

Imran's bail plea postponed
F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Anti-Terrorism court has postponed PTI founder Imran Khan's bail hearing in arson and three others cases by March 28. According to the details, judge Arshad Javed heard the bail plea of Imran Khan in arson and three others cases. The court directed to make the complete arrangements for marking the video link attendance of Imran Khan.

Pervaiz Elahi rushed to PIMS
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Pervaiz Elahi was rushed to PIMS after his health deteriorated in Adiala jail, sources said on Wednesday. The former PM was shifted to PIMS by Islamabad police when his health suddenly deteriorated. Pervaiz Elahi will be examined completely in PIMS hospital. PTI President Pervaiz Elahi earlier suffered bone fracture after slipping in Adiala jail's washroom.

PM orders probe into Bisham terrorist attack

COAS vows to take all-out measures for safety of Chinese citizens in Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday instructed to conduct a thorough joint investigation of the Bisham terrorist attack on Chinese nationals working on Dassu Hydel Power Project, utilizing all resources of the state.

The prime minister offering deepest condolences to the families of the innocent victims of the attack assured that the perpetrators of this barbaric act would be brought to justice swiftly. Chairing a high level emergency meeting in the aftermath of Bisham terrorist attack on Chinese nationals, the prime minister appreciated the alacrity with which law enforcement agencies and locals responded to the attack, saving many precious lives which could have been lost.

The meeting was attended by the Federal Ministers, Chief of the Army Staff, Chief Ministers, Chief Secretaries and Inspector Generals of Police of respective provinces, a PM Office press release said. The meeting discussed in detail the heinous attack on innocent civilians working on a development project, meant to contribute to energy and water security of Pakistan.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif underscored the enduring bond of brotherhood between the people of Pakistan and China and conveyed that the whole nation was saddened by the loss of Chinese lives. He stated, "Terrorism is a trans-national threat that has been instrumentalized by the enemies of Pakistan to stymie

Pakistan's progress and development. The acts targeting Pakistan-China friendship are particularly aimed at creating mistrust between the two iron brothers".

Participants of the meeting expressed resolute commitment to completely rooting out terrorism from this country. The participants expressed serious concerns over sanctuaries available to terrorists across the borders and emphasized upon the need for a regional approach for countering terrorism.

During the meeting, the COAS reiterated the resolve of armed forces to eliminate the scourge of terrorism afflicting the country. COAS stated that the nation had steadfastly fought the war on terror for the last two decades and had defeated the nefarious designs of Pakistan's adversaries. Noting the recent surge in terrorist incidents, COAS remarked that the enemies of Pakistan had once again underestimated the resilience and grit of the State and the people of Pakistan.

He said, "we shall fight terrorism till every terrorist casting an evil eye on Pakistan, its people and their guests, is eliminated; we shall not leave any stone unturned to ensure that every foreign citizen, especially the Chinese nationals, contributing to the prosperity of Pakistan, is safe and secure in Pakistan. We shall fight terrorism with all our might, to the very end." The meeting concluded with the participants reiterating resolve to comprehensively combat terrorism employing all resources available to the state. Strongly reacting to Shangla

terrorist attack which claimed six lives including five Chinese nationals, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir has said that the military "shall not leave any stone unturned to ensure that every foreign citizen, especially the Chinese nationals — contributing to the prosperity of Pakistan — is safe and secure in the country".

The army chief reiterated the resolve of armed forces to eliminate the scourge of terrorism afflicting the country during an emergency meeting chaired on Wednesday by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in the aftermath of Shangla's Bisham city terrorist attack on Chinese nationals working on Dasu Hydel Power Project, read a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office on Wednesday.

The army chief said that the nation had steadfastly fought the war on terror for the last two decades and had defeated the nefarious designs of Pakistan's adversaries. Noting the recent surge in terrorist incidents, COAS Munir remarked that the enemies of Pakistan had once again "underestimated the resilience and grit of the state and the people of Pakistan". He added: "We shall fight terrorism till every terrorist casting an evil eye on Pakistan, its people and their guests, is eliminated; we shall not leave any stone unturned to ensure that every foreign citizen, especially the Chinese nationals, contributing to the prosperity of Pakistan, is safe and secure in Pakistan. We shall fight terrorism with all our might, to the very end."



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing a high level security meeting.

Shangla attack criminals will be brought to justice: Zardari

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A day after a fierce terrorist attack in Shangla, President Asif Ali Zardari vowed on Wednesday that perpetrators behind the terror act targeting Chinese nationals in Bisham would be brought to justice.

President Zardari visited the Embassy of the People's Republic of China today and offered condolences on behalf of the government and people of Pakistan over the killing of Chinese citizens in a terrorist attack in Bisham, read a statement issued by the President's Secretariat. He strongly condemned yesterday's terrorist attack, saying that the Pakistani nation shared the grief of the Chinese people. He added that the people of Pakistan stood in solidarity with the Chinese people in this hour of grief.

Upon his arrival, President Zardari was received by Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong. The secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also present on the occasion. During the meeting, the president said that enemies in the region couldn't accept the fact that Pakistan and China were further strengthening their bilateral ties.

He assured the Chinese envoy that the criminals involved in the gruesome act would be apprehended and brought to justice. He further said that all necessary measures would be taken to ensure the security of the Chinese citizens working on various projects in Pakistan. The Chinese top diplomat thanked the president for personally visiting the embassy to offer condolences. He appreciated that Pakistanis from all walks of life had condemned the terrorist attack.

Zaidong highlighted that Chinese workers had made outstanding contributions towards Pakistan's socio-economic development. He said that terrorists were enemies of humanity and needed to be hunted down for targeting innocent people. He underscored the need for increasing counter-terrorism cooperation and providing enhanced security to Chinese workers in Pakistan. The ambassador reiterated his country's resolve to further strengthen cooperation with Pakistan and continue its support for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and other projects.

While registering his remarks in the visitor's book at the Chinese embassy, President Zardari stated that the inhuman attack struck at the core of shared values and the enduring friendship between the two countries. "This incident was orchestrated by the enemies of Pakistan-China friendship," he added.

US says we do not support Pakistan Iran gas pipeline

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: The US State Department Spokesperson, Matthew Miller said that the US does not support the Pakistan Iran gas pipeline project.

While replying to a question by *The Frontier Post*, Matthew Miller stated that US always advise those who do business with Iran about the risk of getting close to and in touch with US sanctions and would advise everyone to consider this very carefully.

Matthew further said that the Assistant Secretary Donald Lu made it very clear last week during a congressional hearing that the US does not support this pipeline project between Pakistan and Iran.

When asked by *The Frontier Post* to comment on the recent terrorist attack on Chinese convoy in

Bisham Pakistan and whether the US also does not support Pakistan doing business with China through CPEC, the Spokesperson shared condolences with the Peoples Republic of China over the loss of lives of its citizens and also said that the people of Pakistan have suffered a lot through such terrorist attacks.

While replying to a question by journalist of Voice of America Afghan Radio Ashna about ISIS(K) presence in Afghanistan, Matthew Miller said that the US has long been worried about ISIS(K) potential in terrorists activities and that the US had warned both Iran and Russia about the recent terrorists attacks from ISIS(K). Matthew further said that the US has warned Afghanistan several times that their land

must not be used by terrorists and that it is also in their own interest that they do not allow terrorists to use their land to launch terrorist attacks on US and its allies.

Matthew Miller was asked by Ryan Grim of the Intercept news media outlet about the five High Court Judges in Pakistan writing a letter to the Supreme Court of Pakistan about the military officials threatening them and whether in such conditions these judges could fairly give verdict on the election irregularities mentioned by Assistant Secretary Donald Lu at the recent Congressional Hearing. Miller replied by saying that he just saw that letter a while ago and that he will consult his team about it and then reply back later.

IMF demands trace system to curb tax evasion

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has urged the current government to implement an automatic track and trace system, emphasizing the need to seal units not included in the system.

According to media reports, sources within the Ministry of Finance revealed that the IMF has expressed dissatisfaction with the track and trace system managed by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). The IMF has demanded the full application of the FBR's track and trace system across all sectors.

Specifically, the IMF has insisted on the installation of an automatic track and trace system in the manufacturing sector, with a stern directive to seal units not integrated into the system. Highlighting concerns over rampant tax evasion, the IMF pointed out the lack of effective measures in key sectors such as cigarettes, sugar, fertilizer, and cement.

Notably, the FBR has struggled to implement the track and trace system outside of the fertilizer sector over the past two years. The IMF stressed the urgency of implementing track and trace mechanisms in all four sectors to prevent tax evasion and broaden the tax base before initiating any new programs.

It is noteworthy that a staff-level agreement has been reached between Pakistan and the IMF. During a recent visit to Islamabad, the IMF mission conducted meetings with Pakistani officials to review the financial stability criteria set for the loan. However, the \$1.1 billion standby agreement between Pakistan and the IMF was rejected by the IMF Executive Board.

MPAs elected on reserved seats PHC directs KP Assembly Speaker to administer oath

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) ordered Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly to take oath from lawmakers nominated on reserved seats ensure casting of their votes in upcoming senate election, on Wednesday.

A two-member bench comprising Justice S.M. Atique Shah and Justice Shakeel Ahmed heard the petitions of the elected members of People's Party, PML-N and JUI on reserved seats. During the hearing, Justice S.M. Atiq Shah inquired whether the Speaker is refusing to administer oath, to which the Speaker's lawyer Ali Azim Afridi replied that it was not the case, adding that for the first time the Governor's order comes on the request of the opposition leader rather through proper procedures.

Justice Atiq Shah asked if anyone has challenged the Governor's order. To

which Ali Azim Afridi Advocate replied that no one has challenged the governor's order but on March 21, the secretary of the provincial assembly wrote a letter.

The lawyer of the opposition while giving arguments said that the High Court had already given a judgment regarding allotment of reserved seats, adding that in this context delaying the oath taking was also a violation of this decision of the larger bench. He said that if the Speaker was reluctant to administer oath to the members, then the Governor could take the oath.

Justice Atiq Shah inquired whether it is not necessary to take the oath of the members in the House? To which the opposing lawyer replied that the oath taking could be done during the session to be convened for the Senate elections. He insisted that the governor has the power to convene the assembly

session.

During the hearing, Advocate General Shah Faisal Atmankhil told the court that Article 65 says that when a member is elected, he will take oath and it is in the third schedule that the assembly will be in session. It has been defined by the Peshawar High Court in the case of Baldukumar and Speaker Asad Kaiser. Justice Shakeel Ahmed remarked that the members who have been notified have the right to be sworn in. The Advocate General replied that when the Chief Minister is not present or there is no confidence against him, then the Governor can convene the meeting under Article 109. Justice Atiq Shah asked that Advocate General, how he was relying on the decision which the Supreme Court had called a bad law? To which the Advocate General said that this would not happen in future and he withdrew the case reference.



GAZA STRIP: A boy sitting on the debris of destroyed house after Israeli forces bombardment on their area.

Israeli strikes on Rafah raise fear assault could begin

GAZA STRIP (Reuters): Israel bombed at least three homes in Rafah overnight, raising new fear among the more than a million people sheltering in the last refuge on the southern edge of the Gaza Strip that a long-threatened ground assault could be coming.

One of the airstrikes killed 11 people from a family, health officials said. Mussa Dhaheer, looking on from below as neighbors helped an emergency worker lower a victim in a black body bag from an upper story,

said he had awakened to the blast, kissed his terrified daughter, and rushed outside to find the destruction. His father, 75, and mother, 62, were among the dead.

"I don't know what to do. I don't know what to say. I can't make sense of what happened. My parents. My father with his displaced friends who came from Gaza City," he told Reuters. "They were all together, when suddenly they were all gone like dust."

At another bomb site, Jamil Abu Hourai said the intensification of air strikes was Israel's way of showing its disdain for a UN Security Council resolution last week demanding an immediate ceasefire. Next up, he fears a ground assault on Rafah, which Israel has threatened to carry out despite pleas from its closest ally Washington that this would cause too much harm to civilians. "The bombing has increased, and they have threatened us with an incursion, and

they say that have been given the green light for the Rafah incursion. Where is the Security Council?" Abu Hourai said.

"Look at our little ones. Look at our children. Where should we go? Where should we go?" Separately, in the Israeli occupied West Bank, which has seen worsening bloodshed in parallel with the Gaza war, three Palestinians were killed and four others wounded by Israeli fire during a raid in Jenin overnight, the

Palestinian health ministry said on Wednesday. At least 32,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's offensive into Hamas-run Gaza, according to the health ministry there, with thousands of other dead believed unrecovered under rubble. The war began after Hamas fighters raided Israel on Oct. 7, killing 1,200 people and abducting 253 hostages according to Israeli tallies.

Israeli forces just north of Rafah kept the two main hospitals in Khan

Younis, Al-Amal and Nasser Hospital, under a blockade imposed late last week. In the north, they were still operating inside Al Shifa, the enclave's largest hospital, which they stormed more than a week ago. Israel says the hospitals have been used by Hamas fighters, which Hamas and medical staff deny. The Israeli military has said it killed and captured hundreds of fighters in a battle in Al Shifa. Hamas says civilians and medics were rounded up.

Promotion of quality education: Teachers’ training vital: Meena Khan

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa minister for Higher Education, Archives and Libraries Meena Khan Afridi has said that the trainings of lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors of colleges can play vital role in the promotion of quality education.

He urged the college teachers to transfer their useful skills to the students aimed at improving education system in the province.

The provincial minister expressed these views while chairing meeting of Higher Education Academy of Research and Training (HEART).

Additional secretary Umara Khan, director of the academy professor Tasbiullah, deputy director Syed Majid and Muhammad Bilal attended the meeting.

The minister was thoroughly briefed regarding the functions and activities of the academy.

“Since its inception, the academy has completed 131 mandatory trainings programs and trained 5352 teaching faculty of various cadres of Higher Education Department” said in the briefing.

Besides, 21 capacity building training programs arranged for 728 Principals/DDOs, BS Coordinators, HODs and ministerial staff of government colleges of (HED).

The provincial minister was also briefed about the budget of academy and was informed that the salaries of regular staff of the academy are being incurred from the current side budget.

“All other operational expenses are met out from the Annual Development Program (ADP) of HED each year” further said in the meeting.

In the briefing it was added that the academy has taken steps for generating its own revenue and in this regard, MoUs and agreements have been signed with many institutions including Federal Government Education Institution Peshawar Region, Higher Education Department of Gilgit-Baltistan. However, several agreements have been signed with the Elementary and Secondary Education Foundation Peshawar.

Meena Khan Afridi assured that he will solve the issues and challenges being faced by HEART. On the occasion, the provincial minister directed the concerned authority to prepare a case for tackling the financial issue of the academy with finance department.



PESHAWAR: Secretary Health Mahmood Islam Wazir discussing working relations with representatives from State Life Insurance.

Secretary Health directs resolution of card issues

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretary Health Mahmood Islam, accompanied by Chief Executive Sehat Card Dr. Riaz Tanoli on Wednesday visited the State Life Insurance Corporation office in Peshawar.

Secretary Health instructed authorized officials of State Life Insurance Corporation to ensure the immediate resolution of issues related to the Sehat Card and ensure the presence of staff at health facilities corners.

Detailed discussions were held between Secretary Health and representatives from State Life Insurance regarding working relations. Secretary Health emphasized on State Life Insurance officials to expedite the disbursement of dues to empaneled hospitals to avoid any disruptions in the facilities of free treatment provided under the health card scheme.

Delegates from State Life Insurance briefed Secretary Health on the assessment of all factors from claims to disbursements and mentioned the reforms aimed at further transparency in this process.

Secretary Health Mahmood Islam highlighted on the occasion that the provision of uniform and free health facilities in rural areas falls under the priorities of the Health Department, and no compromise will be made in this regard. He further elaborated that the collaboration between State Life Insurance Corporation and the Health Department aims to ensure the provision of standardized and free treatment.



PESHAWAR: Chief Traffic Officer Saud Khan after meeting with officials of traffic police after assuming charge.

Minister seeks report of roads

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial Minister for Communication and Works, Shakil Ahmad has sought report of roads from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Highways Authority (KPHA) and directed to increase revenue generation.

He was chairing a briefing about KPHA that was also attended by Secretary Communication, Idrees Marwat, Managing Director, Asad Ali, Director Technical, Azmat Ullah and other concerned officials.

Chairing the meeting, provincial minister also directed to ensure transparency in tax collection system and measures to increase annual revenue. He also sought report of roads within 16 days and directed completion of ongoing projects ensuring quality standard.

Provincial minister also pointed out impacts of overloading on roads and stressed to take measures for controlling overloading. He directed officials to avoid release of amount to contractors without conducting material lab tests.

PMS aspirants demanded increased F.P. Report

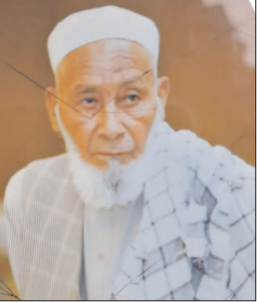
PESHAWAR: The aspirants of the Provincial Management Services (PMS) examination from various districts have demanded increase in the age limit of the candidates.

The aspirants including Syed Haris, Ilyas Afridi, Waleed and others met with provincial ministers Aftab Alam Afridi, Fazal Shakoore, MPA Abdul Moneem Khan, Shafi Ullah Jan and Sher Ali Afridi and informed them of the problems being faced by the candidates.

They said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission had not held the examination for the last four years due to some reasons while other provinces were regularly conducting the examination every year.

They said that other provinces despite conducting the examination regularly had increased the age limit. They said that the upper age limit should be increased to 35 years to accommodate more youth of the province. They demanded announcing the test for the PMS forthwith.

Obituary



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Abdur Raheem Mohmand Musa Khel has passed away and his funeral prayer will be offered today on Thursday 02:00pm at Isa Khel Janazga area.

His family members include Haji Farid, Haji Ata Khan, Gul Afzal, Haya Khan, Mudir, Mamoor Khan, Raees and Shah Nawaz.



PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur chairing a meeting regarding housing societies in province.

Education Minister imposes ban on posting, transfer

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education Faisal Khan Tarakai on Wednesday said that there is a complete ban on all transfers and appointments in the education department and henceforth all transfers will be made under the e-transfer policy.

He said that wrong posting should be completely eliminated and teachers will be transferred on merit under the automatic system. He expressed these views while presiding over the meeting held regarding the e-transfer policy of the Education Department.

Secretary Education Masood Ahmed, Special Secretary, Director Education Samina Altaf, Director IT Salahuddin and other senior officials participated in the meeting.

Every effort has been made to facilitate women under the e-transfer app, the transfer will be done only once a year and at the end of the academic year, said Minister.

He said that various indicators have been set including duration of schooling, distance between school and home, annual results and other indicators.

The provincial education minister was told that only once a year, the education department will call for applications from teachers for transfer to vacant posts as per the need, interested candidates will apply online to the vacant schools, the district education officer will do verification under the digitalized system and Transfer will be done on merit under automatic system.

The provincial education minister issued instructions to make the transfer policy app more active and issued orders to form a technical committee so that vacant positions are advertised on the app as soon as possible.

The minister said that the number of teachers in the education department is high and in remote areas especially women have to go round the offices, which will be completely remedied and transfers will be done on merit without any recommendation under the automated system.

Islamic Relief holds consultative session

PESHAWAR (APP): Islamic Relief Pakistan on Wednesday arranged an orientation session on “Mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction education into the Pakistani education system specifically school-based learning and education system.”

Director General Environmental Protection Agency Sami Ullah Khan while addressing the session expressed that empowering of educators and students with the knowledge and skills to address these critical challenges can help building a more resilient and sustainable future for our country.

“We are excited to connect with the United Nations, and community members to discuss strategies for integrating climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction education into the Pakistani education system specifically school-based learning and education system.”

The orientation session featured presentations from experts in fields of climate science, disaster risk reduction, and education. The session also included interactive group model-building exercises and discussions to explore innovative teaching methods and resources for raising awareness about climate change and building resilience in communities through school education.

KMU celebrates successful public defense of Ph.D scholar Dr. Idrees



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: KMU recently celebrated a momentous academic achievement with the successful public defense of Prof. Dr. Muhammad Idrees, Chairman Deptt of Pathology, Khyber Medical College and a distinguished Ph.D. Scholar in Hematology, at the Institute of Pathology and Diagnostic Medicines (IPDM). Dr. Idrees presented his comprehensive research journey encapsulated in his thesis titled “Genotype-phenotype correlation in transfusion-dependent beta thalassemia patients treated with low-dose thalidomide”.

The event garnered distinguished guests, including Prof. Dr. Rubina Nazli, Dean of Basic Medical Sciences, and Prof. Dr. Jawad Ahmad, as chief guests. Notable examiners graced the occasion, with Associate Prof. Dr. Yasar Mahmood Yousafzai, Director of IPDM, serving as Dr. Idrees’s supervisor, alongside co-supervisors Dr. Tariq Masood Khan, Associate Prof. of Hematology at PIMS Peshawar, and Dr. Asif Ali, Associate Prof. at IPDM KMU. Additionally, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Younas Jamal from the Department of Pathology, Jinnah Medical & Dental College, Sohail University Karachi, served as the external supervisor and examiner.

The proceedings unfolded with warmth and enthusiasm, marking the culmination of Prof. Dr. Idrees’s academic journey.

In a poignant gesture, Prof. Dr. Rubina Nazli, Dr. Yasar Yousafzai, and Prof. Dr. Jawad Ahmad bestowed upon Dr. Muhammad Idrees the prestigious Oxford Graduation Cap, symbolizing the triumphant conclusion of his doctoral voyage. The presence of these esteemed personalities elevated the event, as they extended their heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Muhammad Idrees.

Expressing his gratitude, Dr. Muhammad Idrees conveyed sincere thanks to the attendees for their participation in this significant event. He was lauded for his exceptional academic achievement, which significantly enriches the academic landscape of Khyber Medical University.

Architectural grandeur of Mohabat Khan Mosque attracts visitors

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar has been remained a strategic city where invaders constructed worship places to freely perform religious obligations and use its peoples’ strong bonds with religion in their favor to prolong their rule.

Being a gateway to the subcontinent and central Asian states (CARs), Peshawar was always a strategic city where kings, warriors and invaders constructed mosques, churches and gurdwaras at prime locations to worship in accordance with their faith besides molding public opinions after conquering it before extending their influence to the subcontinent.

The Muslims commanders and kings of different dynasties passed through the historic Khyber Pass from Central Asian Republics (CARs). Afghanistan stayed first at Peshawar where they constructed scores of mosques and worship places for Muslims and minorities to promote interfaith harmony and bring people of all faiths closer.

“From recent GorKathri excavations, it was made clear that Islam had first spread in the border areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Afghanistan after Sabuktigin, a Turkic slave commander laid the foundation of the Ghaznavi dynasty at Ghazi in 977 AD in Central Afghanistan,” said Bakhtzada Muhammad, senior research officer of the archeology department KP while talking to APP.

Following an untimely death of Sabuktigin and a revolt against his son Ismail, Mahmud Ghaznavi had gained control over the Ghaznavi kingdom and extended his influence to Punjab after defeating Raja of Jaypala of the Kabul Shahis at the battle of Peshawar in 1001 AD,” he said.

