

Transgender killed in firing
F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A transgender was killed while three others injured in firing of unidentified armed men here on Wednesday, police said. According to details, unidentified gunmen opened fire at a transgender in Iqbal Plaza of Peshawar. As a result of firing, transgender Asima Lata was killed on the spot while three people hailing from Badkber were injured.

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

Ayub will be Opp leader
F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan announced on Wednesday that Omar Ayub Khan would be the opposition leader in the National Assembly. Barrister Gohar told reporters that parliamentary issues were discussed in the meeting with the PTI chief. He said the cabinet of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was formed.

Vol. XXXIXI

No. 45

Regd. No. 241

SHABAAAN 25 1445 -- THURSDAY, MARCH 07 2024

PESHAWAR EDITION

12 PAGES

PRICE. 30

Shehbaz distributes compensation package among rains victims

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here on Wednesday distributed a huge compensation financial package among victims of the recent torrential rains and flooding of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He on behalf of the Federal Government distributed Rs two million cheque among heirs of each deceased and Rs. 500,000 among each injured of the recent torrential rains and floods in different districts of the province including merged tribal districts.

The prime minister handed over the compensation cheques during a function held here at Governor House. It was the first visit of the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after assuming the office of the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

Besides others, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali, Members National Assembly, Khwaja Muhammad Asif, Engr Amir Muqam, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf, Murtaza Javed Abbasi, Attaullah Tarar, PML-N Leader Ishaq Dar, former Governor KP, Engr Iqbal Zafar Jhagra, senators, members provincial assemblies, Chairman NDMA Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik IGP KP Akhtar Hayat Gandapur and relatives of the rains victims were present on the occasion.

A total of 40 people including 27 children died and 62 injured during recent torrential rains and floods in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The prime minister directed the authorities concerned and relevant departments to complete estimates of all destroyed and partially damaged houses within five days and complete the process of

PM seeks final implementation schedule for PIA's privatization

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Wednesday sought a final implementation schedule for the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA). He was chairing a high level meeting on the PIA's privatization and restructuring of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

The prime minister directed the Ministry of Privatization to present the schedule about the PIA's privatization in the next two days after taking necessary steps. He warned that no laxity and irresponsibility would be tolerated and said that complete transparency should be ensured in all phases of privatization.

During the meeting, the participants reviewed the progress on the privatization of PIA and considered the next phases of the process. The proposed roadmap for the system of automation of Federal Board of Revenue was also approved in principle. The participants considered in detail the proposals for transparency in the system of FBR, infrastructure reforms according to international standards, increase in taxes through incentives, eradication of corruption and smuggling, separation of inland revenue and customs departments, and decrease in tax rates. The PM said that the roadmap should be implemented with clear-cut timelines.

disbursement of compensation payment by March 11.

He directed the NDMA and other relevant departments to use helicopters facility for transportation of officials to ensure speedy compilation of estimates of all the destroyed and partially damaged houses in far flung districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa so that the process of compensation package could be completed within said period.

The prime minister said that delay in this regard would be unacceptable and officials failed to achieve their targets would be held accountable. Shehbaz Sharif announced that Rs 700,000 would be provided for repair of each destroyed house and Rs 300,000 for each partially damaged house.

The financial compensation was

not an alternative of a human life but a token of economic relief to their families to live with dignity in the society, he added. He said the Holy Quran and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) had also laid great emphasis on observance of patience during difficult situation.

The prime minister said that he also visited rain hit areas of Balochistan the other day and expressed solidarity with the victims' families. He said KP was the most rains and flood affected province in terms of human lives reported last month followed by Balochistan and Azad Kashmir and all necessary resources would be utilized by the federal government to help the victims families in this hour of difficulty.

IHC adjourns form 45, 47 case hearing till next week

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday summoned the election commission's reply by next week over a petition about uploading form 45 and 47. The Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) has filed a petition in the high court that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has failed to upload the election result forms 45 and 47 on its website within required period.

Chief Justice IHC Aamir Farooq heard the petition. The court served notice to the ECP and summoned its reply by next week. Earlier, the lawyer informed the court that the elections were held on February 08 but concerned result documents yet to be uploaded by the electoral body.

On a question of the chief justice with regard to documents, lawyer said that the forms issued from presiding officers are required to be uploaded at the website. Moreover, consolidated result forms also required to be uploaded. "The election commission yesterday uploaded some 45 forms, which were later removed from the site," lawyer said.

Advocate Imaan Mazari said that the Election Act clearly said that the election commission will upload the results forms on website. "Which are required to be uploaded within 14 days of the election". The court issued notice to the election commission and adjourned the case until the next week.

KP govt releases Rs39m for rain victims

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On the special instructions of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, an amount of Rs.39 million has been released for financial assistance to the heirs of victims of various incidents caused by recent torrential rains and snowfall in the province, said an official handout issued here on Wednesday.

According to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), the cheques of the financial assistance have been dis-

bursed amongst the heirs of 37 individuals who have lost their lives in the incidents due to the inclement weather in the different districts of the province including Swat, Bajaur, Charsadda, Dir Lower, Dir Upper, Abbottabad, Mansehra, Mardan, Mohmand, Bannu, Khyber, Swabi and Laki Marwat.

Meanwhile, the chief minister has directed the concerned authorities to also disburse the cheque of financial assistance among the victims in the rest of the districts. In his statement, issued here in this regard, Ali Amin Gandapur said

that the provincial government will not leave the affected families alone adding that all available resources would be utilized in order to provide them immediate relief and financial assistance.

He has directed all the concerned divisional and district administrations to personally monitor the rehabilitation activities in rain and snow affected areas adding that all activities including opening of roads and rehabilitation of other infrastructures should be completed in the shortest possible time.

18-member Punjab cabinet sworn in

F.P. Report

LAHORE: An 18-member cabinet of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz took the oath of their offices on Wednesday.

Punjab Governor Muhammad Baligh-ur-Rehman administered the oath to the provincial ministers at a ceremony held at the Governor's House, attended among others by CM Maryam Nawaz. Marriyum Aurangzeb was administered the oath as senior minister, while Syed Muhammad Ashiq Hussain Shah, Rana Sikandar Hayat, Khawaja Imran Nazeer, Khawaja Sulman Rafiq, and Zeeshan Rafique were sworn in as minister.

The other ministers include Bilal Akbar Khan,

Sohaib Ahmed Malik, Azma Zahid Bokhari, Bilal Yasin, Ramesh Singh Arora, Khalil Tahir, Faisal Ayub Khokhar, Shafay Hussain, Sardar Sher Ali Gorchani, Sohail Shoukat Butt and Mian Mujtaba Shuja ur Rehman. The members of the Punjab cabinet would be allocated portfolios later on by the provincial chief executive.

However, sources privy to the matter said that ministries of Planning and Development, Environment, and Forests would be assigned to Aurangzeb. Bokhari is likely to be the Minister for Information and Culture. The portfolio of agriculture would be allocated to Ashiq Hussain and Ramesh Singh would be given Ministry of Minorities, the sources added.

Talking to journalists after the oath-taking ceremony, CM Maryam lauded her newly-appointed cabinet members and said: "Very talented and young people are indicted in the cabinet." "Foreign-educated and experienced people have been made part of the Punjab cabinet," she added.

It is pertinent to mention that PML-N's Malik Ahmed Khan and Malik Zaheer Ahmed Channer will serve as the House's speaker and deputy speaker, respectively. PML-N sources indicate that a significant reshuffle in Punjab's bureaucracy is being considered. Interviews with officers have reportedly begun, and many government officials are seeking political support to retain or obtain lucrative positions.

reserve seats in proportion to general seats in the upcoming elections. Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim sought clarification on whether the case pertains solely to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or the entire country, while Qazi Anwar Advocate argued that the Election Commission's decision infringed upon constitutional and legal principles, urging the court to prevent elected members from taking oath until the matter is resolved.

Responding to the ECP's claim that the Sunni Ittehad Council failed to provide a candidate list, Justice Shakeel Ahmed emphasized the importance of

addressing this issue before reallocating seats. After hearing arguments from Qazi Anwar Advocate, the High Court issued a restraining order until the following day, directing the Election Commission and other parties to provide responses.

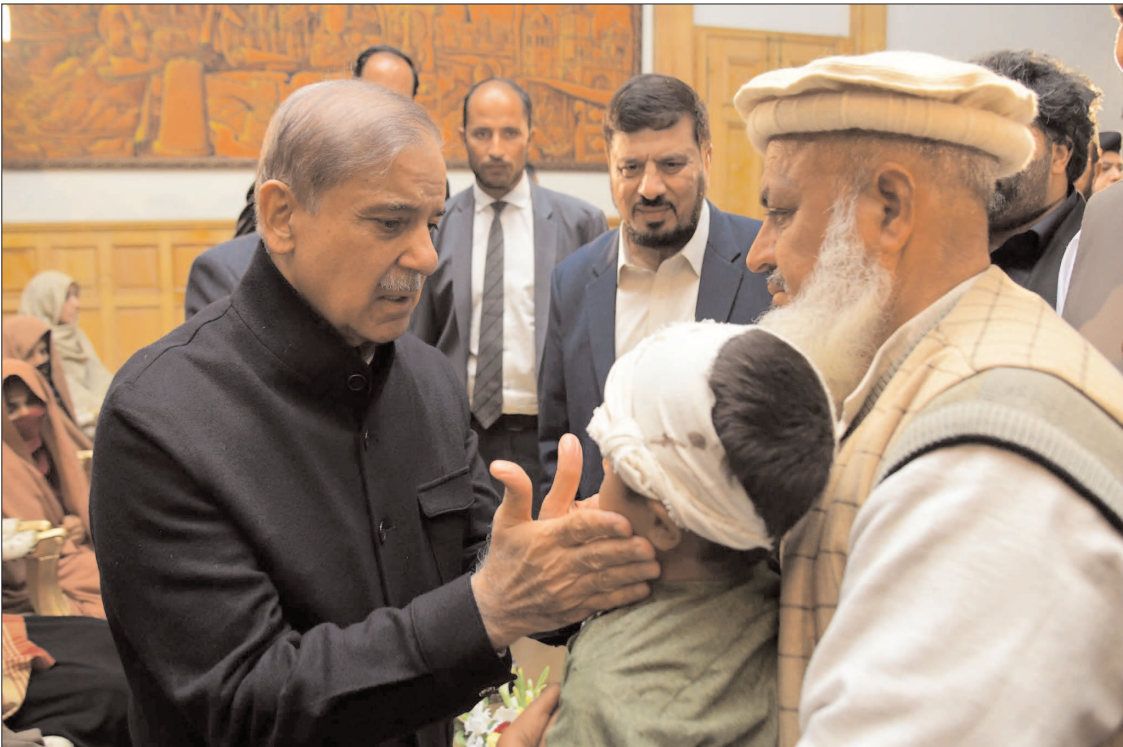
The court also prohibited newly elected Assembly members, particularly women and minority representatives, from taking oath until further notice. The decision by the PHC reflects the ongoing legal battle surrounding seat allotment and underscores the need for a fair and transparent electoral process.

PHC issues injunction against ECP decision on reserve seats

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court issued an injunction on the Election Commission's decision regarding the allotment of reserved seats, following a hearing on a petition filed against the exclusion of reserve seats for the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) and striped the nominated lawmakers from oath while forwarded the plea to Chief Justice for constitution of larger bench, on Wednesday.

During the hearing, the counsel claimed that PTI's elected members joined with the SIC for the allocation of



PESHAWAR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif interacting with families of the deceased and injured of recent torrential rains and heavy snowfall.

PM, COAS discuss security

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir on Wednesday called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here at the Prime Minister's House.

In the meeting, they discussed the Pakistan Army's professional as well as the security-related matters, a PM Office press release said. The army chief also congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz on assuming the office and expressed good wishes for him.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday congratulating the leadership and workers of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), said that by admitting the mistake in Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's trial, the Supreme Court's opinion on the presidential reference had set a new history and tradition.

He congratulated Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, President-designate Asif Ali Zardari, PPP leadership and workers for the Supreme Court's observation that former Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto did not get a fair trial. "It is not possible to correct the past mistake but by admitting the serious mistake, a new history and a new tradition have been set," the prime minister remarked in a statement.

He said that rectification of an injustice of a court by the court was a positive development. "The unanimous opinion of the Supreme Court in the Bhutto reference will help understand the history at the national level through the right perspective. The process of national unity and development can be accelerated only by correcting the past mistakes and doing away with the bitterness," Prime Minister Shehbaz remarked.

Bilawal terms SC ruling historic

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto on Wednesday said the historic verdict passed by the Supreme Court on the Bhutto reference would help Pakistan progress on all fronts, including the democratic system and judiciary.

History is set to be corrected after 44 years, the PPP chairman remarked, as he pointed to the fact that Bhutto was hanged decades ago April 4, 1979 and his family as well as the party have been describing the move as judicial murder since then. Talking to reporters after a nine-member bench shared its verdict, Bilawal – the grandson of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was the first elected prime minister of Pakistan – said the court had accepted that Bhutto didn't get a fair trial.

He noted that it was difficult for ordinary people to trust the judicial system when a popular leader like Bhutto couldn't get justice. Bilawal, during a short interaction with media persons, thanked amicus curiae appointed by the court and the lawyers who presented their opinion and argued the case.

15-member KP cabinet sworn in

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Fifteen Khyber Pakhtunkhwa ministers who have been inducted into the provincial cabinet took oath in a prestigious ceremony held at the Governor's House on Wednesday.

The induction of the ministers into the provincial cabinet was notified by the KP government's administration department following a summary of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, approved by KP Governor Haji Ghulam Ali.

The members include Arshad Ayub Khan, Shakeel Ahmad, Fazal Hakim Khan, Muhammad Adnan Qadri, Aqib Ullah Khan, Muhammad Sajjad, Meena Khan, and Fazal Shakoor.

Nazir Ahmad Abbasi, Pakhtoon Yar Khan, Aftab Alam Khan Afridi, Khaleeq Ur Rehman, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, Faisal Khan Tarakai, and Muhammad Zahir Shah are also part of the cabinet. Subsequently, the newly-elected KP CM Gandapur also sent a summary to the governor to recommend appointments of his advisers, which was also approved by the governor.

Following the CM's advice, five advisers have been appointed, including Syed Fakhar Jehan, Muzamil Aslam, Muhammad Ali Saif, Mashal Azam, and Zahid Chanzeb. Yesterday, Gandapur received a nod of



approval from incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan after a meeting with him in Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi.

After finalising the cabinet members, the chief minister did not disclose their names, as he was under pressure by certain factions within the party to accommodate their nominees. Interestingly, a majority of those considered and approved as cabinet members by the PTI founder were unaware of their selection.

"Some of the cabinet members and their portfolios have been approved but I can't mention them," a PTI leader claimed. Pleading anonymity, he added that every PTI MPA in the provincial assembly expected to be included in the cabinet, which he said, was not possible. After being nominated for the KP chief ministership, Gandapur signalled inducting new faces, up to more than 50%, into the next provincial cabinet, giving them a chance to represent

the citizens in the assembly. Meanwhile, the Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali has approved cabinet ministers' names and after his approval the administration department has issued the notification of the names.

According to the details, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinet consisted of 15 members in which Arshad Yaqoob, Shakeel Ahmed, Fazal Hakeem Khan and Muhammad Adnan Qadri are included. Aqibullah, Muhammad Sajjad, Mina Khan and Fazal Shakoor are also a part of provincial cabinet.

In the first phase, 10 ministers, three advisors and three special assistants will be given posts in different sectors. In the meeting between both leaders Imran Khan and chief minister Ali Amin Gandapur the discussion has been done regarding to appoint Mushtaq Ghani as senior minister who was the former speaker of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was not given a fair trial: SC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Wednesday issued its reserved opinion on the trial, sentence, and execution of the late prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, saying that he did not get a chance to a "fair trial".

A nine-member bench of the top court, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, reserved its opinion on the 2011 presidential reference seeking to revisit the sentence, and execution of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) founder and former premier Bhutto on Monday. The bench also comprises Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Aminud-Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Syed Hassan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Musarrat Hilali.

"Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did not get a fair trial and it was not in accordance with the Constitutional requirement of due process," said CJP Isa while announcing the short order. The court's decision comes after nearly 12 years after a presidential reference seeking to revisit the sentence, and execution of the PPP founder and former premier was filed by former president and PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari.

Bhutto was executed on April 4, 1979, following a verdict of the Supreme Court

in a murder case that his party termed as "judicial murder". The reference – filed by Zardari on April 2, 2011, under Article 186 of the Constitution – was taken up by the Supreme Court's 11-member larger bench headed by former chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry which held five hearings of the reference.

On December 12, 2023, the reference hearing resumed under a nine-member bench headed by CJP Isa following a decision to fix an instant case under the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act, 2023. The SC had appointed amicus curies with expertise on the criminal and constitutional sides, seeking their assistance, particularly on the matter of maintainability of the instant reference, pending with the court for 11 years.

