

Two terrorists killed
F.P. Report
RAWALPINDI: Security Forces conducted an intelligence based operation in North Waziristan District. During conduct of operation and after intense fire exchange, two terrorists were killed, while another two got injured. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area.

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ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner, Jane Marriott called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

IMF reaches staff-level pact with Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Wednesday struck a staff-level agreement on the second and final review under the US \$3 billion Stand-By Arrangement paving the way for the release of the last tranche from the lender.

"The IMF team has reached a staff-level agreement with the Pakistani authorities on the second and final review of Pakistan's stabilisation program supported by the IMF's US\$3 billion (SDR2,250 million) SBA approved in January 2024," said Nathan Porter, the head of the IMF team that held talks in Islamabad from March 14-19 on the second review.

This agreement is subject to approval by the IMF's Executive Board, upon which the remaining access under the SBA, US\$1.1 billion (SDR 828 million), will become available. The IMF mission chief noted that Pakistan's "economic and financial position" was improving since the first review due to "prudent policy management and the resumption of inflows from multilateral and bilateral partners".

But Porter warned that economic growth will remain "modest" in the ongoing financial year as inflation is still above target. He called for the implementation of ongoing policy and reform to address Pakistan's deep-seated economic vulnerabilities amidst the ongoing challenges posed by elevated external and domestic financing needs and an unsettled external environment.

On the Shehbaz Sharif-led government, the IMF team stated that the new setup is ready to follow the "policy efforts" that were launched in the SBA for the remainder of the year. "In particular, the authorities are determined to deliver the FY24 general government primary balance target of PRs 401 billion (0.4% of GDP), with further efforts towards broadening the tax base, and continue with the timely implementation of power and gas tariff adjustments to keep average tariffs consistent with cost recovery while protecting the vulnerable through the existing progressive tariff structures, thus avoiding any net circular debt (CD) accu-

mulation in FY24," said the Washington-based lender.

Porter also stated that the State Bank of Pakistan is "committed to maintaining a prudent monetary policy to lower inflation and ensure exchange rate flexibility and transparency in the operations of the forex market". The statement also mentioned about a new loan Pakistan is planning to seek from the Fund.

"The authorities also expressed interest in a successor medium-term Fund-supported program with the aim of permanently resolving Pakistan's fiscal and external sustainability weaknesses, strengthening its economic recovery, and laying the foundations for strong, sustainable, and inclusive growth," said the IMF. Porter pointed out key objectives that will be discussed for the new programme with the conclusion of the SBA.

The programme would focus on:

(i) strengthening public finances, including through gradual fiscal consolidation and broadening the tax base (especially in undertaxed sectors) and improving tax administration to improve debt sustainability and create space for higher priority development and social assistance spending to protect the vulnerable;

(ii) restoring the energy sector's viability by accelerating cost reducing reforms including through improving electricity transmission and distribution, moving captive power demand to the electricity grid, strengthening distribution company governance and management, and undertaking effective anti-theft efforts;

(iii) returning inflation to target, with a deeper and more transparent flexible forex market supporting external rebalancing and the rebuilding of foreign reserves; and

(iv) promoting private-led activity through the above mentioned actions as well as the removal of distortionary protection, advancement of state owned enterprises reforms to improve the sector's performance, and the scaling-up of investment in human capital, to make growth more resilient and inclusive and enable Pakistan to reach its economic potential.

COAS calls on Saudi Crown Prince

RIYADH (INP): Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has expressed his desire to further strengthen bilateral ties with Pakistan, and said that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will always stand by Pakistan in the future as well.

Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman, also known as MbS, said this during his meeting with Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir, who visited Saudi Arabia on an official visit.

During the visit, the army chief called on Prince Mohammad bin Salman; Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the defence minister of KSA; General Fayyadh Bin Hamed Al-Ruwaili, the chief of general staff of the Saudi Armed Forces; and Engineer Talal Abdullah Al Otaibi, the assistant minister of Defence; as well as other senior military leadership. The two sides discussed wide-ranging issues of mutual interest, including regional peace and security, bilateral defence and security cooperation.

Prince Mohammad Bin Salman highlighted that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan enjoyed historic brotherly and strong relations, and that both countries had always stood up for each other. He also expressed his desire to further strengthen the bilateral ties and said the KSA will always stand by Pakistan in the future as well. Gen Asim Munir thanked the Saudi leadership for the warm sentiments and support for Pakistan.

Blinken arrives in Saudi Arabia

JEDDAH: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken landed in Jeddah on Wednesday to hold talks about the latest developments in Gaza, the US embassy in Riyadh said.

The diplomat will also discuss the situation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden with Saudi leaders. Blinken on Thursday is due to travel on to Egypt, which neighbours Gaza and whose envoys have been involved in previous mediation efforts.

In Jeddah and Cairo, Blinken will discuss efforts to reach an "immediate ceasefire agreement that secures the release of all remaining hostages," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Tuesday. He will visit Israel on Friday, where he will discuss "the ongoing negotiations to secure the release of all hostages" and efforts to boost aid deliveries to Gaza, Miller said on Wednesday.

On Tuesday, Blinken said everyone in Gaza was now suffering "severe levels of acute food insecurity." "That's the first time an entire population has been so classified," he said during a visit to the Philippines. — Arab News

The Frontier Post

ISI chief briefs President

ISLAMABAD (INP): Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) Director General Lt-General Nadeem Anjum on Wednesday visited the Presidency and briefed President Asif Ali Zardari on a string of issues, sources said. President Asif Zardari welcomed the ISI chief at the Aiwan-i-Sadr after which they held a detailed meeting. The meeting covers issues including internal security and situation at the borders.

PM: Cross-border terrorism will no longer be acceptable

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressing resolve to streamline the country's economy by bringing strict reforms in all public departments, said the government will adopt zero tolerance policy against power thieves, tax evaders and corrupt elements.

He said the new government with fresh mandate will work diligently to enhance foreign direct investment, expand tax net, minimize tax evasion, reduce public debt, eliminate power theft and implement stern austerity measures in the government departments.

Addressing the first formal meeting of the federal cabinet held here chaired by him, the prime minister said, he had issued orders to completely digitize the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) as soon as possible to avoid tax evasions.

In this regard, he said that a consultant was being hired for the purpose which would be appointed by next month. PM Shehbaz regretted that trillions of rupees were being evaded by the mafias. Such mafias, he said run businesses worth billions of rupees but they pay zero tax due to undocumented transactions. With digitization of the FBR, such mafias would be exposed and apprehended, he said.

He said Rs 2.4 trillion worth of tax cases were currently pending either in the tribunals or in the courts which needed to be concluded as early as possible. "I request the Chief Justice Supreme Court of Pakistan to help early conclusion of all such sub-judice cases."

Further, he said he had also directed to draw a list of honest and efficient officers to encourage them and acknowledge their services. On the other hand, the prime minister vowed

Shehbaz, cabinet members forego salaries, perks to promote austerity

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and members of the federal cabinet on Wednesday decided to voluntarily forego their salaries and perks as part of the government's efforts to promote austerity. The decision was made in a cabinet meeting chaired by the prime minister which took up different agenda items including the briefing on Staff Level Agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the constitution of PIA Holding Company and others, a PM Office press release said.

Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb briefed the cabinet members on the Staff Level Agreement with the IMF. It was told that the agreement would help improve the national economy and boost the investors' confidence. As an important headway towards the PIA's privatisation, the federal cabinet approved the formation of the PIA Holding Company. Reiterating its resolve to eliminate terrorism from the country, the cabinet members paid tribute and offered Fateha for the martyrs of a terrorist attack that took place in Mir Ali area of North Waziristan on March 16.

to take strict action against the officers involved in corrupt activities. He pointed out that in the previous government, the coalition government had saved the country when it was on the verge of default by putting its politics at stake.

Similarly, he said the annual power theft in the country was around Rs 500 billion which was alarmingly high and needed to be stopped immediately. "I have categorically told the concerned authorities to present a comprehensive road map for complete elimination of the electricity theft and pilferage in the country," he said adding that in this way any kind of resistance will not be accepted.

"There will be zero tolerance...there will be no tolerance to this theft and pilferage." As regards the government's programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the prime minister expressing satisfaction over conclusion of staff level agreement with the Fund for the final tranche of US\$1.1 billion, said that Pakistan needed another IMF programme to strengthen its economic

foundation and to get rid of the debts.

He said during his recent meetings with the diplomats of the friendly countries, he conveyed them that the government was eager to enhance bilateral relations with those countries in terms of trade and investment. He said under the umbrella of Special Investment Facilitation Center (SIFC), the government will provide one window option to the investors to enable them complete their due process without any hassle. The prime minister said all the provinces should support the federal government to achieve its goals of bringing a halt to power theft and tax evasion.

Earlier, PM Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to the armed forces personnel who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country's security. He said the terrorism in Pakistan had been completely eradicated from the country due to exemplary sacrifices of the armed forces personnel and the civilians. However, he regretted that few years ago, this menace of terrorism

(Continued on Back Page)

Mine collapse in Harnai district kills 12

F.P. Report

HARNAI: As many as 12 miners have died and eight have been safely rescued after a coal mine collapsed in Balochistan's Harnai District area trapping 20 people inside.

The development comes after Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti had taken notice of the incident while directing the authorities to carry out rescue and relief operations after a mine, located in Harnai's Zardalo area, had collapsed owing to a gas explosion.

According to the chief mines expert, the ensuing rescue efforts resulted in eight miners being rescued alive along with the recovery of 12 dead bodies.

The official further said that the mine had been "sealed" following the culmination of the rescue operation. Earlier, reacting to the incident, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had expressed grief over the loss of life in the mine collapse. Directing the authorities to ensure expedited rescue efforts, the premier ordered the authorities to provide necessary treatment facilities to those injured in the incident.

Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq along with Deputy Speaker Ghulam Mustafa Shah also conveyed their condolences to the bereaved family.

"We are with the grieving families," Sadiq was quoted saying in a statement issued by the official X handle of the NA. Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives as a result of an explosion in a coal mine in Harnai.

Condoling with the bereaved families, he prayed for the departed souls. The Prime Minister directed to accelerate efforts for the rescue of remaining miners. He said all possible medical treatment be provided to the injured miners. The Prime Minister said such incidents are very painful and sad. He said we stand with the affected families in this hour of grief.

'8 terrorists' killed in attack on GPA Complex

F.P. Report

GWADAR: A group of eight terrorists attempted to enter Port Authority Colony in Gwadar, which was successfully thwarted by the security forces personnel. Own troops employed for security responded immediately & effectively engaged the terrorists, and in ensuing fire exchange, all eight terrorists were sent to hell.

A large quantity of arms, ammunition and explosives was also recovered from the killed terrorists. However, during the intense exchange of fire, two brave soldiers; Sepoy Bahar Khan (age: 35 years, resident of District DG Khan) and Sepoy Imran Ali (age: 28 years, resident of District Khairpur) having fought gallantly, sacrificed their lives and embraced

Shahadat. Security forces of Pakistan, in step with the Nation remain determined to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace and stability of Balochistan, and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve. Meanwhile, Makran Division commissioner confirmed the incident and number of slain terrorists.

Donald Lu calls cipher charge 'complete falsehood'

WASHINGTON: United States Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Donald Lu refuted the cipher allegations against him in a congressional hearing on Wednesday.

He made this remark while testifying before a subcommittee of the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs, at a hearing titled 'Pakistan After the Elections: Examining the Future of Democracy in Pakistan and the US-Pakistan Relationship'. Lu was asked to give his assessment regarding the allegations against him by the PTI founder.

Regarding the cipher case, he refuted the claim of the PTI founder and mentioned he did not have

any role in the removal of the former premier from power. He called the cipher issue a "conspiracy theory, lie and complete falsehood".

Meanwhile, Lu said the allegations against him over the last two years had led to regular death threats against him and his family. "There is a line of acceptability and I think at times, some of the free speech has verged into threats of violence which is not acceptable in our society," he added.

He said, "Pakistan is an important partner country of the United States and there is concern over the shutdown of the Internet during the election as incidents of mistreatment of

journalists were also reported during the election." However, he said there should be a thorough investigation into the allegations of interference in the election adding the US policymakers were concerned about the incidents of election abuse and violence before the election.

Regarding the US-Pak relations, he said America has always supported Pakistan as the former has been investing in the latter for 67 years while mentioning that the both nations have also jointly fought the war on terror. He added the recovery of the economy of Pakistan would be beneficial for the relations between both countries. — Dunya News



JEDDAH: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken shaking hands with Saudi official after his arrival in Saudi Arabia.

PHC suspends ECP notices against KP CM

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has suspended Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) proceedings against

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur for concealment of facts in nomination papers as well as stopped his appearance before the commission scheduled for 26th March, on Wednesday.

PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Waqar Ahmad heard Ali Amin Gandapur plea against ECP notices as well as expected disqualification for concealment of facts in nomination for 2024 elections.

The counsel Syed Sikandar Hayat Shah and Alam Khan advocates argued that a resident from D I Khan had filed complaint at ECP for disqualification of Ali Amin Gandapur because he (Gandapur) had conceal facts from the commission.

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) proceedings against Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur for concealment of facts in nomination papers as well as stopped his appearance before the commission scheduled for 26th March, on Wednesday.

PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Waqar Ahmad granted status quo against ECP orders in favor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and ordered respondents for submission of reply.

Meanwhile, PHC's divisional bench of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Shakeel Ahmad extended status quo and stopped recounting in PK-99 Bannu and NA37 Kurram in favor of Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) member Zahid Ullah and Hameed Hassan, respectively till 26th March.

PK-99 candidate lawyer Qazi Anwar and NA37 member counsel Shumal Ahmad Butt advocates appeared before PHC while arguing that Zahid Ullah had took oath as Member Provincial Assembly while recounting plea was made with delay for 8 polling station Sher Azam Wazir plea.

PHC accepted ECP's lawyer Mohsin Kamran

ther added that after declaration of results the complaints should be entertain by Election Tribunal nor by the commission.

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Ombudsman resolves 38 complaints

LAHORE (APP): On the orders of Provincial Ombudsman Punjab Major (retd) Azam Suleman Khan, various provincial departments, secretary Punjab Workers Welfare Fund Lahore, administrative Officer Provincial Welfare Fund Board Punjab, Punjab Government Servants Benevolent Fund Board Lahore, secretary Workers Welfare Board Labour and Human Resources Department paid marriage grant, death grant, farewell grant of Rs 72 lakh to 36 applicants.

Also, due to efforts of Ombudsman Punjab, Additional Director Grievance Redress Cell, Punjab Social Protection Lahore, District Monitoring Officer Education and Punjab Education Sector Reform Programme Lahore paid educational scholarships worth more than Rs 16 lakh to 38 students, who received educational scholarships. According to a spokesman for the office, 38 applicants belonging to different districts had complained that they were not paid educational scholarships despite several attempts. The Ombudsman issued orders to the relevant institutions to pay the pending educational scholarships to students. The complainants thanked the Ombudsman for taking an effective role in resolving their grievances.

LESCO detects 402 power pilferers in 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 402 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) on the 188th day of grand anti-power theft campaign.

A LESCO spokesman told the media here Wednesday that the company also submitted FIR applications against electricity thieves, out of which 208 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations.

On the 188th consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, the spokesman added, large commercial consumers were also found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected and charged with detection units. Among the seized connections 11 were commercial, 04 agricultural, 02 industrial and 385 domestic, and all these connections were disconnected and charged with a total of 417,574 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 9.791 million.

Apprising the media about some major power pilferers, he explained that LESCO charged Rs 150,000 detection bill to an electricity pilferer in Shafiqabad area; Rs 88,000 detection bill to a power pilferer in Shahdara Town; Rs 85,000 detection bill to another electricity thief also in Tibbi City area; and Rs 75,000 fine in the form of detection bill to a customer stealing electricity in Factory area. During the 188 days of the grand anti-theft campaign, the spokesman mentioned, the LESCO detected pilferage on 65,556 power connections and 63,906 FIRs have been registered against electricity thieves in the relevant police stations, while 20,058 accused have so far been arrested by the police.

CM orders launching App, call service for civic services provision

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has directed the authorities concerned to launch an online App and call service immediately to provide improved civic services to citizens at their doorsteps.

Chairing a review meeting on 'Dastak' programme here on Wednesday, she said good governance and people's convenience would be ensured. She was briefed that Initially 10 services of local government and other departments would be made available to people of Lahore at their doorsteps through 'Dastak' App. These services include birth certificate, death certificate, marriage-certificate, divorce certificate, domicile, e-stamp, vehicle registration, vehicle transfer, token tax and property tax services.

In future, more than 100 services would be offered through 'Dastak' programme, and more than 50,000 jobs would be created. The services in the second phase would include character certificate, police verification, learner driving licence, driving licence renewal, copy of FIR, duplicate driving licence, and tenant registration.

People will gradually be able to get more than hundred services of government departments by calling 1202 or through online 'Dastak' App. Under 'Dastak' programme, a dedicated rider would provide the required service of a government departments at citizens' doorsteps. The chief minister ordered to start registration and training of riders immediately.

Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Former Senator Pervaiz Rashid, Provincial Information Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari, MPA Sania Ashiq, chief secretary, senior member Board of Revenue, secretaries Local Government, Excise, Finance, commissioner Lahore, chairman PITB and other officers attended the meeting.

CM chairs meeting on 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' project: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, during a meeting here on Wednesday, reviewed the 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' project under which 100,000 housing units would be constructed for the low-income people.

The CM said that home is the basic need of every family, and 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' project would fulfill the very basic need of low-income groups. She ordered to urgently complete the site selection process in six major cities of Punjab for the purpose. These cities include Lahore, Multan, Faisalabad, Sialkot, Sargodha and Rawalpindi.

The chief minister ordered for selecting sites keeping in view all basic amenities. If spaces available, construct these houses in city centres; otherwise choose the nearest places to ensure public convenience, adding that Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar project would be a landmark success, where people would get all the facilities to live happily. The chief minister was briefed that the Board of Revenue has identified 117 sites across Punjab, which will be inspected and finalised immediately.

Operation against price hike, 15 arrested, Rs 105,000 fine imposed

ISLAMABAD (APP): The ICT administration has continued crack down against price hike in the Federal Capital with an aim to ensure fair access to daily essentials and maintain order in markets, including Ramzan Bazaars.

On the directives of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, all Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates, are leading these operations against the price hike and profiteer mafia.

In line with this initiative, inspections were conducted at 302 different locations including three Ramzan Bazaars which were set up by the district administration by Magistrates to curb the price hikes and arrested eleven accused while fines of Rs 94,000 were also imposed to the violators, said the ICT Spokesman, Dr

Abdullah Tabassum. During the drive, five kilograms of polythene bags were also seized by the officials. Similarly, Assistant Commissioners Nilore, Uzair Ali also conducted operations against price hike in the different areas of the federal capital to eliminate price hike and profit eaters.

He visited the expressway, Zia Masjid stop and surroundings to check the price lists. The Assistant Commissioner Nilore imposed a fine of Rs 11,000 for non-availability of price lists and selling at higher rates while two persons were arrested and transferred to the police station. Simultaneously, the Assistant Commissioner Industrial Area Farwa Batool visited Mangal Bazar and arrested two persons on the violations of price lists and sent them to police stations.

Excise Narcotics Control team foiled an attempt to smuggle large quantities of drugs



F.P Report

SUKKUR: On the special instructions of Senior Minister of Sindh and Provincial Minister for Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control Sharjeel Inam Memon, the Excise Narcotics Control team has foiled an attempt to smuggle large quantities of drugs by conducting a successful operation in Rohri.

During strict checking near Central Jail Sukkur, adjacent to Sukkur Toll Station, the Excise Narcotics Control team recovered 60 kg of hashish from a double cabin vehicle with registration number GP 3219

and arrested the accused, Imran Noor Durrani. A case has been registered against the accused.

Provincial Minister for Excise, Taxation, and Narcotics Control Sharjeel Inam Memon praised the Excise and Narcotics Control officers for the successful operation and emphasized that drugs pose a serious threat to the welfare and future of our young generation.

He stated that drug eradication will be ensured through coordinated and improved measures, and the Sindh Government will strive to ensure a safe and drug-free society for all citizens.



LAHORE: Beautiful floral scene at the arrival of spring at the railway station.

Sindh Govt makes another reshuffle in bureaucracy

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Government has made another reshuffle in bureaucracy and transferred provincial secretaries and Senior Superintendents of Police of different districts of Sindh with immediate effect.

According to separate notifications issued by Chief Secretary and the Inspector General Police, Shakeel Ahmed Mangnejo, an officer of PAS (BS-21) presently posted as Chairman Planning and Development Board was transferred and posted as Chairman Chief Minister's Inspection, Enquiries and Implementation Team department against an existing vacancy.

Secretary Forest and Wildlife Dept Najam Ahmed Shah was transferred

and posted as Chairman Planning and Development Board, Planning and Development Dept Sindh vice Shakeel Mangnejo transferred.

Khalid Mehmood Shaikh, Ex. PCS (BS-20) officer presently CEO Sindh People's Housing for flood affectees was transferred and posted as Secretary Food Dept vice Nasir Abass Soomro transferred.

Secretary Cooperatives Badar Jamil Mandhro was transferred and posted as Secretary Forest and Wildlife vice Najam Ahmed Shah transferred. The Inspector General Police Sindh has ordered transfer and posting of SSPs of different districts with immediate effect.

Recently posted SSP Ghotki Mir Rohal Khan was transferred and post-

ed as SSP Larkana relieving Muhammad Imran Khan, SSP Shikarpur of the additional charge.

Sumair Noor, an officer of PSP (BS-18) SSP Sukkur was transferred and posted as SSP Ghotki vice Mir Rohal Khan transferred.

Abid Baloch was transferred from SSP Traffic South Karachi and posted as SSP Sukkur with immediate effect.

Irfan Ali Samo was transferred and posted as SSP Shikarpur vice Muhammad Imran Khan transferred and directed to report to Central Police Office, Karachi.

Capt(R) Faizan Ali, PSP officer (BS-19) was transferred and posted as SSP Keamari vice Arif Aslam Rao transferred and directed to report to CPO, Sindh, Karachi.

FIA arrests printing press owner on electricity theft

LAHORE (APP): The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Wednesday arrested an owner of a printing press involved in electricity theft through a remote control device.

According to a spokesman for the agency, during an on going crackdown, a team raided on Mcload Road where suspicious commercial meters were discovered and subsequently subjected to digital inspection. The report disclosed the remote control device installed in the meter for electricity theft.

PHA to provide free plants

LAHORE (APP): The Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) will distribute saplings free of charge to the public in celebration of the International Forest Day, which falls on March 21 (Thursday), announced a spokesperson for the department. As custodians of Lahore's greenery, the PHA planted over a million saplings across the provincial metropolis last year, aiming to reduce carbon levels and combat the climate emergency.

CM Sindh approves Rs 5.5bn Smart Safe City project

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah approved the signing of an agreement of Rs 5.5 billion between the Sindh Police Department and NRTC to launch the first phase of the Smart Safe City project in the red zone.

The approval of the agreement was made in a meeting held at CM House and was attended by Home Minister Zia Lanjar, Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, IG Police Riffat Mukhtar, MD NRTC Brigadier Asim Ishaque, DG Sindh Safe Cities Authority Asif Aijaz Shaikh and others.

The CM was told that the Smart Safe City project 1300 CCTV cameras would be installed at 300 sites in Red Zone & Airport Corridor with FR and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) capability within eight hours solar back.

To a question, CM was told that the 193 km OFC network would connect 18 police stations. The cameras would relate to the

Command & Control Centre of CPO and then a permanent C&CC would be developed at KPO.

The smart safe city project would have the capability of facial recognition and a number plate recognition system. Under the system monitoring of hospitals for criminals/suspects, multiple camera tracking against suspects and response, database management of criminals and integration with National, Criminal, and other databases.

The chief minister said that the project was much awaited and finally it was seeing the day of light and hoped that the project would achieve its purpose. "I want you NRTC to complete the first phase in the one and half years," he said. The NRTC had given him two years to complete the first phase.

The safety system is a safeguard of the city through Artificial Intelligence based digital transformation. The CM said that Karachi has more than 20.38 million population which would increase

further by 2030. Therefore, to control crime and critical incidents, public unrest, disaster management and traffic safety were his top priorities and their solution lay in technological integration and cyber security.

The conceptual framework of the smart safe city Karachi includes swift delivery- response and services- digital forensics and analysis of incidents, situational awareness through one window operation, real-time monitoring of activities, systematised traffic and crowd examining and monitoring, timely action against the untoward incident and intelligent data co-relations from a database. Murad Ali Shah termed the launching of the first phase as good news for the people of the City.

Director General Sindh Safe Cities Authority Asif Aijaz Shaikh and Managing Director NRTC Brig Asim Ishaque signed the agreement in the presence of Sindh chief minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah and others.

Child marriage remains a threat in marginalized areas: CPWB

ISLAMABAD (APP): Child marriage remains a pressing issue, particularly in marginalized areas, where young girls are married off before they turn 18.


Talking to APP here on Wednesday, Punjab Child Protection & Welfare Bureau (CPWB), Sara Ahmad noted that Sindh is the only province in Pakistan with laws against underage marriage. However, she said there are still areas within Sindh where this practice persists. To combat child marriage, she said there needs to be a shift in societal attitudes towards women.