Resultantly, Islam had gained roots in Bannu, Waziristan, Khyber and other border areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where construction of large and small mosques was started.

“An inscription in Arabic engraved on a black marble was found in 1984 on the slopes of the hill below the castle of Raja Gira, which authenticated the foundation of the historic Odigram Mosque in Swat (also known as Sultan Mahmood Ghaznavi mosque constructed in 1048 CE on the order of General Amir Nustagin of Ghaznavi, which attracted worshippers in droves in Ramazan.

The construction of small and big mosques including the historic Yakagund mosque in Mohmand district, Sheikh Habib mosque in 1650 at Bala Manari and Gunj gate mosque alais Khawja Maroof mosque some 600 years ago established at Peshawar by the Muslim rulers of various dynasties, resultantly Islam got flourished in these regions.

After conquering Peshawar, the Mughal rulers started construction work of the iconic Mohabat Khan mosque in 1660-70 by the then Peshawar’s Governor Nawab Mohabat Khan.

An amalgamation of Islamic and Mughal architecture, Mohabat Khan’s small portion was constructed by Mughal emperor, Shah Jehan and a major portion by King Aurangzeb Alamgir with beautiful white marble.

The mosque was finally completed in 1680 and later renovated in 1898 after the vandalism of the Sikh rulers,” he said.

The British took over Peshawar’s control in 1949; the mosque was renovated and handed over to the people of Peshawar for worship. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the refugee tribal elders congregated in the mosque to forge unity amongst Afghans against the Soviets invaders.

The fortune turned positive when the KP government declared Mohabat Khan mosque a historical site in 1982 and took its administrative control to the Auaq Department.

Built on a high mound at Andar Sher bazaar near historic Chowkyadgar at Peshawar City, the worshippers enter its 30,155 square feet vast open courtyard with capacity to accommodate about 30,000 worshippers at a time besides a centrally located ablution pool and a single row of rooms lining the exterior walls with two tall minarets, which further magnified its look.

The prayer hall’s facade is also capped by six smaller decorative minarets that flank the mosque’s five arched entryways, with an additional two minarets and its prayer hall capped by three awesome domes that draw visitors’ attention.

The mosque’s ceiling was embellished with elegant red frescoes in geometric and floral motifs while its exterior was decorated with Mughal frescoes that amplify its beauty.

“Mohabat Khan mosque is the identity of Peshawar due to its unique architecture and glorious ancient history. For the last 12 years, I regularly came to this historic mosque of Peshawar for Jumma prayer, Namaz e Tarveh and Mahfil-e-Shabina of Ramazan ul Mubarak as its spiritual environment take the worshippers to a new world,” said Zahid Shinwari, former President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry while talking to the news agency.

He said Mohabat Khan’s mosque architecture was a jewel of Peshawar, attracting tourists and archeology lovers from across the country. The shopkeepers, who had been rented shops by the Auaq department, increased the size of their shops by many feet by digging more small cabins and encroaching on the entrance and surrounding area of the mosque which negatively impacted its exterior outlook.

The construction of illegally built large plazas and shops around the mosque has adversely affected its exterior architecture and demanded the demolition of all these illegal structures to restore its original grandeur and architectural designs.

“The mosque has recently undergone heavy conservation work after approval of Rs 87.70 million for Mohabat Khan Mosque’s conservation project. We have almost completed rehabilitation and conservation work on its minarets, domes, ablution area, and other portions without compromising on its Mughal era’s architectural designs.”

Former Chief Minister Mahmood Khan during his visit to Mohabat Khan mosque had increased the allocation of the project to Rs160 million with direction for expansion of work and the amount was used on its beautification, decoration, and lighting system to magnify its look at night on the pattern of Peshawar Museum to promote religious and cultural tourism.



In brief

Minor recovered in Thatta F.P. Report

THATTA: Timely police action and public reaction led to recovery of 4 years of age child named Nabila who was allegedly abducted on Tuesday evening from the busy area of Gharo city of district Thatta the other day. As soon as the news of minor's abduction broke a large number of people blocked a section of National Highway forcing SSP Thatta Dr Imran Khan to constitute an eight-member team for investigation. The footages of CCTV installed near victim's house showed a strange man taking the girl with him. Following police actions the kidnapper left the girl near Mirpur Sakro town from where she was recovered on Wednesday. Father of the girl said that the condition of the girl was stable while no any mark of assault was found on her body. No any FIR of the incident was registered till the filling of this report.

Man killed, another injured

BAHAWALNAGAR (INP): One person was killed and another critically injured as security guards of a petrol pump clashed in Fort Abbas on Wednesday, police said. According to details, while performing duty on a private petrol pump, the security guards exchanged hot words over petty dispute. A security guard opened straight fire at companions killing one of them identified as Muzzamil on the spot, leaving other Muhammad Dastagir critically injured and fled the scene. The body and injured were shifted to hospital and police after registering a case into the incident started raids to arrest the culprit.

Two abducted people rescued

SHIKARPUR (INP): Two abducted citizens were rescued while two robbers were held after separate exchanges of fire in different localities of Shikarpur on Wednesday. According to details, the police approached a gang of kidnappers who were shifting two abducted cities to their safe haven and an encounter took place. After exchange of heavy fire, the kidnappers fled the scene leaving behind Ali Nawaz Brohi and Israr Brohi abducted from village Janoo Sharif of Shikarpur few days earlier. In another encounter at Indus Highway Shikarpur, two robbers Shah Nawaz Jatoi and Nadar Junejo were injured and held with arms while their four accomplices managed to escape.

Ceremony arranged

SARGODHA (INP): A welfare organisation, Al-Khidmat Foundation, organised a ceremony for orphan children on the World Orphans Day at Jamaat-e-Islami central office, here on Wednesday. Foundation's Sargodha District Vice-President Chaudhry Liaquat Ali Warraich, District General Secretary Muhammad Saleem and Information Secretary Jamaat-e-Islami Akhtar Rasool participated in the ceremony. A large number of orphan children and their families were also present. The speakers, speaking at the ceremony, said: "Our religion teaches us to take care of orphans and help them in every possible way. By supporting and caring for the orphan children, we could get real success and Allah Almighty's blessings." The speakers also informed the orphan children and their families about Green Pakistan initiative and urged them to plant maximum saplings in their localities.

Subsidized flour for utility stores recovered shops

F.P. Report

BUNER: Action has been taken against several shopkeepers in Swari bazaar here in Buner for selling government subsidized flour provided for utility stores, on Wednesday.

The raiding party headed by ADC relief & Human rights special price magistrate Syed Akram Shah has recovered in Swari market total of 200 bags of flour from several shopkeepers. Hefty fines have been imposed and the highest penalty has been charged to a shopkeeper for recovering 100 bags from a shop and warned that in future such elements will face both jail terms and fines.

ADC Relief and Human Rights and Special Magistrate to ensure the price of essential commodities and sanitation in the holy month of Ramadan, has revealed that while acting on the information, the Punjab low-priced government atta reserved for utility stores from Punjab is smuggled in Karachi and

Lahore bonded coaches from Punjab to Buner, which is sold at market rates at several shops in Swari Bazar here in Buner.

When asked about the profit, a shopkeeper said that after filling the coaches fare, the profit is only Rs. 25 per bag, on which everyone was ashamed that in the blessed month of Ramadan, the Muslim shopkeepers of Punjab were blackmailing the official flour of the utility store for a small profit.

And the coach drivers of Buner for meager fares and shopkeepers spoil both their fasts and domes day for meager profits and also face the hassles of raids by the administration, roaming to government offices and paying fines and the hardships of jails and courts litigation as well. But they do not stop from their deeds, which is less regrettable.

Meanwhile, newly appointed DSP Headquarters Dagar Amjad Ali Khan along with SHO of Police Station Dagar Khalid Khan visited Buner Press Club for goodwill.

Discussions were held on issues of mutual interest. In his first meeting with the journalists, the DSP Headquarters said that the journalists are important pillars of the society and that the police and the press are playing an equal role to make the society free from crime and to improve it.

DSP said this is his first posting in Buner, but he has values from his heart for the people of Buner and he will try to take the press together to play a joint role for the reform of the society and expressed hope that the journalists of Buner police to highlight the positive role and play their positive role for crime prevention and reformation of society.

Journalists of Buner Press Club welcomed the guests and assured them that they will contribute to crime prevention and reformation of society. They assured that media persons will bring forward the positive role of the police and help in conveying the positive activities to the people.

Awareness drive starts against illegal migration

F.P. Report

MARDAN: In order to safeguard the lives and futures of youth, the European Research Institute with financial assistance from the European Union, has initiated a project aimed at raising awareness across the country about the risks and financial losses associated with illegal border crossings, as well as the opportunities available in Pakistan. As part of this initiative, an awareness session was recently held at the Kohat Community Center in Kohat, where individuals were provided information and guidance on legal avenues for migration, agent investigation, and current opportunities and resources available for youth in Pakistan, enabling them to make informed decisions.

The project coordinator Amanullah while detailing the program, stated that while it is understood that illegal migration can pose significant risks to individ-

uals, thousands still choose to take illegal routes to countries such as Europe and the United States every year, putting their lives in jeopardy and facing difficulties.

He informed that under this project, 30 such awareness seminars will be organized nationwide to empower youth to make better decisions. He emphasized that Pakistan is abundant in opportunities and resources, and technical and vocational training centers are working to enhance the skills and abilities of the new generation. With a little effort, research, reconsideration of existing resources, individuals can avoid these challenges.

The expert speakers at the seminar, including Anees ur Rahman, who have significant knowledge and experience in providing opportunities for youth and enhancing their abilities in this field, informed the youth about fundamental points regarding this matter.

They said that if it is necessary to go abroad, then go through legal channels and enhance your skills to earn better livelihoods, and instead of burdening oneself in any country, play a positive role in its economy. Along with this, they also provided information to the participants about legal routes for going abroad and about fake agents and scams.

We have all seen the horrific consequences of those who have adopted illegal paths in the past. Most of these individuals' dreams shatter when they lose their lives due to accidents, and their lives become a victim of human smugglers' deceit. And among them, a few individuals who manage to reach their destination through dangerous and extremely difficult circumstances, there awaits a mountain of new challenges. The 'SAFE' project, funded by the European Union, is addressing these issues by guiding young people on these topics.



FAISALABAD: Gypsy youngsters searching and collecting recycle items from heap of garbage.

Measles breaks out impacted children in Loy Shelman

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: More than twenty children have been impacted by measles in Isagi and Nalay Kelly, Ghunda Khel, Loy-Shelman, the remote and bordering area of Tehsil Landi Kotal district Khyber.

Residents of the area informed that the virus of the disease had spread in the atmosphere and infants of every second house were affected by it. The areas lacked basic health facilities and being poor segment of the society, the dwellers demanded of the health department to control the fatal disease and provide health safety to the infants.

According to the local

vaccinator under Expanded Programme of Immunization, routine vaccination to the children was in progress and almost all children had been administered a vaccine against the disease.

Providing information regarding measles Dr. Khalid Javed said, it is viral disease and fever, redness in eyes and developing red blisters on the body are the preliminary symptoms of measles.

After the initial signs appeared, the disease remained for three days and then it reversed to recuperate, he opined. He further said that the virus of fatal disease can survive for 28 days in air and can affect weak and unvaccinated children. He cautioned not to apply

domestic tips on your child but after get infected with the virus contact the nearest doctor and provide soft food and more fluid to the patient.

In the disease prevention is more important than cure and said that the parents should administer a two-dose anti-measles vaccine to their children at the age of nine and fifteen months respectively, he directed.

When District Health Officer Dr Zafar was contacted on the matter he said that teams of health officials had been dispatched that would vaccinate the remaining children against the disease in addition to adopting all necessary initiatives to ensure the health of the children.



SARGODHA: Police personnel performing parade during Passing Out Parade 'Basic Recruit Class Course' held at Police Training School.

Labourer hold protest at Torkham border F.P. Report

TORKHAM: Laborers and daily wagers condemned what they said was unnecessary restraint imposed for their entry and exit at Torkham border in a protest demo held at Bacha Khan Chowk, Landi Kotal bazaar on Wednesday.

Scores of local laborers carrying black flags and banner inscribed with slogans like, "relax restriction at the border for laborers," gathered at the square and chanted full throat slogans in favor of their demands.

Addressing on the occasion their leaders including Salam Shinwari, Famidullah and others said that because of a lack of source of income, thousands of local tribesmen crossed the border to Afghanistan to earn for their livelihood; however the authorities of Pakistan and Afghanistan had restrained their movement that was injunctive to them.

Due to constrained policy at the crossing thousands of families have been compelled to starve, they added. The protestors demanded of the both countries to have mercy on them and ease restrictions and permit them to cross the border. They threatened that if their problem was not addressed then they would start protest on larger scale against it.

Recovery of citizen demanded

F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: The residents argued Chief Justice Peshawar High Court and Inspector General of Police for recovery of Danyal Shah alias Dada who was kidnapped by Zahoor Khan resident of Swatu in the premises of Khanmai police station. This was demanded by Dawood Shah along with family and friends including Afzal Nangyal, Maus Khan, Khawar and others while addressing media personnel at Takhtbhai press club. They claimed that Zahoor Khan a local land lord had called Danyal Shah to his residence and made him a hostage.

A First Information Report (FIR) had registered at Khanmai police station for enforced disappearance of Danyal Shah by Zahoor Khan but police proved as facilitation for the Landlord Zahoor Khan, they argued. They threatened that if Danyal Shah isn't recovered then they will be compel to arrange protest on larger scale by holding sit-in on Malakand in favor of their demand.

One killed, two injured

F.P. Report

LARKANA: A youth named Mumtaz Ali Mughri has been killed and two others were critically injured in firing among two rival groups while the deceased was resident of Latifabad village of Mhrab Sandelo, a suburb of Larkana.

The injured were identified as Usman and Dhani Bakhsh Mughri, the injured were shifted to the trauma center of Larkana for medical assistance, while the body of the deceased youth was handed over to the heirs after the post-mortem.

Major operations of FIA Kohat Zone, three held

F.P. Report

KOHAT: As many as seven cases have been registered against the elements involved in electricity theft with three accused have been arrested on the spot, FIA Kohat Zone spokesman said here Wednesday.

The raids were conducted by Composite Circle Kohat and Dera Ismail Khan jointly, FIA spokesman said. Among the arrested accused are Baitullah, Muhammad Rizwan and Sultan Shamil, the official of FIA said.

The accused were stealing electricity by hooking

the main power line at their shops and hostels and during raids, the PESCO officials disconnected the illegal connections on the spot by arresting three accused involved in stealing the electricity, FIA spokesman said. Cable and other equipment used for illegal electricity supply were also seized. The national exchequer was losing millions of rupees due to electricity theft, FIA spokesman said, adding the accused was arrested and the investigation started.

Meanwhile, the FIA Composite Circle Abbottabad on Wednesday

raids on medical stores involved in the sale of fake and prohibited drugs.

The officials of the FIA team have registered three inquiries against the accused involved in the sale of fake medicines. During raids at various medical stores in different areas including Jadoon Plaza, Abbottabad were conducted wherein fake medicines were recovered from the accused, the FIA spokesman said. The exported drugs were seized and handed over to the Drug authorities and an inquiry has been registered against the accused.

Commissioner personally monitoring prices at markets

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Shaukat Ali Yousafzai came into the fray to ensure the supply of essential commodities to consumers at official price list.

He along with Additional Commissioner Naem Akhtar, Deputy Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao, TMA and Cantonment Board staff and other officials made a surprise visit to various markets and checked the prices of various food items while in the market interacted with existing buyers and sought their feedback.

On this occasion, many shops were sealed for illegal encroachment and action was taken against profiteers. Commissioner Mardan also reviewed the action taken by the local administration against illegal encroachments in Bank Road and other markets. He directed the administrative officers to continue the process of checking the prices in the markets on a regular basis instead of limiting it to Ramadan.

Commissioner said that the presence of the responsible officer must be mandatory at the time of auction in the vegetable and fruit market and no one

should be allowed to make illegal profit. He also directed to crack down on adulteration in milk and other items and in this regard strict action should be taken against the adulteration mafia by getting the samples of milk checked by the laboratory of Halal Food Authority. Shaukat Ali Yousafzai said that in the light of the instructions of the provincial government, the cooperation of the business community should be obtained to give maximum relief to the people and the official price list should be banned in all cases.

He directed to make the Price Monitoring Desks more active in various markets and to immediately implement the complaints registered there. He also directed to arrange proper parking area for vehicles including Company Bagh on Bank Road so that vehicles are not parked on the road.

Two culprits held along with mixt drugs in Mardan: Drug Control along with Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) conducted joint raids against fake drugs worth lakhs of rupees recovered, two counterfeiters were arrested expensive antibiotics and life-saving fake drugs are included in the

exported drugs FIR has been registered under the prevailing provisions against the accused and important revelations are expected.

According to the details, Inspector Haroon Rasheed of Drug Control Mardan and FIA Mardan raided the secret center of fake medicines in Naseer kaly area of Jabar police station, while Indian and Chinese drugs including capsules, tablets, injections of sex drugs and fake brand of Viagra were also found in huge quantity, the raiding squad seized a huge cache of fake medicine and arrested two counterfeiters named Sajjad and Ijaz, a case was registered against.

On this occasion, Drug Inspector Haroon Rasheed, talking to the media, said that the arrested accused had no connection with the medical sector and had been supplying fake medicines to various medical stores on mobile orders for a long time, a large quantity of fake medicines of well-known brands used to save sensitive lives. He said that investigation is going on with the accused, as a result of which strict action will be taken against the medical store owners who are their customers. The crackdown against sale of fake medicines will continue.

Bisham incident plot to weaken Pak-China Friendship

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri has strongly condemned the killing of 6 innocent people including Chinese citizens in Bisham area of Shangla and said that the incident is a conspiracy to weaken Pakistan-China friendship. Expressing grief and anger over the incident, she said that the recent terrorist incidents in the country are a systematic conspiracy to destabilize the country, which will not be allowed to succeed under any circumstances.

We are an equal participant in the grief of the Chinese brothers. She said that the entire nation pays tribute to the brave security forces for foiling the cowardly terrorist attacks on Gwadar and Turbat. Bisham's suicide attack is also the hand of the same cowardly enemies who are targeting innocent and innocent people with such cowardly acts. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri added in her statement that Pakistan and China are brother countries

and the entire nation is mourning the death of Chinese citizens. We as a nation strongly condemn the Bisham incident and those responsible for the incident and their facilitators will be sent to hell soon.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri further said that foreign elements hostile to Pakistan's security are involved in promoting terrorism in Pakistan to achieve their nefarious goals, but such heinous acts of violence will not shake the nation's resolve against terrorism. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that Pakistan is the only country which is fighting the scourge of terrorism alone and the people and brave forces of Pakistan have thwarted the ambitions of terrorists by sacrificing their lives in this war of terrorism and the terrorists will not be allowed to succeed in their nefarious goals in the future. She expressed the determination that the Pakistani nation has built a laden wall alongside the Pakistan Army and other security

forces in the war against terrorism.

The situation is still the same and such cowardly acts cannot diminish the determination of the nation. She paid tribute to the security forces and said that the Pakistani forces and other security forces are vigilant day and night in the defense of the homeland and have built a leaden wall against the terrorists. She also said that the cowardly terrorist elements should know that they are facing a brave nation which has defeated terrorism in the past and will do so in the future. The evil ambitions of the enemies will also be crushed.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that the entire nation is with its security agencies until the end of terrorism from the country and will not hesitate to make any sacrifice for this purpose. She reiterated that every attempt of anti-national elements to sabotage the peace and development of Pakistan will be thwarted and every drop of blood of martyrs will be counted.



Eighth suspect in Moscow attack appears in court

MOSCOW/DUSHANBE (Reuters): Russia remanded in custody a Kyrgyzstan-born man suspected of involvement in Friday's mass shooting at a Moscow concert hall, and sent investigators to Tajikistan to question the families of four men charged with carrying out the attack.

Eight suspects have now been remanded in pre-trial detention since gunmen sprayed concertgoers with bullets in the deadliest attack in Russia in two decades, days after President Vladimir Putin celebrated an election that handed him a fifth term. Islamic State has claimed responsibility and released footage from the attack. The United States and France say intelligence suggests the group was indeed behind the attack, in which 139 people were killed and 182 wounded.

Putin said the attack had been carried out by Islamic militants but also suggested that Ukraine, which is at war with Russia, may have played a role. Ukraine has denied any role. The militants have not identified any of the attackers.

Russia has said the four suspected gunmen have confessed, but some showed signs of injuries when they appeared in court, raising concern they had been tortured. Russia's commissioner for human rights said detention of suspects should be carried out in accordance with the law, TASS news agency reported, after videos were published showing the interrogation of the suspects. One had part of his ear cut off during questioning.

"It is absolutely unacceptable to use torture on detainees and defendants," the commissioner, Tatyana Moskalkova, was quoted as saying by TASS. Russian authorities have said they are investigating. The arrests have cast a spotlight on two mainly Muslim former Soviet republics in central Asia that have close ties with Moscow and depend on remittances from migrant labourers working in Russia. Three Tajik sources told Reuters that Russian investigators were in Tajikistan questioning the families of the four suspected gunmen, saying their relatives had been brought to the capital Dushanbe from their home towns. Putin said he hoped prosecutors would do everything to ensure the attackers would be



justly punished.

Kyrgyzstan-born Alisher Kasimov, remanded in custody, was led into the court room bent double - like the other suspects - before his handcuffs were removed. He showed no visible signs of injury. He is accused of providing accommodation to the four Tajik men accused of carrying out the attack. The Tajik sources said Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon was personally overseeing the Tajik part of the investigation into the Moscow attack, which he said was a "terrible and shameful event". Russian investigators say that after firing from Kalashnikov AK-47 weapons, the attackers set fire to the building with gasoline before leaving, hitting a family with two young children as they sped out of the car park. Earlier this month, Rakhmon said his government was alarmed by the activity of radical Islamist preachers who were "brainwashing" Tajik youths, making them susceptible to manipulation by foreign groups and intelligence agencies. The motive for the attack is not clear. Russia, along with the United States and Syrian forces, played a major role in defeating Islamic State in Syria.

Driven out of Syria, its fighters scattered and different branches emerged, including an Afghan branch, ISIS-Khorasan, which seeks a caliphate across Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Iran. Sanaullah Ghafari, the 29-year-old leader of the

Afghan branch of Islamic State, has overseen its transformation into one of the most fearsome branches of the global Islamist network, capable of operations far from its bases in the borderlands of Afghanistan. Alexander Bortnikov, the director of Russia's FSB security service, said the number of accomplices in the attack would be larger than the 11 reported to have already been detained, and that Western intelligence services and Ukraine needed the attack to "sow panic" in Russia. RIA news agency quoted Bortnikov as saying Ukrainian intelligence services had contributed to the attack, and that it was "known" that Ukraine had trained militants in the Middle East. Bortnikov was also quoted as saying Russian intelligence services had reacted to the US warning, but that it had been of a general nature. He suggested Western intelligence services and Ukraine had "needed" the attack, hoping it would create panic in Russian society. Russia's prosecutor general called it a new challenge to the entire law enforcement system. Close Putin ally Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of Russia's Security Council, said Ukraine was "of course" behind the attack, after days of indirect suggestions from Moscow that Kyiv was to blame. The Kremlin refused to be drawn on whether it believed there was a link between the Ukrainian leadership and Friday's attack, saying only that its investigation was ongoing.