Apart from CJP, the other members of the bench include Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Aminuddin Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Hassan Azhar Rizvi and Justice Musarat Hillai. The bench had reserved its opinion earlier this week after hearing all sides.

At the outset of the hearing, CJP Isa shared that the bench had come to a unanimous decision. Reading the short order, the chief justice said that the judges are bound to "do right to all manner of people according to law

without fear of favour, affection or ill will". "We must, therefore, be willing to confront our past missteps and infallibilities with humility in the spirit of self-accountability and as a testament to our commitment to ensure that justice shall be serving with unwavering, integrity and fidelity to the law," said the CJP.

The CJP said that the "reference files that the president of Pakistan has provided us an opportunity to reflect upon the proceedings of the trial, conviction and death sentence of Bhutto under the regime of military dictator Gen Zia ul Haq." He also read the five questions raised in the reference. The CJP read the first question i.e. "Whether the decision of the Lahore High Court (LHC) as well the Supreme Court of Pakistan in the murder trial against Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto meets the requirements of the fundamental rights as guaranteed in Article 4, sub-articles 1 and 2(a), Articles 8, 9, 10-A due process and Article 14 and 25 of the Constitution."

CJP Isa then read the court's opinion, saying "The proceedings of the trial by the LHC and of the appeal by the SC do not meet the requirements of the fundamental rights to a fair trial in due process enshrined in Articles 4 and 9 of the Constitution and later guaranteed as the separate and independent fundamental right under Article 10-A of the Constitution."



Deal report on KP resources, national debt: Lawyer approaches PHC

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A writ petition filed before Peshawar High Court (PHC) seeking deal report regarding Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's resources including oil, gas along with other mines and mineral as well as provincial expenditure while asking provision of both domestic and external debts record to be publish for public domain.

A senior lawyer Malak Muhammad Ajmal Khan filed writ plea in Anch- orperson Hamid Mir along with Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense, Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Home& Tribal Affairs Department, Frontier Works Organization and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zone Development and Management Company were made

respondents in the case.

The petitioner is resident of tribal area and member of both Peshawar High Court and Supreme Court Bar Associations, the petition stated.

The residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have right to be aware regarding income, expenditure and royalty received from federation as the province possessing several resources like copper, oil, gas and chromite, the writ argued.

The writ pleaded that local residents are deprived from their constitutional right of Right to Information as well as didn't aware regarding income from natural resources situated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

FWO Engineer Zeeshan revealed in an interview with Hamid Mir on Geo TV that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is 2nd largest producer of

Copper and 1.1 million ton has been extracted, the petition claimed.

The engineer claimed that Copper reservoirs stands at 3.5 million ton and its estimated value is six thousand billion US Dollar in which 22 thousand ton had extracted at the worth of 30/35 million Dollars in three years of mining started in 2019, the writ pleaded.

It is necessary for the public to be aware regarding legal status of FWO and \$30/35 million income from copper? Because it is constitutional right of the citizen to be aware in this as well as the residents of any province holds first right over local natural resources, the writ argued.

In nutshell, it is obligatory that the residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would aware about natural

resources including copper, gas and oil as well as shares obtained from federation in royalty, the writ stated.

Constitution of Pakistan Article-3 argues for elimination of exploitation in every sphere as well as every citizen equal before so distribution of resources must be ensured on principal of equality. Moreover, the elite class is exploiting common man with different tactics and grabbed the natural resources, the petition argued.

PHC order submission of deal report about national debts in both domestic& dollar as well as provision of income along with expenditure of natural resources on daily, weekly, monthly and annual record for public domain. Early hearing in the upcoming days is expected on the plea in larger public interest.



PESHAWAR: Right to Information Services Commission solving people's complaints.

Traders urges govt to work for economy betterment

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: President of Trade Union of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mujeeb ur Rehman said that the completion of government formation in the country is a good thing but the central and provincial governments should jointly take measures to improve the economy and solve the problems.

He said that the business community should cooperate fully with the federal and provincial governments for the sake of this country and recognize each other and the government should work together to solve the problems of the country such as inflation and corruption.

Extortion by agreeing to serve the people and the government to improve the economic conditions in the country so that the country works for the betterment and the government expenditure is reduced and all the political parties go together because at this time politics in the country is a country, he added.

He added the reasons why we have to be enemy with each other, so we have to leave politics behind and we have to work for the betterment of the people because this country needs consensus and unity.

16 arrested for market encroachments

PESHAWAR (APP): The district administration, in collaboration with the capital metropolitan government, took action against encroachments in Qissa Khwani Bazar, adjacent local markets, and circular roads.

A heavy police contingent was deployed to prevent unpleasant incidents during the operation.

Encroachments outside shops were removed, leading to the apprehension of 16 individuals involved.

Commissioner Peshawar has instructed administrative officers to conduct daily market visits and initiate legal action against encroachers.

Legal proceedings are underway against the arrested individuals, as confirmed by the district administration.

Weather to remain cold

PESHAWAR (APP): The weather will remain cold and partly cloudy in most of the districts of the province, officials of the Meteorological Department said here on Wednesday.

In the evening and night, rain with strong winds and thundershowers and snowfall on mountains is likely in Chitral, Kohistan, Shangla, Swat, Bunir, Abbottabad, Peshawar, Nowshera, Kohat, Kurram, Bannu, and Waziristan, said an official of the Meteorological Department.

The minimum temperature has been recorded as low as 11 degrees Celsius, and it is likely to increase to a maximum of 18 degrees Celsius, said the official.

The humidity ratio in the air is 54% recorded, and in the last 24 hours, there has been rain, thunder, and snow in the mountains in Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the official said.

He said the minimum temperature recorded today in Kalam minus 13, Lehla minus 12, Astoor minus 06, Skardu, Kalat minus 04, Deer, Malam Jabba, Chitral, Miri, and Mir Khani recorded minus 03 degrees centigrade with 05 inches of snow was recorded in Darosh, 04 in Kalam, 03 in Mirkhani, 2.4 in Chitral, and 02 in Dir.

Opp leader asks KP govt to withdraw call for protest

PESHAWAR (APP): Leader of opposition in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Ibadullah Khan has termed the protest call of the provincial government for the coming Sunday a drama and asked it for its immediate withdrawal.

In reaction to the protest call of the provincial government here on Wednesday, he said that instead of providing relief to the people, Pakistan Tehrik-Insaf (PTI) has always indulged in negative politics.

He said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is already in the grip of terrorism and price hike and beside fundamental rights and essential daily used items, its people are struggling for two times meal.

In such a situation, he said the provincial government should come to the rescue of the people and concentrate on provision of immediate relief to them.

He said that the province could not afford further provocation, sit-ins and processions. But, it is a matter of concern that Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur while giving call for protest is proving his low level of mentality.

The leader of opposition in KP Assembly said that being a chief executive of the province, he should maintain peace in it and nor to take the people out on roads.

He demanded of the provincial government to withdraw its call for protest in the larger interest of the people with immediate effect. He said that the process of election has been completed. Therefore, he said they should have to join hands to take solid measures for the resolution of long standing problems of the people and bring improvement in their lives.

KPRA conducts workshop AGP's officials on FABS

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority conducted a one-day training workshop on Automated Deduction of KP Sales Tax on Services through the Financial Accounting and Budgeting System (FABS) for the officials of Accountant General of Pakistan, KPRMP, and FABS for making the workshop possible.

She shed light on the integration of KP Sales Tax on Services in the FABS system, emphasizing that it marks a significant milestone for KPRA and a memorable day.

"It is another step towards the automation of KP Sales Tax on Services. This advancement will eliminate errors, as the tax will be automatically deducted and submitted to KPRA. We anticipate an increase in revenue from the AG office," she stated.

She also expressed appreciation for the keen interest shown by the Accountant General of Pakistan in the

KPRA addressed the queries of the participants

Director General KPRA Miss Fouzia Iqbal in her address thanked officials of the Accountant General of Pakistan, KPRMP, and FABS for making the workshop possible.

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"It is another step towards the automation of KP Sales Tax on Services. This advancement will eliminate errors, as the tax will be automatically deducted and submitted to KPRA. We anticipate an increase in revenue from the AG office," she stated.

She also expressed appreciation for the keen interest shown by the Accountant General of Pakistan in the

integration process and assured that her team would be available to assist officials from the AG office with any issues related to the system.

Advisor KPRA on Tax Enforcement Mr. Fazal Amin Shah in his welcome note at the workshop thanked the officials of AG office for attending the training and showed his hopes for smooth coordination in the future. Mr. Shah answered the queries of the participants in detail and assured them to arrange a meeting of KPRA, FABS, and AG Office concerned officers to overcome any shortcomings in the system.

"This collaborative effort will contribute to documenting the overall economy, reducing errors, and increasing sales tax on services in KP, facilitating a smoother payment flow to contractors," he said.



PESHAWAR: Director General KPRA Miss Fouzia Iqbal addressing participants of one-day training workshop.

Delegation of Peshawar Press Club visits PIC

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The newly elected cabinet and members of the governing body of Peshawar Press Club, headed by President Arshad Aziz Malik visited the Peshawar Institute of Cardiology. Professor Dr. Shahkar Ahmed Shah, Medical Director and Chief Executive of PIC-MTI, warmly welcomed the visiting delegation and facilitated a detailed tour of various hospital facilities, including the Out-Patients Department, Intensive Care Unit, Cardiac Care Unit, Pediatrics ward and one of its kind Cardiac Rehabilitation Department.

Professor Shahkar Ahmed Shah briefed the delegation on the hospital's history, provided insights into the facilities available, ongoing research work with international health organizations, international certifications and achievements of the hospital in its brief journey since it begun services on 16 December 2020.

Additionally, the expansion of PIC's satellite units in other districts of the province was also discussed during the briefing by the seasoned cardiac surgeon.

Dr. Shahkar reiterated PIC's commitment in providing international standard facilities to the people of the province, earning the hospital a prominent position not only in the province but also in Pakistan. He emphasized the role of the media in creating awareness among the public about the facilities, services and successes stories of the hospital, and urged the PPC cabinet to continue its vital role in enhancing public awareness.

President Peshawar Press Club Arshad Aziz Malik acknowledged and praised the top-notch facilities and services at the hospital, commending the hospital administration and staff for their efforts in providing the best cardiac treatment facilities to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He highlighted the importance of showcasing the positive aspects of PIC and informing the public about these facilities, making it a priority for journalists to ensure that international standard treatment is accessible within the province.

Both parties exchanged views on taking immediate steps to provide necessary assistance and relief to the journalist fraternity, with a commitment to full cooperation from Professor Shahkar Ahmed Shah.

The delegation included Vice President Tayyab Usman, General Secretary Irfan Musazai, Finance Secretary Rizwan Sheikh, and esteemed members of the governing body. The hospital's Medical Director and Chief Executive, Dr. Shahkar Ahmed Shah, led the delegation, with Hospital Director Dr. Naemat Shah, Director Finance Khashif Zaman, Director Nursing Officer Daud, and Media Manager Riffat Anjum in welcoming the delegation. Professor Dr. Shahkar Ahmed Shah presented President PPC with a shield of honour.

Pak-China friendship to become stronger via CPEC: Suriya Bibi



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The member of the provincial assembly elected on the general seat from Chitral and the first ever female deputy speaker in the history of the provincial assembly Suriya Bibi, has said that Pakistan-China friendship will become stronger and more stable with the passage of time, we believe that CPEC is a plan for the economic development of Pakistan.

She expressed these

views during a visit to China Window, a Chinese cultural center established in Peshawar and addressing the ceremony of awarding certificates to language learners.

Suriya Bibi visited various galleries of the state of the art China Window, signed the friendship wall and recorded her comments in the guest book.

Deputy Speaker said that China has helped Pakistan in every difficult time and now the CPEC project will

play its role in the economic development of Pakistan, however, he emphasized that the backward areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa should also be given a share in the CPEC, especially Chitral should also be considered in the CPEC. She hoped that CPEC would usher in a new era of prosperity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Deputy Speaker Provincial Assembly Suriya Bibi also described Chinese language as important for the future and said that it is the need of the hour to learn Chinese language so that learners can get job opportunities in the ongoing projects of Chinese investors in Pakistan.

Deputy Speakers said that with the establishment of Rashkai Economic Zone, more than two hundred thousand jobs will also be created which can be benefited. Suriya Bibi further said that the China Window is a wonderful center of

friendship not only for the people of Peshawar but also for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which is also playing a significant role to strengthen the friendship between the two countries.

Later she distributed certificates among the students of the Chinese language learning course.

Earlier in his speech at the ceremony, Peshawar Press Club President Arshad Aziz Malik said that after the general elections, the government's focus should be on economic development so that production can increase and People get jobs.

He said that Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has also indicated in his first speech on the floor of the assembly to take all possible steps to improve the economy, after which he hopes that the industrial sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. And agricultural development will start very soon.

3-day conference on countering violent extremism organized

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Center of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism, in collaboration with Community Resilience Activity North and Paigham-e-Pakistan, on Wednesday organised a three-day conference on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE).

The conference brought together researchers, social workers, law enforcement officials, and professionals from various relevant fields across the country, said a press release.

National and international researchers specialising

in countering violent extremism also actively participated in the conference.

The primary objective of the conference was to assess the prevailing strategies and policies related to countering violent extremism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, within the global context.

Researchers shared insights and recommendations on combating extremism during the conference, and specific directives for researchers working on countering extremism were outlined.

Throughout the event, the role of various social groups in countering violent extremism was emphasised.

Discussions were held on promoting sustainable peace, establishing security, and involving all segments of society in decision-making processes to foster social stability.

On the 1st day of the conference, five working groups affiliated with diverse schools of thought presented their findings, which will be further deliberated upon in the upcoming sessions.

Recommendations for countering extremism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to be finalised at the end of the conference.

The purpose of this conference is to formulate measures for countering violent extremism through research, providing valuable insights that will contribute to policy formulation at the national and provincial levels.

By implementing these recommendations, assistance can be extended towards preventing extremism and promoting peace and stability in the region.

Power suspension notified

PESHAWAR (APP): PESCO on Wednesday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from Peshawar City grid station on 8th March from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Peshawar City and Taru Jabba grid connected feeders will face inconvenience.

Likewise, it said power supply will remain suspended from Pabbi Grid Station on 7th March from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Pana Kot, Pubbi Hospital, Industrial Zone and Saleha Khan feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from Tank Grid Station on 8th and 9th March from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Tank, Gomal Zam Dam, Wana, Jandhola and Kulachi grid connected feeders will face inconvenience.

The power supply will remain suspended from Mingora Grid Station on 7th and 9th March from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. resultantly, consumers of Malam Jaba, Express Saidu Hospital, Bandai, Mingora 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Kabal and Nawa Kali.

FIA takes action against illegal currency business

PESHAWAR (APP): On the direction of Director Peshawar Zone Nisar Tanoli, the crackdown continues against the elements involved in the hawala, hundi and illegal currency business here on Wednesday.

Suspect Saeed Zaman was arrested in raid operations by the FIA official in Buner district and during the raid, millions of rupees were recovered from the accused, the officials of the FIA said. A total of Rs. 17, 22000 Pakistani rupees was recovered from the accused and records related to hundi, hawala was also

recovered from the accused, he said.

He further said that the accused could not satisfy the authorities regarding the exported currency and a case has been registered against the accused whereas, further investigation has been initiated.



PESHAWAR: PTI's Member of National Assembly Abdul Latif addressing a press conference. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza



In brief

E-Domicile service starts F.P. Report

KHAR: District Administration Bajaur on Wednesday launched E-Domicile Certificate provision facility to address problems of students. The first E-Domicile was issued by District Administration Bajaur in a ceremony that was attended by Deputy Commissioner Bajaur, Anwar-ul-Haq, Deputy Commissioner General, Ali Raza and concerned officials. Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner said that E-Domicile has been started at Tehsil level to facilitate students especially those who live in remote areas and facing difficulties to get domicile adding that it would also save precious time of applicants. He said that domicile has been issued with the cooperation of Tribal Affairs Department and Information Technology Board. He said that assistant commissioners have also been directed to complete required procedures and ensure provision of E-Domicile for facilitation of applicants.

Hashish, opium recovered F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Charsadda police here Wednesday foiled a bid of smuggling and arrested a smuggler near Sardaryab. According to police, a car was intercepted near Sardaryab and during checking 15.6 kilogram hashish and 12 kilogram opium was recovered. Contraband was concealed in secret compartments of the car. Police also arrested smuggler who was identified as Muhammad Ishaq, resident of Rawalpindi. Case has been registered against the arrested smuggler and investigation is underway.

