

Senator Talha joins PPP
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Senior leader and JUI-F Senator Talha Mahmood joined PPP on Tuesday. In a press conference, Talha announced his departure from JUI-F and his decision to align with PPP, alongside other PPP leaders. Talha emphasized his decision to join PPP amidst the country's severe crisis, stating that it is incumbent upon all to contribute towards resolving the challenges faced by nation.

5 Chinese nationals among six killed in Shangla terror attack

F.P. Report

SHANGLA: Five Chinese nationals and a Pakistani driver were killed and several other persons injured when the vehicle they were travelling in was attacked near Besham – a town located in Shangla district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tuesday.

A suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into a convoy of engineers which was on its way from Islamabad to their camp in Dasu, Mohammad Ali Gandapur, the regional police chief [DIG Malakand], said.

"Five Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver were killed in the attack," Gandapur told media. Dasu – the headquarters of Upper Kohistan district – is the site of a major dam and the area has been attacked in the past. Earlier, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also visited the embassy informed the Chinese ambassador about the details of the attack and deaths of Chinese engineers.

Reacting to the incident, President Asif Ali Zardari, Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Haji Gulber Khan, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Punjab, KP and Sindh chief ministers and others strongly condemned the attack, saying that such efforts to harm Pakistan's ties with China will never get successful.

Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Tuesday condemned terrorist attack on the car of Chinese residents at Karakoram highway in Shangla district. Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur expressed his condolences to the Chinese government and said that targeting Chinese residents is very sad and condemnable.

The Chief Minister asked the Inspector General of Police KP for a report on the incident. The Chief Minister expressed regret over the loss of human lives in the incident. The Chief Minister expressed condolences to the Chinese government for the death of Chinese citizens. The chief minister directed the concerned divisional and district administrations to ensure immediate medical assistance to the blast victims. The Chief Minister directed the concerned authorities to ensure foolproof security of foreign residents in the province.

China urges action against attackers

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In a statement, the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan said: "At around 1pm on 26th March local time, a Chinese company's bus carrying staff on the Dasu Hydropower Project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province was hit by terrorist attack. 5 Chinese citizens and 1 Pakistani citizen were unfortunately deceased."

The embassy and Consulates General in Pakistan expressed deep condolences to the victims and sincere sympathy to the bereaved families. It further said that they were making every effort to handle the aftermath together with the Pakistani side.

The embassy further said that it has launched an emergency plan immediately, requesting the Pakistani side to "thoroughly investigate the attack and severely punish the perpetrators". All necessary measures were being taken to protect the safety of Chinese citizens, institutions and projects in Pakistan, and to ensure such incidents will not happen again, it added.

In addition to this, the embassy reminded Chinese citizens, enterprises in Pakistan to pay close attention to the security situation, enhance security alerts, strengthen security measures, and make every effort to take safety precautions.

It was not the first time that Chinese nationals came under attack in Dasu, the site of a major dam, as 13 people, including nine Chinese nationals, were killed in an explosion in 2021. Chinese engineers are currently working on a number of projects in Pakistan with Beijing investing over \$65 billion in infrastructure works as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) under Beijing's wider Belt and Road initiative.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visits Chinese Embassy, and met with Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong to offer condolence over the death of Chinese nationals in suicide attack in Shangla.

ECP reserves verdict on appeals against oath to KP reserved seat MPs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday reserved its verdict on a plea of not administering the oath to the newly elected members on the reserved seats in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly.

Headed by CEC Sikandar Sultan Raja, a five-member bench including members Nisar Ahmed Durrani, Shah Muhammad Jatoti, Babar Hassan Bharwana, and Justice (Retd) Ikram Ullah Khan, heard the petition.

The proceeding was attended by the MPAs elect Jamila Paracha, Afshan Hussain, Amna Sardar Faiza Malik, Shazia Jadoon, and Suresh Kumar. The MPAs

elect argued that they were being denied the opportunity to take their oath as members of provincial assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Complainants' counsel Shah Khawar, said that the ECP issued notification for the petitioners on reserved seats on March 4, and it was the responsibility of the Speaker

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly to convene the session and administer the oath. The Speaker is constitutionally obligated to convene the assembly session. He argued that the April 2, Senate elections should be held only after administering the oath. The Chief Election Commissioner questioned how the ECP could instruct the Speaker of the assembly

regarding the delay in administering the oath to the newly elected members on reserved seats.

A representative from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly stated that the Speaker has not refused to administer the oath, but rather argued that the summoning of the assembly session by the Governor was illegal. Shah Khawar emphasized that the ECP should not intervene in the internal affairs of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly proceedings.

The Secretary of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly mentioned that it needs to be examined whether the Governor has the authority to summon the assembly session without a summary from the relevant authorities.

The Frontier Post

Ministry official summoned

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC), hearing the petition against ban on 'X', formerly known as Twitter, on Tuesday summoned the concerned officer of the Ministry of Interior on April 3. IHC Chief Justice Justice Aamer Farooq heard the petition filed by Ihtesham Abbasi, a journalist. Pakistan Telecommunication Authority's (PTA) lawyer, on the occasion, submitted to the court the Authority's reply in the case.



SHANGLA: Security officials inspecting the site of a suicide blast targeting Chinese van.

4 terrorists gunned down in D I Khan

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security forces gunned down four terrorists in Dera Ismail Khan (DIK) Intelligence Based Operation (IBO). In a statement released on Tuesday, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) stated that the security forces conducted the "IBO on the reported presence of terrorists".

During the conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between Pakistan security forces and the terrorists, as a result of which four terrorists were gunned down. The terrorists were identified as Mustafa, Qismatullah and Islamuddin, who were involved in an attack over security forces and civilians. Arms and ammunition were also recovered from the custody of the killed outlaws.

"Sanitisation operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area," the ISPR stated. Loicals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism. Earlier, security forces foiled a terrorist attack on Pakistan Navy's Airbase PNS Siddique in Turbat, late Monday night.

According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) four terrorists armed with heavy weapons and explosives attacked the Naval base in Turbat. However, timely action by navy personnel thwarted the assault, preventing any harm to the base or its personnel.

PTI to stage bid demo for Khan's release

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is all set to hold what it called the biggest-ever protest demonstration in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the release of the PTI founder Imran Khan. PTI chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan said this while talking to media on Tuesday. He said the PTI founder had said his life is for the country and would die here while the workers should not be bewildered.

Gohar said Senate elections and Donald Lu's statement was discussed with the PTI founder and he wanted Asad Majeed to come forward to record his statement again. Rajan Nasir Abbas would be the PTI candidate from Punjab while Mian Aslam Iqbal parliamentary leader for Punjab, the PTI chief said.

The PTI chairman said Zulfi Bukhari would also be a PTI candidate for Senate election from Punjab while Faizur Rehman and Dr Shafqat Ayaz would contest from KP. "Azam Swati would be a candidate for the technocrats post from KP. In case of objection Noorul Haq Qadri will replace him," Khan said.

IMF programme no excuse to retard growth

Prime Minister announces significant incentives for highest tax payers

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday while terming the highest tax payers as 'heroes of the nation' announced significant incentives for them including issuance of blue passport and conferring of Pakistan Honour Cards and honorary title of ambassadors of the country upon them.

Addressing a 'Tax Excellence Awards' ceremony held here to acknowledge the highest tax payers, the prime minister said the highest tax payers and exporters would be treated as honorary ambassadors of the country abroad and the country's embassies across the globe would be directed to fully coordinate in this regard.

The prime minister said that the purpose of today's ceremony was to acknowledge the contributions of the heroes of the nation and those who honestly paid taxes and served the country through their talents, with setting up of small and medium businesses, women entrepreneurs and those who had spurred the non-traditional exports. The prime minister said that about Rs65 billion refunds had been issued to exporters upon his direction and he had also directed for making it a routine matter without any leniency.

While mentioning the country's economic issues and challenges, he stressed that the government and private sector had to work closely to overcome them. "If we want to resolve these issues, like two wheels of a vehicle, the private sector and the government have to work closely and with the support of provincial governments, the federal government will address the issues faced by the private sector, end red tape with provision of enabling circumstances to them so that they can tread upon the development path," the prime minister said.

The government's role was not to do the businesses but it acted like a catalyst and through facilitation, consultative process and enactment of policies; they could lead Pakistan on path to progress, he added. The prime minister said that a nation's voice was heard among the comity of nations when it had sound economic health.

"The time has arrived when all have to accept the challenge through best solutions," he opined and stressed upon overcoming the past decades mistakes. "Implementation of policies with letter and spirit and under complete dedication is the strategy of the incumbent government to put country on path of progress," he added.

He further reiterated that they should get rid of costly oil churning power units to provide competitive power supply to industries and said that he had directed the minister concerned and authorities to do away with such junk. About FBR, he said they were taking measures for its complete restructuring and informed that next month, a consultant would be appointed.

The prime minister opined that about 27 billion rupees were under litigation whereas revenue target was set at Rs9 trillion. He said underscored the need of appointment of competent tribunal heads to expeditiously dispose of the pending litigation, adding that he had also appealed to the chief justice for speedy disposal of such cases at the upper tiers.

He said the country's tax collection stood around 9 per cent of the total GDP which was lowest in the region while huge chunk of tax was siphoned off. He said that if this massive leakage was not plugged, further imposition of taxes would not yield results and underlined the need to reduce tax slabs. He said that they required innovative tax initiatives.

He also appreciated the tax collectors and the relevant departments who he said would also be given public recognition. The prime minister referring to seeking of foreign debts said that it was grave matter and it was high time to indulge into self introspection. He emphasized upon an exports led growth, boosting of IT and agriculture development.

Youth bulge was a valuable asset for the country that should be imparted skilled education, he observed. The prime minister also termed another IMF programme a requirement for the country's economic stability. The prime minister mentioned the functioning of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) which was accelerating investment prospects by removing all hurdles.

He said that Pakistan enjoyed excellent ties with China and said that the second phase of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would expedite the economic development. The prime minister said that they were outsourcing airports besides expediting the privatization of PIA, and regretted that state owned enterprises were making billion of rupees losses annually. Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb, in his remarks, said that for development and growth, taxes on internal side and exports on external side were drivers for development. He stressed upon end to end digitization to plug the loopholes and structured reforms.

Militant attack on Navy base in Turbat foiled

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security forces successfully thwarted an attack attempted by terrorists on PNS Siddique – a naval base in Balochistan's Turbat city, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement on Tuesday.

The attack, which took place on the night of March 25 and 26, was foiled following the swift and effective response by the troops ensuring the safety and security of personnel and assets, the military's media wing added. Synergetic and effective response by the armed forces enabled the killing of all four terrorists in the ensuing joint clearance operation, the statement read.

"Security forces in the vicinity were immediately mobilised to support the naval troops," it added. In

the wake of the attack, a 24-year-old Frontier Corps trooper, Sepoy Noman Fareed, embraced martyrdom after gallantly fighting the terrorists. The martyred soldier was a resident of Muzaffargarh and was serving in Frontier Corps Balochistan.

"Sanitisation operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area," the statement read, adding that Pakistan's armed forces remain "committed to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the country at all costs". The attack comes almost a week after a group of gunmen stormed the Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) colony with security forces acting swiftly and foiling the fierce attack.

Own troops, the ISPR said, employed for security responded immediately and

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, it added.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has appreciated the security forces for thwarting a terrorist attack. Due to a prompt and effective response by the security forces, terrorists were sent to hell, thus saving the country from a big damage, PM Office Media Wing quoted the prime minister in a press release.

PM Shehbaz also maintained his resolve to crush the specter of terrorism. "The entire nation was standing with their brave security forces and paid tribute to them," the statement added.



Reforms in education system: Strict decisions to be taken: Minister

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Minister for higher education, archives and libraries Meena Khan Afridi on Tuesday said that strict decisions have to be taken for bringing better reforms in education system of the province.

He said these while chairing a meeting of the regional directorates of higher education department in Civil Secretariat Peshawar.

Additional Secretary, Director, Additional Directors male and female

and other officers participated in the meeting.

The Provincial Minister was given a detailed presentation on Malakand, Hazara and South regions. In the briefing it is said that currently the directorates are managing the affairs of 320 colleges, including 172 male and 148 female colleges.

Besides, 238 general colleges offering BS programs in various disciplines, 20298 students enrolled in Associate Degree Program in 113 colleges.

Although, during 2022-23 financial year 41 new colleges in settled areas including 21 boys and 20 girls colleges while 10 new colleges in newly merged districts functionalised.

Furthermore, construction work on 59 boys and girls institutions in settled districts and 17 in merged areas are in progress and these will be completed by June 2024 subject to release of fund.

During the meeting various suggestions also came into discussion.

303,000 Afghans sent to Afghanistan

PESHAWAR (APP): As many as 303,162 Afghans have been returned to their own country via three border points in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the volunteer return and repatriation of unregistered and illegally residing foreigners in the country.

According to statistics from the Home Department, 296,412 voluntarily returned to their country while 6,750 were deported through Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

It said that a total of 297,017 people have returned from the Torkham border point, 5446 via Angoor Ada and 689 through Kharlachi.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Health Syed Qasim Ali Shah being briefed by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq at Khyber Medical University.

KTH retains ISO accreditation for consecutive 2nd year

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Teaching Hospital (KTH) has proudly announced the successful maintenance of its ISO hospital accreditation for the second consecutive year in 2024. This achievement reaffirms KTH's position as a distinguished ISO hospital in the region. Dr. Muhammad Zafer Afridi, the Hospital Director, has been recognized as an exceptional leader by the ISO team, receiving praise for his outstanding leadership qualities.

Sajjad Khan, the spokesperson of Khyber Teaching Hospital, highlighted that KTH had initially attained the ISO 9001:2015 certification in 2022, becoming the first government general hospital in Pakistan to do so. The recent renewal of this certification signifies KTH's unwavering dedication to upholding excellence in healthcare standards.

In a recent development, an international organization Total Quality System underwent a rigorous Surveillance Audit conducted under the supervision of Muhammad Akbar Khan from TQS. This comprehensive audit encompassed interviews with



staff, assessment of hospital cleanliness, documentation review, evaluation of standards, and verification of administrative protocols and patient care practices over a two-day period.

Following the audit, a detailed report was issued, outlining areas for improvement and identifying any deficiencies. The TQS team subsequently issued a formal statement after addressing and rectifying the identified complexities and shortcomings. KTH has now become

the first public sector hospital to retain its accreditation status for ISO 9001:2015 for the second time, ensuring continued compliance until 2024 and 2025. The ISO team commended the hospital for its enhanced administrative practices and services, acknowledging the significant milestone achieved.

During the certificate distribution ceremony, Dr. Muhammad Zafer Afridi was honored with an accolade, recognizing KTH's commitment to improving

patient care and operational efficiency. The collective efforts of the entire team, including doctors, nurses, pharmacists, paramedics, security personnel, hospital administration, and management, were applauded for their contribution to this success.

Muhammad Akbar Khan, Head of TQS, commended Dr. Muhammad Zafer Afridi for his pivotal role in successfully implementing ISO standards, leveraging his extensive 34 years of healthcare management experience to drive the hospital towards progress. Expressing gratitude to the entire hospital team for their dedication and hard work, Dr. Muhammad Zafer Afridi extended congratulations to all on this remarkable achievement.

This recognition not only instills pride in the province but also fosters healthy competition among hospitals, ultimately aiming to provide the public with top-notch healthcare facilities. Dr. Zafer Afridi acknowledged the relentless efforts of the hospital's team in overcoming this significant milestone, emphasizing the collective commitment to delivering exceptional healthcare services to the community.

SACM asks TEVTA to find-out opportunities of income

PESHAWAR (APP): Special Assistant to KPCM on Technical Education, Industries and Commerce, Abdul Karim Tordhir has directed Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) to find out opportunities of income from various possible sources for better and sustainable financial management and taking of effective measures for self-reliance and financial stability of the institute.

He issued these directives during a briefing regarding Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) here in Hayatabad on Tuesday.

Besides, the Managing Director (MD) TEVTA, Aamir Afaq, Director Finance Munir Gul, Director HR Abid Iqbal, Director Nisab Sadiq Orakzai, Director P&D Haider Ali, Director Monitoring Nazir and other officers of the authority were present on this occasion.

ANP condemns Shangla attack

PESHAWAR (APP): Awami National Party (ANP) has condemned the terrorist attack on foreign nationals in Shangla expressing concern over the existing security situation in the province.

In condemnation message issued from Bacha Khan Markaz here Tuesday, ANP Provincial President, Aimal Wali denounced the attack and raised questions over the security situation. He questioned the efficiency of provincial government and said that people are feeling uncertainty due to incidents of terrorism.

He suggested serious steps to control the menace and said that ANP shares the grief of bereaved family members of victims in these moments of distress.



All sections of TEVTA gave separate briefings to the special assistant regarding operational affairs, personnel, courses provided in training institutes, financial and administrative affairs, financial challenges and proposed plan to tackle them, curricular and development activities.

The special assistant directed initiating efforts for introduction of a suitable business and production model to operate the financial affairs of the institute in a better manner, under which the resources and assets of the department can be utilized for the financial affairs of the institution.

He also directed the inclusion of the trade of regional importance and characteristics in the curricular activities of technical education and assigning of responsibilities to the heads with the best performance and transparency in training institutions.

In the meeting, the financial challenges faced by the Special Assistant and

several suggestions were presented to deal with them.

The special assistant was given detailed briefing regarding operational affair, staff, courses taught in institutions and financial challenges faced by them.

The Special Assistant was also briefed about the technical education institutions in the province, the courses offered in them and the responsibilities of the teaching and other staff of the institutions.

On this occasion, the Special Assistant said that the technical education sector is the basic and important pillar of vocational education and training for the youth of the province, saying he is making efforts to strengthen it further.

He said that in the formation of the new Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) board, good reputation and capable people should be included who can play their role in achieving the goals

of the development of the organization because it is the government's effort to prepare people for the preparation of experienced and skilled manpower.

The Special Assistant also stressed on making the recruitment process in TEVTA to the high principles of transparency and said that the entire recruitment process should be made transparent for the recruitment of 100% qualified and merit-based personnel in the recruitment of new staff for the organization. He directed for hiring of competent and qualified people for the institution.

He directed to review the matter to keep the number of staff as per requirement at TEVTA headquarters.

On this occasion, the Special Assistant directed him to provide the details of the staff posted on (detachment) in different centres of the institution. He said that they have to make possible efforts for the development and stability of the institution and find a useful way in this regard.

He said that in technical education courses in tourism, mining, agriculture and other important sectors according to the local needs and importance should be included.

Governor condoles with journalist

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali on Tuesday attended the funeral prayer of mother of Gulzar Khan, President Press Gallery KP Assembly and reporter Daily Jang.

He also offered fataha and prayed to rest the departed soul in eternal abode with peace.

He also prayed for Allah Almighty to grant courage to family members to bear the irreparable loss with fortitude.

Spurious drugs recovered

PESHAWAR (APP): Directorate General Drug Control and Pharmacy Services (DG DC & PS), Health Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa conducted a raid in collaboration with Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) team in Peshawar wherein spurious drugs Manufacturing and storage was seized in residential premises situated at Siphon Chowk Badabher area, District Peshawar.

In a second raid on same day, by Drug Control Mardan assisted by Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), was carried out in Mardan, Shankar area, where spurious manufacturing, storage of drugs was seized.

Machinery, Raw material and other packaging materials were recovered during the raids along with huge stocks of Inj Isanex, Inj, Bromep 40 mg, Inj, CE-PERAZONE 2 g, Inj Q-bact 2 g, Inj-Oxidil 2g, Cap. Velosef 500mg, Tab Novidat 500mg, Tab Xanax 0.5mg, Tab Duphaston 10mg, Cap Azomax 250 mg, Cap Azomax 500mg, Tab Claritek 500mg, Cap. Magnet 400 mg, were recovered.

The Directorate General Drug Control & Pharmacy Services, Health Department has constituted special teams for joint activities against menace of spurious drugs in all districts of the province, to curb the mushroom growth of Spurious Drugs from the Market of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Rain predicted in KP

PESHAWAR (INP): The Regional Meteorological Department on Tuesday predicted rains starting on March 27 to 31 in most parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to a notification issued by Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) stated that Regional Met Office Peshawar has informed that a new spell of rains is starting for which people are urged to take all precautionary measures to avoid any loss of life, damages to infrastructure and crops and animals.

Furthermore, all concerned authorities asked to take the safety measures. Tourists to be informed about weather forecast, ensure availability of all emergency services staff and machineries and other resources, and all concerned line departments to remain vigilant in restoring road links.

In case of any occurrence contact with Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), active round the clock via helpline 1700.

Governor can't summon assembly session for oath taking on reserved seats

PESHAWAR (APP): The office of Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has submitted reply to the Peshawar High Court and the Law Department saying that the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cannot summon assembly session by himself for the swearing-in ceremony of elected members on reserved seats.

According to the document, "Assembly meeting can be convened on the

advice or requisition of the Chief Minister, calling the meeting by the Governor was an unconstitutional process, so it cannot be implemented."

The reply further said that the governor can convene the first meeting after the election by himself, besides, the governor can also convene the meeting in case of no-confidence motion.

According to the Advocate General's Office,

in the current situation, the governor misused his powers, the opposition leader's interference in calling the meeting was also wrong.

According to sources, the Law Department has also sent the reply of the Advocate General's Office to the Assembly Secretariat.

It should be noted that the Peshawar High Court has asked the Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly for a reply till Wednesday.

Advisor inaugurates tourism website of KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Zahid Chanzab, Advisor Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Tourism, Culture and Archeology, inaugurated a new interactive and virtual tourism website under the auspices of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) in a simple but impressive ceremony at Peshawar on Tuesday.

The new website provides online virtual tour facilities besides pictorial details of all the major tourist spots of the province and any visitor wearing VR and clicking on any tourist spot will feel as if he is there himself, and can roam anywhere he likes.

Eulogizing this effort, the tourism adviser directed to pay full attention to virtual tourism across the province and emphasized on making virtual tourism in this website various religious, cultural and archeological sites besides the hill stations and tourist



places. Similarly, he urged to include all the tourist, cultural and archeological places of the merged districts in the list of virtual tourism, which have now become an integral part of the province and domestic and foreign tourists are eager to visit there.