More EU curbs against Russia needed

HELSINKI (Reuters): Finland and Sweden believe the EU needs to ramp up sanctions against Russia following the death in prison of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny. Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom said. "The fact we can see that the death of Alexei Navalny is clearly linked to the leadership in Russia makes it necessary to see to it that we can add sanctions specifically targeting those who are responsible for his death," he told a joint news conference with his Finnish counterpart Elina Valtonen. "We also believe of course that the sanctions as a whole, the sanctions package, should be enlarged because we see that the sanctions are making a difference when it comes to crippling the ability of Russia to wage its illegal war against Ukraine," he said. He said the two Nordic countries also wanted to see a sanctions regime established against Belarus related to its support to Russia in the war.

Vietnam party leader Trong invites Putin

HANOI (Reuters): Vietnam Communist Party Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong invited Russian President Vladimir Putin to visit the Southeast Asian country during a telephone call, Vietnamese state media reported. Vietnam remains one of Russia's closest partners in Asia, ties developed during the Soviet era, and Hanoi is a major buyer of Russian weapons.

"President Putin happily accepted the invitation and agreed for the two sides to arrange (the visit) at a suitable time," the official Vietnam News Agency reported. Vietnamese state media reported in October that Putin had accepted an invitation from Vietnam's president for a visit, but that has not taken place. The invitation was extended months after the Hague-based International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Putin. In call, Trong congratulated Putin on being re-elected as Russian president, and sent his condolences to Russian people and families of the victims of the concert attack outside Moscow last week. The leaders also discussed ways to promote cooperation in security, defence, trade and tourism.

Iraqi court acquits police officer

BAGHDAD (Reuters): An Iraq court has acquitted a police officer previously convicted and sentenced to death for leading a group that gunned down well-known analyst and government adviser Hisham al-Hashemi more than three years ago in Baghdad, court officials told Reuters.

Hashemi, who had advised the government on defeating Sunni Muslim Islamic State militants and curbing the influence of the pro-Iran Shi'ite militias, was shot outside his Baghdad family home on July 6 2020 by men on a motorbike. A Baghdad court issued the ruling following a retrial on Wednesday. The court dropped the charges against Ahmed Hamdawi for lack of evidence and said his previous confessions were unfit for conviction, said a criminal court lawyer who attended the session.

Media were not allowed access to the court session. "Ahmed Hamdawi has denied all charges and judges found that there is no legal basis to charge him. The judge has decided to release him unless he's wanted for another case," said the lawyer, reading from a copy of the verdict. Hamdawi was blamed for killing Hashemi using a police gun and sentenced to death by a Baghdad court last May. His lawyers appealed the sentence last year, and an appeal court cancelled the death sentence and ordered a retrial, a court official said. After Hashemi's murder government officials told Reuters he had been advising on plans to curb the power of pro-Iran groups and bring smaller paramilitaries who oppose Iran under closer state control.

Destruction, lawlessness and red tape hobble aid as Gazans go hungry

CAIRO (Reuters): In mid-March, a line of trucks stretched for 3 kilometers along a desert road near a crossing point from Israel into the Gaza Strip. On the same day, another line of trucks, some 1.5 kilometers long, sometimes two or three across, was backed up near a crossing from Egypt into Gaza. The trucks were filled with aid, much of it food, for the more than 2 million Palestinians in the war-ravaged enclave. About 50 kilometers from Gaza, more aid trucks - some 2,400 in total - were sitting idle this month in the Egyptian city of Al Arish, according to an Egyptian Red Crescent official. These motionless food-filled trucks, the main lifeline for Gazans, are at the heart of the escalating humanitarian crisis gripping the enclave. More than five months into Israel's war with Hamas, a report by a global authority on food security has warned that famine is imminent in parts of Gaza, as more than three-quarters of the population have been forced from their homes and swathes of the territory are in ruins.

Galvanized by reports and images of starving children, the international community, led by the United States, has been pressuring Israel to facilitate the transfer of more aid into Gaza. Washington has air-dropped food into the Mediterranean enclave and recently announced it would build a pier off the Gaza coast to help ferry in more aid. UN officials have accused Israel of blocking humanitarian supplies to Gaza. The European Union's foreign policy chief alleged Israel was using starvation as a "weapon of war." And aid agency officials say Israeli red tape is slowing the flow of trucks carrying food supplies.

Israeli officials reject these accusations and say they have increased aid access to Gaza. Israel isn't responsible for delays in aid getting into Gaza, they say, and the delivery of aid once inside the territory is the responsibility of the UN and humanitarian agencies. Israel has also accused Hamas of stealing aid. Reuters interviewed more than two dozen people, including humanitarian workers, Israeli military officials and truck drivers, in tracing the tortuous route that aid takes into Gaza in an effort to identify the choke-points and reasons for delays of supplies. Reuters also reviewed UN and Israeli military statistics on aid shipments, as well as satellite images of the border crossing areas, which revealed the long lines of trucks.

Before the aid shipments enter Gaza, they undergo a series of Israeli checks, and a shipment approved at one stage of the process can later be rejected, according to 18 aid workers and UN officials involved in the aid effort. At one crossing from Israel into Gaza, goods are twice loaded off trucks and then reloaded onto other trucks that then carry the aid to warehouses in Gaza. The aid delivery process can also be complicated by competing international demands, with some countries wanting their contributions to be prioritized.

Aid that does make it into Gaza can be ransacked by desperate civilians, sometimes fall prey to armed gangs, or get held up by Israeli army checkpoints. Half the warehouses storing aid in Gaza are no longer operational after having been hit in the fighting.

"It's upsetting watching these aid trucks go nowhere and vast humanitarian supplies sit in warehouses when you think about what's happening, right now, to the people who need them," said Paolo Pezzati, an Oxfam worker who recently visited the queue of aid trucks near the Egypt-Gaza border. Before the war began, an average of 200 trucks carrying aid entered Gaza each day, according to UN figures. A further 300 trucks laden with commercial imports, including food, agricultural supplies and industrial materials, also entered each day via Israel. Since the start of the war, an average of around 100 trucks have entered Gaza daily, according to a review of UN and Israeli military statistics on aid shipments. While the trucks struggle to get into Gaza, the need for aid has risen dramatically, both because of the vast number of displaced people and the devastation of key infrastructure in Israel's assault. This includes the destruction of bakeries, markets, and farmland whose crops met some of Gaza's food needs.

"Previous wars weren't like this," said Alaa al-Atar, a municipal official, referring to conflicts in Gaza. "There wasn't the destruction of all sources of subsistence - homes, farmland, infrastructure. There's nothing left to survive on, just aid," said Atar, who was displaced from the north to the south of Gaza early in the war.

To meet its minimum needs, aid agencies and UN officials say Gaza currently requires 500 to 600 trucks a day, including humanitarian aid and the commercial supplies that were coming in before the war. That's about four times the number of trucks getting in now. In March there has been an uptick, with an average of 150 trucks entering Gaza each day.

Some deliveries are being made by international air drops and via sea, but they aren't making up for shortfalls on the land routes. In the first three weeks of March, the equivalent of some 50 truckloads of aid was airdropped and brought in by sea, a Reuters tally based on Israeli military statistics showed.

The recent food security report, known as the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), found that a lack of aid means almost all households in Gaza are skipping meals every day and adults are cutting back on meals so their children can eat. The situation is particularly dire in northern Gaza, it said, where in nearly two-thirds of households, "people went entire days and nights without eating at least 10 times in the last 30 days." The war was triggered by a Hamas-led attack on communities in southern Israel on Oct. 7 that killed 1,200 people and resulted in more than 250 being taken hostage, according to Israel.

Israel has committed genocide in Gaza: UN

GENEVA (Reuters): A United Nations expert told the global body's Human Rights Council that she believed that Israel's military campaign in Gaza since Oct. 7 amounted to genocide and called on countries to immediately impose sanctions and an arms embargo. Israel, which did not attend the session, rejected her findings.

"It is my solemn duty to report on the worst of what humanity is capable of and to present my findings," Francesca Albanese, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Occupied Territories, told the UN rights body in Geneva, presenting a report called "The Anatomy of a Genocide". "I find that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold indicating the commission of the crime of genocide against Palestinians as a group in Gaza has been met," she

said, citing more than 30,000 Palestinians killed among other acts. "I implore member states to abide by their obligations, which start with imposing an arms embargo and sanctions on Israel and so ensure that the future does not continue to repeat itself," she said, prompting a burst of applause. The 1948 Genocide Convention, enacted in the wake of the mass murder of Jews in the Nazi Holocaust, defines genocide as "acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group". Israel's diplomatic mission in Geneva said the use of the word genocide was "outrageous" and said the war was against Islamist group Hamas and not Palestinian civilians. It was triggered when Hamas fighters stormed into southern Israel, killing 1,200 and taking 253 hostages, by Israeli tallies. "Instead of

seeking the truth, this Special Rapporteur tries to fit weak arguments to her distorted and obscene inversion of reality," it said. Gulf nations such as Qatar, as well as African countries including Algeria and Mauritania, voiced support for Albanese's findings and alarm at the humanitarian situation. The seats for Israel's ally the United States were left empty. Washington has previously accused the council of a chronic anti-Israel bias. Albanese, an Italian lawyer, is one of dozens of independent human rights experts mandated by the United Nations to report and advise on specific themes and crises. Her views do not reflect those of the global body as a whole. In the past, her comments on the Israel-Hamas conflict have drawn scrutiny, including from a US ambassador in Geneva who said she has a history of using "antisemitic tropes".

Ukraine ramps up spending on homemade arms to help repel Russia

KYIV (AP): Ukraine needs any edge it can get to repel Russia from its territory. One emerging bright spot is its small but fast-growing defense industry, which the government is flooding with money in hopes that a surge of homemade weapons and ammunition can help turn the tide.

The effort ramped up sharply over the past year as the US and Europe strained to deliver weapons and other aid to Ukraine, which is up against a much bigger Russian military backed by a thriving domestic defense industry. The Ukrainian government budgeted nearly \$1.4 billion in 2024 to develop weapons at home - 20 times more than before Russia's full-scale invasion.

And in another major shift, a huge portion of weapons are now being bought from privately owned factories. They are sprouting up across the country and rapidly taking over an industry that had been dominated by state-owned companies. A privately owned mortar factory that launched in western Ukraine last year is making roughly 20,000 shells a month. "I feel that we are bringing our country closer to victory," said Anatolli Kuzmin, the factory's 64-year-old owner, who used to make farm equipment and fled his home in southern Ukraine after Russia invaded in 2022. Yet like many aspects of Ukraine's war apparatus, its defense sector has been constrained by a

lack of money and manpower - and, according to executives and generals, too much government red tape. A more robust private sector could help root out inefficiencies and enable factories to churn out weapons and ammunition even faster. The stakes couldn't be higher.

Russia controls nearly a quarter of Ukraine and has gained momentum along the 1,000 kilometer (620 mile) front line by showing a willingness to expend large numbers of troops to make even the smallest of advances. Ukrainian troops regularly find themselves outmanned and outgunned, and this has contributed to falling morale. "You need a mortar not in three years, you need it now, preferably yesterday," said Taras Chmut, director of the Come Back Alive Foundation, an organization that has raised more than \$260 million over the past decade to equip Ukrainian troops with machine guns, armored vehicles and more.

Kuzmin, the owner of the mortar factory, fled the southern city of Melitopol in 2022 after Russia invaded and seized his factory that mostly made spare parts for farm equipment. He had begun developing a prototype for mortar shells shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, when it illegally annexed the Crimean Peninsula.

Kuzmin took over a sprawling warehouse in western Ukraine last winter.

His long-term goals include boosting production to 100,000 shells per month and developing engines and explosives for drones. He is just one of many entrepreneurs transforming Ukraine's weapons industry, which was dominated by state-owned enterprises after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Today, about 80 percent of the defense industry is in private hands - a mirror image of where things stood a year ago and a stark contrast with Russia's state-controlled defense industry.

Each newly made projectile is wrapped in craft paper and carefully packed into wooden crates to be shipped to Romania or Bulgaria, where are loaded with explosives. Several weeks later, they're shipped back and sent to the front. "Our dream is to establish a plant for explosives," said Kuzmin, who is seeking a partner to make that happen. Ukraine's surge in military spending has occurred against a backdrop of \$60 billion in US aid being held up by Congress and with European countries struggling to deliver enough ammunition. As impressive as Ukraine's defense sector transformation has been, the country stands no chance of defeating Russia without massive support from the West, said Trevor Taylor, a research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, a London-based think tank. "Ukraine is not capable of producing all the

munitions that it needs for this fight," Taylor said. "The hold up of \$60 billion of American help is really proving to be a significant hindrance." Russia is also pumping more money into its defense industry, whose growth has helped buffer its economy from the full brunt of Western sanctions. The country's defense minister, Sergei Shoigu, recently boasted of huge increases in the manufacture of tanks, drones and ammunition. "The entire country has risen and is working for our victory," he said. Compared with last year, Ukraine's output of mortar shells is about 40 times higher and its production of ammunition for artillery has nearly tripled, said Oleksandr Kamyshin, Ukraine's minister of strategic industries. There has also been a boom in drone startups, with the government committing roughly \$1 billion on the technology - on top of its defense budget. "We now produce in a month what we used to produce in a year," said Vladislav Belbas, the director general of Ukrainian Armor, which makes a wide array of military vehicles. For the Ukrainian army's 28th brigade, which is fighting near Bakhmut, delays in foreign weapon supplies haven't yet posed any problems for troops "because we are able to cover our need from our own domestic production," said Major Artem Kholodkevych.

US, South Korea set up task force to block North Korea oil shipments

SEOUL (Reuters): The United States and South Korea this week launched a new task force aimed at preventing North Korea from procuring illicit oil, as deadlocked at the United Nations Security Council casts doubts over the future of international sanctions. The first meeting of the Enhanced Disruption Task Force (EDTF) was held in Washington.

The meeting involved more than 30 officials from ministries and agencies in charge of diplomacy, intelligence, sanctions, and maritime interdiction, South Korea's foreign ministry said in a statement. The two sides expressed concern

over the possibility of Russia providing refined oil to North Korea, and discussed ways to suspend illegal cooperation between Moscow and Pyongyang, the statement added. "Oil is an essential resource for North Korea's nuclear and missile development and military posture," the statement said.

Under UNSC restrictions imposed over North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile programs, Pyongyang is limited to importing 4 million barrels of crude and 500,000 barrels of refined products a year. There is a strong possibility Russia will veto a UN resolution calling for

continuation of the mandate for the expert panel that monitors sanctions on North Korea, a UN diplomat told Reuters last week. A UN expert panel that monitors implementation of sanctions said this month that North Korean-flagged tankers may have delivered more than 1.5 million barrels of refined oil products between Jan. 1 and Sept. 15 last year. The United States and South Korea say North Korea has supplied Russia with weapons for use in Ukraine. Russia and North Korea have denied this even as they pledged to strengthen military cooperation. Commercial satellite imagery show North

Korean oil tankers, including some sanctioned vessels, have visited Russian ports in recent weeks. The US-South Korea task force is considering potential actions to disrupt North Korea's refined oil procurement networks including exposing sanctions evasion activities, levying unilateral sanctions designations, and engaging private sector and third-party actors throughout the region who either knowingly or unwittingly facilitate oil shipments, the US State Department said. In the future, the task force could target other areas of sanctions evasion, including coal sales, the department said in a statement.

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Rehmat Shah Afridi (Late)

Founder

Bilal Shah Afridi

Chief Executive

Jalil Afridi

Managing Editor

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

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

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

Terrorism lashes across Pakistan

ANOTHER heinous act of terrorism leashed out in Bisham that cost at least six innocent lives, including five Chinese nationals, when a suicide bomber ramped a bomb-laden car into a convoy of Chinese engineers that was on its way from Islamabad to their camp in Dasu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to the police, five Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver were killed in the attack. The Intelligence and Law Enforcement agencies launched investigations into the cowardly act to apprehend the culprits involved in the killing of the Chinese nationals working on an important energy project vital for energy security and the economic revival of the country.

The giant of terrorism, anti-Pakistan elements, and foreign agencies have joined hands on a single-point agenda to destabilize the country after the Pakistani government refused to back down before terrorist outfits and launched a nationwide Counter Terrorism campaign in the country. Unfortunately, the enemies of Pakistan once again succeeded in their nefarious designs by hitting foreign nationals on Pakistani soil to make headlines in the international media. Despite multiple successes against the monster of terrorism in Balochistan, North Waziristan, and the KP's border regions, the Pakistani LEAs could not completely protect the vital aspect of the country's security architecture involving Chinese engineers working on the projects relating to multiple billion dollars China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) spread across the country from Gwadar to Gilgit Baltistan.

In the past 72 hours, the first two attacks targeted a Naval Air Base and a Gwadar Strategic Port used by China in the southwestern region of Balochistan where Chinese engineers are working on multiple infrastructure projects. Dasu is also home to a major dam being constructed through Pak-China cooperation which previously came under attack in 2021, when a blast on a bus killed 13 people including nine Chinese nationals. The government has condemned the recent terrorist attacks and pledged to strengthen the security measures to protect Chinese nationals working on multiple development and CPEC projects in the country.

The recent terrorist attacks against Chinese engineers have significant political and economic implications for the country. These incidents have raised concerns about the security of foreign nationals working on critical infrastructure projects, particularly those associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The CPEC is a cornerstone of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aiming to improve regional connectivity, and multilateral and transit trade through magnificent road, rail, and seaport infrastructure which can transform the highly improvised South Asia into one of the most developed and well-connected trade regions in the world. Politically, these attacks could potentially strain the relationship between Beijing and Islamabad. It possibly spoils Pakistan's tourism and sports which are already at the lowest web and foreign teams and tourists avoid visiting Pakistan due to security concerns. Economically, such events can lead to delays or increased costs in infrastructure projects due to heightened security measures and potential hesitancy from foreign investors. Although such attacks are unlikely to derail the Pak-China relationship yet such incidents affect foreign investment and lower global confidence in the country.

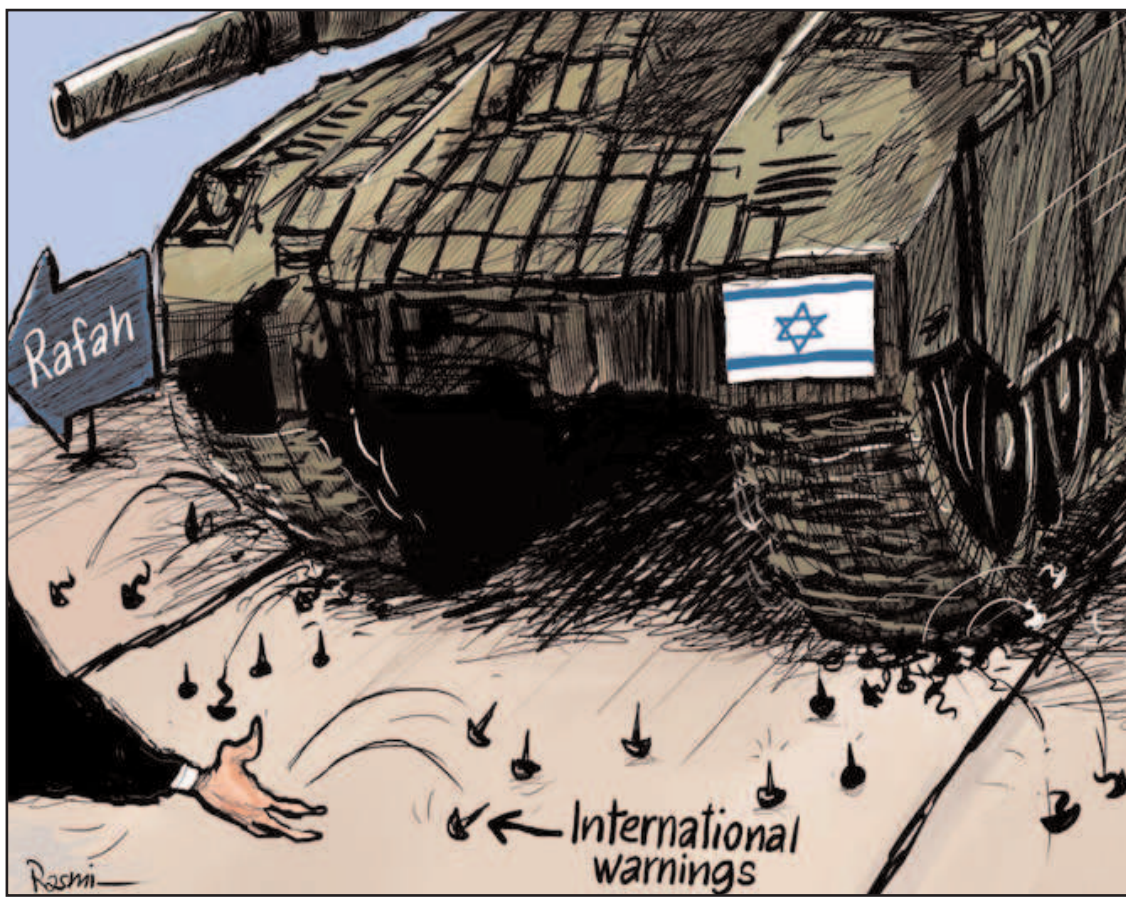
The current upsurge in terrorist activities must be viewed in the context of Pakistan's military strikes against the TTP's infrastructure inside Afghanistan. Historically, terrorist outfits have always targeted Pakistan's vital strategic interests and caused unimaginable losses to the country ranging from the PNS Mehra attack to GHQ, PAC Kamra, APS tragedy, and multiple attacks on Chinese nationals working on important projects in the country. Yet the state's response had always been lax and apologetic in respect of the implementation of policy measures whether it is the execution of the National Action Plan (NAP), prosecution and the hanging of the terrorists and dealing with the financiers, sympathizers, and supporters of terrorists in and outside of the country. There had been no repeat of 9/11 and 26/11 in the US and India respectively while Pakistanis witnessed Dhaka fall, APS, and Peshawar Police lines like massacres every other day. The nation does not know, whether it is the fault of the public, the weakness of the government, the impotence of the security institutions, or the confusion of our strategists that our nation is always stung by known snakes at a very common but vital aspect. The Nation also asks why the helicopters and air fleets are only reserved for the VIPs and bureaucrats. What is the alternative if road convoys are insecure in the country? The time has come for the nation to ask the leaders and institutions to stop their personal and institutional business and take care of the national interests otherwise the time will not wait for us.

Basant and deadly kite flying

THE Rawalpindi Police has accelerated its ongoing operation against kite sellers and flyers and managed to net 20 accused with 1000 kites and 27 kite flying string rolls. According to the details, during this year's crackdown against kite flyers and sellers, more than 970 accused were arrested and more than 78,000 kites, over 1300 string rolls, 4 rifles, 23 pistols, and 6 loud-speakers were recovered. According to the authorities, kite flying and aerial firing are deadly practices and serious hazards to the public safety and writ of the law which could not be tolerated by the government in the larger interest of the public.