DPO applauds bravery of cops F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Newly appointed District Police Officer (DPO) Dera Nasir Mehmood on Wednesday applauded the bravery and unwavering dedication of Dera police in the war against terrorism. The district police chief stated this during his visit to Yarik police station while Superintendent of police (SP) Saddar Circle Umar Hayyat Khan was also accompanied him on this occasion, said a police spokesman. During the visit, the DPO met with the on duty staff at Yarik police station and listened to their issues. He was also briefed about the security arrangements made in view of the prevailing law and order situation in the area. On which, the DPO expressed satisfaction and said the bravery and courage of the Dera police against the menace of terrorism was admirable. He said "I am well aware of the problems being faced by the police force and all the issues would be resolved." Later, the DPO also visited different police check posts including one at Yarik Toll Plaza.

Power pilferers arrested F.P. Report

MULTAN: Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO) has intensified its operations against electricity theft and defaulters in the region and during significant actions against offenders resulting in arrest of 76 pilferers from South Punjab in a single day. Spokesperson of MEPCO said on Wednesday that the electricity thieves were fined a total of Rs. 44,54,000, with over Rs. 4,00,000 collected on the spot.

Policeman shot kills one man, injured another in Buner

F.P. Report

BUNER: A local named Baitullah killed on the spot while one Jan Parvez residents of Linder Chenglai area of Khudokhel tehsil, Buner district critically injured in unprovoked by policeman Haq Nawaz serving at police station Changli during polio eradication campaign.

According to details, the policeman named Haq Nawaz bearing Belt No. 656, posted at Chenglai police station opened firing. The dead body and injured were immediately transferred to Civil Hospital Totalai, from where the injured was referred to Peshawar due to his bad condition, while the body was handed over to

the relatives after post-mortem.

The district police officer confirmed the incident and claimed immediately arrested the accused police constable and seized the official rifle.

The police also confirmed that FIR has been lodged on the report of injured Jan Pervaiz who has said that the accused police man was on polio security duty with polio team No. 3, while going on the way, he asked the polio team to go ahead and he himself came to the field with government weapons and told Baitullah why he was abused him and on the same time open firing on him.

As a result, Baitullah killed on the spot and he himself (Jan Parvez) sustained bullet injuries.

Police has registered a case and started investigation. It should be clear that deceased Baitullah was close relative of JUI tehsil Emer and former candidate of Provincial Assembly Constituency PK 27 Maulana Abrarullah who was present at the time of filing the FIR by injured Jan Parvez. The police have registered a case and started investigation.

Meanwhile, the residents argued Chief Justice of Pakistan, Prime Minister and Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to ensure psycho-analytics of police personnel to avoid such incidents in future as well as to ensure sense of security among the public at large.

Provision of essential commodities directed

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Mardan: Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai here on Wednesday directed the administrations of Mardan and Swabi districts to provide maximum relief as well as ensure supply of essential commodities to general public on reasonable rates during the Holy month of Ramadan.

Addressing the meeting held in this regard, Commissioner Mardan said that the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has issued clear instructions to the administration in this regard. He asked the traders to ensure the supply of food items to the public at reasonable prices and to avoid profiteering and hoarding keeping in mind the sanctity of Ramadan.

Deputy Commissioner Mardan Muhammad Fayaz Khan Sherpao, Press Club President M Bashir Adil, business leaders Ehsan Bacha, Waqar Bacha, Abdul Zar Lali, Vice President of Chamber of Commerce Muhammad Amin Utman Khel, Vice President of Flour Mills

Association Abid, apart from Central General Secretary APCA Aurangzeb Kashmiri, District Food Controller Aftab Umar, Director Livestock Misal Khan, Regional Manager of Utility Stores Ali Bacha and other relevant officials attended.

DC Swabi Dr. Tariqullah attended the meeting on Zoom. The administrative officers while briefing the meeting said that prices of essential items have been set in price committee meetings in both the districts on the instructions of the provincial government, while special Sasta Bazars are also being established in Ramadan in which people can buy food items at cheap prices from the market. While monitoring desks under the supervision of the respective assistant commissioners will also work at the tehsil level. Commissioner Mardan Division Shaukat Ali Yousafzai urged the business community to ensure the supply of essential commodities to the fasting people at cheap prices during the holy month of Ramadan.

Women thief held: A

female thief was caught red-handed with the help of CCTV cameras in the sikandari urban area of Mardan. After making a fuss, the local people referred the case to police station Par Hoti. The habitual thief has stolen from more than 20 streets from drain grills and manholes.

After the initial investigation, police passed the police station and let the thief inside. According to the details, a couple who were stealing drain grates and nets from the streets in the morning in the urban area of Mardan was caught red-handed. After the disappearance of the girl from the streets, the local citizens caught Ali Rehman son of Bacha Khan was caught stealing a grill with a young woman and was referred to the Par Hoti police station after making a big fuss. It is to be clear that the investigation team of the police separated the woman from the case and started investigation against the habitual thief. According to information, the arrested accused has stolen valuable iron grills from more than 20 neighborhoods.

Political parties hold protest against police

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Various parties protested against the increasing unrest and police abuses in Larkana. A protest demonstration was held in front of the protesters holding banners and placards on which the slogans of Stop Cruelty and Justice were written.

The protesters chanted that for the past three months, the influential Ghulam Qadir Jatoti and his favorite have been trying to buy a house at a low price, while on their refusal, they kept our youth Salim Brohi in police custody on false charges, freed them with an alleged 90,000 bribe, while operations are being conducted on our homes with the help of the police of influential people making up fabricated stories and violating the sanctity of the wall and the cloak, Liaquat

Ali Brohi has been arrested without warrant.

It is based on sheer excesses and injustices, he demanded from the Deputy Inspector General of Police Larkana Region and SSP Larkana to regulate the excesses of Godara police and take action against the influential so that justice and security can be provided. On the other hand, against the growing unrest in Larkana and the looting of 6 lakh rupees from a shopkeeper by unknown armed persons, a protest was held by the shopkeepers of Gelis Bazar and fish market at Jinnah Bagh Chowk.

That three unidentified armed motorcycle-riders stole 6 lakh rupees in cash and mobile phones from the shop located at the fish market last day and escaped easily. He further said that Larkana has now become a

base of robbers, any trader is helpless to do business and no one's honor is safe. The stolen cash should be returned from the affected shopkeepers while removing the shuttered strikes in the entire Larkana.

In other Larkana, members of the Chandio community protested at the famous SSP Chowk against Rahmatpur Police and the abuses of their relatives. protested and said that we have a dispute with our community on which our influential relatives are harassing us in various ways through the police while Bihari SHO of Rehmatpur Police Station Ali Hasan Mughiri raided our houses without warrant. He appealed to the Chief Minister of Sindh and said that action should be taken against the said police officer and orders should be issued to provide justice and security.

Rescue 1122 conducts training session on first aid

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: The training wing of the district emergency service 1122 has conducted a training session on first medical aid and the Basic Life Support (BLF) at Gomal Medical College (GMC) here.

The training session was conducted by Rescue 1122 Dera with the coordination of IFMSA GMC under the supervision of Incharge of the training wing Aizaz Mehmood to create awareness among the staff and students of GMC about safety measures and Rescue 1122's role during emergency situations, said a press release issued here.

District Emergency Officer Awas Babar was the chief guest of the event which was also participated by GMC Dean Prof. Dr

Naseem Saba, Prof. Dr Jahanzeb Khan, Prof. Dr Ameer Aman Ullah, Prof. Dr Nargis Noman, Prof. Dr Samina Qadir, Dr Fazlur Rehman, Prof. Dr Shahjahn, Dr Rafiq Mehsud, Dr Sara Rehman, Prof. Dr Sadaf, Dr Ismail and other members of Faculty. As many as 140 people were benefited with this workshop. The participants were educated through practical demonstration as how to act when they met various emergencies and provide first medical aid to victims.

The rescue personnel imparted training about different life saving skills including first aid to the injured and subsequently their safe shifting to nearby hospitals. Besides, the trainers also educated the participants about personal

protective measures, scene assessment, hazard prevention, trauma, cardiopulmonary recovery, bleeding, stabbing and bone fractures. They also gave a detailed lecture on fire prevention, types of fire and their prevention and the use of fire extinguishers.

The Rescue 1122 Training Wing team highlighting the importance of first aid said that the role of the people present at the time of any accident was decisive as far as safety of human lives was concerned. The objective of this training was to make students and staff aware of first aid so that they could play their vital role in any emergency and support the Rescue 1122 team in this mission to save lives and create a safe, responsible and prosperous society.



FAISALABAD: President Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, Mr Mike McKirdy planting a sapling in TUF lawn after addressing an International Breast Cancer Symposium on 'Bridging the Gaps: Integrated Team Approach in Breast Cancer Care.'

KKKU Management Sciences hold meeting F.P. Report

KARAK: Khushal Khan Khattak University (KK-KU) Karak Department of Management Sciences has conducted the successful online 9th Board of Studies (BoS) meeting. The meeting was held on Wednesday, which was presided over by Dr. Faqir Sajjad Ul Hassan, the Convenor of the Board of Studies and Head of the Department of Management Sciences.

Distinguished members participated in the meeting included Dr. Ikram Ullah from Comsats University Islamabad, Dr. Muhammad Zubair from UST Bannu, and Dr. Hafeezullah from KUST. The other BoS members: Dr. Siraj ud Din, Muhammad Shah Din, Dr. Abdul Latif, Umair ud Din, Dr. Muhammad Ovais, Dr. Jamsheed of Govt College of Management Sciences Karak, Director QEC Dr. Muhammad Anwar also participated. Additionally, Dr. Anwar Khan, Director Academics and Research, and Dr. Jamsheed Ur Rehman from the Management Sciences Department actively contributed to the discussions.

The focal point of the meeting was deliberations on the Scheme of Studies for BBA Honors, aligning with the HEC undergraduate education policy 2023. Dr. Faqir Sajjad Ul Hassan commended the faculty members for their invaluable role in finalizing the BoS recommendations, emphasizing their dedication to academic excellence. The Board members lauded Dr. Faqir Sajjad Ul Hassan for his unwavering full-time support to the department's academic activities. They acknowledged his pivotal role in steering the department towards continuous growth.

Crackdown against profiteers F.P. Report

KARAK: District price review committee has asked the traders to reduce their profit margin and provide essential commodities to people at control rates during the holy month of Ramadan.

The committee met with deputy commissioner Mujibur Rehman in the chair and discussed matters pertaining to fixing prices of edible items, price checking and ensuring provision of quality food items in bazaars. Officials of food and industries departments, office bearers of traders' organization and consumers' representatives were in attendance.

After thorough deliberations and discussion, prices of food items were fixed and the district food authorities were directed to issue the new price list immediately. The committee also reduced prices of various items, ignoring the proposals of businessmen to increase rates of commodities.

At the meeting, the deputy commissioner said that the traders should reduce profit margin instead of demanding an increase in prices of essential commodities.

Lakki Marwat blind murder case Police arrests two alleged culprits

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: Police claimed to have solved the blind murder case of a young boy and arrested two suspects during a raid in Bitanni tribal subdivision of Lakki Marwat district.

On Feb 29, a beheaded body was found in the Fareedkhel area of the tribal subdivision. The deceased identified as Ghaniullah son of a former nazim AShaukatullah (late) was slaughtered and tortured to death and his body was shifted to a hospital in Tajori town.

The gruesome murder had triggered protest in the area as relatives of the deceased and tribesmen along with activists of Marwat Bitanni Tehreek, a rights body had closed the Peshawar-Karachi Highway for vehicular traffic at Tajazai Chowk.

After registration of a case against unknown killers on the complaint of Karimullah, a cousin of the deceased, Lakki Marwat DPO Tariq Habib constituted a special investigation team (SIT) to trace the killers", said an official. He said that the special investigation team headed by DSP Mahabat Khan found a clue about killers with the help

of using modern technology and human intelligence. The official said that the law enforcers arrested two suspects including Mursalin and Muhammad Tahir residents of Fareedkhel and shifted them to the police station.

"During initial interrogation, the arrested men confessed to have committed the murder of Ghaniullah with the help of two other accomplices", maintained the official, adding that police have intensified efforts to bring the remaining suspects into clutches of law.

Co-curriculum activities stressed for mental development of students: Assistant Commissioner Yasir Nazir has acknowledged the capabilities and talent of students and asked the teachers to prepare them for future challenges. He was speaking as a chief guest at the prize distribution ceremony of the annual district Higher Secondary and High Schools' sports tournament.

DEO Musarrat Hussain Baloch presided over the ceremony held at Government Shaheed Muhammad Ghasan Khan Centennial Model High School No. 1, in Lakki City. Deputy DEO Gul Faraz

Khatak, tournament's general secretary Wahjeehullah, SDEO Qadir Shah and ADEO Dr Ihsan were in attendance. Students displayed physical training skills, rifle drill, gymnastic and scouting and received great applause from participants. AC along with the district education officer distributed trophies and cash prizes among the players of winner and runner up teams.

He declared curricular and co-curricular activities inseparable and said that participation in sports and game events kept students physically and mentally fit for getting education. He said that the students of government run educational institutions always excelled in education and in the field of sports. The district education officer said that his department had launched the enrolment drive from March 1 to bring all out of school children to schools. "Besides providing free textbooks to students, the public sector schools are also equipped with trained teachers and basic facilities", he claimed, calling upon parents to get their kids enrolled in state run schools as getting education is their fundamental right.

Youths provided with CCTV cameras installation training

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The district administration in collaboration with the youth affairs department provided a six-month short course to a total of 50 selected deserving youths in CCTV cameras' installation. The course concluded here on Wednesday.

A closing and certificate distribution ceremony of the six-month vocation training in this regard was held at Timergara with district youth officer Malik Shahzad Tariq in the chair. Speaking on the occasion Malik Shahzad said that youths should be equipped

with technical and professional skills so that they could earn livelihood for their families on completion of their education.

The official asked colleges and universities' students to get technical and vocational training in various fields as it was the need of the day. He said that technical and vocational education would benefit youth in future. The district youth officer and Principal of a private technical institute Hassan Sher distributed certificates and shields among the course participants and guests on the occasion. The trainee youth

thanked the administration and the youth affairs department for arranging the course for them and hoped they would properly utilize the skills they learnt during the course.

Meanwhile the Maidan administration continued to provide the rain and snow-fall-hit families with relief items. The assistant commissioner Lal Qila Noor Zali Khan along with the renew and field staff visited the affected families and handed them over with relief items on behalf of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA).

14 fishermen still missing in boat mishap

F.P. Report

THATTA: Contradicting the claims of government officials the relatives of fishermen have claimed that out of 45 fishermen only 31 fishermen were rescued while 14 are still missing. As per details a boat carrying 45 fishermen capsize near Hajamro creek within the limits of district Thatta on Tuesday.

The rescue operation was initiated by the fishers boarded in nearby vessels who claimed that all 45 fishermen had been rescued. Majority of the fishermen who were on board hailed from Ibrahim Hyderi area of Malir. Late on Tuesday evening Dr Sahira Assistant Commissioner Malir confirmed that all the fishermen had been rescued and sent homes.

On Wednesday morning the relatives of missing fishermen approach local media men and revealed that 14 fishermen were still

missing. They further said that they were unable to make any cellular contact with missing fishermen. As per the list provided by the relatives Hussain poro, Sher Malah, Hashim, Riaz Sajjad, Qayoom, Alam, Shakeel, Noor Muhammad, Raheem, Kuki, Habib among others were still missing.

Chairperson of Pakistan Fishers Folk Forum Yasmeen Shah said that the local divers were busy searching missing fishers but following intensity of tides and gusty winds they were facing difficulties in the rescue operation. She lashed out at Government officials for showing less serious attitude towards the issue.

Without verifying she said the government officials announced that all fishermen were rescued. She urged Pakistan Navy and maritime security agency to help fishermen rescue their dear ones.

Freelancing key for financial independence F.P. Report

BANNU: An awareness and preparation of the potential benefits of freelancing and its challenges is an important need of the present digital era, through which people, especially the youth, can adopt an attractive job.

It allows working hours that are suitable for a freelancer, i.e. part-time. These views were expressed by Mr. Kamran Ullah, District Youth Officer, Bannu during a two-day training workshop organized at Government Post Graduate College, Bannu. The main objective of the workshop was to introduce the youth to the benefits of freelancing, opportunities and using platforms like Upwork, Fiverr and Amazon.



Ukrainian attacks increasingly sap power of Russia's Black Sea fleet

KYIV (AP): Ukrainian sea drones reportedly sank another Russian warship in the Black Sea, the latest in a series of strikes that has crippled Moscow's naval capability and limited its operations with the war now in its third year. Successful Ukrainian drone and missile strikes have provided a major morale boost for Kyiv at a time when its undermanned and under-gunned forces are facing Russian attacks along the more than 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front line.

Challenging Russia's naval superiority also has helped create more favorable conditions for Ukrainian grain exports and other shipments from the country's Black Sea ports. Here's a look at recent Ukrainian attacks against Russian naval assets and their consequences. In the latest reported strike, Ukrainian naval drones attacked the Sergei Kotov patrol ship near the Kerch Strait, which links the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, according to the Ukraine's military intelligence agency. The strike, which couldn't be independently verified, killed seven members of the Russian crew and injured six others, while 52 were rescued, the agency said. The Russian Defense Ministry didn't comment on the claim, but some Russian military bloggers confirmed the ship's loss and said its crew had been rescued.