Successful operation of cantt division police, dangerous robbery gang apprehended

Syed Adnan

Acting on special directives from SP Cantt Division Waqas Rafique, under the leadership of DSP Cantt Amjad Khan, SHO Muhammad Asif Khan conducted a successful operation against elements involved in street crimes. During this operation, a dangerous and active robbery gang, responsible for robbing millions from a money changer, was apprehended at Edwardes College Chowk. Four suspects were arrested, identified as residents of Custom Chowk, Tehkal, Peshtakhara, and Dir Colony. The organized gang has been found involved in various criminal activities, including dacoities within the jurisdiction of Hayatabad police station and other areas. They confessed their involvement in the robbery incident during the initial interrogation. The apprehension of the suspects led to the recovery of a significant amount of stolen cash totalling 3.4 million rupees, three modified motorcycles used in the commission of crimes, and four pistols. Further interrogation of the arrested suspects is expected to yield more crucial revelations. This successful operation reflects the commitment and effectiveness of Cantt Division Police in combating criminal elements and ensuring the safety and security of the citizens.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَاِنَّ الْيُسْرٰى رَاجِعُوْنَ



انتقال پر ملاح

محمد زمان خان بقضائے الہی وفات پا گئے

ہے۔ جن کا نماز جنازہ آج بروز جمعرات

21 مارچ 2024 کو بوقت 5 بجے زاہد

مارکیٹ پشاور میں ادا کیا جائے گا۔ مرحوم

ڈاکٹر سلمان کے والد محترم تھے۔

رابطہ ڈاکٹر سلمان 03459164383



KARACHI: People rush to buy snacks for Iftari at Burns Road.

Increase of food items prices: Two members bench hear petition

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar High Court Wednesday heard the petition filed against increase in prices of food items and hoarding during Ramadan. The hearing was conducted by a two-member bench consisting of Justice Ijaz Anwar and Justice Waqar Ahmed. The court summoned the Chief Secretary, Secretary Food and DG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety Authority. The Chief Secretary and other relevant officers should come on Thursday and tell what steps have been taken, the court said.

Assistant Commissioner, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Authority and officials of the Food Department appeared in court, the honorable judges said. The price of everything has

been doubled, the price list is not being implemented, the petitioner's lawyer Abbas Sangin told the court.

This problem cannot be solved by arresting two or four prisoners and posting their pictures on Facebook, said Justice Ijaz Anwar. Government should take practical steps, Justice Ijaz Anwar said.

Justice Ijaz Anwar said that the district administration do not take this issue seriously. This is such an important issue, three dates have passed and you are not submitting the report, Justice Waqar Ahmed said.

It is not only for Ramadan, implementation of the official price list should also be done after Ramadan, and Justice Ijaz Anwar directed the concerned govt officials. The

price in the official price list is one and in the market it is something else, petitioner Abbas Sangin advocate said in his petition.

On one side they are sending high prices and on the other side they are mixing it which is harmful to health, Abbas Sangin advocate told the court. The administration says that meat is 700 rupees and milk is 130 to 160 rupees per kg but the actual price of meat being sold is Rs. 1000 or Rs. 1150 per kg.

The weight of bread has been reduced so much that biscuits have been made from it.

The court summoned the Chief Secretary, Secretary Food and DG of KP Food Authority on Thursday. The hearing adjourned till Thursday.

Minister assures to resolve problems

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education, Meena Khan Afridi has said that result-oriented steps would be taken to address problems confronted by universities.

He was talking to a delegation of Teaching Staff Association in Civil Secretariat here on Wednesday. The delegation apprised minister about problems of universities urging him to take steps for resolution.

Delegation also suggested joint efforts of government and teachers to solve complicated and difficult matters.

Speaking on the occasion, minister appreciated suggestion of teachers association and assured cooperation to delegation. He said that practical steps would be taken after due consideration to evolve permanent solution of these problems.

Action over profiteers directed

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Minister Zahir Shah Toro Wednesday said that they have been tightened against the elements involved in violating the govt price lists and selling food items on their own choice, creating price hike and illegal profits.

In a press statement issued here, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Minister Zahir Shah Toro said that the prices of food items have decreased relatively and most of the food items are expensive coming from down country.

Deputy Commissioners and concerned authorities should take action against wholesalers and profiteers, the Food Minister directed. Action will also be taken against the concerned officers for neglecting their duty, the Food Minister said.

The performance of the Food Authority has deteriorated under the caretaker government, alleged Food Minister Zahir Shah. People should report to the complaints cell to end artificial inflation, the Food Minister said.

KP Assembly session summoned

PESHAWAR (APP): The KP Assembly session has been summoned on March 22, at 3pm for taking oath of members of reserved and minority seats.

The Governor in exercise his power conferred by clause (a) of article 109 of the Constitution of Pakistan has summoned the session of the provincial assembly, said a notification issued here on Tuesday.



PESHAWAR: A delegation led by president Kisan Board Rizwan Ullah Mohmand meeting with Advisor Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif at his office.

FIA operations continue against illegal currency trade

PESHAWAR (APP): Major Operations of FIA Peshawar Zone continued on the directives of the Director Peshawar Zone Nisar Tanoli with crack-down against the elements involved in the Hawala and hundi business.

The team of FIA Peshawar Zone Circle arrested 6 suspects involved in illegal currency

exchange business, the FIA spokesman said here Wednesday. Among the arrested accused are Umair Khan, Bhakti Anwar, Afsar Ali, Gohar Taj, Sherizada and Hafeezullah, the spokesman said.

The accused were arrested from Upper Dir, Peshawar Motorway and Mansehra Road Abbottabad and during the raids,

local and foreign currency worth millions were recovered from the accused, the FIA official said.

A total of 6400 Saudi Riyals, 600 US Dollars, 350 UAE Dirhams, 370 British pounds, 150 Omani riyals and Rs. 3.6 million Pakistani rupees were recovered from the accused, the FIA official said.

He said, Hundi and Hawala and foreign currency exchange records were also recovered from the accused and the accused could not satisfy the authorities regarding the exported currency.

Cases have been registered against the accused, further investigation is ongoing, FIA spokesman said.

KMU, CEF collaborate to enhance Quranic education, character building

PESHAWAR (APP): Directorate of Academic and Admission at Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar organized a comprehensive training and orientation session centered on Quranic & Sunna understanding courses, in collaboration with the Character Education Foundation.

The primary objective of this event was to augment faculty development initiatives and enhance student learning resources related to Quranic education, character development, and community engagement.

Distinguished individuals in attendance included Dr. Mehmood Ahmed, founder and chairman of the Food Authority has deteriorated under the caretaker government, alleged Food Minister Zahir Shah.

Rubina Nazli, Dean of Basic Medical Sciences, Prof. Dr. Jawad Ahmad, Prof. Dr. Zilli Huma, Director of Academic & Admission, and Muhammad Islam Khan, Additional Director of Academic Affairs. Alongside them, faculty members and a significant number of students participated actively in this enriching session.

The ceremony commenced with opening remarks from Prof. Dr. Abdul Ghafoor, stressing the importance of fostering a strong relationship with the Quran and Sunnah for both students and faculty members.

Guest speaker Dr. Mahmood Ahmed, founder and chairman of Character Education Foundation(CEF), Prof. Dr.

Education Foundation, shared insights on the importance of sincerity, vision, determination, and practical wisdom in achieving success in life, emphasizing the significance of Quranic teachings and Sunnah.

He underscored the essential role of perseverance and highlighted the need for character building to pave the way for a prosperous society.

In her address, Prof. Dr. Rubina Nazli, acknowledged the pivotal role of religious education alongside medical education, emphasizing the responsibility of parents in encouraging their children to embrace Quranic teachings in today's era.

The session concluded

with Prof. Dr. Rubina Nazli and Prof. Jawad Ahmed, Prof. Dr. Zilli Huma Director Academic & Admission, Addl Director M. Islam presenting shields of recognition to Mahmood Ahmed for his enlightening discourse and invaluable contributions to character education.

Storm of inflation in Peshawar not letting up

PESHAWAR (APP): The district administration is powerless to control the prices of vegetables, fruits and live chicken here on Wednesday.

The price of Onion increased 50 rupees and is now being sold at Rs 250. Tomato Rs 130, Garlic Rs 650, Ginger Rs 610 and Lemon Rs 250 per kg. Potato 70, Kachalu 240, Green pepper 240, Capsicum 400, Eggplant 140, Cauliflower 100, Okra 360 rupees sold per kg.

As far the price of fruits including Apple 350, Pomegranate 460, Malta 340, Stobery 440, Amardo 330 per kg being sold while banana 210 rupees per dozen is being sold.

An increase of 15 rupees in the price of live chicken per kg and now the price of live chicken has increased from 440 to 455 rupees per kg. The price of a dozen eggs in the market remained at Rs 320 with rupees 30 increased.



PESHAWAR: Member City Capital Metropolitan meeting with Assistant Director LG Malik Arshad.

Minister directs completion of software in 25 districts

PESHAWAR (APP): Minister for Excise, Mian Khaleeq-ur-Rehman has directed to complete centralized database software in 25 districts of the province. He was chairing a meeting of regarding Motor Vehicle Software Database and Software Up gradation here on Wednesday.

The minister said that transparent system of tax-

ation was being introduced in the province while digitization has been brought in excise an taxation system for facilitation of people.

He also directed steps to resolve technical problems in Motor Vehicle Software Database and its implementation all over the province. He directed to complete database in 25 districts of the province and added that

integrated system would soon be develop for online verification of property and motorcar taxation.

Excise minister said that citizen service would be inducted in software database under which people would be provided services of e-invoicing, text messaging, vehicle audit trail and NADRA verification on a single platform.

Islamia College Peshawar: An education icon that saw Independence Movement draws students ahead of Pakistan Day's celebrations

PESHAWAR (APP): Established in the foothills of Koh-e-Sufaid in 1913, Islamia College Peshawar which saw Independence Movement, started attracting students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to present rich tributes to its students' historic role in completion of Quaid e Azam's mission for Pakistan.

Impressed by the ICP's students' heroic role in mobilization of the denizens of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Pakistan, the students of different Govt and private schools here Wednesday visited different sections of ICP including Khyber Union, a debating society of the college established in pre-partition era that was also visited by father of the nation Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and highly praised its great services in awakening of people for Pakistan.

Students Abdul Hadi, Daniyal, Malaika Bibi and Muhammad Saad along with others were over the moon after seeing the tall beautiful domes, lush-green lawns and majestic architecture of Islamia College Peshawar grabbing visitors' attention while passing on University Road.

Declaring ICP's identity as Peshawar, the students

said that they have heard a lot about this historic college of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and today their dream to see it was fulfilled by their fathers and relatives. "I thanked my papa jan for helping me to see my favorite's college today with my own eyes," said Abdul Hadi of Nasirpur village, Peshawar.

"Getting admission in ICP is a dream of every student of KP. I will definitely try to get admission in my favorite college after qualifying the metric examination with a high score," said Malika Bibi, a fifth grade student of Educators Pabbi Campus Nowshera.

Holding a torch of education for 111 long years, ICP is carrying the national flag hoisting high on occasion of 84th Pakistan Day that would be celebrated with national enthusiasm on Saturday across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Being a beautiful combination of Aligarh Movement of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and Deoband School of Thoughts, ICP is a mere testimony to the greatness of its Founder, Nawab Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan.

Muhammad Yousaf Khan, Chairman Pakistan Studies Department, ICP told APP on Wednesday

that the history of the Pakistan Movement could not be completed without mentioning the role of ICP. Yousaf said ICP had provided a unique platform to KP's people to compete with other communities in education, civil service, economy and politics after they were pushed to the wall during the colonial era, and great educationist Sir Abdul Qayyum Khan has played key role in its establishment.

"The idea to establish a college clicked in the minds of Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum Khan, leader of Muslim League, and Sir George Roos-Keppel, the then Chief Commissioner of NWFP (now KP) in early 1909 when they met the Pathan students during their visit to the Muslim University Aligarh," writes ex-principal ICP, Prof G.D. Khilji in his memoirs.

The students requested them either to construct a Frontier hostel at Aligarh or a college may be built for them in then NWFP (now KP). As a token, the students raised around sixty rupees and gave them to Roos Keppel to form a Frontier Hostel fund or any other project.

Later, Keppel passed the money on to Nawab Sahib. It was April 12, 1911 when

philanthropists Ghulam Haider Khan, Habibullah Khan, Khushal Khan, Sethi Karim Bakhsh and Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum gathered at the residence of Abdul Karim Khan Indrabai in Peshawar.

Haji Karim Bakhsh Sethi offered to build a mosque, Rahim Shah Kakakhel promised to construct a hostel and Abdul Karim Khan donated Rs 10,000, Sethi Karim Bakhsh Rs.50,000 and Nawab of Dir promised Rs100,000 for the college fund.

Later, a 10-member ad-hoc college committee under the chairmanship of Colonel Muhammad Aslam Khan was set up on May 29, 1911 to table proposals for establishment of the college. Leading Khans and Ulema were invited and seven resolutions including one to title the college as "Darul-Ulum-i-Islamia Suba-i-Sarhad" were unanimously passed. A committee was constituted to select a suitable site for the college. The proposal of a college at Wazir Bagh was rejected by Ross Keppel as he wanted to spare the place of recreation.

Sahibzada Abdul Qayyum in consultation with Ross Keppel selected the existing place for ICP. On October 1, 1913, ICP

was opened with 26 students on roll and Sahibzada Khurshid was the first student who got admission and later became the Governor of then NWFP and Tipping (1913-17) was its first Principal.

"Like students of Aligarh Movement who were in the vanguard of the independence movement in India, so were the students of Islamia College, Peshawar for the creation of Pakistan," said Muhammad Younas.

Quaid-i-Azam had an immense love for people of KP, ICP and visited this college in 1936, 1945 and 1948 as first Governor General of Pakistan.

In 1945, Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah had received a rousing welcome at ICP where students and Muslim Students Federation (MSF) presented him Rs 8,000 as fund for Pakistan Movement. "They assured him to present 8,000 committed educated workers when he came again to this great alma-mater."

Younas said, 'KP people had shown an immense love for Quaid-i-Azam and that is why Muslim League secured maximum seats in the 1946 election and after that historic victory nobody could stop the independ-

ence movement from this province.'

'In July 1947 Referendum, Muslim League clinched landslide victory in KP by securing over 200,000 votes and its people announced to become part of Pakistan,' he said. 'The spirit and enthusiasm of people was historic when Quaid e Azam came to Peshawar as first governor general of Pakistan on April 12, 1948. Peshawarities had decorated their houses, markets, vehicles and bazaars with national flags looking festive.'

The great Quaid presented glowing tributes to the services of its students towards making Pakistan in these words. 'I am indeed very happy to be present here today and to have the privilege of addressing students of this great Darul Uloom, who are the future builders of Pakistan.'

He reminded the students, 'we have achieved the national goal of Pakistan and now it is our collective responsibility to work hard in our respective professions with a high-level of dedication, commitment and sincerity to make it one of the greatest countries of the world.'

He advised students to develop a sound sense of

discipline, character, solid academic background and devote themselves towards studies. 'Remember your government is like your own garden. Your garden flourishes by the way you look after it and the efforts that you put towards its improvement. Similarly, your government can only flourish by your patriotic, honest and constructive efforts to improve it,' he told students.

Following a gap of one year, the Government had established University of Peshawar near ICP in 1949 in line with the Quaid's vision and later two more universities UET and Agriculture University were formed besides Pakistan Forest Institute. Younas said the great Quaid also addressed a Grand Tribal Jira at Governor House, Peshawar on April 17, 1948 and highly praised strong commitment, patriotism and support of tribesmen for Pakistan. He laid great emphasis on education and social economic development of tribesmen.

The love of Quaid-i-Azam, who became an honorary member of Khyber Union debating society of the college set up in 1936, can be judged from his "Will" written on May 30, 1939 in Bombay in which

he declared ICP, Muslim University Aligarh and Sindh Madrassatul Islam, Karachi as among the inheritor of his property.

Later, Quaid Trust paid Rs10,811,600 in different installments to ICP and was spent on construction of Quaid-i-Azam College of Commerce, University of Peshawar, construction of Jinnah residential quarters for employees, Jinnah College for Women and newly constructed Takbeer block at ICP.

The college was closed for about three weeks in 1919 due to the second Afghan War and students were shifted to Shahi Mehman Khana, Peshawar. It was again closed for a few days in 1920 due to the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Eleanor Roosevelt of the USA, first Governor of the NWFP Sir Ralph Griffith, renowned writer of Turkiye Khalida Aadeb Khanum, leader of All Indian Muslim League Sir Muhammad Shafi, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Governor then NWFP George Cunningham and Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar besides others remained its honorary members.



In brief

DPO visits police stations Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: District Police Officer Kohat Mohammad Umar Khan Wednesday paid a surprise visit to Police Station Billi Tang here. On the occasion of the visit, the DPO Muhammad Umar Khan made a detailed inspection of the records of the Police Station. The DPO reviewed the facilities available for people coming to the Police Station. He directed the police officials to increase the facilities for the civilians coming to the police station. The DPO urged all the staff of the police station to work with good intentions to solve the problems of the people and take the prayers of the poor and oppressed.

Public safety priority of police F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: Station House Officer (SHO) City police station Qaser Bhinder said that provide justice to the people in my first priority, on Wednesday. Because I am a servant of the people and it is my responsibility to listen and solve the problems. He further said that I took charge as SHO in Kamalia, I have been trying to provide justice to the people and inshallah, continuous action being taken against the criminals. SHO said that Al-hamduillah, in kamalia, crimes have ended to a large extent. I am trying to provide justice to peoples as much as possible. In the end, he said that the doors of my office are open all the time to provide justice to the peoples.

Food package distributed F.P. Report

MARDAN: Save the Life Welfare Foundation Baghdadada Mardan distributed Ramadan food packages of 48000 rupees among ninety five deserving families as part of their Ramazan Package initiative. Each Ramadan Food Package contains 10kg of flour, 5kg Rice, cooking oil of 2 liters, 2kg of Sugar, and 1kg of Dal Chana, 1kg of Dates, 1kg basin and half kg of black tea which will be sufficient for a family throughout the holy month of Ramadan. A special ceremony was held in this regard, which was presided over by the Foundation's Patron-in-Chief Maulana Abdul Haq, while the Foundation's Executive Member Fazal Rabbani, Acting President Mansoor Ali Advocate, Chairman NC Baghdadada one Ishaq Ahmad Lodhi, Vice Chairman Malik Muhammad Ilyas, Maulana Jawad Haqqani, Maulana Muhammad Raees Khan, Mufti Asfandiyar Durrani, Haji Ehsanul Haq and volunteers of the foundation were also present.

Flood victims get packages F.P. Report

LARKANA: On the instructions of Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Chairman Shahid Hussain Leghari, with the support of International Federation of Red Crescent Red Cross Society, distributed packages among the flood victims of 2022 in Larkana district. In the ceremony held at the municipal stadium of the city, Mayor Larkana Advocate Anwar Ali Luhar, Assistant Director of Field Operations of Pakistan Red Crescent Ehtsham Kedo, DD Livelihood Saif Jamali, Field Operations Officer Zain, Finance Officer Aqeel Jokio, Media Officer Arusa and others from Larkana district.



HYDERABAD: A large number of people breaking fast (Iftar) during the holy month of Ramazan.

Residents roaming for flour in Shahdadkot

F.P. Report

SHAHDADKOT: Due to the incompetence, inattention and corruption of the food department in district Qamber Shahdadkot, it was revealed that millions of bags of wheat are in abundance, as well as millions of bags of wheat lying at various centers. According to sources, 29 wheat procurement centers have been established in Qamber Shahdadkot district, including Qabu Saeed Khan, Shahdadkot, Miro Khan, Sajawal Junejo, Qamber, Warah. Centers were established in Naseerabad taluk, small towns and villages, Kuchi Pul, 97, Bahram, Ghibi Dero, Hakim Shah and other places, and last year the target of wheat purchase was around 14 lakh bags of Cuttack.

The officials of the food department bought about 12 lakh bags of wheat, for

which it is reported that the purchased lakhs of wheat bags are due to the mix of officials of the food department and the officials appointed at the centers. The revelation of bagging has come to light, after which the NAB team from Sukkur also reported the disappearance of wheat bags. And about 25 centers in charge of large-scale corruption have increased the fear of investigation.

The food inspectors who have committed corruption of crores of rupees in the wheat purchased at Takhu market are again trying to inform the center to buy the wheat coming in Takhu market this year. Due to the fact that they are not transferred to the government warehouses in time, there is a fear of spoilage, while due to the mixing of the wheat sacks with dirt and garbage in the wheat, the contractors stopped the transfer to the government warehouses,

due to which the government has to pay billions of rupees.

The loss of wheat has to be taken care of, while the food department has announced to buy wheat from 20 March to buy wheat from farmers, but due to last year's chopped wheat, the new wheat is full. The problem of transferring the wheat from the center to the warehouses has become difficult for the food department. It is being told about the transfer of wheat from 29 centers of district Qamber Shahdadkot that the food department had sent 3 contractors to carry the wheat to Hyderabad, Karachi. Those who visited the buying centers expressed helplessness due to dust and garbage in the bags of wheat purchased. On the other hand, according to DFC Altaf Magasi, there are no NAB cases against us and now the target has been reduced.

Ulema urged to play role for population control

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: The role of religious leaders and Ulema is vital for creating awareness to overcome uncontrolled increase in population besides better health of mother and child. These views were expressed by the District Population Welfare Officer Hafizabad Muhammad Atif Ali while addressing a seminar held in connection with observing family planning week on the direction of Provincial Secretary Sulman Ijaz and DG Saman Ray. Local ulema, religious scholars participated in the seminar.

District Social Officer (DSO) said that awareness was being given regarding family planning to prominent personalities, traders, lawyers, teachers and students in the district. He said that unbridled increasing of population was eating all resources of the

nation and no nation could prosper without balancing between sources and population.

Later, an awareness walk arranged from district complex led by the District Population Officer and a large number of people belongs to different segments of society attended the walk.

Cleanup Hafizabad mission initiated by administration: Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad directed the district administration, local government, District Council and Municipal Committees to ensure removal of wall chalking, flaxes and encroachments throughout the district besides cleanliness work under Chief Minister's 'Suthra' Punjab Campaign by the 31, March 31.

While presiding over a meeting held to review pace of work on 'Suthra'

Punjab Campaign and other people welfare initiatives taken by the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif in the district, DC said that cleanliness work in the district was in full swings and sanitary workers were engaged in remove garbage, wall chackling and encroachments from streets, bazars and other places under a schedule plan.

ADCR Imtiaz Ali Baig, AC Munawar Hussain and officers of different departments attended the meeting. He further directed the officers concerned to focus on cleanliness campaign and take notice of complaints of citizens immediately. If anywhere need to cleanliness than sanitary workers and machinery be deployed without any delay for addressing complaints of people, she urged the officers.

BBA election to be held on 30th F.P. Report

BUNER: A joint penal of three political parties including Awami National Party, Jammāt-e-Islami and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf will contest election for Buner Bar Association 2024-25 scheduled on 30th March, on Wednesday.

According to details, the alliance presidential candidate will be Riaz Jan Irshad Khan as General Secretary Haroon u Rasheed for Vice President Zulfiqar Ali for joint Secretary Gul Bacha for Finance Secretary and Shakeel Khan for Library Secretary has submitted the applications.

Another alliance comprising of Muslim Lawyers Forum with other lawyers Forums nominated Mian Naeem-ud-Din as presidential candidate, General Secretary Ashraf Ali, joint Secretary Muhammad Irfan Ullah and Ilyas for Finance Secretary and Amjad Ali Library secretary. The elections will be held on 30th of this month in Barroom Board Chairman Rafiq Ahmed Khan Advocate and members Hazrat Hussain Advocate and Qaiser Ali Advocate has announced the schedule.

It should be clear that for the past several years, there is an electoral alliance between the Malgari Wakilan and the Islamic Lawyers Forum and because of the majority, the advantage is gained and this year Insaf Lawyers Forum has also joined this alliance. It is likely that the alliance panel apparently has majority but the announcement of the winner will have to wait for the formal announcement by the Chairman of the Election Board after the elections are held.

ADC monitoring bazaars, hotels to implement official prices: On the special instructions of Deputy Commissioner Hamid Ali Khan, Special Magistrate Syed Akram Shah checked the tandoor and paratha vendors outside Dagar Hospital at Sehri time and summoned 2 tandoors and 4 paratha vendors in his office in the morning for lack of weight, price list and scales.

PTI expels 15 activists for ignoring party policy

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chapter took a strict action against more than 15 of its members for not following party rules during the general elections held on February 8, 2024. To get to the bottom of the matter, an inquiry team led by Purdil Khan was formed. This team had the task of figuring out who had disobeyed the party's instructions during the general elections 2024.

After a careful and open investigation, the 15-member committee discovered that certain members had gone against the party's policies and had actively campaigned against the PTI's chosen candidate. Following the recommendations made by the inquiry committee, the party leaders decided to take immediate action.

As a result, the memberships of these party members were terminated on the spot. Among those who faced the consequences were Nadeem Shah advocate, who served as the president of the Insaf Lawyer Forum (ILF), along

with Sadat Khan, Muhammad Kamal, Iqbal Khan, Israr Ahmad Shahkar, Mian Farman, Waheed Gul, Musa Khan, Mian Mubarak Shah, Mian Bawar Khan, Bilal Yousafzai, Nizam Mashal, Zeeshan Khan, Shahid Ali Zada, and Imtiaz Khan.

This move underscores the PTI's commitment to upholding discipline within its ranks and ensuring that its members adhere to party policies, especially during crucial electoral processes. **Safety of public's lives & property constitutional obligation:** Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai has directed the concerned authorities to strengthen the security arrangements at all levels in the context of the current security situation and to ensure the safety of people's lives and property at any cost.

He was addressing the Divisional Intelligence Coordination meeting in his office. Additional Commissioner Naeem Akhtar, Regional Police Officer Najibur Rahman Bagwi, Deputy Commissioner Swabi Dr.

Tariqullah, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Saeedullah Jan, ADCs Shah Zaib and Gohar Ali, officers of security agencies, ANF and other concerned officials attended the meeting.