Basant is a vibrant springtime festival that has been celebrated in Punjab and adjoining regions since long time ago. Historically, Basant which has now been purely dubbed with kite flying, once used to be a soulful and joyable festival in Pakistan. Awfully, over the years this pleasant event was turned into a dreadful occasion involving dangerous practices such as use of steel thread or kite strings laced with chemicals that often ends up slitting the throats of innocent people including children. Meanwhile, kite flying on rooftops, high rise buildings and busy roads often lead to fatal injuries and deaths. There have been multiple deaths and tragic incidents due to aerial firing and clashes over kite flying on the eve of Basant that led to a countrywide ban on such unethical celebration of this festival. However, manufacturing, sale and flying of kites with deadly string grew unhindered and still continue, whilst local administration and Police failed to properly curb dangerous kite flying which cause serious safety risks for the public in spring season every year.

Historically, Basant and kite flying is basically not a bad event but it is our way of celebration which make this pleasureful festival a risky and dangerous phenomena. Civilized nations celebrate their festivals and social events with traditional zeal, national proud and care, while maintaining the beauty and grace of those occasions. The government must take action against those responsible for use and manufacturing of string made of dangerous chemicals, ensuring that all distributors and sellers are selling government-approved string. People should also observe maximum caution and cooperate with the LEAs and local government in making this event healthy and joyful. So, no innocent life fell prey to dangerous attitude of our fellow citizens and every one add to the beauty of this colourful event in our nation.



Russia depends on migrants. Moscow terror attack could inspire new wave of hate

Bektour Iskender

Iremember the first time I entered Russia back in 2012 very distinctly. I traveled from my hometown of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, to Moscow to attend a three-day conference organized by Google's Russian office.

Given the short duration of my trip, I opted to travel light, relying solely on a backpack to carry my essentials. This is what caught the attention of the Russian customs official. Having cleared border control and nearly made my way through the green corridor of Sheremetyevo airport, a man in uniform suddenly stopped me. He directed me through a maze of passages marked with "staff only" signs, until I found myself in a small room with four other travelers from Central Asia. Together we were a microcosm of the migration demographics of our region: two men from Uzbekistan, one from Tajikistan, and my compatriot from Kyrgyzstan.

And so, we waited. Each passing minute stretched into what felt like an eternity. After about an hour, a group of customs officers along with a plainclothes official, entered the room. They inspected our belongings, meticulously checking each item one by one.

"Why are you traveling with just a backpack?" inquired one of the uniformed officials. My explanation appeared to catch him off guard. He proceeded to explain that my minimal luggage raised red flags, suggesting that I could be smuggling drugs. "Your people usually travel with huge bags, which is why you seem suspicious," he remarked bluntly, not caring about the racist undertones in his words.

Before my trip to Moscow, I had heard numerous stories about the mistreatment of Central Asians like myself. A firm rule within my family was to steer clear of the city at all costs, fueled by chilling accounts of racial animosity, police intimidation, and the harrowing specter of neo-Nazi violence. Despite my hopes that these stories were exaggerated, my experience upon arriving at Sheremetyevo airport quickly showed they were not. It became clear that for Central Asians in Russia's capital, threats wait behind every

corner.

What appalled me most was not merely the necessity of an additional customs check - such inconveniences are commonplace at airports worldwide. Rather, it was the blatant racial profiling perpetrated by the customs officials. Discrimination against Central Asian migrants is an everyday reality in Russia. Yet events such as the recent attack on Crocus City Hall have the potential to exacerbate the already hostile environment and spark new waves of violence. After a suicide bomber attacked the St. Petersburg metro in 2013, racism against Central Asian migrants rose sharply. The suspects in the attack need not even be of Central Asian descent to stoke the flames of hate. Any person of color from Central Asia, the Caucasus, or one of Russia's ethnic republics, regardless of whether their guilt is proven or not, can be scapegoated to justify aggressive actions against the broad category of people Russians derogatorily label as "nerussky" or "nerus" - terms that translate as "non-Russians."

Following the Crocus City Hall attacks, one of the initial reports that caught my attention stirred memories of my first visit to Moscow: migrants from Kyrgyzstan told RFE/RL journalists they had been detained at Sheremetyevo Airport for a staggering two days. A quote from one of the migrants, speaking to RFE/RL on Sunday, encapsulates the profound sense of hopelessness experienced by Central Asian migrants:

"We flew in from Bishkek yesterday and arrived at Sheremetyevo at 18:40 Moscow time. Here they collected our passports and took us to some room. They checked our phones for four hours and wouldn't give them back. They took our fingerprints and made us sign some papers. Ukrainians and Tajiks are getting beaten up. We've been sitting here hungry for a day, they didn't even give us water. They've locked us up like criminals in a room, there are more than 10 Kyrgyzstanis in one room, and there are others in different rooms. At first, they said it was 'additional checks,' but then they stopped

explaining anything at all. We contacted the embassy, they told us they couldn't help us with anything." These words encapsulate the horrors people from Central Asia face in Russia: the brutality of the Russian state, fears of physical violence, and the stark realization that even your own government cannot offer any assistance.

For many people from Central Asia, the situation feels like a relentless trap. Escaping the pull of migration to Russia is no simple feat. Central Asian countries lead in migration to Russia, with millions from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan laboring and settling in what was once our colonial metropole. In my youth, I was fortunate to secure a decent job in my homeland. Growing up in Bishkek afforded me certain privileges through my education and connections. However, for most young people in my country, lucrative job opportunities are scarce. Finding work abroad is the sole avenue for supporting their families. Yet the options for where to migrate are disappointingly limited. The United States is too distant, the European Union and China present a formidable barrier with their strict visa policies. Russia, despite its problems, is the best option many of them have.

Paradoxically, Russia relies heavily on Central Asian migrants. On one hand, they supply Russia with much-needed labor. Yet on the other, they deepen Central Asian countries' dependence on the Kremlin, thereby facilitating Moscow's ability to bolster its political influence in the region. Hence, Russia's policy towards Central Asian migration is rife with contradictions. While citizens of Central Asian republics can easily relocate to Russia, the Russian state invariably relegates them to second-class status through systemic discrimination and racial profiling.

Statistics indicate that many Central Asian migrants would opt out of working in Russia if given the opportunity. In 2022, the International Organization for Migration conducted research on returning migrants in Kyrgyzstan. Although over 80% had pre-

viously resided in Russia, 44% said they would have preferred to stay in Kyrgyzstan permanently. Additionally, one-third indicated that even if they were to migrate again, they would favor destinations other than Russia, with Germany, the US, Turkey, and Korea topping the list. I always sensed this sentiment whenever I encountered fellow Kyrgyz people in Moscow. During the same trip in 2012, I crossed paths with a friend from Kyrgyzstan who was then working at Google and attending the same conference. Following the event, he invited me to join him for lunch at Google's Moscow office to discuss ideas for localizing Google services in Central Asian languages. Upon our arrival, we quickly realized that the woman serving food in the canteen was also from Kyrgyzstan. Her delight at discovering our shared nationality was palpable, prompting her to usher us into the kitchen, where we found everyone was from Kyrgyzstan as well. Our brief conversation with the kitchen team left them visibly elated. They were thrilled to encounter fellow compatriots, clearly homesick yet hungry for news of success and breakthroughs by people from Kyrgyzstan.

As we finished our lunch, one of the employees said the words that will stay with me forever: "You've brought us such joy today, you were the first Kyrgyz visitors to the other side of the canteen." Usually, my countrymen only came in to work in the kitchen. I wish for a future where people from my region don't have to endure discrimination abroad. I am grateful to people who tirelessly cultivate local businesses, seek foreign investments, and confront the corruption that impedes our economic growth. I hope other countries will become more welcoming to Central Asian immigrants or develop stronger ties with our entrepreneurs. This benefits everyone: it will make Russia less reliant on cheap Central Asian labor, and weaken the Kremlin's grip over the region. But this journey will take time. Until then, people from my part of the world will have to go to Russia, living in constant fear.

The Moscow Times

'Cold war' climate does not allow for human rights

Eyad Abu Shakra

TWO notable developments from last week deserve our attention. One is the Russian-Chinese veto against the US resolution at the UN Security Council regarding the displacement war in Gaza, and the other is the shooting attack on the outskirts of Moscow that left hundreds of casualties in its wake.

Conspiracy theories, which many in the Arab world are fond of, are premature. It would also be naive, however, to take at face value the statements of sympathy issued from most Western capitals following the attack. As for the fact that Daesh claimed responsibility so speedily for the operation, that is nothing more than another indication of its nature and operational intelligence structure.

However, let us first look into the background of the Russian-Chinese veto and the political message it sent. It came as no surprise that the two countries vetoed the American resolution, as Washington had previously rejected all previous calls to put an end to the massacres and displacement in Gaza. The US administration justified its position on the grounds that these calls did not condemn the Hamas attack of Oct. 7, did not demand the immediate and unconditional release of the Israelis who had been kidnapped by Hamas, and did not punish the movement by rooting it out as a military force and political authority.

What we know is that Washington's terms are the same as the explicit conditions laid out by Israel. Since the principal being represented here, Israel, does not have the right to veto, the representative, Washington, took it upon itself to veto four ceasefire resolutions at the Security Council, including a proposal that included Russian amendments.

In the most recent vote, the US resolution was supported by 11 countries and opposed by three: Russia, China and Algeria (the only Arab country on the council currently), while Guyana abstained. Of course, the US representative criticized the Russian and Chinese stances as "ridiculous." However, her Russian counterpart responded by saying that the US had done nothing to rein in Israel and that it was now speaking of a ceasefire after "Gaza has been virtually wiped off the face of the Earth ... We have seen a typical hypocritical spectacle." The Russian delegate went on to claim the American proposal was "highly politicized" and that its only goal was to appease US voters opposed to the ongoing war, and that it granted Israel immunity by not addressing its crimes.

The fact of the matter is that the international political climate exposed by the Gaza displacement war affirms that a post-unipolar era has begun. While it is premature to speak of the fall of the American Empire, we are seeing realignments, reassessments, and alliances reevaluated or forged anew. For example, Europe no longer accommodates countries that find a safe haven in neutrality. We now see these countries rushing to

join NATO. Another example is the collapse of the broad areas of consensus that had been the pillars upon which Western democracies, especially in Europe and its venerable political traditions, have long stood.

However, outside of Europe, which had been the strategic stage of the Cold War era and home to the countries of the Warsaw Pact and NATO, we now see centers of power emerging, and new crises threatening to shake the international frameworks. Likewise, some entities in the Middle East and beyond are revisiting the question of the primary mover. Is it the US or Israel through their respective influential American and European lobbies?

Asia is home to two of the world's largest countries, India and China, which are both members of BRICS. Changes to this grouping could be inevitable if India continues its gradual shift from a parliamentary democratic system and a pluralistic state comprising dozens of ethnicities and languages to an ethno-religious dictatorship where minorities are marginalized and potentially persecuted.

The implications of the shift, which is already underway and accelerating, could become evident in the upcoming elections. So far, however, major Western powers have not voiced any reservations about the policies of India's leader Narendra Modi, despite the fact that the situation has been aggravated and needs to be addressed.

Moreover, both India and China have ambitious foreign projects to forge global alliances founded on interests. Given the rapid rise of China as a technological, economic, military, and political power, the West has remained silent about Modi's policies. And some suggest that Western capitals - led by Washington, of course - will have no choice in the future but to rely on India as a counterbalance to China.

Going back to Europe, the tsar in the Kremlin, Vladimir Putin, predictably won a new mandate after the Ukraine war stirred Slavic sentiments and awakened Russia's historic sense of being targeted and besieged. The war in Ukraine has provided Putin with a strong justification to tighten his grip domestically before settling his scores outside the country's borders. The theater of a Daesh attack - exported to Moscow last week - served as a reminder of this to Russia and compounded its apprehensions of being under siege.

Indeed, what the Kremlin has done in Syria since 2011 is not very different from what the Israeli war machine has done and continues to do in Palestine. Back then, it was said that Moscow did not see a Syrian nation in pain, but a Western attempt to expand at its expense, especially after it had been pushed out of Libya. However, it is also true that the lives, fate and future of the Palestinians mean nothing to Washington. In the calculations of the major powers and their vetoes, the people always come last.

Arab News

Tibet's democratic development an inevitable choice

Zhang Yongpan

THE azure sky, towering snowcapped mountains and clear rivers, these are all hallmarks of Tibet, the characteristic features of "Shangri-La". However, in the past, the feudal serfdom of Tibet was so dark, barbaric and cruel that it denied people even the basic freedoms and hindered social development.

In 1904, Edmund Candler, a British journalist who visited Tibet, wrote that the Tibetan people were still in the medieval era, not only in their political and religious aspects, in their severe punishments, witchcraft, the practice of identifying reincarnated lamas, and enduring torture by fire and boiling oil, but also in all aspects of their daily lives.

The feudal serfdom in Tibet started in the late ninth century and matured after the 14th century, profoundly influencing the region's social structure and people's lives. In the first half of the

20th century, while slavery had been abolished in most parts of the world, the feudal system continued to dominate Tibetan social structure, subjecting the Tibetan people to suffering as serfs and slaves. From the local Tibetan people to Westerners, including litterateurs, and officials from the interior visiting Tibet, they all meticulously recorded the suffering of the Tibetan people.

In old Tibet, the population mainly comprised serfs, slaves and serf owners, with the serf owners accounting for about 5 percent of the total population, while the remaining 95 percent were essentially serfs and even more miserable slaves. These serfs were destined to serve their "owners" from birth, and were subjected to oppression and untold hardship.

The serf-owners had almost all the powers in society, including the making of laws, which often were enacted to favor them. Worse, the serfs were subdivided into different categories, with the lowest ranks essentially no different from slaves. As for the Dalai Lama, he used his theocratic position to hold the power of life and death over the serfs. No wonder US scholar Melvyn C. Goldstein said that religion and the monastic establishment were heavy shackles on Tibetan social progress.

In 1951, the Tibetan people welcomed Tibet's peaceful liberation. And the entry of the People's Liberation Army and a large number of central government officials into Tibet liberated the masses, with the Tibetan people praising the PLA personnel as "living bodhisattvas".

From 1951, Tibet's theocratic feudal society began to disintegrate. But the 14th Dalai Lama's group planned to launch a rebellion so it could maintain the feudal serfdom and enjoy its privileged position. But on March

10, 1959, the upper-level reactionary group in Tibet, with support from foreign forces, disrupted the "17-Article Agreement" and launched an armed rebellion. On March 20, 1959, the central government issued instructions on democratic reform, emphasizing that democratic reform must rely on the laboring people, and the land owned by the local government of Tibet must be distributed to the farmers. All debts, corvee, and feudal levies must be abolished.

On March 28, 1959, the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued an order to dissolve the original local government of Tibet, with the Preparatory Committee for the Xizang autonomous region exercising the powers of the local government of Tibet, and marking the disintegration of the old political order in Tibet and taking charge of the situation by a million former serfs.

The liberation of the Tibetan serfs is one of the landmark events in Chinese history, as well as an important milestone in achieving national unity and ethnic solidarity. In commemoration of this historic event, the Xizang autonomous region designated the "Tibetan Serfs Emancipation Day" in 2009, in order to remember history, honor the martyrs, promote the national spirit and uphold the unity and progress of all ethnic groups in Xizang. The Serfs' Emancipation Day is not only an important turning point in Tibetan history but also a milestone in the Chinese people's struggle for national liberation and progress. The day has been

designated to review and commemorate the abolition of the feudal serfdom in Tibet and the historic moment of a million serfs gaining freedom.

The day also showcases the firm determination and positive achievements of the Chinese government in safeguarding human rights, promoting social development, and helping deepen the international community's understanding and recognition of China's development path. At the same time, the day portrays a good image of China on the international stage and lays a solid foundation for friendly cooperation between China and other countries.

The China Daily

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Problem with British policing is not ‘just a few bad apples’

ON February 29, an independent inquiry into the abduction, rape and murder of Sarah Everard by an off-duty police constable in London published its first damning report. The Angiolini Inquiry focussed on the "career and conduct" of the murderer Wayne Couzens, who used his police warrant card and police powers to convince Sarah to get into the back of his car during a COVID-19 lockdown in March 2021. It found that he should never have been allowed to become a police officer let alone remain in the force for 20 years.

Metropolitan Police "repeatedly failed" to spot warning signs about his unsuitability to be an officer, the inquiry said. The many offences he has been accused of throughout his life include a serious sexual assault against a child before the beginning of his policing career and multiple counts of indecent exposure. According to the inquiry, one indecent exposure charge, to which he pleaded guilty, had occurred just days before Sarah's murder. The police force consistently turned a blind eye to Couzens' predatory behaviour, the report found, and missed multiple opportunities to stop him. Sarah's family said if not for these failures, she would still be alive today.

The damning picture painted in the report - one of police incompetence, institutional misogyny and systemic apathy towards sexual violence - is devastating and truly frightening but what it is not is surprising. After all, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Mark Rowley himself admitted in September that the force readily employs "hundreds" of officers who should have been sacked for misconduct. And another independent review tied to the Everard murder, this time looking into "the standards of behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police Service" and published in March 2023, found that it is "institutionally racist, misogynistic and homophobic".

Although multiple inquiries have been restricted to scrutinising London's Metropolitan Police, in truth this is a national issue. As thousands of women and girls harassed, abused, victimised and failed by police across the country know too well, if we were to broaden the scope of such inquiries and reviews, we would see many, if not most, police forces across the country are crippled by misogyny, racism and indifference to sexual violence. Indeed, according to a 2023 report by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), from October 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022, at least 1,483 unique allegations of violence against women and girls were recorded against 1,539 police employees. Last year,

even the former head of the so-called Independent Office for Police Conduct - the watchdog we rely on to protect us from police corruption and abuse - was charged with raping a child. Sarah was the victim of a national crisis of policing that threatens public safety and wellbeing. Police routinely fail to apprehend repeat abusers like Couzens before their behaviour escalates to murder, and this failure is not limited to predators among their own ranks. On average, two women are killed by their domestic partners each week, often after contacting police or other public services and asking for help.

According to a new report by

failed to make so much as a safeguarding referral despite innumerable pleas for help. She went missing just a few hours after a police officer hung up on her, accusing her of talking "a load of rubbish". She was already dead when they finally agreed to start properly searching for her.

Just like London Met, Dorset Police has an an appalling record of investigative failure and harbouring perpetrators. A Dorset woman was strangled to death by a serving officer in 2020. Survivors are dying as a result of police indifference to sexual violence and a systematic refusal to thoroughly investigate abuse within communities as well as in their own ranks.

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the NPCC, from April 2022 to March 2023, police recorded 242 domestic abuse-related deaths in England and Wales, including 93 suspected victim suicides. There are many ways that the trauma of abuse can change or take a life, particularly when that trauma is amplified by a discriminatory state response. Countless are lost to suicide and addiction related to the impact of prolonged abuse by their abuser(s) and neglect by the state. In this country today less than one in 100 rape cases lead to conviction; less than two in 100 are even being charged.

I have heard the same story of neglect, discrimination and corruption from more survivors than I can count. People started sharing their stories with me when I started speaking out and campaigning for change following the loss of my cousin Gaia. She was 19 years old in November 2017 when she died of hypothermia after going missing in Dorset during a mental health crisis. This was less than two years after reporting to Dorset police that she was a victim of child exploitation. Like so many others, the police in Dorset repeatedly failed to listen to Gaia or take action to keep her safe and this paved the way for her preventable death. They failed to fully investigate Gaia's and others' allegations against the known child sex offender she accused of rape, refused her a restraining order and

These failures cannot be allowed to continue.

The routine negligence and discrimination that met Gaia and meets so many survivors who report to the police - including many of those who tried to report Wayne Couzen's past abuses - has been normalised to the point of routine. But if the police had really listened to survivors' accounts, both Sarah and Gaia might still be with us today.

This is why since 2022 I have been campaigning for the "Gaia Principle", which would compel officers to "join the dots" between any similar allegations against the same suspect, rather than treating them in isolation. This would improve the investigation of serious sexual abuse and help ensure that survivors of harassment and abuse can no longer be so easily denied justice or left in danger by police who cannot or choose not to investigate properly. By legislating that such negligence is a professional standards and ultimately a misconduct issue, the Gaia Principle offers a mechanism for survivors and their advocates to hold police officers to account. Put simply, an officer who cannot or will not do their job might lose their job.

There is already guidance in place that, if followed in full, would vastly improve the police investigation of sexual assault. Following years of campaigning

by survivors and allies, the College of Policing's new National Operating Model for Violence Against Women presented a detailed blueprint of how officers should safeguard survivors and conduct an thorough investigation. For example, it tells officers to be "suspect focused" in their investigations, and focus on "the behaviour of the suspect to see whether they have committed a crime, not the victim's character". The fact is however that in the absence of accountability mechanisms like the Gaia Principle, these are all just words on paper. Many officers at the inquest into Gaia's death testified that they had not read or even heard of the guidance they were supposed to be following.

The problem of British policing, the reason why women like Gaia and Sarah keep needlessly dying, is not a few rotten apples and incompetent officers but systemic misogyny, institutional indifference to sexual violence and patriarchal attitudes that enable officers to turn a blind eye to serial offenders and victimise survivors with their subpar investigations. Because if there are no consequences either way, guidance on issues that are not a priority will not be prioritised. And the truth is that neither for our institutionally misogynistic police nor for the patriarchal state it serves has the harassment, rape, abuse, neglect and murder of women and girls ever been a priority.

If we want to see change in our lifetime, we must make sure that Angiolini's findings are understood not as one rotten apple slipping into the barrel or one toxic London police force in an otherwise functional system, but instead as the consequence of patriarchal culture within the police and the state as a whole that is so deeply rooted that it has completely normalised the routine dismissal and disbelief of survivors while actively sheltering perpetrators within its own ranks. The Gaia Principle is now being considered in Parliament, having been tabled as an amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill. The modicum of basic accountability it offers in a bill that otherwise leaves police power practically unchecked is absolutely essential at this point when the time to trust the police to police themselves has so clearly passed.

It represents one step on a long road. Ultimately, we must go on to move public debate beyond the "one rotten apple" narrative that has excused so many abuses of power. It is this same narrative which normalises the institutional homophobia, ableism and racism which contributes to so many preventable deaths in custody or following police contact. We must pull up the whole rotten tree, roots and all.

Israel cannot be the exception anymore

Osma Al-Sharif

IT is still difficult to say when and how the war on Gaza will end. Even as the UN Security Council passed a resolution on Monday calling, for the first time since the conflict began six months ago, for a lasting ceasefire, Israeli officials were quick to brush it off, insisting they will not stop until Hamas is defeated and the hostages are released.

The US representative to the UN, who abstained from the vote, stunned her council colleagues when she described the resolution as "nonbinding." Meanwhile, negotiations for a temporary truce between Israel and Hamas remain bogged down as the humanitarian catastrophe in beleaguered Gaza breaks new records every day.

What is at stake today is not only the fate of 2.2 million Gazans, the prospect of a just and lasting settlement to the Palestine question, which is long overdue, and an end to Israeli exceptionalism, but the very future of a world order that is tilting and on the brink of collapse. The day after the war in Gaza ends will be the most challenging test for Israel, the Palestinians, the countries of the wider region, and the US. One thing is clear: The Middle East will not return to the way things were before Oct. 7. The same applies to the rest of the world, as countries grapple with the fallout from the war, the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the ensuing political gridlocks, the veracity of the rule of law, the discredited international order, and ultimate accountability.