He also directed to provide all the facilities related to hotel booking on the website in addition to other services so that no one is left unattended under the one window operation.

He clarified that these measures will increase the viewership of the website as well as the revenue generation of KPCTA will also increase significantly.

Zahid Chanzab said that he will leave no stone

turned to promote tourism and culture in the province owing to the vision of his party chief Imran Khan and the confidence of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur in him.

He recalled that tourism industry is the largest source of income in the world and henceforth we can make our province the richest and most prosperous region only through promoting tourism industry on war footings.

The Tourism Adviser also directed to speed up steps to open new tourist spots and provide additional facilities for tourists in all tourist areas including Guliyat, Hazara, Malakand and Chitral due to the start of summer season.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Minister for Higher Education Meena Khan Afridi presiding over a meeting.

HEC performance report of KP universities: University of Peshawar remains at bottom

PESHAWAR (APP): Once known for its quality of education and research work, the renowned and prestigious institution of higher education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, University of Peshawar remained the least productive institution among the public sector universities of the province on the basis of its performance during the year 2022-23 as issued by Higher Education Commission.

Based on the prescribed scorecard of HEC, UOP could get 10 percent followed by Gomal University, Kohat

University of Science and Technology (KUST) and Sarhad University of Science and Information Technology (SUIT) with below 30 percent score.

The Khyber Medical University got first position among the universities by obtaining over 70 percent score, followed by University of Engineering and Technology, Peshawar with over 60 percent, Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan got 53 percent score, University of Hazara with over 52 percent and Islamia College University, Peshawar got 48 percent score.

Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar, Abbottabad University of Science and Technology (AUST) and University of Malakand got 40 percent score and 20 and 30 percent score respectively.

HEC conducts the assessment exercise every year to determine annual performance rankings of universities on the bases of four key performance indicators including human resource and operations, research excellence, innovation and commercialization and sustainability and capacity building.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Public Health Engineering Pakhtunyar Khan presiding over a high level meeting at Civil Secretariat.



In brief

AD&SJ rejects smugglers bail F.P. Report

KHYBER: Additional District and Session Judge (AD&SJ) Khyber Shaukat Ali rejected bail pleas of four alleged drug-smugglers and ordered for keeping them behind bars, on Monday. Deputy Public Prosecutor Zulfiqar Ali and Assistant Public Prosecutor Zubair Ahmad Qureshi argued that drugs are recovered from direct possession of alleged culprits while opposing bail pleas before the worthy AD&SJ. According to prosecution, Ilyas, Muhammad Ullah, Arman Jan and Taj Wali are nominated in several First Information Reports registered at various police stations including Millward, Bara and Jamrud for their alleged involvement in drugs-smuggling. In the meantime, the lawyers for accused requested for provision of bail on different grounds, however, prosecution opposed provision of any relief in this regard. AD&SJ Khyber Shaukat Ali rejected bail pleas of four alleged drugs-smugglers and ordered for keeping them behind bars.

Two friends die in Swabi mishap F.P. Report

SWABI: At least two boys were killed and another critically injured when the bike they were travelling on skidded off the road near Ambar Interchange in Swabi on Tuesday. Police said three friends namely Afnan, Saleh and Shayan were returning from Ambar Interchange when their motorcycle skidded off the road due to slippery road conditions. As a result, police said Afnan and Saleh were killed on the scene while Shayan sustained critical wound and was shifted to hospital. The deceased Afnan was the lone brother of five sisters, police said.

Residents hold protest F.P. Report

SHAHDADKOT: The residents of Razi Khan Gorar village, a suburb of Qamber Shahdadkot district, protested in front of the press club against the alleged abuses of the police. Addressing the demonstration on this occasion, Sultan Ahmad Jagirani, Musmi Kamil woman protested with her children and said that the police raided in our house without court orders and violated the sanctity of the four walls and two people of the house, young Shoaib Ahmad Jagirani and Musmi zadi Jagirani has been arrested and transferred to an unknown place. The speaker said that tractors were stolen from our village area a few days ago, on which he was arrested due to misidentification of khoji dogs, as thr part completely wrong and abuse. is. He demanded the Chief Minister Sindh and DIG Police Larkana Region and said that we are poor but not thieves, so they should help us to get rid of the brutality of the police.

Today readers are tomorrow leader F.P. Report

TOBA TEK SINGH: The annual prize distribution ceremony was held at The Approach Public School in which students, parents, social personality founder Pyara Pakistan Welfare Society Chaudhry Sajid Kamboh were invited as the chief guest, on Tuesday. Ch. Sajid Kamboh distributed prizes among the children who secured prominent positions. Addressing the ceremony on this occasion, Chaudhry Sajid Kamboh said that getting education is a duty for all of us, so give equal education to your boys and girls, so that after getting education they can make a place for themselves in the society and regional and national.

Rustam council flays Israeli brutality in monthly meeting

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The monthly meeting of Tehsil Council Rustam was held under the chairmanship of Acting Chairman Maulana Hazrat Bilal, in which all members of the Council and representatives of Health, Education, WAPDA, Police, Municipalities, and Rustam Press Club members participated.

Acting Chairman Hazrat Bilal presented the agenda of the meeting, after which the members of the council, Chairman Sajjad Alam, Ramdad Khan, Faiq Zaman, Syed Munir Khan, Muhammad Naeem, Aamir Sohail, and others addressed the ongoing Israeli attacks on the Muslims of Palestine. Strongly condemned the atrocities and announced a boycott of Israeli products.

In the meeting, all kinds of cooperation from the police to prevent aerial firing on moon night, shortage of medicines in Rustam Hospital, lack of X-ray facility, poor sanitation, shortage of beds, check and balance of food items in Rustam Bazar, self-inflicted increase in prices, sale of chicken meat per kg, repair of street lights installed in Rustam Bazar, and other issues were mentioned.

At the end of the meeting, the convener and acting chairman, Maulana Hazrat Bilal, said that the purpose of the meeting was to identify the problems of Tehsil Rustam and solve them immediately. The proceedings of the issues discussed in the meeting will be sent to the Deputy Commissioner's Office and other departments for timely resolution.

Anti-encroachment drive conducted: Taking into consideration the complaints of the citizens, on the special instructions of Deputy Commissioner Mardan, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Saeed Ullah Jan, Assistant Commissioner Madam Ayesha Tahir, Additional Assistant Commissioner Headquarters Junaid Khalid, and Cantt Executive Officer, they took actions against temporary encroachments in Bank Road and Par Hoti.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Mardan Saeed Ullah Jan took action against the temporary encroachments, taking into consideration the complaints of the citizens, and removed the encroachments made on the sides of the road and in front of the shops on the footpath. Additional Deputy Commissioner said that citizens are facing severe problems due to encroachment in the market, but in the future, the encroachment mafia will be dealt with strictly.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Saeed Ullah Jan issued strict instructions to the shopkeepers to refrain from temporary and permanent encroachments; otherwise, actions would be taken on a daily basis.

Youth the nation's future: Chairman of Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Farid Ahmad Khattak has said that children are our future and they are striving for quality education from 2025 instead of traditional marking grading system will be used, there will be no compromise on merit. Duplication mafia will be dealt strictly.

Class 9th paper will be taken online on trial basis. Dashboard has been set up for the first time. He was addressing Meet the Press program of Mardan Press Club. Secretary of the Board Professor Inamullah Toru, Controller of Examinations Professor Ishrat Ali, Education Experts Ashraf Ali, Hafiz Zubair Ahmed, SM Ilyas, Hafiz Inam, Usman Sangar, Farhad Takkar, Sohail Iqbal and Niaz Ali were also present on this occasion.

The chairman of the board said that to know the problems of the students, he is starting the open classrooms from tomorrow, in which children and parents from all the three districts of the board will participate. SL20 exams were successfully tested which will yield far-reaching results, the e-marking system was also started under which Physics and English papers will be taken and two more subjects will be included in the next exams. JazzCash and EasyPaisa facility has been provided for the fees.

The doors of the board are open to every citizen, they believe in self-accountability and positive criticism will be welcomed. The chairman of the education board said that a year ago when he was entrusted with the duties of the chairman of the board by the government, he accepted the post as a challenge and started reforms in the board. For the first time positive activities such as science expo, sports gala and speech competitions have been started.

The message of the board has been spread throughout the country by issuing a newsletter. Farid Ahmad Khattak said that when the Mardan Education Board was established in 2002, there were 20,000 students and 19 employees, while now six lakh students are giving annual exams and the board has more than two hundred employees. The chairman board said that the education board is the trust of the people. BISE said that there is no lack of talent among our children, all resources will be used to highlight their abilities along with this the long-standing issue of up-gradation of board employees has been resolved. He said that for the solution of the energy crisis, a solar system is being installed with the help of the Afghan Commissionerate for which the paper works have been prepared. He said that they are also trying for the board building.

Police conducts search and strike operation

F.P. Report

LARKANA: On the direction Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Larkana Mir Ruhail Khan Khoso, conducted search and combing in various areas including strict snap checking on the entrance and exit routes to bring the criminals into the grip of the law throughout the Larkana district.

During the search and combing operation, 15 auxiliary fighters and rapid response teams participated, the Larkana police, under the supervision of district DSP, along with auxiliary fighters and I.T staff, searched the entrance and exit through search app, SVAS and CRI system. By conducting strict snap checking, (650) persons were checked, in which (06) suspicious persons without identity documents were transferred to different police stations.

The undocumented motorcycles were sent to various police stations for verification, which are being

verified. Suspects transferred to various police stations during checking have been released after checking/verifying their details.

DC held review meeting regarding ZA Bhutto 45th anniversary: Deputy Commissioner Larkana Sharjeel Noor Chana chaired a meeting with the officers of all government departments in Darbar Hall regarding the 45th death anniversary of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, on April 4, 2024.

According to details, DC instructed police officials to install walk-through gates and make fool-proof security arrangements so that no untoward incident occurs and also to make the traffic system more efficient and effective. On this occasion, the Deputy Commissioner said that for the people participating in the Varsi from all corners of the country, cleaning and lighting should be done in the district.

There should be no inconvenience and the officials should carry out the assigned responsibilities

cheerfully so that the people participating in the funeral do not face any inconvenience. He instructed the officials of the health department to set up medical camps on the roads leading to Garhi Khudabakhsh Bhutto on the occasion of Varsi.

However, hospitals, basic health units and dispensaries should be kept open 24 hours, where expert doctors and other staff and medicines are also kept. He also instructed the SEPCO officials not to load the electricity on the occasion of the event and to ensure the presence of standby generators and also instructed the Sui Gas officials to fix any gas leakage immediately.

On this occasion, the Deputy Commissioner instructed the local government officials to ensure cleanliness in the entire district, including Garhi Khudabakhsh Bhutto, and the public health engineering department officials were given the responsibility of drinking water.

Debris of developmental works' damages river flow & agri land

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: Chitral is beautiful district located in northwest of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where scenic and tourist area of Kailash Valley attract thousands of domestic and foreign tourists every year during religious festival of Kalash community, but the road to Kalash valley was very narrow and earthen. Hence National Highway Authority has started widening and construction of roads with a cost of about Rs 12 billion for these valleys last year. The road for the Kalash Valley is being started from Kailash's first gateway Ayun Valley, but during its design the engineer ignored the already existing Link Road, and new road is being carrying from an inappropriate and unsafe place among the agriculture land.

The road is approximately two hundred feet high in the middle of the agricultural land where only dust and debris are putting and raised the road, which one hand it has affected agricultural land and irrigation drains for it and on the other hand it is very risky and dangerous in flood or earthquake, residents of Ayun living on both sides of the road are facing anxiety, while there is no protection wall on both sides of this artificial mountain and it can be collapsed in case of flood, earthquake or heavy rains.

CDM (Chitral Development Moment) civil society group working for betterment of roads on volunteer basis Major Retired Prince Siraj Mulk, Principal Retired Liaquat Ali, Project Manager Retired Inayatullah Asir, Chairmen of Ayun Valley, Mohammad Rehman and Wajih-ud-Din visited these areas along with media team.

Local experts say that the NHA engineer may have made map setting in Islamabad and never visited this road because there is already existing road here which is also safe, but they carrying the road 200 feet high and build an artificial mountain in agricultural land and which can be destroyed in the event of floods and heavy rainfall.

They called on the Federal



Minister and Secretary Communications and Chairman NHA to send the team again here to reviews design of this road to be carried it in a safe place. They have also prepared a map with the help of local experts and engineers in which the road absolutely passes straight.

CDM team also visited the road in Rumbur Valley where work has been suspended on the road. They revealed that contractor digging a long tunnel in the mountain and put a large quantity of ammunition in it and put the debris and boulders in river after blasting. There is debris and thousands of tons heavy of stones falling into the river Rumbur. Now the artificial lake has become in the river and in the coming days when the snow melts due to the heat and falls into the river will be cause of tremendous flood.

Talking to the media team, locals said that the flow of water has been stopped due to the contractor's big stone thrown into the Rumbur canal and it presenting a look of the Attabad Lake. Locals said that the lakes that have been made in this stream can also be dangerous for us because there is a lot of snowfall this year and when the snow is melting on mountains, it will destroy our houses, gardens and fields. It can also be cause for destruction of the entire Ayun

Valley in the form of a flood.

Locals also revealed that the contractor carries a heavy explosion by putting a lot of ammunition and urea fertilizer in the mountain, causing the entire mountain to fall down and this ammunition and chemical contaminating the water flowing to down area where People use it causing for local people to suffer from illnesses.

Locals demanded that heavy stones and debris should be removed immediately from Rubmro river so that the flow of water could not be interrupted or it could cause massive catastrophe or tremendous flood. Locals also revealed that the forest department had built a road from Ayun to Bumborat fifty years ago, which used to bring Deodar wood if the NHA department restores the same road which can be recovered from a minor repair.

On the one hand, work will not be suffered by traffic and People will travel on the above road, while on the other hand, domestic and foreign tourists also like the routes that have passed through the mountain where the whole valley is visible. Our correspondent repeatedly tried to contact Chairman NHA Arshad Majeed Mohmand and project director Zaheeruddin and sent them written message to take their version in this regard, but they have not yet responded.

Tribesmen hold protest

F.P. Report

WANA: A protest held in Azam Warsak near Pak-Afghan border in Lower Waziristan against the illegal police raid on the residences of Taj Muhammad Wazir, the former provincial candidate from South Waziristan.

It is the violation of sanctity of Pashtoon culture to raid on houses without proper warrants. Loca leaders said. They (leaders of various political leaders) demanded the Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur to take notice of the false FIRs of the police. The local political leadership put on all responsibility to the police and state institutions.

It is to mention here that a few days ago, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur had announced that he would stop the series of fake FIRs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but so far this series has not been stopped despite directions of the Chief Minister. Olsi Pason named police raids illegal on Taj Muhammad and Shehzad homes. they also described search of the houses as an attack on the political consciousness of the Pashtun honor.

All leaders of political leaders expressed dismay over the bullying of state institutions without being stopped. Local police are helpless in registering FIRs and all fake FIRs are registered on the tacit approval of enlightenment.

Six stolen motorcycles recovered, accused held

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Samarbagh police on Tuesday claimed to have recovered six stolen motorcycles and arrested the accused. Briefing local journalists, the station house officer Shah Faisal Khan said that a police team investigating the matter brilliantly traced the accused Farman and arrested him. The SHO said that six motorcycles were recovered from different places which the accused had taken away.

He said a case had been registered against the accused Farman in Samarbagh police station

and further investigation was in progress.

The SHO said that there was no place for criminals in the area and legal action will be taken against those involved in other crimes like drug trafficking, riots, theft and other illegal activities. He said that the administration wanted all the people of the area to live in peace and the police would play a role in making the area crime-free and preventing all types of illegal activities.

Meanwhile the additional deputy commissioner relief Tariq Hussain on the directives of his high up visited markets at Talash and Nasafa and checked

milk, vegetables, fruits, meat and other edibles. The official also checked prices and quality of various items and imposed fines on shopkeepers for violating the official price list and food act.

An official of the administration informed local journalists that actions were taken against 612 shopkeepers during the month of Ramadan. The official said that a total of 44 FIRs were registered against the violators in the Lower Dir district. He said that 63 business outlets were sealed while 431 shopkeepers were warned in the district.

Public welfare top priority of Punjab's govt

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Present Punjab government led by the Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is taking practical and result oriented measures for providing different facilities to the people at their doorsteps while addressing problems of people at local level is top priority.

This was stated by the Commissioner Gujranwala and Gujrat Divisions Naveed Haider Sherazi while addressing a meeting held at District Complex.

Commissioner said that Nigehban Ramadan Ration Package was a historic and people friendly package of Rs. 30 billion in the history of the Punjab in its own nature and under this package, hampers of ration were being supplied to people at their doorsteps without hurting ego of the poor and less-resources people transparently. He said that with impation on different initiatives taken by the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the people would get relief in the great extant as well as living stan-

dard of the people would also be upgraded soon.

He laid foundation stone of Raquia Begum Chohan Training Centre Pindi Bhattian being constructed under auspices of the 'Meri Rooshni' Trust, reviewed pace of work on ongoing development projects, distribution of ration under Chief Minister's Nigehban Ramzan Package, 'Suthra' Punjab Campaign and inspected different examination centres during the visit to ensure holding of examination transparently and peaceful atmosphere.

Islamia varsity employees flay immoral campaign by private college

Saqib Mustaq

BAHAWALPUR: Professor Dr. Shazia Anjum Dean Faculty of Chemical and Biological Sciences the Islamia University of Bahawalpur has said that the entire community of the university, teachers and students are united for the sanctity and respect of the institution and its teachers.

Prof. Dr. Shazia Anjum expressed these views today along with Dean Faculty of Social Sciences Prof. Dr. Rubina Bhatti, Dean Faculty of Law Prof. Dr. Rao Imran Habib, Director School of State Sciences Prof. Dr. Yasmin Rufi, Chairman Department of Social Work Prof. Dr. Asif Naveed Ranjha, Chairperson Department of Special Education Prof. Dr. Nasreen Akhtar, Prof. Dr. Samar Fahad and other faculty members in a crowded press conference. More than 100 women teachers were present on this occasion.

She said that misleading propaganda is being done by the head of TLC Institute



Lahore. Baseless allegations are being made against our honorable teachers. We women teachers and employees strongly condemn the depravity of our fellow teachers. She said that actually there is a problem of affiliation of the said college. Administrative lapses were identified by the committee. The woman head should have removed the technical and administrative deficiencies.

Unfortunately, she got down to personal grudges and went to the extent of filing a defamation complaint which is completely wrong. Yesterday, by spreading the concept of a meeting with the Governor of Punjab in the media, an attempt was made to attribute and run

an unconfirmed statement from him. We also request the Chancellor's office to take actions on such a nefarious conspiracy so that no one can issue any false statement regarding such a prestigious office. She said that the TLC Institute was for the first time affiliated with the university during the academic session 2021-22 for the BS Nursing Program only.

The said institute, later, applied to the University for Affiliation for the session 2022-23 to offer the BS Nursing & Post-RN Programs. The Committee visited the college for inspection on 11 November 2022. After inspection, the Committee recom-

mended to grant the affiliation of BS Nursing to the Institute but declined the request to grant affiliation of the Post-RN program vide letter No. 103/AF dated 06.02.2023 on account of core deficiencies inter alia of lack of infrastructure.

Feeling aggrieved by the order of refusal of the Post-RN program by the Affiliation Committee, the TLC Institute preferred an appeal before the Syndicate Committee on 10 February 2023. The Syndicate Committee, after providing a fair opportunity hearing to the CEO/Director of the TLC Institute in a personal capacity, dismissed the appeal and refused to grant the affiliation of Post-RN program vide letter

No. 285/AF dated 29 March 2023. Feeling further aggrieved, the TLC Institute preferred to appeal before the Senate Committee on 31 March 2023.

The Senate Committee, after providing a fair opportunity of hearing to the Director of the TLC Institute in a personal capacity, decided to revisit the Institute by a sub-committee of the Senate Committee to observe/review the improvements. The TLC institute, instead of complying with the decision of the Senate Committee and upgrading its infrastructure, withdrew its appeal vide letter No. TLC/SC-11-04-2022 dated 12 April 2023 and showed no further interest in pursuing the case of affiliation. In order to satisfy her personal grudge and vendetta of non-affiliation, the complainant filed a complaint of harassment against the members of the Affiliation Committee on 16 August 2023 before the IUB Anti-Harassment Committee, duly constituted under the HEC

Policy on Protection against Sexual Harassment in Higher Education Institutions and the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace Act 2010.

During the cognizance of the said inquiry, the complainant has filed another complaint before the Ombudsperson Punjab, Lahore. It is pertinent to mention that complainant / Ms. Sania did not recorded or raised any plea of harassment before the Syndicate or Senate Committee. Moreover, the TLC Institute has once again applied for affiliation of both BSN and Post-RN programs for the session 2023-2024, hence the complainant has filed the titled complaint as a tool to pressurize, harass and torture the members of the Affiliation Committee. The women teachers appealed to the media to talk on the merits instead of believing the false propaganda and the concerned college should legally remove the deficiencies pointed out. Do not defame the teachers and the institution by making such false accusations.



Why US did not veto a Gaza truce resolution at UN

WASHINGTON: On three separate occasions, the United States has used its veto power to scuttle United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions aimed at bringing a ceasefire to war-torn Gaza. That streak ended, when the administration of President Joe Biden decided not to veto the latest ceasefire resolution, allowing it to pass by abstaining from the vote instead.