The meeting took stock of the current situation and reviewed the law and order situation during Ramadan in detail and necessary decisions were taken to protect the life and property of the people besides government property and installations. The meeting approved various measures to take actions against drugs, illegal vehicles, weapons and anti-social elements in Mardan Division.

Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai while addressing the meeting said that the protection of life and property of the people is the primary responsibility of the government and fulfilling this responsibility should be our first priority. He directed the police and other agencies to crack down on drugs and especially ice in Mardan and Swabi districts.

Nation stands by Pakistan armed forces: Samina

F.P. Report

QUETTA: The entire nation is standing by the side of the army until the end of terrorism from the country and terrorists will never succeed in their evil intentions. These views were expressed by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri in her statement condemning the ongoing incidents of terrorism in the country.

She said that in the terrorist attack in Mir Ali, North Waziristan, terrorist organizations originating in Afghanistan are involved, for which we strongly condemn, Pakistan's action in Afghanistan is justified.

She said that all the martyrs, including Lieutenant Colonel Syed Kashif Ali and Captain Ahmed Badr, are heroes of the nation and the entire nation and their families are proud of the martyrs' eternal sacrifice for the country.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that those who sacrificed their lives for the protection of Pakistan have proved that the protection of Pakistan is in strong hands and no one can look at the enemy of Pakistan with a lecherous eye. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri further said that the brave soldiers and officers of Pakistan Army sacrificed their lives for the sur-

vival of the country, for which the nation pays tribute to the martyrs.

She said that the courage, perseverance and patience of the families of the martyrs are a source of strength for the nation and the security forces. She also said that the martyrs themselves got the status of martyrdom but they saved the lives of the people and brought the terrorists to hell. Soon these cowardly terrorists will be brought to their end. In her statement, she said that cowardly enemies cannot shake our firm resolve with such actions. Every drop of blood of martyrs will be counted.



SARGODHA: Students sitting on the roof of bus in a dangerous way may cause any mishap and need attention of authorities concerned.

Alarming situation of air pollution in Pakistan

Ghazala Anbreen

KEY findings from the 2023 World Air Quality Report reveal that Pakistan is the second most polluted country of the world. Pakistan is a country blessed with Glaciers, plains fertile lands, minerals and all the seasons coupled with an excellent geo strategic position.

However, there are serious issues of environment pollution there. Every year 49.6 million tons of solid waste is generated by Pakistan but waste management departments dispose off from 50 to 80 percent of the solid waste. The question arises how can we use garbage to our benefit? One case study can be that of Istanbul.

The waste in this city is recycled to produce electricity. This model can be a good example to study how the government managed this waste to its advantage. In Istanbul, a city with a population of 16 million people, a facility is designed to create electricity from waste which converts 3000 tons of garbage a day into electricity. Boilers burn the garbage at 1832 degrees Fahrenheit (1000 degree centigrade). The kinetic energy thus created produces electricity to the extent of creating 85 megawatts in one day equivalent to the amount of daily energy 1.4 million people

need. Even the ash is used in the cement making. The hazard of environmental pollution is minimal as they control the emissions as well.

Air Pollution in Lahore: In 2022, Pakistan was the third most polluted country in the world. Lahore had the worst air pollution in the world in 2022. Poor air quality was there year round and as described by a social worker (Abid Omer), even the River Ravi and blue skies could not be seen. Lahore had a concentration of 97.4 micro grams of PM 2.5 particles per cubic meter of air. In 2021 it was 86.5.

In order to combat the rising air pollution in Lahore Clean Air Plan was developed by the Ministry of Environment Pakistan and supported by Climate and Clean Air Coalition, the Stockholm Environment Institute and Clean Air Asia in 2022. Its basic purpose was to identify the causes responsible for pollution and set plans to eradicate air pollution by quantifying black carbon and other air pollutants at national and provincial levels.

Importing of waste by Pakistan by the developed countries: In 2022 a Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change met for a briefing on the National Hazardous Waste Management Policy 2022. This

policy aimed to prevent the deadly waste from entering in Pakistan for safeguarding health and environment.

The parliamentary committee took notice of the reports that a large amount (80,000 ton waste was imported by Pakistan annually) of which many countries were sending their garbage to Pakistan while the fact remains that by that year Pakistan itself generated 30 million tons of solid waste per annum.

Why these countries are sending their garbage in Pakistan and why Pakistan is accepting it? The countries who send their waste to Pakistan assert that this is an aid. Mostly this is plastic or some metals which can be recycled. The premise is that in this way Pakistan will not have to buy much plastic and its import bill would be low. In fact, due to this import of garbage Pakistan had to face many problems. As for instance, clinical waste brings much bacteria along with it and can create much diseases. According to a DW report in 2019 in Pakistan the garbage which came from America, 624 containers were found contaminated having poisonous material.

Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal in Switzerland entered into force

on 1992. In it a decision was made relating to better waste disposal practices and sound management of hazardous wastes thereby promoting responsible handling and preventing environmental harm. Pakistan is a party to this Convention. Emphasis should be on adopting environmentally sound practices with the minimum risk to human health and environment.

Due to the mismanagement of safe disposal of solid waste the environmental problems exacerbate.

Current situation: Air pollution has worsened in Pakistan. Lahore has repeatedly been ranked as the most polluted city in the world. Swiss monitoring platform, IQAir, a Swiss Air Technology Company reported that air quality over 300 is considered hazardous and in Lahore it was 348 in 2021.

Factors responsible: Factors responsible for this include vehicular emissions, industrial residues, seasonal practice of burning crop stubble, smoke from brick kilns and dust from construction sites especially from October to February, increase in housing societies in the declared green areas etc. Also low quality petrol and harvest fires are responsible for this alarming situation.

Besides burning of solid

waste and agricultural residues in the open. steel mills, sugar mills, cement industries, fertilizer plants and power plants using furnace oil having high quantity of sulphur content also create air pollution. In this way quantity of methane gas gets higher in the air and affects the lives of the people living in that area. Methane gas is five times poisonous than Carbon dioxide produced in this way. This contaminated air causes respiratory diseases and eye infections.

At this point, it would be important to note that Pakistan has signed the Global Methane Pledge which aims to reduce the methane level by 30 percent over the next two decades. Similarly there is a lack of proper monitoring of vehicular fitness and emissions testing.

Impacts: Due to all these factors respiratory diseases are on the rise resulting in shorter life expectancy and cardiac diseases. Chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases make the life span reduced.

What is required: Regulations are needed as air cleaning filters for factories, limits of carbon emissions for cars, use of hybrid technology and planting more trees in the cities. Enhancing public transportation system and reducing the number of private vehicles, electric transport and restricting movement of vehicles

in urban areas can be some of the solutions. Smoke emitting transport should be fined.

Solutions: Pakistan's NCAP (National Clean Air Policy) was approved in March 2023 and its transition to Euro 5 emission standards can yield good results provided Pakistan observes safety protocols for the dumping of hazardous waste, promote better manure storage and management in the livestock industry, regularly monitor emissions from factories and adopt clean technology. Apart from that planting more trees, discouraging the burning of trash, encouraging proper disposal of solid waste, installing more of the air quality monitoring stations, investing more in renewable energy sources, reducing the burning of fossil fuels can also be effective solutions. Involvement of NGOs in pollution control efforts and community mobilization through awareness at mass media can be helpful as well. Composting can be a method of processing and recycling of the garbage and sewage in one operation. It is a biological process allowing organic portion of refuse to decompose under carefully controlled situations. Enforcing existing environmental laws would be essential for protecting public health through sustainable collective efforts.



Palestinian paramedics fear Gaza dangers will spread to West Bank

GAZA: In his 25 years as a paramedic, Jawdat al-Muhtaseb has worked during fraught times, from the second Intifada to the heightened tensions in 2015 and then to the current situation, where the ripple effect of Israel's war on Gaza led to an increase in deadly Israeli violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

The 46-year-old Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) medic has been shot three times but it is the images he sees every night on his television from Gaza that have been hardest to deal with psychologically. Tension continues to rise in the West Bank, where at least 433 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the war on Gaza on October 7, including more than 116 children, mostly as a result of Israeli raids. And al-Muhtaseb cannot escape the thought that the devastation he sees in Gaza will soon be the reality where he is.

His family is just as worried. al-Muhtaseb's eldest child, eight-year-old Muhammad, asks if they will ever be in a situation where al-Muhtaseb will have to rescue them from their bombed-out home, like the images he sees from Gaza. Six-year-old Saba asks al-Muhtaseb what his reaction would be if he saw her and her two siblings dead.

"I haven't found the answers yet, and I can't comprehend their questions," al-Muhtaseb tells Al Jazeera from a PRCS facility in Hebron. "But despite these difficulties and the extremely difficult psychological conditions, I've accepted [the situation] we work in, and I'm proud of the humanitarian mission we are accomplishing." PRCS paramedics work around the clock providing services to Palestinians. They deal with everything from traffic accidents to Israeli army and settler attacks.

One of al-Muhtaseb's colleagues, 42-year-old Lina Amro, is a mother of five and has been working for the PRCS for 15 years. She describes her typical day – preparing her children for school, then heading to work, putting on her uniform and preparing her first aid kit before waiting for the calls to come in.

But since the beginning of Israel's war on Gaza, the job has gotten harder. The Israeli military has increased the number of road closures for Palestinians across the West Bank, making waiting times much longer for al-Muhtaseb and Amro and sometimes preventing them from being able to reach the casualties in time to



save them.

"Fear and dread have increased because of the many dangers that surround us and the difficulties and obstacles we face during our work due to the barriers and restrictions we face," Amro tells Al Jazeera. Those restrictions, which Israel says are necessary for security reasons, have forced the paramedics to look for alternatives – but that can lead to problems.

"The entrances to cities are closed at night, so when there is someone who needs to reach a hospital, we use a handover method at the checkpoint," al-Muhtaseb says, describing how ambulances park on either side of the checkpoint and then paramedics carrying the patient walk across to hand them over rather than try to cross with the vehicle. "This is risky and stopping us from approaching the checkpoints, as well as the death threats and the shots fired towards us, prevent us from being able to bring the patient [to hospital] promptly," al-Muhtaseb explains. "In some instances, it took 75 instead of 10 minutes, which is dangerous for the patient ... We need every minute we can get to save someone's life."

Al-Muhtaseb says the danger for paramedics is increasing, particularly in light of the killings of more than 350 medical workers by Israel in Gaza and repeated attacks on hospitals. "The Israeli army targets every Palestinian ... even though we are protected as an organisation by international humanitarian law," al-Muhtaseb says, pointing to the killing

of two PRCS paramedics in Gaza who were sent to rescue six-year-old Hind Rajab who called pleading for help after the Israeli army killed all the family members in a car with her.

"Coordination was under way with the Red Cross to ensure that the ambulance would arrive at the child's location, and when the message arrived permitting the ambulance crews to proceed, our colleagues headed to the location," al-Muhtaseb recounts. "Within less than half an hour, communication with the colleagues inside the vehicle was cut off, and for 12 days, we were not allowed to advance towards the location, and we were unable to get any information [about what had happened]."

The Red Crescent was forced to wait for the army to withdraw and then found only "a melted vehicle" and "decomposed bodies", he says. Israel says it targets only sites where Hamas fighters are hiding or infrastructure and denies targeting civilians. But the story of the attempted rescue of Hind typifies the dangers Palestinian paramedics face in an environment where they know that their medical uniforms can offer little protection from Israeli fire.

It is a reality al-Muhtaseb and Amro contend with every day as they hope to make it home to their families. "[It's dangerous,] especially here in Hebron, ... where [Palestinians] mix with settlers, who throw stones at us," Amro says. "After October 7, it is not the same as before. ... I pray every time before we leave in our ambulance." — Aljazeera

Moldova expels Russian diplomat

BUCHAREST (AP): Moldova said it has expelled a Russian diplomat after Moscow opened polling stations for its presidential election in Moldova's pro-Russia breakaway region of Transnistria.

Relations are increasingly fraught between Russia and Moldova, whose pro-Western government has firmly opposed Russia's full-scale war in neighboring Ukraine. Moldova summoned Russia's ambassador, Oleg Vasnetsov, to protest against the Kremlin's decision to open six polling stations in Transnistria "contrary to the position of the Moldovan authorities," the foreign ministry said.

It said it informed Vasnetsov that an unnamed embassy worker was a "collaborator" who was declared persona non grata and must leave the country. Russia had previously agreed to open just one polling station at its embassy in Moldova's capital of Chisinau. Russia has opened polling stations in Transnistria in previous presidential elections as well.

Moldovan officials have repeatedly accused Russia of conducting a "hybrid war" against their country by funding anti-government protests, meddling in local elections and running vast disinformation campaigns to try to topple the government and derail the country from its path toward full European Union membership. Transnistria was declared a breakaway state by pro-Russia forces after a short war in the early 1990s. It isn't recognized by any UN member country, including Russia, which maintains close ties to the region that is home to about 220,000 Russian citizens. Russia maintains about 1,500 troops in Transnistria as so-called peacekeepers, who guard Soviet-era weapons and ammunition stockpiles. A large number of Russian citizens in Transnistria also hold Moldovan passports.

Moldova is set to hold a referendum on EU membership later this year — along with its own presidential election. Moldova was granted EU candidate member status in June 2022, and Brussels in December of last year said it would open accession negotiations for both Moldova and Ukraine.

Germany bans entry of far-right figure

BERLIN (AP): German authorities have issued an entry ban on a prominent Austrian European far-right figure known for his talk about "remigration" at a recent meeting of nationalist populists that triggered large protests against populism in the country.

Martin Sellner of the Identitarian Movement said in a video posted on social media platform X that German authorities sent his lawyer a letter saying he wasn't allowed to enter Germany for the next three years and if he happened to be on German soil, he had to leave within a month. Local media outlets, including Sueddeutsche Zeitung and Spiegel, cited German officials confirming Sellner's entry ban.

Lately, Germany has seen large protests against the far right following a report that extremists met in Potsdam near Berlin in November to discuss the deportation of millions of immigrants, including some with German citizenship. Sellner presented his "remigration" vision for the deportation of immigrants there. The Alternative for Germany party, some of whose members reportedly attended the meeting, has also been facing widespread criticism. The party has sought to distance itself from the event, while also decrying media reports that covered it.

During the weekend, Sellner was set to give a speech in the Swiss Aargau canton (state) when he was thrown out and escorted to Zurich. Identitarians belong to an extreme right movement that started in France and mainly campaign against immigrants and Islam.

Senegal President rejects blame for election chaos

DAKAR (BBC): Senegal's president has told the BBC he does not regret delaying this year's elections, a move that sparked deadly protests. Macky Sall said he did not make the decision alone - he was responding to concerns raised by parliamentarians. After a violent backlash, many feared the relatively stable nation was slipping into political crisis.

But the attempt to push the election back by 10 months was blocked by Senegal's top court. The vote will now take place - a month after it was initially due. "I have no apology to make, I have done nothing wrong," President Sall told the BBC. "All the actions that have been taken have been within the framework of the law and regulations."

With just three weeks to go before the 25 February election, Mr Sall announced that it would be delayed, a move that was later approved by parliament. Critics accused Mr Sall of trying to stay on beyond his term of office, which the president denied. He argued that the delay was needed to resolve a dispute over the eligibility of presidential candidates. He

says it was opposition politicians who raised these concerns.

"If it had not been for the National Assembly which passed the law, which referred it to me, there would not have been the postponement of the election," he said. Mr Sall's announcement sparked violent clashes between police and protesters, in which three people died. Many feared that Senegal's reputation as a bastion of democracy in an unstable region was on the line.

Senegal has had three peaceful handovers of power since independence and is the only country in mainland West Africa that has not experienced a coup. Mr Sall told the BBC that the recent unrest "shows that there was an information campaign targeting Senegal and its president", as there is "just one month" between the original election date and when the vote will now take place. "In the progress of states, there comes times where there are crises and it is these crises which strengthen democracy and I think that this crisis has shown that we have solid institutions and, more than ever, our

democracy is set in stone," he said.

Last week, Senegal's main opposition leader and one of Mr Sall's fiercest critics Ousmane Sonko and his party's presidential candidate Bassirou Diomaye Faye were released from prison under a presidential amnesty. Mr Sonko has been prosecuted on a series of charges, all of which he says were politically motivated as a way of excluding him from the election. Because of a conviction of immoral behaviour with a minor, he was barred from contesting and Mr Faye is standing in his place.

President Sall denied that the charges against his rivals were politically motivated. He has served two terms in office - the maximum amount as per Senegal's constitution. In his interview with the BBC, he repeated his pledge not to overstay. "If the next president is not elected on the 24th [March], I'm leaving on 2 April regardless. That is the deadline, and I don't intend to stay on another day," he said. If no candidate gains more than 50% of the vote, there will be a second round.

Houthis in Yemen blow up a resident's house

CAIRO (AP): Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen blew up a house in a town southeast of the capital, Sanaa, killing at least nine people from the same family, officials and residents said. This came a day after two Houthi fighters were killed in an ambush allegedly set up by the house's owner, Ibrahim al-Zaei.

The deceased — a set of parents and their seven children — were killed in the explosion, according to residents Ahmed Baydawy and Arman Mahmoud.

Rescuers and civilians were trying to pull out others buried under the rubble, they said. Baydawy and Mahmoud said the Houthis besieged the house and its surroundings in the district Radea, in the Bayda province, before booby-trapping the house and blowing it up, causing

severe damage to neighboring buildings.

In a statement, the Houthi-run Interior Ministry said detonating the house was an "irresponsible reaction" by security forces who used "excessive force in an illegal way" while pursuing suspects behind ambush. It said an investigation committee has been formed to bring those involved to justice. The ministry didn't provide a death toll following the house blowup, but confirmed fatalities.

Yemen has been engulfed in a civil war since 2014, when the Houthis captured the capital, Sanaa, and forced the internationally recognized government to flee to the south, and then later to Saudi Arabia. The Houthis have imposed a repressive rule in Sanaa and other areas they control in

Yemen. They have cracked down on any possible sign of rebellion among residents, jailing thousands and confiscating large swathes of land from those deemed dissents.

A Saudi-led coalition entered the war the next year to try to restore the government to power. The war has deteriorated largely into a stalemate and spawned one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. The war has killed more than 150,000 people, including fighters and civilians, and created one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters, killing tens of thousands more. Since the start of the Oct. 7 Israel-Hamas war, the Houthis have made headlines with their attacks on commercial ships in the Red Sea, causing trade that normally flows through the crucial corridor to reroute.

South Sudan heatwave: Extreme weather shuts schools and cuts power

KHARTOUM (BBC): All schools have been ordered to close in South Sudan, as it prepares for a heatwave in which temperatures could reach an exceptional 45C (113F). Authorities said children should stay indoors and that the extreme weather could last for at least two weeks.

Deaths "related to excessive heat" have already been reported, officials said on Saturday. Residents in parts of the capital Juba sweltered without electric fans as the heat sparked power cuts. The streets of Juba, home to more than 400,000 people, were largely quiet in the afternoon as local media reported temperatures of 41C (106F).

It is exceptionally early for South Sudan to experience such heat - temperatures often exceed 43C (109F) but only in the summer months, according to the World Bank's Climate Change portal. Children in

uniform could be seen walking back to their homes, having been turned away from school. The ministries of education, health and environment said on Saturday that all schools would be closed because of the "serious health hazards" posed to students.

The ministries' statement did not say when schools would open again, but after a briefing with the authorities, two teachers told the BBC that their classes would resume on 3 April. Medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) told the BBC it had seen an increased number of admissions to one of its hospitals since the temperatures started to rise.

Residents of South Sudan, whose independence from Sudan in 2011 makes it the world's newest nation, described difficult conditions. "This heat is very serious and it's really

affecting our work," Wadcon Saviour Lazarus, who runs a national NGO, told the BBC. "Because of this heat, we are not able to move from one place to another. We come to the office early and leave late in order to avoid the heat," he said.

Juba resident Ayaa Winnie Eric said: "I take a lot of water to keep me hydrated. I also wear light clothes that do not absorb heat, and I avoid walking in the hot sun." Muslims, who make up around 6.2% of the country's population, have been hit especially hard as many are observing Ramadan - a month of fasting. They are therefore not permitted to drink water or any other liquids to stay hydrated during the day. South Sudan is the latest in a long line of African countries to experience blistering and, in many cases, record-breaking heat.

El Niño, a natural weather phenomenon, has been a big driving factor. It has caused unusually warm waters in the east Pacific Ocean - disrupting global weather patterns and driving up temperatures. However, El Niño is occurring against a backdrop of wider climate change. Meteorologists across the world have been documenting an increasing number of temperature extremes, with 2023 becoming the world's hottest year on record.

South Sudan could experience a few storms in its southern region next week, which could bring some relief amid the blazing heat. And in the longer term, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) has forecast wetter-than-normal conditions in the country over the coming months. While this will cool temperatures and bring relief in drought-hit areas, it may also cause flooding.

Polish farmer faces an uncertain future

CYWINY WOJSKIE, Poland (AP): Piotr Korycki picks up a handful of wheat and watches as the yellow grains run through his fingers. All around him, grain is piled high in a warehouse on his farm north of the Polish capital: hundreds of tons of wheat, rye and corn left over from last year's harvest that he is unable to sell for a profit.

With a new harvest on the horizon, he feels pressure to sell what he has to prevent it from going bad. "The situation on our markets is really very, very tough," Korycki said. "And if nothing changes, in a year or two it could become critical." Korycki's frustrations have pushed him to help organize protests that have been taking place in Poland for the past three months, part of protests by farmers across Europe. The latest in Poland is expected on Wednesday.

His yard is filled with huge round bales of hay and modern farm equipment, evidence of the changes that came to agriculture in Poland since the country joined the European Union nearly 20

years ago. The family farms 200 hectares (nearly 500 acres) of wheat, rye, corn and sugar beets. The 34-year-old, a farmer like his father and grandfather, says his business has been badly destabilized by Russia's war against Ukraine, a result of the EU deciding to allow free trade with Ukraine after the war started. The disruption of Ukrainian exports via the Black Sea led to a massive flow of grain across Poland's border with Ukraine, driving down prices for food products while inflation has caused production costs and interest rates on loans to rise.

Korycki didn't feel the pain for the first year of the war. Early on, the price for grain rose, but then fell below its original level. While he managed to sell part of last year's harvest, he still has 300 tons of unsold grain. The surplus represents a loss of 100,000 zlotys (\$25,000), which he calls "very large." In the past, he would have taken the grain to the Baltic Sea coast to sell to buyers who export it abroad by ship. But with the price collapse, what he

would get would not cover transport costs. He expects the best he can do is sell it closer to home as animal feed at a loss. "It's going to be critical because land prices are rising, prices of commodities for production remain at a high level and prices of the final product are simply going down constantly," he said.

Korycki says the EU seems to have no idea of what to do with the grain, "where to export it, on what terms, for what money, so this problem will only get worse." Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk acknowledges that the problem is real, and has been seeking relief for farmers in Brussels, where his voice carries weight after serving as president of the European Council from 2014-2019. Tusk has said there are well over 20 million surplus tons of grain in storage in Europe, with 9 million tons in Poland alone.

"And the summer harvest hasn't started yet," Tusk said in late February. "We do not yet have the infrastructure that would allow this grain to be

exported further." Adding to the anger of farmers across Europe are EU plans to fight climate change with policies called the Green Deal, which they say will create more administrative work and worsen financial burdens. The calls of Europe's farmers have grown increasingly strident even though the European Commission has relented to their pressure by rolling back some environmental requirements — despite warnings by scientists that agricultural production must become more environmentally sustainable in a period of climate change.

Paulina Sobiesiak-Penszko, a sociologist and agricultural expert at the Institute of Public Affairs in Warsaw, said the protests have become more radical, and asserted that they are being exploited by pro-Russian groups to drive an anti-Ukraine agenda. What is being lost, she argued, is the necessity of addressing the climate crisis, which requires new agricultural policies, and the needs of consumers, who among other things would benefit from less pesticide use in farming.

Brazil police accuse Bolsonaro of fraud

BRASILIA (Reuters): Brazil's federal police formally accused former President Jair Bolsonaro of fraud on his vaccination records, opening the door to criminal charges, according to a police report seen by Reuters.

An investigation by the comptroller general's office had already found that Bolsonaro's vaccination records were falsified to suggest he was vaccinated against COVID-19 in Sao Paulo in July 2021, when he was not in the city. Police found in their report that Bolsonaro could be charged with falsifying data in the country's public health system (SUS) and forming a criminal organization to evade public

health rules.

One of his former aides, Mauro Cid, who was arrested in May in the investigation and released as part of a plea bargain, was also formally accused in the police report. Police found that Cid fraudulently obtained vaccination records for Bolsonaro and his daughter Laura at the request of the then-president. Cid's plea bargain testimony was used as evidence against his former boss.

Bolsonaro told Reuters that he had not taken the COVID vaccine or done anything wrong: "It's a selective investigation. I'm calm," said the former president. "The world knows that I didn't take the vaccine." The police said that

the fraudulent certificates were issued "to obtain undue advantages related to the evasion of sanitary rules established during the pandemic period."

During his tenure, Bolsonaro repeatedly downplayed the importance of immunization and social distancing measures during the pandemic, which killed more than 700,000 people in Brazil. The police report accusing Bolsonaro of crimes paves the way for Brazil's prosecutor general to present criminal charges before the Supreme Court.

Bolsonaro has already been ruled politically ineligible until 2030 for spreading electoral misinformation during the 2022 election.