There will be a pressing need to examine the root causes of the conflict, draw adequate conclusions, and adjust course to contain blowbacks and prevent a recurrence. This will necessitate soul-searching and bold decisions, some of which will be hard and painful. For the Palestinians, the day after will require that two crucial challenges are addressed: ending the political rift that has weakened and splintered the Palestinian national movement, and reviving and reforming the Palestine Liberation Organization as the only legal body representing the will of the Palestinian people, under occupation and in the diaspora.

That reformed organization must encompass all factions and hold democratic and free elections to choose a leadership that can decide the future path to national liberation and self-determination, all while renewing its

commitments to international law and UN resolutions. The new leadership will have to tackle some tough questions, including: the future of the Oslo Accords, which Israel has all but abandoned; the viability of the two-state solution; redefining the concept of Palestinian statehood; and holding Israel accountable as an occupying power for its war crimes in Gaza and the West Bank.

For Israel, there will be public demands to investigate the events of Oct. 7. But beyond that, pressure will mount to hold early elections. The choice of Israelis at the polls will determine the future of the "new Israel" that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has helped create over the past decade. The war on Gaza will represent a pyrrhic victory for Israel. It has never been so isolated, paranoid and demonized, eliciting feelings of a "Masada complex" and making it more dangerous to itself and others than ever before.

After inflicting such pain and horror on the Palestinians, Israel must also confront the ghost of its enduring curse: the occupation. At that decisive juncture, Israelis must decide what path to take: Either live in peace with the Palestinians, free of occupation and subjugation, or relive the recurring nightmares of bloodletting, abomination and eternal guilt.

Israel must also decide whether it will continue to be a fortress, just like Masada, that lives by the sword, only to perish by it. Or whether it will choose to become a normal state in the region.

The choices Israel makes will determine its fate and that of the region as a whole. Its allies in the West must help it make the right decisions. Netanyahu's Israel is unhealed, locked in delusions of grandeur, and ultimately bent on self-destruction.

For the wider Middle East, the day after the war will require a comprehensive revision of the region's collective security imperatives. There is a genuine sense of urgency about resolving the Palestine question. A new security paradigm is needed to ensure there is no repetition of the Gaza debacle. The fundamentals of a peaceful resolution and sustainable security for all must be redefined, and Israel will have to make a choice that it has evaded for decades: end the occupation and be accepted in the

region. Regional security means that the politics of war, as pursued by regional powers and their proxies, must end. That mantra must apply to the entire region: Libya, Sudan, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.

Failing states must be supported and revived. Nonstate actors must finally be incorporated into central states. A new approach to resolving conflicts must be discussed and considered through an association that aims to cushion the region against geopolitical upheavals and superpower polarization. These are tall orders but they are needed if the region is to break the cycle of violence that has squandered its wealth, weakened states, propped up nonstate actors, triggered civil and sectarian wars, and fueled famine and poverty.

Unless a bold initiative is proposed that delivers a clear perception of the region after the war in Gaza and beyond, the deep fissures that threaten its future will run even deeper.

For the US, a new and fresh perception is required that is distinct from the type of radical, partisan politics of the past few decades that have delivered a cynical, simplistic and insulting view of the region, its people and its culture.

The US must address the question of why it has become so hated and reviled by the overwhelming majority of the people in this region. At the heart of all of this is America's controversial ties with Israel, which have stripped the US of any meaningful leverage during the war in Gaza and made it directly complicit in the genocide of the century.

Israel has become a liability for the US, not only in the region but around the world. That is something for the American people to address and examine. For the Middle East, and its population of more than 400 million people, the question is whether the US can forge a regional policy that is independent of the narrow interests of Israeli expansionists and delusional religious warmongers. Beyond all this lies the fate of the international world order, the rule of law, and the concept of justice and impartiality under the law.

Israel's long-tolerated exceptionalism has ended and the world must inform authorities in the country of this new reality. They must be held accountable for their actions if the legitimacy of world institutions is to be upheld and respected. Israel cannot be the exception anymore.

EU-Mauritania migration deal is destined to fail

Hassan Ould Moctar

ON March 7, the European Union and Mauritania inked a 210-million-euro (\$227m) migration deal. The agreement was spearheaded by the EU and lobbied for by the Spanish government, which is worried about an uptick in undocumented migration to the Canary Islands. In January, more than 7,000 arrivals were recorded on the islands.

The migration deal aims to decrease these arrivals by supporting the Mauritanian border and security forces to combat people smuggling and human trafficking and bolstering Mauritanian border management and surveillance capacities. The deal also promises funds for job creation in the country, strengthening the asylum system and legal migration schemes.

But a glance at the history of the EU's "border externalisation" policies suggests this deal has little chance of meeting its stated objective. Worse still, the unprecedented public backlash it has generated in Mauritania threatens to destabilise the country. EU efforts to stem migration from Mauritania began in 2006 when nearly 32,000 people arrived on the Canary Islands from West African shores. These sea arrivals followed a bloody crackdown on migrants at Spain's North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in 2005 and a consequent southward reorientation of migratory movement.

The response involved aerial and maritime surveillance operations carried out by Spain with the support of Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, and the deployment of Spain's Civil Guard in the northern Mauritanian port city of Nouadhibou. The police force was tasked with patrolling the city and training its Mauritanian counterparts. To process and deport those detained in the Canary Islands or intercepted at sea, an old school in the city was converted into a detention centre. These efforts resulted in a dramatic increase in deportations of foreign nationals from Mauritanian territory and a temporary lull in sea arrivals in the Canary Islands, allowing Spain to laud the operation as a success.

The EU took this opportunity to draft a new national migration strategy that was adopted by the Mauritanian government in 2010. If the deployment of foreign security forces in Nouadhibou already

had drastic implications for Mauritanian state sovereignty, this exercise in external technocratic governance further cemented them. In practice, the strategy financed a swathe of projects in the country, ranging from capacity building for security forces and upgrading the country's border infrastructure to youth assistance programmes and awareness-raising campaigns for migrants in the country.

In subsequent years, the routes to Europe shifted east, with unprecedented numbers arriving via the Central and East Mediterranean passages in 2015. In response, the EU launched the Trust Fund (EUTF) for addressing the root causes of irregular migration and displacement in Africa. Through the EUTF, Mauritania once more received EU financial and technical support devoted to migration management with a wider pool of cash and projects aimed at preventing Europe-bound movement. By 2020, however, arrivals on the Canaries from West Africa had picked up once more with more than 40,000 sea arrivals recorded by the Spanish government that year. In a report on these arrivals, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime identified a restriction on border crossings in Morocco among the drivers of the increase.

The shift to sea came at a great human cost, however, with the death rate on the Atlantic Route estimated to be as high as one death for every 12 people who attempted the journey. While it has long been observed that such border deaths, and people smuggling more generally, are a consequence of restrictions on legal movement, the EU response has been to further expand the means of restricting movement in Mauritania.

Since July 2022, this has taken the form of a diplomatic push to negotiate a Status Agreement between the European Commission and Mauritania. In a further dent to Mauritanian territorial sovereignty, this would authorise a Frontex deployment on Mauritanian territory, allowing its staff to carry out border management duties in the country and endowing them with immunity from prosecution in Mauritania. This Status Agreement has yet to be finalised, and while the causes of the delays have not been made

public, there have been indications that Mauritanian authorities have felt aggrieved by the relative lack of recognition by European partners of their role in policing the EU's external borders. Documents leaked in September indicate a sense within Mauritanian government circles of being underappreciated compared with Tunisia, which struck a deal with the EU in July, which included 100 million euros (\$112m) devoted to migration management. With arrivals on the Canaries rising towards the end of 2023, the stage was thus set for a similar deal to be signed with Mauritania.

Given the history of externalisation policies that have been implemented in Mauritania since 2006, however, there appears little hope that this deal will meet its intended objective of stemming "irregular migration" to Europe. Those who seek to reach Europe will continue to try with alternative routes being sought out in response to restrictions and crackdowns.

Indeed, just as the rise in the number of arrivals on the Canaries in 2006, which originally launched the externalisation drive in Mauritania, were preceded by a violent crackdown in Ceuta and Melilla in 2005, the increase in sea arrivals in Spain towards the end of 2023 was foreshadowed by an all too similar massacre at Melilla in June 2022. If the migration deal thus has a sense of déjà vu to it, two novel features are worth highlighting. First, the negotiated funding is orders of magnitude larger than previous externalisation efforts.

The 2010 national migration strategy, for instance, earmarked 12 million euros (\$13m) of projects over the course of its eight-year existence while the EUTF financed 84 million euros (\$91m) of projects in Mauritania in 2019 alone. The latest migration deal, by contrast, promises 210 million euros (\$227m) to Mauritania before the end of the year.

Second, while opposition to border externalisation in Mauritania has historically been confined to a handful of civil society organisations, the latest migration deal has sparked a societal uproar. Opposition parties have derided what they see as a plan to resettle "illegal immigrants" in Mauritania while civil society activists I have

spoken to are critical of EU efforts to make Mauritania the "gendarme of Europe". The blowback has been such that the Mauritanian government has been forced to respond to the negative publicity. Both the ruling party and the Ministry of Interior issued separate statements denying rumours that the country was being forced to resettle foreign nationals on its territory. These statements did little to quell public concerns, however. The day before the deal was signed, security forces dispersed a protest against it in the capital.

The polarisation created by the agreement thus has the potential to seep into wider society. Indeed, 2023 was also a year of increased riots and protests in Mauritania due in large part to the police killing of human rights activist al-Soufi Ould al-Chine in February and a young Afro-Mauritanian man, Oumar Diop, in May. The latter instance in particular compounded a sense of racialised exclusion felt by many within the Afro-Mauritanian community. Indeed, it is not uncommon for Afro-Mauritanians to be suspected of being "illegal immigrants" by security forces, given the difficulties many face in obtaining civil registry documentation. In such a context, the EU incentivising national security forces to crack down on "irregular migration" carries acute risks for those already on the margins in Mauritania.

The migration deal, therefore, risks inflaming racial tensions and social polarisation in Mauritania while it is also unlikely to achieve its stated aim of preventing "irregular migration". Such an outcome would foremost be detrimental to the country itself, and it would also undermine the EU's own framing of Mauritania as a beacon of stability in a troubled region. Ultimately, the only way out of the vicious and futile circle fostered by border externalisation is for ordinary people in Global South countries, such as Mauritania, to exercise greater influence over their governments' engagement with external actors, such as the EU. This would enhance the scope for migration policies that reflect regional realities rather than external interests and would foreground the interests of those at risk of being victimised under the status quo.

Aljazeera

Vladimir Putin can be tried for his crimes now

Geoffrey Robertson

THIS month, the Russian people chose as their president for the next six years an international criminal for whose crimes they bear the same political responsibility as Germans who once supported Hitler. Both leaders are guilty of what the court at Nuremberg described as "the supreme international crime", that of aggression - i.e. invading an unthreatening country for no good reason - and thereby becoming liable for "all the evils, all the horrors of war; all the effusion of blood, the desolation of families, the rapine, the ravages - they are his works and his crimes".

It is possible to envisage a modern Nuremberg tribunal, with Putin taking Goering's place in the dock, flanked by co-conspirators like Lukashenko from Belarus, Dmitry Medvedev, the commanders who supervised the destruction of Mariupol and the executions at Bucha, and the lying propagandists from state television and the Orthodox Church.

The most important of these cheerleaders will be the Patriarch, Kirill, a former KGB colleague who forgave the indiscriminate bombing and the killing as part of a "holy war" against the West, in which Russian soldiers who died would go to heaven. The problem with this picture is its improbability. For the present, there is no court available to try Putin - which is why some 39 democratic nations, including the UK, have set up a "core group" to examine how to create an "aggression tribunal" to deal with him in the event that he is overthrown.

Putin is, without doubt, guilty of the crime of

aggression, but must be proved guilty. The law is clear enough. Aggression was outlawed by the UN Charter, and criminal responsibility for enforcing it was left to the International Criminal Court (ICC), which eventually came up with a simple definition that came into effect in 2018. It is committed by any political or military leader who breaches the UN Charter by invading another member state with a force of the "character, gravity and scale" that makes the breach "manifest". This definition fits Putin like a glove. The only defence he can offer is self-defence under article 51 of the UN Charter. He may claim entitlement to attack and kill Ukrainians because the country might have joined Nato and Nato might have attacked Russia. This is called "pre-emptive self-defence".

Putin would doubtless rely on the arguments being advanced by a so-called "realist" school of academics, that Nato is to blame for the war because it failed to honour promises made to Russian leaders in 1990. Such promises ("not a step further east") might well have been made orally, but were never put in writing.

The notion that Putin was unfairly provoked is now being peddled by some professors, but it is difficult to credit them with either intelligence or morality because they ignore the rights of Ukrainians to life and liberty. So Putin's defence would be rejected by any bench of international judges. But where is the court that can try him? The ICC has issued an arrest warrant, but he is unlikely to turn up at the Hague and this court has no

power to try him in his absence. It has jurisdiction to put leaders on trial for aggression, but (absurdly) only if they agree to be tried - it cannot indict leaders of states that are not ICC members.

There is only one solution if his guilt is to be authoritatively declared. That is by a trial in absentia. This expedient is always opposed by Anglo-American lawyers - how, they ask, can a trial be fair if the defendant plays no part in it? But such trials work effectively in some European countries and (importantly) in Ukraine itself.

Moreover, there is nothing that Putin's presence could add to the evidence or the arguments at his trial for aggression - the facts of his invasion are unchallengeable, his defence of self-defence against likely Nato aggression can be judged on expert evidence and, to the extent that is relevant, his own opinions are amply available from his speeches, writings and interviews. The trial would give some real meaning to the crime of aggression, which has never been the subject of legal proceedings since Nuremberg. It is important to set a precedent which may serve to deter others.

One of the founders of international law, Emmerich de Vattel, as long ago as 1760, described those guilty of aggression in terms that judges could invoke in sentencing Putin, if they convict him. He is "guilty of a crime against the enemy... He is guilty of a crime against his own people. Finally he is guilty of a crime against mankind in general whose peace he disturbed and to whom he sets a pernicious example."

The Telegraph



CCP to sign MoU market regulator

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: China has made significant investments in Pakistan through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and various Chinese companies operating in the country. This investment is expected to increase manifold after the second stage of CPEC. To facilitate these expanding business activities, the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) is preparing to put in place a comprehensive legal and regulatory framework.

CCP is poised to sign a MoU with China's State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR), marking a significant milestone

in bilateral cooperation. The MoU, which has received the final approval from the last Federal Cabinet, aims to enhance information sharing and technical capacity between the two countries.

SAMR is a ministerial-level agency under China's State Council responsible for enforcing anti-monopoly laws and regulating markets. The signing of the MoU is expected to usher in a new era of collaboration between China and Pakistan in the field of anti-trust.

On October 19, 2023, a high-profile Chinese delegation led by Dr. Gan Lin, Vice Minister of SAMR visited the CCP. Discussions between CCP Chair-

man Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu and Vice Minister Gan Lin highlighted the strategic importance of a partnership focusing on enhancing market regulations, providing training and capacity building, sharing expertise in cartel detection, and collaborating on research projects to improve regulatory efficiency.

The MoU will solidify the partnership between CCP and SAMR by establishing a framework for enhanced cooperation through bilateral meetings, training programs, workshops, research collaborations, experience sharing, exchange of information, and cooperation in the field of competition law and policy.

Gold rates up by Rs.100 to Rs.229,500

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold witnessed an increase of Rs.100 and was sold at Rs.229,500 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs.229,400 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.86 to Rs.196,760 from Rs.196,674 whereas the price of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.180,363 from Rs.180,284, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

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

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$7 to \$2,200 from \$2,193, the Association reported.



KARACHI: Governor State Bank of Pakistan Jameel Ahmad cutting a ribbon to inaugurate main branch of AL Habib Exchange.

PSX stays bullish, gains more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 641.51 points, a positive change of 0.97 percent, closing at 66,547.79 points against 65,906.28 points the previous trading day.

A total of 354,597,630 shares valuing Rs.11,884 billion were traded during the day as compared to 303,710,027 shares valuing Rs.12,078 billion the last day. Some 346 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 179 of them recorded gains and 152 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 15 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Lotte Chemical with 42,831,026 shares at Rs.19.53 per share, Telecard Limited with 29,177,124 shares with Rs.9.24 per share and PTCL with 24,701,735 shares at Rs.17.31 per share.

Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.235.00 per share price, closing at Rs.7,635.00, whereas the runner-up was Shahmurad Sugar Mills Limited with a Rs.31.38 rise in its per share price to Rs.472.00.

Rafhan Maize Products Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.240.00 per share closing at Rs.8,050.00, followed by Sapphire Fibres Limited with Rs.106.50 decline to close at Rs.1,476.00.

Rupee gains 3 paise

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Wednesday gained 03 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs278.04 against the previous day's closing of Rs278.07.

The buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs278.5 and Rs281.25, respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 47 paise to close at Rs300.97 against the last-day closing of Rs301.44. The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs1.83, whereas a decrease of 76 paise was witnessed in exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs350.99 compared to the last closing of Rs351.75.

He said that the role of the business community is very important for the promotion of mutual trade relations between Pakistan and Brazil and ICCI is ready to play its full role in this regard.

Ahsan said that Brazil is a big trade market which is connected to a big trade block like BRICS and its trade and economic relations with Pakistan are important.

He said that there were wide possibilities of cooperation between Pakistan and Brazil in the field of sports, especially in football. Brazil can co-promote football in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Zafar Bakhtawari highlighted the international importance of Brazil and its role in global trade and expressed hope for the expansion of mutual economic and trade relations between the two countries in the future.

Jameel inaugurates AL Habib Exchange

F.P. Report

KARACHI: AL Habib Exchange Company (Private) Limited a wholly owned subsidiary of Bank AL Habib commenced operations from its main branch in Karachi.

The main branch of AL Habib Exchange was inaugurated by the Governor State Bank of Pakistan Jameel Ahmad in the pres-

ence of Abbas D. Habib Chairman Bank AL Habib, Qumail R. Habib Executive Director, Bank AL Habib, Mansoor Ali Khan, Chief Executive, Bank AL Habib, Syed Furqan Chief Executive Officer AL Habib Exchange and Senior officials from SBP, Bank AL Habib and AL Habib Exchange.

AL Habib Exchange is an initiative by Bank AL

Habib in line with State Bank of Pakistan's structural reforms within the Exchange Companies sector and aims to cater to the genuine foreign exchange needs of its customers.

This occasion marks the beginning of a new era in foreign exchange services, as AL Habib Exchange endeavors to set new standards of excellence and reliability in the industry.

Honda installs clean drinking water facilities

F.P. Report

LAHORE: In rural areas, ensuring access to clean drinking water has been a persistent challenge, particularly due to the common contamination of existing water sources.

Acknowledging the vital importance of safe drinking water, Honda Atlas Cars (Pakistan) Limited has implemented proactive measures to tackle this issue in the vicinity of Government Primary School, Tibba Samad,

Manga Mandi, Lahore.

On 7th March, 2024, a commendable effort to ensure the well-being of the students and teachers, Honda Atlas Cars (Pakistan) Limited has installed deepbored water pumps and reservoirs. These installations aim to provide a reliable supply of clean drinking water, reducing the likelihood of any infections and improving the overall health and safety of the school children.

The inauguration ceremony, held at the school prem-

ises, marked a significant milestone in the journey towards ensuring access to clean drinking water for all.

Maqsood-Ur-Rehman Rehmani, Vice President, and Company Secretary, led the ceremony by cutting the ribbon and officially unveiling the new drinking water facility. This initiative underlines Honda Atlas Cars (Pakistan) Limited's commitment to corporate social responsibility and its dedication to making a positive impact on the communities it serves.

Fruits, vegetables rates increase by 40 per cent

ISLAMABAD (APP): In the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, the prices of fruits and vegetables have increased by 40 percent in the first half of the Holy month of Ramadan.

According to the market survey conducted by APP here on Wednesday, the prices of vegetables and fruits, especially onions and tomatoes, peas, cabbage, apple gourd, garlic, ginger, beans, cucumber, carrots, and fruits including apples, pomegranates, bananas, citrus, and oranges, have increased by 40 percent during Ramadan.

Since last week, various varieties of fruits, including apples, have been sold at Rs 250 to Rs 300, pomegranates at Rs 350 to 400, bananas at Rs 250 to Rs 300, citrus at Rs 200 to 250, and oranges at Rs 250 per

kilo/dozen.

Similarly, among vegetables, peas cost Rs200, cucumbers Rs120, apple gourds Rs150, onions Rs200 to 250, and garlic and ginger cost 600 rupees per kg.

According to the survey, the price of poultry chicken reached Rs 430 per kg, and the price of poultry eggs reached Rs 280 to 290 per dozen in the open market in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

The meat of the poultry chicken has reached Rs 630 per kg in the open market. The prices of poultry items have increased by 30 percent in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 319.30 points as compared to 315.31 points during the past week. The

SPI for consumption groups from Rs. 17,732-22,888, Rs. 22,889-29,517; Rs. 29,518-44,175 and above Rs. 44,175, increased by 1.75 percent, 1.86 percent, 1.27 and 0.66 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 14 (27.45%) items increased, 12 (23.53%) items decreased and 25 (49.02%) items remained stable.

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

Zafar Masud elected as Chairman of Pakistan Banks' Association

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Banks' Association (PBA) is pleased to announce that Zafar Masud, President & CEO – The Bank of Punjab (BOP), has been elected as the new Chairman of the Association.

This change is subsequent to Muhammad Aurangzeb, the sitting PBA Chairman, assuming the role of Federal Minister of Finance and Revenue for Pakistan earlier this month. To effect this change, the PBA Executive Committee (EC) met and unanimously elected the following:

a) PBA's sitting Senior Vice Chairman, Zafar Masud (President & CEO – The Bank of Punjab) as Chairman of the Association.

b) PBA's sitting Vice Chairman, Yousaf Hussain (President & CEO – Faysal Bank), as Senior Vice Chairman and;



c) Member of the Executive Committee, Ahmed Khan Bozai, (Managing Director & Citi Country Officer – Citibank N.A., Pakistan) as the new Vice Chairman of the Association.

The Association firmly believes that, under the new leadership, it will continue to effectively represent the banking sector through further nur-

turing close relationships with all the key stakeholders, including the State Bank of Pakistan.

It will increase its focus on aligning banks to further build up the technology & digital framework, maintain the highest compliance standards, and play a strong role in increasing financial inclusion.

Additionally, it will coordinate with banks to facilitate the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), middle markets, and financing of large infrastructure & industrial projects deemed critical for the country.

PBA expresses its gratitude to Muhammad Aurangzeb for his significant contributions during his tenure as Chairman PBA and is confident that its new Chairman, Zafar Masud, and the Executive Committee, will continue to guide the organization towards greater achievements and significant milestones.

Pakistan urged to join BRICS to become part of global economy

ISLAMABAD (INP): Ambassador of Brazil to Pakistan, Olyntho Vieira has urged Pakistan to join international multilateral forum BRICS for becoming part of the global economy.