The US move garnered widespread attention as a sign of Biden's growing frustration with Israeli leadership, which is pressing on with its deadly military campaign in Gaza. But Palestinian rights advocates argue that what is needed is a fundamental rethinking in Washington's support for Israel - beyond symbolism and rhetoric. "It's a shift. However, it hasn't stopped arms transfers from being made. And that's ultimately what really matters," said Adam Shapiro, a political analyst. Washington played down the resolution as "non-binding", but the change in stance was enough to prompt a fiery response from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who lashed out at the US for failing to block the motion. His office issued a statement accusing Washington of harming Israel's war efforts, underscoring the growing tensions with Biden. Advocates say the question is now whether the Biden administration will use its leverage to pressure Israel to end its abuses against Palestinians in Gaza. Biden officials have urged the Israeli government to protect civilians and allow more aid to Gaza, but they have so far declined to place conditions on aid to Israel to further those goals. Tariq Kenney-Shawa, a US policy fellow at Al-Shabaka, a Palestinian think tank, said

the true test of where the US stands is whether it will grant the "wish list" of arms Israel is expected to ask for. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant is on a visit to Washington, DC, and US and Israeli media outlets have reported that he will request specific weapons for the ongoing war. "The policy of providing Israel and Netanyahu in particular with all the tools he needs to continue the assault on Gaza has continued uninterrupted since October," Kenney-Shawa said in an email to Al Jazeera. "In many ways, I see this as a dance. The Biden administration is taking what it sees as the necessary public steps to make it look like they're doing everything they can to hold Israel's feet to the fire, when in reality, they're facilitating and enabling Israel to no end. Israel has yet to face any concrete consequences from the US for its war crimes and genocide." The war started on October 7, after an attack on southern Israel killed 1,139 people. Since then, Israel's military offensive on Gaza has killed more than more than 32,000 Palestinians and displaced hundreds of thousands more. Its blockade of Gaza has also brought the territory to the verge of famine.

Resolution, which was adopted in a 14-0 vote, called for a "lasting" ceasefire as well as the release of Israeli captives in Gaza and a surge of humanitarian aid to the Palestinian territory. "Our vote does not - and I repeat that, does not - represent a shift in our policy," White House National Security spokesperson John Kirby told reporters. "We've been very clear, we've been very consistent in our support for a ceasefire as part of a hostage deal." That is not how Netanyahu saw it, though.

The Israeli prime minister said the abstention "constitutes a clear departure from the consistent US position in the Security Council since the beginning of the war". In response, Netanyahu cancelled an Israeli delegation's visit to Washington, DC. The group was meant to discuss ways to avert an Israeli assault on the crowded city of Rafah in southern Gaza. Israel had previously threatened to call off the trip if the US did not veto the resolution. The Biden administration has been urging Israel not to launch a full-scale offensive in Rafah, warning that such an invasion would harm civilians trapped in the city and further isolate Israel on the world stage.

Against that backdrop, multiple US officials had talked up the delegation's now-cancelled visit as an example of Washington's efforts to contain the war. State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller described Netanyahu's move to nix the trip as "surprising and unfortunate". Shapiro, the analyst, told Al Jazeera that it was a "slap in the face" to Biden. He questioned why the US - a global superpower - is failing to advance its priorities with Israel, a much smaller ally dependent on US aid. "At this point, the United States is not reacting in accordance with its complete failure to get its policy objectives met, in the current context of what Israel is doing in Gaza or the larger picture in terms of what Israel is doing overall on the occupied territories," he said. Nancy Okail, the president of the Center for International Policy, a US-based think tank, said this is far from the first time Netanyahu has openly flouted US demands. — Aljazeera

AAG Rahat Ali obtains Barrister at Law



F.P. Report

LONDON: An event was organized in honor of Assistant Attorney General (AAG) Rahat Ali Nahaqi at Lincoln's Inn United Kingdom after his Barrister-at-Law graduation.

Barrister Rahat Ali Nahaqi is son of senior lawyer Akhtar Ali Nahaqi while he had also served at several department as law officer. He is now serving Federal Government of Pakistan as Assistant Attorney General at Peshawar High Court.

The honorable Society of Lincoln's Inn arranged organized an event in which Barrister at Law was granted to Assistant Attorney General Rahat Ali Nahaqi.

Russian envoy is a no-show after Poland summons him

WARSAW (AP): The Russian ambassador to Poland did not show up for a meeting at the Polish Foreign Ministry where he had been summoned because of a Russian cruise missile that violated Polish airspace on the weekend, the Polish ministry's spokesman said.

Russian Ambassador Sergey Andreev was to be given a note of protest after the Russian missile entered the airspace of the NATO member for 39 seconds amid a Russian attack targeting western Ukraine. Paweł Wroński, the Polish Foreign Ministry spokesman, told reporters in a brief statement outside the ministry that Andreev did not come to the meeting, and that his failure to appear has led the Warsaw government to wonder "whether he is able to properly represent the interests of the Russian Federation in Warsaw."

Wroński said the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations "clearly defines the duties of an ambassador in a host state." The Polish Foreign Ministry had said it would "demand explanations" from Russia over the violation of its airspace - the latest of several incidents since Moscow launched its war against Ukraine more than two years ago. Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski informed NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg of details of the incident by phone, the ministry said in a statement. Sikorski stressed that Russia's war against Ukraine also threatens the security of NATO member states, the statement said.

S Africa's Opp party may deal with ANC

JOHANNESBURG (Reuters): South Africa's second most popular party the Democratic Alliance (DA) would consider a deal with the ruling African National Congress should the ANC fail to get the majority it needs to retain power in May elections, its leader said.

Pollsters expect the ANC to lose its legislative majority on May 29 for the first time since Nelson Mandela took power at the end of apartheid 30 years ago, with voters unhappy with poor service delivery, joblessness, crime and power cuts. If that happens, President Cyril Ramaphosa or a successor for the top job would be unable to stay on without a coalition, since South Africa's parliament elects the president. "It would depend which ANC you're dealing with and what their programme of action is," DA leader John Steenhuisen said, declining to disclose whether any talks had already taken place.



LONDON: Farmers take part in a tractor 'go-slow' through Parliament Square, Westminster. Farmers are driving dozens of tractors in a slow-motion convoy towards Britain's Parliament to protest post-Brexit rules and trade deals that they say are endangering livelihoods and food security.

UK farmers in tractors head to Parliament in protest

LONDON (AP): Farmers drove dozens of tractors in a slow-motion convoy towards Britain's Parliament to protest post-Brexit rules and trade deals that they say are endangering livelihoods and food security.

Supporters of the campaign groups Save British Farming and Fairness for Farmers of Kent rolled from southeast England and through southern districts of the capital, bound for Parliament Square, where dozens of supporters waited to welcome them. A line of tractors flying Union Jack flags or signs reading "Stop subsidizing imports" snaked along the River Thames and towards the Houses of Parliament before circling Parliament Square to cheers and honking horns.

Britain has so far not seen large-scale farmers' protests like those that

have snarled cities in France and other European countries. Farmers from across the 27-nation European Union have protested against what they see as unnecessary bureaucratic rules, clean-air and soil targets and unfair competition from abroad that, they say, is driving them toward bankruptcy. U.K. agriculture has been heavily affected by Britain's exit from the EU, which took Britain out of the bloc's free trade zone and complex web of farming rules. Many British farmers backed Brexit out of opposition to the EU's much-criticized Common Agricultural Policy. But now many say post-Brexit trade deals between the U.K. and countries including Australia and New Zealand have opened the door to cheap imports that are undercutting British

producers. Organizers also criticize labeling that allows products to bear a Union flag when they have not been grown or reared in Britain.

The U.K. has also delayed checks on imports that were due to begin after the country's final break with the EU at the end of 2020, a move farmers say threatens biosecurity. Liz Webster, a beef and arable farmer from western England who is one of the protest organizers, said the government had "totally betrayed us all." "Polling shows that the public back British farming and food and want to maintain our high food standards and support local producers," she said. "We need a radical change of policy and an urgent exit from these appalling trade deals which will decimate British food."

North Korea says Japan's Kishida proposed summit with Kim

SEOUL: North Korea has claimed that Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida requested a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un but said any meeting was unlikely without a policy shift by Tokyo. There was no immediate comment from Japan's government.

In the statement carried by state media, Kim's sister and senior official, Kim Yo Jong, said Kishida used "another channel" to convey his position that he wants to meet the North Korean leader in person at an early date. Kim Yo Jong said there would be no breakthrough in North Korea-Japan relations as long as Kishida's government raises the issue of Japanese citizens abducted to North Korea in past decades and opposes what she described as the North's "exercise of sovereign rights," apparently referring to Pyongyang's weapons testing activities.

"If Japan continues to try to interfere with our exer-

cise of our sovereign rights, and continues to be preoccupied with the abduction issue, of which there is nothing more to resolve or investigate, then the prime minister's [offer for talks] will inevitably be labelled as just an attempt to improve his popularity," she said. "As long as Japan is hostile toward [North Korea] and infringes our sovereign rights, we will consider it as an enemy that is within our target, not as a friend," Kim Yo Jong said. "The prime minister should know that he won't be able to meet the leadership of our country just because he wants to or just because he's determined to."

In February, Kim Yo Jong issued a similar statement on bilateral ties, saying North Korea was open to improving relationships with Japan and even inviting Kishida to Pyongyang. But she said those would be possible only if Tokyo "drops its bad habit of unreasonably pulling up [North Korea] over its

legitimate right to self-defense and does not lay such a stumbling block as the already settled abduction issue". Kishida has previously said he wants to hold talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un "without any preconditions" and is personally overseeing efforts to realise the first such leaders' summit in 20 years. Japanese media reported he said he was not aware of the North Korean announcement when he was asked about it in parliament. Some experts say North Korea is seeking to improve ties with Japan as a way to weaken a trilateral Tokyo-Seoul-Washington security partnership, while Kishida also wants better ties with North Korea to increase his declining approval rating at home.

The United States and South Korea have been expanding their military drills and trilateral exercises involving Japan in response to North Korea's accelerating weapons tests.

The North Korean weapons tested in recent years included nuclear-capable missiles designed to strike key facilities in Japan as well as those in South Korea and the mainland US. North Korea and Japan do not have diplomatic ties, and their relations have been overshadowed by Pyongyang's nuclear programme, its past abduction of Japanese nationals and Japan's 1910-45 colonisation of the Korean Peninsula. After years of denial, North Korea acknowledged in an unprecedented 2002 summit between Kim Jong Il, the late father of Kim Jong Un, and then-Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi that its agents had kidnapped 13 Japanese, mainly to train spies in Japanese language and culture. It allowed five of them to return to Japan that year but said the others had died. Japan thinks at least some of them may still be alive, and believes hundreds more may also have been abducted. — Aljazeera

Warnings against normalising conflict as Yemen marks decade of war

SANAA: About four and a half million children are not in education in Yemen, while half of the country is in desperate need of medical aid, NGOs have warned.

Reports released said two in five Yemeni children are not attending school while more than 17 million people - half of them children - require health assistance.

The statistics underline the uncertainty of daily life following a decade of brutal war, the NGOs noted, pointing to mounting difficulties in funding and supplies as the number of emergency situations spread across the Middle East and other global locations. A Save the Children publication [PDF], Hanging in the Balance: Yemeni Children's Struggle for Education, details the continuing issues in the country, where a United Nations-negotiated ceasefire has restored relative calm, but humanitarian needs still remain dire amid low-intensity violence.

The Saudi-backed Yemeni government and Iran-aligned Houthis have been fighting since 2014. A UN-brokered truce that took effect in April 2022 brought a sharp reduction in hostilities. The truce expired in October last year, and fighting largely remains on hold following a renewed peace process reached in

December.

"Nine years into this forgotten conflict, we are confronting an education emergency like never before," Save the Children's Mohamed Mannaa said in a statement. "While the truce reduced some violence, it hasn't ever brought the stability families desperately need to rebuild their lives. Above everything else, families in Yemen need an official ceasefire; without one, families are left in limbo." The World Health Organization (WHO) said that as the conflict in Yemen enters its 10th year, over half of the country's population is in desperate need of aid. An estimated 17.8 million people require health assistance, 50 percent of them children, the NGO said in a statement. "It's almost as if ongoing conflicts have become an accepted part of the everyday realities of life in the region. It's important to step back and remember that hungry children, disease outbreaks, hospitals shutting down ... these are not to be normalized," said Hanan Balkhy, WHO regional director for the Eastern Mediterranean. Amid the escalating emergencies in the Middle East and elsewhere, WHO is finding it harder to secure the necessary emergency funding for

war-torn spots like Yemen.

In the last five years, it warned, WHO funding for the country has declined by 45 percent. In 2024, WHO needs \$77m to provide essential health assistance, it insisted. Other aid agencies are also experiencing increasing difficulties in providing urgently needed help to Yemen. In December, the World Food Programme suspended food aid to northern parts of the country citing limited funding and a disagreement with the authorities over how to distribute supplies. At least one child has dropped out of school in the past two years in one-third of the families surveyed for the Save the Children report. Displaced children are twice as likely to drop out than their peers, the researchers found. Economic hardships and insecurity were the main drivers of absenteeism.

More than 44 percent of guardians and children surveyed said they were more interested in supporting their family's income. Children as young as 12 told the researchers they have had to leave education in order to work. About a quarter of the families said they could not afford monthly fees and school books. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has labelled the

conflict in Yemen as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. Thousands have died and millions have been displaced. Two-thirds of Yemen's 33 million inhabitants have fallen below the poverty line, Save the Children said, with about 4.5 million people displaced. Over 3,700 schools have been damaged or repurposed.

Fourteen percent of families interviewed pointed to insecurity as the reason for children dropping out, with three-quarters of students - 76 percent - reporting that they feel no safer since the truce. The ripple effects of Israel's war on Gaza have dragged the country into further warfare, and threaten further destabilisation. The Houthis, who control much of the country, have attacked ships in the Red Sea in support of Palestinians. In turn, the United States and other military forces, have fired at Houthi targets in Yemen. Meanwhile, al-Qaeda launched an attack against troops from the secessionist Southern Transitional Council. Although at odds with the internationally-recognised government, the council - backed by the United Arab Emirates and controlling much of Yemen's south - is its ally in the war against the Iranian-backed Houthi. — Aljazeera

Suspended judge challenges deportation

SYDNEY (Reuters): David Lambourne, an Australian-born High Court judge whose aborted deportation two years ago from Kiribati sparked a judicial crisis in the Pacific Islands nation, appeared in court on Tuesday, in a case closely watched by the United Nations and international legal groups.

Lambourne, who has lived in Kiribati for 30 years and is married to Opposition leader Tessie Lambourne, faces deportation if he loses a High Court challenge to Kiribati president Taneti Maamau's attempt to sack him. Kiribati will hold national elections later this year. Lambourne has been living in Kiribati without a visa or salary since 2022 when Maamau suspended him, and then suspended all three Court of Appeal judges and the chief justice after they ruled Lambourne should not be deported.

One attempt at forced deportation amid legal proceedings in August 2022 failed when a Fiji Airlines pilot refused to accept Lambourne on the plane

against his will. "Today's case involves the government's continuing assault on the rule of law," Lambourne's barrister Perry Herzfeld told the court by video link from Sydney, pointing to what he said were issues of judicial independence. Maamau had appointed a new tribunal to investigate Lambourne on an "extremely expedited timetable" with plans to hand a report to parliament next month, Herzfeld said. Lambourne's legal team only learnt days ago of the existence of the tribunal, he added. None of the allegations made against Lambourne - including a disputed claim he took too long to make judgements - justified the president forming a tribunal to investigate his removal from office, he said. It was also "fatal" under the constitution that the tribunal does not include a judicial officer, he added. Kiribati's deputy solicitor-general Monoo Mweretaka argued in court the allegations against Lambourne were serious, and there was no require-

ment in the constitution for the tribunal to offer him procedural fairness. There was also no definition of judicial office in the constitution, so it should not be restricted to legally trained officers, he added.

In a letter to Kiribati in September 2023, Margaret Satterthwaite, UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, said she was "seriously alarmed" at the series of suspensions of judges, which left Kiribati without a functioning High Court or Court of Appeal to act as a check on the power of parliament. The letter also raised concerns that Lambourne's treatment and the lack of a judicial officer on the tribunal could breach human rights standards. An interim visa issued to Lambourne in January expires when a judgement is delivered by the court. High Court commissioner Aomoro Amten on Tuesday reserved his judgement. Kiribati's parliament sits for a final session next month, before dissolving in May ahead of national elections.

US, UK sanction alleged China-based hackers

WASHINGTON: The United States and the United Kingdom have announced sanctions against a Chinese company and two individuals after an alleged cyber-espionage operation targeted millions of people, including legislators, voters and prominent Beijing critics. In announcing the sanctions, the US and UK traced the "malicious cyber activity" back to intelligence operations within the Chinese government.

A statement from the US Treasury Department identified the sanctioned organisation as Wuhan Xiaoruzhi Science and Technology Company Ltd. The announcement described it as a front company for the Chinese Ministry of State Security, serving as a "cover for multiple malicious cyberoperations". The US Treasury also named two Chinese nationals in its sanctions: Zhao Guangzong

and Ni Gaobin, both of whom are affiliated with the Wuhan company. They are accused of using cyberattacks to undermine critical infrastructure sectors including defence, aerospace and energy.

Also, the US Department of Justice charged Zhao, Ni and five other hackers with conspiracy to commit computer intrusions and wire fraud. The agency said they were part of a 14-year-long cyber operation "targeting US and foreign critics, businesses and political officials". The aim of the global hacking operation was to "repress critics of the Chinese regime, compromise government institutions, and steal trade secrets", US Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco said in a statement. UK authorities did not name the company or the two individuals sanctioned. However, they said the two

sanctioned individuals were involved in the operations with the Chinese cyber group APT31, an abbreviation for "advanced persistent threat". The group is also known as Zirconium or Hurricane Panda.

APT31 has previously been accused of targeting US presidential campaigns and the information systems of Finland's parliament. Officials also said that, in 2021, Chinese-government-affiliated hackers "conducted reconnaissance activity" against critics in the UK Parliament, but none of the accounts targeted were successfully compromised. Three UK legislators have said they were among the targeted. They were members of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, an international group focused on curbing Beijing's influence abroad and addressing human rights concerns. — Aljazeera

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UN's Resolution, an impaired action

THE UN Security Council for the first time on Monday demanded an immediate ceasefire for the month of Ramadan after the US observed abstain and allowed the passage of the draft. Drawing unusual applause in the often staid Security Council chamber, all 14 other members voted in favor of the resolution which demands an immediate ceasefire for the rest of the ongoing Islamic holy month. According to the details, the resolution called for the cessation of hostilities to lead to a lasting sustainable ceasefire and demanded the release of hostages seized by Hamas on October 7.

Historically, the UN Security Council (UNSC) made a fractured endeavor first time in the months-long Gaza war, calling for a temporary ceasefire for the holy month of Ramadan which ends in two weeks. The forum whose sole responsibility remains the maintenance and preservation of global peace, moved haphazardly and stopped short of its primary task in obedience to the cartel that utterly surrounds the United Nations at this point. Although, adopting a ceasefire resolution is a step in the right direction to end the five-month war, allowing the entry of aid, initiation of war recovery, reconstruction, and rehabilitation of those displaced from their homes are the colossal issues laying ahead, yet demanding a temporary truce after a months-long wait is surely no less than a joke with the bereaved Palestinians in particular and the world in general. The ruthlessness and brutal treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli military and the criminal conduct of the UN Security Council were obvious to the world. Historically, the restoration of peace and the implementation of resolutions is the legal responsibility of the UN Security Council and its member states, wherein they failed badly and the recently unanimously passed resolution is typically aligned with the interests and plan of the Netanyahu regime and its allies.

The peace and humanitarian situations in war-hit Gaza are very dire where the rogue Israeli regime has intentionally imposed a blockade and starved the poor Palestinians since October 8. Israel's ruthless bombardment and inhuman atrocities against innocent Gazans resulted in over 32,000 deaths, and more than 76,000 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 enclave with little aid entering. Several Western nations have launched an airstrip campaign to provide essential food items to bereaved Palestinians, yet there is no alternative to provide humanitarian assistance to war-hit region except land routes that have been blocked by the Israeli troops since the start of the war. Extreme levels hunger and severe malnutrition are widespread in Gaza, where about 2.2 million Palestinians are facing a famine-like situation that is gradually expanding and worsening all across the enclave.

Amid such scenarios, the importance of achieving a permanent ceasefire that extends beyond Ramadan along with securing the entry of aid, working to release prisoners, and preventing forced displacement in war-torn region is vital and must be ensured by the UN Security Council (UNSC). The Muslim world and non-aligned nations including Russia and China seek a permanent ceasefire and immediate halt to the ongoing hostilities but the previous drafts demanded a permanent ceasefire were vetoed by the United States, the staunch ally of Israel.

Finally, the UNSC has adopted an impaired resolution that neither correlates with its mandate nor fulfills the needs of the oppressed society, yet there are doubts that the global forum might be able to implement its verdict by the Jewish state which is now forcefully confiscating the Palestinian land along with trading in their blood to redraw international borders of its own choice. After all, if Tel Aviv abides by the resolution, the conflict will resume by the end of Ramadan, and the invader will be allowed by decree to open a fresh offensive and relaunch its atrocities. Hence what kind of justice and peace are being promoted by the world forum during this era of calamity and chaos?

LEA's failure and dacoits' Raj

PUNJAB police conducted a grand operation against the dacoits of the Katcha area in Rojhan, Rajan Pur, and claimed a big success against the outlaws. According to the DPO, a total of 55 dacoits, affiliated with the Bannu and Fayyaz Dulani gang, surrendered before the police. The police destroyed several hideouts of Katcha area dacoits during the operation. Meanwhile, Sindh Rangers and police arrested 21 suspects allegedly involved in numerous criminal activities in a joint operation in the Katcha area in the province.

The law and order situation has significantly deteriorated and an unimaginable upsurge has been witnessed in crimes in the rural areas as well as in major population centers including Karachi, Hyderabad, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Peshawar, etc. The urban centers are marred with the street crimes including armed robberies, cell phone snatchings, cases of extortion, kidnapping, and ransom, whereas the dacoit gangs have established their rule in Katcha area in upper Sindh, Rahim Yar Khan and RajanPur. The evils of dacoity and robbery have shaped into a long-held problems in rural Sindh and Southern Punjab where dacoit gangs equipped with the modern lethal weapons established their stronghold in ravine forests and difficult hilly terrains staging armed robberies in the rural areas and looting vehicles on gunpoint on the highways. These robbers are using social media and online fraud schemes to attract people for onward kidnapping and ransom. The recent surge in street crimes and kidnappings for ransom has plunged the people of Sindh and some parts in Punjab into a state of fear and uncertainty.