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Gaza famine and the world

THE United Nations human rights office has recently observed that Israel's restrictions on the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza could amount to a war crime. According to the Spokesman for the UN Human Rights Office, the extent of Israel's continued restrictions on the entry of aid into Gaza, together with how it continues to conduct hostilities, may amount to the use of starvation as a method of war, which is a grave war crime. Meanwhile, attacks on aid workers, humanitarian facilities and aid convoys, and access restrictions for relief staff, particularly in northern Gaza are currently a matter of extreme concern for the global community.

Israel's ruthless bombardment and inhumane atrocities against innocent Gazans continued since October 8 last year. More than 31,819 Palestinians, mostly women, and children, have been killed and over 74,000 wounded in the Gaza Strip since Israel launched an invasion against Hamas over five months ago. Israel's war against Hamas has created a humanitarian crisis throughout the Gaza Strip and devastation in northern region, which is largely cut off from the rest of the territory with little aid entering. Although, several western nations including the US, the UK, Germany, and Jordan have launched an airdrop campaign to provide essential food items to bereaved Palestinians, but such airdrop operations could not be an alternative to providing food grains to several million Palestinians presently incarcerated in an open prison under ruthless aggression of the worst enemy. Extreme level hunger and severe malnutrition are widespread in Gaza, where about 2.2 million Palestinians are facing a famine-like situation that has begun now in some areas and gradually expanding and worsening all across the enclave which is completely blockaded by Israeli troops from the Sea, land, and air.

The rogue Netanyahu regime has intentionally imposed a blockade and starved the poor Palestinians since October 8, apparently to punish common Palestinians, spread fear and harassment so no one dare to take arms against the occupier state in the future. The global community and UN rights experts continuously stressing an immediate ceasefire to avert an escalating famine that draws in rapidly every passing day.

A strange and deplorable policies of the western nations and multiple organs of the United Nations have been experienced by the World during the months long conflict in Gaza, wherein the major countries support Israel war-machine through provision of latest weaponry and resolutely sabotage ceasefire efforts at the UN Security Council on the one hand, while supply humanitarian aid in war torn Gaza and struggle for temporary truce on the other. Similarly, the UN Secretary-General, UN Human Rights Chief, FWO, and General Assembly have categorically admitted Israel's criminality and urged for action against the Jewish State but unfortunately, the UN executive bodies such as the UN Security Council and the ICJ are unable to observe Tel Aviv's war crimes and issue a ceasefire order in Gaza. Such dubious policies and biased attitudes seriously undermining international peace and eroding trust in the multilateral forums in the world.

Previously, the ICJ ordered Israel to change its course, avoid civilians casualties and give passage to humanitarian aid but since then conditions in Gaza have worsened, and Israel inhumane warcrimes continued against Palestinians. The Israeli authorities are undoubtedly involved in Palestinians' genocide and undertaking measures that mount to warcrimes and apartheid yet the global forums are helpless to play their due role in protecting humanity from the oppressor. Surprisingly, several world nations have adopted a principled stance over Gaza war but the Muslim countries and the OIC failed in playing an effective role in Palestine crisis. Until and unless, Muslim nations show courage and unity no force can bring a change in the existing conditions of Muslim Ummah in the contemporary world.

Pakistan-Kuwait ties

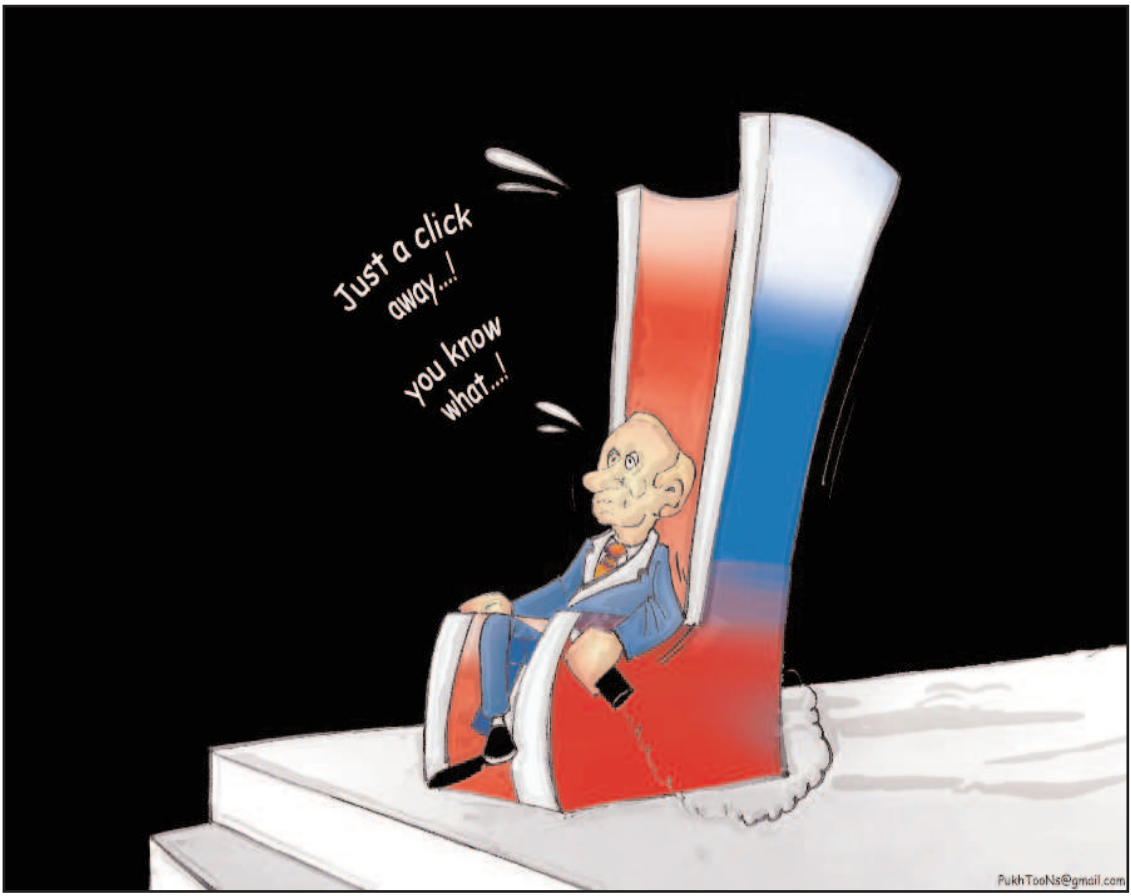
PRIME Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has emphasized concerted efforts by Pakistan and Kuwait to ensure the early implementation of their bilateral agreements in different fields. During a meeting, the Prime Minister told the Kuwaiti envoy that Pakistan attaches great importance to its historic and deep-rooted ties with Kuwait and Islamabad intends to further strengthen the same with a focus on trade and investment.

Pakistan and the state of Kuwait are two brotherly Muslim nations that are tied in a deep-rooted historic friendship and Muslim brotherhood. Both countries enjoy a multifaceted relationship, spanning diplomacy, trade, religion, history and culture. Humanitarian aid, and people-to-people contacts throughout the past. Over one lac Pakistani expatriate workforce plays an important role in the progress and development of Kuwait alongside boosting Pak-Kuwait friendship and team spirit. The government of Kuwait had always displayed utmost generosity and brotherhood for Pakistan in the event of natural disasters and calamities including last year's superfoods, where Pakistan resolutely supported Kuwait's independence and sovereignty and Pakistani troops actively took part in the global campaign for Kuwait's liberation from Iraqi occupation in 1991. Last year, Pakistan and Kuwait signed seven agreements worth ten billion dollars, encompassing multiple avenues including food security, water supply, hydel power, mangrove rehabilitation, technology, mines, and minerals.

Unfortunately, the bilateral relationship and religious and political association between the two brotherly countries could not be translated into long-term economic and trade partnerships by the two brotherly countries due to which their mutual trade remained insignificant throughout the past. Presently, Kuwait's exports to Pakistan stand at \$ 750 million while Pakistan's export to the Kingdom is about \$ 50 million. During the previous visit of the Pakistani Prime Minister to Kuwait, both nations decided to expand their bilateral trade to \$ 1 billion in the next three years. Pakistan's Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) is actively engaged with the State of Kuwait to establish long-term strategic cooperation between both friendly countries. There are vast opportunities for both nations to expand their trade, economic, political, and security cooperation to benefit from each other resources and technical expertise yet continuous engagement and concerted efforts are needed to manifest this relationship into a long-term strategic partnership that not only benefits both states but promotes broader Muslim cause and brotherhood.

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The countdown to Netanyahu's departure has begun

Osama Al-Sharif

ISRAEL'S five-month-old war on Gaza is like never before. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is at the center of rising tensions between the two close allies. It is not Israel's right to defend itself and destroy Hamas, which is at the heart of the crisis. Still, Netanyahu's unrelenting and brazen push to carry on with the massive destruction of the Gaza Strip, regardless of the horrific scenes, the brutal tactics and the shocking statistics, has become the indelible hallmark of this war.

US President Joe Biden has made no secret of his frustration with Netanyahu and his far-right coalition's provocative and confrontational policies. Netanyahu's Gaza war has become a US election issue, stripping Biden of much-needed young and progressive Democratic votes. Netanyahu's rejection of Biden's "red line" on the imminent offensive against Rafah has brought ties between the two men to an inflection point.

Then, last week, the most prominent US Jewish legislator, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, publicly rebuked Netanyahu's handling of the Gaza war and called for new elections in Israel. He said that Netanyahu has "lost his way" and is an obstacle to peace in the region. Biden noted that Schumer delivered a good speech, leaving Netanyahu to retort that the senator's statement was "inappropriate." Republican lawmakers joined a chorus of Israeli politicians in denouncing Schumer for interfering in Israeli democracy.

Other Western leaders have stopped short of singling out Netanyahu. Still, they have made sure to criticize Israel publicly for hindering the flow of aid to Gaza, which is resulting in mass starvation and famine across the enclave and the death of Palestinian babies as a result of malnutrition and a lack of access to medical care.

Domestically, Netanyahu's approval ratings had been low even before the Oct. 7 attack by Hamas. They remain low, even though a majority of Israelis continue to support the war and the destruction of Hamas, all while calling 5th century BCE that, "The physician treats, but nature heals." We are now re-learning what humans have always known, but which, since the industrial revolution, we have forgotten or ignored - that when we harm our environment, we harm ourselves. For centuries we have plundered our planet. Now we are paying the price, with a triple planetary crisis: climate, change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The immediate impact of more frequent and severe weather events, which cause deaths and injuries, and damage to health facilities and other essential infrastructure. Then there are the medium- and longer-term sequelae: More heatwaves contribute to more cardiovascular disease; air pollution drives lung cancer, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease;

Chemicals such as lead cause intellectual disability,

for new elections. Netanyahu's refusal to approve a new hostage exchange deal has polarized Israeli society even further and weakened his far-right partners in the polls.

Netanyahu has also rejected Biden's postwar plans for Gaza. He is refusing to consider handing over administration to the Palestinian Authority, withdrawing from Gaza and

He single-handedly took Israel off the peace path by empowering settlers and aligning himself with the ultranationalists and ultrareligious fanatics. In the aftermath of the 2007 Hamas takeover of Gaza, Netanyahu saw an opportunity to play one Palestinian faction off against the other. It is no secret that he propped up Hamas in Gaza against the PA in the West Bank for years by allowing Qatar to bring tens of millions of dollars into the blockaded

embracing the two-state solution, which he says rewards Hamas. In return, he has baffled his war Cabinet partners by failing to provide a realistic post-war scenario.

The Biden White House has pressured Netanyahu in an effort to rein him in. Washington has imposed sanctions on two West Bank settlement outposts involved in terrorizing Palestinians. The EU could soon follow suit. This is a precedent that could lead to hundreds of settlers being penalized, as well as foreign donors. The US has circulated a draft resolution to be submitted to the UN Security Council sometime soon that supports international efforts to establish "an immediate and sustained ceasefire" as part of a deal to release hostages. The US has previously vetoed draft resolutions that called for such a ceasefire on four occasions.

Netanyahu, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, has always been defiant and unconventional. Soon after the signing of the Oslo Accords, he sought to clinch the premiership by denouncing then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and any settlement with the Palestinians. He single-handedly took Israel off the peace path by empowering settlers and aligning himself with the ultranational-

ists and ultrareligious fanatics.

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body of nations. Israel had lost control of the narrative. In the eyes of millions around the world, who were mobilized mainly by social media activists and the flood of raw images of daily massacres posted on such platforms, Tel Aviv's claim that it was the victim in all this had collapsed. Netanyahu's calculations are now at odds with his allies at home. His war Cabinet is split and several rivals are vying for his place. The Israeli political establishment now views him as a liability. The families of the hostages see his rejection of any deal to return their loved ones as a betrayal. Moreover, even if his army ventures into Rafah at a heavy civilian cost that will compound the humanitarian crisis, there are no guarantees that he can secure the decisive victory he has promised the public.

For the Israeli political establishment, Netanyahu's so-called achievements in Gaza are now being eroded by the severe damage he has done to Israel's political assets abroad, especially in the US. It is time for him to remove himself and let someone else take a subtler approach to the penultimate phase of the war. Netanyahu has done a lot: weakened Hamas, destroyed Gaza's infrastructure, created a new buffer zone inside the enclave and partitioned the Strip. There is no way Gaza can go back to the pre-Oct. 7 reality.

His successor will carry out most of Netanyahu's objectives with less drama and fanfare, while restoring ties with the US and initiating a damage-control operation regarding Israel's scarred public image. In all cases, Netanyahu's legacy in Gaza and beyond will likely endure: the two-state solution will still be bogged down by piles of details and last-minute addendums.

If elections were to be held today, Likud would be downsized and the far right would take a hit, but it would still have a voice in the Knesset. A new coalition of right-of-center parties, most likely led by Benny Gantz, would rule with little opposition. What the Biden White House has come to realize is that Netanyahu has become radioactive, both within Israel and beyond. The countdown to his departure has begun.

As Netanyahu ignored such calls, Israel was facing charges of genocide at the International Court of Justice and accusations of deliberately starving millions of Palestinians, all while feeling almost total abandonment by the UN Security Council and the

cardiovascular and kidney disease; Certain pesticides are associated with higher rates of suicide in countries where they are readily available; And drought and water scarcity affect food production, making healthy diets less affordable. Small island developing states are especially at risk, as land becomes less arable and oceans encroach.

Meanwhile, climate change is leading to shifts in the behaviour, distribution, movement, range, and intensity of mosquitoes, birds and other animals that are spreading infectious diseases such as dengue and malaria to new areas. Since the turn of the century, the number of reported cases of dengue has increased eightfold, now affecting over 130 countries. Illegal wildlife trading also increases the risk of zoonotic spillover that can trigger a pandemic, high-

lighting the importance of primary prevention to reduce risk. The threats to health from climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss are not hypothetical risks in the future. They are right here and right now, which makes health the most compelling reason for climate action. And yet, almost 30 years since the first UN Climate Change Conference, COP28 in Dubai last year was the first COP to include a day dedicated to health. WHO estimates that pollution, waste and chemicals account for an estimated 14 million deaths a year, or about a quarter of the global disease burden. The impacts are not equal. People in low- and middle-income countries bear the brunt of the health consequences, especially those in rapidly developing urban areas. Around the world, WHO is supporting countries to prepare for and

US' Gaza aid maritime effort is woefully insufficient

Kerry Boyd Anderson

US military ships are on their way to Gaza in an effort to establish a maritime route for delivering aid. The starving and suffering Palestinians of Gaza need any aid that can be delivered, but the US effort is complicated, expensive and potentially ineffective.

On March 7, President Joe Biden announced plans for a military "emergency mission to establish a temporary pier in the Mediterranean on the Gaza coast that can receive large ships carrying food, water, medicine and temporary shelters." He promised the US public, which is wary of engaging in any more wars in the Middle East, that no American soldiers would actually be "on the ground" in Gaza.

In technical terms, the project is expensive and complex but also impressive and feasible. About 1,000 soldiers will participate in the effort. The military will construct a floating dock where large ships can offload aid. The US will also build a floating pier that it will attach to the Gazan coast. Smaller US military vessels will then move aid packages from the dock to the pier, where trucks will pick up the aid and deliver it to land. Constructing the dock and pier and setting up the system could take up to 60 days. However, throughout the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, technical feasibility is seldom the problem. Rather, politics determine outcomes and the pier plan will be no exception.

Slow, strict and convoluted Israeli inspections of aid are a major factor that has squeezed the supply via land routes. Israeli authorities do not provide clear and complete lists of prohibited items and often reject aid in ways that appear arbitrary to many aid agencies. Under the US plan, Israeli officials would inspect aid packages in Cyprus before delivery to the floating dock. However, if Israeli inspectors reject entire shipments by land because they contain scissors in medical kits for children, water filters, solar lights or tents - to name just a few of the items that Israeli inspectors have reportedly rejected - why would inspectors based in Cyprus conduct inspections any more quickly? While Israel's reluctance to allow aid into Gaza is a huge barrier, it is not the only obstacle and the US plan faces other risks. As law and order increasingly break down in Gaza, there is no functioning authority that could guarantee the security of US military personnel and assets. While soldiers might not officially be on the ground in Gaza, they will be interacting with a war zone that includes anti-US militants, opportunistic gangs, Israeli forces that might unofficially oppose the aid deliveries and a starving population desperate for food.

It is also unclear who will actually distribute the aid and how, especially as there is no functioning infrastructure left and Israel seeks to dismantle UNRWA, the main organization with aid distribution capacity in Gaza. One

of the problems with aid deliveries comes from bottlenecks related to distribution within Gaza. Humanitarian organizations trying to distribute aid have come under attack from Israeli forces and Palestinian looters. Buildings and roads are so badly damaged that trucks can struggle to get through. When aid is not delivered, it creates bottlenecks throughout the supply chain. Without basic levels of security and transportation infrastructure, aid distribution will remain limited, even if the US successfully delivers aid via a temporary pier.

Delivering aid via a temporary mechanism on Gaza's coast is an inefficient and resource-intensive approach. Nonetheless, aid is desperately needed. After Oct. 7, Israel converted its long-standing partial siege of Gaza into a total one. Egypt opened the Rafah border crossing in late October, allowing some aid to enter. In December, Israel opened the Kerem Shalom crossing for limited amounts of aid. However, other crossing points between Gaza and Israel remain closed. A March 7 Refugees International report noted that an average of 500 trucks per day entered Gaza before the Hamas attack on Oct. 7, but now only 50 to 100 go through each day, providing far less than is needed for the population's basic survival. Famine conditions are starting to take hold, especially in northern Gaza. A complex process of delivering aid via Cyprus and a floating dock and pier is insufficient but, amid such a crisis, something is better than nothing.

The Biden administration sincerely wants to help ease the suffering and that humanitarian impulse is partly driving the temporary pier project. Biden is also responding to diplomatic and domestic political pressures. Continuing support for Israel in the face of the devastation in Gaza is undermining US global diplomacy. The president also faces growing opposition to his approach among Democrats, which is particularly problematic in an election year. The maritime plan is a high-profile effort designed to show that Washington cares about Palestinian suffering. However, to critics within the US and abroad, the effort feels like too little, too late. Furthermore, the Biden administration appears to be twisting itself in knots to try to demonstrate humanitarian concern while refusing to use US leverage with Israel. Providing billions of dollars in weapons and other assistance should put Washington in a position to demand that Israel do more to facilitate aid deliveries. The problem is that the Israeli government knows that Biden and Congress will not withhold serious amounts of funding and therefore does not need to heed US requests. Rather, Biden is spending more US resources trying to mitigate a crisis that Washington might have the ability to end, if it had the political will to do so.

On Christmas Eve 1967, less than four months before his assassination, Martin Luther King said, "It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one destiny, affects all indirectly." For everything that makes us different, we are one species, sharing the same DNA, and the same planet. We have no future but a common future.

The China Daily

Climate change an alarming health threat

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

If our planet were a patient, it would be admitted to intensive care. Its vital signs are alarming. It is running a fever, with each of the last nine months the hottest on record, as we hurtle towards the 1.5 degree threshold. Its lung capacity is compromised, with the destruction of forests that absorb carbon dioxide and produce oxygen.

And many of the earth's water sources - its lifeblood - are contaminated. Most concerning of all, its condition is deteriorating rapidly. Is it any wonder, then, that human health is suffering, when the health of the planet on which we depend is in peril? The health of humans, animals and our environment are woven together in a bond that is inextricable, yet fragile. We belong to the same unique, finely balanced ecosystem. This is not a new realisation. Hippocrates, the father of medicine, wrote in the

5th century BCE that, "The physician treats, but nature heals." We are now re-learning what humans have always known, but which, since the industrial revolution, we have forgotten or ignored - that when we harm our environment, we harm ourselves. For centuries we have plundered our planet. Now we are paying the price, with a triple planetary crisis: climate, change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The immediate impact of more frequent and severe weather events, which cause deaths and injuries, and damage to health facilities and other essential infrastructure. Then there are the medium- and longer-term sequelae: More heatwaves contribute to more cardiovascular disease; air pollution drives lung cancer, asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease;

Chemicals such as lead cause intellectual disability,

cardiovascular and kidney disease; Certain pesticides are associated with higher rates of suicide in countries where they are readily available; And drought and water scarcity affect food production, making healthy diets less affordable. Small island developing states are especially at risk, as land becomes less arable and oceans encroach.

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respond to these threats, by making their health systems more climate-friendly and climate-resilient, and by providing the evidence to tools to address the health impacts of pollution, waste and chemicals. But no single agency can do this alone.

At the recent United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi, countries adopted important resolutions on air quality, chemicals and waste, sustainable lifestyles, hazardous pesticides, and water policy that are important for driving sustained, multisectoral action to protect the health of people and planet. They also committed to continue work on the negotiation of an international legally-binding instrument on plastic pollution. One Health is likewise an important element of the legally-binding pandemic agreement that WHO's Member States are now negotiating. The patient is in peril.

Band-Aid solutions will not do. At the national, regional and global levels we need transformative action in energy and transport systems, food systems and health systems. And as UN agencies, we must do better at breaking out of our siloed mindsets and working together for effective, inclusive and sustainable multi-lateral action - because we have no other choice.

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The key election for Russia is in November

Leonid Ragozin

THE Russian presidential election was not expected to be a cliffhanger. The victory of incumbent President Vladimir Putin was very much ensured by the absence of registered candidates who could truly challenge his re-election. Yet it is an important milestone which marks another six years of Putin - the most militant and aggressive version of him - in charge of Russia.

The Kremlin framed what essentially is the incumbent's self-reappointment as a plebiscite on the war in Ukraine - a carefully choreographed performance aimed at convincing both Russian and Western audiences that an overwhelming majority of Russians stand behind the regime's effort to defeat Ukraine and undermine the West. In his post-election news conference late on Sunday, Putin said that people came to the polls in large numbers in order "to create conditions for internal political consolidation". On the eve of the election, Kremlin sources were telling various Russian independent media outlets that the need to demonstrate national unity prompted the presidential administration to set the unprecedented target of achieving 80 percent of votes in Putin's favour. The end result was even higher - more than 87 percent.

Several factors contributed to achieving this surreal result: the intense brainwashing through Russian state media that channel the Kremlin's toxic propaganda; vote-buying through the expansion of the welfare state and various social benefits on the eve of the election; and ballot stuffing and rigging through the opaque early voting and electronic voting systems. The Kremlin has turned the electoral system into an impregnable fortress, this time barring even the most conformist opposition candidates from appearing on

the ballot. The vast majority of real, nonconformist opposition politicians and activists have gone into exile since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The leader of the opposition, Alexey Navalny, died in a Russian prison under suspicious circumstances last month. Remarkably, Putin's post-election speech was the first time when he referred to Navalny by his name - something he avoided doing during their decade-long bitter rivalry. But this picture wouldn't be complete without considering another important factor that drove Russians to vote for Putin: the historical fear and mistrust of the West. The United States and the European Union have done very little to convince the Russian population of their good intentions and instead strove to isolate Russia from its immediate neighbours by pursuing Euro-Atlantic integration that welcomed anyone, except Russia.

This exclusion, which derives from the mindless Western triumphalism in the decades that followed the collapse of the USSR, forms an organic component of Putin's support. It also explains why so many Russians buy the Kremlin's narratives about the war in Ukraine being both inevitable and existential for Russia. No matter which side made a greater contribution to the conflict between Russia and the West, Putin emerges as its chief beneficiary. It prolonged his political life by decades. It even helped him maintain a strong grip on power when the invasion of Ukraine threatened to upend his "social contract" with the Russian people - ie, the informal agreement that his leadership would not be challenged in exchange for him providing stability and an improved standard of living.

While the scope of this sentiment is difficult to measure, it is safe to say that it would still play a role, even if the Russian political system were to open up to fair competition. For now, the Kremlin has managed to cushion the majority from the effects of war, with only a small part of the population - the most voiceless and destitute - suffering the consequences of its devastating human losses. Whether it will stay that way during Putin's new term is an open question. It all depends on the outcome of the war in Ukraine, which Putin has a good chance of ending on his terms, as things now stand on the front line.

Imaginary or real, the perceived national unity behind the war effort, provides Putin with a mandate to increase mobilisation in order to make decisive advances in Ukraine that could pressure the country into capitulation. It's far from clear whether Ukraine has an answer to that - its legislators are not rushing to adopt an unpopular mobilisation law, while the provision of crucial US assistance is being stalled in the Congress by Republicans allied with Donald Trump. Even if this money is eventually disbursed, the current troubles suggest that it will be even more difficult to fund the Ukrainian war effort beyond this year, no matter who wins the US presidential election in November. Polls currently show President Joe Biden's rival, Trump, as the likely winner of the US presidential race. If elected, he may or may not change the course of events in Ukraine. He has indeed promised to end the war "within 24 hours", but his first term clearly showed that his stance on supporting Ukraine could also align to a certain extent with Biden's. Trump authorised the supply of lethal weapons to

Ukraine - something which the Obama administration was reluctant to do - and launched a campaign against the Nord Stream 2 pipeline which was supposed to supply Russian gas to Europe.