He said, "Pakistan is a big market in terms of its population which can play an important role in BRICS and promote trade with these countries."

Brazilian Ambassador was speaking during a call on meeting with President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry

(ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and Secretary General UBG, FPCCI Zafar Bakhtawari.

Olyntho Vieira said that the BRICS have an important role in the future global economy and with it, South-South cooperation will also grow and international multilateralism will be strengthened.

He said that Pakistan was the largest market in terms of population in the Islamic world, which was important because of its geo- Strategic location and there was a need to strengthen the trade relations between Brazil and Pakistan.

The Envoy said that Pakistan and Brazil have vast trade and cooperation opportunities in technology

and fruits, especially mango and Citrus, which need to be expanded further.

He said that Brazil was part of various economic and trade integration forums in the world and South, South Cooperation were very important from which Pakistan can take full benefits.

The Ambassador said that between Pakistan and Brazil there was a mutual trade of \$45 million in which Brazil was in trade surplus.

He said that Brazil is exporting soybeans and cotton to Pakistan, while Pakistan is exporting surgical equipments, textiles and fruits to Brazil.

He said that in the same way, Brazil is a big market

with which Pakistan can be connected with the market of South America by being economically connected.

Meanwhile, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that the signing of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Pakistan and Brazil will promote mutual trade in both countries and both countries will be able to benefit from each other's markets.

He said that the role of the business community is very important for the promotion of mutual trade relations between Pakistan and Brazil and ICCI is ready to play its full role in this regard.

Ahsan said that Brazil is a big trade market which is connected to a big trade block like BRICS and its trade and economic relations with Pakistan are important.

He said that there were wide possibilities of cooperation between Pakistan and Brazil in the field of sports, especially in football. Brazil can co-promote football in Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Zafar Bakhtawari highlighted the international importance of Brazil and its role in global trade and expressed hope for the expansion of mutual economic and trade relations between the two countries in the future.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was reported at the port where eight ships, Maersk Santosa, Xpress Bardsey, MSC Spring III, Port Imabari, Solar Roma, Dravin, Malha Ras Laffan and Epicurus carrying Containers, Coal, Palm oil, LPG, LNG and Gas oil, berthed at Container Terminal, Bulk Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Engro Terminal, Gasport Terminal and Oil Terminal respectively during last 24 hours. Meanwhile two more ships, Chemroad Rose and Anna-M carrying Chemicals and Coal also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the same period.

A total of twelve ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, Xpress Barsey and MSC Maeva left the port on today morning and two more ships, MSC Spring III and Maersk Santosa Ullswater and Crested Eagle are expected to sail on today afternoon).

Court Notice

In the Court of Abdul Salam Khan Sarkanikhel Additional District Judge I/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Dagar. Appeal No. 72/13 Institution 13/6/2023 date of hearing 6/5/2024 Shahzada etc. Vs. Bakht Sultana etc. Notice to No. 4 Bakht Rashad 6 Nowshad sons of Noran Shah Resident of Bhattai Tehsil Gadezai District Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 9 am dated 6/5/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the court of Sadia Ali Civil Judge IV, Bannu. Suit No. 480/1 institution 10-11-2023, next date of hearing 06-04-2024, case title Mst. Khurshed Bibi etc. Vs. Hanif Ullah etc. Notice To No. (22) Shaker Ullah (23) Sawabur Rahman sons of Shereen Khan Resident of UAE Main Alghan City (26) Adil Usman S/o Gul Rustam Khan R/o Asperka I Saieda 2 Tehsil Domel Bannu presently in Saudi Arabia Main Al Riaz City. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendants cannot be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendants will/shall not appear personally or through a dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8 a.m. dated 06-04-2024, the proceeding will be taken ex-parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

KARACHI (INP): The Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PRGMEA) calling for the revision of the Textile Policy has urged the government to present a separate five-year 'Apparel Policy' detaching the garment sector from textile and giving it an independent status in the aftermath of expiring GSP Plus status and opening up of new opportunities in view of the US International Trade Commission's (ITC) report on competitiveness of Pakistan's apparel industry to be submitted at the end of August this year.

In a statement on Tuesday, Central Chairman PRGMEA, Mubashar Naseer Butt appreciating the government's urgent response to the US ITC report on competitiveness of apparel industry of Pakistan, observed that the move holds significant

implications, presenting a valuable opportunity for Pakistan's apparel industry to enhance its export because the US major focus is also on apparel import from Pakistan. So, we need to strengthen this sector, giving it an identity like the rest of the world do, as the EU country's single demand is also just apparel items not the raw material or fabric.

The International Trade Commission of the US, during the recent hearing, also put this question, asking the participants as to why Pakistan exports raw material instead of making value-addition, as it is capable of doing this, he added. He said the textile industry is the most important manufacturing industry in Pakistan, with a relatively complete industrial chain- from raw cotton, cotton ginning, spinning, clothing, printing and dyeing to garment manufactur-

ing.

PRGMEA central chairman observed that we are grateful to the whole team from Pakistan to prepare a strong case, presenting it in a befitting manner before the US International Trade Commission along with the PRGMEA, as it would prove to be a stepping stone for the Pakistan apparel export. "So far, the team of Pakistan has done a god job- a well-coordinated work of politicians, bureaucracy and private stakeholders."

Mubashar Naseer Butt advocated for a launch of a new and totally independent apparel policy in line with the textile policy for the next five years, besides constituting an Apparel Council at federal level, as the formulation of sector-wise policies is the only remedial solution to avoid decline and stabilize textile exports. "We ask the government to review its textile

policy and introduce an apparel policy because our issues are completely different. We have no particular sales tax issue and we are labour intensive and a major employment generator as compared to the textile sector," he added.

The garment sector has the immense potential to create jobs with comparatively low investment and less energy needs, as it generates four times the employment at one-fourth of the energy consumption compared to other textile sectors. Countries like Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia are grabbing a major share in global garment market, while Bangladesh and India are also preparing themselves to pick up greater share, he said.

He highlighted that the US is the largest export destination for Pakistan, as our apparel exports constitute around 85% of total

exports to the US, and it can be enhanced significantly if we exploit this new opportunity fully.

It is to be noted that Pakistani representatives testified about the comparative advantage of the apparel sector before the US International Trade Commission. This was a public hearing by the ITC on the export competitiveness of the apparel industries in the South Asian countries including Pakistan in the US market.

PRGMEA EC member and former chairman Sajid Saleem Minhas, who was representing PRGMEA in the hearing, pointed out that it could be a strategic opportunity for Pakistan to showcase the strength and potential of our apparel industry, believing that a well-crafted response from our end could lead to positive outcomes for our trade relations.

Sajid Minhas said that

presently Pakistan has very little share of the US market in the apparel sector, because they are subject to applicable MFN tariffs of up to 38.3%.

"It is first step to get duty-free access to the US market and govt should also support the private sector, taking effective steps for making the value-added textile industry competitive and vibrant in the US market."

Stressing the need for establishing 'Apparel Council/Committee' he said that it would include both public and private sector to monitor apparel sector's all activities and policy making for escalating country's exports. He also called for giving special attention to manmade fiber in context of its huge demand in the US market.

In the new apparel policy we also need to enhance manmade fiber capacity because there is great

potential of it in Pakistan. We need to make strategies with the help of the government on the issue of how we attract investment further in this regard.

Sajid Minhas added that we have to encourage the young male and female entrepreneurship, enabling them to play their instrumental role in strengthening national exchequer, as the country has a great potential and our association's members can enhance the exports, by bringing innovation in the products.

"Finally, the US is giving us an opportunity to trade and not depend on aid through the ITC report, which will be submitted by 30th August. Now, it depends upon the government how they lobby and pursue to encourage the US government to open discussion for a possible tariff-free agreement on apparel export from Pakistan," he concluded.



In brief

Bilal Raza resigns as PCB director legal

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan Cricket Board's Director Legal Bilal Raza resigned from the post, sources said on Wednesday. More directors of the board are also expected to step down in the coming days. Meanwhile, Bilal Afzal, who had served as a minister in cabinet of caretaker chief minister Mohsin Naqvi, was named in the selection committee. Mr Afzal will work as a data analyst in the selection committee while renowned analyst Hassan Cheema is also part of the committee as ex-officio. Director International Usman Wahla has been appointed secretary of the selection committee.

Maia hits 91 in fourth T20

WELLINGTON (Agencies): England sealed a T20 series victory with a game to spare with a dominant 47-run win over New Zealand in Wellington. England's imposing 177-3 was set up by opener Maia Bouchier's stunning 91 from only 56 balls. In reply, spinner Charlie Dean took 4-26 as the hosts stumbled to 130-7 from their 20 overs. The White Ferns were left to rue a sloppy fielding performance, dropping Bouchier twice and missing a stumping. Captain Sophie Devine was unable to bat after sustaining a quad injury in the field, to further dent New Zealand's hopes of chasing the competitive total. But they should not have been chasing such a target after Izzy Gaze missed a regulation stumping with Bouchier on 31, Jess Kerr could not hold on in her follow-through when she was on 44 and substitute fielder Leigh Kasperek spilled a tough diving chance on 80. England were also gifted plenty of runs through New Zealand's substandard ground fielding, and punished their wilting bowlers for 65 runs from the last five overs. Bouchier's knock included 12 fours and two sixes, before captain Heather Knight's 21 from nine balls and Nat Sciver-Burnt's 29 from 14 balls added the late impetus from which New Zealand never recovered. The final T20 takes place at the same venue on Friday.

Bayern to face Spurs

LONDON (Agencies): Bayern Munich striker Harry Kane is set to return to the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium to face his former team in an August pre-season friendly, the Premier League club announced on Wednesday. Spurs' all-time leading goalscorer joined the six-time European champions for £100 million (\$126 million) last year and was followed by defender Eric Dier, who made the switch to the German club in January. The Visit Malta Cup clash will take place on August 10, a week before the start of the Premier League season. "This mouthwatering curtain-raiser to the new season takes on extra significance, with the club's all-time leading goalscorer, Harry Kane, and long-serving defender Eric Dier having recently joined the Bundesliga champions," Tottenham said in a statement. England captain Kane has been impressive in Germany this season, scoring 37 goals in 35 appearances across all competitions. He leads the Bundesliga goalscoring charts with 31 so far for Bayern, who currently sit second, 10 points off league leaders Bayer Leverkusen. Last time Bayern and Tottenham met was in the 2019/20 Champions League group stage.



WELLINGTON: Charlie Dean bagged four wickets, New Zealand vs England 4th T20I.

Multan Sultans join hands with NEOC for fight against Polio



Saqib Mushtaq

MULTAN: Multan Sultans join hands with National Emergency Operations Centre for Polio Eradication in the Fight Against Polio In a significant step towards combating polio, Multan Sultans and the National Emergency Operations Centre have collaborated through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at eradicating polio from Pakistan.

The MoU signing signifies the unwavering commitment of Ali Tareen, Owner of Multan Sultans, towards raising awareness for polio eradication.

Ali Tareen emphasized the profound impact sports figures and sports franchises like Multan Sultans have on society, underscoring the responsibility they bear towards community welfare. He pledged full support from Multan Sultans in actively participating in polio eradication campaigns to disseminate crucial awareness.

"Polio eradication is a noble cause, and we envision a future where every child is safeguarded against this disease," stated Ali Tareen. "We recognize the pivotal role of our cricketing heroes in uniting the nation towards this common goal. Through various channels, including video messages, our players will advocate for polio vaccination, leveraging the immense reach of cricket."

Acknowledging the tireless efforts of polio workers, Tareen emphasized their indispensable role in securing a polio-free future for generations to come. "Our polio workers are the

unsung heroes in this fight, and we are committed to providing every possible support to their noble cause," he added.

Ali Tareen further added, "The collaboration between sport and public health initiatives marks a pivotal moment in Pakistan's fight against polio. With polio remaining endemic in only a handful of countries, including Pakistan, the collective mission is to ensure the safety and well-being of every child."

As Pakistan's beloved sport, cricket holds the power to unify the nation towards this critical objective. Multan Sultans, with their extensive fan base and influence, vow to harness this power to propel the nation towards a polio-free future.

The partnership between Multan Sultans and the National Emergency Operations Centre for Polio Eradication signifies a strengthened resolve to combat polio, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to global health initiatives.

All Pakistan 3x3 Ramadan cup basketball tournament kicks off from today

ISLAMABAD (INP): Under patronage of the Federal Basketball Association (FBB), the All Pakistan 3x3 Ramadan Cup Basketball Tournament will be starting from tomorrow (Thursday) at Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad.

According to Federal Basketball Association Secretary Ouj E Zahoor, a large number of basketball clubs and departments from around the country are participating in the event which will be played under floodlights.

He said that Federal Basketball Association and the Pakistan Basketball Federation, with the support of the Pakistan Sports Board have been at the

forefront of nurturing and promoting basketball in the country. This tournament is a testament to their unwavering commitment to developing sports infrastructure and providing platforms for athletes to showcase their skills.

"The tournament, spanning several days, will showcase the growing talent in three distinct categories including Men's Departmental Tournament, Club Tournament for men and the Women's Tournament", Ouj said, adding that the men's departmental tournament will see fierce competition among 12 teams from prestigious departments including Wapda, Army, Navy and Police.

Meanwhile, the Club Tournament is expected to be a grand affair with 48 teams from various cities across Pakistan competing for the top spot and women's tournament will feature 12 teams, highlighting the growing interest and participation of women in basketball.

Ouj E Zahoor said that this year's 3x3 Ramadan Cup is more than just a tournament; it's a celebration of basketball and its rapidly growing format. 3x3, which has been gaining international acclaim and popularity. The event is set to provide a significant boost to the sport's visibility and interest among the youth and sports enthusiasts across Pakistan.

Australia reaffirms desire to host India-Pakistan bilateral series: report

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Cricket Australia has reaffirmed its willingness to host a bilateral series between India and Pakistan if the BCCI and PCB agree to play each other in the future, cricket website ESPNcricinfo reported on Wednesday.

India and Pakistan's men's teams will be in Australia at the same time in November this year after CA announced the schedule for Australia's next home summer with Pakistan playing three ODIs and T20Is before India start a five-Test series just four days later on November 22. There was never a realistic chance of matches between the two nations as part of the visits.

India and Pakistan have not played a bilateral series since 2012-13 and currently only meet at global ICC events.

After the success of the 2022 T20 World Cup match between India and Pakistan at the MCG, when 90,293 witnessed a last-ball

thriller, CA, the Melbourne Cricket Club (operators of the MCG) and the Victorian government expressed an interest in hosting the two teams in bilateral matches at the MCG.

CA chief executive Nick Hockley reiterated that desire when he announced Australia's home schedule at the MCG on Wednesday. "I think anyone that was here for the India-Pakistan game at the MCG, it will go down as one of the most memorable occasions, not just sporting occasions, that I've ever been to," he was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo. "So people want to see that contest. We would love to host that if the opportunity arose. If we can play a role, we'd love to play a role."

"We're so excited to host Pakistan. We're so excited to host India. If we can help, that's great. But I think in many ways, that's a bilateral series. It's really for others to make that happen."

CA's head of scheduling

Peter Roach acknowledged on Tuesday that there would also be some interest in hosting a tri-series, which last happened involving India and Pakistan during the 1999-2000 season, rather than just a neutral bilateral series if that were possible but he noted there was no room in the current FTP.

"We haven't got a tri-series in the FTP," Roach said. "Going forward we're always interested in opportunities for matches and contests that will engage our fans. It's fair to say every country in the world would love to see India and Pakistan compete in their country."

"We're on record as saying we're one of those countries that has asked the question. There's no room in the schedules to do that at the moment. We'll keep talking to them in any other opportunities that arise, but in this specific example there are not going to be any changes to the schedule."

Naqvi assures ICC delegation of top-notch facilities for Champions Trophy 2025

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The International Cricket Council (ICC) delegation visiting Pakistan to inspect venues and facilities for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 on Wednesday called on Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi.

The delegation led by Chris Tetley, ICC's Head of Events, included Sarah Edgar, Senior Manager event operations at ICC and Aun Zaidi, Manager event operations.

The meeting was also attended by COO PCB Salman Naseer, Director International Cricket PCB Usman Wahla and other PCB officials.

After inspecting Karachi's National Bank Stadium, Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium and Rawalpindi's Pindi Cricket Stadium, the ICC delegation insisted on the extensive preparations needed to host the Champions Trophy 2025.

Acknowledging the importance of hosting a successful tournament, Mohsin Naqvi gave the



delegation assurances of thorough preparations at every stage.

Naqvi further presented his plans for the stadiums' upgradation and reiterated that he would not leave any stone unturned.

"Pakistan is set to host an ICC Tournament which is an absolute pleasure and a welcome development not

just for the board but also for the fans across the country who are an important stakeholder in this sport, he said adding that the PCB will arrange top-notch facilities as per the stature of this historic tournament.

"I am delighted to announce that the PCB will upgrade the three major venues in the coun-

try well in time before the start of ICC Champions Trophy 2025.

The PCB will leave no stone unturned in making this a very successful and memorable tournament."

The ICC delegation expressed satisfaction with the overall facilities on offer across Karachi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi.

Pakistan face 0-7 defeat in second FIFA qualifier against Jordan



ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan faced a resounding 0-7 defeat against Jordan in their FIFA World Cup 2026 Round 2 Qualifier away fixture at the Amman International Stadium on Wednesday.

The match was part of the fourth round of Group Seven competitions in the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup. "Defeat in Amman," the Pakistan Football Federation said on X, announcing the results of the match.

Jordan's Musa Al-Taamari scored a hat-trick by netting the first, fourth, and sixth goals. Yazan Al-Naimat contributed the second goal through a penalty kick while Saad Al-Rousan

got a third goal for his team.

Adding to the scoreline was Ali Alwan who found the back of the net in the 75th minute, followed by Muhammad Abu Zureiq, who scored the seventh goal.

The victory has put Jordan in second place in Group Seven of the Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup, with a total of seven points. Two teams from the group will now advance to the third round, while the remaining two sides will play in the Asian Cup 2027 Qualifiers.

Last Thursday, Jordan thrashed Pakistan 3-0 at the Jinnah Stadium in Islamabad during the first qualifying

match between the two sides. This was Jordan's first visit to Pakistan for a football match in 18 years.

Pakistan's journey in the qualifiers has been a mix of victories and defeats.

Pakistan clinched a 1-0 victory against Cambodia last October, marking their first-ever FIFA World Cup qualifier win in Islamabad, but then suffered a 4-0 loss to Saudi Arabia in the subsequent round.

Squads: Pakistan: Yousuf Butt, Saqib Hanif, Abdul Basit, Hassan Ali, Easah Suliman, Abdullah Iqbal, Mamoon Musa, Haseeb Khan, Mohammad Saddam, Mohammad Sohail, Rao Omar, Mohammad Fazal, Mohammad Adeel, Rahis Nabi, Harun Hamid, Alamgir Ghazi, Rajab Ali, Ali Uzair, Shayek Dost, Abdul Samad, FareedUllah, Waleed Khan, Imran Kayani, Adeel Younis.

Jordan: Yazid Abu Laila, Ahmed Al-Jaidi, Abdullah Al-Fakhouri, Yazan Al-Arab, Baraa Marhi, Anas Bani Yassin, Saad Al-Rousan, Ihsan Haddad, Firas Shalbaya, Saleem Al-Ajalini, Mahmoud Shawkat, Nizar Al-Rashdan, Ibrahim Saada, Nour Al-Rawabdeh, Rajai Ayed, Youssef Abu Jalbush, Saleh Ratib, Mahmoud Mardi, Muhammad Abu Rizk, Ali Alwan, Muhammad Abu Zureiq "Sharara", Musa Al-Taamari, and Yazan Al-Naimat.

Djokovic splits from Ivanisevic with bitter sweet message

PARIS (AFP): Novak Djokovic and Goran Ivanisevic are to go their separate ways, the tennis world number one announced on Wednesday, ending a five-year association which yielded 12 Grand Slams.

Djokovic brought Croatia's 2001 Wimbledon champion on board as a member of the coaching team ahead of the grass court Grand Slam in 2019 and although the Serbian admitted their "on-court chemistry had its ups and downs", it also resulted in huge success.

However, Djokovic has had by his high standards a poor start to the year, losing to eventual champion Jannik Sinner of Italy in the Australian Open semi-finals. The 36-year-old Serbian then lost to Sinner's under-21 compatriot Luca Nardi in the third round at Indian Wells, prompting him to withdraw from the Miami tournament for what he claimed were scheduling reasons. "Goran and I decided to stop working together a few days ago," Djokovic posted on Instagram.

"Our on court chemistry had its ups and downs, but our friendship was always rock solid. In fact, I am proud to say (not sure he is) that apart from winning tournaments together, we also had a side battle in Parchisi going on... for many years," he said, referring to the online game. "And — that tournament never stops for us. Šefinjo, thanks for everything my friend. Love you."

Djokovic said the volatile and charismatic Ivanisevic had brought more than just his tennis acumen to the partnership, which was exactly what he and his then head coach Marian Vajda had been looking for.

Miami Open Three-time champion Azarenka sets up semi-final with Rybakina



MIAMI (Agencies): Victoria Azarenka continued her bid for a fourth Miami Open title with victory over Yulia Putintseva to set up a semi-final encounter with Elena Rybakina.

The Belarusian 27th seed, who won her last title at Miami Gardens in 2016, needed almost three hours to claim a 7-6 (7-4) 1-6 6-3 win against Putintseva.

There was a 45-minute stoppage in the opening set due to a power outage.

Meanwhile, world number four Rybakina beat Greek eighth seed Maria Sakkari 7-5 6-7 (4-7) 6-4.

Rybakina, who is the highest ranked women's player remaining in the tournament, lost in last year's final to the Czech Republic's Petra Kvitova.

The Kazakh had two match points in the second set on Tuesday but Sakkari fought back and won the tiebreaker to force a decider. A single break of serve in the third set was enough for Rybakina to wrap up the victory after a gruelling two

hours and 48 minutes. "I have no words because I'm so tired but I'm really happy with the win," Rybakina, 24, said. After the power outage to electronic line-calling system caused the delay in Azarenka's match, the 34-year-old saved three set points before clinching the first-set tiebreak against Putintseva.

The unseeded Kazakh dominated the second set, but dropped serve twice in the third to allow Azarenka, who defeated Britain's Katie Boulter in the fourth round, to reach a first semi-final in Miami since 2018.

On the other side of the draw, American fifth seed Jessica Pegula will face Russia's Ekaterina Alexandrova for a place in the last four, while Caroline Garcia of France takes on American Danielle Collins.

Miami Open: Carlos Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner & Daniil Medvedev reach quarter-finals: Top seed Carlos Alcaraz reached the Miami Open quarter-finals with a 6-3 6-3 win over

Italy's Lorenzo Musetti.

Spaniard Alcaraz, 20, will next play Bulgarian 11th seed Grigor Dimitrov, who beat Poland's 2021 champion Hubert Hurkacz 3-6 6-3 7-6 (7-3). Italian Jannik Sinner and Russia's Daniil Medvedev also progressed. Australian Open champion Sinner won 6-4 6-3 against Australian Christopher O'Connell, while Medvedev defeated German Dominik Koepfer 7-6 (7-5) 6-0.