Unfortunately, the government's previous strategies and measures against dacoity and armed gangs including the Army operation in 1990 could not produce long lasting results because of political backing and patronage these criminals enjoy from the tribal Sardars and feudals in rural Sindh, Balochistan and some districts in Southern Punjab adjoining both provinces. There had been a traditional consensus among the dacoits and the Police regarding peaceful coexistence and no intervention into each other domains, as Police patrols on the roads wherein dacoits roam in jungle and ravines. There is a need for a coordinated and full-fludge operation against the dacoit gangs in Sindh and certain districts in Punjab simultaneously so they could not elude to other regions/ provinces. Stern punishment to the criminals and their facilitators is a must, along with the establishment of check posts of rangers /paramilitary troops in dangerous Ketcha areas and Koh-e-Suleman to curb the evil of dacoity and violence of armed gangs permanently. Otherwise, this cancer is spreading relentlessly every passing day.

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Will genocide and famine in Gaza shift the West?

Chris Doyle

TWO terms have entered the lexicon in dealing with Palestine this year, both of which should chill all but the most heartless - genocide and famine. Israel now stands accused of bringing about both. It is the International Court of Justice that is putting it on trial for the former.

As for the latter, it was the Integrated Food-Security Phase Classification that released its determination last week that Gaza was on the brink of famine. This famine is purely man-made.

One has to wonder, after all the apocalyptic scenes of rubble, destruction and death the world has seen day after day for nearly six months, if images of babies and toddlers being starved to death will prick the conscience of Western governments? Will there finally be some meaningful action to stop the horror?

A ceasefire may or may not ensue in the coming days or weeks. Hope on this front is minimal. The gaps between the Israeli leadership and Hamas inside Gaza remain too wide. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu alone is determined to continue to the most bitter of ends, refusing any opportunity for a period of calm for his array of domestic opponents to take him down. Hamas wants the ceasefire to be permanent, while Netanyahu wants just a pause. The hostages held in Gaza are just pawns in all of this, as are Palestinian civilians in Gaza. What should major powers do? The US has considerable options, but a hesitant President Joe Biden is unwilling, it seems, to do more than let it be known how angry he is with the Israeli leader.

American inaction should be no excuse for other actors. Many have been hiding behind Washington's coattails on this, arguing that unless the US takes action, their efforts will be meaningless. This is just a lame cop-out. European states, Canada, Australia, and Japan can all do far more, and their warm trade links with Israel offer them leverage if deployed. China and Russia, fresh from vetoing a UN Security Council draft resolution, could also be more effective, but they have their

own agendas and priorities.

The bare minimum requirement of major donor states is to reverse the nonsensical and immoral suspension of funding to UNRWA. The Israeli government has utterly failed to provide evidence for its

Israel is not going to stop blocking aid unless such states demonstrate that consequences will follow. The EU has plenty of tools. It did finally impose sanctions on settlers a week ago. These can be expanded. Why should extremist settler organizations such as Regavim or Elad be allowed to raise funds even market properties in illegal settlements in Europe and elsewhere? The policy of distinguishing between Israel and the Occupied Territories, as demanded in UN Security Council Resolution 2334, must be hardened.

allegations against UNRWA staff, who in any event have already been fired. Thankfully, many states have already made this move. The EU partially restarted aid to UNRWA by releasing €50 million (\$55 million) out of €84 million allocated for 2024. Australia, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Canada, Slovenia, Ireland, Spain, Norway, and Portugal have announced extra support for UNRWA. Yet Israel continues its games with UNRWA. It has denied entry to Philippe Lazzarini, the agency's head. Twice in the past week Israel has denied access to an UNRWA food convoy trying to deliver aid to the north of Gaza.

Donors can also divert their energies from the air-drops that are little more than dangerous, ineffective showboating, and press Israel to open more border crossings and for longer hours. Gaza has seven border crossings, but only two are operational. Israel is not going to stop blocking aid unless such states demonstrate that consequences will follow. The EU has plenty of tools. It did finally impose sanctions on settlers a week ago. These can be expanded. Why should extremist settler organiza-

as such trade should not be happening with a state that is on trial at the International Court of Justice for genocide, and whose openly stated policy of denying food and water to Palestinians in Gaza is leading to famine. Israel has more than enough capabilities to defend itself, but denying extra weaponry could impinge on its ability to continue its war criminal onslaught. Is any of this possible? Some welcome signs of a change of approach are appearing, like spring flowers nervously popping their heads above ground.

The British position has hitherto been very sympathetic to Israel. Yet, the Foreign Secretary, David Cameron, wrote a letter last week containing the staunchest criticisms yet of Israel's conduct in Gaza. He made clear Israel was to blame for blocking aid. "The main blockers remain arbitrary denials by the government of Israel and lengthy clearance procedures, including multiple screenings and narrow opening windows in daylight hours." Cameron also confirmed, contrary to Israeli claims, "that the UN has not requested that the Kerem Shalom crossing is closed on Saturdays. It is our understanding that Israel closes it due to the Sabbath." Earlier comments on social media from Cameron blaming Israel for blocking aid into Gaza led to an Israeli official challenging this, repeating the blatant lie that there are "no limits of food, water, medicines or shelter equipment into Gaza." Further to British complaints, that spokesperson was suspended. Quite what happened is not clear, but Cameron was not happy.

Britain has subtly changed some key positions. Ministers now state Israel has to adhere to the provisional measures the ICJ ordered it to comply with. The UK has also made clear that Europe is considering withholding weapons from Israel if it does not grant the International Committee of the Red Cross access to Palestinians seized in Gaza and now detained in Israel. Mini-steps will not cut it. If genocide and man-made famine are genuinely seen by leaderships as atrocities, today, not tomorrow, is the moment for drastic action.

Why archaeologists must speak up for Gaza

Hilary Morgan Leathem

SINCE the outbreak of the war in Gaza, more than 200 cultural heritage sites have been destroyed alongside numerous archives, universities, and museums. There have been reports of the Israeli army looting historical artefacts and even displaying some of them at the Knesset. Destroying Gaza's heritage has far-reaching social, political, and emotional ramifications. It is a concerted attack on the existence of Palestine and its people.

Beyond producing cultural amnesia around what it means to be Palestinian, heritage destruction symbolises the negation of Palestinian history and right to land. The Israeli obliteration of Palestinian memory is intentional. It is a genocidal strategy, according to the definition laid out by the Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term "genocide" in 1944. This effort to destroy physical links between Palestinians and their heritage is aimed at erasing Palestinian presence and legitimising Israeli settler colonialism.

The Israeli destruction of archaeological sites and looting of artefacts in Gaza also raises questions about archaeology's purported neutrality in our world. The reality is that archaeology can be deeply political. The ability to make claims in the present based on material records of the past endows archaeology with great power. Quite literally, archaeologists provide the physical evidence required for the making of historical narratives. Archaeologists thus carry a moral obligation to inform the public of its deeply political nature.

In this context, the silence of archaeological associations across the world on what is happening in Gaza has been deafening. In Europe, Irish and Ireland-based heritage scholars mounted pressure on the European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) to speak up. In early March, the EAA finally issued a statement.

But the text was disappointingly noncommittal and milquetoast in the face of atrocity. It referred to the genocides in Gaza as the "Israel/Gaza crisis" and used language ripped from UNESCO's World Heritage Convention of 1972. In other words, it spoke of heritage in terms of its socioeconomic value - its integrity or authenticity - rather than recognising the political ramifications of heritage destruction in a settler-colonial setting.

The EAA's failure to reflect on how archaeology, and subsequently, the construction of heritage, is intertwined with power and history is dangerous, as it misrepresents the discipline as purely objective.

Some people may be aware of archaeology's role in colonialism. Ever fewer, however, know how it informed 20th-century politics, crafting identities that rely on discovered, shared pasts and invented traditions, as historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger argued. Archaeology forges links between the land and its people through possessing the past. Used correctly, it has the power to illuminate how people once lived in and related to our world.

Used incorrectly, it becomes a technology of oppression, co-opted by power regimes who wish to harness one version or "vision" of the past to dispossess and displace others.

It is no coincidence that, as the Palestinian-American anthropologist Nadia Abu El-Haj has written, Israel is known for using archaeology strategically to legitimise its status as a historical nation in the Abrahamic Holy Lands rather than a modern nation-state founded in 1948. Archaeology can be a mechanism for maintaining power and this is the case not just in Israel-Palestine.

In Mexico, where I have conducted research for the last 15 years, archaeology and anthropology were explicitly charged with forjando patria, or forging the nation. During the reign of Porfirio Diaz, Mexico's second president, the government struggled to bring together its settler population with its Indigenous citizens, who had suffered from linguistic and cultural erasure during Spanish colonisation. The proposed solution was to construct a nationalist ideology of mestizaje or "mixture", which celebrated and claimed the monumental ruins and artistic traditions of Indigenous Mexicans as the patrimony of the Mexican state and thus all Mexicans. While this preserved the legacies of Mexico's Indigenous communities, it also led to dis-possession and displacement. As the Mexican state claimed Indigenous heritage for all, questioning the legitimacy of the Spanish-descended ruling class became impossible.

Archaeologists are scholars and experts of the past who are cognizant of the ways archaeological evidence is used to not just fashion history, but control and weaponise it. That is why archaeologists must speak up about Gaza. Once Gaza's heritage, libraries, and universities are gone, it can be said they were never there. With the "matter of facts" wiped from both human memory and the archaeological record, it will be impossible to scientifically "prove" Palestinian presence.

We must remember that archaeology is inseparable from politics, playing a major role in the making of history, nations, and national identity. We must also remember how the total erasure of heritage often prefigures the destruction of people, which is why cultural genocide is also classified as a war crime under international law. The resistance of EAA and other professional archaeological organisations to issuing even a limited statement that recognises the genocides in Gaza - the ethnic cleansing coupled with the destruction of Gaza's heritage - is tantamount to complicity and is a refusal to acknowledge archaeology's responsibility. I hope that the continued pressure of archaeologists in Europe and across the world will change their minds. As an anthropologist of heritage, I am haunted by the question of whether archaeology can ever do right. Here is a moment in which it might, if only it is willing to reckon with its own past.

Aljazeera

Daesh is not a tool of intelligence agencies

Mamdouh Al-Muhany

DAESH may have claimed responsibility for the terror attack in the suburbs of Moscow, but many refuse to accept that the extremist group was behind it. The terrorists responsible have told us that they planned and carried out the operation, and denialists say, no, they did not.

This reminds me of the justifications some Western analysts gave for Al-Qaeda terrorism in the past and even now. Al-Qaeda's leaders and ideologues believe in a "takfiri" ideology that compels them to sacrifice in its name and accuse even those close to them of being infidels. However, theorists in the West have argued that 9/11 and other attacks are the result of American expansion, modern imperialism, and modernity's assault on societies that reject it.

I once attended a lecture at a Western university in which the professor made all of these arguments to the

students, but forgot to present the simple explanation: Extremism breeds terrorism. He also neglected to mention that extremists do not leave their mothers' wombs as extremists. They are born normal, healthy individuals, but then immerse themselves in a culture that turns them into extremists before climbing the professional ladder to become terrorists.

The latest excuse is that Daesh is a tool of intelligence, and some deluded individuals on social media even claim that former US President Barack Obama was its founder. They are echoing former US President Donald Trump's simplistic and malicious statements accusing Obama of being behind Daesh, implying that his withdrawal from Iraq created a vacuum filled by the terrorist organization. In both cases, the claim is baseless. Daesh told us so in its latest announcement, explaining that extremist ideology is its ulti-

mate motivator.

While countries or organizations could resort to using the group, it was formed and exists because of extremist ideology, and destroying it demands rooting out the extremist thought that brought it to life in the first place.

But why fabricate such excuses? Some of those who make these arguments are well-intentioned individuals who are deceived by this propaganda and want to avoid blaming Islam. They thus seek comforting justifications. However, Islam, a great religion, is not at all to blame. Extremist thought and the Islamic faith are two very different things that have unfortunately come to be seen as one and the same.

Indeed, in recent decades, we have seen many Sunni and Shiite terrorist organiza-

tions, such as Al-Qaeda and its branches, Daesh with its offshoots, Hezbollah, and

Asaib Ahl Al-Haq, effectively hijack this religion, branding others as infidels in their discourse, or killing them with suicide attacks or car bombs. This is a crisis of extremist thought, and let us remember that while Russia was the victim of this bloody massacre, Muslim countries are the primary targets of these terrorist organizations.

Society bears responsibility for a peaceful boy's transformation into a heartless monster in just a few years; we cannot blame him alone. If he had grown up in an environment that taught him to be tolerant and rational, and explained the humanitarian essence of all religions to him from an early age, at home, school, in the mosque, and through television, would he have grown up to be a terrorist?

Of course not, he would be a well-adjusted, tolerant, and good person who seeks to do good for humanity

and serves it (as well as himself, as we all do). He would not blow himself up to kill children, or run them over with a truck like insects under the pretext that they are infidels.

However, most of those who reiterate these accusations that Daesh is a tool of intelligence services are malicious actors. Their intentions are clear and simple: They do not want to scrutinize extremist thought, and so they mix things together. They are the same people who consistently insist that the perpetrators are mentally ill and deranged, which is also another excuse meant to distort the issue by shifting it from an ideological and cultural matter to a public health issue. Psychiatric patients go to clinics, and we do not see them organizing themselves into disciplined armed groups, burning businesses to the ground, and bombing mosques.

These claims are illu-

sions, and now they speak of a culture clash with the West and are turning it into fodder for extremist thought, in order to find excuses for this thought and ways to avoid confronting it. Ironically, these extremists migrate to Western countries, whose freedom of speech they exploit to incite against countries that embrace a tolerant and humanist thought that preserves Islam's sublimity and spirituality, and are gradually reclaiming it from its hijackers.

It is not American expansionism, the incursion of modernity, intelligence agencies, colonialism, imperialism, or the cultural clash with the West that has given rise to this terrorism. These were excuses concocted by extremists trying to keep their extremist ideology alive. The terrorists themselves are more candid. They openly embrace takfiri thought and their thirst for blood - we should believe them for once.

Terrorism attack in Moscow a test of world’s conscience

THE terrorist attack on concertgoers in Moscow on Friday night killed at least 137 people and injured over a hundred. It was one of the most deadly terrorist attacks in Russia's modern history. The number of casualties has surpassed that of the terrorist attack on a Moscow theater in 2002, and is second only to the Beslan hostage incident in 2004. With its military conflict with Ukraine still ongoing, it is now a very difficult moment for Russia. Dmitry Peskov, Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, said that Russia is already in "a state of war".

The terrorist attack occurred just after Putin was re-elected. The terrorists came to Moscow to slaughter a large number of civilians, and Putin has pledged that no matter who was behind the atrocity, they will be identified, severely punished and bear the price. The attack was intended to undermine Russia's domestic politics and stability.

Details are still emerging, but according to the currently known information, it took only 18 minutes from the first alarm to the moment the terrorists escaped by car. The terrorists behaved very professionally throughout the attack, throwing grenades and incendiary bombs at the same time as shooting, and changed clothes immediately after they got out of

the concert hall. The people at the concert venue had no time to react.

Although the Islamic State group has announced responsibility for the attack, there are still many questions about who perpetrated it. There are questionable differences between this attack and those of ISIS in the past. Usually, ISIS extremists are indoctrined suicide attackers.

Suicide bombs are a must and the terrorist group publicly admits to its actions on the internet in order that its hatred be understood by the world. They are also not worried about revealing their identities and ready to give up their lives to fulfill their sacred missions. But these four non-Russians were reportedly willing to be killers for less than 500,000 rubles (less than \$5,000), had no intention to commit suicide and they fled desperately, trying to save their lives, when found.

One of the four didn't even have a bank card when he was arrested, saying he threw it on the road. So, the more the West believes that the ISIS did it, the less Russia believes it. On top of that, both the Moscow theater incident in 2002 and the Beslan incident in 2004 had political demands for Russian troops to withdraw from Chechnya. But this terrorist attack has not been accompanied by any political appeal. It appears that its aim was simply to

maximize the number of casualties. There are reasons to believe that the "real terrorists" are not the four people directly involved in the deadly shooting, but others. "Hiring murderers" is the characteristic of this terrorist attack, indicating that the "real terrorists" do not want to show who they are. Who the real terrorists are needs further investigation by the Russian side. Over time, the truth will probably eventually surface. Also, may be, even Russia can confirm it with proof, but the west will deny it. It will end long time without results.

The most important thing now for Russia is to strengthen its defenses to prevent the people behind this bloody crime from committing new crimes. Terrorists will become bold only in front of those groups that are unarmed and cannot defend themselves. This terrorist attack has had a direct impact on Putin, who has just announced his re-election. Wearing black clothes and a black tie, Putin delivered a television speech to the Russian people and declared March 24 as a national day of mourning and promised to hold all those responsible accountable and to identify the forces behind them.

Every terrorist attack will prompt changes in the international situation, and this one is no

exception. Russia may use this attack to launch its own "war on terror".

No matter where it happens, indiscriminate attacks on ordinary people in public should be one of the bottom lines of mankind, and any who cross it must be severely punished. A double standard in counterterrorism or attaching political purposes to counter-terrorism will only backfire and allow terrorism to thrive. Unfortunately in the past, there has been a prevailing double standard among certain Western politicians and media outlets when it comes to Russia or China.

Terrorist attacks against civilians should be the common enemy of all civilized governments. Only by uniting the people of all countries in the world can terrorists not find a place to hide. Earlier this month, the US embassy in Moscow issued warnings about a possible terrorist attack. That should remind us that in the US anti-terrorist actions after the 9/11 incident, Russia was one of the first countries to respond to the US' calls and provide assistance.

Whether all nations across the world can unite to fight against terrorism in future will be a test for politicians from all over the world, a test of the conscience of people from all over the world, also a test of whether there is still hope for a peaceful and stable life in this world.

Land thefts reinforce Palestinian attachment to their country

DONALD Trump's son-in-law and former Middle East adviser, Jared Kushner, characterized the Gaza carnage as "a little bit of an unfortunate situation." Yet, as a solution Kushner proposed that Israel should "move the people out and then clean it up" - remarking that "Gaza's waterfront property could be very valuable." He added insult to injury by saying that allowing Palestinians to have their own state would be "a super-bad idea" that "would essentially be rewarding an act of terror."

Beyond the sheer jaw-dropping idiocy of such comments, Kushner essentially voices the Israeli far-right's agenda of forced relocation or extermination of Gaza's entire population. Kushner agreed that Israel likely would never allow Palestinians back into Gaza after such a forced evacuation, while questioning the historic existence of Gaza or Palestinians as a people.

The vision of wholesale depopulation has become normalized throughout Israel, after long being a fantasy of the fascist extreme-right. A CNN report highlighted an initiative by former residents of the 21 Gaza settlements evacuated within Ariel Sharon's 2005 disengagement plan. Proponents of such initiatives have been energetically raising funds and signing up hundreds of families for Gaza resettlement schemes, following the enforced purging of Arab inhabitants. A figurehead for these Gaza resettlement initiatives, Daniella Weiss, told CNN: "No Arabs. I'm speaking about more than 2 million Arabs. They will not stay there ... The Arabs want to annihilate the state of Israel, so you can call them monsters." A map advocated by Weiss shows Jewish settlements spanning the entire Gaza Strip, wholly depopulated of Palestinians.

Recent polling found that 26 per-

cent of Israelis support the reconstruction of Gaza's Gush Kati settlements, rising to 51 percent among supporters of Netanyahu's government. Speaking alongside other far-right government ministers, Amihai Eliyahu, Israel's heritage minister, explicitly supported these Gaza resettlement proposals, saying: "Why?do you think it is immoral to take land from someone who wants to kill me? Why is it immoral to take my land?"

Kushner's comments are particularly concerning because in the event of an incoming Trump administration, they express the prevailing mindset, which would be entirely in alignment with hard-right Israeli political consensus. Even though Kushner claims he is not seeking a formal position, nobody doubts his huge influence. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu knows that a Trump regime would offer a blank cheque to fulfil the desires of lunatic fascist acolytes, such as Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir.

Attending recent social gatherings, I hear people questioning why Palestinians are unable to find new homes among vast Arab nations; or, conversely, why Israeli Jews cannot relocate to Europe, Russia or the US? Both scenarios fundamentally miss the point concerning the intimate attachment of both sides to their land.

Both my parents are of Lebanese heritage, and the thought of losing an inch of our motherland is unthinkable. For our children's safety, we fled Lebanon for the UK during Israel's 1982 invasion. I was warmly received, but my feeling of belonging to Lebanon and its culture has only strengthened. I dream of dying in my native land. Palestinians

Baria Almuiddin

displaced to nearby states over past decades likewise are still passionately enmeshed within all aspects of their culture, and a young generation is even more intimately attached to their lost lands. Hence, Palestinians who say they prefer to die in Gaza, rather than face the rootless misery of foreign refugee camps.

Over the past 75 years of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the extreme fringe fantasies of each generation became the orthodoxy for the next generation, whether the huge 1948 territorial seizures; or the post-1967 expansions of the settler movement, as obscure hilltop outposts mutated into sprawling towns carving up Palestinian lands into ever-shrinking cantons. During the 1990s Oslo years, those who preached complete eradication of Palestinians, such as Rabbi Meir Kahane and Baruch Goldstein were belittled as an extreme lunatic fringe.

Hamas and Hezbollah's rhetoric of forcibly regaining the entirety of Palestine is no less of a dangerous and unrealisable fantasy, given that most Arabs and Palestinians have come to accept the futility of military struggle as a means for supposedly removing Israel, with all its military might and US backing. Most Israelis alive today were themselves born there and know no other land.