Trump's election victory could be more consequential for Russia in a different way. His return to power would mean the American public has decided to take the path of sovereignty and nativism, of national and corporate interests explicitly trumping values at all times. This would signal a new era for the rest of the world, especially for Europe. In this new world, Putin would be seen less as a rogue leader and more as an early pioneer of the new global political paradigm and definitely as someone the US could make a pragmatic deal with - and not only on Ukraine. It will vindicate his position after decades of isolation and ostracism and restore his membership in the club of world leaders.

In this sense, there is more at stake in the US election for Putin and Russia than in Russia's own.

On the bright side, the belated realisation that Russia represents a grotesque manifestation of the Western crisis of values, rather than its own inherent evilness, may help those in the West who still cherish universal values to begin a critical reassessment of Western policies towards Russia in the last 30 years.

The Russian opposition has a lot to say about how the unholy alliance of irresponsible oligarchy and paranoid securitocrats can undo democratic institutions and other achievements of civilisation. Its experience will be of great value in the process of forming a global coalition to oppose creeping authoritarianism and to uphold universal values, rather than geopolitical interests.

Aljazeera

Fascism on margins of the tragedy in Gaza

Eyad Abu Shakra

East and North Africa Brett McGurk.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continues to ramp up his political-military rhetoric, stressing the "inevitability" of an assault on Rafah, which is the final refuge of the people of Gaza amid Israel's war of displacement that has claimed more than 30,000 lives. The West's rejection of the offensive does not seem to reflect any real determination to prevent it or the humanitarian disaster that several bodies have warned would ensue from it.

Even the personal criticisms of President Joe Biden and Democratic Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (the highest-ranking Jewish official in Washington), who called for Netanyahu's departure after snap elections, have not come with serious threats. Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader in the Senate, outbid Schumer in his defense of Israel, attacking Biden and criticizing his Democratic colleague.

On a related note, amid the ambiguity of the US administration's stance on the scenario of the coming hours and days in the Gaza Strip, some have presented a different reading of Washington's decision to set up aid facilities on the central coast of the Gaza Strip. They see it as a substitute for the vital Rafah and Kerem Shalom crossings and, thus, as evidence that the US is unwilling or unable to prevent the attack on Rafah.

In this regard, there are some undeniable facts that should not be downplayed, including the following.

The US has not changed its stance on confining the fighting and violence to the Gaza Strip. It has been reiterating this position since Israel began its operations in response to the Oct. 7 attack. While no US administration would want to get involved in wars or long-term problems during an election year, plunging a region as sensitive as the Middle East into political security quicksand

would be a disastrous move for the future.

Washington's position on Tehran adds to the confusion. Whether in Lebanon, Iraq or Syria, it does not seem that the US will take a decisive or stern position on the Iranian leadership. This is despite the fact that Washington is well aware that Tehran calls the shots for all the regional players in its orbit. Indeed, the US administration is going in the opposite direction, diplomatically engaging Iran in Muscat and releasing billions of dollars in assets to the Iranian leadership, knowing full well where those funds will go and how they will be spent.

The situation in the region can still be contained for now. However, the Biden administration must - at the very least - understand that this could change. Rather, it will inevitably change for the worse if Donald Trump returns to the White House and Netanyahu maintains his ability to extort through violence, occupation and displacement.

As we know, many crucial elections will be held across the globe this year. It is obvious that racist, populist and neo-fascist movements are seeking major victories. Even the oldest and most stable democracies that have maintained the appearance of gravitas, claiming moderation and respect for human rights, are rapidly changing for the worse. There are indications from across the globe - and this is expected to reflect negatively on the Middle East - that the future does not bode well at all for religious, ethnic and cultural coexistence.

Thus, problems that can be resolved or contained today could become insurmountable if action is not taken in the next few months.

To put it plainly, the Arab world will not stabilize so long as Israel is beholden to the whims of its most extreme right-wing fascists and racists and their dictates, and while Iran continues to exploit its proxies to make deals with the West - both openly and in secret.

Arab News

Crimean Tatars are forgotten innocent victims of Russia's war

Nedim Useinow

ON the 10th anniversary of its illegal annexation, Crimea resembles an island. It is cut off from the rest of the world by a wall of lawlessness, behind which the victims of the regime are denied any hope of justice. As I write these words, thousands of people were protesting against the war in Warsaw, where I live, on the anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. It is important that the occupation of Crimea is not forgotten when reminding the world of Russia's crimes.

It has been a decade since the Crimean Tatars were taken hostage by the Kremlin. On that fateful day, Feb. 26, 2014, they thronged the square in front of the Crimean parliament. They made it impossible for Moscow to fake the voluntary secession of the peninsula, and its subsequent so-called-democratic accession to the Russian Federation. When that plan failed, Putin decided to use force. On the night of Feb. 26-27, armed men in unmarked uniforms occupied public administration buildings in Simferopol, after which armored vehicles blocked Ukrainian military units throughout the region. Thus began the occupation of parts of Ukrainian territory, which continues to this day. In response, the West imposed political and economic sanctions on Russia. But this did not stop Moscow from taking the war to Ukraine's Donbas. After the full-scale genocidal invasion of Ukraine in 2022, many inhabitants of occupied Crimea found themselves targeted by the Russian secret services and army. The Crimean Tatars,

whom the vengeful Russian president regarded as personal enemies, suffered the worst, being punished for their loyalty to Ukraine.

First, two recognized community leaders, Mustafa Dzhemilev and Refat Chubarov, were prevented from returning to Crimea in 2014. Then, a court in Simferopol outlawed the Mejlis and Kurultai, the self-governing body of Tatars in the region. These unlawful actions were accompanied by the closure of the only independent media representing the community, Meydan Radio and ATR television station. They were forced to move their headquarters to Kyiv, leaving all their confiscated assets behind.

Almost immediately after the occupation of Crimea, the Crimean self-defense militia - led by local pro-Ukrainian politician Sergei Aksyonov - started to kidnap, torture and murder civilians. The list of political prisoners from Crimea, which has been growing since the start of the full-scale war, now contains almost 80 names. The draconian sentences handed down by the Kremlin range from 15 to 20 years or more in maximum security penal colonies. Human rights defender Iryna Danylovykh was abducted in Crimea in February 2022 and then sentenced to seven years in prison based on fabricated evidence. Nariman Dzhelal, a prominent activist and deputy head of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, was sentenced in September 2022 to 17 years in prison on trumped-up charges of extremism. Dozens of supporters of Crimean Solidarity -

an organization of citizen journalists, religious activists, and the lawyers who defend them - sit in Russian prisons, usually far from their native Crimea. What unites them is their membership in the Crimean Tatar community and the courage to speak out against repression. The numbers speak for themselves: the majority of the 200 victims of the Kremlin's persecution on the peninsula are Crimean Tatars. What is the fate of this small nation under Russian occupation? The majority of ordinary people have become disengaged from politics and avoid speaking out on issues considered dangerous.

Furthermore, a creeping Russification and destruction of the Crimean Tatar language and community identity are taking place. The Crimean Tatars' survival strategy is not to develop their culture, which they can only dream of, but to preserve themselves physically and avoid forced emigration. When faced with the possible failure of his army on the battlefield in September 2022, Putin ordered a partial mobilization to call up 300,000 men to fight. Crimea was also covered by this order.

Who would have thought two decades ago that such a thing was possible, and that the perpetrator would once again be Russian imperialism? The same force that destroyed Crimean Khanate in the 18th century, provoked an exodus and stifled a national revival in the 19th, destroyed half the Crimean Tatar population in the 20th, and now holds it hostage and uses its

people as human shields in the war. One of the biggest challenges, apart from the war and ongoing occupation, is finding a remedy for Russian propaganda and political manipulation. Just to give one example of how easily we have come to believe the mythical support for incorporation among the peninsula's ethnically Russian majority. Outside of the Ukrainian government, no politician has yet challenged the myth that more than 90% of the region's population voted for annexation in the sham referendum of March 16, 2014. It is not just a question of whether a fair election is possible under the muzzle of a rifle. The point is that too many people are uncritically susceptible to false narratives about the supposed Russianness of Crimea. Recently, former US President Barack Obama and acting Polish President Andrzej Duda have made unfortunate statements in which they de facto acknowledged Russia's historic claim over Crimea. This not only illustrates their lack of historical knowledge, but also how helpless even world leaders are in the face of the Kremlin's manipulation. If we do not become immune to it, our leaders will continue to wave away new acts of Russian aggression with uninformed justification. It is particularly sad that since 2014, few have asked the Crimean Tatars how they feel about Russia once again taking away their homeland. The Moscow Times is a notable exception. I hope world leaders will finally turn their attention to the Crimean Tatars' plight.

The Moscow Times

Would Macron's way lead to victory for Ukraine or a third world war?

Yossi Mekelberg

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron is no stranger to controversy. Such is his belief in his own leadership qualities, it frequently leads to accusations of arrogance. Yet he thrives on this characterization, one that helped propel him to the highest office in the country in the first place. Still, his late-night announcement in a press conference at the end of a summit of 20 European heads of state in Paris last month, in which he did not rule out the possibility of sending European troops to Ukraine to support it in its war with Russia, was something of a bombshell even by his standards.

In the two years since Russia's latest invasion of its Ukrainian neighbor, the efforts of the latter to reclaim all of its territory have stalled. Impressively, it has managed to recapture more than 50 percent of the land initially occupied by the Russian invasion back in 2022. However, almost a fifth of its territory is still occupied by Russian troops and breaking this military deadlock is proving to be more difficult than first envisaged.

At the beginning of the war, the West was united both in purpose and readiness to support Ukraine militarily, economically and diplomatically. But fatigue has now crept in and other crises have diverted our attention. And the longer the conflict remains unresolved, the more Ukraine's backers of its just and heroic efforts to regain its occupied land are becoming sluggish, especially after last

year's spring offensive that failed to recapture all of the occupied territory. Nevertheless, this is an extremely narrow prism through which to assess success or failure, as the war is well into its third year. First and foremost, support for Ukraine and its people is a moral imperative to protect those who are victims of naked aggression by a more powerful neighbor. But at no point should support for Ukraine be regarded as doing it a favor or as charity. Rather, it is a collective effort to preserve a rules-based international order. Otherwise, the way is opened to similar acts of aggression - and not only by Russia.

Ukraine has become a test case for defending what the UN Charter and other international conventions stand for in terms of guarding the sovereignty of all countries, not to mention preventing war crimes or bringing to justice those who commit them. And on this occasion, when the aggressor is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, sticking by these principles is even more vital. There were also immediate practical reasons behind the widespread support for Ukraine, among them being the need to counter severe disruptions in the supply chains of energy and food, exacerbated by a cost-of-living crisis that set back a world economy that was just emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic. This support has so far stopped short of sending in troops due to the perceived risks involved of

starting a third world war with a nuclear power.

Macron's refusal to rule out sending ground troops to Ukraine, while accepting that there is no consensus on this approach, was as much a warning to Moscow as to his own allies. A week later, the French president continued to mercilessly whip up his Western allies by urging them not to be "cowards" in supporting Ukraine's war against the Russian invader. He added that he fully "stood behind" his remarks of a week earlier, making it clear that they were no slip of the tongue. This is where France's leader currently differentiates his strategy of winning the war in Ukraine from that of his Western allies. He claimed: "There is a change in Russia's stance. It is striving to take on further territory and it has its eyes not just on Ukraine but on many other countries as well." Defining his proposals as a defensive measure, Macron is urging other countries to heed this advice.

Back on Feb. 24, 2022, there was a massive sigh of relief at NATO's headquarters that Ukraine was not a member of the organization. This relieved the alliance of the obligation to activate Article 5, which would have forced it to come to the defense of Ukraine. Nevertheless, this did not deter NATO and its members from mobilizing massive amounts of support for Ukraine as the country also immediately benefited from the exceptional wartime leadership

of Volodymyr Zelensky and his government and the heroism of its people and soldiers. This meant Ukraine was able to contain Russia's army with no need for Western troops on the ground. Macron's motivation might have stemmed from being more attentive to the constant warning signs, including from the CIA, that Ukraine is running out of munitions, and from the US Congress being very slow in appropriating more funds to support the Ukrainians. Then there is the prospect of Donald Trump winning America's November presidential election. Macron may also have sought to challenge his antagonist in the EU, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who dreads the idea of sending troops to fight in this war.

For now, military aid, the renewal of ammunition supplies, upgrading the existing weaponry and providing technical and training assistance should remain US and European policy, as Ukraine stands a good chance of regaining more of its territory and more pressure can be brought to bear on Moscow through a tougher sanctions regime. The combination of improved capabilities facilitated by Western aid and the gallantry of Ukraine's soldiers has proved to be more successful than anyone dreamed possible two years ago - and this can be built upon. Macron's idea of sending in ground troops has its merits, but we are already facing a Cold War 2.0 and this might just push the world to the brink of a third world war.

SECRETARY of Defense Lloyd Austin says the United States remains determined to provide Ukraine with the resources it needs to fight Russian aggression, even as a US Congress has yet to approve new funding for Ukraine. "The United States will not let Ukraine fail. This coalition will not let Ukraine fail, and the free world will not let Ukraine fail," Austin said at the start of this month's Ukraine Defense Contact Group meeting in Germany.

This is Austin's first international trip since he was hospitalized on January 1 due to complications from surgery to treat his prostate cancer in late December. The Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG) brings together officials from more than 50 nations to coordinate their Ukraine efforts. The US has contributed about \$44 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since Russia's invasion in February 2022, with allies and partners also committing more than \$44 billion in that time frame. But the US military has run out of congressionally approved funds for replenishing its weapons stockpiles sent to Ukraine, and leadership in the Republican-controlled US House of Representatives has so far refused to bring new aid for Ukraine up for a vote.

"There isn't a way that our allies can really combine forces to make up for the lack of US support," according to a senior defense official, who spoke to reporters on the condition of anonymity ahead of the UDCG. Not only is the US military out of funds for Ukraine, the Defense Department has a funding shortfall from its efforts to provide military support to Ukraine that will grow to least \$12 billion by the end of the fiscal year without additional funding from Congress, according to officials.

The Pentagon previously acknowledged a funding shortfall of about \$10 billion for US military weapons needed to replace those already sent to Ukraine. In addition to the \$10 billion shortage for weapons replenishment, US Army Europe and Africa currently has overspent its budget by about \$500 million as it continues to pay for the training of Ukrainians and other Ukraine support mission necessities out of pocket, Col. Martin O'Donnell, the public

Carla Babb

affairs director for the Army's forces across those two continents, told VOA.

That shortfall will grow to at least \$2 billion by the end of the fiscal year without supplemental funding from Congress, he added. Ukrainian forces have continued to fight back against Russian forces in the east while inflicting considerable damage to Russian forces in the Black Sea and downing Russian warplanes. However, Moscow - with the help of North Korea and Iran - has drastically ramped up its defense production capacity, forcing Ukraine to retreat from some battles due to ammunition shortages, the senior defense official added.

"Ukraine is heavily outgunned on the battlefield. We've received reports of Ukrainian troops rationing or even running out of ammunition on the front lines," said the official. Austin on Tuesday thanked members of the group for digging deeper to get vital security assistance to Ukraine, praising the Czech Republic for recently procuring 800,000 artillery shells for Kyiv.

He also highlighted Germany, France, Denmark and Sweden for their new contributions. Last week, the United States announced its first new round of military aid for Ukraine since late December, in what defense officials called an "ad hoc" package made possible through US Army procurement savings. The military assistance package is valued at up to \$300 million and will provide Ukraine with immediate air defense, artillery and anti-tank capabilities, along with more ammunition for HIMARS rocket launchers and 155-mm artillery rounds. But officials say it is unclear if there will be future procurement savings to produce another extraordinary package of aid.

"This is not a sustainable solution for Ukraine. We urgently need congressional approval of a national security supplemental," the senior defense official said. The emphasis on ammunition and air defense will likely be as strong as ever during this UDCG meeting. Officials say Ukraine's forces need interceptors for a variety of their air defense systems, which they have been running out of as they try to defend against wave upon wave of attacks from Russia.

VOA



PSX continues with bullish trend, gains 229 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend for third consecutive day on Wednesday, gaining 229.20 points, a positive change of 0.34 percent, closing at 65,731.79 points against 65,502.60 points the previous trading day.

A total of 341,843,546 shares valuing Rs.11.844 billion were traded during the day as compared to 323,281,871 shares valuing Rs. 17.059 billion the last day.

Some 342 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 173 of them recorded gains and 146 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 23 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Bank of Punjab XD with 45,010,786 shares at Rs.5.28 per share,

WorldCall Telecom with 34,431,573 shares with 1.36 per share and The Organic Meat with 17,997,500 shares at Rs.28.97 per share.

Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.90.00 per share price, closing at Rs.7,510.00, whereas the runner-up was Philip Morris (Pakistan) Limited with a Rs.39.89 rise in its per share price to Rs.749.99.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.424.49 per share closing at Rs.8,575.01, followed by Siemens (Pakistan) Engineering with Rs.14.43 decline to close at Rs.582.01.

Rupee gains 23 paise against dollar
Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday strengthened

by 23 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.40 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.63.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs278.7 and Rs281.45, respectively.

The price of the Euro remained unchanged to close at Rs302.35, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen came down by 02 paise and closed at Rs1.83, whereas an increase of 02 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs353.80 compared to the last closing of Rs353.78.

The Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 06 paise each to close at Rs75.81 and

Rs74.23.

Gold rates up by Rs.500 to Rs.227,800 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold witnessed an increase of Rs.500 and was sold at Rs.227,800 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs.227,300 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.429 to Rs.195,302 from Rs. 194,873 whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.179,027 from Rs. 178,634, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs.2,580 and Rs.2,211.93 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$5 to \$2,178 from \$2,173, the Association reported.

BankIslami's Ehad Sukuk II listed on PSX with gong ceremony

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) organized a gong ceremony on Wednesday to mark the listing of BankIslami Pakistan Limited's Islamic financial instrument of Ehad Sukuk II, a fully paid up, rated, perpetual, unsecured, subordinated, non-cumulative and contingent convertible Mudaraba Sukuk.

The issue size was of PKR 1,000 million, out of which Sukuks of PKR 850 million (85% of issue size) were issued to the pre-IPO investors and Sukuks of PKR150 million (15% of issue size) were offered to the general public by way of Initial Public Offering, according to a press statement issued by PSX.

The issue price or par value of each Sukuk is PKR 5,000, with an expected profit rate of 1 month KIBOR + 2.5% per annum to be paid out monthly. The instrument has a perpetual tenor. The purpose of the Issue was to raise capital towards the issuer's Additional Tier I for Capital Adequacy Ratio as per guidelines set by the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Bankers to the issue (for the retail portion) were Meezan Bank Limited, United Bank Limited, and BankIslami Pakistan Limited. The designated Market Maker is JS Global Capital Limited and the Issue Agent is Pak Brunei Investment Company.

The public subscription for the instrument took place on February 20 – 21, 2024. The public subscrip-

tion for the Sukuk was highly successful with the Sukuk being oversubscribed by 56.23%.

While the Sukuks offered to the general public were PKR 150 million, the total amount received against the public subscription was PKR 234.345 million. The applications were received by the designated bankers to the issue with a significant number of applications being received via the PSX and CDC e-IPO system as well.

BankIslami Pakistan Limited President and CEO Rizwan Ata along with the Deputy CEO BankIslami, Imran Haleem Sheikh performed the opening bell ceremony amidst the presence of MD & CEO PSX, Farrukh H. Khan and senior management of BankIslami, PSX, JS Global Capital and Pak Brunei Investment Company, to mark the listing of BankIslami Ehad Sukuk II of PKR 1.0 billion on the bourse.

Welcoming the guests at the gong ceremony, Farrukh Khan said the listing of BankIslami Pakistan's Ehad Sukuk II was a valuable addition to the portfolio of Islamic financial securities available at PSX for investors.

He said, the overwhelming response from investors for this Sukuk as depicted by the oversubscription by 56.23 percent speaks volumes about the investor appetite for such instruments. He expressed confidence that this would add greater depth and volume in the market as well as increase the options available for investing in the Islamic financial market in Pakistan.

Speaking at the gong ceremony, President & CEO of BankIslami Pakistan Limited, Rizwan Ata said, this was the second fully listed Additional Tier 1 (ADT 1) Mudaraba Sukuk issued by BankIslami to further strengthen

the Bank's capital.

Earlier in 2020, the Bank issued Pakistan's first listed ADT 1 Sukuk of PKR 2 billion, he said adding this was the reaffirmation of BankIslami's vision and commitment to promote global economic prosperity through the Islamic Financial System and to save humanity from Riba.

The impressive involvement of more than 500 investors in the Sukuk IPO demonstrates the market's appetite to invest in such rated, fully listed, Shariah compliant instruments.

The Sukuk offers an attractive monthly profit to its investors, whereas JS Global Capital Ltd, as designated Market Maker provides the necessary market liquidity for this listed instrument. As a subsidiary of JS Bank Ltd, BankIslami has become an integral part of JS Group which is one of the leading investment and financial services conglomerates in Pakistan, he added.

CPEC pivotal for development: PCJCCI

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki said on Wednesday that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would bring enormous opportunities to Balochistan and ensure modern development there.

Speaking in a think-tank session here at PCJCCI Secretariat, he added that the regional countries, especially Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, would use the corridor for exports and trade through Gwadar port.

PCJCCI Senior Vice President Fang Yulong said that the minerals and fishery sectors of Balochistan have immense potential and the federal government is taking serious steps to utilise it for the benefit of the people of Pakistan.

He emphasised that

Gwadar port and various projects under CPEC will change a lot for the people of Balochistan and the Government of Pakistan is especially focusing on road infrastructure, development of industrial and agriculture sector, provision of employment, and availability of basic facilities in Balochistan.

He added that there is a dire need to include transport, construction of basic infrastructure, provision of clean drinking water and its better utilization, agriculture and livestock, information technology, energy, industry and commerce, manpower and education and other schemes for the revolutionary development in such neglected province of Pakistan.

While the joint Chamber's Vice President Hamza Khalid said that the new government is focusing on

the social and economic uplift of Balochistan to bring it at par with other provinces of the country. Pakistan, Uzbekistan and China have agreed to allocate dedicated spaces in Gwadar and Tashkent for establishing warehouses to help each other in the transportation of goods to other countries in the region.

Salahuddin Hanif, Secretary General PCJCCI, said that CPEC is a source of new avenues of opportunities for Balochistan.

Balochistan with regards to its geographical location is pivotal for CPEC since Gwadar has a central position in the entire project.

It is believed that the project will potentially contribute to the development of the whole province and is likely to address its inter-linked economic and social problems.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Telecommunication Authority Major General (Retd) Hafeez ur Rehman called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

FCCI considering proposal to attend AIM

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) is considering a proposal to participate in 13th Annual Investment Meeting-2024 (AIM) as a delegate, which is scheduled to be held in Abu Dhabi, UAE from 7-9 May this year, said FCCI President Dr Khurram Tariq.

Muhammad Haroon, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) AIM, visited the FCCI and briefed President Dr Khurram Tariq about the importance of this leading investment forum.

The FCCI president said that Abu Dhabi had become the most lucrative destination for investment and people from Arab, Asia and other regions have established their offices in this city to capitalize its dividends. He termed AIM an important event to steer the global economy from the continuing meltdown. He said that major investors were following Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the ruler of UAE, to earn hefty profit from their investment.

He said that Pakistan is situated very close to this city and "we should also avail from its investment potential".

Earlier, Muhammad Haroon said that 10,313 investors from 174 different countries are expected to participate in this meeting which would specifically focus on digitalization.

Chicken price reach at Rs420 per kg

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of poultry chicken reached Rs 420 per kg and the price of poultry eggs reached Rs 280 per dozen in the open market in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

The meat of the poultry chicken has reached Rs 700 to 710 per kg in the open market, according to the survey conducted by APP here on Wednesday.

The price of poultry chickens and eggs has been going above Rs 420 to 280 per kg and dozen for the past last months, which is getting away from the purchasing power of consumers day by day.

The prices of poultry items have increased by 20 percent in the twin cities during the last month after Ramadan began, which has created huge volatility in the market.

According to the market survey, during the last two months in the twin cities, a 24% increase was witnessed in the price of poultry chicken, while as same as 30 per cent increase in the price of poultry eggs in the same period.

Meanwhile, talking to APP, former Chairman of Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA), Dr Sajjad Arshad said that the increase in the current prices of poultry was due to demand and supply factor.

He said that the increase in poultry business inputs and cost of doing business was seen across the country due to which the market was in crisis.

He said that many people related to the chicken business were affected by the current crisis, especially small businesses. A number of poultry farms were closed for suffering the business by the current economic crisis.

Minister, envoy pledge to boost trade ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United States Ambassador Donald Blome on Wednesday called on Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, on Wednesday to discuss and explore avenues for enhancing bilateral trade and investment between the two countries.

During the meeting, both acknowledged the importance of leveraging people-to-people contacts and instilling confidence within the business communities of both countries

to bolster trade volume, said a press release issued here on Wednesday.

Minister Jam Kamal Khan emphasized the need for a comprehensive package of initiatives in various sectors including digital trade, mining, energy, climate, services, and the environment.

Highlighting the government's commitment to prioritize the economy, Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan underscored the significance of building con-

fidence among traders and investors.

He reiterated the Ministry of Commerce's dedication to facilitating businesses in all sectors, aiming to encourage increased investment in Pakistan.

Acknowledging the positive role played by the Pakistani-American community in the United States, Ambassador Blome commended their contributions to various fields, particularly in politics and business.