Indian Wells champion Alcaraz is aiming to complete the Sunshine Double by winning the two prestigious American hard-court tournaments in the same season. The 2022 Miami Open champion took a comfortable first set against Musetti with a double break and, after being broken in the seventh game of set two, Alcaraz responded immediately before serving out the match. World number three Sinner, who triumphed in his first Grand Slam final in Melbourne in January, will play Czech Tomas Machac for a semi-final place.



In brief

Police bust street criminal gang

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have busted a street criminal gang by arresting two of its active members allegedly involved in street and other crimes and recovered snatched cash Rs 107,000, six stolen motorcycles, mobile phone, weapons and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, City police held two street criminals namely Alamgir and Rizwan and recovered cash Rs 107,000, six stolen motorcycles, mobile phone, weapons and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is under process. The accused are being shifted to jail for identification parade, he added. Superintendent of Police Rawal directed the police to make efforts to net other members of the gang.

11 Illegal arm holders apprehended

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 11 illegal arms holders and recovered arms, ammunition, and dagger from their possession during a crackdown here on Wednesday, informed police spokesman. According to a police spokesman, Morgah police held Zahid and recovered 01 pistol 30 bore from his possession while taking action, the same police recovered 01 pistol 30 bores from Bilal. Similarly, Taxila police nabbed Lal Muhammad, Waqar, Atif, and Danyal and recovered 04 pistols and 30 bores from their custody. While Gujjar Khan police recovered 01 pistol with 30 bores from Asif. Following the operation, Saddar Barooni police recovered 01 pistols and 30 bore from Naseer. Rawat police recovered 01 pistols and 30 bore ammunition from Nadeem. Kalar Syedan Police held Muhammad Ali and recovered 01 pistols 30 bores from him. Kahuta police recovered 01 dagger from the accused Shah Mir. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and further investigation was in progress. City Police Officer (CPO) Khalid Mehmood Hamdani commended police teams and said that strict action will be taken against those carrying illegal weapons.

16 drug dealers nabbed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 16 drug dealers and liquor suppliers and recovered more than 07 kg of drugs and 41 liters of liquor recovered from their possession during operation here on Wednesday. According to police spokesman, Rawat police nabbed Umar and recovered 1.4 kg drugs from his possession. Similarly, Mandra police held Bilal and recovered 1.2 kg from his custody and 10 liters of liquor from Rashid. While, Sadiqabad Police recovered 1.2 kg drugs from Nadeem. Following operation, Gujjar Khan police recovered 500 gram of charas from Waseem. Airport police recovered 560 gram of charas from Shahroz. New Town police recovered 550 gram of charas from Umar. Pirwadhai police recovered 580 gram of charas from Yasir and 510 gram of charas was recovered from Shiraz. Kahuta police recovered 510 gram of charas from Numan. While taking action, City police recovered 220 grams of charas from Sajid. R.A Bazar police recovered 120 gram of charas from Umar. Ganjmandi police recovered 10 liters of liquor from Saddam. Bani police recovered 08 liters of liquor from Danish and 05 liters of liquor was recovered from Patras. 08 liters was recovered from Qaiser.



ISLAMABAD: Turkish Ambassador H.E. Dr. Mehmet Paçacı called on Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain.

PPP stands firm in favor of NFC Award, tells Sharmila

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) MNA Dr Sharmila Faruqi on Wednesday reiterated the party's steadfast stance in favor of upholding the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, emphasizing the critical need for economic growth as a sustainable solution to Pakistan's financial challenges.

The NFC Award, introduced in 2010, has been a cornerstone of Pakistan's fiscal framework, aiming to distribute federal tax revenues equitably between the federal and provincial governments. Dr Sharmila Faruqi emphasized the importance of respecting this constitutional mandate, highlighting that any attempts to revise the award must be approached with careful consideration of its long-term impact on Pakistan's federal structure and inter-provincial relations.

In response to recent discussions surrounding the NFC Award, she affirmed PPP's position, stating, "NFC Award is a constitutional right of the federating units. It should not be tampered with." The recent news about the International Monetary Fund's demand to curtail the NFC Award amidst the federal government's meaningful silence raises concerns about undermining the constitutional framework that safeguards provincial autonomy and

fiscal harmony, Sharmila added. She said Pakistan's adherence to the NFC Award is not merely a matter of policy but a constitutional obligation that fosters cohesion and inclusivity across diverse regions. The Award serves as a conduit for resource allocation, enabling provinces to address local needs and bridge socio-economic disparities.

"At a time when the federal government has successively failed to achieve its revenue targets amidst reports of tax evasions in billions of rupees, a ballooning circular debt despite prolonged and futile attempts to privatize State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), any attempts to experiment the political economic constitutional scheme by reversal or alterations should be discouraged", she said in a statement issued this morning.

Dr. Sharmila Faruqi reiterated the need for progressive tax reforms and enhanced revenue collection efforts, both at the federal and provincial levels. "Rather than encroaching upon provincial shares, the federal government should be concerned about improving tax collection through the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) particularly when there are reports of tax evasions surpassing the annual federal revenue

targets" she stated.

PPP Lawmaker emphasized the importance of cooperative federalism and urged policymakers to focus on addressing structural issues in Pakistan's economy. "There are significant structural issues that require reform if Pakistan is to embark back on a sustainable and inclusive growth path but none of them pertain to deconstruct the hard-earned federalism," Dr. Sharmila Faruqi remarked, highlighting the need for collaborative efforts to address challenges such as climate change, progressive taxation, and privatization.

"The PPP Lawmaker reiterated its commitment to advocating for policies that prioritize the welfare of all citizens and promote inclusive economic growth. "The development of Pakistan and the prosperity of the people should be the priority of all of us," Dr Sharmila emphasized.

She said that Pakistan stands at a pivotal juncture where the principles of federalism and fiscal equity must prevail over external pressures. Upholding the NFC Award not only reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to constitutional governance but also underscores its resolve to prioritize the welfare of its citizens above all else, she concluded.

Ambassador Atif highlights booming bilateral ties between Pak, Ethiopia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Pakistan in Ethiopia Atif Sharif has praised Pakistan's cordial relations with Ethiopia and shared that opening of Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad, inauguration of direct flights and rising trade flows were signs of booming bilateral relationship. The ambassador underscored the historical significance of Pakistan Day and paid tribute to the founding fathers of the country.

He also reiterated Pakistan's principled support for right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir and Palestine facing brutal occupation.

He expressed these views during an Iftar-dinner reception which was held to celebrate the 84th National Day of Pakistan at the Hilton Hotel, Addis Ababa, a press release, on Wednesday, said.

Over 170 guests including Ambassadors from

Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Kuwait, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, Brazil, Oman, Sri Lanka, Cuba, Chile, Finland, Spain, New Zealand and deputies Ambassadors from US, UK, Germany, France, Russia as well as Ethiopian dignitaries, businessmen and Pakistani expatriates attended the event.

Ambassador Gebeyehu Ganga, Director-General (Middle East and Asia Pacific) graced the event as the chief guest.

To share a glimpse of Pakistan's diverse beauty with the participants, the venue was tastefully adorned with vibrant portraits and banners depicting the splendid heritage, dazzling landscapes, and fauna of Pakistan.

Mesmerizing cultural dances of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Balochistan were presented by Pakistani youth which

earned deep praise from the audience. An enchanting documentary highlighting Pakistan's culture, tourism, food and industry was also played.

Ambassador Gebeyehu Ganga, in his speech, expressed profound felicitations to the embassy and the people of Pakistan on the National Day.

He lauded Pakistan's innumerable advances in all spheres of life turning the country into a strong, self-reliant, and influential member of world community.

He also commended Pakistan's role to uphold UN Charter, and international law and contribution to world peace and security.

About Ethiopia-Pakistan cooperation at multilateral fora, he expressed Ethiopian government's commitment to forge strong partnership with Pakistan and assured complete cooperation to the Ambassador Atif Sharif towards this end.

Tajweed Al-Qur'an classed organized

ISLAMABAD (INP): Tajweed Al-Qur'an classes were organized by Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) during Ramadan.

A total of 37 employees of the university, including 22 female and 15 male employees, were registered for these classes. The certificate distribution ceremony for these classes took place yesterday.

Dean, Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Prof. Dr. Mohyuddin Hashmi presided over the ceremony, while Director, Coordination and Follow-up, Prof. Dr. Syed. Aamir Shah was the chief guest. Dr. Sana Ullah Hussain, Chairman of the Department of Quran and Tafseer, hosted the event.

Addressing the ceremony, Prof. Dr. Amir Shah spoke about the close relationship between the Quran and Ramadan and congratulated the Department of Quran and Tafseer for their efforts. Dr. Mohyuddin Hashmi praised the department's work in guiding people back to the Holy Quran, emphasizing the importance of the Quran and the Sunnah in guiding Muslims.

Awais vows to combat electricity theft

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Minister for Power, Sardar Awais Ahmed Leghari, on Wednesday, expressed his unwavering resolve to combat electricity theft across all DISCOS.

Addressing the Chairmen and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of Power Distribution Companies (Discos) via video link, he underscored the urgent need to address electricity theft.

During the event, the discussion primarily focused on combating electricity theft, which the Minister described as a form of economic terrorism severely impacting the country's economy.

He urged Discos officials to harness technology and innovation in their endeavors to eradicate power theft, aiming to minimize indiscriminate power outages, particularly affecting consumers who diligently pay their bills.

Leghari called for the removal of all

obstacles hindering efforts to prevent electricity theft and warned that employees and officers involved in such illegal activities would face firm and decisive action.

He reiterated that there would be no political interference in the campaign against electricity theft, emphasizing decisions based on merit for a transparent and impartial approach.

The Minister instructed all Discos to establish modern customer service centers nationwide and appoint competent officers to ensure the timely resolution of customer complaints.

He stressed the importance of kindness towards consumers and emphasized a policy where the "customer is always right."

He mandated the management of Distribution Companies (Discos) to maintain up-to-date financial records diligently and compile detailed information regarding the company's assets.

Ahsan emphasizes role of Sector Specialists in PSDP Projects

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Federal Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal held a meeting with the Sector Specialists of the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives on Wednesday. Highlighting the significance of harnessing technical expertise, the Minister stressed that Sector Specialists play a vital role in the success of all Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) projects.

In his address, Ahsan Iqbal underscored the importance of Sector Specialists in fostering strategic thought leadership, shaping key areas of development, and ensuring adherence to the global

best practices, according to a press release.

He emphasized that their expertise should not be confined to initial project proposals (PC1), but rather extend to developing thought leadership for future development endeavors. Recognizing the challenges faced by sectors with low productivity, such as agriculture and housing, the Minister emphasized the need for expert research and knowledge to drive Pakistan towards sustainable growth.

He called for collaboration among top minds from these sectors to devise innovative solutions to

pressing issues. Ahsan Iqbal also highlighted the necessity of meticulous micro-planning alongside macro-planning for effective project implementation. He emphasized the importance of measuring the performance of Sector Specialists through evidence-based decision-making to ensure output-oriented results. As Pakistan embarks on a journey towards inclusive development and sustainable progress, the Minister expressed confidence in the collective expertise of Sector Specialists to overcome challenges and realize the nation's vision.

Over 2,700 professional beggars held

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad Capital Territory Administration in coordination with the police arrested more than 2,700 professional beggars during its recent campaign against begging.

An official informed on Wednesday that out of the total arrested

beggars, 45 per cent of them were male, 40 per cent female, 5 per cent minors and 10 per cent of trans genders.

Led by the relevant Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates, various teams were constituted to run the anti-begging cam-

paign across the capital. In a recent update provided by the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) spokesman, it was revealed that a staggering 2,765 individuals engaged in begging were apprehended over the past six months, spanning from October to March.

ANF Academy organizes workshop on anti money laundering, counter financing of terrorism

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) Academy here on Wednesday organized a three-day Workshop/Seminar on Anti Money Laundering and Counter Financing of Terrorism.

53 Investigation Officers and Public Prosecutors from ANF and sister law enforcement agencies benefited from the Workshop/Seminar.

Chief Instructor ANF Academy Sahib Khan highlighted the importance of the workshop.

The experts from relevant stakeholders on Anti Money Laundering and Counter Financing of Terrorism, including Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU), State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), FATF Secretariat and Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Islamabad were invited as guest speakers.

Honorable Commandant, ANF Academy Brigadier Ghazi Kamal Kiani graced the closing ceremony on the final day of the workshop/seminar. Commandant ANF Academy appreciated the earnest efforts of ANF Academy to provide a platform for capacity building on money laundering and terrorism financing related issues relevant to various stake holders. He also highlighted Pakistan's efforts at policy, procedural and oper-

ational level to fulfill the requirements of FATE.

He underscored the importance of ANF as a vital link in "National Integrated Approach" being a key member of various national forums on money laundering and terrorism financing. As the task is multi sectoral endeavor, ANF is actively engaged with all stakeholders namely MoI, NACTA, FATF Secretariat, FMU, Police, FIA, NAB, CTD and FBR for information sharing, cooperation and provision of data through a desk involving a dedicated focal person. ANF Academy strives to remain at the forefront of holding specialized courses and workshops for capacity building that in turn, feeds into the national efforts against money laundering and terrorism financing, he added. The Commandant stressed the need for continuous capacity building of investigation officers and prosecutors to better deal with the dynamics of assets investigation including financial intelligence to undertake proactive pursuance of assets investigation and money laundering cases.

18th IATF meeting held at ANF Headquarters: 18th Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) meeting on the increasing trend of drugs in educational institutions and anti-narcotics measures was held here at Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Headquarters.

The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Major General, Abdul Moeeed, Director General of ANF, in which senior officers of federal and provincial law enforcement agencies, intelligence setup and related government departments participated. The purpose of the meeting was to review the supply of drugs in educational institutions and the measures taken by the management of the institutions to combat it.

A comprehensive briefing was given on the agenda by the representatives of the agencies and the departments concerned, in which the root causes of the problem and the gaps in the implementation of the policy were highlighted, while at the same time, the ways forward were also discussed. ANF presented a comprehensive plan for drug-free educational institutions which was discussed in the meeting.

All the stakeholders agreed that concerted efforts should be made and a collective campaign should be launched to deal with the issue. The meeting also discussed several aspects including reduction in drug supply and demand for the implementation of the plan. The DG ANF assured all possible support and assistance from ANF to all the agencies and departments for the successful conduct of the national campaign.



ISLAMABAD: Heavy machinery being used to expand a road at Chak Shahzad in the Federal Capital.

IESCO intensifies crackdown against electricity theft

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has stepped up its efforts to combat electricity theft, following directives from the Power Division and the Ministry of Interior.

A spokesperson for IESCO said that both the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the Anti-Corruption Cell are actively pursuing cases against individuals involved in electricity theft.

In the current month alone, fines exceeding Rs. 20 million have been imposed on more than 298 individuals

involved in the crime..

The crackdown has resulted in the arrest of 51 individuals, many of whom are facing FIRs filed by the FIA.

Since the commencement of the operation on September 7, over 13,000 instances of electricity theft have been penalized, amounting to fines totaling over Rs. 560 million.

The spokesperson said that these concerted efforts are part of a larger initiative aimed at eradicating the scourge of electricity theft from the region.

Kabul, Tehran partnership

KABUL (BNA): Nuruddin Azizi, Minister of Industry & Commerce and Dr. Seyed Ruh-ullah Hosseini, Cultural Attaché of Embassy of Iran hold meeting in Kabul. The meeting centered around several key areas of mutual interest. These included cultural interaction, growth of handicraft industries, academic exchange programs between universities of both countries, sharing experiences of professors, providing Iranian scholarships to Afghan students and organizing exhibitions.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Ramazan 17, 1445 — Thursday, March 28, 2024

IEA expresses regret

KABUL (Ariana News): Ministry has expressed regret over death of several Chinese nationals who were killed in an attack in Shangla. IEA has also expressed its condolences to the Chinese and Pakistani governments for the casualties caused in the incident. The ministry said on Wednesday that such incidents are an attempt directed at weakening regional cooperation and highlights that regional countries should not allow the opposition of regional cooperation to achieve their goals.

Shooting claims on civilians in Farah

FARAH (TOLONews): Following claims of security forces firing on civilians in the Bala Buluk district of Farah province, the residents of the province are calling on security institutions to make efforts in securing the safety of the people.

Last day, after a conflict between two groups of civilians over land in Farah, one side claimed that the security forces had fired on them, wounding three individuals.

Mohammad Dawood, a resident of Farah, said: "Our request from the authorities is to resolve the

Bala Buluk issue through dialogue, and closing the path they had was not the right action."

Ahmad, another resident of Farah, said: "Our request from the people is to solve their problems through dialogue and tribal elders, and if that's not possible, we have a government, and they should solve it through the Islamic Emirate."

However, local officials in Farah deny the shooting on civilians by security forces. Abdul Hai Sabawoon, the head of Information and Culture in Farah, states that the security forces, after being deployed to the loca-

tion, have prevented any further conflicts.

Sabawoon said: "After the security forces and the council of scholars from the center and a committee from the department of vice and virtue arrived there, currently, there is no problem, and the issue is resolved."

Two groups of people from the village of Kansak in Bala Buluk district of Farah province clashed over a land dispute on Monday of this week, and after the conflict, they blocked the Farah-Herat main highway for several hours."

Turkey keen to start up cement plant in Jawzjan

JAWZJIAN (Ariana News): Turkish construction company 77 officials have met with the acting minister of mines and petroleum, Shahabuddin Delawar, about investing in a cement factory in Yatim Taq area of Jawzjan province.

The minister, Shahabuddin Dalawar, has said the ministry will cooperate with the company but first needs a proposal, including details around how they plan to implement the project as well as social development plans.

Turkey's 77 company has been working on electricity generation projects in Afghanistan for several years. A number of industrialists say that if more investment is made in the cement production sector, not only will domestic demand be met, but the country's cement will also be exported.

At the moment, cement is being produced by private companies in the provinces of Kandahar, Parwan and Herat.

Govt urged to help traders

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): The sole owner of a fruit chip-producing and processing company in western Herat province has urged the government to help businesswomen sell their products to foreign institutions.

Sadeqa Sadiqyar told Pajhwok Afghan News she launched the business two months ago. In addition to direct sales, she is doing online business as well.

Satisfied with her business, she acknowledges such businesses take time to flourish. Her products have special customers, given their prices.

Sadiqyar claims her company is the only one in Afghanistan converting eight types of fresh fruits into chips.

Initiating the business two years ago, Sadiqyar has invested 200,000 afghanis. She wants the government to support women traders by introducing them to foreign organizations and markets.

Alia Ghoryar, finance and administrative head of the company, says one of the objectives behind establishing the factory is to provide a good environment for women working in shifts with decent monthly salaries.

Ghoryar says the company can convert 20 to 30 kilograms of fresh fruit into chips daily, depending on availability of devices and facilities.

About bringing down product prices, she says efforts are being made to buy more fruits during the fresh fruit season to begin mass production.

The Department of Commerce and Industry says a suitable business environment has been created in the province.

Businesspeople could continue their work with government support, Director of Commerce Maulvi Mohammad Bashir Sirat told Pajhwok.

The Sadiqyar Chip Company is unrivalled in Afghanistan and is known for its quality in the region as well, according to the director.

Maulvi Sirat listed supporting businesspeople as one of the priorities of his office. In this regard, he will do all he can.

He recalls 76 companies participated in a recent product exhibition in Turkmenistan.

NRA reports transportation of over 87,000mt of goods

KABUL (BNA): The National Railway Authority has reported that over the past week, a significant amount of goods, totaling 87,445 metric tons, were transported through the country's ports.

According to an official statement, 611 tons of transit and exported commercial goods, including kinnow, juice, and pomegranate juice, were transferred during this period.

The goods were transported via various railway lines. The Hairatan railway line accounted for the majority of the transportation, carrying 70,883 tons. The Aquina and Torgandi railway lines transported 6,652 tons and 10,010 tons respectively.

The transported goods comprised of a variety of items, including oil, non-oil goods, and other materials, both imported and exported.

Hamid Karzai meets with Norwegian Charge d'affaires

KABUL (Ariana News): Paul Klouman Bekken, Norway's charge d'affaires to Afghanistan, met with former president Hamid Karzai on Wednesday to discuss the current situation in the country.

In the meeting, Bekken discussed the need to reopen schools and universities for girls.

Karzai in turn said national understanding was necessary for lasting peace and stability in the country.

Also in a separate meeting with the Acting Minister of Economy, Din Mohammad Hanif, Bekken assured the Islamic Emirate of his country's continued assistance in terms of humanitarian aid for the people of Afghanistan.

The Acting Minister of Economy said that with the provision of all-round secu-



rity in Afghanistan, safety has been provided for aid distribution and development across all areas of the country.

Afghan experts consider aid being provided by the

international community as being effective in gradually reducing poverty, but they say once restrictions on women's work and education are removed, more aid will flow to the country.

Norway meanwhile is one of few countries that maintains relations with the Islamic Emirate and hosts meetings about Afghanistan. It also sends in humanitarian aid from time to time.

Stoning punishment based on Sharia, says Zabihullah Mujahid

KABUL (TOLONews): The Islamic Emirate said that the United Nations' concern about the implementation of stoning sentences for women in the country is baseless.

Zabihullah Mujahid, the spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate, said that stoning is part of Sharia law and the world should not misinterpret it. "Without a doubt, one of the Sharia laws is stoning. If the conditions for it arise again, we will undoubtedly implement

the Sharia decrees; whether it is prayer or stoning, we will carry it out," Mujahid told TOLONews.

Previously, Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, called the implementation of stoning sentences on women in Afghanistan disappointing and said that restrictions on women and girls in the country should be lifted.

"It's extremely disheartening, as you know we have been expressing our

concern consistently about the mistreatment of women and many of the rulings by Taliban and we have called for those edicts to be revoked and we will continue pressure on that to push for the equal rights of women in Afghanistan and indeed in all countries," Farhan Haq said.

"Although women's rights are greatly violated in Afghanistan, and they are deprived of all their fundamental rights; in my opinion, it would be better if the Islamic Emirate

chooses an alternative to stoning for a female offender," said Fazila Sarwari, a women's rights activist.

Although some institutions and countries around the world have consistently criticized what they consider to be human rights violations, especially the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, the Islamic Emirate has stated that the rights of all citizens are protected under Islamic laws in the country.

Market for Ramadan foods become bustling in Kabul

KABUL (TOLONews): In the holy month of Ramadan, the market for Ramadan foods has become bustling in Kabul.

Fried foods and pickles are among the items that most people in the country consume during Ramadan.

Some pickle shop owners in the capital express satisfaction with their sales during Ramadan compared to other months.

Ali, 31, has a pickle shop in a corner of the capital. He says that his sales market is lively during the holy month.

Ali told TOLONews, "Thank God, our markets are doing well; we are not ungrateful because it is our season, and it is better compared to previous months."

Another shopkeeper, Mahfuz, said, "Most people buy local pickles and fried pickles. Our customers come and buy red pickles. People in Kabul also buy more red pickles; but among the pickles, red pickles have the highest sales, and among jams, they buy plum jam."



Bolani is also one of the fast-cooked and desirable foods of the Afghan people and has its particular enthusiasts.

Several residents of Kabul also share stories about the culture of Ramadan foods.