However, a 2024 poll found that 63 percent of Israeli Jews reject the creation of a Palestinian state, while politicians talk unashamedly of Palestinian territories being forcibly divested of their rightful inhabitants, despite such genocidal blueprints being flagrantly illegal.

Provocatively timed with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's Israel visit, Smotrich last week announced the single largest land seizure since the 1993 Oslo accords.

The location is particularly provocative because it would sever the northern and southern West Bank, while also calculatedly making it impossible for Palestinians to claim parts of East Jerusalem as their future capital. Following Blinken's departure, there are unmistakable signs of Israel stepping up its activities in the Rafah area toward a likely full-blown operation. Britain has warned that it could halt arms supplies unless Israel allows essential goods into Gaza and adheres to international law, with Foreign Secretary David Cameron expressing "enormous frustration" at obstruction of humanitarian aid. Gaza's blood is on Netanyahu's hands, but it is also on America's hands for decades of submitting to Israel's every whim, shielding it from international accountability and bankrolling maximalist militarized policies - buying into rhetoric that Palestinians and Arabs were a subspecies, to be exterminated at will. Progressive US congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez described the situation as a "mass starvation of people ... accomplished with US resources and weapons. If you want to know what an unfolding genocide looks like, open your eyes."

Enough of Biden and Blinken throwing up their hands and protesting their impotence. If they genuinely believe in international law and a two-state solution, they hold all the cards for compelling a leadership which has violated all international norms to halt the carnage. If you do not like seeing the bombing of babies and women, simply cease sending bombs to Israel. Meanwhile, the only way this long-traumatized land can ever see peace is by both sides mutually recognizing each other's inalienable rights, attachment and sovereignty over their beloved homelands.

FORMER President Donald Trump, facing a deadline to post a \$464 million bond no one would give him, caught a break from a state appeals court Monday that cut the bond demand in his civil fraud case to \$175 million due within the next 10 days. The action may also spare Democrats backlash from voters who would be incensed at the potential seizure of Trump's assets.

Trump became an A-list celebrity as a symbol of extreme, almost gaudy wealth. His reputation for business acumen and ability to manage a massive real estate empire played a large role in why many voters were willing to entrust the presidency to a political neophyte in 2016.

Therefore, it's easy to see how it could be embarrassing for Trump, as he seeks to return to the White House, to be unable to pay when the bond deadline came due. This is especially true now that Trump has more time to pay much less money (he declared he will post the new lower amount "in cash or bonds or security or whatever is necessary very quickly"). It runs counter to his carefully cultivated public image that predates, but certainly enabled, his political career. The New York civil fraud case raises questions about how Trump acquired much of his wealth in the first place. But the confiscation of Trump's assets - or the threat of seizures - could also rally voters to his side in much the same way his other legal problems appear to have helped him in the Republican primaries. People often don't like to see people's bank accounts and properties seized, and this alone could engender sympathy for the candidate. But

major losses." The belief that a "two-tiered" system of justice is being "weaponized" against conservatives, Republicans and ordinary citizens has resonated in the GOP primaries this year. The presumptive Republican nominee's campaign is banking on this continuing to be the case as we head toward the general election.

My inbox is filled with fundraising appeals asking donors to help stop James from taking Trump Tower. Legal moves to seize Trump's New York properties will anger his base, possibly make him a sympathetic figure to other voters and once again help him dominate the airwaves without his campaign spending a dime on advertising, all variables that have benefited him in the past. The general election isn't the Republican primary, to be sure. Non-Republicans take most of the charges against Trump more seriously, polls suggest. Nevertheless, there are strong indicators that this is shaping up to be a "base election," as presidential races since 2000 have often been. That means the two major-party candidates are roughly deadlocked and each has a real chance of winning. The election will be decided largely by which campaign is best able to turn out core supporters, so any issues that mobilize the candidates' bases will be crucial.

Trump's political standing may be boosted by the perception among even some observers outside of GOP and pro-Trump circles that he is the victim of legal overreach. "The essence of Trump's argument on appeal is that the supposed harm he caused was minimal at best - all his

lenders were repaid - and that the penalty levied against him was therefore wildly excessive," wrote liberal Washington Post columnist Ruth Marcus. "The conundrum is that the very size of the judgment, and the consequent size of the bond that Trump is required to post, might make him unable to appeal. Trump could pursue his case, but in the meantime, James would be entitled to seize and sell off the former president's assets." "That can't be right," she concluded.

"To me, putting up all the cash upfront before you appeal the case seems draconian for everyone, not just Trump," progressive - and staunchly anti-Trump - commentator Cenk Uygur said on his show The Young Turks. "But what if he wins the appeal? So you made him sell all of his properties to get the collateral, but then he can't buy them back. ... So when his lawyer says 'irreparable harm,' in this case, financially speaking, it would be irreparable harm." These takes may not be shared among the half of Americans who believe Trump is guilty of the falsifying business records charges brought in his separate New York criminal case. But if some commentators on the left see potential asset seizures in his civil case as unfair, many of the voters still winnable for Trump could easily regard this as an outrage. Conservatives and angry independents who see New York's actions against Trump as a reason to pull the lever for him in November could ultimately decide the election. If so, Trump could once again turn a legal and personal setback into a political windfall.

CNN

How I became a migrant trafficker in Mexico

Belén Fernández

IN February 2024, far-right American activist and white nationalist Laura Loomer - whom former United States president and current presidential candidate Donald Trump once praised as "really very special" - descended upon Panama for a weeklong "investigative trip" to the Darién Gap to "report on the invasion of America" being staged thousands of kilometres south of the United States border.

The Darién Gap, of course, is the formidable stretch of roadless territory between Panama and Colombia that refuge seekers from around the world must navigate as they pursue a better life - pardon, as they seek to invade America. The Gap comprises a dense jungle where assault, rape and death are par for the course. And yet the US is somehow still the victim. Loomer's expedition brought her up close and personal with the enemy, including a number of "Venezuelan invaders", some of whom told Loomer that Trump was a "bitch" and that they loved incumbent president Joe Biden. In other words, this was clearly war.

I recently encountered some Venezuelans of my own in Mexico, the final leg of the US invasion, where the administration of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) continues to dutifully carry out the anti-migrant dirty work assigned to the country by its friendly gringo neighbours. Despite Biden's reputation among the right wing as aiding and abetting the migrant conquest of the US, he has done a fine job of ensuring that the trans-Mexico trajectory remains as hellish as possible for refuge seekers - a situation that has only been exacerbated as presidential elections approach on both sides of the border. After all, repressing poor people usually scores you points. When two young Venezuelan friends of mine - we'll call them Juan Antonio and Claudia - crossed into the Mexican state of Chiapas from Guatemala in March, I was in the neighbouring state of Oaxaca and decided to do my part for the migrant conquest by renting a car and going to pick them up. This was easier said than done from the get-go, as my valid US driver's licence was at my mother's house in Washington, DC, and my mother was in Spain - a first-world travel problem if there ever was one.

While I despaired over how to proceed, Juan Antonio and Claudia were detained in the Mexican border town of Ciudad Hidalgo, which had seemingly been spontaneously converted into an open-air prison of sorts minus the complimentary food and water. Whereas asylum seekers were previously able to leave Ciudad Hidalgo with relative ease and proceed on their way, my friends were now informed that departing on their own would make them immediate prey for the cartels. Instead, Mexican immigration personnel added them to an infinite list of passengers to be bussed to the city of Arriaga in western Chiapas, the stated price for which bus ranged between free and \$100. Several scorching days and sleepless nights passed, an arrangement that was hardly ideal for two young people who had just emerged from a harrowing trek through the Darién jungle. Juan Antonio had been robbed and beaten, and women in the group had been raped.

It eventually occurred to me that my old Texas driver's licence, which was indeed in my possession, bore the expiration date 03/07/2024 - meaning March 7 in the US but interpreted in Mexico as July 3. Sure enough, off I went to the rental car company and was soon on the road to Chiapas, arriving to Arriaga just as Juan Antonio and Claudia, having now clocked six days in Ciudad Hidalgo, were at last being loaded onto the mythical Arriaga bus. I stopped there to wait for them at 4pm; at midnight it was revealed that the Arriaga bus had not been bound for Arriaga at all but rather the city of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, more than two hours away.

Before sunrise on March 19, I set out for Tuxtla to retrieve them. The plan was to spend one night in Arriaga, where they would eat, shower, rest, and do other basic things taken for granted by travellers with privileged passports, who do not have to contend with being abused and extorted at every turn by Mexican officials, organised crime outfits, and transportation companies alike - often working in symbiosis. I would then drive them as far as Oaxaca City, southwest of the Mexican capital of

Mexico City, thus sparing them the harassment and extortion payments they would have otherwise endured along the way. Or so I thought.

Leaving Arriaga at 9am on March 20 in the highest of spirits, our only concern being how to get the desired reggaeton playlist to play on the car stereo, we had advanced no more than a few kilometres before we were stopped at a checkpoint manned by a bevy of police officers and representatives of the state attorney general's office. My best American tourist accent failed miserably, and we were hauled out of the vehicle for inspection of all possessions including our cell phones - prompting the following sympathetic comment from the sole female police officer: "Well, we all have naked pictures on our phones, don't we?" This same officer suggested repeatedly that I gift her my sunglasses, while the male officers concerned themselves with more substantial matters: I would need to produce 50,000 Mexican pesos (approximately \$3,000) or they would confiscate the car, put me in jail for migrant trafficking, and send the Venezuelans back to the border.

Having already experienced Mexican jail once, it was not something I wanted to repeat; nor, however, did I have 50,000 pesos. The bribe was ultimately negotiated down to about \$500, and an agent from the attorney general's office instructed me to drive Juan Antonio and Claudia as far as the next gas station, where they were to join all the other refuge seekers walking toward the US in the blistering sun. Naturally, another checkpoint materialised before the gas station, where I was once again alerted to the fact that my friends were "illegal" and that I was committing a "crime" punishable with jail time. When I responded that I was simply following orders from the last checkpoint, I was accused of having contributed to the problem of corruption in Mexico by acceding to the demand for a bribe.

Some more threats were emitted before the "good cop" of the group asked for my phone - this time to indicate to Juan Antonio and Claudia the pedestrian route they were to use to circumvent the upcoming checkpoints, one belonging to the National Guard and the next to Mexico's National Migration Institute (INM), the latter of which was just beyond the Chiapas-Oaxaca state border. I could pick them up on the other side of the INM checkpoint, the officer said, and we could continue on our way. This was not to be, as my friends were ambushed on their walk by National Guard agents lurking among the bushes, who made off with their meagre funds.

They were then detained by the INM, as I, oblivious to all that was happening, drove in circles and waited for the one WhatsApp checkmark to turn into two on the messages I had sent Juan Antonio and Claudia. I stopped to drink beer under the bridge past the INM checkpoint, and in the infernal heat chatted with a man from the state of Sinaloa who had been sentenced to 15 years in prison in the US in 2020 for trafficking migrants across the border. On account of the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, he had been deported after only 15 days.

When I inquired as to what he currently did for a living, he answered vaguely that he worked with "live-stock". Also under the bridge was an assortment of taxis dedicated to ferrying undocumented persons past the ensuing checkpoints for a hefty fee, a business that flourishes with complete state complicity.

At about 3pm, my friends reappeared online to notify me that the INM had deposited them on the side of the road in the city of Berriozábal outside Tuxtla Gutiérrez. Back I went to retrieve them, and back we arrived at Arriaga at 7pm, ending up at the morning's first checkpoint with the same cast of characters. At a loss for what to do, I descended from the vehicle and declared pompously that, in light of the day's progress, I had decided to write an article about migrant extortion. Would anyone like to be quoted in it?

The police dealt with this proposition by shouting that the "migra" was coming and for us to get out of there, which we obligingly did. Juan Antonio and Claudia once again took the pedestri-

an detour around the National Guard and INM checkpoints, this time in the dark. Assaulted once again, they explained to their assailants that all of their money had already been taken in the previous assault. They were allowed to proceed when Claudia broke down in tears. I picked them up under the same bridge I had sat under earlier in the day, where the taxi drivers were none too thrilled at losing two customers to a meddling gringa and apparently phoned ahead to the next National Guard checkpoint to advise them that a migrant trafficking case was heading their way. I was told as much by the three National Guard members who cornered us with their pick-up truck in a parking lot preceding the checkpoint, and who informed me that from my Mexican jail cell I would constitute a stain on the national pride of the US. Displeased to hear that their fellow forces of law and order had already taken all of my pesos and that a 2,000-peso bribe was categorically impossible, they were unmoved by my rambling chatter about the fundamental role of my own country in Mexico's migrant crackdown and general inhumane landscape. They eventually let us go after banning Juan Antonio and Claudia from getting back in the car.

In the parking lot, we acquired an 18-year-old Venezuelan companion who had been stuck for nearly a year in Mexico and who had been returned to the Mexican-Guatemalan border three times, once from the northern city of Ciudad Juárez, just across from the US city of El Paso. This young man offered to guide Juan Antonio and Claudia around the next checkpoint in exchange for something to eat. In the end, the young man joined us for what remained of our vehicular journey together. Two checkpoints were successfully circumvented on foot, with me driving through and picking up the passengers on the other side. The third checkpoint, located in the town of Nilttepec on Oaxaca's isthmus of Tehuantepec, had seemingly also been cleared successfully - until we were chased down by a car with flashing lights that belonged to some branch of the Mexican security apparatus I had never even heard of.

It was nearly lam, and the officers were blunt with me: I was to keep driving straight, and they were to take "these people" back to Nilttepec. My passport was photographed along with the car, and I was reminded that I was committing a grave "crime". If I was caught again, I was going behind bars for sure. I did as I was told, and will now have to limit my "trafficking" activities to sending my friends money to fund an excruciatingly slow and obstacle-ridden traversal of Mexico and to line the pockets of a whole lot of people between here and the US border - if they make it, that is. When on March 22 I bought them bus tickets online to travel from the isthmian town of Juchitán to Oaxaca City, they were removed from the bus by the INM and sent back to Arriaga to advance at a snail's pace. If we want to talk about real "crimes", of course, we could start with the criminal nature of the US border itself, the self-declared sacrosanctity of which translates into physical and psychological torment for thousands upon thousands of refuge seekers - many of whom are fleeing political and economic violence created by the US in the first place. Indeed, the United States' selective criminalisation of cross-border movement by the have-nots of the world strips them of their dignity and exposes them to all manner of harassment and peril as they transit Mexico. America's last line of defence, where US pressure to deter migration helps enable astronomical corruption.

But since it's hard to deter people who have nothing to lose, the whole deterrence strategy accomplishes little aside from making the journey all the more painfully complicated and dangerous. In the meantime, the effective criminalisation of solidarity and humanity makes folks all the more reluctant to assist people in transit. At the end of the day, then, the "invasion of America" hyped by the likes of Laura Loomer is a rather haphazard one, the "invaders" thwarted and extorted at every turn. But the real war is in the opposite direction, and, as elections loom in the US and Mexico, the next phase of battle has only just begun.



Pak-Japan to enhance bilateral economic ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Japan on Tuesday expressed their desire to further enhance the bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Japan and pledged to work together towards achieving common goals for the benefit of both nations.

The Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, Mitsuhiro Wada, called on Muhammad Aurangzeb, the Minister for Finance and Revenue, said a press release issued here. The Japanese Ambassador congratulated the Finance Minister on assuming the office.

The Minister for Finance and Revenue welcomed the Ambassador and stated that the Government is committed to undertaking reforms to bring macroeconomic

stability and sustainability.

The Minister stated that increasing the tax to Gross Domestic Product ratio remains a priority area.

In this regard, the Government will strive to achieve end-to-end digitization to expand the tax base, bring transparency in the tax system and improve the client experience.

He further apprised the Ambassador about energy sector reforms.

While the focus would be on reducing the costs in the sector governance issues of the distribution companies will be addressed through private participation in the management and eventual privatization.

Meanwhile, on the occasion, Ambassador Wada noted the commitment of

the Government to continue with the implementation of prudent fiscal policies and structural reforms. He informed that presently 80 Japanese companies are operating in Pakistan.

The Ambassador highlighted some of the issues being faced by Japanese automakers in Pakistan.

He appreciated the government's efforts towards economic revival and expressed Japan's continued support for Pakistan's initiatives aimed at fostering growth and prosperity.

The Finance Minister informed that agriculture and IT sectors have demonstrated robust growth recently and the Government would make efforts to support these sectors to become growth leaders.

Minister directs expediting work

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday directed the authorities concerned to expedite the construction work on the Gwadar Power Plant.

The minister passed these directives while chairing a meeting to review the progress of Gwadar Power Plant, which was attended by the ministry officials, Managing Director of Private Power Infrastructure Board (PPIB), the Chinese Minister-Counselor Yang Guangyuan and other relevant stakeholders, a news release said.

The PPIB is processing the 300MW coal power project at Gwadar, being developed by M/s CIHC Pak Power Company (Pvt) Limited (CPPCL). The project is in the 'priority list' of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and holds paramount importance for the energy infrastructure and economic development of the region.

"The supply of electricity is essential in Gwadar and no delay will be accepted," said the minister while directing the stakeholders concerned to remove all the bottlenecks and start the construction work immediately.

Terming Gwadar 'the gateway of CPEC', the minister said that the incumbent government had expedited the implementation on phase 2 of the CPEC while integrating it with five new economic corridors.

"The development of Gwadar Port City, New Gwadar International Airport and East Bay Expressway is going to transform the city of Gwadar into a maritime trade hub and a new smart port for the region. It will also lead to industrialization in Balochistan," he added.

The minister expressed confidence that all major projects under CPEC in Gwadar, including Gwadar Power Plant, distribution of 2000 Boat engines to fishermen of Gwadar, Khuzdar-Panjgur Transmission line (via Nag-Basima) which connect Markran with National Grid, New Gwadar International Airport Project, the China-Pak Friendship Hospital, China-Pak Technical and Vocational Institute in Gwadar, the Gwadar East-bay Expressway Project, Gwadar Free Zone, and Gwadar Port would become a shining pearl in the region.

During the tenure of PDM, he said several projects were completed by the then government in Gwadar particularly related to water and electricity that were neglected by the previous government deliberately.

Jiangsu reports record trade

NANJING (APP): Jiangsu Province, an economic powerhouse in east China, saw foreign trade with BRICS nations soar to a record 102.22 billion yuan (about 14.4 billion US dollars) in the first two months of 2024, marking an increase of 36 percent year on year, according to Nanjing Customs.

The value of trade between Jiangsu and India and Jiangsu and Brazil stood out, reaching 25.31 billion yuan and 23.87 billion yuan, respectively, in the first two months of the year. These figures reflect respective year-on-year growth rates of 12.1 percent and 36.4 percent.

According to the customs, this notable surge in trade figures can be attributed to Jiangsu's robust private sector. Meanwhile, Jiangsu also made progress in exporting the three major tech-intensive green products, or the "new three" -- new energy vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic products, which are gaining popularity in the BRICS emerging markets.

BRICS is the acronym for an emerging-market cooperative mechanism that initially featured Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. On 1st January, 2024, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, and Ethiopia also joined BRICS, doubling its number of members from five to 10.

Chairman Siddiqsons Group receives award from PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif presented awards to 65 leading exporters and compliant taxpayers in a ceremony held at the PM Office. Among the recipients, Tariq Rafi, the Chairman of Siddiqsons Group, was recognized as the 4th highest taxpayer by the Prime Minister.

Established in 1959, Siddiqsons Group has excelled in various sectors including Textile & Denim Manufacturing, Real Estate & Construction, Tinplate Manufacturing & Tin-Can Packaging, and Dairy Industries, expanding its presence globally.

The ceremony saw the distribution of approximately 40 awards to top exporters in sectors like textiles, sports, surgical goods, pharmaceuticals, foods, and steel.

Moreover, awards were presented to taxpayers who contributed significantly through their income tax payments in various categories such as companies, AOPs, and individual taxpayers.

The government also acknowledged Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and first-time filers who made substantial contributions to the



national treasury, offering special incentives to those who made significant tax payments.

Noteworthy features of the Prime Minister's awards for compliant taxpayers and exporters included recognizing (i) top IT exporters, (ii) large exporters in sectors other than textiles, (iii) first-time exporters with export

values exceeding \$10 million, (iv) exporters of non-traditional products, (v) women exporters, and (vi) those with the highest growth compared to the previous year.

Compliant taxpayers were acknowledged based on criteria such as (i) highest individual income taxpayers, (ii) AOPs and companies with the highest tax

contributions, (iii) overall highest taxpayers, (iv) new taxpayers with substantial tax payments, (v) business income taxpayers with significant growth, (vi) entrepreneur taxpayers, (vii) SMEs, (viii) taxpayers with substantial foreign direct investment (FDI), and (ix) entrepreneurs from underdeveloped regions.

PCAA clarified inaccurate reports

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The statement is being released in response to a few TV reports alleging that the Director General PCAA reinstated an employee with a fake graduation degree. It is important to clarify that this issue dates back to a routine policy decision made in 2022. The reports circulating are inaccurate and misrepresent the actual situation.

Azhar Farooq (Sr. Asst. Dir.), the employee in ques-

tion, joined CAA as a Facilitation Assistant in the 1990s.

The minimum educational requirement for this position was at the intermediate level, not at the graduation level, and he was hired based on meeting this requirement.

Subsequently, after a few years of service, he submitted a graduation degree which was later discovered to be counterfeit.

It is crucial to note that a graduation degree was not a prerequisite for his

employment, and he did not gain any financial or career advantages by submitting the falsified document.

In accordance with organizational policies, the employee faced a penalty of having his promotion withheld for a year.

In situations where fake credentials are used to meet the educational requirement mandatory for an employment, the policy mandates a major penalty such as termination or dismissal from service.

Transforming prisons into reform centers

Practical steps to be taken: FCCI President

FAISALABAD (APP): Practical steps would be taken to transform prisons into reform centers for the inmates in Faisalabad, said Dr Khurram Tariq, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI).

He visited the District Jail and appreciated the administrative capabilities of Jail Superintendent Chaudhary Ali Akbar.

He said that the FCCI in collaboration with the business community would arrange classes to impart technical education to female inmates.