The strike, if verified, would mark the latest successful use of Ukraine's domestically produced Magura drones, the agile uncrewed boats that have become the Russian navy's nemesis. Just last month, drones sank Russia's Caesar Kunikov amphibious landing ship and Ivanovets missile corvette.

The Russian military hasn't acknowledged those losses, either, but they have been reported by Russian military bloggers and some media. In another attack in late December, Ukraine said it destroyed the Novocherkassk landing vessel in Crimea's port of Feodosia with long-

range cruise missiles. The Russian Defense Ministry said the ship was damaged in the attack, but Russian war bloggers said it was lost. The Ukrainian military also has launched a series of persistent cruise missile and drone strikes on Russian radar facilities, air defense assets and air bases in Crimea, a region of Ukraine that Russia annexed in 2014. Increasing the pain for Moscow, Ukrainian troops also downed two Russian early warning and control aircraft over the Sea of Azov in January and February, depriving the Russian military of some of its most precious intelligence-gathering assets. The strikes followed other highly efficient Ukrainian attacks earlier in the war, including the April 2022 sinking of the Black Sea fleet's flagship missile cruiser, the Moskva, and a missile strike last September on the fleet's headquarters in the port of Sevastopol.

The smart use of remote-controlled drone boats laden with explosives has allowed Ukraine to tip the scales of naval warfare in its favor despite Russia's massive superiority in firepower. The Magura drones are equipped with advanced GPS and cameras, and have a low radar signature that makes them hard to detect. Its latest version, the Magura V5, is 5.5 meters (18 feet) long, weighs up to 1,000 kilograms (2,200 pounds) and has a range of up to 800 kilometers (500 miles), 60 hours of battery life, and a 200-kilogram (440-pound) payload, according to Ukrainian authorities. It also beams live video to operators. Ukraine also has relied on cruise missiles provided by the U.K. and France for striking Russian assets in Crimea. The missiles - produced jointly by Britain and France and called Storm Shadow by the U.K. and SCALP-EG by France - are launched from Ukraine's Soviet-era warplanes and have a range of more than 250 kilometers (155 miles).

Western officials praise the effi-

ciency of the Ukrainian attacks, noting that Kyiv has smartly used its limited resources to defeat far stronger Russian forces and destroy about 20% of the Black Sea fleet, effectively blunting Moscow's naval dominance. The successful strikes on Russian naval assets have allowed Ukraine to increase its food and other Black Sea exports despite Russia's withdrawal last summer from a deal that guaranteed safe shipment of Ukrainian grain. Moscow's pullback from the deal raised the possibility of Russian attacks on ships carrying Ukrainian grain and other products, posing a threat to the Ukrainian economy and global food security.

But the steady series of successful Ukrainian attacks on Russian warships and other military assets in the area have put Russia's fleet on the defensive, limiting its offensive capability. Although the Russian Defense Ministry has mostly kept quiet about the Ukrainian drone and missile attacks on its naval assets, Russian military bloggers and commentators have harshly criticized the military brass for its slow and sloppy response to the threat.

The strikes have forced the Russian navy to take precautions that have affected its operations, including relocating some of its ships from ports in Crimea farther east to Novorossiysk to better protect them.

Despite the damage from Ukrainian attacks, the Black Sea fleet remains a powerful force and is still capable of launching long-range cruise missile strikes at Ukraine. Russian air bases in Crimea also have remained operational, hosting warplanes that have continued flying combat sorties to support its ground operations in the region. Russian military bloggers reported that the head of the Black Sea fleet, Adm. Viktor Sokolov, was dismissed last month following the latest losses of warships. There was no official confirmation of his ouster.



GAZA: People look for salvageable items amid the rubble of Al-Bukhari Mosque that was destroyed in Israeli attacks in Deir el-Balah.

Mexico City drought causes rainwater catchment basin

MEXICO CITY (AP): Mexico City's drought and water shortage is so bad that one of the capital's rainwater catchment basins caught fire, scorching 75 acres (30 hectares) of dried-up vegetation. The Mexico City fire department said in a statement that the fire had been brought under control by late afternoon, although photos distributed by the department showed a haze of smoke still blanketing the low-lying basin.

The El Cristo basin was hit by a fire that began on the city's northwest side. The basins are meant to hold excess water from storm drains. Because the city is located in a high mountain valley with no natural outlet, sudden rushes of rainwater tend to overwhelm the man-made drains; the catchment basins act as a buffer. Normally, they are so green from previous rains that residents sometimes used them in the past as impromptu soccer fields or for grazing animals. But the central Mexico valley saw below-average rainfall in 2023. The situation is so bad that the Cutzamala reservoirs on the city's outskirts are at about one-third of capacity, with some as low as 30%. The network of three reservoirs supplies about a quarter of the water for over 20 million residents in the Mexico City metropolitan area. Wells in the city provide most of the rest.

Mexican officials began restricting water from those reservoirs by roughly 8% in October and decreed a further 25% cut in November. It will probably be about three months until any significant rains fall. Officials said El Niño and heat waves caused the recent falloff in rain, but added that drought conditions have been intensifying the past four years and gradually lowering reservoir levels. Studies have shown climate change creates stronger El Niño patterns that bring periods of decreased rain.

Navalny died of natural causes, says Russian spymaster

MOSCOW (AP): Russia's spymaster said that opposition leader Alexei Navalny died of natural causes, a statement that appeared to reflect the Kremlin's efforts to assuage international outrage over the death of President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe.

Sergei Naryshkin, the director of the Foreign Intelligence Service, the top spy agency known under its Russian acronym SVR, made the statement in an interview broadcast by Russian state television. He didn't name the cause of Navalny's death in a remote Arctic penal colony or give any other details. "Sooner or later life ends and people die," he said. "Navalny has died of natural causes."

Navalny died on Feb. 16 at Penal Colony No. 3 in the town of Kharp, in the Yamalo-Nenets region about 1,900 kilometers (1,200 miles) northeast of Moscow where he was serving a 19-year sentence on charges of extremism. Russian authorities still haven't announced the cause of his death at age 47 and many Western leaders blamed it on Putin, an accusation the Kremlin angrily rejected.

Haiti gang leader warns of civil war

PORT-AU-PRINCE: Jimmy Cherizier, the Haitian gang leader behind a violent attempt to overthrow Prime Minister Ariel Henry, has warned of civil war and "genocide" unless Henry steps down. Armed criminal gangs, who control large swathes of the country, launched a coordinated assault to remove the prime minister when he was out of the country last week.

Henry, who was supposed to step down in February, was reported to be in Puerto Rico, a United States territory, after the Dominican Republic refused permission for his plane to land. The Dominican Republic shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti. "If Ariel Henry doesn't resign, if the international community continues to support him, we'll be heading straight for a civil war that will lead to genocide," Cherizier, a 46-year-old former police officer who goes by the name Barbecue and is under United Nations sanctions for human rights abuses, told reporters in the capital Port-au-Prince.

"Either Haiti becomes a paradise or a hell for all of us. It's out of the question for a small group of rich people living in big hotels to decide the fate of people living in working-class neighbourhoods," he added. Gangs opened fire on police outside the Toussaint Louverture International Airport in Port-au-Prince, as dozens of employees and other workers fled the bullets. The airport remained closed, along with schools and banks. Over the weekend the gangs raided Haiti's two largest prisons, enabling thousands of inmates to escape. "Haiti is now under the control of the gangs. The government isn't present," said Michel St-Louis, 40, standing in front of a burned-down police station in the capital. "I'm hoping they can keep Henry out so whoever takes power can restore order." Henry, who came to power under a deal agreed with the opposition following the 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moise, was supposed to step down in February so elections could be held.

But in recent months, gangs have pushed beyond the city and into rural areas overwhelming security forces in one of the world's most impoverished countries. Henry has said the situation remains too volatile for elections and has been urging the deployment of a UN-backed multinational police mission to help stabilise the country. At least 15,000 people have recently evacuated the worst-hit parts of Port-au-Prince, said Stephane Dujarric, a spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Rights group Plan International said many were fleeing the capital for Artibonite, traditionally Haiti's farming region whose residents are now facing food shortages as fighting spreads north. The government has declared a state of emergency and nighttime curfew, while the UN Security Council has scheduled a closed-door meeting on the situation for later on Wednesday. Countries in the region have withdrawn embassy staff and advised their citizens to leave. — Aljazeera

‘Left behind’ families look to ICC for Philippines drug war justice

MANILA: Ephraim Escudero had been missing for five days when a neighbour showed his family a news clipping. The bodies of two unknown men had been found in Pampanga, about five hours from their home east of Manila in Laguna, but the report contained enough identifying details that the family knew instantly. "It was Ephraim," said his sister, Sheerah.

"Both [victims] were wrapped with packaging tape around their heads," Sheerah recalled. "[Ephraim] was hogtied. His hands were behind his back. His feet were tied with plastic and brown packaging tape. He also had gunshot wounds." When 18-year-old Ephraim first went missing in September 2017, local police had shown little interest in helping. An investigator in Pampanga acknowledged that Ephraim may have been killed because of the drug war unleashed by then President Rodrigo Duterte, but after the family submitted evidence, "we heard nothing from them," Escudero said. "They were just fooling around, pretending like they were investigating, but they're really not."

Seven years and one

president later, Escudero is no closer to finding justice. While drug-related killings have slowed since their peak in 2017, they have begun to climb since President Ferdinand Marcos Jr took power, according to data from the Dahas project, an initiative of the University of the Philippines. Dahas recorded 331 drug casualties in 2023. That is seven more than the 324 it recorded in 2022 - 149 in Duterte's final six months as president, and 175 in the six months after Marcos took office on June 30. Philippine National Police chief Benjamin Acorda Jr admitted in February that people were still killed in police drug operations after Dahas project data showed there had been 28 drug-related killings in January. He insisted the killings were not intentional.

"There will be aggressive operation[s]," Acorda said. "We want it done honestly." Marcos has repeatedly ordered his government not to cooperate with investigators from the International Criminal Court (ICC) who are probing Duterte for the thousands of killings that took place in the years up to 2019, when Duterte pulled the country from the ICC.

Although many have speculated the ICC will issue an arrest warrant for Duterte in the coming months, the Philippine National Police have already promised not to enforce it. Escudero and other victims, nevertheless, see the ICC as their last hope for justice. There have been only three prosecutions of extrajudicial killings related to the drug war since 2016, according to a report by the US Department of State. Marcos "hasn't supported the families of victims," said Jane Lee, whose husband, Michael, was killed in a 2017 police operation. Lee and Escudero both received support from Rise Up for Life and for Rights, an organisation supporting women who have lost relatives to the drug war. "We're still saying the same thing," Lee said. "Nothing has really changed." Lee had initially hoped Duterte's harsh anti-drug campaign would "clean up" drug use in her neighbourhood in Caloocan, a city in Metro Manila. But when the killings began, many of the victims "were not users or sellers," she said. "They ended up becoming collateral damage." The bloody anti-drug campaign did not have the effect Duterte had promised. "There are still

drugs," she said. But now, under Marcos, the government has also failed to support the families of victims left behind. "In some ways, it's even worse," Lee said. "I'm a solo parent. If my husband were alive, life would [still] be hard. But I'm the only one." "There are no programmes for the children who are left behind," she said. "We have not experienced any help and support." During the coronavirus lockdowns in 2020, police began visiting the homes of Lee and other family members of drug war victims, asking whether they would file court cases - which they saw as a thinly veiled attempt at pressuring them not to draw the attention of the ICC. The house visits continued until recently, Lee said. She was not sure if the police were continuing to visit other families. But filing cases in domestic courts remains a futile exercise. Christine Pascual filed a case against the police officers who killed her 17-year-old son, Joshua Laxamana, in 2018 when he was in Pangasinan, a region north of Manila, for a video game tournament. That case went all the way to the Supreme Court before it was dismissed in 2020. — Aljazeera

Refugees, migrants held in ‘violent, squalid’ Malaysian detention centres

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia is holding thousands of refugees and migrants in a network of "violent, squalid" detention centres where they are deprived of basic needs and sometimes subject to torture, Human Rights Watch (HRW) has said.

In a report released on Wednesday, the rights group said 23 former detainees described the centres as "oppressive" places where they faced the daily threat of punishment. All those interviewed by HRW for its report, "We Can't See the Sun: Malaysia's Arbitrary Detention of Migrants and Refugees", said they had witnessed beatings while 15 of them said they had been beaten themselves. Punishments included being hit, kicked and beaten with rubber pipes or batons, being forced to hold stress positions or hang from the wall, isolation, having meals withheld and being ordered to perform hundreds of squats and

push-ups, the report said.

Hussein, a Rohingya refugee registered with the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR) since 2016 but still detained, told HRW that he had been held in multiple detention centres. At Kemayan in the central state of Pahang, he said he was among some 80 people in a cell, and targeted for his ethnicity. When "the officer realized we were Rohingya, we were kicked, beaten, and slapped," Hussein told HRW. "Beatings happened when detainees made any mistakes. We were inside only, we couldn't go anywhere. Couldn't speak either." Hussein said guards called detainees for regular roll calls. In one centre - Belantik, in the northern state of Kedah - there were between 10 and 12 roll calls a day, each lasting for half an hour. In Kemayan, there were only three but they lasted far longer.

"Sometimes one muster call would take an hour," he said. "That meant we had to

look down and not lift our heads for the whole hour. If the officer saw anyone lifting their head, they would withhold all our food for the day. Once the muster call lasted three hours." Ali, who also spent time in Belantik, recalled severe punishments, even for children. "We would get beaten when we asked for more food, took an extra mug of water to shower, or asked for a blanket for the cold," he told the researchers. "Once, I begged the officer to stop beating a boy who had asked for more bread. I was brought out of the cell to an area that other detainees couldn't see. Then I was not only beaten, I was submerged in a big water tank for the whole night. I tried begging the officer to stop because I had surgery before being detained and my scar was aching."

Every time I stood up from the tank, I was beaten. I was beaten by eight officers at the same time. It was like they were playing foot-

ball, they just kept kicking me. That went on from around 8 p.m. to 3 a.m." Malaysia, like most countries in Southeast Asia, is not a signatory to the UN Convention on Refugees and has no legal framework to process and recognise those fleeing persecution, violence and unrest. Refugees are often detained alongside undocumented migrants and the UNHCR has not been allowed to visit immigration depots since 2019 even as the number of immigration raids has increased. Parliament was told last year that some 11,694 people, including 1,467 children, were being held in its immigration detention centres as of September 2023. Human Rights Watch noted those held had no recourse to judicial review or mechanisms to appeal their detention. "Malaysia's use of prolonged, judicially unsupervised immigration detention violates international human rights law," the report said. — Aljazeera

Moldova warns against Russian meddling

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP): Moldova's national intelligence agency warned against "unprecedented" Russian interference as the country gears up for a referendum on joining the European Union and a presidential election.

The Intelligence and Security Services, or SIS, released a report saying it has gathered data indicating Russia plans to launch vast hybrid attacks against Moldova through 2024-2025 to try to bring the former Soviet republic back under Moscow's influence. Head of the SIS, Alexandru Musteata, said in a press conference that Russia sought to undermine the democratic polling this year in the eastern European country.

"There is information about an attempt to compromise the referendum on European integration, the presidential elections, to denigrate institutions and candi-

dates who will promote the idea of European integration," Musteata said. The report said part of Russia's strategy would be the "extensive use of social networks," such as Telegram and TikTok, to back pro-Moscow political figures, create socio-political and economic crises, encourage anti-government protests, as well as provoke "social clashes to incite inter-ethnic hatred" on top of sprawling disinformation campaigns. Musteata named pro-Russia Moldovan oligarch Ilan Shor as a central figure in Russia's fresh campaign. Shor, the head of the outlawed Russia-friendly Shor Party, was sentenced in absentia to 15 years in jail last year on fraud and money laundering charges. "According to the data, Shor's main task for 2024 is to compromise the results of the (EU) referendum," the SIS head said. "Protests will continue to be used as a tool

to undermine trust in the current government." Moldova, which neighbors Ukraine and Romania, was granted EU candidate status in 2022 and is scheduled to hold a nationwide referendum on joining the 27-nation bloc. The presidential election will follow in the fall. Last week, officials in Moldova's Russia-backed breakaway region of Transnistria appealed to Moscow for protection against economic pressure, as tensions escalated with Moldova's pro-Western government over new customs duties implemented in the New Year. Since Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Moldova's relations with Moscow have soured significantly. Moldova's leaders have routinely accused Russia of conducting campaigns to try to destabilize the country. There was no immediate comment from Russian officials.