Zubair, a resident of Kabul, said, "Common foods include Borani, egg-

plant, green beans, okra, potatoes, or some other things are found."

Zakir, who has been making Bolani in a corner of the capital for several years, says that his business market has a special boom compared to a few months ago.

Zakir told a TOLONews reporter, "The work is better than before because it is

Ramadan, and people like Bolani more; they buy it or eat it."

Many Muslims around the world fast during the month of Ramadan, and in Islamic countries, with the arrival of this month, people decorate their Ramadan tables with colorful foods and welcome the holy month of Ramadan.

Needy families in Kabul receive aid from Bayat Foundation

KABUL (Ariana News): As part of Bayat Foundation's program to distribute food aid during the holy month of Ramadan, hundreds of needy families in Kabul received aid packages.

According to Bayat Foundation officials, the items include rice, flour and oil.

"Today, fortunately, we

have come to the 7th district of Kabul city and we are distributing aid to a number of needy people who were listed following a survey conducted by our team. It includes flour, rice and oil. Our aid in various provinces and capital Kabul continues until the end of the holy month of

Ramadan," said Haji Mohammad Ismail, deputy head of Bayat Foundation.

Families that received the aid packages thanked Bayat Foundation for its assistance and asked other aid organizations to help the needy during these difficult times.

"God bless them for

always helping the poor and unemployed people of Afghanistan," an aid recipient said.

Officials of Bayat Foundation emphasize that the Ramadan aid has been distributed in some provinces of the country and will continue until the end of the holy month.



Educational opportunities provided for prisoners



HERAT (TOLONews): Officials at Herat Prison said that they have provided illiterate prisoners with opportunities to learn literacy and recite the Holy Quran.

Recently, nearly 130 prisoners have graduated after completing courses in literacy and recitation of holy Quran.

The literacy and Quran memorization courses at Herat Prison range from four months to two years.

Mohammad Nabi Khalil, the director of Herat Prison, said, "Approximately 75

individuals have graduated as reciters and about 50 have graduated from the literacy section."

Several prisoners said that they have learned to read and write over several months of literacy training.

Gholam Dastgir, a prisoner, said, "This is not a prison, this is a university for anyone who takes advantage of it." According to officials at Herat Prison, nearly a hundred other prisoners are currently engaged in vocational training.

Officials added that in

the women's and children's sections of Herat Prison, school books and vocational training are provided.

Nematullah Ershad, the head of the children's section at Herat Prison, said, "We have 78 prisoners in the school section, for whom teachers come from the Ministry of Education to teach."

According to statistics from Herat Prison, nearly two thousand prisoners, including women and children, are imprisoned in separate sections of the prison.

Law for hearing complaints ratified



KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Vice and Virtue stated that the law for hearing complaints, consisting of 2 chapters and 23 articles, has been ratified by the leader of the Islamic Emirate.

Sayed Ali Sediqullah, deputy minister of the Ministry of Vice and Virtue, said that last year, one 1,700 complaints were addressed, which shows a decrease compared to previous years.

"Insh Allah, based on this endorsed law, the gap between the nation and the government will be eliminated, and the complaints of the poor and destitute will be addressed, and their lives and properties

will be protected," Sediqullah said.

According to Sediqullah, based on this law, the ministry is obligated to create an environment where people can freely register their complaints.

Among the 1,700 complaints registered last year in Kabul, there are complaints made by people against officials and soldiers of the Islamic Emirate.

Sayed Ali Sediqullah said that the satisfaction of the people with the performance of the Islamic Emirate and its officials has led to a decrease in the number of complaints.

"This year, the level of complaints in Kabul has decreased, with only 1,700 complaints registered; however, in previous years, there had been a higher number of complaints recorded," he added.

According to officials, more than 5,000 complaints were registered in the first year of the Islamic Emirate's rule.

Based on the information from the Ministry of Vice and Virtue, women also have the right to register complaints, and people can share their complaints with the ministry 24 hours a day.

Private bank poised to launch gas power project

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Industry and Commerce announced that the work on producing 55 megawatts of gas power in the province of Balkh will begin by a private bank.

Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce Nooruddin Azizi, stated that this private bank was also working on the project during the previous government and now intends to restart its efforts.

Nooruddin Azizi added that there is increased interest from the country's businessmen to invest within Afghanistan. He said, "Today, we had discussions with Ghazanfar Bank, and they want to revive a project that previously existed, about 55 megawatts of power in the city of Mazar-e-Sharif, which is the

largest project."

Amanullah Ghaleb, the former head of Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), mentioned that the 55 megawatt power generation project, utilizing gas piped from Sheberghan in the Balkh province, will not only create job opportunities but also contribute to the country's self-sufficiency.

Ghaleb said, "Gas will be transported to Mazar-e-Sharif through a pipeline, which spans about 45 to 50 kilometers."

Meanwhile, some experts believe that domestic investment in infrastructure projects, including power production, is crucial for achieving self-sufficiency.

Shabir Bashiri, an econ-

omist, said, "Generating electricity from domestic resources and increasing the production level to at least finance the Afghan industrial and production sector is indeed considered a fundamental investment in Afghanistan."

Another economic expert, Qutbuddin Yaqoobi, stated, "With the completion of these projects, Afghanistan will escape from external dependencies and create job opportunities for those living in the environment."

While Afghanistan primarily purchases its required energy from neighboring countries, officials in the Islamic Emirate have consistently emphasized their plans to achieve self-sufficiency in energy production.

Seven, including Mohsin Naqvi, elected unopposed on Punjab's Senate seats

Balochistan parties agree to get candidates unopposed

F.P. Report

LAHORE / QUETTA: Seven Senate candidates from Punjab, including Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, elected unopposed on Wednesday. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's Ahad Cheema, Pervaiz Rashid, Nasir Mehmood, Talal Chaudhry, have been elected unopposed. Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi of the ruling coalition has also been elected.

Sunni Ittehad Council's Hamid Khan and Raja Nasir Abbas have been elected on the Senate's general seats. Senate candidates Waleed Iqbal, Shahzad Waseem, Ejaz Hussain Minhas, Musadik Masood Malik and Omar Sarfraz Cheema withdrawn their nomination papers for the Senate election.

The nomination papers of 12 candidates were approved for the election on 7 general seats of Senate from Punjab after scrutiny. Now the elections will only be held on five seats from Punjab including two technocrat seats, two women-reserved seats and one minority seat. The polling for

Senate elections on vacant seats of the house will be held on April 02 from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm in the National Assembly and four provincial legislatures.

Meanwhile, six large parliamentary parties in Balochistan on Wednesday have decided to get their all candidates from the province elected unopposed in the Senate elections. Sources said that the parties had also agreed on the distribution of seats amongst themselves.

Sources revealed that out of a total 11 seats, both the PML-N and the PPP would get three seats each, while the JUI-F would get two and the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), the National Party (NP) and the Awami National Party would get one seat each. Out of three seats which the PML-N would get, they informed, two would be general and one for women.

Similarly, the PPP would get, sources disclosed, one general seat, one for a technocrat and one for women. Likewise, out of two seats, which the JUI-F would get, one would be general and one would be

that for a technocrat. Syedal Nasir and Agha Shah Zeb Durrani will be the PML-N candidates for two general seats, while Rahat Faqir Jamali will be the party's candidate for the women's seat.

PPP Balochistan President Changez Jamali would be the party's candidate for the general seat and Bilal Mandokhel for the technocrat seat. JUI-F had fielded Ahmad Khan Khilji as its candidate for the general seat while the party's provincial Ameer Maulana Abdul Wasay would be the candidate for the technocrat seat, sources informed. Jan Muhammad Buledi would be the NP's candidate and Aimal Wali Khan would be the ANP candidate for the general seat.

Hasna Bano would be the joint candidate of all parliamentary parties for the women's seat. Former caretaker prime minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar would be got elected as a senator as an independent from the quota of BAP. Total, 35 candidates had filed their nomination papers for 11 Senate seats from Balochistan.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari meeting with Ambassador of China, Mr. Jiang Zaidong, to offer his condolences over the killing of Chinese citizens in Bisham, at Chinese Embassy.

PTI gets permission for Islamabad rally

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday conditionally allowed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to hold a rally in Islamabad.

As per details, Chief Justice IHC Aamer Farooq heard the PTI plea seeking permission for a rally in Islamabad. The Court directed the district administration to allow Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to hold a rally in Islamabad on March 30.

The Chief Justice IHC ordered that no unusual conditions should be imposed and only standard Terms of Reference (TOR) should be followed. Earlier, the deputy commissioner of Islamabad refused to grant permission to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to hold a rally in the capital on March 30. The district administration turned down PTI's request saying that "in view of the law and order situation, rallies cannot be allowed at any place, including

D Chowk." It is pertinent to mention here that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) announced holding a public rally in Islamabad on March 30 against alleged election rigging. According to a statement issued after the PTI core committee meeting, the committee expressed its concern over the losing bat symbol and closure of its Lahore office and laid stress on stepped-up efforts to bring the party electoral symbol back and going for a legal battle to reopen the party office.

Hezbollah says it launched dozens of rockets

BEIRUT (Reuters): Lebanon's Hezbollah said it launched dozens of rockets at Kiryat Shmona, an Israeli town over the border, early on Wednesday in response to deadly Israeli strikes on the village of Hebbariyeh in southern Lebanon a day earlier.

Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah have been trading fire across the border since the Israel-Hamas war erupted in Gaza, in the biggest escalation between the old enemies since a month-long conflict in 2006. Both sides have said they do not want all-out war and are open to a diplomatic process but strikes, have picked up this week after a lull in cross-border shelling.

Israeli emergency services said a rocket strike on Wednesday killed a factory worker in Kiryat Shmona following warning signs in the area. Paramedics from the MDA ambulance service said the man was pulled from the wreckage of the factory with severe wounds and was pronounced dead at the scene. At least seven people were killed in the Israeli strikes on Hebbariyeh, two Lebanese security sources told Reuters.

The Israeli strikes appeared to be aimed at the Islamist group's emergency and relief center in the village, the sources said. Hezbollah earlier on Wednesday had condemned the strikes on Habbariyeh. Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon had already killed more than a half dozen medical personnel and rescue workers, according to Lebanon's health ministry.

The Gaza war has spread beyond the enclave's borders to other parts of the Middle East. Aside from tensions between Israel and Hamas' ally Hezbollah, Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis have been attacking ships in and around the Red Sea, and armed groups in Iraq with close ties to Tehran have attacked bases hosting US forces in that country.

Steps to be taken to root out terrorism: Tarar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar on Wednesday reiterated the commitment of the government that all possible steps would be taken to root out the scourge of terrorism from the soil of the motherland.

Addressing a press conference after a high level meeting on security chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, he said that Prime Minister expressed the firm resolve to eliminate terrorism and make Pakistan a peaceful state. Tarar said that all the participants of the meeting were on the same page regarding ensuring security for all. He said today's high level meeting was attended by Federal Ministers, Chief of Army Staff, Chief Ministers of all four provinces, Chief Secretaries, Inspector Generals of the provinces, Chief Secretaries and IGs of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Attaulah Tarar said that the meeting had the consensus that an integrated strategy should be adopted to wipe out terrorism from this country. "A message of unity was given to the nation today that all units are on the same page with the Federation".

he informed the media. All were on the same page on the integrity and national interest of Pakistan, he said adding, "We know how to defend ourselves and our old friends". He disclosed that regarding the investigation of the incident, there was also a consultation on the establishment of Joint Investigation Team. The minister said that morale of all participants was high in the meeting and they had a unity of thought on tackling the issue. He recalled that in 2018, the Pakistan Muslim League-N had left a peaceful Pakistan free from terrorism.

He said yesterday's sad incident in Bisham resulted in loss of six precious lives including Chinese citizens. He said that China was a time tested friend of Pakistan that has always stood by Islamabad at all difficult times and at international forums. He said that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor was the guarantor of economic development in the country. The minister said after the launch of the CPEC about 64 billion dollar investment was done in Pakistan and its GDP had increased significantly.

"Millions of new employment opportunities will be created in the country in future due to CPEC", he added. Tarar said after the tragic incident, the PM set aside all his engagements and visited the Chinese Embassy and expressed his condolences to the Chinese Ambassador. He said that the Prime Minister not only condemned the incident but also assured about investigation of the incident.

A message, he said was given to the Chinese leadership through the ambassador that effective action will be taken

against the terrorists involved in the dastardly act. The Prime Minister assured the Ambassador of China that the Government of Pakistan will leave no stone unturned to eradicate terrorism and bring to book the culprits involved in killing of Chinese citizens.

Expressing heartfelt condolences to Chinese nation, the minister said, such incidents were an attempt to harm Pakistan-China friendship but Pakistan-China friendship will continue forever. He said when the PML-N came to power in 2013, incidents of terrorism were a routine matter but when it's tenure ended in 2018, Pakistan had become terrorism free area.

Attaullah Tarar said that Pakistani nation equally shared the grief of the Chinese nation and leadership. He added that all possible steps will be taken for prevention of such incidents in future. The minister said Pakistan had formulated a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) for the security of Chinese citizens in the country. All the arrangements and steps were being taken to ensure security of all the Chinese working on CPEC and non-CPEC projects in the country. He vowed effective implementation of the SOPs in this regard.

Tarar said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had a special place for China in his heart and the bilateral relations between the two countries flourished during the tenure of PML-N. He said when the CPEC project was underway, the Chinese President told the prime minister that "it is a gift for him and his elder brother Nawaz Sharif". Now, the visit of the prime minister to the Embassy was reflection of their decades old relationship. He questioned the role of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder in promoting talks with terrorists and showing sympathy towards them. The minister asked why the apex committee meeting on national security was not convened by Imran Khan during his government's tenure. The security of Chinese citizens was always top of the agenda of the apex committee, he added. The people fully knew who was responsible for the recurrence of terrorist incidents in the country, he said. He said all the stakeholders were on the same page for curbing terrorism in the country.

He paid tribute to the mothers and families whose children sacrificed their loved ones for the protection of the mother land. The prime minister had already directed to expedite the process of safe city project in Gawadar, he said in response to the query. He said the Punjab Counter Terrorism Department had been operating in exemplary way and there was a need for replicating the system in other provinces as well. The minister said that government would like to take up the issue of terrorism in the upcoming session of the National Assembly.

LHC declares Faisalabad Master Plan illegal

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday declared the Faisalabad Master Plan as illegal.

As per details, Justice Shahid Karim heard the case and ordered to appoint a consultant to monitor the Master Plan effects on the environment. The court remarked that master plan could not be made without obtaining a Non-Objection Certificate (NOC) from the environment department.

He stated that the Faisalabad Master plan was made first and the regulations made later, which is illegal. It is pertinent to mention here that last year, the anti-corruption establishment unearthed massive corruption in the approval of the Faisalabad Master

Plan. As per details, the ACE spokesperson said that former chairman of Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) Mian Waris Aziz and former DG MDA Zahid Ikram caused damage worth millions to the national treasure. The spokesperson said that million rupees bribe was taken by the accused in order to convert the agricultural land into commercial illegally.

However, Zahid Ikram who was appointed as DG Multan Development Authority changed the master plan through a frontman building inspector Honey Shehzad. The anti-corruption Faisalabad conducted a raid at the MDA office for the arrest of Zahid Ikram but he fled his office. Meanwhile, cases were registered against Waris Aziz

and Zahid Ikram.

Meanwhile, the Lahore High Court has ordered to remove Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Usman Dar's name from Provisional National Identification List (PNIL) conditionally. The court on Wednesday directed the petitioner to submit surety bonds before withdrawal of his name from PNIL. During hearing of the petition, the court remarked that these people are politicians, they will not go anywhere from Pakistan. Justice Shams Mehmood Mirza heard Usman Dar's petition. In the petition, the federal government and others were made parties. The applicant in its petition had taken the plea that he wants to go for Umrah so it is requested to remove his name from the PNIL list.

PTI nominates Marwat for PAC chairmanship

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Ali Muhammad Khan, a prominent leader of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has announced the nomination of Sher Fazl Marwat for the chairmanship of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

Emphasizing the significance of the PAC chairmanship as an opposition privilege, Khan asserted that it is not within the government's authority to dictate who

leads the committee. He dismissed any notion of factionalism within PTI, stating that despite internal discussions and differences, the party remains united under the leadership of Imran Khan in the pursuit of safeguarding the electoral mandate.

Talking to media, Khan highlighted the challenges faced by PTI, particularly during Imran Khan's incarceration, which led to the departure of key figures

such as Asad Umar, Fawad Chaudhry, Ali Zaidi, and Imran Ismail, creating a temporary vacuum within the party.

However, he credited the resilience of PTI members and the support of legal professionals for navigating through turbulent times. Referring to the legal battles faced by Imran Khan, Khan reiterated the party's stance that the cases against their leader are baseless and politically motivated.

Fazl announces boycott of by-polls

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam (JUIF) Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has announced boycotting the by-elections to be held on April 21.

In a video message, Maulana Fazlur Rehman said the JUIF rejected the results of the February 8 elections and now it would also boycott the by-elections. "We will struggle to establish a real Islamic welfare and democratic state. Workers seek Allah's help and start working from now," the JUIF chief said.

He said in 2018 elections, people's right to vote was robbed while in the 2024 elections, people's right to vote was killed. "We reject the [Feb 8] poll results. We have to go to people. We will take them in confidence and unite them for the right to vote," he said. "By creating unity in the ranks of people, we will enable them to protect their vote. Our stand is clear and we have decided to move forward for our rights."

"We will hold rallies and a mammoth public rally will be held in Pishin on April 25 in which people from all over Balochistan will participate," Maulana said. A rally will be held in Karachi on May 2. People from all over Sindh will participate in the rally. On May 9, a rally will be held in Peshawar and people from KP will participate, he said, adding his party will contact other political parties to forge unity for the rights of people.

PTI announces candidates for by-election

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Wednesday announced candidates backed by the party for by-elections in Punjab.

According to the details, PTI Punjab President Hammad Azhar in a post on "X" (formerly known as Twitter) announced two candidates for National Assembly constituencies and seven for the Punjab Assembly.

Hammad said that Shehzad Farooq will be contesting as PTI-backed independent candidate from NA-119, the seat vacated by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. Hr said that from NA -132 Qusur Sardar Muhammad Hussain Dofra would contest the poll. The PTI Punjab president added that Hakeem Nisar is the party's backed candidate from PP-22 Chakwal, Parvaiz Elahi from PP-32 Gujarat, Owais Qasim from PP-54 Narowal and Aijaz Bhatti from PP-139 Sheikhupura.

Hamad stated that from PP-149, Hafiz Zeeshan would be contesting the poll as a PTI-backed independent, Monis Elahi from PP-158 Lahore, and Yousuf Meo from PP-164 Lahore. The PTI Punjab president said that candidates for the remaining constituencies would be announced later. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will hold elections on vacant national and provincial assembly seats, on April 21.

Peshawar Valley Project KP CM directs speeding up pace of work

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has directed the authorities concerned to speed up the pace of work on the new Peshawar Valley Housing Project.

Presiding over an important meeting regarding housing sector development here at Chief Minister's House on Wednesday, he directed that the project be executed on BOT mode and in a phase wise manner and urged upon authorities that all ongoing and newly approved housing schemes should also be completed as soon as possible.

Besides, the Provincial Minister for Local Government & Rural Development (LG&RD), Arshad Ayub Khan and Minister for Housing Fazal Hakeem, Tehsil Chairman Mathra Inaam Ullah Khan, administrative Secretaries of concerned department, Commissioner Peshawar, Deputy Commissioner Peshawar and other rele-

vant officials also attended the meeting.

Important matters related to public and private-sectors new housing schemes came under discussion.

Talking on the occasion, Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur said that housing infrastructure development in accordance with the contemporary requirements especially at the urban periphery is much needed. That's why, he said the government, alongside taking other priority initiatives, was also committed for infrastructure and urban development, promoting investment and Ease of doing business in the province.

"Incumbent provincial government will not only encourage private-sector investment in the province but will also extend its all-out support to investors interested in investment here", he remarked and directed the quarters concerned to take pragmatic steps for attracting and facilitating private-sector

investment in the province. Necessary amendments in the relevant legal framework be proposed for simplifying the entire process of investment so that maximum private investment could be attracted towards province, he directed.

He said that all these efforts would bring positive change in the life style of people by promoting conducive environment, creating employment opportunities and boosting the overall economic landscape of the province. He maintained that provincial housing department and all other stakeholders would have to work under realistic and integrated strategy for this purpose.

These all projects and initiatives once completed, will not only provide conducive residential facilities to the people, rather will also result in substantial increase in the revenue of the provincial government, through generating investment and economic activities in the province.



ISLAMABAD: KP Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali called on Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan.

Sri Lanka PM says China to develop strategic infrastructure

BEIJING (AFP): Sri Lanka's prime minister said on Wednesday that China has pledged to develop the island nation's strategic deep sea port and the capital's airport after talks with his counterpart in Beijing.

Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena said China — the island's biggest bilateral creditor — would "assist" Sri Lanka's restructuring of external debt, a key condition to maintaining a \$2.9 billion IMF bailout. Beijing's position on debt restructuring has not been made public, but Sri Lankan officials have said China was reluctant to take a haircut on its loans but could extend the tenure and adjust interest rates.

Sri Lanka in 2022 ran

out of foreign exchange to finance essential imports and declared a sovereign default on its \$46 billion foreign debt. Months of protests forced then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa out of office. Gunawardena's office said Premier Li Qiang had promised China would "assist Sri Lanka's debt restructuring process continuously and help Sri Lanka to develop its economy".

Gunawardena said Beijing had offered "assistance to develop" Colombo International Airport and Hambantota port, the state-owned added, without giving further details. A Japanese-funded expansion of Colombo airport had been

on hold since Sri Lanka's sovereign debt default. The southern sea port of Hambantota was handed to a Chinese state-owned company in 2017 on a 99-year lease for \$1.12 billion, sparking security concerns in Beijing's regional rival India.

India and the United States are both concerned that a Chinese foothold at Hambantota, on the island's southern coast, could boost its naval advantage in the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka has insisted its ports will not be used for any military purposes, but New Delhi has objected to Chinese research vessels calling at Hambantota fearing that they could be used for espionage.

SC restrains FIA from arrests of journalists

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday restrained the FIA from arrests of journalists till the next hearing of the case.

"Is it the violation of the law?", Chief Justice of Pakistan asked. "This notice has been under section 160 of the Criminal Procedure Code, it is a notice prior to registration of the FIR," CJ said. "This notice can be served to me tomorrow, why you presume that they will register the FIR. At a time,

an officer after comes under heavy pressure from above, issues notice but not registers an FIR, or arrest the person. In this notice they could also summon someone as a witness," CJ said.

"When you show us something illegal than we can declare it void, we will not declare a legal act as null and void," chief justice said. "It is necessary to provide complete details of the case with the notice," Barrister Salahuddin argued. "I will be informed of the reason first, if I am being sum-

moned to the police station," he said.

"You are saying the FIR has been compulsory before being summoned. The officer may call you for verification of facts before registration of the FIR," chief justice said. Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan said that registration of the FIR comes first and summon after it. "Do you want notice under section 157, instead of section 160," he asked. "The notice can be served after registration of the FIR," Barrister Salahuddin said.