Cement exports increase 39.26% to \$163.900m

ISLAMABAD (APP): The exports of cement witnessed an increase of 39.26 per cent during the first eight months of the financial year 2023-24, as against the exports of the corresponding months of last year.

The cement exports from the country were recorded at US \$163.900 million during July-February (2023-24) against the exports of US \$117.691 million during July-

February (2022-23), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). In terms of quantity, the exports of cement also surged by 71.67 per cent going up from 2,473,225 metric tons to 4,245,717 metric tons, according to the data.

Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the exports of cement witnessed a decrease of 22.32 per cent during the month of February 2024 as compared to the

same month of last year.

The exports of cement from the country during February 2024 were recorded at US \$13.248 million against the exports of US \$17.055 million in February 2023.

On a month-on-month basis, exports of cement also dipped by 10.05 per cent during February 2024 when compared to the exports of US \$14.728 million in January 2024, the PBS data revealed.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, MSC Shy, Tethis-7, Kano and Log Sparta, carrying Container, Palm oil, LNG and Mogas, berthed at Container Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Gasport Terminal and FOTCO Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile four more ships, Maersk Kinloss, Maersk Cabo Verde, Forshun and Gas-Chem Leda carrying Container, Palm oil and Chemicals also arrived at outer-

anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours.

A total of nine ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, MSC Shy, Melody and Umm Bab left the Port on today morning.

A cargo volume of 175,963 tonnes, comprising 130,294 tonnes imports cargo and 45,669 tonnes export cargo carried in 1,665 Containers (86 TEUs Imports and 1,579 TEUs export) was handled at the

port during last 24 hours.

There are 10 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Maersk Cabo Verde, Maersk Kinloss, Trans Spring and Gaschem Leda carrying Containers, Steel coil and Chemicals are expected to take berths at QICIT, MW-1 and EVTL on Wednesday, while two more ships, APL Southampton and Patreas with Containers and LPG are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Thursday.

Most Asian markets rise as Fed decision looms

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets mostly rose Wednesday as traders tracked another record day on Wall Street ahead of the Federal Reserve's policy meeting, while the yen further weakened a day after Japan's rare interest rate hike.

US monetary policymakers are widely expected to hold borrowing costs at a two-decade high, but traders will also be watching the "dot plot" of projections for how many cuts they see this year.

At the turn of 2024, markets had factored in up to six cuts, but a spate of strong data -- particularly pointing to sticky inflation -- has forced investors to revise that down to three.

That is in line with the Fed's December projection, but there are worries policymakers could be spooked into lowering their outlook to just two -- or 50 basis points.

Some market participants are also concerned that the first reduction -- anticipated by many to come in June -- could be pushed back.

"It would only take two participants to move their dots to move the median to 50 basis points of cuts for

this year," warned Citigroup's Veronica Clark. "We are thinking the Fed is OK with where they are now. But it is definitely the risk."

Still, Wall Street investors remained upbeat, pushing all three main indexes higher on the back of a tech rally, with the S&P 500 chalking up another record.

"Since the start of this year, expectations about 2024 central bank easing have been pared back materially," JP Morgan economists wrote in a recent investor note.

"But that has not disrupted the general trend toward an easing in global financial conditions."

Asian dealers were a little less enthusiastic in the early exchanges but grew more optimistic as the day wore on.

Hong Kong, Shanghai, Mumbai, Seoul, Singapore, Wellington and Manila rose, but there were losses in Sydney, Taipei, Jakarta and Bangkok.

Tokyo was closed for a holiday. London dipped at the open even as data showed UK inflation fell more than expected last month.

Paris also dipped and

Frankfurt was flat.

The yen weakened further after the Bank of Japan suggested that Tuesday's interest rate hike -- its first in 17 years -- would not likely be followed by any more any time soon.

The unit fell to around 164.7 per euro -- its lowest since 2008 -- with the difference between the BoJ and European Central Bank's rates still too wide.

It was also at more than 151.5 per dollar, with analysts saying officials would be keeping an eye on the markets ready to support the unit.

The move marked the end of the BoJ's ultra-loose monetary policy, which was an outlier as other central banks ramped up rates to combat surging inflation.

Speculation that the Fed could revise down its own rate cut projections was also putting pressure on the Japanese currency.

"Looking ahead, the Bank will likely keep its policy stance accommodative in the near term, unless it sees risks of significant upward pressure on underlying inflation," said Duncan Wrigley and Kelvin Lam at Pantheon Macroeconomics.

Court Notice

In the Court of Abdul Halem Civil Judge V/Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar. Suit No. 24/1 Institution 30/1/2024. Date of hearing. 3/4/2024. Sadar Khan Vs. Sher Khan. Notice to No. 1. Sher Khan. 2. Sedad Khan sons of Ajon Khan resident of Jowar Tehsil Gadezai District Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8 a.m. dated 3/4/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Ahmed Ihsanullah Qureshi, ADSI-1, Swabi Muhammad Ayub etc Vs. Muhammad Arif etc. Suit number: 39/13 Institution date: 21-10-2023 Hearing date: 09-04-2024 Subject: Civil Appeal Notice to: (8) Muhammad Asif underage son Muhammad Rafiq (9) Muhammad Atif underage son Muhammad Rafiq (18) Naveed Akhtar Son Akhtar Muneer (19) Hamid Akhtar Son Akhtar Muneer (26) Muhammad Zahid Son Faheem Jan R/o Topi, presently Abroad. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court on 09-04-2024 personally, through counsel or attorney to avoid ex-parte proceeding.



In brief

Davis Cup 2024 Finals

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 16 nations set to compete at the 2024 Davis Cup Finals Group Stage in September have been drawn into four groups of four teams with some mouthwatering ties to look forward to. The Finals Group Stage would take place from September 10 to 15 across four cities: Bologna (Italy), Manchester (Great Britain), Valencia (Spain) and Zhuhai (China, P.R.), said a press release. The winners and runners-up of each group would progress to the Final 8 knockout stage at the Palacio de Deportes José María Martín Carpena in Malaga on November 19 to 24.

Blind Cricket Tournament

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) will organize a One-Day Blind Cricket Tournament in Peshawar from April 20 to 25 after Eid-al-Fitr. PBCC Chairman Syed Sultan Shah said a total of five teams from across the country would feature in the tournament. Teams from Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Islamabad will participate in the event. The tournament will be played on a single league basis and each team will bowl 40 overs in the game, Sultan Shah, who is also President of World Blind Cricket Limited told APP. He said Islamabad would be led by Nisar Ali Khan, while Badar Munir would captain Sindh. Balochistan will be led by Nimatullah, Punjab by Zafar Iqbal and Sanaullah would captain Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he said.

REEF headquarters searched by police

MADRID (Agencies): Police have searched the headquarters of the Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) in Madrid as part of a corruption investigation. The operation is part of a wider investigation linked to alleged corruption in business, improper management of assets and money laundering, the prosecutor said. Police were carrying out 11 searches on unspecified locations across Spain. The prosecutor expected seven people to be arrested. Spain's national men's team trained on a pitch adjoining the headquarters of the Spanish Soccer Federation as the search was carried out on Wednesday. Spain play Colombia on Friday in a friendly at West Ham's London Stadium (20:30 GMT kick-off). Meanwhile, RFEF staff were barred from entering the headquarters. Reuters reported a source at the RFEF telling them the home of former Spanish Football Federation president Luis Rubiales in Andalusia was being searched.

Mushfiqur Rahim ruled out of Tests

DHAKA (Agencies): Bangladesh wicket-keeper Mushfiqur Rahim has been ruled out of the two-match Test series against Sri Lanka, owing to a thumb injury. Bangladesh physio Bayjedul Islam Khan confirmed that the 36-year-old batter will require at least three weeks to recover from the injury, ruling him out of the Test series, which will commence on 22 March. "After the match, Mushfiqur [Rahim] underwent an X-ray examination in Dhaka, which revealed an avulsion fracture on the MIP joint of his right thumb," Bayjedul said. "He is currently undergoing conservative management for his injury and is expected to be sidelined for around three to four weeks, consequently ruling him out of participation in the Test series against Sri Lanka."

Pakistan not an easy team: Jordan football coach

ISLAMABAD (APP): Jordan football coach Hussein Amutah's on Wednesday said Pakistan would not be an easy team to compete, in the forthcoming FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifier Round 2 matches.

Speaking at the pre-match press conference, he said the Jordanian team performed well in the Asia Cup. "The confidence of the team has increased from the Asia Cup and we would play the best football."

Football is the most popular sport in Jordan but it was not an easy game. "Every game for Jordan is important. We have prepared well for FIFA qualifier matches against Pakistan," the Amutah said, who was contented to tour Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Pakistan coach Stephen Constantine said our team also performed well in the Asia Cup. "We are trying with all our might to qualify for the group stage of the World Cup. We are trying to build a new team and players would not learn if they won't play," he said. Constantine said Pakistan was planning to play against different countries.

"Our players lack experience and my focus right now is the Asian qualifiers and the SAFF Cup. I want to see the best football team of Pakistan and it is necessary to hold a football league in the country for better results," he said.

The Pakistan-Jordan, home game was scheduled to be held here at the Jinnah Stadium of

Pakistan Sports Complex on March 21 while the squad would then head to Jordan for an away game on March 26.

Pakistan Squad includes- Goalkeepers: Yousuf Butt (D), Saqib Hanif, Abdul Basit and Hassan Ali; **Defenders:** Easah Suliman (D), Abdullah Iqbal (D), Mamoon Musa, Haseeb Khan, Mohammad Saddam, Mohammad Sohail, Omer Rao, Mohammad Fazal (D) and Mohammad Adeel; **Midfielders:** Rahis Nabi (D), Harun Hamid (D), Alamgir Ghazi, Rajab Ali, Ali Uzair, Shayek Dost and Abdul Samad (D); **Forwards:** FareedUllah, Waleed Khan, Imran Kayani (D) and Adeel Younis.

Japan warns football fans not to go to North Korea for World Cup qualifier



TOKYO (AFP): Japan has warned football fans not to attempt to travel to "hostile" North Korea for next week's World Cup qualifier in Pyongyang.

The Tokyo foreign ministry "strongly requests the general public to refrain" from attending the match on March 26, the first for the two sides in North Korea since 2011.

"As you know, North Korea takes a hostile view of Japan and travel is not recommended for the general public," it said on X, formerly Twitter.

Japan and North Korea play in Tokyo on Thursday as part of qualifying for the 2026 World

Cup, before the return fixture next week.

Japan's long-standing advice for its nationals is not to travel to North Korea but it does not expressly forbid them from doing so. The two countries do not have diplomatic relations.

It was unclear how many fans, if any, would try to travel. They would need a North Korean visa to do so.

Fourteen government officials will however accompany the Japan team for the match as well as a small number of media outlets, Japanese broadcaster NHK reported.

The first leg of their

women's playoff for the Paris Olympics was switched from the North Korean capital to neutral ground in Saudi Arabia last month.

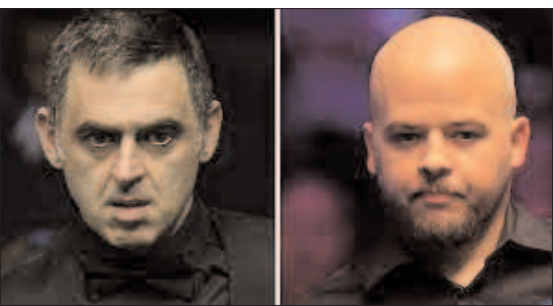
Relations have long been dogged by issues including compensation for Japan's brutal occupation of the Korean peninsula between 1910 and 1945 and more recently by Pyongyang's firing of missiles over Japanese territory.

The abduction by North Korean agents of Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s — forced to train spies in Japanese language and customs — has also long been a major point of contention.

Thursday's match in Tokyo was expected to see a sizeable contingent of North Korean supporters from among Japan's long-standing ethnic Korean community of about 300,000 people.

Most are descendants of civilians taken from their homes during Japan's colonisation of the Korean peninsula.

O'Sullivan wins in China but world champion Brexel out



BEIJING (Agencies): Ronnie O'Sullivan moved into the last 16 at the World Open in China, but there was a shock as reigning world champion Luca Brecel was knocked out.

England's O'Sullivan was never behind on his way to a 5-2 win against China's Lyu Haotian in the third-round match.

Belgium's Brecel, who defends the World

Championship in Sheffield next month, lost 5-1 to Scotland's Stephen Maguire.

Former world champions Judd Trump, Mark Selby and Neil Robertson joined O'Sullivan in the fourth round.

Trump, who is leading the tour's seasonal rankings, won 5-3 against China's Fan Zhengyi, while Selby and Robertson earned 5-2 victories

against Long Zehuang and Yuan Sijun respectively.

Welsh pair Daniel Wells and Jackson Page, who knocked out top-10 stars Mark Allen and John Higgins in the previous round, backed up those notable wins as each beat Chinese opponents.

Wells won 5-3 against He Guoqiang, with Page beating Wu Yize by the same scoreline.

However, world number eight Ali Carter was another big-name exit on Wednesday. He lost 5-1 to fellow Englishman Chris Wakelin.

The fourth-round matches of the Yushan event, which has returned this year after a three-year hiatus because of the Covid-19 pandemic, take place on Thursday.



ISLAMABAD: Head Coach of Pakistan Football Team Stephen Constantine speaks during a press conference.

Schedule for West Indies women tour to Pakistan announced

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan are all set to host their final set of ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 matches at home as the West Indies are scheduled to arrive in Karachi on April 14 to feature in eight white-ball matches.

Three One Day Internationals (ODIs) — part of ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 — will be played at the National Bank Stadium (NBS) in Karachi on April 18, 21 and 23. The ODI series will be followed by five T20Is, to be played at the same venue. The T20Is are scheduled for April 26, 28, 30 and May 2 and 3.

The ODIs are set to begin at 330pm PKT, while the first ball in the T20Is will be bowled at 730pm PKT. Pakistan women's team is currently ranked third in the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25, securing 16 points from 18 matches, whereas the West Indies women's team is positioned at number nine with eight points from 12 outings.

In the ICC Women's T20I rankings, Pakistan are placed in eighth position, while West Indies occupy the sixth spot. The forthcoming West Indies women's team tour to Pakistan will be their second tour since 2021. West Indies last visited Karachi in November 2021 and featured in three ODIs.

The upcoming ICC Women's

Championship 2022-25 series will also be the fourth series hosted at home by Pakistan Cricket Board. Sri Lanka (June 2022), Ireland (November 2022), and South Africa (September 2023) women's cricket teams have visited Pakistan during this period.

Pakistan's last series in the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 will be the tour to England taking place in May this year. Head of Women's Cricket Tania Mallick said: "We extend a warm welcome to the West Indies women's team to Pakistan for the upcoming series."

Hosting the fourth Women's Championship series at home within the 2022-25 cycle is a testament to PCB's commitment to promoting women's cricket and providing our players with opportunities to shine on the international stage".

She said that the forthcoming series against the West Indies is not just about cricket; it's about developing relationships and strengthening bonds between cricketing nations. "With the ICC Women's C'ship 2022-25 coming to its conclusion for the Pakistan women's team, the stakes are higher than ever for the women's team to qualify directly for the ICC Women's ODI World Cup."

The current position of the Pakistan women's team reflects our

determination and dedication, and we aim to collect maximum points from the three championship matches at home," Tania said.

"Later this year, the ICC Women's T20 World Cup is also taking place. In light of this event and the team's recent good performances in the shortest format, we have scheduled five T20Is against West Indies. The T20I series will help the selectors finalize the squad for the mega event," she maintained. Series schedule:

14 Apr — West Indies women's team arrival in Karachi

18 Apr — First ODI at (NBS), Karachi (330pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

21 Apr — Second ODI at NBS (330pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

23 Apr — Third ODI at NBS (330pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

26 Apr — First T20I at NBS (730pm local time)

28 Apr — Second T20I at NBS (730pm local time)

30 Apr — Third T20I at NBS (730pm local time)

2 May — Fourth T20I at NBS (730pm local time)

3 May — Fifth T20I at NBS (730pm local time).

Five PSL stars stand out as T20 WC squad approaches

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season 9 saw country's local contingent showcasing top notch in the extravaganza, as to get on the selectors' radar for the T20 World Cup to be held in the USA and Caribbean.

With a number of withdrawals and the unavailability of many overseas players, it was down to Pakistan's local contingent to make their quality known in this ninth PSL edition.

ESPNcricinfo looks at five players who performed well in the tournament and are to look for keeping in mind the upcoming T20 World Cup. The five players include Haider Ali, Imad Wasim, Mehran Murtaz, Abrar Ahmed and Usman Khan.

Haider Ali (103 runs in five innings at a strike rate of 163.49), was at his best, a seductively clean ball-striker. He was left unpicked at the draft before Islamabad United plumped for him as a late replacement. And two nerveless, unbeaten innings in virtual knockouts for United conjured flashbacks of the kind of player Pakistan thought they were getting with Haider.

Competition for places is much less fierce in those lower-middle-order positions, and the upcoming T20Is against New Zealand would be the perfect time for a trial.

Next was Imad Wasim (126 runs in nine innings at a strike rate of 128.57 | 12 wickets in 12 innings at an economy rate of 6.60), who last played for Pakistan over a year ago, and has officially retired from international cricket, but it's difficult to ignore him.

Imad's consistently effective all-round showings this tournament were a throwback to a time when he opened the bowling for a side that won 11 T20I series in a row. Injuries, and a perceived lack of commitment to fitness, have seen his international career fade, but with the bulk of this year's T20 World Cup in the Caribbean, the case for one last dance with the international side has only become stronger.

His economy rate of 6.60 was matchless — no bowler (minimum 25 overs) came within almost a full run of it — and his ability to nibble away at opposition top orders without being a run-leaker is far too alluring a

combination to ignore.

Third was Mehran Murtaz (5 wickets in five innings at an economy rate of 6.63), who gets the ball to grip and turn while bowling at near 100kph. Murtaz, the 20-year-old left-arm bowler, didn't play much of the PSL, but in the five games he did, he was both captivating and effective. He took five wickets, but it was the economy rate that stood out — 6.63, a smidge over Imad's.

He remains an unknown quantity to most in Pakistan, but Pakistan have 12 games before the T20I World Cup, and an ideal opportunity to test him.

Fourth was Abrar Ahmed (16 wickets in ten innings at an economy rate of 7.82), who broke through at PSL with Karachi Kings and Peshawar Zalmi before injuries wiped years off his career. But when he emerged, Pakistan, for some reason, viewed him as a red-ball specialist, handing him his international debut against England in Multan.

He made an instant impression, taking five wickets before lunch and since, the six matches he's played have all come in the Test format.

He was the third-highest wicket-taker of the tournament, taking a wicket every 15 deliveries at an economy rate superior to Usama Mir's or Mohammad Ali's, the only bowlers more prolific. He was an invaluable part of the Quetta Gladiators side, bowling his full quota in all ten games. If he can remain injury free over the upcoming swing leading to the World Cup, expect to see him in a green shirt with the white ball in hand at some point. Perhaps even in the Caribbean.

Usman Khan (430 runs in seven innings at a strike rate of 164.12), who was good enough isn't a doubt at the moment. At PSL, only Babar Azam scored more runs and Usman played four fewer games, scoring two of the PSL's four hundreds at an average in excess of 107 and a strike rate exceeding 164.

He changed his affiliation to the UAE in 2022 but he's still got 14 months left to qualify for the UAE, and though he was lukewarm about his ambitions to play for Pakistan, there is little doubt Pakistan wouldn't want to let a player like him slip away quite so easily.

PCB launches first-ever Inter-College Ramadan T20 Cup

LAHORE (PPI): The Pakistan Cricket Board has launched the first-ever Inter-College Ramadan T20 Cup, which is set to take place in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad involving a total of 30 colleges. In Lahore, the tournament will commence from 22 March, while tournament matches in Islamabad and Karachi will commence from 23 March.

With this T20 tournament, the PCB intends to popularise the game among students and also scout young talent for the future. The tournament will be organised with the help of the respective regional bodies involving Lahore Regional Cricket Association (LRCA), Karachi Regional Cricket Association (KRCA) and Islamabad Regional Cricket Association (IRCA), through an organising committee formed by the aforementioned regions and endorsed by the PCB.

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi: "We are thrilled to announce the inaugural Ramadan Inter-College T20 tournament to foster cricket talent within educational institutions. This tournament expresses our commitment to the game development at the grassroots level.

"The spirit of Ramadan, combined with the excitement of T20 cricket, promises an electrifying atmosphere on the field.

"Our vision extends beyond just cricket and through this tournament, we hope to encourage students to pursue both academic excellence and sporting achievements.

"By hosting this tournament in Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad, we aim to provide a platform for young cricketers from diverse backgrounds to showcase their skills and passion for the game."

Director — Domestic PCB Abdullah Khurram Niazi: "We

are organising this tournament, as per the vision of the Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi, to increase the outreach of the game to a vast majority of the students who normally find it tough to juggle between playing cricket and their studies.

"I am confident this tournament will also bring some exciting talent to the forefront as well while providing young students the opportunities to prove their mettle on the cricket field."

The tournament will see a total of 10 teams participating in each city. These teams will be divided into two groups while the top team of each group will play the final. Each team will play four matches in the pool stage while a total of 21 matches will be played in each city.

Each team will have a squad of 14 players and additionally three reserve players, along with three officials.

The participation rules for the

players involve an age bracket where a player born on or after 1 September 2000, will be eligible to take part in this Inter-Collegiate T20 tournament. To take part in the tournament a player must be a bonafide student of the respective college.

The umpires officiating the games will be from PCB's panel of Umpires.

The winning team in each city will be awarded a cash prize of PKR 500,000 while the runners-up in each city will bag PKR 250,000. Also, during the tournament, the PCB selectors will be at the venues to closely monitor the performances of the players.

Islamabad-leg
Group A — Bahria College Zafar Camp E-8, Beaconhouse I-8, IMCB F-7/3, IMPC H -8/4 and FROBELS

Group B — IMCB — Chakshahzad, West Minister, IMCB Degree College Sihala, IMCB F-10/3 and IMCB G-10/4

The Islamabad-leg will be played from 23 March to 3 April at the Misam Cricket Ground. The first match will take place at 8pm, while the second match will resume at 1130pm. The first ball of the final is expected to be bowled at 9pm.

Lahore-leg
Group A — Punjab College, Superior College, Diyal Singh College, Gulberg College and Science College

Group B — Government College University, MAO College, Islamia College Civil Lines, Government College Township and Shalimar College Baghbanpura

The Lahore-leg matches will be played at the LCCA Ground with the opening and final match taking place at 8pm. The second match later in the evening will start at 11pm. On the double-header matches, the first match will start at 730pm.

The final of the Lahore-leg

will be played at the LCCA Ground on 8 April. The schedule is available here.

Karachi-leg
Group A — Government Dehli College, Government College for Men, Happy Palace College, Beaconhouse School System and Government Jinnah College

Group B — Government National College, Government College Asifabad, Government College 36-B Landhi-4, The City School and Government Pak Shipowners College

The Karachi-leg matches will resume from 23 March and the final of the tournament will take place on 4 April. The T20 matches will be held at Eid GAH Ground Nazimabad and IBA Karachi University Ground, with the match starting at 730pm. The final of the tournament will be played at the EID GAH Ground in Nazimabad, with the first ball expected to be bowled at 730pm.



In brief

AIOU starts mailing of books

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has begun dispatching books to 60,000 students who are enrolled in the matriculation program for Semester Spring 2024. According to Director Admissions AIOU, the process of dispatching books to matric program students will be completed by the end of this week. Additionally, the process of delivering books to 80,000 students enrolled in FA will commence next week. To ensure that all academic tasks are completed within the specified timeframe and to avoid any complaints from students, Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has strictly instructed all departments to follow the academic calendar. This is the first time in the university's history that semester admissions are underway, and the delivery process of books to students has already begun. It is pertinent to mention that the University has also introduced a "Computerized Tracking System" for information regarding delivery of books. The students can easily enter their roll number or admission fee challan number and track all the delivery steps of books at the AIOU website. In case of non-receipt or delay of the textbooks, the students are instructed to approach the nearest post office.

World Water Day to be observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Like other parts of the world, World Water Day will be celebrated on March 22 in Pakistan to raise awareness about the water crisis. The theme for World Water Day 2024 is "Water for Peace," underscoring the pivotal role water plays in fostering stability and prosperity worldwide. Since its inception in 1993, World Water Day has been observed on March 22, following the United Nations General Assembly's declaration. On this day, the UN and its member nations dedicate efforts to implementing UN recommendations and advancing concrete activities to address global water challenges. According to the United Nations, over 3 billion people worldwide rely on water sources that traverse national boundaries. Despite this, only 24 out of 153 countries with shared water resources report having cooperation agreements with their neighbors. As the impacts of climate change intensify and the global population expands, it is imperative that we unite in safeguarding and conserving our most precious resource.

Police arrest two dacoits

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police here on Wednesday managed to arrest two dacoits after an encounter, said a police spokesman. He informed that six dacoits opened firing on the police party in the jurisdiction of Dharnai police station. As a result of the firing, Assistant Sub-Inspector, Sajid and Head Constable Waqar received bullet injuries and shifted to hospital. During the firing, two dacoits namely Gul Meera and Hasan, who also received bullet injuries, were arrested. The spokesman informed that when the CIA police signaled the suspects to stop, the dacoits started firing at the police party. The arrested accused are record holder in dacoity cases. On receiving information about the incident, senior police officers reached the spot. A search operation was underway in the area to arrest the other dacoits managed to escape from the scene.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior and Anti-Narcotics Mohsin Naqvi called on Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain.

Minister for declaring education emergency to enrol out of school children

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui on Wednesday underlined the need to declare national education emergency in the country to bring back out-of-school children.