The Frontier Post

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National economy, what next on card

ACCORDING to the media, the Federal Government has started homework to initiate talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to seek a \$6 billion bailout package to coup up the forthcoming debt payment crises that are more likely to emerge if these urgent measures are not implemented timely. According to details, newly-elected Prime Minister Shehbaz has directed the Finance Ministry to immediately kick start the procedure for initiating talks with the IMF regarding the Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

Pakistan faces longheld problems of poor fiscal management, irrational decision making, and bad governance that caused a vicious cycle of mass circular debt, economic slowdowns, and low foreign reserves that require frequent injections of foreign loans/ aids from the global lenders and the friendly nations to provide temporary relief to the bed-ridden economy. Historically, every sector from Agriculture to industry, fuel procurement to energy production and distribution, health and education, from business and trade to currency regulation and foreign exchange witnessed degradation and unproductivity throughout the past. The agri sector receives massive subsidies on various accounts but performed below its potential. The Industry became uncompetitive due to high production costs and higher commodities prices. Management and utilization of human capital remained a big challenge for the governments as over 26 million children are currently out of school, high infant mortality rates, and the lack of public health services are persistent issues. Amid such heart-left scenarios, over 200 State Owned Entities (SOEs) further nose downed the crumbling economy with an annual addition of billions of losses on an annual basis.

Historically, Pakistan's economic outlook often sails through these cyclones throughout the year, and the majority of the governments accuse their predecessors of spoiling the country's economy and creating hurdles for the successors but the incumbent rulers reassumed their work from where they left a few months back without blaming the caretakers for any misappropriation and poor performance. Pakistan's current short-term loan program with the IMF will end in April 2024 and the government faces problems in meeting the balance of payments in the midterm. Henceforth, the country and its leaders have no solution to take new loans to pay the previous baggage of the global lenders.

Unfortunately, Pakistani leaders always searched for solutions to the country's economic issues through foreign loans, grants, and assistance from friendly countries on an ad-hoc basis instead of making efforts to tackle those issues through legal and infrastructural reforms, stringent economic measures, and exploitation of domestic resources so the nation comes out of persistent economic frailty on sustainable conditions. Such selfish attitudes and imprudent policies have led the country to the current stage wherein no aspect of our national life presents pride and satisfaction.

At the moment, there is a need for patriotic hard work and sagacity to think out and implement rational policies that benefit the country in the long term. The loss-making State-Owned Entities (SOEs) were a burden on the national exchequer and had always eaten up the public's resources in the past. Those unproductive monsters must be privatized on an urgent basis. The power resources must be diversified to produce cheaper green energy that will not only reduce the production cost of the local industry making it compatible with the global levels along with providing significant relief to the public on account of kitchen heating, transport fares, and overall inflation in the country. The country has no scarcity of resources and talent but lacks patriotism and sincerity in its leadership and bureaucracy, who owe authority, undertake decisions, implement policies, and steer the country through all wax and wane. As the new government has assumed the responsibility, the nation eagerly awaits the tact and credo of its leaders that might bring affluence in their lives or otherwise.

Russia-German face off

RECENTLY, Russian Intelligence leaked an audio call of a German military officer using an unsecured phone line at a Singapore hotel igniting a fresh controversy and irked tension between the Russian Federation and Germany. The leaked call features four high-ranking German air force officers discussing hypothetically how Germany made Taurus long-range cruise missiles could be used by Kyiv against invading Russian forces, which embarrassed the German government and inflamed the tensions between the two countries. Surprisingly, the German government neither questioned the audio leak nor denied the accusations about Germany's alleged provision of lathel cruise missiles to Kyiv that might have grave consequences for Russian troops who otherwise advanced rapidly into Eastern Ukraine in recent weeks.

The war in Ukraine has entered its third year with Russian forces now in a better position on the battlefield with multiple successes on various fronts. Russia has stepped up its defenses to its western borders after Finland and Sweden officially joined the NATO military bloc. Ukraine's war efforts are gradually weakening and Kyiv's troops are sliding back in multiple places due to a scarcity of troops, arms, and ammunition. Unfortunately, the EU assistance package for Ukraine faced staunch opposition from multiple members at the EU Parliament wherein the \$ 60 billion proposed Ukraine aid package of the Biden administration met the same fate in US Congress. Thus, the entire burden shifted on Burlin, which had been the third largest provider of economic and military assistance to Ukraine after the US and the UK. In recent months, Germany has been under tremendous pressure to send Taurus missiles to Ukraine in response to urgent calls from Kyiv, but Chancellor Olaf Scholz has however declined to approve the deliveries, fearing it could draw Germany into the war.

The strategic impact of the Russia-Ukraine war continues to evolve, and its long-term consequences will depend on how the conflict ultimately plays out and the actions of various stakeholders including Russia, Ukraine, the United States, and its allies, which are resolutely stood beside Kiev and adding to the hostility through all possible means. The Ukraine conflict has potential to transition into a nuclear as well as global conflict as war reaches a decisive point. Although Adolf Hitler was died at the end of World War II, yet the world has no scarcity of such characters in the 21st century. The world leaders have the choice to wait for the catastrophe or resolve the issue through talks and diplomacy.

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Gazans need international protection, not just a ceasefire

Osama Al-Sharif

ALMOST five months into Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, the tide has turned. Israel has lost the public relations campaign completely, its "self-defense" operation to uproot Hamas has resulted in the worst humanitarian disaster in decades and it now faces serious charges of committing genocide, as well as war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

Benjamin Netanyahu's capricious and miscalculated misadventure in Gaza has dragged his army more profoundly into a quagmire. There is no honor in what Israel has done in the past five months: the mass killings of women and children, the bombing of hospitals, the targeting of journalists, doctors, medics and academics, and the displacement of more than 2 million people. Now, Gazans face starvation and famine.

In the process, Netanyahu's dirty war has also dragged Israel's closest allies into the mud. The Gaza debacle has triggered a global awakening of the hypocrisy of Western governments and their complicity in the longest colonial occupation of modern times. Now, the Biden administration is trying to salvage a hopeless situation and achieve two impossible goals: save Israel's face in any way it can and fix a dire humanitarian crisis that is getting worse by the hour.

On Sunday, US Vice President Kamala Harris uttered what had for months been a taboo statement for the Biden administration. She called for "an immediate ceasefire" in Gaza. In the most forceful rebuke of Israel's conduct by a US official yet, she said that too many innocent Palestinians have been killed in what has become "a humanitarian catastrophe." She called on Israel to facilitate the flow of aid and take measures to protect civilians.

The proverbial straw that broke the camel's back was last Thursday's massacre, when Israeli soldiers opened fire on thousands of Gazans as they tried to reach UN aid trucks to receive sacks of flour. More than 100 people were killed and at least 700 wounded. UN and aid observers visiting the nearby hospital where most of the injured were taken confirmed that

most of the casualties suffered from bullet wounds.

This was not an isolated incident of Israeli soldiers, tanks, fighter jets or naval ships firing at civilians in Gaza. But the number of those killed and injured was staggering, while Israel also provided contradictory and unconvincing accounts about what happened.

But global denunciations of the bloody incident did little to change Israel's attitude. Three days later, an Israeli strike hit an aid truck in Deir Al-Balah with civilians close by, killing at least nine people. Israel has also continued to blow up entire residential blocks and has done nothing to facilitate the flow of aid, especially to northern Gaza, where about 700,000 people face famine, according to the UN. By Monday, the num-

exchange for letting some of the thousands of Palestinians in Israeli jails go free. But the US hopes that a ceasefire, even if it lasts for only a few weeks, would give it time to do several things.

First, it would work with Egypt and Qatar to facilitate the release of the remaining captives, thus putting pressure on Netanyahu to end his Gaza misadventure, which has harmed Israel and turned worldwide public opinion against it in an unprecedented manner.

Second, it would give Washington time to influence internal Israeli politics and neutralize Netanyahu by encouraging calls for a snap election that would remove him. Harris on Monday met with Israeli war Cabinet member

and about 3 million in the West Bank are in dire need of international protection. A ceasefire in Gaza could collapse at any moment over many excuses and from both sides. The humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza will take years to contain, but it must be tackled robustly and sustainably. Any interruption to the truce will compound an already complicated situation that has not been seen before in any part of the world.

While Israel and its allies will argue that no international peacekeeping force is needed in the West Bank, it will be difficult to oppose such an idea in Gaza. The US and the rest of the world have rejected any notion of Israel reoccupying the Strip. The Palestinian Authority is too weak and unpopular to take over the administration of a devastated Gaza. Only an international peacekeeping force can maintain the peace, facilitate the flow of humanitarian aid and help in the evacuation of thousands of injured and terminally ill people to foreign hospitals. A sustainable truce is needed to rebuild much-needed facilities like hospitals and schools.

UN and NATO peacekeeping forces have a checkered track record. They have been successful in some conflicts and done poorly in others. But we have to look at the glass as being half full and realize that there can no longer be a return to the day before Oct. 7 - for both sides.

So, the US must lead despite its dismal record in pushing for the two-state solution, which will take forever to materialize. While the Palestinians - and Israelis - wait for a just and lasting solution, the people of Gaza do not have that luxury. They need immediate help and they need protection. Tens of thousands of orphaned children need immediate care and, every day, some newborn babies will lack even the most basic medical care.

Gaza will need a massive and probably unprecedented aid bridge when a ceasefire occurs. And once such an aid bridge is launched, it cannot stop. A tentative truce is not the answer, but the permanent presence of a peacekeeping force is. The world, having abandoned the Palestinians for so long, owes this much to the children of Gaza.

Arab News

This is the same US that has supplied Israel with 2,000-pound bombs to drop on the most crowded enclave on the planet. The US is now pushing for a six-week ceasefire to begin before the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan.

ber of Palestinian babies to have died from starvation rose to at least 15. The harrowing image of a starving child, Yazan Al-Kafarna, a 10-year-old with cerebral palsy, who died at Al-Najjar Hospital in Rafah after suffering from malnutrition, was posted all over social media platforms.

In a symbolic and desperate move to address the situation, the US, along with the Jordanian air force, dropped more than 35,000 meals on northern Gaza on Friday, in what President Joe Biden said would be one of many air-drops. The irony of the US dropping food on tens of thousands of hungry civilians caught in a war zone and denied access to aid by America's ally, Israel, was not missed by many commentators. This is the same US that has supplied Israel with 2,000-pound bombs to drop on the most crowded enclave on the planet.

The US is now pushing for a six-week ceasefire to begin before the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan. This deal would see the release of Israeli captives by Hamas in

Benny Gantz, who traveled to Washington against Netanyahu's advice. Gantz, described as a right-of-center soldier turned politician, is leading Netanyahu in the polls and would certainly defeat him if elections were held today. Washington believes Gantz would realize the damage that Netanyahu has inflicted on Israel's ties with its Western partners and seek a way to restore them.

Third, the White House hopes that a ceasefire would alleviate the pressure coming from progressive Democratic voters, including Arab and Muslim Americans, after more than 100,000 Democrats voted "uncommitted" in last week's Michigan primary as a protest against Biden's Gaza position.

Fourth, the Biden administration hopes that a ceasefire deal would appease the US' Arab allies, who have expressed their frustration over Biden's Gaza policy and built up public pressure among their citizens.

But a ceasefire, vital as it is, is not enough to end the war on Gaza. More than 2 million Palestinians in Gaza

What Democrats' 'uncommitted' campaign means for US policy

Kerry Boyd Anderson

DEMOCRATIC voters in Michigan last week sent a message to President Joe Biden's reelection campaign, expressing their deep disapproval of his approach to the war in Gaza. However, it remains unclear what impact their protest might have on US policy.

Michigan is a key swing state in US presidential elections and one of the states that is crucial for Biden to win. The president is elected through the Electoral College system, which is based on votes in states rather than a nationwide popular vote, with electoral results often centered on the outcomes in a few battleground states, such as Michigan. In 2020, Biden won in Michigan, defeating then-President Donald Trump by about 154,000 votes. In 2016, Trump won the state, defeating Hillary Clinton by fewer than 11,000 votes.

Michigan also has a relatively large Arab American community, though they remain a small minority of the state's population. The Arab American community played a major role in organizing an effort to send a message to Biden that he risks losing votes over his strong support for Israel in the face of the devastation in Gaza. Importantly, Arab Americans were not alone and partnered with Muslim Americans, young voters and others. Together, they launched a campaign to vote "uncommitted" in Michigan's Democratic primary.

In the US system, the Republican and Democratic parties choose their presidential candidates through a series of state elections - primaries and caucuses. As the incumbent president, Biden is nearly certain to be the Democratic Party's nominee, though he technically faces some opposition. In Michigan, Marianne Williamson and Dean Phillips were running against him. However, his major opponent was the "uncommitted" movement, which asked voters to demonstrate their commitment by showing up to vote but choosing this option rather than backing Biden or another candidate.

The movement was successful. Some leaders of the campaign had set an initial goal of 10,000 uncommitted votes, arguing that Clinton lost in Michigan by about only 10,000 votes. Therefore, they said, if Biden lost that many due to his Middle East policy, then he would risk losing the state - and thus, potentially, the entire election. Some analysts noted that a goal of 10,000 votes was very low because uncommitted vote totals in the past had sometimes been much larger. However, on election day last week, more than 100,000 voters selected "uncommitted" on the ballot, putting the campaign at 13 percent of the vote, far more than Williamson or Phillips received.

Biden still received more than 80 percent of the vote, but the uncommitted campaign received enough votes to send two delegates to the Democratic National Convention in August, giving it a very small voice

but at least some representation.

More importantly, the campaign clearly demonstrated that Biden's policy toward Israel is weakening his chances in Michigan. If 100,000 voters actually choose not to vote for Biden in the presidential election - even if they do not vote for his opponent - that alone would risk a defeat in Michigan for the president. Although it is likely that some of those voters would choose Biden when facing Trump as the only viable alternative, the uncommitted campaign sent a clear message that Biden risks losing badly needed votes.

However, it is unclear whether the Michigan primary outcome will have broader electoral impacts or will help to change US foreign policy. The uncommitted movement can place more pressure on Biden if it expands to other states, but there are multiple obstacles. Many states do not have an "uncommitted" option on the ballot, which could make similar campaigns difficult. Other states also lack the type of concentrated numbers of Arab Americans that exist in Michigan. While many other social justice groups and young voters increasingly share Arab Americans' outrage over the war in Gaza, they do not all have the same capacity to organize around the war as a single issue in an election.

The Biden campaign is well aware of many Democrats' growing concerns about Israel's approach to the war and ongoing US support. But Biden's personal support for Israel remains strong. His administration has taken only a few, small steps to try to demonstrate that it hears concerns, but sanctioning a few Israeli settlers and acknowledging that Palestinian lives matter look incredibly insufficient given the extreme suffering in Gaza.

Biden's campaign officials have tried to express sympathy for the pain that those worried about Gaza feel but, without openly saying it, effectively suggested that Biden does not intend to change his policy. Rather, campaign representatives said that voters should remember that Trump is their only other choice and that Trump's calls for a Muslim travel ban and positions on issues like climate change and healthcare should be priority concerns for voters. However, on Friday, Biden authorized the US military to start airdrops of humanitarian aid into Gaza - the biggest policy change he has made since the current war started in October. He also expressed his strongest criticism of Israel so far, calling on it to allow more aid into the Strip.

It is unclear what role the uncommitted vote in Michigan played in pressuring Biden to more actively ensure that aid reaches Palestinians. Biden administration officials have clearly grown frustrated with the Israeli government, which might matter as much or more than domestic political pressures. Nonetheless, the uncommitted vote in Michigan is one factor battering against the long-standing wall of the country's unconditional support for Israel, which is starting to show cracks.

Western media's double standard in defense budgets

Lan Shunzheng

IT'S no surprise that Tuesday's announcement of a 7.2 percent increase in Chinese military spending has once again dominated global headlines.

Many Western media outlets have chosen to focus on this growth, often sensationalizing the "China threat" or potential regional conflicts. However, it's quite absurd for these reports to consistently overlook the fact that China's increased military budget aligns with its expanding national strength, and China just contributes a lot to global peace.

Talking about military budgets and the threat to global peace and security, the US Congress approved a staggering defense budget of \$886 billion for 2024. The US' 2024 defense budget accounts for about 40 percent of the total global

defense spending, hitting a new high. The US' humongous defense budget makes it clear that it is the biggest cause of global instability.

The US has been waging wars since even before its founding. The white settlers first waged wars and massacred Native Americans and Mexicans, annexing large swathes of Mexican territory. They then annexed Hawaii. After World War II, the US began using its advantages in military, economic, scientific and technological, and cultural and other fields, to launch (or trigger) wars against other countries on the pretext of spreading democracy and protecting human rights. From the end of World War II in 1945 to 2001, the world has seen 248 armed conflicts, with the US initiating 201 of them, including the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the Gulf

War. Since 2001, the US has launched wars against Afghanistan and Iraq, and toppled the governments there in the name of fighting global terrorism, and strengthened its military bases in countries across the world.

