Buttari and SHO Naseer Manzoor with contempt of court, however, both denied the charges. Afridi was first arrested on May 16 from his Islamabad residence under Section 3 of the MPO Ordinance, 1960.

Achakzai calls for resolutions to ensure parliament’s supremacy

F.P. Report

I S L A M A B A D : Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai on Friday urged all political stakeholders to pass a resolution to ensure supremacy of parliament.

Speaking on the National Assembly (NA) floor, Achakzai said that Pakistan was passing through difficult times, underscoring the importance of ensuring supremacy of parliament. "Today is the first day of the National Assembly, you all [PPP, PML-N and PTI] should now pass four resolutions that parliament will be the source of power for Pakistan's internal and external affairs and no one else," he said.

Mahmood Khan Achakzai further said that they will "salute" those who believes in the

supremacy of the Constitution. "Those who embraced martyrdom in fight for democracy should be declared martyrs and judges who opposed martial law should be declared heroes," he added. "Believe it or not the PTI representatives have come to the parliament through the power of the people. Changing the public mandate is tantamount to treason," he maintained.

Earlier in the day, PML-N's Sardar Ayaz Sadiq was elected as the National Assembly speaker, while PPP's Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah secured the slot of deputy speaker. Sadiq became the 23rd speaker of the parliament's lower house after he bagged 199 votes, defeating Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) candidate Malik Aamir Dogar, who bagged 91 votes.

Khaqan to make new political party

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has announced the formation of a new political party by emphasizing that the political parties have to stop calling each other corrupt.

Shahid Khaqan was talking to the media on the current political situation. Ex-prime minister Shahid stated that the political parties are not talking about the country's problems that is why he is forming a new political party. He said that the other political parties do not discuss about the solution of the problems even in the current elections campaign there was no discussion on the issues of Pakistan.

ECP moved to postpone PTI intra-party election

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has been moved to postpone Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) intra-party elections. As per details, the plea was filed by Naveed Anjum Khan after his nomination papers for PTI chairmanship were rejected. The plea stated that Anjum Khan submitted his nomination paper for the chairmanship as a party worker however it was rejected by the PTI election board.

He said in his plea that the constitution of party gives him the right to contest election for the PTI chairman slot. Yesterday, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan was elected unopposed as the Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) after other candidates withdrew from the intra-party elections.

44 dead in Bangladesh restaurant fire

DHAKA (INP): At least 44 people were killed and dozens injured after a fire blazed through a seven-storey building in an upscale neighbourhood in the Bangladesh capital of Dhaka, authorities said. "So far 43 people have died from the fire," Bangladesh's health minister Samanta Lal Sen told foreign media after visiting the Dhaka Medical College Hospital and an adjoining burn hospital.

Police inspector Bacchu Mia said one more person died at Dhaka's main police hospital to bring the death toll to 44. Sen said at least 40 injured people were being treated in the city's main burn hospital. "None of them are out of danger," he told media.

Fire department official Mohammad Shihab said the blaze originated in a popular biriyani restaurant in Dhaka's Bailey Road at 9:50pm Thursday (1550 GMT), and quickly spread to the upper floors, trapping scores of people.

Firefighters brought the blaze under control in two hours, he said. They rescued 75 people alive, a statement from the fire service said. Fire officials told reporters they suspected the inferno was caused by a gas cylinder blast at the restaurant.

"It raced through the upper floor quickly as there were restaurants in almost all floors of the building. They use gas cylinders," one fire officer, who did not give his name, said. The government has ordered a probe into the incident. The Bailey Road building houses mainly restaurants along with several clothing and mobile phone shops.

"We were at the sixth floor when we first saw smoke racing through the staircase. A lot of people rushed upstairs," said a restaurant manager called Sohel. "We used a water pipe to climb down the building. Some of us were injured as they jumped from upstairs," he said.

Others were trapped on the rooftop and called out for help.

"Alhamdulillah (praise be to god). We are sending down all women and children including my wife and children. We all men are in rooftop. Fire service stands beside us. Fifty yet to be down," wrote

Kamruzzaman Majumdar, a professor of environmental science, in a Facebook post. He was later rescued safely. Hundreds of anxious family members rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital as ambulances brought the dead and injured to the clinic.

Fires in apartment buildings and factory complexes are common in Bangladesh due to lax enforcement of safety rules. In July 2021, at least 52 people were killed including many children when a fire swept through a food processing factory. In February 2019, 70 people died when an inferno ripped through several Dhaka apartment blocks.

New faces dominate National Assembly

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a sweeping change, 36% of the National Assembly welcomes fresh faces, marking a significant shift in Pakistan's political landscape. Among the 96 new members, Mir Jamal Khan Raisani of the People's Party emerges as the youngest member from Balochistan, injecting new energy into the assembly.

Independent candidates, backed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, lead the influx of newcomers, signalling a dynamic shift in political allegiance. Notably, 15 members from Muslim League-N, 11 from PPP and MQM each secure their first-time seats, alongside debutants Abdul

Aleem Khan and Aoon Chaudhary, entering the fold of the National Assembly.

PML-N's Attaulah Tarar secures his maiden seat, joining the ranks of Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, Sher Afzal Marwat, and Latif Khosa. Shandana Gulzar, transitioning from a specific seat to a general one, consolidates her presence in the assembly. MQM sees new blood with Rauf Siddiqui, Syed Mustafa Kamal, and Arshad Vohra making their inaugural mark in the National Assembly.

In a ceremonial affair, 282 members solemnly take oath, with luminaries like Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Asif Zardari, and Nawaz Sharif gracing the occasion.

Notable figures including Shahbaz Sharif and Maulana Fazlur Rehman add weight to the assembly's proceedings. Despite a delayed start, the meeting commences with the recitation of the Holy Quran, setting a solemn tone for the session.

The gathering witnesses the swearing-in of diverse representatives, including Umar Ayub and Barrister Gohar, alongside Ali Muhammad Khan of the Sunni Ittehad Council.

As the assembly convenes, it embodies the diverse fabric of Pakistani democracy, with 266 members directly elected and the remaining nominated by the House of Representatives, echoing the voice of the nation.