He stated this while chairing a meeting held here. Officials of the Ministry of Federal Education briefed the minister about different programs and projects, for advancing education in Pakistan. The participants of the meeting focused on the crucial initiatives to address the pressing issues within the education sector.

During the meeting, the minister expressed deep concern over the alarming number of out-of-school children in the country. In response to this challenge, he said that we will suggest the prime minister and the

federal cabinet to declare a national education emergency to enrol the out-of-school children without delay. This declaration aims to bring back these out-of-school children into the education system.

Furthermore, federal minister Dr. Khalid Siddiqui directed the ministry to swiftly formulate a strategy, with the urgency of a wartime effort, to train one million technology and IT-skilled workers.

This initiative will be funded by the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTC), with the goal of equipping the workforce with all necessary skills.

In addition to addressing the educational needs of children, federal minister unveiled plans for a School Meals Program to be implemented in all Islamabad Government Primary Schools. This initiative will

not only ensure proper nutrition for students but also promote their overall health and hygiene.

Dr. Khalid emphasized the government's unwavering commitment to improve access to quality education for all.

He stressed the importance of focusing on girls' education to narrow the gender literacy gap, recognizing it as a crucial step towards achieving national development goals.

The minister announced that a National Conference will be organized in collaboration with SIFC.

This conference will have aim to address the issue of out-of-school children and combat learning poverty by leveraging the transformative power of technology. The federal minister reiterated the government's dedication to revolutionize the education sector in Pakistan.

ANF recovers 30 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 30 kg drugs and arrested six accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed that 1.2 kg hashish was recovered from a parcel booked for Lahore in TCS office Rawalpindi. 1,943 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a parcel sent from Thailand at a courier office in Rawalpindi.

85 Ice-filled capsules were recovered from a passenger going to Doha at Peshawar Airport. 13 kg heroin, 9 kg hashish, and 980 grams Ice were recovered from the possession of two accused arrested from Makran Coastal Highway Hub. In fifth operation, 1.5 kg opium and 1.2 kg hashish were recovered from two women netted near Tandlianwala Road Faisalabad.

Khalid Maqbool urges provinces to harmonize food business rules

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui has called upon the provincial governments to harmonize rules related to food businesses.

In separate letters addressed to each chief ministers of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Balochistan, Dr. Siddiqui highlighted the need for uniformity to ensure food safety and quality nationwide.

The minister said the existing disparities in regulations and enforcement mechanisms among provinces and federal agencies have resulted in inconsistencies, inefficiencies and potential gaps in ensuring the safety and quality of food products available to consumers nationwide and for import and export purposes. He emphasized the role of the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) as the national standards body and advocated for streamlining standards to prevent duplication of efforts between PSQCA and provincial authorities. He said PSQCA is the sole

national standards body to establish standards for all food and non-food products, services and processes. "After the 18th amendment, provinces started establishing their own standards which are against the international best practices", the letter said.

The minister noted that manufacturers were suffering because of the duplication of these activities by PSQCA and provincial food authorities.

The minister said the Council of Common Interest has decided to standardize regulations and designate PSQCA as the primary authority for standards, certification, and labeling.

He said the Special Investment Facilitation Council has also decided to ease doing business, duplication should be removed by harmonizing rules and regulation between PSQCA and provincial authorities.

This move aims to enhance efficiency, eliminate inconsistencies, and facilitate a conducive environment for businesses in the food sector, he added.

DG PNCA emphasizes the spiritual significance of calligraphy in Islamic culture

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General (DG) of the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) Muhammad Ayoub Jamali has said that calligraphy is a beautiful art form deeply rooted in Islamic scripture.

Talking to APP, DG PNCA said that the ability to write calligraphy using the same tools available when the Quran was written centuries ago is a unique and cherished skill. He shed light on the history and importance of calligraphy with special reference to a month-long calligraphy exhibition in PNCA.

Creative calligraphy pieces of prominent artist and calligrapher Azeem

Iqbal were also showcased at the month-long exhibition. Talking to APP, Azeem Iqbal said that the exhibition is not just a fleeting experience, it is a journey that extends throughout the month of Ramadan.

Appreciating PNCA for providing platform, he said that calligraphy, a centuries-old decorative ornamental handwriting art, hails from the Greek civilization. The word 'calligraphy' is a combination of two Greek words 'kalli' (beautiful) and 'graphia' (to write). Since the advent of Islam, its holy book, the Quran, was written on different mediums.

Calligraphists of that

era used many writing styles to transcribe the manuscript of the holy book. Since then, this particular art has associated itself with spirituality and is the most popular form of design arts in the Muslim world. After acquiring the status of the noblest of all arts, it has been adorned on the ceiling, exterior, interior and domes of all famous mosques, shrines, buildings and monuments of religious importance in Islam. In 1997, he drew a 50ft painting on calligraphy at National Art Gallery Islamabad.

He has won several awards in calligraphy.

PEC announces 'Seed Funding Scheme for Engineering Startups'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) Innovation and Entrepreneurship Committee (ICE) has invited engineering startups to submission of business proposals under its 'Seed Funding Scheme for Engineering Startups'. The business proposals addressing key challenges and opportunities in the engineering sector with a focus on sustainable technology development in Agri-tech and Smart-tech are sought from the engineers.

About the thematic areas for this scheme, the official of PEC said that the themes for the proposals are Agri-tech and Smart-Tech.

Agri-tech is crucial to enhance productivity, efficiency, and sustainability in the sector of agriculture such as food security, environmental sustainability, and increasing demand for agricultural products, integration

of technology in agriculture continues to evolve, offering new opportunities for innovation and improvement in farming practices.

It also emphasizes the adoption of waste-to-product and waste-to-energy approaches to reduce environmental impact. Smart-tech plays a pivotal role in modern society, revolutionizing various sectors with its efficiency and innovation. From enhancing communication through interconnected devices to optimizing resource management. Smart-tech fosters convenience, sustainability, and economic growth. By harnessing data-driven insights and automation, Smart-tech not only streamlines daily tasks but also paves the way for a more interconnected and sustainable future.

About the eligibility, the official informed that the interdisciplinary team led by PEC registered engineers

will be eligible to submit proposals and the startup must have a capital investment of at least PKR 300,000. The product /solution must directly address one of the thematic issues.

The selected engineers will be given interest-free loans up to PKR one million with a repayment period of seven years with two years grace period. While a 10 percent waiver will be given on lumpsum/balloon repayments. The selected team will also be given continued training and mentorship. For participation, the intending candidates must prepare a comprehensive proposal outlining their business idea, and highlight its uniqueness, feasibility, and potential impact. The proposals can be submitted through the web link: <http://forms.gle/32ojCaYoyDjNjV78> till the last day for proposal submission of April 7.

Hur Movement in Sindh



As per Dr. Nabi Bakhsh Baloch, Fehmida Khuro and Col. Wisal Mohammad, Pir sahib alias Sureh Badshah was arrested very soon at the tender age of twenty under concocted allegations of confinement of a boy and possession of illegal weapons in 1929. Quid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah pleaded his case but to no avail. After first hearing Quid-e-Azam distanced himself from the case and informed Pir sahib that the British government had already decided to convict you. It came true when the court convicted him with sentence of ten years. The court curtailed the sentence by two years on appeal. Pir sahib remained in jails for six years at Dhaka, Ratnagiri, Madnapur, Alipur jails. Another two years were waived on account of his good conduct during sentence.

However, after six year, Pir Sahib was released in 1936. Hardships of Jail strengthened his conviction, that's why, he emerged as resolute Pir. He performed Hajj in 1937 and did spiritual tour across the Sindh for seven months to raise morale of Hur community and to reorganize them.

The World War-II had erupted

in 1939 and the English were engaged in fighting a war against the German. Pir Sahib thought that this was right time, they would be beaten. GM Syed writes, "I met him to join Muslim League, he refuse flatly and said my mission is freedom or death. Then, he recruited Ghazis at Ket, Pir Jo Goth, Khairpur and Garang Banglow, Sanghar and supervised their exercises and physical trainings at Hadil Shah in Kacha area near Pir Jo Goth. Since, Sureh badshah was under strict watch by the British Government, he was arrested again by Ghulam Rasool Shah Nazim Police Khairpur Mirs and took to Karachi. He was detained in the bungalow of Mir Khuda Bux where Governor Sindh called him in and directed him to stay at Karachi. Pir Sahib left the Karachi for Pir Jo Goth saying that he could not stay without Court orders. Then, he visited Sanghar to enlist Ghazis- freedom fighters. He invited his unmarried young followers to show their willingness to become Ghazi. Some 8,000 ghazis pledged to obey his orders in any case. In the meanwhile, he was called in June 1941 to meet new Governor Hugh Dow. The Governor restrained him from leaving Karachi. He stayed at bungalow of Mir Khuda Bux located at Bander road opposite Young Woman Christian Associations hotel. He asked Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah then Home Minister for permission to leave for few days. On the contrary, the Governor in his letter to Viceroy India suggested his arrest and deportation from Sindh. Offended by Governor's reluctance to entertain his request Pir Sahib left

Karachi in the month of October and drove directly to Sanghar in violation of detention orders. Sureh badshah met Hur commanders and issued necessary instructions. Then, he went instantly to Pir Jo Goth and here too he issued instructions. The very next day he was rearrested over charges of mutiny and taken to Seoni Jail of CP, India. Sureh Badshah had already given plan of armed struggle to Hurs, in case, he was hanged. The Hurs started movement against the British Army. His residence and fortlike compound wall of Dargah of Pir Sahib was bombarded, and properties worth one billion were seized. His family was arrested. Almost after a year he was tried incamera at Hyderabad Jail. He tried his best to hire Quid-i-Azam M.A Jinnah through Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto father of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto but Quid-e-Azam refused to plead the case on the excuse that he had no time. Government prosecutor Mr.Dealdas of Halani Naushehro Feroze pleaded his case. Mock trial lasted for three days in Hyderabad Jail. However, he was convicted with capital punishment 'death' and then was hurriedly executed on March 20, 1943 at Hyderabad Jail.

Mr. Dealdas once said his

Murshid Pir of Jhok sharif that Sureh Badshah was convicted by the court, though he was not proved guilty.

Hurs started struggle empty

handed with no weapon. Either

they collected guns from friends or

forcibly snatched guns from the

people who owned them. In early

days, Chief Police of Khairpur

State Mr. Ghulam Rasool Shah

who had arrested Sureh Badshah

was killed at Khenwari, Taluka

Naro, Khairpur Mirs on March 14,1942. In this encounter five soldiers were killed and ten injured, whereas, nine hurs were martyred. HT Lambark in his book 'The Terrorist' calls this encounter as Battle of Khenwari.

Hurs adopted guerrilla warfare. They used to attack main public installations just to cause huge loss to the British government. They destroyed telegraph lines/wires and derailed different trains at different places. Hurs planned to derail Military Train on a tip off at Uderolal station Tando Adam. Military Train was stopped due to technical reasons. Unfortunately, Lahore Mail crossed it and was derailed, in which son of sitting Chief Minister Sindh Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah was killed. 30 people were reported to be injured in the accident. In another attack, former CM Sindh Ellahi Buksh Soomro was shot dead in an ambush at Shikarpur when he was going back from railway station to home on a tanga. It is pertinent to mention that Hurs never targeted any civilian, son of Sir Ghulam Hussain was killed because of his screaming as said by the surviving attackers in an interview published in a book Mirya Mathe Mach in 1992. Whereas, Mr.Soomro was targeted by Hur fighters because he had used abusive language and openly challenged Hurs in a political congregation at Umerkot. e a bus of Police was also attacked in which 13 policemen including an officer were killed.

Moreover, many a canal was breached in order to harm the opponents or bring hurdles in the way of British army. Mund Jamrau canal was also breached. some

reports say atleast 50 breaches were made. Countless encounters and assaults took place between Hurs and the British forces in seven years from arrest of Sureh Badshah till freedom of the country in 1947.

British Govt. soon realized that despite all efforts the movement was taking momentum day by day. The Sindh government passed Hur Suppression Bill and imposed Martial Law for the first time in India in Hur dominated districts of Sindh on 1st June 1942. Mr. H.T Lambrick was posted as Martial law Administrator.

After execution of Sureh Badshah in March 1943, his dead body was buried at unknown place. His burial place was kept top secret by the British Govt. The Researchers say that the official communications among the officers made public subsequently by England was misleading and letters mentioning discussions and opinions regarding burial place gave no final clue about it. It seems that for either letters mentioning final decision are intentionally not disclosed, or the matter is finalized orally by the competent authorities of British Govt. Hence, place of burial of Sureh Badshah is still a mystery.

Family of Sureh Badshah was detained, properties were confiscated and his sons were took to Aligarh Indian and then exiled to Liverpool England. British Army started raids and invasions over Hur villages on large scale. They torched their houses, arrested indiscriminately the innocent Hur families in thousands, and detained them in concentration camps. For this purpose, they established 22 camps at different places in Sindh. Serious cases were lodged against

hundreds of Hurs who were apparently tried and eventually hanged in public. More than 200 Hur fighters were hanged. The government used to hang them in public too. Graveyards of Hur martyrs can be visited outside the Hyderabad and sukkur jails even now. Hur freedom fighters continued their war for eleven years. There were several groups of Hur guerillas who were engaged in war activities in different areas until the independence of Pakistan. Colonel Philip head of ml Sindh admits by saying in a letter to his friend in Sindh "Had we not succeeded in crushing Hur movement, there would have been end of empire in Asia, and with freedom of Sindh, Bangal too would have been freed.

Pakistan came into being on 14th August 1947. Son of Pir Sureh Badshah was brought back after five years of independence. It is irony that Hurs were still treated as criminals by their own independent country Pakistan for which they sacrificed their lives, children, and properties. They were languishing in Jails of Pakistan. New incumbent Pagaro Syed Shah Mardan Shah Pir Pagaro-VII was forced to order the wanted Hurs to surrender immediately. Though the Hurs surrendered on the orders of their spiritual leader, they were prosecuted and hanged on the basis of cases filed by British Government.

History can not forget sacrifices of Pagaro dynasty and their Hurs for freedom of Pakistan and its defence from the enemy in the wars of 1965 and 1971.

M Khalid Mairaj Abbasi
Information Group
33rd SMC

Buildings for courts to be built

PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): All district courts in central Logar province would get buildings during the next solar year, an official said. Governor Mawawi Ziaurrahman Madani told a gathering that in line with the orders of the IEA courts in Mohammad Agha, Khoshi, Baraki Barak and Azra districts would get buildings. He said this infrastructure work would be completed during one year and the budget for this purpose would be provided from the development funds.

Nine people injured in clash

MAIMANA (Pajhwok): Nine people have been injured as a result of a clash during aid distribution in northwestern Faryab province, a statement said. During aid distribution in the Dasht Buz village of Khawaja Sabz Posh district nine people disputed and injured one another with sticks, a statement from Police Headquarters said. It added security personnel shifted the injured to the hospital and launched an investigation.

Security incidents, casualty figures from solar year 1402

KABUL (TOLONews): The TOLONews’ findings indicate that in the past solar year, more than ten suicide and other bombing attacks occurred across the country, resulting in 40 deaths and 130 injuries.

These attacks took place in the provinces of Baghlan, Badakhshan, Balkh, and Kabul.

However, the Islamic Emirate, which considers the establishment of security as one of the achievements of the caretaker government, said that efforts are being made to prevent further security incidents.

Notable incidents include an attack on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate on the 7th of Hamal (March 27, 2023), an attack on the governor of Badakhshan on the 16th of Jowza (June 6, 2023), an explosion near the funeral of the former deputy governor (acting governor) of Badakhshan on the 18th of Jowza (Jun 8, 2023), and an attack on the Imam Zaman mosque in the city of Pul-e-Khumri on the 21st of Mizan (October 13, 2023).

Mawlawi Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid, acting Minister of Defense, in a press conference of the Security and Clearance Commission held in Jadi 1402 (December 2023), mentioned the presence of Tajikistan fighters in security incidents in Afghanistan and added that in the operations over the past two years, several of these fighters were killed and dozens were arrested.

“The attacks that occurred in Afghanistan in mosques, khanqahs, on religious scholars, and at people’s gatherings, were all carried out by foreign nationals, especially citizens of Tajikistan,” Mujahid said.

Abdul Matin Qane, spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior, said: “In most provinces

of the country, no security incident has occurred. Even in the first-tier provinces, we did not have a single security incident last year.”

According to TOLONews findings, in 1401, at least 110 people were killed and 270 others were injured in 12 security incidents.

Border tensions were another issue that persisted in 1402. These tensions mostly occurred with Iran. The Islamic Emirate has said regarding these conflicts that all the border clashes were initiated by the neighboring countries first, and the caretaker government had never intended to ruin relations with the neighbors.

In the latest incident, fighters bombed parts of Paktika and Khost provinces a day ago, and the border forces of the two countries engaged in conflict again.

Its claimed that in this incident, fighters of Tehreek-e-Taliban were targeted, and the Islamic Emirate reported the death of eight civilians, including children and women, in these airstrikes.

“The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan strongly condemns these strikes and calls the unconsidered act an invasion of its territory, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has the experience of a long struggle for freedom against the superpowers of the world and cannot tolerate any kind of invasion of its territory,” Hamdullah Fitrat, the deputy spokesman of the Islamic Emirate stated about the recent airstrikes.

Throughout the past year, it has repeatedly claimed that the caretaker government has sheltered militants in parts of the Durand Line, a claim that the Islamic Emirate has consistently

denied.

Asif Ali Durani, Pakistan’s special representative for Afghanistan, said on the 20th of Aqrab (November 11, 2023): “Peace in Afghanistan has become a nightmare for Pakistan. Because those people who are taking sanctuary inside Afghanistan, they are launching those attacks and as the Prime Minister had rightly pointed out, the increase has been 65% ever since the Taliban have come to power, but the suicide attacks actually have increased five hundred percent.”

However, countries around the world and the United Nations have had varied views on the Islamic Emirate’s fight against narcotics. The United Nations praised the reduction in production, processing, and smuggling of narcotics by the Islamic Emirate in a report; however, the Tajikistan Drug Control Agency claimed in Dalwa (January 2024) that there has been no decrease in the volume of narcotics smuggled from Afghanistan to that country.

Iran also expressed concern about the smuggling of narcotics from Afghanistan several times.

The Security Council, in Dalwa 1402 (January 2024), expressed concern about the presence of terrorist groups including ISIS in Afghanistan. Vladimir Voronkov, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism, and also the representative of the United States at the Security Council, urged the Islamic Emirate to take action against terrorist groups, especially Daesh.

In response to these statements, the Islamic Emirate emphasized that Daesh has been defeated in Afghanistan.

Education of girls priority in policies

KABUL (Khaama Press): At the same time that the new solar year and the new academic year commence in Afghanistan, the United States Department of State expresses deep concern over the denial of education to Afghan girls, considering it “heartbreaking.”

Vedant Patel, Deputy Spokesperson for the US Department of State, said in a press briefing that if the Taliban government seeks international legitimacy, ensuring women’s rights is a crucial condition.

The spokesperson for the US Department of State added that this is the third year that Afghan girls and women have been deprived of education, and this issue is a priority in Washington’s policies regarding Afghanistan.

This comes as the Taliban held the first session of the new academic year in Kabul today, Wednesday. A session where there was no mention of girls’ education and even female journalists were not allowed to attend.

Habibullah Agha, the acting Minister of Education of the Taliban, said in this session that the only way to liberate from the need for outsiders is to “educate the children of the homeland in religious and modern sciences, and we are using all our resources to achieve this goal.”

In a statement released on the occasion of the new academic year, the ministry urged teachers and students of schools to “align their behavior and conduct with Islamic principles.”

The statement from this ministry reads: “We instruct all teachers and students to align their behavior and conduct with Islamic principles and refrain from wearing clothes that contradict Islamic principles and Afghan traditions.”

Abdul Salam Hanafi, the administrative deputy of the Prime Minister’s Office of the Taliban, also said in the ceremony marking the beginning of the academic year 1403 in Kabul that a nation without education will always depend on others, and a nation in need of others can never be independent. He emphasized that more efforts should be made to provide modern and technological education alongside religious education for Afghan children.

Minister meets with Azerbaijan’s envoy



KABUL (Ariana News): Acting Minister of Interior Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), Sirajuddin Haqqani, met with the new ambassador of the Republic Azerbaijan, Ilham Mohammadov in Kabul on Wednesday. Haqqani, said relations

between Afghanistan and Azerbaijan were based on the religious, political and cultural values of both countries and hoped for their further development. Mohammadov in turn said the opening of the Azerbaijan embassy in Kabul was a historic step between the two coun-

tries and agreed that both nations shared common religious and cultural values.

During the meeting, Mohammadov said Afghanistan’s comprehensive security and successful fight against narcotics were welcome achievements by the Islamic Emirate.

Western zone media contest held in Herat

HERAT (Ariana News): A media contest, organized by the Herat media and journalists support and supervision committee in cooperation with the Cohesion and Coordination Office of the Republic of Turkey, has been held in Herat to acknowledge local talent.

Organizers of the event say 145 works from different media sectors were sub-

mitted, from four provinces in the western region, and prizes were awarded across seven categories to the winners. Categories included television documentaries; news reports; television and radio news anchor; radio program; television program; sports reports and photojournalism.

This festival was held on the occasion of the 27th of

National Journalist’s Day.

Local officials in Herat have welcomed such initiatives.

Participants who entered their work said such programs will motivate members of the media to produce good work.

The organizers of this festival say that they will continue organizing such events in the future.

Focus of discussions in global meetings in solar year 1402

KABUL (TOLONews): More than twenty global meetings were held in 1402 Solar year regarding Afghanistan, many of them not attended by any representative of the Islamic Emirate.

The formation of an inclusive government, preventing the use of Afghanistan’s soil against other countries, combating narcotics, and observing human rights, especially the rights of women and girls, were demands that were consistently raised in these meetings; demands that, according to the Islamic Emirate, are all being observed in Afghanistan.

The EU-Central Asia meeting in Kazakhstan, the Oslo Forum in Norway, the Shanghai meeting hosted by India, the Astana meeting in Kazakhstan, the Samarkand meeting in Uzbekistan, the Moscow format meeting in Kazan, and the Herat security meeting in Tajikistan were among the important meetings regarding Afghanistan.

Asif Ali Durani, Pakistan’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, stated in one of these meetings concerning peace in Afghanistan: “Pakistan believes that by engaging with the current authorities in Afghanistan, we can help bring peace to this country and tranquility to the people of Afghanistan.”

The representative of the Islamic Emirate was present in some of these meetings, including the Moscow format, the Oslo Forum, and Samarkand.

Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Acting Foreign Minister, said in one of these meetings: “My country, Afghanistan, after more than four decades of invasions by foreign countries, war, and chaos, as it steps towards security and stability, faces sanctions for employing human rights.”

Alongside these meetings, meetings of the political opponents of the Islamic Emirate were also held abroad, where the situation in Afghanistan was discussed in various aspects. The “Afghanistan between Past and Future” meeting in Moscow and the Vienna meeting in Austria were among the important meetings of the political opponents of the Islamic Emirate this year.

The conduct of these meetings was not without reaction. Some officials of the interim government, including Shir Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, the Political Deputy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Mawlawi Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid, the Acting Minister of Defense, called the organization of such meetings abroad biased and a conspiracy against Afghanistan.

The first Doha meeting on the situation in Afghanistan was held in this year, lasted two days, discussed important issues including human rights in the country.

The second Doha meeting was also held in the month of Dalw (18-19 February 2024). The meeting was supposed to appoint a Special Representative of the United Nations for the implementation of recommendations of the independent assessment by the United Nations Special Coordinator with the goal of reintegrating Afghanistan into the United Nations; however, at the end of this

meeting, António Guterres added that they would also consult with the Taliban for appointing this representative; an issue that remains unclear.

Guterres said at the end of this meeting to reporters: “We want an Afghanistan that is at peace with itself and its neighbors, and an Afghanistan that is capable of fulfilling international commitments.”

The United Nations Security Council also held at least seven meetings on Afghanistan in 1402.

The Security Council meeting on the independent assessment of the United Nations Special Coordinator in Qaws (December 2023), the Security Council meeting on the outcomes of the Doha meeting and the appointment of a Special Representative in Hoot (March 2024), the Security Council meeting on the United Nations Secretary-General’s quarterly report in Hoot (March 2024), the subsequent Security Council meeting on the extension of UNAMA’s mission, the Security Council meeting on the extension of the mandate of the Monitoring Team on sanctions against the Islamic Emirate, the Security Council meeting on children and conflict in Afghanistan, and the Security Council meeting on ISIS and Afghanistan were held during this year.

Nevertheless, these meetings could not pave the way for addressing the current challenges in Afghanistan.

Going to school; dream of girls that did not come true in 1402

Female school and university students from across the country protested until the last days of 1402 (solar year) for the reopening of schools and universities and for access to a brighter future in the country; however, no positive result was achieved.

Various institutions and countries also emphasized the resumption of girls’ education in Afghanistan in the year 1402.

Mariam, one of the students who criticized the closure of schools in the month of Hamal of the year 1402 (first month of the solar calendar), raised the question: “If a girl cannot study and become a doctor, to whom should a sick woman turn?” She said, “Why are schools closed for girls? When there is no female doctor, should a sick woman go to a male doctor?”

The closure of educational institutions’ doors to girls in this year has always faced reactions from countries and global institutions.

Markus Potzel, the UN deputy special representative for Afghanistan, said: “I think that the de facto authorities in Afghanistan should let girls go to school beyond grade six. They should let girls go to university. They should let women work for international NGOs, national NGOs, and for UN organizations. And they should let women participate in social life. If this happens, I can imagine that Afghanistan would be integrated into the international community again, and international donors would also rethink and probably reinforce engagement with Afghanistan.”