The motive behind the US' military adventurism is to maintain its global hegemony and prevent the peaceful rise of any country that doesn't toe its line. Far from bringing peace to the world, the US' military actions have raised tensions and caused instability in some regions, with the common people suffering the most.

Take the Iraq War for example. The US invaded Iraq without the authorization of the United Nations, and also on trumped-up charges. The US media glorified the Iraq War as the most

important US project to promote democracy and freedom, and protect human rights since the Marshall Plan, and one of the grandest things the US has attempted abroad.

The fact, however, is that between 200,000 and 250,000 civilians have been killed in Iraq, with US troops directly killing about 16,000 of them. Not to mention the war left more than 1 million people homeless. Equally tragically, US weapons such as depleted uranium bombs have caused radioactive contamination in Iraq which would threaten lives for decades. Not for nothing do Iraqis say that US-style "democracy is a lie" that brought destruction, illiteracy, backwardness, death and danger to Iraq.

As for Afghanistan, the US, even after 20 years of occupation, could not

improve things in any field. In fact, the situation in Afghanistan is worse than what it was before the US invaded the country.

Behind the US' beligerence is the military-industrial complex, which is a network of the military, arms dealers and politicians. It is a huge interest group that links the US war machine with the economic system, and mainly comprises military institutions, military industries, and cliques of Congress members, defense research institutions and lobby groups.

The US is also the world's largest arms exporter, accounting for more than one-third of global arms exports, from which the US military-industrial complex makes a big fortune. Brown University's Cost of War research project showed that since the launch of the Afghan War in 2001,

the Pentagon has spent \$14 trillion, of which one-third to half has gone to military contractors.

Moreover, after the Russia-Ukraine conflict broke out, the US, instead of mediating between the two sides to help end the fighting, sent a huge cache of weapons and military equipment to Ukraine.

Worse, more than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed and over 70,000 wounded in the Gaza Strip since Israel's war on Hamas began nearly five months ago, and the US has shipped more than 10,000 tons of armaments on 24 cargo planes and 20 ships to Israel. Such actions have filled the pockets of major US military enterprises at the cost of regional peace and stability, and aggravated the suffering of the people in the region, mainly Palestinians.

What will the US election mean for its foreign policy?

RECENT developments in the primary elections suggest a disquieting familiarity for American citizens as they contemplate the impending clash between incumbent Democratic President Joe Biden and former Republican President Donald Trump. The prevailing sentiment among observers is one of déjà vu, reminiscent of the contentious show-down witnessed in the 2020 election. Notwithstanding any unforeseen developments, the prevailing trajectory suggests a repeat of the previous experience.

Discernible patterns have emerged throughout the primary elections, reinforcing the likelihood of a Biden-Trump rematch. This anticipated repetition prompts reflection on the electorate's desire for novelty and fresh perspectives. Despite aspirations for change, the political landscape appears entrenched in familiar faces and established narratives.

An underlying sentiment among the populace is a craving for new, youthful leadership - a sentiment not readily fulfilled by the prevailing contenders. As citizens yearn for a departure from the status quo, the prospect of another electoral showdown between Biden and Trump underscores the endurance of entrenched political dynamics over aspirations for renewal.

While domestic concerns such as economic inflation, healthcare and immigration understandably dominate the discourse among American citizens, the international community eagerly awaits insights into the future direction of US foreign policy. Eyes worldwide are fixed on the candidates' nominations,

eagerly anticipating their positions on global issues as articulated in debates and campaign remarks.

The significance of America's foreign policy cannot be overstated. Its decisions and actions reverberate across the globe, impacting economies, security and diplomatic relations. As such, the world scrutinizes the presidential contenders, seeking clues and assurances regarding the trajectory of US engagement with the international community.

Understanding the nuances of US foreign policy is paramount for nations and leaders navigating an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape. The rhetoric and policies espoused by the presidential hopefuls have implications for diplomatic relations, strategic alliances and shared global objectives. As the presidential race unfolds, the international community remains attuned to the nuances of each candidate's foreign policy platform. The stakes are high and the world watches with anticipation, knowing that the outcome of America's presidential election will reverberate far beyond its borders.

The divergent approaches to foreign policy of Biden and Trump underscore significant disparities in how they address critical global issues. These differences reflect nuanced perspectives on international relations and strategic priorities, shaping the course of action taken by their administrations.

Each candidate's attitude to the Ukraine conflict and Washington's military aid to Kyiv reveals their differing foreign policy strategies. Biden prioritizes robust support to counter Russian influence.

On multiple occasions on the

Dalia Al-Qqidi

campaign trail, meanwhile, Trump has expressed his support for Russia intervening in NATO member states that fall short of their defense spending requirements. He has disregarded the alliance's collective defense clause, suggesting that he would not automatically defend nations that fail to contribute financially. Trump also attributed improvements in NATO's financial situation to his presidency.

Biden promptly responded to this narrative by expressing his concern over Trump's assertion regarding Russia, characterizing it as alarming and dangerous. He said that Trump's statements could empower Russian President Vladimir Putin to perpetuate further conflict and violence, mainly targeting Ukraine, while also extending the threat to Poland and the Baltic states. Biden denounced such prospects as deeply troubling.

At last month's Conservative Political Action Conference gathering, Trump conveyed a stance unsympathetic to Palestinians in the context of Israel's war on Gaza, given his recognition of the threat posed by radical Islamist groups such as Hamas. Consequently, he would not be anticipated to advocate for pressure on Israel to agree to a ceasefire.

Trump also underscored Israel's perceived safety during his tenure in the White House, attributing this to his administration's policies. He specifically highlighted Iran's support of Hamas and asserted that his approach toward Tehran had diminished its ability to support such proxies. "Iran was broke, and they had no money for Hamas, and

they had no money for Hezbollah. They had no money for anything," Trump told CPAC attendees.

If Trump secures victory in November, he is likely to escalate America's involvement in the Middle East significantly. His administration would likely engage with numerous Arab countries, alongside Israel, to combat extremism and counter Iranian influence in the region. Furthermore, Trump's approach toward Iraq suggests a willingness to target senior leaders within the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, particularly in response to threats against American forces in the area. The possibility of a scenario akin to the targeted killing of Maj. Gen. Qassem Soleimani cannot be discounted.

In regard to China, tensions with Washington escalated during Trump's first term, particularly concerning trade matters. His decision to impose tariffs on Chinese goods in 2018 and 2019 exacerbated these tensions.

While the Biden administration has not rescinded these tariffs, it has implemented additional restrictions. The former president has promised his supporters further tariffs on Beijing, potentially surpassing 60 percent. Regardless of the occupant of the White House, it appears improbable that the relationship between the world's two largest commercial centers will undergo substantial change. In the case of Biden, continuity is anticipated in his policy approach, with no substantial deviations expected. Although there may be some alterations to his Cabinet composition, these adjustments are projected to exert minimal influence on the overarching policy trajectory.

China ex-foreign minister: Spy or state secret keeper?

Natalie Liu

WHEN China opened its annual National People's Congress in Beijing on Tuesday, one rising star from last year's gathering was absent: former foreign minister Qin Gang. Ahead of this year's meetings, China's state media announced that Qin had resigned as an NPC delegate. That announcement, however, did little to unify opinion as to why Qin has not been seen in public since late June of last year and why he was abruptly removed from office seven months after he started.

Reports citing anonymous and connected sources have suggested that his disappearance could be linked to espionage and that perhaps he has died or committed suicide. Some have focused on an alleged romantic relationship he had with a former Chinese TV program host Fu Xiaotian, who also has not been seen in public since she posted a message on Twitter last April while en route to unspecified destination.

Dennis Wilder, a former US national security official, told VOA: "Try to get a Chinese to say what the story is on Qin Gang, you won't get it. Because they can't talk about it, because the truth is, it is espionage." Others disagree, including Nigel Inkster, former head of operations and intelligence at the British Secret Intelligence Service, also known as the MI6. News of Qin's resignation confirmed reports Inkster had heard "a couple of months ago" that Qin was still alive, and that his case "would be settled soon," Inkster told VOA in a phone interview from London.

In a report in early December, online media news outlet Politico quoted "several people with access to high-level Chinese officials" who said Qin, along with several other top officers in China's People's Liberation Army, had been compromised by Western intelligence. A February 12 column published in The Washington Post mentioned rumors that Qin was a Russian asset. "They can't both be true, can they?" Inkster said. June Teufel Dreyer, an American political scientist and China specialist, also doubts Qin's downfall was a result of espionage. "What would be his motive?" she said. "What could foreign intelligence services offer him that he didn't already have?"

That said, an extramarital affair and fathering a child outside of marriage could have made Qin vulnerable to foreign powers' blackmail, Dreyer added. Inkster agrees. "If it was the Russians [who compromised Qin], it's probably because they've got something on him," he said. Both analysts see more

questions surrounding Fu, Qin's rumored romantic partner. In July 2023, as Qin's disappearance seized worldwide attention, interest was also growing in an April 10 post on X by Fu. The post included a picture of her holding a baby on board an airplane and a caption saying she had been on the same plane a year earlier for a flight to Washington, where she interviewed Qin.

Last time flying alone with this aircraft was from LA to DC for a work visit, and that both happily and sadly turned to be the very last interview I did with Talk with World Leaders. At first, it wasn't clear whether the airplane featured prominently in her post was a commercial or private jet. But later photos Fu posted on social media confirmed that it was a private jet.

China's foreign minister #QinGang was just removed after disappearing from public view for a month. TV reporter #FuXiaotian has also vanished amid rumors of an affair with Qin. According to Federal Aviation Administration records, the Gulfstream G650ER N333GW has Rolls-Royce engines and 22 seats. Its current owner is listed as Salt Lake City-based Bank of Utah Trustee. An X user with the handle itweetcatsndogs also found linkage between the jet and Sino Jet, a Beijing and Hong Kong-based aircraft leasing and operating company. Online flight tracking records show that the jet flew from Los Angeles, California, and landed in Beijing on April 11 before traveling on to Hong Kong.

Dreyer told VOA that she finds it "definitely unusual" for Fu to be flown in a private jet both for work when she interviewed Qin, and when she and her son flew back to Beijing and/or Hong Kong last April. "If Ms. Fu isn't independently wealthy, then someone, or some people, are subsidizing her," Dreyer said, noting that Fu's connections might be above Qin's pay grade. "There's definitely something fishy about this story," she told VOA.

In an investigative report last September, CNN said it had spoken to people who knew Fu and they said Fu's mother was a teacher in her hometown, Chongqing, while her father worked in a managerial position at a production facility. Experts interviewed by CNN also raised questions about Fu's identity as it came to light that the coastal mansion where Fu stayed in Los Angeles was listed for rent at \$55,000 a month in 2021. In her Weibo posts, Fu admitted to being lonely in spite of being surrounded by luxury, and told her followers that she began taking antidepressants in January

2023, posting herself holding bottles of the prescribed drug on March 14, 2023, less than a month before she flew out of L.A. In 2016 - years before Qin's disappearance - Fu had made headlines in the U.K. for making a large donation to Cambridge University. "I have no idea what happened there, I can't explain it," admitted Inkster, who now advises the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies on China and directs geostrategic and intelligence-related analysis at Enodo Economics.

"But it's quite clear that somebody else was putting up the funding for that. There's no way Fu Xiaotian herself could have done it," Inkster said. Something else that puzzles observers is the fact that Cambridge University's Churchill College went out of its way to name a garden after Fu. The college's website says that was done in connection with "a series of generous gifts" Fu pledged in 2016. Those pledges happened around the time that China pledged significant investments to Britain during Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping's state visit to the country in October 2015. Xi's wife, Peng Liyuan, accompanied Xi on that trip. One other interesting twist. On February 27, the same day China announced Qin's resignation from the NPC, state media unveiled an amended Law on Guarding State Secrets. According to Chinese media reports, the revisions were prompted by pressure from certain NPC Standing Committee members who were concerned about individuals who may stand to lose "rights and benefits."

Article 43 now stipulates that "for those with knowledge of state secrets whose lawful rights and benefits are impacted due to reasons that have to do with the guarding of state secrets, they ought to be accorded appropriate rank and benefits, or be compensated accordingly, by the state." Meanwhile, Article 21 of the law says that the scope of knowledge of state secrets ought to be kept "within the smallest possible circle." Further, "Whenever possible, the information ought to be kept to the single designated individual."

Dreyer, who teaches at the University of Miami in Florida, finds the timing of Qin's resignation and this special clause's coming into being "cause for suspicion," as she put it, wondering if those clauses might be connected to Qin's case, even in the absence of direct reference. "Except for when Mao [Zedong] named Lin Biao [as his successor in the official party constitution], no one has ever been named" in legislation, she said.

VOA

Supreme Court just erased part of Constitution

David French

AS of Monday, March 4, 2024, Section 3 of the 14th Amendment of the Constitution is essentially a dead letter, at least as it applies to candidates for federal office. Under the US Supreme Court's ruling that reversed the Colorado Supreme Court's decision striking Donald Trump from the state's primary ballot, even insurrectionists who've violated their previous oath of office can hold federal office, unless and until Congress passes specific legislation to enforce Section 3.

In the aftermath of the oral argument last month, legal observers knew with near-certainty that the Supreme Court was unlikely to apply Section 3 to Trump. None of the justices seemed willing to uphold the Colorado court's ruling, and only Justice Sonia Sotomayor gave any meaningful indication that she might dissent. The only real question remaining was the reasoning for the court's decision. Would the ruling be broad or narrow? A narrow ruling for Trump might have held, for example, that Colorado didn't provide him with enough due process when it determined that Section 3 applied. Or the court could have held that Trump, as president, was not an "officer of the United States" within the meaning of the section. Such a ruling would have kept Trump on the ballot, but it would also have kept Section 3 viable to block insurrectionists from the House or Senate and from all other federal offices.

A somewhat broader ruling

might have held that Trump did not engage in insurrection or rebellion or provide aid and comfort to the enemies of the Constitution. Such a ruling would have sharply limited Section 3 to apply almost exclusively to Civil War-style conflicts, an outcome at odds with the text and original public meaning of the section. It's worth noting that, by not taking this path, the court did not exonerate Trump from participating in an insurrection. But instead of any of these options, the court went with arguably the broadest reasoning available: that Section 3 isn't self-executing, and thus has no force or effect in the absence of congressional action. This argument is rooted in Section 5 of the amendment, which states that "Congress shall have power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article."

But Section 5, on its face, does not give Congress exclusive power to enforce the amendment. As Justices Elena Kagan, Sotomayor and Ketanji Brown Jackson pointed out in their own separate concurring opinion, "All the Reconstruction amendments (including the due process and equal protection guarantees and prohibition of slavery) 'are self-executing,' meaning that they do not depend on legislation." While Congress may pass legislation to help enforce the 14th Amendment, it is not required to do so, and the 14th Amendment still binds federal, state and local governments even if Congress

refuses to act. But now Section 3 is different from other sections of the amendment. It requires federal legislation to enforce its terms, at least as applied to candidates for federal office. Through inaction alone, Congress can effectively erase part of the 14th Amendment.

It's extremely difficult to square this ruling with the text of Section 3. The language is clearly mandatory. The first words are "No person shall be" a member of Congress or a state or federal officer if that person has engaged in insurrection or rebellion or provided aid or comfort to the enemies of the Constitution. The section then says, "But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each house, remove such disability."

In other words, the Constitution imposes the disability, and only a supermajority of Congress can remove it. But under the Supreme Court's reasoning, the meaning is inverted: The Constitution merely allows Congress to impose the disability, and if Congress chooses not to enact legislation enforcing the section, then the disability does not exist. The Supreme Court has effectively replaced a very high bar for allowing insurrectionists into federal office - a supermajority vote by Congress - with the lowest bar imaginable: congressional inaction.

As Kagan, Sotomayor and Jackson point out, this approach is also inconsistent with the constitutional approach to other

qualifications for the presidency. We can bar individuals from holding office who are under the age limit or who don't meet the relevant citizenship requirement without congressional enforcement legislation. We can enforce the two-term presidential term limit without congressional enforcement legislation. Section 3 now stands apart not only from the rest of the 14th Amendment, but also from the other constitutional requirements for the presidency. In one important respect, the court's ruling on Monday is worse and more consequential than the Senate's decision to acquit Trump after his Jan. 6 impeachment trial in 2021. Impeachment is entirely a political process, and the actions of one Senate have no bearing on the actions of future Senates. But a Supreme Court ruling has immense precedential power. The court's decision is now the law.

It would be clearly preferable if Congress were to pass enforcement legislation that established explicit procedures for resolving disputes under Section 3, including setting the burden of proof and creating timetables and deadlines for filing challenges and hearing appeals. Establishing a uniform process is better than living with a patchwork of state proceedings. But the fact that Congress has not acted should not effectively erase the words from the constitutional page. Chaotic enforcement of the Constitution may be suboptimal. But it's far better than not enforcing the Constitution at all.