"We would also provide them with necessary gadgets and appliances for their training", he added.

Dr Khurram Tariq said that a smart education sys-

tem would also be introduced for the prisoners including all basic subjects with a focus on the social and moral ethics & values.

He said that their ultimate objective was to make them a productive part of society after their release from jail. "We would also provide them with technical education so that they could earn a respectable livelihood", he added.

The President FCCI visited various departments of the District Jail and particularly appreciated the performance of the 30 bed hospital where the health department has appointed doctors to look after the health of the inmates.

Earlier on his arrival,

Jail Superintendent Chaudhary Ali Akbar welcomed Dr Khurram Tariq while a well turned-out contingent of jail presented a guard of honor.

The superintendent briefed him about the procedure for the meeting of inmates with their relatives in a congenial environment.

He said that the jail kitchen was being renovated and they needed financial help for it.

Senior Vice President FCCI Dr Sajjad Arshad, Vice President Hajji Muhammad Aslam Bhalli, Convener Standing Committee on Jail Dr. Ashfaq Qamar and executive member Shafiq Hussain Shah were also present.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, MSC Mundra VIII, MSC Spring III, Nimble Nicky and Shiva scheduled to load/offload Container, Iron Ore and LPG, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal and Engro Terminal respectively on report period.

Meanwhile five more ships, MSC Maeva, Kerala, Port Imabari, Dravin and Milaha Ras Laffan scheduled to load/offload Container, Furnace oil, LPG and LNG also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours.

Ten ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, MSC Mundra VIII and Forshun left the Port on today morning while three more ships, Ullswater, Shiva and Mackenzie are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Cargo volume of 140,659 tonnes, comprising 112,201 tonnes imports cargo and 28,458 tonnes export cargo carried in 1,647 Containers (840 TEUs Imports and 807 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

Nine ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them five ships, Solar Roma, Port Imabari, Dravin, Milaha Ras Laffan and MSC Maeva & two more ships, Maersk Santosa and Xpress Bardsey carrying Palm oil, Coal, LPG, LNG and Container are expected to take berths at LCT, PIBT, EVTL, PGCL and QICT on Tuesday, while two more container ships, Marathopolis and X-Press Mekong are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Wednesday.

NUMS allows engaging IFI in M.City project

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Board of Directors of the Public Private Partnership Authority (P3A) on Tuesday marked a significant stride towards advancing infrastructure development in the country, with a focus on promoting initiatives for public welfare.

The board meeting, chaired Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission and Vice Chairperson of the Board Dr Jehanzeb Khan, saw deliberations and approvals on various agenda items, including the pivotal approval of the National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS) request to engage an International Financial Institution (IFI) for the Medical City Project, a news release said.

The NUMS project, focused on establishing a Medical City in Islamabad's Sector I-17, is set to redefine healthcare standards in Pakistan.

With a 1600-bed hospi-

tal and specialized research institutes, the project aims to enhance medical education, research and patient care. Its phased implementation over 20 years underscores a long-term commitment to advancing healthcare infrastructure and promoting medical excellence nationally and internationally.

Dr Jehanzeb Khan emphasized the paramount importance of initiatives geared towards the public good, highlighting the role of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in fostering development that benefits society at large.

He underscored the need for P3A to provide support to implementing agencies in conceptualizing their projects, guiding them through the complexities of PPPs, and ensuring that projects were aligned with the overarching goal of public welfare.

Moreover, the meeting also touched upon the

broader landscape of PPPs, recognizing their vital role in infrastructure development and sustainable growth.

The meeting emphasized the need for continued focus and innovation in PPPs to address the evolving needs of the country effectively.

The approvals and discussions during the meeting underscored P3A's commitment to facilitating infrastructure development through strategic partnerships and initiatives aimed at promoting the public good.

Among others the meeting was attended by Secretary Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Awais Manzoor Sumra, Additional Finance Secretary Amjad Mahmood, private members of the Board Akbar Ayub Khan and Huma Ejaz Zaman, besides Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of P3A Malik Ahmad Khan.

Tokyo shares end flat

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks ended flat on Tuesday as investors held out hope for gains in semiconductor-related shares while locking in profits after recent rallies.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index trimmed earlier losses and inched down 0.04 percent, or 16.09 points, to 40,398.03 at the close, while the broader Topix index added 0.11 percent, or 3.16 points, to 2,780.80.

"Tokyo shares couldn't find a sense of direction as it hovered around the previous day's close," Daiwa Securities said.

"Investors' wait-and-see stance became pronounced as they observed various comments from officials (warning about the yen's depreciation),

Easter and the US personal consumption expenditures price index," the brokerage said.

The Tokyo market faced selling pressure after overnight falls on Wall Street while investors settled accounts before the Japanese fiscal year will close this week.

Still, others bought shares to secure the rights to year-end dividends.

Semiconductor issues firmed, driven largely by gains in US giant Nvidia shares, although investors were still looking for fresh news, analysts said.

The dollar stood at 151.36 yen, slightly down from 151.42 yen in New York.

Among major shares, Sony Group added 0.46 percent to 13,110 yen and

Toyota rose 0.52 percent to 3,850 yen.

Semiconductor shares also rose. Tokyo Electron added 0.54 percent to 38,930 yen and Advantest firmed 0.34 percent to 6,754 yen.

Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing fell 1.63 percent to 46,360 yen.

Nissan dropped 3.94 percent to 604.1 yen after the automaker announced a new business plan aimed at increasing sales volumes while lowering costs.

Kobayashi Pharmaceutical ended up 0.26 percent at 5,069 yen, as it investigates reported health issues among customers who took its supplements.

It is still well down on Friday's closing price of 6,056 yen.



In brief

Inter-College Ramadan T20 Cup

KARACHI (PPI): The fourth day of the Inter-College Ramadan T20 Cup saw action in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad as nine teams came head-to-head in five matches. Lahore Government College Township beat Government Islamia Graduate College Civil Lines by 46 runs at Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore. Government College Township managed to set a target of 118 with Civil Lines' bowlers claiming crucial wickets in the early overs of the match. Mohammad Hammad top-scored for Government College Township, hitting 25 off 37 while Civil Lines' bowler Ali Asghar claimed three wickets at the expense of 21 runs. In turn, Civil Lines were dismissed for just 71 runs in 17.4 overs courtesy Hafiz Mohammad Awais, Ali Hamza and Mohammad Umair, all of whom claimed two wickets each. Karachi Government Jinnah College beat Government Delhi College by 10 wickets at Karachi's Eid Gah Stadium. Jinnah College bowlers Naeem Gul and Abdullah Ashfaq picked up five-wicket and four-wicket hauls respectively, managing

Perth to kick off India's test tour

MELBOURNE (Reuters): Perth will host the opener of the blockbuster five-test Australia-India series in November, which will conclude with the traditional New Year's test in Sydney, Cricket Australia said on Tuesday. The teams' first five-test series in over 30 years will kick off on Nov. 22 at Perth Stadium, where Virat Kohli's India were well beaten in their only previous visit to the stadium in 2018. The second match of the series will be a day-night test in Adelaide from Dec. 6, with Brisbane to host the third at the Gabba from Dec. 14 and Melbourne to stage the fourth match in the traditional 'Boxing Day' slot from Dec. 26. Australia, who thrashed India in last year's 50-overs World Cup final, have not beaten the South Asians in a home test series since 2014-15, losing both the 2018-19 and 2020-21 contests. Cricket Australia also published its schedule for the Women's Ashes between Australia and England, which starts on Jan. 12 with an ODI in Sydney. The Ashes wraps up with a one-off, day-night test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground from Jan. 30, the first pink ball international at the stadium.

MCG to host Women's Ashes Test in 2025

LONDON (Agencies): The Test match in the 2025 Women's Ashes in Australia will be a day-night game at the 100,000-capacity Melbourne Cricket Ground. The Test returns to a four-day match after it was extended to five days during the 2023 series in England. The pink-ball game, which starts on 30 January, will also end the multi-format series for the first time since it was introduced in 2015. Australia retained the Ashes with an 8-8 draw last year in England. "[The Test is] an amazing opportunity for the team to play at such an iconic Australian cricket venue and in such a big occasion like an Ashes series," said Australia all-rounder Ellyse Perry. "That's the next evolution for women's cricket [and] more globally as well for women's sport - we're starting to see that happen more and more often across the board."

Pak to tour Australia for 3 ODIs, T20Is in November

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced on Tuesday that the Men in Green will visit Australia for a white-ball series between November 4 and 18 this year. The tour, which will mark the start for Australia's white ball schedule for the summer of 2024-25, will comprise six games in total - three ODIs and as many T20Is - to be played across six venues from 4 to 18 November 2024. Pakistan will be returning to Australia after a gap of nearly 11 months, after having competed in the Benaud-Qadir Trophy, which comprised three Test matches played across Perth, Sydney and Melbourne in December

2023-January 2024. The three-match Dettol Men's ODI series will begin on 4 November at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground. Pakistan and Australia will then play in Adelaide and Perth on 8 and 10 November, respectively. Pakistan last played an ODI series on Australian soil back in 2016, which saw the home-side come out on top. Subsequently, Pakistan and Australia will face one another in the three-match Dettol Men's T20I Series. Pakistan's last T20I outing on Australian soil was back in 2022, wherein the men in green appeared in the final of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup. The series will start at The Gabba in Brisbane.

Action will then move to the Sydney Cricket Ground; Pakistan's last T20I at the venue saw them beat New Zealand at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup semi-final. Hobart will be the last stop on the tour, where the final T20I will be played on 18 November. **Full schedule:** ODI Series: 4 November: MCG, Melbourne; 8 November: Adelaide Oval, Adelaide; 10 November: Perth Stadium, Perth. T20I Series: 14 November: The Gabba, Brisbane; 16 November: SCG, Sydney; 18 November: Bellerive Oval, Hobart.

Sania, Nabeel overjoyed to receive Pride of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Futuristic Learning founder, Sania Alam, and her student, Nabeel Hasan, who have been awarded with esteemed Pride of Pakistan believes receiving the award was a milestone that shows their efforts were valued and celebrated. The award recognizes their contributions in advancing education through innovative Super-Learning training and for raising Pakistan's flag internationally. Sania received the award for her efforts in transforming the educational system and enhancing human capabilities. Her Super-Learning program significantly reduces the time it takes students to complete their education, demonstrating the ability of finishing 12 years of academic work in just two to three years. Nabeel, trained by Sania, has made a name for himself in memory sports by setting two Guinness World Records, previously held by competitors from India. He memorized 40 sets of three-digit numbers, totaling 120 digits, breaking the record for 'Most three-digit flash numbers



memorized.' Additionally, Nabeel memorized 30 digits in 4 seconds, surpassing the record for 'Most Numbers Memorized in 4 Seconds,' earning him the Pride of Pakistan award and showcasing the talent of Pakistani youth on a global stage. Sania's accolades also include the Brain of the Year Award from the UK Brain Trust, joining the ranks of Stephen Hawking and John Glenn. In Pakistan, she received the Prime Minister's Youth Excellence Award and has played a significant role in the Prime Minister's National Youth Council of Pakistan. Another key factor in her receiving the Pride of Pakistan award was her successful coaching of students who secured 54

medals and 15 trophies across various mind sports categories, claiming six Guinness World Records and titles such as World Memory Champion, World Speed Reading Champion and Junior World Mind Mapping Champion. Sania was also honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award by US. Sania in a statement to the youth said, "In this fast-changing world, if you want to achieve success, you should embrace Super Learning skills. There is just no way around it." "Receiving the Pride of Pakistan award is not just an honor, but a milestone that marks my unwavering commitment to education. The Pride of Pakistan title is a reminder that when we lift the potential of our minds, we elevate our nation. I am grateful for this esteemed acknowledgment." Nabeel said, "Being awarded the Pride of Pakistan is an incredibly humbling experience. This award is not just for me but for every young Pakistani who dreams big. Such awards reassure us that our efforts are seen, valued, and celebrated."

Boulter loses to Azarenka in Miami fourth round



MIAMI (Agencies): British number one Katie Boulter is out of the Miami Open after a fourth-round defeat by Victoria Azarenka of Belarus. The 27-year-old, ranked 30th in the world, lost 7-5 6-1. World number one Iga Swiatek is also out after a 6-4 6-2 defeat by 14th seed Ekaterina Alexandrova of Russia. American world number three Coco Gauff was stunned by French 23rd seed Caroline Garcia, who reached the last eight in Miami for the first time with a 6-3 1-6 6-2 victory. Two-time Grand Slam champion Azarenka, 34, will play Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan in the quarter-finals. Garcia, who beat four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka in the previous round, will play American Danielle Collins for a place in the semi-finals. Collins beat Romania's Sorana Cirstea 6-3 6-2 to progress to the last eight. Elsewhere, Kazakhstan's world number four Elena Rybakina progressed with a 6-3 7-5 win over American Madison Keys to set up a meeting with Greek eighth seed Maria Sakkari. Sakkari moved in to the quarter-finals with a walkover after Russian

opponent Anna Kalinskaya withdrew. America fifth-seed Jessica Pegula progressed to the last eight with a 7-6 6-3 win over Emma Navarro and will face Alexandrova. Boulter battles but falls short Boulter had made it through to the fourth round of the tournament for the first time by beating Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia in straight sets. The Briton broke back to deny Azarenka as the former world number one served for the first set, before saving two break points to level the opener at 5-5. But three-time Miami champion Azarenka struck again two games later, breaking Boulter to love to clinch a tight first set. The second set proved much more one-sided as Azarenka stormed into a 5-0 lead with a double break before Boulter was able to get on the board in the sixth game. Boulter managed to save two match points but she could not deny Azarenka, whose upcoming opponent Putintseva beat Ukraine's Anhelina Kalinina 6-4 7-6 (7-5). Swiatek overpowered by Alexandrova Swiatek, who was hoping to complete the sunshine double of Indian

Wells and the Miami Open, was broken in the opening game of the match. The Pole then struggled to handle the power of Alexandrova's service game and from the baseline. "Second quarter-final here, second year in a row," Alexandrova said. "Beating Iga after so many tries and she's number one. It's the first time I beat the number one. All three things are very special to me." "I'm not sure if it's a surprise or not, but I just worked quite hard on the court and it paid off." "I had the match in control" - Gauff Gauff, 20, who won her maiden Grand Slam at the US Open last year, was hoping to do better in her home tournament. "I'm the type of person where every loss weighs on me heavy, especially one like today where I felt I could have done better and I felt like I had the match in control, especially after the second set," said Gauff. "It helps being home, so I can just drive and be home and be in my own bed. I wish I could have done better this hard-court season." Gauff, who lost to Swiatek in the 2022 French Open final, added she was "excited" for the upcoming clay season.



BANGKOK: Park Jin-seop of South Korea celebrates after scoring the team's third goal during the FIFA World Cup Asian second qualifier Group C match between Thailand and South Korea.

Players report for physical fitness camp at Kakul

ABBOTTABAD (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan players began to report for the physical fitness camp here at Kakul, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced Tuesday. Taking to X, formerly Twitter, the cricket board shared pictures of a bunch of the fitness-camp-bound players at the "home of fitness". "Players assemble for the fitness camp at Kakul, Abbottabad," wrote PCB. A total of 29 players will undergo fitness training in the camp, organised in collaboration with the Pakistan Army. "The camp, organised in collaboration with the Pakistan Army, is strategically designed to prepare the players for the upcoming series and tournaments, including the home T20I series against New Zealand, the away T20I series against Ireland and England, and the forthcoming ICC T20 World Cup in the USA and West Indies," the PCB said in a press release. "The camp will focus on team building and aims to enhance the physical and mental strength of the players, ensuring they are in the best condition to face the challenges ahead. "Under the guidance of experienced trainers and coaches, the players will undergo a comprehensive training regime tailored to elevate their fitness levels, agility, leadership, strategic thinking and overall performance on the field." The camp is scheduled to commence today on March 26 and will conclude on April 8. Pace bowler Mohammad Amir and all-rounder Imad Wasim, who recently came out of retirement, are also included in the camp along with top-order batter Usman Khan. Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, Saim Ayub, Fakhar Zaman, Sahibzada Farhan, Haseebullah, Saud Shakeel, Usman Khan, Mohammad Haris, Salman Ali Agha, Azam Khan, Iftikhar Ahmed, Irfan Khan Niazi, Shadab Khan, Imad Wasim, Usama Mir, Mohammad Nawaz, Mehman Mumtaz, Abrar Ahmed, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Hasan Ali, Mohammad Ali, Zaman Khan, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Aamir Jamal, Haris Rauf and Mohammad Amir.

Five-goal Australia, Iraq advance in Asia WC qualifying

HONG KONG (AFP): Australia and Iraq were in rampant goalscoring form on Tuesday as they both cruised into the next stage of Asian qualifying for the 2026 World Cup, while Son Heung-min's South Korea are on the brink of joining them after beating Thailand. Australia handed out a 5-0 drubbing to Lebanon in Canberra in Group I while Iraq progressed from Group F after brushing aside the Philippines by the same score in Manila. In Group C, Son scored as South Korea look favourites to go through after a 3-0 win against Thailand in Bangkok, while China got their qualifying hopes back on track with a 4-1 win against Singapore. Park Jin-seob and Lee Jae-sun joined the Tottenham Hotspur star on the scoresheet and South Korea now need only a draw in Singapore in June to go through. Australia's Craig Goodwin led his side to a fourth straight qualifying victory with two goals in a man-of-the-match performance, together with strikes from Kusini Yengi, John Iredale and an own goal. "When I knew Craig Goodwin younger, he didn't believe in himself like he does these days," Australia coach Graham

Arnold said of the 32-year-old, who also created the opener for Yengi and whose free-kick led to the own goal. "He's a top-quality player, but he's a fantastic person and a great leader. "His delivery, set pieces, is fantastic and his finishing, it's just got better and better as he gets older." Palestine, their supporters in Gaza reeling from the Israel-Hamas war, gave themselves a great chance of going through with Australia by beating Bangladesh 1-0 in Dhaka. Palestine just need a draw with third-placed Lebanon in their next match in June to guarantee their progress from Group I. Captain Wu double Ayman Hussein's 14th-minute penalty set Iraq on their way against the Philippines, ranked 139th in the world. Amir Al Ammari's goal and a second from centre-forward Hussein gave the visitors a 3-0 half-time lead. They completed the job with second-half strikes from Zidane Iqbal and Zaid Tahseen to make it four wins out of four in qualifying. Indonesia beat Vietnam 3-0 in Hanoi in the group's other game. In Tianjin, China moved into second place in Group C behind South

Korea after hammering Singapore 4-1 thanks to new captain Wu Lei's double, Fei Nanduo's second-half penalty and a late goal from Wei Shihao. Wu took over the arm-band from Zhang Linpeng who was left out of the starting line-up by coach Branko Ivankovic. Zhang had quit the national side after China threw away a two-goal lead in the 2-2 draw in Singapore last week, only to make an abrupt U-turn. Wu put China ahead in the 21st minute, running on to Zhang Yuning's through ball before deftly chipping the onrushing Singapore goalkeeper Hassan Sunny. But the lead lasted only seconds as Singapore broke down the right straight from the restart with Ryhan Stewart crossing for Faris Ramli to power a header past Wang Dalei. Fei restored the lead from the spot on 65 minutes. China finished the match with 10 men after Li Yuanyi was given a straight red card for a foul in the 79th minute. But Wu cut in from the left and lashed home five minutes from time before Wei scored the fourth. The top two from each of the nine Asian groups will advance to the third round of 2026 World Cup qualifying.

Bangladesh recall Shakib Al Hasan for second Sri Lanka Test

DHAKA (Agencies): Star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan on Tuesday, was recalled to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) after the hosts succumbed to a hammering 328-run defeat against Sri Lanka in Sylhet on Monday. Towhid Hridoy, who is yet to make his Test debut, made way for Shakib in the squad after being left out of Bangladesh's Playing XI for the first Test. Uncapped Mushfik Hasan has been ruled out of the second and final Test because of an ankle injury and was consequently replaced by fellow

Premier League this month. Shakib Al Hasan was recalled to the squad by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) after the hosts succumbed to a hammering 328-run defeat against Sri Lanka in Sylhet on Monday. Towhid Hridoy, who is yet to make his Test debut, made way for Shakib in the squad after being left out of Bangladesh's Playing XI for the first Test. Uncapped Mushfik Hasan has been ruled out of the second and final Test because of an ankle injury and was consequently replaced by fellow

pacer Hasan Mahmud. The home side was outclassed by Sri Lanka in all departments but their batting unit disappointed the most as they failed to amass 200 runs in either innings. Bangladesh Test squad: Najmul Hossain Shanto (c), Zakir Hasan, Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Shadman Islam, Liton Das, Mominul Haque, Shakib Al Hasan, Shahadat Hossain Dipu, Mehidi Hassan Miraz, Nayeem Hasan, Taijul Islam, Shoriful Islam, Syed Khaled Ahmed, Nahid Rana, Hasan Mahmud.

Hawks stage 30-point comeback to stun Celtics

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): The Atlanta Hawks produced a comeback for the ages to overturn a 30-point deficit and defeat the Eastern Conference-leading Boston Celtics 120-118 on Monday. Boston, who were confirmed as having clinched the Eastern Conference's top seed earlier on Monday, appeared to be cruising towards a resounding win after outscoring Atlanta 44-22 in the first quarter. The Celtics raced into a 30-point advantage midway through the second quarter before Atlanta woke up and began chipping into the Boston lead. The Hawks kept the rally going into the second half, narrowing the gap further with a 34-22 third quarter before harnessing that momentum into the fourth quarter to complete a dramatic win. De'Andre Hunter led

the Hawks scoring with 24 points, including a decisive three-pointer with 10 seconds remaining that gave Atlanta a four-point cushion and effectively made the game safe. Hunter was backed with 22 points from Bogdan Bogdanovic while Dejounte Murray finished with 19 points, 15 assists and five rebounds. Hawks coach Quin Snyder praised the unrelenting support of the Atlanta home crowd in helping drive his team to a remarkable victory. "Tonight the way we started the game, and the way Boston started, their energy really gave us a lift," Snyder said of the Atlanta fans. "Anytime you're down that much you have to have something out of the ordinary a little bit to get back in the game." And when you

have a group of people you know who are behind you thick or thin, rain or shine -- and there was a lot of rain early -- they were a big part of helping the sun come out tonight." Atlanta improved to 32-39 and remain in 10th place in the East, on course for a spot in the play-in tournament. Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla said his team paid the price for not killing the game off, adding that Atlanta's physicality had caused his team problems in the second half. "It's a good lesson," Mazzulla said. "Credit to them for battling back. "I thought their physicality -- they were extremely physical as soon as the ball got past half-court. I thought that messed up our offense, and they made us work for everything."