Thomas West, the US special representative for Afghanistan, also

spoke about the restrictions imposed on women in Afghanistan: “As we engage with the Taliban, we need to keep women and girls’ issues front and center when we talk about other things --- it is their families that are bearing the brunt of that dislocation.”

Some officials of the Islamic Emirate also declared their support for girls’ education in the country.

Shir Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, the Political Deputy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said: “I say once again that the door to knowledge should not be closed and should not discriminate. We need everything, and we need men and women in every field.”

On the 29th of the month of Saratan 1402 (solar calendar), the Kankor exam for the year 1401 was held without the presence of girls among 24,000 candidates in eleven provinces, raising further concerns among female students.

Hadia Mohammadi, a school graduate at that time, said: “We also want to participate in the exam and build our future. Please let girls study too.”

On the 24th of the month of Sunbula (solar calendar), a global foundation under the name “Education Above All” said that Afghanistan is on the list of countries in the worst educational situation.

Maleiha Malik, Executive Director of Protect Education in Insecurity and Conflict (PEIC), said: “There are some persistent countries that come in that list ---Afghanistan was on that list persistently. And in Afghanistan attacks on education all sides not only state actors, but also armed non state actors were prevalent. And I think what happened particularly with the media is that the armed non-state actors became more prominent, and it was hard sometimes to see that state parties were also causing massive destruction. The new barriers to education in Afghanistan are still challenging.”

The acting Minister of Higher Education, Neda Mohammad Nadim, during a trip to Tatarstan, Russia, in the month of Jauza of 1402 (solar calendar), sought support for the education sector in Afghanistan and asked neighboring countries to send staff to Afghanistan.

Nadim added in that meeting: “We expect friendly countries to support higher education in Afghanistan by sending professional cadres there or, in their own countries, by providing scholarships to train professional cadres.”

The Acting Minister of Education, Habibullah Agha, in the month of Mizan (solar calendar), promised to provide better educational opportunities for students in the country.

Habibullah Agha, said: “The Ministry of Education is dedicated to providing its educational services in the areas of religious and modern education in all parts of Afghanistan in a balanced manner.”

Although girl students were not allowed to go to school this year, the Ministry of Education announced in the month of Dalw (solar calendar) that more than 35,000 schools and madrasas are active across the country, and thousands are engaged in

education.

Mansour Ahmad Hamza, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Education, added: “The leadership of the Ministry of Education has strived to provide services completely to places that were deprived of education and had their rights taken away, and the Ministry of Education is 100% committed to providing balanced educational services to remote areas.”

Mansour Ahmad Hamza, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Education, said: “The leadership of the ministry has always tried to concentrate on forgotten areas of Afghanistan where people were deprived of their rights. We are committed to provide balanced educational services to the deprived areas.”

The academic year in the cold provinces of the country started on the first day of the month of Hoot (solar calendar) without the presence of girls.

Nevertheless, there is still no hopeful news about the reopening of schools to girls beyond grade six and the reopening of universities to female students.

Ups and downs of Afghanistan’s health sector in 1402

In the solar year 1402, the health sector in Afghanistan was not free from challenges.

The scarcity of medical equipment, the discontinuation of aid from some global institutions, the launch of polio vaccination campaigns, and the construction of hospitals are among the significant issues in 1402.

This year, six positive cases of polio were recorded, prompting 12 vaccination campaigns across the country, resulting in millions of children being vaccinated.

Shrafat Zaman Amarkhil, the spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Health, said, “In the solar year 1402, six positive cases of polio were recorded in the country, but only in the eastern region, mainly because of immigrants from Pakistan and internally displaced people, along with other challenges.”

On the 23rd of Hamal (solar calendar), the World Health Organization announced that in 2023, approximately 17.6 million people in Afghanistan would need humanitarian health aid; however, the Ministry of Public Health stated that this number could be higher than the estimate provided by the World Health Organization.

The Ministry of Public Health spokesperson said, “Afghanistan’s population is close to 40 million, and it is inevitable that among them there are sick people. The 17.6 million figure is an estimate; the needs of the patients might exceed this.”

On the 12th of Saur (solar calendar), the Ministry of Public Health announced that female doctors could not register for the ministry’s specialization exam, raising concerns about the reduction of female doctors and the increase in maternal and infant mortality rates in the country.

Najm Sama Shefajo, head of the Afghan Women’s Medical Association, told TOLONews, “A few years later, we will see a worse tragedy, and many mothers in

Afghanistan will be lost. Afghanistan already has the highest maternal mortality rate in Asia, and it will significantly increase.”

On the 2nd of Jawza (solar calendar), the Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO) expressed concern in the organization’s annual report about the increase in polio cases in some countries, including Afghanistan and Pakistan, stating that the organization is committed to eradicating the disease from countries that are struggling with it.

“So far this year, there have been three reported cases of wild polio virus, including one from Pakistan and two from Afghanistan just last week. WHO and our partners remain steadfastly committed to finishing the job of consigning polio to history,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

On the 21st of Jawza (solar calendar), the Afghanistan section of the World Health Organization announced the establishment of 37 centers for polio virus detection across Afghanistan, and on the 19th of Dalwa, in collaboration with the World Health Organization and global aid agencies, the first polio virus laboratory aimed at eradicating the disease in the country was inaugurated in Kabul.

Qalandar Ebad, Acting Minister of Public Health, said, “For the year 2024, we have set a major goal to completely eradicate polio from Afghanistan.”

Hamed Jafari, Director of the Eastern Mediterranean Polio Programme, said, “It is very important that the two countries work together and coordinate with each other. These two countries cannot achieve this success alone; they must succeed together, as Qalandar Ebad mentioned. Since polio exists in these two countries, they must proceed with coordination to be able to eradicate polio in both countries. The coordination between the two countries should not only be in terms of vaccination but now also at the laboratory level.”

On the 28th of Asad (solar calendar), the International Committee of the Red Cross announced that due to a lack of funds, it would cancel financial support for 25 hospitals in Afghanistan in two phases.

Shrafat Zaman Amarkhil, spokesperson for the Ministry of Public Health, said, “We pay the salaries of all employees of these 25 hospitals that provide health services from our ministry’s budget, and we supply whatever medicines and materials are needed for the diagnostic section from the internal budget.”

This year, several reconstruction and construction projects of some hospitals also began by the Ministry of Public Health, among which was the reconstruction and modernization project of the Jamhuriat Hospital, valued at more than four billion Afghanis.

Qalandar Ebad, Acting Minister of Public Health, said, “Four billion dollars have been allocated to this project, of which we will spend three hundred and seventeen million on the construction part of this hospital, and

approximately two billion and six hundred and seventy million will be spent on purchasing medical equipment for this hospital.”

Throughout the year, the Acting Minister of Public Health had five trips to various countries, including Iran, Pakistan, Qatar, and Malaysia, where during his trip to Qatar, he met with representatives of various countries and sought the comprehensive cooperation of the international community in the health sector of the country, and during his trip to Malaysia, he reported in an interview with a Malaysian media that more than 150,000 women are active in the health sector in Afghanistan.

The Acting Minister of Public Health said, “150,000 women are working in the health sector, which is a significant number. Under the previous government, this number of women did not work. We employ women who have experience in various sectors in the health sector. We have institutes for nursing, midwifery, and also various educational programs. We are not opposed to women’s rights. Where women are needed, we keep the door open for them because women are an important part of our society. It is very difficult to manage society without women.”

On the 2nd of Dalwa (solar calendar), the specialty completion exam was held for obtaining 465 positions from more than six thousand doctors, including twelve hundred female doctors.

Haider Omar, head of the Specialization Completion Program of the Ministry of Public Health, stated that these doctors participated in this training from across the country for the 465 announced positions in various medical fields.

This year, various aids were also provided in the health sector.

Japan, by signing a memorandum of understanding with the Afghanistan section of the World Health Organization, provided nearly seven million dollars to the Antani and Afghan-Japan hospitals, and the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSRelief) provided more than one million dollars for providing services to mothers and children in Bamyán province to Afghanistan.

Shamim Mehrzad, a doctor, said, “Access to health services for mothers and children in villages is very limited. Such aids can be life-saving and constructive for mothers and children. If managed properly, it can prevent the death of many mothers and children in villages.”

The Medical Council of Afghanistan, despite establishing its offices in six zones and amidst all the ups and downs and concerns about the lack of female doctors, conducted two rounds of licensing exams for the Medical Council of Afghanistan from more than eleven thousand applicants; however, without the presence of female doctors.

It remains to be seen whether the number of female doctors will increase in the solar year 1403 and to what extent the challenges of this sector will be resolved.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, Mitsuhiro Wada, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

PTI founder, Qureshi acquitted in two cases

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder, AML chief, Sheikh Rasheed, Shah Mahmood Qureshi and others have been acquitted in two cases registered against them at Bhara Kahu police station.

The reserved verdict was announced by Judicial Magistrate Suhaib Bilal. According to verdict, PTI founder Imran Khan, Sheikh Rasheed, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Saifullah Niazi, Aamir Mahmood Kiani, Pervaiz Khattak, Asad Umar, Ali Nawaz Awan, Raja Khurram Nawaz, Faisal Javed and Shireen Mazari have been acquitted in the Bhara Kahu police station case.

The judicial magistrate reserved its verdict after the completion of arguments from both sides on Tuesday. Earlier, the District and Session Court of Islamabad acquitted the PTI founder, Asad Umar, Faisal Javed and others in a protest and vandalism case.

Imran Khan, Asad Umar, Faisal Javed Khan, Raja Khurram Shahzad Nawaz, Abid Hussain, Ali Nawaz Awan, Zaheer Khan and others were booked at Tarnol police station on February 26, 2022. Judicial magistrate Muhammad Shahbir issued the release verdict by accepting their acquittal pleas in the case. The court judgments mentioned the accused had filed separate acquittal pleas under section 249A of the constitution. The accused can't be indicted in the case, and an additional trial of the case was a waste of time, the verdict mentioned.

Quetta jolted by earthquake

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Quetta and adjoining areas were jolted by another earthquake in the wee hours of Wednesday, the third in the past 24 hours.

The intensity of third earthquake was recorded 5.6 magnitude on the Richter scale in Quetta city and other areas of Balochistan province adjacent to Afghan border. As per the National Seismic Monitoring Centre (NSMC), the depth of the earthquake was 30 km and the epicenter of it was Shorawak area of Afghanistan's Kandahar province, adjacent to Nushki district of Balochistan that is 166 km south-west of Quetta.

SC grants bail to suspects involved in May 9 violence

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted bail to five suspects involved in May 9 violence and stated that the authorities concerned were not arresting the "real terrorists" but are after those who take out political rallies.

Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail made these remarks during hearing of bail petitions of suspects allegedly involved in vandalising and attacking the state property on May 9. A number of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers and others were arrested after protests broke out across the country following Imran Khan's arrest in the Al-Qadir Trust case.

A three-member bench, headed by Justice Mandokhail, and comprising Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Mussarat Hilali conducted the hearing of the plea seeking post-arrest bail. The apex court approved the bail in exchange for surety bonds of Rs50,000 each. It also directed the trial court to give a verdict without getting influenced.

The petitioners, Owais, Saifullah, Nasrullah, Kamran and Waqas, were accused of attacks and vandalising between May 9 to 10. During the proceedings on Wednesday, Justice Mandokhail highlighted the lapses in investigations and spoke about the provisions of terrorism in the first information report.

"Do you know in what circumstances the anti-terrorism clauses are invoked?" he questioned. He then gave examples of terror incidents, saying that the Army Public School tragedy and attack on lawyers in Quetta can be categorised as such.

"Fight your political game in the political arena, don't fight political battles in the courts," he said. Justice Mandokhail added

that when a weapon is not recovered, then the relevant provision cannot be added in the FIR. Justice Rizvi then said that all the witnesses were police officers.

"The witnesses can also be policemen, but the evidence should be shared," said Justice Hilali. At this point, Justice Rizvi said the accused were also charged for firing, however, no weapon was recovered and no policemen were injured. To this, Justice Mandokhail said that the investigating officer was making up stories.

He then added that the authorities concerned aren't catching the "real terrorists" but are after those who took out a political rally. At this, the investigation officer said that the accused attacked the sensitive institutions after the arrest of their leader. Punjab government's counsel claimed that molotov cocktails were recovered from their possession and they also resorted to firing. "A head constable of Special Branch Lahore is also a witness," he added.

"Should the former prime minister be considered a traitor on the statement of a head constable?" questioned Justice Mandokhail. Justice Rizvi then said that there was no evidence except the testimonies of policemen. Justice Hilali highlighted that there is no mention of the attack on the ISI office in the FIR.

At this point, Justice Rizvi asked about the evidence against the accused and if they were identified from CCTV cameras. To this, the IO said that the CCTV cameras were damaged by the protestors. "This means there is no evidence against the accused but only police statements," said Justice Mandokhail. He questioned how did taking out rallies become terrorism.

PTI founder approaches SC against alleged poll rigging

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The PTI founder on Wednesday approached the Supreme Court against the alleged rigging in the February 8 elections.

The former prime minister filed petition in the Supreme Court through senior lawyer Hamid Khan seeking formation of a judicial commission to probe

the alleged rigging. In the petition, he prayed for establishment of a commission consisting of Supreme Court judges who have no bias. He said an investigation should be conducted into defeating the winning candidates in the February 8 election by fraudulent results.

He also urged the apex court that formation of governments in the federation

and Punjab should be suspended.

It should be noted that the general elections were held across the country on February 8, in which the PTI founder's party, PTI, could not be a part of the election process due to the loss of the election symbol of 'bat' and the candidates supported by the party had to contest elections as independents.

2 girl students awarded death for slaughtering their teacher

D I KHAN (INP): A court in Dera Ismail Khan on Wednesday sentenced to death two girl students of a madrassa who mercilessly killed their teacher on concocted charges of committing blasphemy. The court also awarded life imprisonment to the third accused girl who was a minor.

The D I Khan court also slapped Rs2 million fine each on the condemned girls while one-million-rupee fine to the third. According to the prosecution, on March 29, 2022, in Anjumabad area of Dera Ismail Khan, three students of Madrassa Jamia Islamia

Falah Al-Banat namely Razia Hanifa, Ayesha Nauman and Umrah Ahsan slaughtered their 18-year-old female teacher 'S' with knives.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Jameel heard the case while public prosecutor Tanseer Ali and Haji Shakeel advocate represented the prosecution while Asad Aziz advocate appeared in court on behalf of the accused girls. According to the uncle of the deceased 'S' Bibi, he was present at the house when the management of the madrassa informed him on mobile

phone that there has been a murderous attack on his niece. On reaching the madrassa, he saw the tortured and butchered body of his niece lying in the street.

The deceased's uncle said his niece used to teach in the madrassa and went to the madrassa as usual when the three girls who were already present at the main gate attacked and killed her. D I Khan police took the three girl students into custody and recovered the knives and sticks after initial action on the complaint of the deceased's uncle.

Balochistan CM extends olive branch to insurgents

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti has expressed a welcoming stance towards insurgents willing to abandon violence and reintegrate into society. He made these remarks during a seminar titled "Balochistan Youth State Harmony Summit" held at the Balochistan University of Information, Engineering, and Management Sciences on Wednesday.

Bugti assured that the government would fully support those who opt for peace and choose to join the mainstream. Addressing the participants, the CM lamented the longstanding propagation of animosity among Balochistan youth. He underscored the necessity of distinguishing between perceptions and facts, stating, "Rather than presenting facts, anti-state elements fabricate narratives about various issues and historical events in the province."

Bugti asserted that only the state possesses the authority to employ force against those challenging its legitimacy. He said that resorting to force to advance demands contradicts religious, cultural and societal norms. Commending the surrender of former militant commander Sarfraz Bangulzai, the chief minister highlighted the state's willingness to reintegrate individuals back into society despite their past transgressions. "The government stands ready to assist anyone seeking to embrace the mainstream," he affirmed.

Regarding the grievances of disgruntled Baloch, Bugti clarified that those resorting to violence and endangering innocent lives are not representative of the disgruntled Baloch, but rather militants. He stated, "The true disgruntled Baloch are those who, despite obtaining education, remain unemployed due to nepotism within parliament and bureaucracy."

Bugti reiterated the government's commitment to merit-based employment, stressing that no positions would be sold under his administration. He emphasised that the rights of Balochistan would not be compromised, and the federal government would be urged, firmly but respectfully, to safeguard the province's interests.

Bugti underscored the importance of countering militant propaganda disseminated through social media platforms from locations such as Dubai and Singapore, urging increased awareness among the youth. The CM stressed that the ongoing war on terror requires collective effort, adding that it is a battle for survival waged by courageous soldiers, rather than a conflict solely between militants and the military.

Addressing systemic shortcomings, Bugti acknowledged responsibility for youth unemployment and urban sanitation issues, asserting, "If we fail to provide employment opportunities and maintain cleanliness in our cities, the fault lies with us, not with any specific group." The chief minister deplored the diversion of 40 to 50 percent of development project funds towards commissions, reaffirming his administration's commitment to sustainable development by curbing commission-based practices.

Israeli military says it killed 90 gunmen at Al Shifa hospital

JERUSALEM (Reuters): Israel's military said on Wednesday it had killed around 90 gunmen and arrested 160 in a raid on Gaza's Al Shifa hospital.

Al Shifa, the Gaza Strip's biggest hospital before the war, is now one of the few health care facilities that is even partially operational in the north of the territory, and had also been housing displaced civilians. "Over the past day, the troops have eliminated terrorists and located weapons in the hospital area, while preventing harm to civilians, patients, medical teams, and medical equipment," the military said in a statement.

Israel's raid at the hospital began in the early hours of Monday. The military said it had sent in special forces supported by infantry and tanks, based on intelligence that the hospital was again being used by gunmen. Israel faced fierce criticism last November when troops first raided Al Shifa hospital. The troops uncovered tunnels there which they said had been used as command and control centers by Hamas. Hamas and medical staff deny the hospital was used for military purposes or to shelter fighters.

AFP adds: Israel has vowed to let Palestinians crammed into southern Gaza leave before its planned invasion of Rafah, but experts have warned it was practically impossible to get those civilians out of harm's way. The roughly 1.5 million Gazans in the territory's southernmost tip have the Mediterranean Sea to their west and sealed borders to the south and east, while Israeli forces are poised to push in from the north.

"Where will we go if they enter Rafah, and where will we get a tent, mattress and blankets?" said Sabah Al-Astal, 50, already displaced inside Gaza by the Israel-Hamas war. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted on sending troops into Rafah to root out Hamas in the area that borders Egypt and Israel.

But Netanyahu has also pledged to enable Gazans to leave, saying Sunday that his troops would not move in "while keeping the population locked in place." Israel, though, remains vague regarding how or when this massive evacuation would take place, a challenge that aid experts consider impossible in the devastated territory. "People don't know where to go. There's nowhere safe in Gaza," said Nardia Hardman, an expert on refugees at Human Rights Watch (HRW).

The bloodiest ever Gaza war broke out after Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on October 7 that resulted in about 1,160 deaths in Israel, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures. Militants also seized about 250 hostages, of whom Israel believes 130 remain in Gaza, including 33 who are presumed dead.

Israel has carried out a relentless bombing campaign and ground offensive that

President approves dismissal of SC's Justice

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday greenlit the dismissal of Supreme Court (SC) Justice (retd) Mazahar Ali Naqvi, who was found guilty of misconduct by the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) earlier this month.

The Ministry of Law and Justice issued an official notification for the judge's removal. "Consequent upon recommendation of the Supreme Judicial Council of Pakistan under Article 209(6) read with Article 48(1) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 1973 and SI No 31 of Schedule V-B of Rules of Business, 1973, the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is pleased to remove Sayyed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi (formerly, judge, Supreme Court of Pakistan) from his office, for being guilty of misconduct, effective from January 10, 2024," the notification read.

The ministry also notified that an earlier notification for Justice (retd) naqvi's resignation issued by the division has been subsequently

withdrawn. In a surprise move in January, Justice (retd) Naqvi had stepped down from his post following misconduct allegations — and within a day, fellow judge Justice (retd) Ijazul Ahsan also resigned, raising questions over their untimely departure.

In his resignation letter, the former judge had said: "[...] in the circumstances which are a matter of public knowledge and to some extent public record, it is no longer possible for me to continue to serve as a Judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Considerations of due process also compel so." However, the SJC after holding over two month of misconduct proceedings, held that the controversial judge was guilty of misconduct, suggesting that he should have been fired before his resignation.

In a short statement, the top judicial body headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, opined that the ex-judge — facing several allegations — was guilty of misconduct and "should have been removed from the office of Judge". The top judicial forum said



that it considered six different complaints, in chronological order, and in respect of five the opinions expressed by the members to whom it was referred, recommended that there was no substance therein, with which the SJC concurred.

It rendered its opinion in respect of the nine complaints against the former judge under Article 209(6) of the Constitution and "opined that he was guilty of misconduct and should have been removed from the office of Judge". The development came after the apex court's last month's verdict that the proceedings against a judge by the SJC will not stop even after his resignation or retirement.

PM: Cross-border terrorism will no longer be acceptable

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surfaced again in certain areas of the country.

"Almost 70,000 to 80,000 Pakistanis, including those from law enforcing agencies, police, professionals, and others sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country's security," he remarked. He said a couple of days back, he visited the residences of Lt Colonel Syed Kashif Shaheed and Captain Ahmed Badar Shaheed and was impressed by the determination and courage showed by the bereaved family members.

The PM also committed to stop infiltration of terrorists from across the border saying that it will not be born by the Pakistan government at any cost. "We want to live with the neighboring countries in peaceful atmosphere and we also want to enhance trade and other bilateral relations with them. However, he said "we will not tolerate any kind of terrorism under no circumstances from across the border". He also asked the neighboring country to sit together and help Pakistan eradicating the terrorism and poverty from the region.

Earlier, the cabinet members paid

tribute and offered Fateha for the martyrs of a terrorist attack that took place in Mir Ali area of North Waziristan on March 16. The meeting took up different agenda items including the briefing on Staff Level Agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the constitution of PIA Holding Company and others, a PM Office press release said.

During the meeting, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and members of the federal cabinet decided to voluntarily forego their salaries and perks as part of the government's efforts to promote austerity.

Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb briefed the cabinet members on the Staff Level Agreement with the IMF. It was told that the agreement would help improve the national economy and boost the investors' confidence. As an important headway towards the PIA's privatisation, the federal cabinet approved the formation of the PIA Holding Company. The PM directed to further speed up the privatization process of PIA besides ensuring transparency in the process. He also directed to formulate a committee

with regard to outsourcing of the airports which will help attracting investment from the world's best investors in the country's aviation sector.

The cabinet, on the recommendation of the ministry of commerce, approved to form a committee for determining the exemption of bans regarding exports and imports. Federal Minister for Commerce would be the convener of the committee. The committee would determine the said exemption under section 21 of the Trade Organizations Act 2013 and in this regard it would also hear the appeals.

Likewise, on the recommendation of interior ministry, the cabinet approved to send the recommendations of the Federal Commission established on the order of the Islamabad High Court regarding the arrest/detention of former member of the National Assembly Dr. Shireen Mazari to the relevant federal and provincial authorities. On the proposal of the Ministry of Law and Justice and the recommendation of the Sindh High Court Karachi, the cabinet approved the return of the services of District and Sessions Judge Ghulam

Shah, who was working on deputa- tion in Banking Court II, Hyderabad, to his department.

PM directs formulation of constitutional, legal amendments package for judicial reforms: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the special committee concerned to formulate a package of constitutional and legal reforms to bring in judicial reforms in the country.

The prime minister, chairing the maiden meeting of the special committee on legal and judicial reforms, also instructed the committee to formulate a strategy to simplify the civil and criminal laws for ease of the common man. The committee comprises Law Minister Azam Nazeed Tarar, President of Supreme Court Bar Association Shehzad Shaukat, representative of Pakistan Bar Council Ahsan Bhoon, former Law Minister Zahid Hamid, senior legal expert Shahid Hamid and Attorney General Mansoor Awan, a PM Office press release said.

Expressing his desire to provide quick and easy justice to the common man, the prime minister called for easing the taxation matters for the people, particularly the business com-

munity. He asked the committee to put forward its legal proposals to ensure effective recovery of taxes.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that pending tax recoveries worth Rs2400 billion due to the court or tribunals' orders was a matter of concern. He also sought an interim report within two weeks on the financial and tax matters. He instructed that the report to be presented by the committee should be forwarded to the relevant ministries for implementation, after consultation with the coalition partners.

PM for early conclusion of Pak-UK Enhanced Strategic Partnership agreement: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressing the desire to elevate the Pakistan-UK relationship to the next level, emphasized the importance of early conclusion of the Enhanced Strategic Partnership (ESP) agreement.

The prime minister, in a meeting with British High Commissioner Jane Marriott, who called on him, highlighted the government's priorities, in particular the importance of navigating through the economic challenges facing the country, a PM Office press release said. In this regard, he underscored the need to enhance bilateral

cooperation in trade and investment, climate, and people-to-people contacts as well as developing convergences on regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest.

Prime Minister Shehbaz thanked British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Foreign Secretary Lord David Cameron for their messages of felicitation on his re-election and said that he looked forward to working closely with the UK leadership to further strengthen bilateral relations. He said Pakistan and the UK had longstanding, historic relations and shared immense political goodwill while cooperating closely over a wide range of areas.

The prime minister called for the early resumption of PIA flights between Pakistan and the UK to help strengthen linkages between the two countries and assuage concerns of the 1.6 million strong Pakistani diaspora in the UK. He requested the high commissioner to convey his best wishes to King Charles III and prayed for his early recovery to full health. The prime minister also expressed the hope that the King would visit Pakistan, as soon as his health permitted him to travel.