The New York Times

I was punished under Espionage Act. Why wasn't Joe Biden?

Daniel Hale

IN February, I was released from federal prison, having served 33 months for a violation of the Espionage Act, after I disclosed classified information detailing what I saw as the high moral cost of America's drone assassination program. Before having time to adjust to the world beyond concrete walls, I was struck by the news of Special Counsel Robert Hur's report [PDF] wherein he lays out the reasons he decided not to charge President Joe Biden for alleged violations of the same law.

I am always encouraged to hear whenever the Justice Department decides against using the Espionage Act. By the time the ink of the 1917 law had dried, it was already being used to silence voices of dissent across the country. Thousands were rounded up and summarily convicted for their opposition to America's involvement in the bloodiest conflict in human history at the time.

While some of the worst aspects of the law have since been amended, the Espionage Act remains the premier criminal statute for prosecuting government sources who rely upon the press to expose secret government abuses to the public. The decision by Justice Department officials to go after government whistleblowers with the Espionage Act has been a part of a concerted effort to signal clear-

ly that the next person who dares speak with a reporter could find themselves facing decades of incarceration.

After reading Special Counsel Hur's report, I was curious to find the similarities between my case and that of the investigation into the president. According to the report, President Biden kept classified information outside of a secure facility at his home and office - as did I. The president later spoke with a reporter about the classified information he retained - again, as did I.

Both President Biden and I expressed to our respective reporters the concerns we had about official US policy - his about the failed 2009 surge in Afghanistan (as vice president) and mine about the consequences of that policy. So why the decision to prosecute one and not the other?

According to Hur, the president would have been seen as too sympathetic to convince a jury of fault in this case. That Hur believes Biden is a well-meaning individual who did not intend any harm by his actions is a good reason for not charging him. Now contrast that with what the government said about me at my sentencing, accusing me of endangering the public and likening me to a heroin dealer. I was portrayed not as someone with good intentions, but as

someone who tried to "ingratiate himself with reporters" for the sake of notoriety, as opposed to acting in the public interest.

Hur goes on to cleverly dodge the matter of intent where the Espionage Act is concerned. Counterintuitively, the law does not require proof of intent to harm the United States - only evidence that the unauthorised possessor of national defence information knowingly retains it and wilfully communicates it to someone not entitled to receive it. Prosecutors usually prove this by pointing to the stacks of nondisclosure agreements every clearance holder must sign in order to remain employed. Being elected, Biden might never have had to sign such an agreement, but - his degree of sympathy aside - it would not have taken much to prove that he knew the disclosure of classified information to be unlawful.

Nevertheless, Biden is let off the hook because he did not mean any harm. In contrast, the government's pre-trial motions in my case argued that I not be allowed to present evidence of what it called my "good motives". Afraid my motives might make me appear too sympathetic to a jury, I - like every other whistleblower before me - was rendered effectively defenceless because of a legal technicality in the way the law is

written. Given no other choice, I was forced to plead out to avert a costly, unwinnable trial.

All told, the guilt I professed for wilfully delivering national defence information to a journalist was nothing compared to the immense shame I felt for wilfully participating in the drone programme. In 2021, scarcely weeks after I was sentenced to federal prison, Zemari Ahmadi and nine members of his family, most of them small children, were the victims of a mistaken US drone strike. The Pentagon called it a "righteous strike" before the truth forced them to quietly back away and conduct an internal investigation in which it found no one to be at fault for the innocent lives that were taken. To this day, I am the only person to have worked in the drone programme to have been held responsible. Not for my role in it, but for my effort to reveal the deadly truth of it to the public with the help of a journalist.

I am sincerely glad President Biden was able to receive what so many others in the crosshairs of the Espionage Act have been denied - the benefit of the doubt. But if Joe Biden truly wishes to convey the kind of ideals that helped secure his presidency in the first place, he would utilise his power as president to pardon the whistleblowers and cease the global war on terror policy of "targeted" killing.

Aljazeera

No willingness in region to join Philippines' games

Li Yang

THE Philippines on Tuesday accused the China Coast Guard of carrying out "dangerous maneuvers" that led to a collision between one of its coast guard ships and a Chinese vessel. Philippine Coast Guard spokesperson Jay Tarriela said in a social media post: "Their reckless and illegal actions led to a collision", which caused "minor structural damage" to the Philippine vessel.

The CCG issued a brief statement on the same day regarding the incident saying that it took "necessary measures" to drive the Philippine vessel out of Chinese waters in accordance with the law, indicating the Philippine spokesperson had concealed some crucial details. Even the video clips Manila released clearly show that it is the Philippine vessel that took the initiative to make contact with the Chinese ship.

What Tarriela didn't say is that the mission the Philippine vessel was engaged in was intended to resupply the Philippine troops stationed in a World War II-era warship the Philippines intentionally and illegally grounded on China's Ren'ai Reef in 1999, and whether the materials to be supplied to them contained building materials that can be used to shore up the already battered ship, which the Chinese side strictly opposes.

After the Philippine ship collapses in the foreseeable future, the Philippine

troops will have to withdraw from the Chinese reef that they are squatting on. It is Washington that has incited Manila to take advantage of the Philippines' territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea, to try and muddy the otherwise peaceful waters for the US' narrow ends.

Beijing will by no means allow the Philippines to turn the old ship into a permanent foothold on China's reef. That it has given a green light to Manila delivering life supplies to its troops on that ship for nearly three decades is out of humanity and the consideration that the dispute should not be allowed to define the whole of Sino-Philippine relations and it should be settled through negotiations.

The Ferdinand Marcos Jr government of the Philippines is well aware of the ugly role it has been playing at the behest of the US. That its call for other regional countries to join the Philippines to do the same has met with a cold shoulder demonstrates that none of its neighbors wants to involve itself in the bloc confrontation sought by Washington, as well as their common view that Manila's moves are destabilizing the region.

The latest sign of regional countries' aversion toward Manila's solicitations is the Malaysian leader's remarks on Monday. Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said during the Association

of Southeast Asian Nations Summit in the Australian city of Melbourne: "So while we remain... an important friend to the United States and Europe and here in Australia, they should not preclude us from being friendly to one of our important neighbors, precisely China."

"We are an independent nation, we are fiercely independent, we do not want to be dictated to by any force," Anwar said. "If they have problems with China, they should not impose it upon us. We do not have a problem with China." That represents a common voice of the region and highlights the pressure being applied by the US and its allies on regional nations to take their side in their strategic rivalry with Beijing, as well as how the Marcos government has isolated the Philippines from the ASEAN family on the issue.

Considering the Philippines urged regional neighbors in the same meeting on Monday to stand together more strongly in upholding the "rule of law" in the South China Sea, Anwar's admonishing was apparently not only intended for Western ears. The other ASEAN member states should be wary of Manila advancing the US' agenda in the region at the cost of the organization's solidarity, which, if unchecked, will shatter ASEAN's "central role" in the region and make the organization another pawn of the US.

The China Daily



Governor SBP inaugurates SAARCFINANCE seminar

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Mr. Jameel Ahmad delivered the inaugural speech at the SAARCFINANCE Seminar on the 'Potential Role of Big Data in Economic Policy.' The event, held in Islamabad, brought together distinguished delegates, subject matter experts, and esteemed speakers from the SAARC region to discuss the impact and implications of Big Data in shaping economic policies.

Governor SBP emphasized that the unprecedented volume of data generated by digital devices underscore the potential of effective data utilization in contributing to sustained economic growth, societal welfare, poverty reduction, and improved living standards across the diverse SAARC region.

During his speech, Mr. Ahmad shed light on the growing role of Big Data in central banking, financial inclusion, and how the SBP is incorporating Big Data analysis in policymaking.

He also shared specific examples of how the central bank uses Big Data analytics for economic analysis, leveraging satellite imagery data, and harnessing the power of machine learning algorithms for fraud detection and prevention.

Governor SBP also highlighted the legal and regulatory challenges related to privacy and confidentiality.

He called for strong data protection laws and underscored the importance of addressing the current costs associated with technological infrastructure and skilled human resources.

Governor SBP called upon SAARC member nations to collaborate in building a data-driven ethos in the region, ensuring inclusive benefits and responsive policies.

He expressed optimism that multilateral and regional economic bodies, such as SAARC, could play a crucial role in setting industry standards and regulatory best practices for the adoption of Big Data analytics.

The seminar featured distinguished policy and market experts from reputable organizations such as International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, International Finance Corporation (IFC), Arab Monetary Fund (BUNA), Meta, Google, and the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

The seminar also featured keynote speeches by Dr. Naeem Uz Zafar, Chief Statistician, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), Mr. Matthew Sal, Digital Finance Expert, International Finance Corporation (IFC), Dr. Ishart Hussain, Ex-Governor SBP and other renowned public policy experts.

The speakers discussed opportunities, recent experiences, and potential use cases of Big Data in Pakistan and the SAARC Region.

Team from Pakistan wins Laurels at Model UN competition in Greece



F.P. Report

KARACHI: A team of students from the Bay View Academy Karachi competed at the Platon School Model United Nations (PSMUN) 2024 in Athens, Greece from the 1st to 3rd March 2024. They were led

by Ms. Manizah Zainli, Ms. Tahira Abdul Rehman and Mr. Umer Sharfuddin, their communications trainer.

The Platon School, established in Athens in 1969, is one of the best I.B., IGCSE and Greek standard schools in Greece. It has been hosting its signature

Model UN competition for the past 12 years. This year's competition hosted over 750 students from all across the world, including teams from Belgium, the GCC, South Africa, and USA.

After three days of intense debate, the Bay

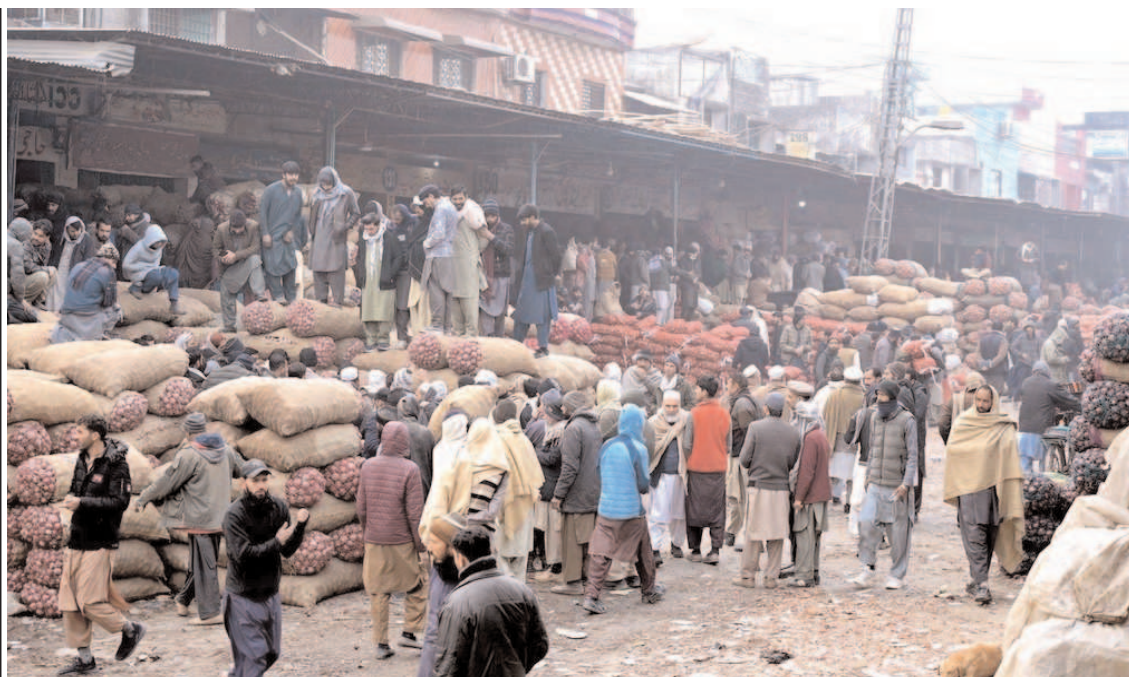
View Academy team won 2 awards in 9 debate committees, becoming the only team from Pakistan to win this year.

During their stay in Athens, the team called on Pakistan's ambassador to Greece, His Excellency Mr. Aamar Aftab Qureshi, at the ambassador's residence.

Ambassador Qureshi is a seasoned diplomat who joined the Foreign Service of Pakistan in 1994.

With assignments abroad in Kabul, Stockholm and Geneva, he also served as Consul General in Manchester, UK and became Pakistan's ambassador to Greece last year.

Students had a very engaging session with Ambassador Qureshi on the role of diplomacy in projecting Pakistan's image, bilateral ties between our two countries and role students can play in the future of the country.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people purchasing onion at vegetable and fruits market.

Secretary review uplift works

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Secretary Housing and Works Shahzad Khan Bangash and Director General Captain (R) Zafar Iqbal Federal Government Employees Housing Authority on Wednesday reviewed the development works of Sector G14 Markaz and Sector F-14/F-15 and planted commemorative saplings in Sector G14 Markaz.

Director General Housing Authority Captain Retd Zafar Iqbal and Chief Engineer Imtiaz ul Haq Khattak briefed about the infrastructure of the projects. On this occasion, the project directors informed the Secretary Housing and Works Shahzad Khan Bangash about the current position of the sectors.

Secretary Housing and Works appreciated the efforts of Director General FGEHA in Sector G14 Markaz and Sector F-14/F-15 of the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority and He also advised the officers to complete the projects as soon as possible and provide all facilities to the allottees and investors.

Bank AL Habib declares 50% final cash Dividend

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The Annual General Meeting of Bank AL Habib Limited was held at Bank's premises located at 128-C, Old Bahawalpur Road, Multan on Wednesday.

The shareholders approved the Annual Accounts for the year ended December 31, 2023, along with payment of 50% final cash Dividend. This final Dividend is in addition to 90% Interim Cash Dividends paid earlier, thus, making a total of 140% i.e. Rs.14.00 per share.

Gold rates increased

ISLAMABAD (APP): The price of per tola 24 karat gold increased by Rs1,500 and was sold at Rs225,400 on Wednesday compared to its sale at Rs 223,900 on the last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 1,286 to Rs193,244 from Rs 191,958 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs177,140 from Rs 175,962 the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten-gram silver remained constant at Rs 2,600 and Rs 2,229.08 respectively.

100-index of PSX loses 69 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Wednesday lost 69.42 points, a negative change of 0.11 percent, closing at 65,656.62 points against 65,726.04 points the previous trading day.

A total of 419,737,124 shares valuing Rs18,296 billion were traded during the day as compared to 396,598,408 shares valuing Rs16,591 billion the last day.

Some 354 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 163 of them recorded gains and 172 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 19 remained unchanged.

The three top trading companies were Nenergyco PK with 30,683,511 shares at Rs 4.63 per share, PIAC(A) with 28,092,000 shares with 14.51 per share and Pak Refinery with

28,036,399 shares at Rs 28.52 per share.

Nestle Pakistan Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 522.50 per share price, closing at Rs 8,200.00, whereas the runner-up was Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited with a Rs 400.00 rise in its per share price to Rs.21,500.00.

Mari Petroleum Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 53.56 per share closing at Rs 2,431.67, followed by Pakistan Hotels Developers Limited with Rs 39.67 decline to close at Rs 489.33.

Rupee sheds 04 paise against dollar

The Rupee on Wednesday weakened by 04 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs 279.35 against the previous day's

closing of Rs 279.31.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.2 and Rs 282.1, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 32 paise to close at Rs 303.40 against the last day's closing of Rs 303.08, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen gained 01 paise to close at Rs186, whereas an increase of 93 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 355.05 compared to the last closing of Rs 354.12.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 01 paise each to close at Rs 76.05 and Rs 74.48 respectively.

BKIAP hold ramp safety session and FOD walk



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Peshawar's Bacha Khan International Airport (BKIA) recently organized a Ramp Safety Awareness Session and Foreign Object Debris (FOD) Walk.

The event saw active

participation from PCAA officers, Airport Security Force (ASF), Airlines, and Ground Handling Agencies (GHAs) officials.

The main objective of the session and walk was to raise awareness and promote vigilance regarding ramp safety protocols and

the prevention of foreign object debris (FOD) hazards within the airport premises.

It is anticipated that the knowledge acquired during this event will play a significant role in improving safety measures and operational efficiency at the airport.

Services' exports earn \$4.44 billion in 7 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned \$4,447.97 million by exporting various services during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (2023-24), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The export of services, however, witnessed a decline of 2.42 percent when compared to the exports of \$4,558.41 million during the same period last year.

The services' imports into the country increased by 28.76 percent, going up from \$4,790.38 million last year to \$6,168.13 million during the first seven months of the current fiscal year.

Based on the figures,

the services' trade deficit widened by 641.56 percent during the period under review, going up from \$231.97 million last year to \$1,720.16 million this year.