In brief

RPO hold "Open Court"

RAWALPINDI (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Region Babar Sarfraz Alpa held an open court in the Regional Police Office under the open door policy of the Punjab government and as per the vision of IGP Punjab. In the open court, the citizens of the four districts of the region, Rawalpindi, Attock, Jhelum and Chakwal, submitted their applications for redressal of grievances. Yasir Ali resident of Cantt took a stance that action be taken against the plaintiff case under 182. On which the RPO issued orders to City Police Officer (CPO) Khalid Mehmood Hamdani for immediate further action. Another complainant Imran submitted application regarding the transaction and dispute over the land. On which immediate inquiry orders were issued to the CPO Rawalpindi. Additionally, RPO also issued order to the relevant officers for immediate action on other miscellaneous requests. Speaking on this occasion, RPO Rawalpindi said that timely access to justice is the basic right of every citizen, promising concerted efforts to uphold justice and merit in addressing citizens' concerns also.

AIOU inks MoU with Takmil

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Takmil - Teach A Kid Make Individual Life, regarding cooperation and facilitation to bring out-of-school children into the education network. Dean, Faculty of Education, Prof Dr Fazal ur Rahman and Director, Coordination and Follow-up, Prof Dr Syed Amir Shah represented the Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof Dr Nasir Mahmood in the ceremony. Chairman, Department of Distance, Non-Formal and Continuing Education, Dr Muhammad Ajmal Chaudhry from AIOU and a board member from Takmil, Dr Sania signed the MoU. According to MoU, Allama Iqbal Open University will provide educational and technical support to bring out-of-school children into the educational network. This includes support for teachers' training, conducting training sessions for master trainers, and assistance in organizing educational activities. Dr Fazal ur Rehman, addressing the ceremony, mentioned that both public and private sector organizations, as well as various NGOs, are working on out-of-school children, but they are still encountering some challenges.

10 drug dealers nabbed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 10 drug dealers and recovered more than 08.5 kg of drugs from their possession during crackdown here on Tuesday. According to police spokesman, Rawat police held Murtaza and recovered 1.5 kg drugs from his possession. Similarly, Gujjar Khan police nabbed Waheed Ullah and recovered 1.4 kg drugs from his custody. While, Kahuta police arrested Mazhar and recovered 1.2 kg drugs from his possession. Following operation, Wah Cantt police recovered 1.2 kg drugs from Awal Khan. Race Course police arrested Riaz and 530 gram of charas was recovered from him while 560 gram of charas was recovered from Shoaib. Airport police recovered 550 gram of charas from Hayyat and 520 gram of charas was recovered from Muqadas by Morgah police.



ISLAMABAD: Federal minister for Aviation Khawaja Muhammed Asif chairs a meeting on outsourcing of airports and privatisation of PIACL at aviation division.

PUC applauds UN resolution on Gaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) on Tuesday welcomed the United Nations Security Council resolution on Gaza, affirming that Israel's actions has constituted genocide in Gaza, surpassing even the brutality witnessed during the Second World War.

Emphasizing the imperative of implementing the resolution, the Council underscored its significance as a pivotal victory for Islamic and just nations. Pakistan and its people ardently aspired for the establishment of Palestine as a secure and sovereign state, it said adding that demonstrating unwavering solidarity with their oppressed Palestinian brethren, Pakistan and its populace advocated for a fair, comprehensive, and sustainable resolution to the Palestinian conflict.

These sentiments were expressed by the Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, along with esteemed scholars including Allama Abdul Haq Mujahid, Maulana Muhammad Rafiq Jami, Maulana Nauman Hashir, Maulana Asad Zakaria Qasmi, Maulana Muhammad

Shafi Qasmi, Maulana Asadullah Farooq, Allama Zubair Abid, Maulana Muhammad Ashfaq Pittafi, Maulana Abu Bakr Hameed Sabri, Maulana Tahir Aqeel Awan, Maulana Aziz Akbar Qasmi, Maulana Haq Nawaz Khalid, Maulana Obaidullah Gormani, Allama Tahirul Hasan, Maulana Hanif Osmani, and Maulana Muhammad Asghar Khosa, among others.

Expressing grave concern over the dire situation in Palestine, where over 30,000 Palestinians, including more than 20,000 children and women, have tragically lost their lives since October 7, the religious scholars and leaders highlighted the unprecedented suffering endured by humanity in Gaza. They condemned Israel's egregious violations of moral principles and commended the Security Council's resolution as a beacon of hope amidst the despair plaguing Palestine and the Muslim Ummah. They asserted that the resolution marked a crucial initial step in halting Israel's brutal campaign in Gaza, pledging continued support from Islamic nations, particularly Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar, and the reli-

gious factions of the Muslim Ummah, to secure the rightful establishment of Palestine as a safe and independent entity.

Raising the voice for a just, comprehensive, and sustainable resolution to the Palestinian conflict, the leaders decried the relentless Israeli assaults during the sacred month of Ramadan, which had inflicted untold suffering, hunger, and deprivation upon the people of Gaza. They stressed the urgent need to implement the Security Council resolution to curb Israel's belligerence, terrorism, and cruelty, thereby averting further devastation and bloodshed.

Furthermore, the PUC vehemently condemned the recent attack on Chinese citizens in Bisham. Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi conveyed profound sadness and sorrow regarding this deplorable incident, extending heartfelt condolences to the families of the deceased Chinese residents.

Ashrafi emphasized the profound significance of the Pakistan-China friendship, asserting that every nefarious scheme devised by adversaries would ultimately falter.

PBM, TIKA host Iftar dinner for orphans

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Baitul Mal, (PBM) in collaboration with the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), organised an Iftar dinner on Tuesday for 100 orphans from PBM Sweet Home to mark World Orphans Day.

Speaking on the occasion, Muhsin BALCI, TiKa's Country Head, praised PBM's dedication to caring for impoverished and orphaned children, and reiterated his commitment to collaborating with PBM to safeguard the rights of orphaned children. On the occasion, Country Head TiKa and other team members also presented gifts to the orphan children.

He also utilised the opportunity to raise awareness among people about their important role in improving the lives of poor and orphaned children. The event was also attended by Country Head TIKA, Muhsin BALCI, Directors of PBM and other officials.

Law minister chairs meeting for tax reforms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on Tuesday said that Federal Board of Revenue would nominate full time departmental representative for courts so that tax related cases could be concluded as early as possible.

A meeting regarding tax reforms and tax collection was held under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Law Raja Naeem Akbar and Afaq Qureshi Member Operations (IR).

Some of the crucial decisions were taken during the meeting. The law minister while giving direction said that FBR will nominate full time departmental representative instead of 15 days duration

who will appear on behalf of FBR.

This will help handling the tax related cases in a proper manner and avoid adjournment of cases.

The law minister also advised that each hearing will be reported back with a performance to evaluate the performance.

The alternative dispute resolution committee will be constituted in this regard, he said. Ministry of Law will nominate retired Judges of High Court and FBR, and issue the notification. The law minister also gave directions that FBR will revise Panel lists to improve the efficacy. It was also decided that progress will be made to resolve the cases without delay. Lastly, if required the law ministry will provide legal assistance to Federal Board of Revenue.

RDA lodges FIRs against 12 illegal housing schemes

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of the Director General (DG) Kinza Murtaza has lodged FIRs against 12 illegal housing schemes.

According to RDA spokesman, the Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate RDA lodged First Information Reports (FIRs) against Sheikh Ifitikhar, Sheikh Sarosh, Sheikh Intiaz, Nayyar Raza, Muhammad Rizwan, Abdul Majed, Tahir Parvez, Fazal Mad, Muhammad Parvez, Abrar Rashid, Mohsin Ali, Ishaq Malik, Muhammad Aslam, Chaudhry Zafar Ali, Chaudhry Muhammad Ifitikhar, Muhammad Ahsan Sardar, Sardar Muhammad Jawad Khan, Sardar Muhammad Nasir Khan, Asif Parvez and Malik Fakhrudin, the owners of the illegal housing schemes namely Gulshan-e-Kashmir (Asia Housing Scheme) Mouza Misriot Kollian Chakri Road, Rawal

Enclave/Rawal Town and Housing Enclave Mouza Ping Lar Ranyal, Faisal Town Phase II Mouza Kollian Padpilu Thalian, Aman Developer Mouza Rajar Chakri Road, Manan City, Multi Garden Phase-II and Khayaban Ifitikhar at Mauza Chahan, Real Estate & Builder, Nabeel Block Kohsar Extension F Block, Kohsar Extension and Kohsar Extension F Block at Mauza Pind Gondal Dhok Sayedan Chongian Taxila, Top View City D-17 at Mauza Paswal Taxila Rawalpindi.

He said that the MP&TE Directorate RDA was taking legal actions against the illegal advertisements and marketing of illegal housing schemes. He informed that before lodging FIRs, RDA had issued notices to the illegal housing schemes. RDA had warned the rules violators that without getting the requisite NOC from RDA for launching the housing schemes, apartment proj-

ects, commercial buildings, etc. within the controlled area of RDA, all sorts of advertisements, marketing and development of such projects are illegal.

Therefore, RDA had also advised the citizens not to invest in illegal housing schemes. The owners of the illegal housing projects were also asked to contact RDA for getting NOC/approval of the scheme as per law, otherwise, strict legal action would be taken against them. The spokesman said RDA had sent letters with request/information to the Governor State Bank of Pakistan, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Rawalpindi, FIA Cyber Crime Islamabad, Overseas Pakistanis Foundation Islamabad, SNGPL Islamabad, District Collector Rawalpindi, District Council Rawalpindi, PEMRA Islamabad and Commissioner Islamabad about illegal advertisements of private housing schemes on social media.

Traders losing customers due to encroachments

RAWALPINDI (APP): City traders have expressed concern about ever-increasing encroachments on roads and demanded the Rawalpindi Municipal Corporation to remove these illegal encroachments to end frequent traffic jams which were affecting their business.

General Secretary Anjuman-Tajraan Rawalpindi Tahir Taj Bhatti led by a delegation met Municipal Regulation Officer Ali Imran and conveyed their concern

regarding growing encroachments in the markets. He said that as Eid shopping was gaining momentum with each passing day, there was a need to widen the entrance of interior city bazaars including Talwara Bazaar, Trunk Bazaar, Bohar Bazar, Sabzi Mandi, Moti Bazaar and others.

The MRO acknowledging the veracity of the trader's complaints assured them that their concerns would be addressed.

Meanwhile talking to APP, Tahir Bhatti said that due to lack of parking space and encroachments in many markets of downtown areas, traders were losing customers and distances of minutes were being covered in hours due to acute road encroachments and traffic stickups. He said traders and commuters, especially women, were facing great difficulties during routine shopping, and it doubled over on celebratory shopping.

Pakistan showcase its tourism potential at MATTA, Malaysia tourism fair 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), in collaboration with five private tour operator companies, proudly represented Pakistan and showcased its tourism potential at the MATTA, Malaysia Tourism Fair 2024. The Pakistan pavilion at MATTA was inaugurated by the High Commissioner of Pakistan in Malaysia, Syed Ahsan Raza Shah, a news release said issued here.

The national MATTA fair takes place twice a year from 22-24th March in Kuala Lumpur and draws attention to more than 180,000 visitors each time.

Aftab ur Rehman Rana, Managing Director PTDC in his message said that, "We are thrilled to represent Pakistan at the MATTA, Malaysia Tourism Fair 2024. This platform provides an excellent opportunity to showcase the diverse and rich tourism offerings of Pakistan to the international community."

We are committed to promoting Pakistan as a preferred tourist destination and are confident that our participation will enhance bilateral tourism ties between Pakistan and Malaysia."

Pakistan's pavilion at the fair

attracted a significant number of visitors including travel agents, tour operators, and travel enthusiasts, who expressed keen interest in exploring the various tourist attractions and cultural heritage sites that Pakistan has to offer.

Pakistan's participation in the MATTA, Malaysia Tourism Fair 2024, highlights the country's ongoing efforts to revitalize and promote its tourism sector on the international stage, aiming to attract a growing number of foreign tourists to experience the natural beauty, cultural diversity, and hospitality of Pakistan.



CDA reconstitutes inspection team to ensure transparency in Islamabad Housing Schemes

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to enhance transparency and ensure the legitimacy of housing schemes in Islamabad, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has reconstituted an Inspection Committee tasked with verifying the physical aspects of these projects.

The decision was made during the meeting of the CDA Board, said a senior official on Tuesday.

The reconstitution of the committee comes as a response to the need for thorough verification of housing schemes in the capital city.

Recognizing the importance of this task, the CDA Board approved the composition of the Inspection Committee, which will be chaired by the Member

Engineering of the CDA.

The five-member committee comprises officials from various departments within the CDA, including the Director of Building Control, the Cost Accountant from the Finance Department, the Deputy Director of Land Survey, and a Town Planner who will serve as the Member-cum-Secretary of the committee.

A key directive from the CDA Board is for the committee to conduct physical and ground verifications of the housing schemes within a strict timeline of one month. This mandate underscores the urgency and importance of the verification process, aiming to uphold transparency, efficacy, and clarity in the functioning of these housing projects

Afghanistan gets Hajj quota

KABUL (Ariana News): Afghanistan has secured a quota of 30,000 for the 2024 Hajj pilgrimage, officials announced Tuesday. Acting Minister of Hajj and Religious Affairs Noor Mohammad Saqib said in a press conference that two airlines have been contracted for the transportation of pilgrims. He added that the cost of this year's Hajj has been set at \$3,865 for each pilgrim. There is also a Hajj quota for members of the IEA, heirs of martyrs, the disabled and refugees.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Ramazan 16, 1445 — Wednesday, March 27, 2024

Food and cash distributed

KABUL (Khaama Press): World Food Programme (WFP) in collaboration with the technical assistance of the World Vision organization and in coordination with this department, has distributed food items to 3,472 needy families in the Char Sadah district of Ghur province. Similarly, authorities at the Department of Migrants and Returnees Affairs in Ghur have announced the distribution of cash assistance to 222 needy families in the Shahrak district.

Tuberculosis cases declined by 5.5%

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Public Health of the Islamic Emirate states that the number of positive cases of tuberculosis in Afghanistan has decreased in 2023 compared to previous years.

The spokesperson for the Ministry, Sharafat Zaman Amarkhil, said: "These incidents have decreased compared to other years. Compared to 2019, the number of positive tuberculosis cases in Afghanistan has decreased by 6 percent, and if we compare this year's number with that of 2022, the positive cases have decreased by 5.5%."

Sharafat Zaman further states that during the year 2023, nearly 50,000 positive cases of tuberculosis

were registered in Afghanistan, including women and children.

Sharafat Zaman Amarkhil in this regard said: "In the year 2023, more than 49,533 cases of tuberculosis were registered across the country, with 44 percent of tuberculosis diseases in women aged over 15 years. 34 percent are male patients whose ages are also above 15 years, and 22 percent are children under the age of ten affected by this disease."

According to the information from the Ministry of Public Health of the Islamic Emirate, the treatment of patients who are called MDR or patients with resistant tuberculosis, which resists the drugs of this disease, continues and

their number is about 658.

The spokesperson of the Ministry of Public Health adds: "In the provision of services to patients with tuberculosis, 873 health centers are active at the country level. In major cities, 68 private hospitals coordinate with the Ministry of Public Health to activate tuberculosis treatment units, and diagnostic machines are also active in more than 90 centers."

Based on the figures from the Ministry, for the prevention of tuberculosis, public awareness has been conducted through media in the capital and provinces, and new sites or centers have been established for better access for patients.

IEA hails UN resolution on Gaza ceasefire

KABUL (Ariana News): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan welcomed on Tuesday the newly adopted UN Security Council resolution that demands an immediate ceasefire in Gaza during the holy month of Ramadan.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that it supports Hamas and Palestinians' call for a permanent ceasefire, the withdrawal of occupying forces, humanitarian aid, the return of displaced people to their homes, the reconstruction of Gaza and an end to the siege.

The statement called on the UNSC to immediately ensure enforcement of a ceasefire in Gaza and end the ongoing crisis.

The IEA called on the UNSC and influential countries to take practical steps to prevent "genocide" against Palestinians and find a fair solution to the issue of Palestine. The UN Security Council on Monday adopted Resolution 2728 demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza during Ramadan and called for the release of all hostages.

More than 32,200 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed in the Israeli offensive since October 7 in Gaza. Over 74,500 others have been injured.

Historical artifacts uncovered

HERAT (Khaama Press): Local government officials in the Western Province of Herat say that over the past two years, more than 200 historical artifacts have been discovered.

The Bakhtar News Agency, a media outlet close to the Taliban administration, citing Abdul Jabbar Nowruz, the director of museums and archives of the Information and Culture Directorate in Herat province, has reported that they have discovered 215 historical artifacts from this province in the past two years. Nowruz added that these artifacts have been handed over to the Herat Museum, but no explanation regarding their historical significance and nature has been given.

The Taliban authorities continue to announce the donation of about 300 other historical artifacts by cultural enthusiasts to the Herat Provincial Museum, while the claim of Atiqullah Azizi, the deputy minister of information and culture of the Taliban government, that more than 60,000 historical artifacts are preserved in the National Museum.

It is worth mentioning that Mr. Azizi had previously requested assistance from the Japanese government in enriching and constructing a new building for the National Museum of Afghanistan.

Historical artifacts in Afghanistan have largely been destroyed or lost due to years of war and insecurity, and significant study has not been conducted in the exploration and investigation of historical artifacts so far.

Daesh weakened in Afghanistan: IEA

KABUL (TOLONews): Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, in response to the claim by Michael McCaul, the chairman of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee regarding the presence of Daesh in Afghanistan, said that Daesh has been suppressed in Afghanistan and cannot pose a threat to other countries.

Zabihullah Mujahid once again pledged that Afghan soil will not be used against any country.

"Daesh has been significantly weakened compared to when American forces were here, and the forces of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan have used all means to suppress Daesh. Even if Daesh remains here 1 or 2 percent, they can neither recruit soldiers here nor can they create a threat," he added.

Previously, Michael McCaul, the chairman of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee, criticized the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in an interview with CBS News, calling it a breeding ground for Daesh in



Afghanistan.

Michael McCaul said in the interview that the manner of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, which did not include an assessment of Daesh capabilities, was a mistake.

"The way it was done and the way we left it with no ISR capability, that intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance, puts us in danger where this is a new battleground training ground for (Daesh)," he added.

A number of military and political experts said that Daesh does not exist in Afghanistan and that America wants to portray Afghanistan to the world as unstable. "The main source of terrorism is America, and this country has created proxy groups and wants to achieve its goals through these means," Kamran Aman, a military analyst, told TOLONews.

"There is no need for world superpowers to create such concerns that further deteriorate the situation of our country," said Ahmad Khan Andar, a political analyst.

The New York Times has also recently claimed in a report that Daesh's Khorasan branch intends to attack the embassies of China, India, and Iran in Afghanistan; however, the Islamic Emirate emphasizes that Daesh does not have the capability to attack diplomatic missions.

Russia contributes \$1 million to WFP in Afghanistan

KABUL (Ariana News): The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in Afghanistan announced Monday Russia has contributed \$1 million to support nearly 150,000 people with food assistance.

WFP said in a statement that this funding will allow it to buy 1,000 metric tons of food to support 21,000 Afghan families – nearly 150,000 people – with life-saving food assistance. "With a large part of the Afghan people in dire need, humanitarian assistance is critical for preserving lives. The unprecedented humani-

tarian crisis in Afghanistan necessitates an urgent response. The international community, including major donors, should recognize the imperative for post-conflict reconstruction of Afghanistan," said Dmitriy A. Zhimov, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation in Afghanistan.

WFP noted that currently, 16 million people – one third of the Afghan population – are going hungry.

"Record levels of food assistance thanks to our generous donors have paid off and helped avert a large-

scale humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan," said Hsiao-Wei Lee, Country Director of WFP in Afghanistan. "Thanks to this assistance and a better harvest, we now see slight improvements, but they remain fragile and could deteriorate quickly and reverse. WFP needs to continue humanitarian food assistance across Afghanistan and in parallel we need to be able to make investments into the productivity and resilience of communities, so that they can break the cycle of dependency." Last year, a funding cri-

sis forced WFP to drop 10 million hungry people from food assistance and halve food rations for many to the bare minimum

In 2023, WFP reached a total of 18.6 million people through all of its programmes, 80 percent of whom were women and children. WFP distributed 600,000 metric tons of food and disbursed US\$190 million in cash or vouchers to help families meet their food needs.

WFP said that the latest contribution brings Russia's total contribution to \$4 million over three years.

Bayat Foundation distributes Ramadan aid in Nangarhar

JALALABAD (Ariana News): As part of its aid program for the holy month of Ramadan, Bayat Foundation has distributed food assistance packages to dozens of needy families in Nangarhar province.

The packages which include flour, oil and rice, have been distributed to the needy after a transparent survey. Officials of Bayat Foundation said that the Ramadan aid program will continue to cover Afghan provinces.

"Bayat Foundation helps the needy every year. This year also, on the occasion of Ramadan, it distributed aid in Jalalabad city. The assistance includes flour, oil and rice," said Attaullah Sahil, the representative of Bayat Foundation in the eastern zone of the country. Thanking Bayat



Foundation, recipients called on other organizations to help them during the holy month.

"We are very thankful to Bayat Foundation for dis-

tributing aid to us. God help them. They have given us oil, rice and flour," said Sima, a recipient.

Bayat Foundation not only regularly assists the

needy, but it also serves in various fields, including education and health – constantly working to improve the lives of Afghans in need.

Over 250 schools unusable due to quake damage



HERAT (Ariana News): Last year's earthquake in Herat not only had a devastating impact on quake-hit victims, who lost loved ones and their homes, but also on children as scores of schools are unusable.

In addition to the loss of lives and widespread destruction, 256 schools were badly damaged in the quake.

Herat education officials said in addition to these schools, another 144 schools are also in need of major repairs.

This comes just days after the start of the new academic year, which has resulted in hundreds of children now having to be taught in open-air classrooms.

Teachers at some of the schools have said it's too dangerous to use many of these schools.

In just one school, which suffered extensive damage in the earthquake, over 300 children are being taught outdoors.

These teachers say they hope repair work will soon start so that they can move children back in doors.

Officials from the Department of Education in Herat say some of the school buildings are not in a state to be repaired as the damage was extensive.

Officials said there are 1,400 schools in the province.

Four large earthquakes measuring 6.3 magnitude each and their aftershocks affected Herat province in western Afghanistan in early October 2023.

The first two earthquakes occurred on 7 October at 11:11 am and 11:42 am near the city of Herat, followed by many

aftershocks.

On 11 and 15 October, two other magnitude 6.3 earthquakes struck the same area.

The World Health Organization estimated 1,482 fatalities, 2,100 injuries, 43,400 people affected and 114,000 people requiring humanitarian aid.

KABUL (Khaama Press): The International Amnesty Organization has expressed concerns that Pakistan's program to continue expelling Afghan migrants will put many of them at risk.

The organization has urged countries to expedite the processing of asylum cases and the resettlement of Afghan migrants.

Amnesty International has also called on the Pakistani government to halt the mass expulsion of Afghan migrants and to

protect the rights of asylum seekers in accordance with international laws.

According to Pakistani officials, after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, around six hundred to eight hundred thousand Afghans migrated to Pakistan.

Many intend to seek asylum in other countries, while some face uncertain fate.

The Pakistani government recently instructed its police force to begin the second phase of expelling Afghan migrants.

Half of Afghanistan's population faces mental distress amid low quality of life

KABUL (Khaama Press): The World Health Organization, in its joint session with the Office of Drugs and Crime, the European Union, and Japan, discussed the psychological consequences of drug use, stating that half of Afghanistan's population is struggling

with mental distress, which has significantly impacted their quality of life.

Hanan Balkhi, the regional director of the World Health Organization, stated at this session titled "Deepening Crisis: Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders Paralyzing

Afghan Society," held in Vienna, that 50% of Afghanistan's population is experiencing various forms of mental distress.

While she didn't elaborate on the statistics regarding mental health issues, she emphasized that these conditions have affected the

quality of life, rendering individuals more vulnerable to drug use. The session emphasized the need for effective solutions to reduce the consequences of drug use. Raffaella Iodice, the acting head of the European Union delegation in Afghanistan, stressed the importance of investing in global and Afghan mental health and substance use disorder initiatives as a shared responsibility of the global community.

Meanwhile, according to the latest Gallup research findings, Afghanistan has been rated as the unhappiest country for several consecutive years, with significant portions of the population expressing dissatisfaction with life in Afghanistan. A similar report from the "World

Happiness Center" indicates that Afghanistan has ranked at the bottom of the list for the fifth consecutive year in terms of happiness.

Unemployment, political instability, decades of bloody wars, gender discrimination, poverty, environmental conditions, and low literacy rates are cited as major reasons for the Afghan people's failure to build satisfying and joyful lives.

However, there is still a lack of responsive and executable plans to improve people's quality of life and reduce the destructive consequences of drug use. The World Health Organization, in its session, emphasized the need for prioritizing sustainable budget allocation for combating drug use and implementing mental health programs in Afghanistan.

Israel and Hamas dig in as int’l pressure builds for a ceasefire

JERUSALEM (AP): Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday vowed to press ahead with Israel's offensive and blasted a UN Security Council resolution calling for a pause in the fighting, saying it had emboldened Hamas to reject a separate proposal for a ceasefire and hostage release.

As the war in Gaza grinds through a sixth month, each side has publicly insisted that its own idea of victory is in reach and rejected international efforts to stem the bloodshed. Netanyahu has said Israel can achieve its aims of dismantling Hamas and returning scores of hostages if it expands its ground offensive to the southern city of Rafah, where over half of Gaza's population has sought refuge, many in crowded tent camps.

Hamas has said it will hold onto the hostages until Israel agrees to a more permanent ceasefire, withdraws its forces from Gaza and releases hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, including top militants. It said late Monday that it has rejected a recent proposal that fell short of those demands — which, if fulfilled, would allow it to claim an extremely costly victory. Netanyahu said in a statement that the announcement “proved clearly that Hamas is not interested in continuing negotiations toward a deal and served as unfortunate testimony to the damage of the Security Council decision.”

“Israel will not surrender to Hamas’ delusional demands and will continue to act to achieve all the goals of the war: releasing all the hostages, destroying Hamas’ military and governing capabilities and ensuring that Gaza will never again be a threat to Israel.” The war has killed over 32,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its tally but says women and children make up about two-thirds of those killed. The fighting has left much of the Gaza Strip in ruins, displaced most its residents and driven a third of its population of 2.3 million to the brink of famine.

An Israeli strike late Monday on a residential building in Rafah where three displaced families were sheltering killed at least 16 people, including nine children and four women, according to hospital records and relatives of the deceased. An Associated Press reporter saw the bodies arrive at a hospital. On Monday, the Security Council finally managed to pass a resolution calling for a ceasefire as the United States abstained instead of vetoing the measure, angering Israel in a major escalation of tensions between the two close allies. The resolution calls for the release of all hostages held in Gaza but did not condition the ceasefire on it.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz told Army Radio on Tuesday that the resolution had emboldened Hamas by signaling

that international pressure would end the war without it having to make any concessions. “The message delivered to Hamas yesterday ... is that you don’t have to hurry,” Katz said.

The war began on Oct. 7, when Hamas-led militants stormed across the border and attacked communities in southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting around 250 others. It is still believed to be holding about 100 hostages and the remains of 30 others, after most of the rest were freed in November in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners. The United States, Qatar and Egypt have spent several weeks trying to negotiate another ceasefire and hostage release, but those efforts appeared to have stalled. Hamas has informed the mediators it will stick to an earlier position, it said in its statement late Monday.

Hamas said Israel has not responded to its core demands of a “comprehensive ceasefire, an (Israeli) withdrawal from the Strip, the return of displaced people and a real prisoner exchange.” Hamas has previously proposed a phased process in which it would release all the remaining hostages in exchange for a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, the opening of its borders for aid and reconstruction, and the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, including top militants serving life sentences.

Netanyahu has vowed to resume Israel’s offensive after any hostage release and keep fighting until Hamas is destroyed, saying it’s the only way to prevent a repeat of the Oct. 7 attack. But he has provided few details about what would follow any such victory and has largely rejected a postwar vision outlined by the US That approach has brought him into increasingly open conflict with President Joe Biden’s administration, which has expressed mounting concern over civilian casualties while supplying Israel with crucial military aid and backing Israel’s aim of destroying Hamas. The US had vetoed previous UN resolutions calling for a ceasefire.

The White House has urged Israel not to undertake a major ground operation in Rafah, warning that it could cause a humanitarian catastrophe. The administration was set to brief visiting Israeli officials on an alternative approach, but Netanyahu called off their visit in response to the US abstention at the UN Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant is in Washington on a separate trip, however, and is to meet with US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Tuesday.

On Monday, Gallant vowed to continue the offensive until Israel’s aims are met. “We will operate against Hamas everywhere — including in places where we have not yet been,” he said. “We have no moral right to stop the war while there are still hostages held in Gaza.”

IHC orders ECP to provide certified forms to candidates

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has issued a notice to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) regarding petitions against the non-issuance of certified forms and other documents related to the election results following the general elections.

Chief Justice Amir Farooq of the Islamabad High Court heard the applications of candidates Salman Akram Raja and Shoaib Shaheen, who participated as members of the National Assembly in the recent general elections. Petitioner Shoaib Shaheen appeared before the court in his personal capacity, while Salman Akram appeared on behalf of Raja.

The Chief Justice remarked that obtaining certified forms is the legal right of the applicants. He directed that the same order given on Shoaib Shaheen’s application be applied to Salman Akram Raja’s application as well. These forms must be issued by the Election Commission itself, whether today or within ten days. The court adjourned the hearing and issued a notice to the Election Commission to file its reply by tomorrow.

Government ends gas slab discount

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The government has abolished the current tiered gas billing system with slabs and discounts, instead moving to a flat rate system for gas consumption. This change will impact domestic and industrial consumers alike, as everyone will be charged the same rate regardless of the amount of gas they use.

Under the new system, the price per unit of gas (MMBTU) will be uniform across sectors, including domestic, commercial, general industry, and even export-oriented consumers. The exact price is yet to be finalized and awaits approval. However, it is expected to be around Rs. 4,501 (excluding taxes) for consumers in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Islamabad.

This decision comes on the heels of a recent request by Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) for a 147% increase in gas tariffs. During a public hearing, the company argued that the gas price needs to be raised to Rs. 4,446 per MMBTU to reflect production costs.

Consumers present at the hearing expressed strong opposition to the proposed hike, highlighting the potential for business closures and rising unemployment due to high gas prices. Stakeholders pointed out that existing gas prices have already forced numerous businesses to shut down, despite the fact that Pakistan sells gas to some customers for as low as \$4 per unit while purchasing it internationally for \$15.

The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) chairman acknowledged the concerns of both consumers and gas companies and indicated that a final decision on gas price revisions will be made after careful consideration. It’s important to note that Ogra has scheduled another hearing on the matter in Peshawar tomorrow, March 27th. The implementation date for any changes in gas prices is expected to be set at January 1st, 2024.

Russia extends detention of WSJ reporter

MOSCOW: Russia has extended the pre-trial detention of American journalist Evan Gershkovich by three months. The Moscow City Court ordered on Tuesday that the 32-year-old Wall Street Journal reporter remain behind bars until June 30 as he awaits trial on espionage charges. The United States embassy slammed the decision, which ensures that the journalist will spend a year at least in prison, as evidence that Russia is “using American citizens as pawns to achieve political ends”. Gershkovich and the WSJ have consistently denied the allegations of spying since his arrest in March 2023 while on assignment in the Urals city of Yekaterinburg. — Aljazeera



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari addressing Iftar dinner hosted by him for children from different orphanages of country, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Oath taking plea over reserved seats: PHC adjourns hearing

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Syed Arshad Ali adjourned hearing on oath taking plea over reserved seats at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa till to today (Wednesday).

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) members while urge the court to see that the members elected on the reserved seats are sworn in to be able to cast their votes in the upcoming Senate elections.

During hearing Amir Javeed, Tariq Afridi and Farooq Afridi advocates appeared on behalf petitioners while Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shah Faisal Ottomankhel appeared on behalf of provincial government, Additional Attorney General Sana Ullah for Federal Government and Election Commission of Pakistan lawyer Sikandar Bashir Mohmand advocate were present.

“Failure to administer the oath to members elected on the KP reserved reflects ‘mal-intent’,” the plea reads further praying the court to postpone the Senate polls if the elected members are not sworn in. The development comes as the issue of oath-taking of members on the reserved seats is facing uncertainty owing to the deadlock between the KP government and opposition parties, wherein the former has objected to the KP governor’s decision to summon the assembly session upon the opposition’s request.

However, Justice SM Attique Shah inquired regarding role of Election Commission of Pakistan after issuance of notification and is ECP can give any orders after the notification of successful candidates from Sikandar Bashir Mohmand advocate.

ECP lawyer argued that the commission had fulfilled all constitutional responsibilities and added that the petitioners are successful candidates but their victory notification has been challenged at High Court but it was rejected by PHC larger bench. PHC inquired regarding legal procedure when competent authority deny oath,

PHC struck down the ECP recounting orders on PK 99

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A division bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Syed Arshad Ali struck downed Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) decision of recounting on 6/3/2024 in PK 99 Bannu-I, on Tuesday.

The returned candidate Zahid Ullah Khan PTI backed independent had challenged this order in Writ Petition before PHC through Shumail Ahmad Butt advocate. The Bench while hearing the writ was informed that recount can only be ordered either by RO or ECP but “before consolidation of results” under Sec 95 Election Act. The counsel further informed that consolidation had taken place on 9/2 and 10/2/2024 while the application of recount was made to ECP on 11/2/2024.

The returned candidate was also notified and had taken oath as member PA on 29/2/2024. Once the candidate stands notified, ECP becomes functus officio and cannot set aside election. Qazi Jawad Advocate while representing respondent tried to convince bench that ECP has powers under Sec 9 to set aside a poll or order reelection.

Shumail Ahmad Butt invited the attention of the PHC bench towards Article 225 of the Constitution that precludes ECP or any other body from setting aside an election except by way of election petitions before Election Tribunal which is also already notified. Bench after hearing the petition, allowed it and set aside the order or ECP for repoll. PHC’s divisional bench comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Syed Arshad Ali turn-downed ECP decision regarding recounting of ballots in Bannu-I PK-99 after conclusion of arguments.

in the meantime ECP lawyer argued that if Speaker deny oath from petitioner then Governor can take oath otherwise President of Pakistan is competent authority as Lahore High Court had granted judgement in 2022 regarding Chief Minister Punjab oath.

It is worthy to mention that last week political rhetoric used by KP Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru said that the governor took an illegal step by writing a letter summoning the assembly session.

Last week, Pakistan Peoples Party’s (PPP) Central Information Secretary Faisal Karim Kundi had announced approaching the courts as well as the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to convene the provincial assembly session. His remarks came after KP Assembly Speaker Babar Saleem Swati’s refused to follow the governor’s recommendation to summon the legislature’s session and administer the oath to the members elected on seats reserved for women and minorities.

It is pertinent to know that the oath-taking of KP Assembly mem-

bers notified on reserved seats has become crucial for both the ruling and opposition parties as it will play an important role in the Senate polls slated for April 2 for filling 11 seats from the province.

The Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), which has a clear majority in the house, is planning to delay the oath-taking, at least till the Senate polls. With the existing strength of the assembly, the ruling party can win most of the Senate seats in all categories from the province.

On the other hand, the opposition parties want the 24 MPAs elected on reserved seats to be administered oath before the Senate polls to get the desired number of seats in the upper house of parliament. Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly lawyer requested for adjournment to obtain Wakalaat Nama from the Speaker for arguing the case on behalf of him. PHC’s divisional bench comprising of Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Syed Arshad Ali adjourned further hearing till today while ordered both parties for arguments at 9’o clock.

LHC allows PTI leader Moonis Elahi to contest elections

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has granted permission to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Moonis Elahi to contest elections. According to details, Moonis Elahi, a former federal minister, has been given permission to participate in the by-elections.

The Lahore High Court’s appellate tribunal had earlier rejected the nomination papers of PTI leaders, but in its recent decision, the Election Appellate Tribunal accepted Moonis Elahi’s nomination papers. It has been reported that former Punjab Chief Minister Pervez Elahi and his son Moonis Elahi had filed an appeal against the returning officer’s decision to reject their nomination papers for the 2024 by-elections. In their appeal, Chaudhry Pervez Elahi, the central president of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, and former federal minister Moonis Elahi maintained that the returning officer had rejected Moonis Elahi’s nomination papers for PTI-158 constituency while accepting Pervez Elahi’s papers for PTI-32 constituency.

The appeal argued that the returning officer had rejected the nomination papers of both candidates contrary to the facts. Moonis Elahi’s nomination papers were rejected on the basis of allegations of concealing assets, and the returning officer rejected Moonis Elahi’s nomination papers under the assumption of being

Sanam Javed added in candidates for women’s Senate seats

F.P. Report

LAHORE: A revised list of candidates for women’s reserved seats of Senate in Punjab has been released, it emerged Tuesday. PTI candidate Sanam Javed’s name has been added in the revised list for women’s seats issued by the election commission.

Sanam Javed moved to the Appellate Tribunal after her nomination papers were rejected by the Election Commission of Pakistan. The Appellate Tribunal of Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday accepted the appeal of Sanam Javed and allowed her to contest the Senate elections.

The tribunal comprises of LHC Justice Shahid Bilal Hasan ordered the ECP to include the name of Sanam Javed in the list of the candidates, contesting Senate elections. In the revised list, four candidates will now contest for two reserved seats of the Senate for women from Punjab. The list included Anosha Rehman and Bushra Anjum Butt of PML-N, People’s Party’s Faiza Malik and PTI’s Sanam Javed.

Earlier, Sanam Javed has been granted permission to contest the upcoming Senate elections from a women’s reserved seat in Punjab. The Lahore High Court’s Justice Shahid Bilal Hasan issued an 11-page written decision on Tuesday, overturning the Election Commission’s (ECP) rejection of her nomination papers.

a party to a court case. The court declared the decision of the returning officer null and void.

Meanwhile, PTI leader Moonis Elahi stated, "For us, it's not about jail or NAB (National Accountability Bureau), but a separate plan has been made. If Imran Khan gets relief, then we will also get relief. If PTI Chairman Imran Khan comes out, then the possibilities of the return of leaders like me, Hamad Azhar, Murad Saeed, and others are there because at this time, we have not been tagged

with jail or NAB but a separate plan has been made."

Former federal minister also said that efforts are not being made for the release of Imran Khan. "We are also working with the core committee and lawyers for the release of the founding PTI," he added. "Lawyers' attention should only be on the cases of the former prime minister. Attention should not be on press conferences, talk shows, and constituency politics. When attention is given to Imran Khan's cases, results will come soon."

Parents of Aitchison College students express solidarity with principal

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Parents of some Aitchison College students on Tuesday took to the street to express solidarity with the institute’s principal who resigned a day earlier.

Michael A Thompson tendered his resignation on Monday, citing nepotism and political interference as the reasons behind his decision. Several parents gathered outside the Governor House and raised slogans demanding restoration of the principal of Lahore’s premier institution.

They also sought an impartial inquiry and reversal of, what they said, illegal measures of Governor Balighur Rehman. A police contingent dashed to the Governor House to prevent violent backlash. The

Aitchison College principal’s abrupt decision to quit came as a surprise. His extreme step appeared to have been triggered by Governor Balighur Rehman’s move to waive the tuition fees for the sons of PML-N leader Ahad Cheema.

According to media reports, Cheema’s wife had appealed to the Punjab governor to waive her sons’ fees. Also Read: Aitchison College Principal Michael Thompson resigns, citing political interference Subsequently, the governor issued an order granting a three-year waiver on their fees. “Politics and nepotism have no place in schools,” Thompson wrote in a letter issued to the college staff.

“Throughout my time as Principal, I have done my very best to protect

the school’s reputation while extending compassion to those in need,” he said in the letter, adding that “there is a crucial difference between this pursuit and blatant policy manufacturing to accommodate certain individuals because such people simply insist on preferential treatment”.

Thompson asserted that “this is not how I planned to leave Aitchison”. He said that he would be stepping down from the principal’s post on April 1 and would not be playing any role in the management and admissions process. Thompson had also tendered his resignation back in September 2018, allegedly under pressure from political circles due to disciplinary action taken against some students but he later withdrew the decision.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur chairing a meeting regarding establishment of Bone Marrow and Liver Transplant Centres.

KP govt to setup Liver transplant centre

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In a bid to provide quality health care facilities to people at the provincial level, the chief minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has decided to establish Liver transplant and Bone marrow transplant centres in the province, and directed the finance department to provide funds, required for the purpose on priority basis.

He was presiding over a meeting of health department, held here at Chief Minister’s House, Peshawar the last night. Provincial cabinet members Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Muzammil Aslam and Mashal Yousufzai, chief secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, administrative secretaries of the concerned departments and experts from health sector in the relevant fields including Dr. Abdul Wahab Dogar, Dr. Taqi, Dr. General (R) Pervaiz, Dr. Mumtaz and others attended the meeting.

Various matters and proposals with the purpose to materialize the decisions regarding establishment of Liver and Bone marrow transplant centers came under discussion. It is imperative to mention here that establishment of those centers would be the first ever step of its kind at government level in the province. It was decided in the meeting that initially, Liver transplant centre would be established at Institute of Kidney Diseases Peshawar, and

later, this center would be shifted permanently to the under-construction building of Khyber Medical University.

The meeting has also decided to establish first ever institute of Neurosurgery in the province. The proposed institute would be established at Fountain House, Peshawar, it was agreed in the meeting. The chief minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has directed the concerned authorities to finalize the proper plans for establishing the proposed centers and institute and submit same for approval. He made it clear that the plans must include all the details about manpower, funds, medical equipment, and administrative structure required for the centers. The Chief Minister further directed them to have viable financial plans to run these centers on a sustainable basis.

He said that the provincial government is fully committed for providing liver and bone marrow transplant facilities to people within the province, adding that once the proposed centers are established, people of this province will not need to go to anywhere outside the province for this facility. He further directed the concerned authorities to ensure round-the-clock availability of dialysis services in all those government hospitals, wherein this facility already exist.

And necessary steps should also be taken to start dialysis services in other

government hospitals, where this facility is not yet available, he directed. The Chief Minister said that the health sector is one of the priority areas of his government adding that all available resources would be utilized to provide quality health care facilities to people of the province.

Katcha dacoits kidnap brother, sister

KASHMORE (INP): Despite police operations against dacoits of the katcha area in Sindh, there seems to be no end in sight to the terror unleashed by them as the outlaws continue to kidnap people for ransom with complete impunity. In a latest incident, the dacoits have kidnapped a brother and sister from Kandhkot and have demanded Rs5 million for their release. Only six days ago, a primary school teacher had been shot dead by some bandits in the katcha area of Kandhkot, district Kashmore, where dacoits continue to hold sway despite several efforts to eliminate them.

The teacher, Allah Rakhiyo Nandwani, was kidnapped on his way back home from a primary school in Nasrullah Khan Bijarani, which has been designated as a no-go area due to the presence of dacoits, on Monday (March 18).