Meanwhile, on a year-over-year (YoY) basis, the services' exports from the country decreased by 1.47 percent, going from \$688.10 million in January 2023 to \$677.96 million in January 2024.

The imports went up by 53.09 percent, growing from \$649.96 million to \$995.04 million, according to PBS data.

On a month-to-month (MoM) basis, service exports decreased by 7.25 percent in January 2024 when compared to exports

of \$730.99 million in December 2023.

The imports on a MoM basis increased by 15.84 percent during the month under review when compared to imports of \$859.00 million in November 2023.

Meanwhile, merchandise exports from July-February (2023-24) increased by 14.2 percent and were recorded at \$20.341 billion compared to the exports of \$17.815 billion during the same period of the last year.

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

LIPTON Teas announces strategic partnership with Salesflo

F.P. Report

KARACHI: LIPTON Teas & Infusions Pakistan has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Salesflo, a leading provider of Value Chain Automation solutions, to strengthen and expand its distribution network.

This collaboration marks a significant step towards enhancing LIPTON's Distribution Excellence and creating greater value for consumers.

Farheen Salman, President BSPAN & GM Pakistan, expressed enthusiasm about this partnership, stating, "This strategic alliance with Salesflo is a pivotal move for us in increasing market penetration and ensuring our products are readily accessible to consumers. We are committed to delivering quality tea experiences, and this collaboration aligns perfectly with our goal of being at arm's reach for our consumers."

Salesflo, known for its groundbreaking B2B SaaS solutions, is honored to work with LIPTON Teas & Infusions.

Sharoon Saleem, Co-founder of Salesflo, commented, "Collaborating with the world's largest and only international tea company in Pakistan is a testament to our commitment to excellence."

LIPTON Teas and Infusions, with their rich heritage and global presence, perfectly comple-

ments our mission to fuel enterprise growth through our innovative solutions."

This collaboration between LIPTON Teas & Infusions Pakistan and Salesflo exemplifies a shared commitment to excellence, innovation, and delivering exceptional products to consumers in Pakistan.

Together, they aim to redefine the tea industry's distribution landscape and elevate the tea-drinking experience for enthusiasts in the country.

FCCI to help local associations

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) will help local trade and industrial associations to get registration from the directorate general of trade organisations (DGTO) and convey their issues to the policy makers. This was said by Senior Vice President Dr Sajjad Arshad while addressing a delegation of the Faisalabad Dyes and Chemical Merchants Association (FDCMA).

He assured of arranging seminars for the FDCMA members by inviting professors from the universities. He said that a travel help desk established in the FCCI would also help the members of the FDCMA to participate in international exhibitions and conferences. He said: "We must encourage our younger generation to actively participate in healthy and productive activities".

He said the FCCI would encourage young entrepreneurs to take part in the chamber's business promotion initiatives. "It will help them to become successful business leaders", he said and added the FCCI had also launched E-chamber to digitize the membership system.

Court Notice

In the Court of Jauhar Ali Safi Civil Judge-I/Alaqa Qazi Buner at Daggar, Suit No. 501/1, Institution 11/9/2023. Date of hearing 14/3/2024. Gul Nawab Khan Vs. Amer Khan etc. Notice to No. 9. Zahir Shah Khan. 10. Amanullah Khan sons of Bandy son Said Alam. 12. Aminur Rehman/Amir Bash late sons of Abdul Qadar late resident of Balokhan Pir Baba 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 a.m. dated 14/3/2024 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Three ships namely, MSC Aby, Maersk Pittsburgh and Torm Integrity, carrying Containers and Gas oil, berthed at Container Terminal and FOTCO Terminal respectively on Tuesday.

Meanwhile two more ships, Huang Shan-16 and Medison Eagle with Palm oil and Coal are also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim on same day.

A total of eight ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them two

ships, MSC Aby and African Baza left the Port on today morning, while four more ships, Medi Chiba, Al-Rayyan, Sea Dream and Maersk Pittsburgh are expected to sail on same day.

Cargo volume of 132,711 tonnes, comprising 99,005 tonnes imports cargo and 33,706 tonnes export cargo carried in 4,708 Containers (2,921 TEUs Imports and 1,787 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 10 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, San Nicolas, Medison Eagle and Huang Shan-16; four more ships, Lusail, Sea Dream, MSC Spring-III and Cap Andreas carrying Coals, Palm oil, LNG and Containers are expected to take berths at MW-4, PIBT, LCT, PGPC and QICT respectively on today, while two more Container ships, X- Press Altair and Seaspan Ganges are due to arrive at Port Qasim on Thursday.

PTDC highlights Pak's tourism potential at ITB



F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), in collaboration with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), Pakistan mission in Germany, provincial tourism departments, and private tour operator companies, proudly represents Pakistan at ITB Berlin 2024, a leading international travel expo of tourism.

From 5th to 7th March 2024, over 5,500 exhibitors from 170 countries are showcasing the potential of their tourism destinations at Berlin, Germany. This year's theme is "Beauty has an Address".

Aftab ur Rehman Rana, Managing Director of PTDC, in his message on this occasion, informed that Pakistan's flag is once again waving among the flags of nations at the world's biggest travel show at Messe Berlin Exhibition Ground. PTDC has managed to send a delegation of 11 exhibitors to showcase Pakistan's rich tourism potential in this leading global travel show.

He said that Pakistan's participation in ITB Berlin 2024 is aligned with the country's tourism strategy to boost foreign tourist arrivals and foster positive perceptions of Pakistan on the global stage.

He emphasized, "PTDC

is empowering the private sector to be part of important global business forums of the tourism sector and develop B2B and B2C linkages".

He stressed the pivotal role of Pakistan's participation in this global exhibition to build the image of the country as a safe tourist destination for foreign tourists.

He emphasized that the event serves as a crucial platform to unveil Pakistan's untapped tourism potential and forge essential business-to-business relations with international stakeholders, particularly with European countries, which are key players in the global tourism industry.



In brief

Watson likely to become Pakistan head coach

LAHORE (Web Desk): Australian all-rounder Shane Watson is likely to be appointed as head coach of the national team as Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has launched the search for the post ahead of New Zealand T20I series. Watson, who is currently serving as the coach of Quetta Gladiators in the Pakistan Super League (PSL), is the strong candidate for the position. Peshawar Zalmi's head coach Darren Sammy is also in the race while source said the Australian player was being considered a favourite candidate. PCB is likely to announce the decision soon as Kiwis are scheduled to visit Pakistan next month for the T20I series.

Commissioner Marathon

KARACHI (PPI): In an effort to promote healthy lifestyles and combat societal ills, 60 male and female athletes from the Pakistan Road Runners Club (PRR) are set to participate in the 5th Commissioner Karachi Marathon 2024 under the special instructions of Jamal Said, the founder & president PRR Club. According to PRR information on Wednesday, Chief Captain of Pakistan, Muhammad Ahmed, announced that the athletes have undergone rigorous preparations, following their commendable performances in marathon races across various cities in the country. Ahmed expressed confidence in the abilities of the participating athletes, anticipating their success in the upcoming event. Highlighting the significance of sports in fostering well-being, he underscored the potential of marathon races in steering the new generation away from detrimental influences such as drug addiction. The 5th Commissioner Karachi Marathon 2024 is scheduled to take place on March 8 at Seaview Karachi. The event promises to not only showcase the athletic prowess of participants but also serve as a platform for promoting a healthier lifestyle among the youth.

FIH-IOC unveil hockey schedule

ISLAMABAD (APP): The International Hockey Federation (FIH) and International Olympic Committee (IOC) unveiled the competition schedule for hockey at Paris 2024, to be played from July 27 to August 9. The schedule was revealed by IOC President Thomas Bach and FIH President Tayyab Ikram, said a press release. The hockey tournaments of the XXXIII Olympiad would be played in Yves-du-Manoir Stadium – an Olympic Games arena in 1924 – in Colombes, near Paris. A total of 12 men's and as many women's national teams would compete to clinch the highly coveted Olympic medals, including Dutch women and Belgian men who will compete in the event as the reigning gold medalists from the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020. Both men's and women's hockey tournaments at Paris 2024 would get underway on July 27. The first match of Hockey at Paris 2024 would be an all-European affair with Great Britain taking on Spain in the men's Pool A match. The women's competition would begin on the same evening with silver medalists from Tokyo 2020, Argentina, beginning their quest to go one step further this time, against USA in the women's Pool B encounter. The pool stages in both tournaments would be played till August 3, followed by knockout matches starting August 4.



MULTAN: Pakistan Super League (PSL) Twenty20 cricket match playing between Islamabad United and Lahore Qalandars at Pindi Stadium.

Zaman Khan shines as Lahore Qalandars bag first PSL 9 win

RAWALPINDI (Monitoring Desk): Zaman Khan's four-wicket haul after Rassie van der Dussen's gutsy half-century led Lahore Qalandars to their first win in the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 here at Pindi Cricket Stadium on Wednesday. Set to chase 163, the United's batting unit unfolded on 145 in 18.5 overs despite Faheem Ashraf's unbeaten 41. The home side had a disastrous start to the run chase as they lost six wickets inside seven overs with just 38 runs on the board. Following the slump, Azam Khan partnered briefly with Faheem Ashraf for an anchoring 35-run partnership which lasted with the former's departure in the 11th over. The right-handed batter

smashed three boundaries and two sixes on his way to a 19-ball 29. Faheem then put together an important partnership with Naseem Shah when the duo added 42 runs for the eighth wicket. Naseem scored a brisk 27 off 16 deliveries before falling victim to Shaheen Shah Afridi in the 16th over. But Faheem kept the scoreboard ticking and brought United in touching distance to a thrilling victory when they needed 18 off eight deliveries. However, Zaman Khan trapped Rummam Raees lbw with a ferocious yorker and United, as a result, bundled out on 145 in response to Qalandars' 162. Faheem remained stranded at the non-striker's end 41 not out off 31

deliveries which featured four boundaries and a six. Zaman led the bowling attack for the Qalandars with 4/37, followed by Afridi, who bagged two wickets. Put into bat first, the defending champions, who are yet to win a match in the ongoing tournament could manage a subpar total despite Rassie van der Dussen's half-century. The visitors had a disappointing start to their innings as they lost their openers Sahibzada Farhan (2) and Fakhar Zaman (10) inside the batting powerplay with just 16 runs on the board. The Qalandars then sustained another blow to their batting charge when Shai Hope (6) perished in the sixth over, bringing them down to 30/3 in the seventh over.



RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Super League (PSL) Twenty20 cricket match playing between Karachi Kings and Quetta Gladiators at Pindi Stadium.

'Perfect day' as Kane double powers Bayern into Champions League last eight

MUNICH (Agencies): Harry Kane scored a goal in each half as Bayern Munich beat Lazio 3-0 on Tuesday to reach the Champions League quarter-finals 3-1 on aggregate. Kane headed Bayern level in the tie in the 38th minute, canceling out Lazio's lead from the first leg with his first Champions League knock-out goal in five years. Thomas Mueller doubled the hosts' lead with a clever header before half-time and Kane doubled up in the 66th minute, tapping in the rebound from a Leroy Sane shot to seal Bayern's progress to the next round. "It was a perfect night for us," Kane told Amazon Prime. "Everyone with energy, all around the pitch, the way we played and created chances and pressed without the ball — it was a top, top performance." Bayern kept their slim hopes of silverware this season alive while likely giving outgoing coach Thomas Tuchel a stay of execution until the quarter-finals in April. "It's the most difficult trophy to win in Europe, probably the world," Tuchel, who won the Champions League with Chelsea in 2021, told reporters. "But it doesn't get any easier or more difficult if you have a long contract or if you're leaving at the end of the season."

Kane recognized the manner of Tuchel's exit was "unusual" but said "nights like this can change the season. I'm proud of the boys — we just have to keep this momentum up." Mueller, a two-time Champions League winner, said: "We're going to make sure everyone enjoys this feeling, never-mind what is in the newspaper yesterday or tomorrow." "We're very happy because we know the importance of progressing further today." The loss snuffed out Lazio's chance of a first Champions League quarter-final appearance since 1999-2000. Six-time European champions Bayern came into Tuesday's match staring down the barrel of a last-16 elimination for just the

second time in the past 13 seasons. Three straight losses including the 1-0 defeat in the first leg in Rome amounted to Bayern's worst run since 2015, costing Tuchel his job less than a year after arriving in Munich. With Tuchel allowed to keep the seat warm until the summer, the coach promised to be more "ruthless." On Tuesday, he benched big-money signing Kim Min-jae for Eric Dier, while moving Joshua Kimmich — a fixture in midfield for Bayern and Germany — to right-back. Bayern pushed Lazio back early with the fit-again Sane and Jamal Musiala going close. Scorer of the first leg's only goal, Ciro Immobile had a golden chance to



Kane celebrates after scoring his side's third goal.

Hasan Ali, Tim Seifert guide Karachi Kings to crush Quetta Gladiators

RAWALPINDI (Monitoring Desk): Hasan Ali's four-fer, followed by Tim Seifert's quick 49-run knock to help Karachi Kings thump Quetta Gladiators by seven wickets in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 here at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Wednesday. Chasing a paltry 119-run target, Karachi Kings completed the pursuit with 4.3 overs to spare when Shoaib Malik smashed Usman Tariq for six. Captain Shan Masood fell early in the chase with 13 runs on the board, however, Seifert and James Vince steadied the ship with a 50-run partnership off 39 balls. Vince scored an anchoring 27 off 28 with the help of four boundaries before he fell to Akeal Hosein.

Seifert switched gears after the wicket and added 44 runs for the second wicket with Malik but could not finish the game as he fell with his team requiring 12 runs. He top-scored for Karachi Kings with 49 runs from 31 balls, which featured eight boundaries including two sixes. Malik scored played an anchoring 27-run knock from 20 balls and saw his team chase down the total in the 16th over. For Quetta Gladiators, Mohammad Amir, Abrar Ahmed and Akeal Hosein picked one wicket each. Earlier, Karachi Kings' captain Shan Masood opted to bowl first after winning the toss, and the decision bore fruits as Blessing Muzarabani removed Jason Roy (15) with 20 runs on the board. Saud Shakeel and Khawaja Nafay knitted a 47-run stand for the second wicket in 36 balls before Hasan Ali picked his first wicket to send the former back to the pavilion. Shakeel top-scored for Quetta Gladiators with promising innings of 33 runs off 28 balls, which featured two fours and two sixes. Ali struck again in the same over to remove Nafay (17) and opened the floodgates as Quetta Gladiators failed to recover after this double-wicket over. After that, captain Rilee Rossouw played a cautious knock of 10 runs from 16 balls, while Akeal Hosein smashed a six during his 14-run cameo in 13 balls. No other batter could provide resistance against tight bowling by Karachi Kings bowlers as Quetta Gladiators were booked at 118 in the last over after being 65-1 at one point. Hasan Ali led the bowling attack for Karachi Kings with figures of 4-15, while Muzarabani and Zahid Mahmood bagged two wickets each.

Chairman PCB calls on franchise owners of PSL

LAHORE (PPI): Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi met HBL PSL franchise owners where other PCB officials including COO Salman Naseer, League Commissioner Naila Bhatti and Director Pakistan Super League Sohaib Sheikh were also present in the meeting. According to a statement on Wednesday, the franchise owners congratulated Mr. Mohsin Naqvi for taking up the duties of Chairman PCB and lauded the Pakistan Cricket Board for successfully hosting the Lahore and Multan leg of HBL PSL 9. Chairman PCB thanked the franchise owners for their unwaver-

ing support in making HBL PSL a successful brand over the years. Furthermore, addressing the franchise owners the chairman stated, "Pakistan Super League has become an identity of the country over the years. I would also welcome your suggestions to further improve the quality of the league. The board is eager to entertain all recommendations by stakeholders which would help in enhancing the standard of cricket in the country." Chairman PCB inspects Pindi Cricket Stadium: Chairman PCB visited the Pindi Cricket Stadium and inspected the

facilities at the venue. COO PCB Salman Naseer briefed the chairman while Chief Selector Wahab Riaz was also present. According to a statement on Wednesday, Chairman PCB asked the relevant authorities to present a plan to upgrade the stadium to a quality international venue. He instructed to replace the temporary seating arrangement with permanent quality seating along with improvement in the infrastructure of the enclosures. The Pindi Cricket Stadium is currently hosting the HBL PSL 9 matches which are scheduled to run until 10 March.

Prosecutors demand near 5-year Ancelotti sentence



MADRID (Agencies): Prosecutors in Spain have called for Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti to be jailed for four years and nine months for allegedly avoiding one million euros (£854,000) in tax. The charges relate to image rights revenues during his first spell in charge of the club in 2014-15. The Madrid Community Prosecutor's office accuses the Italian of creating a "confusing" and "complex" system of shell companies to hide extra earnings. Ancelotti returned to Madrid in 2021. His lawyer declined to provide a comment to Reuters and La Liga club Real have also not commented.

League leaders Real host RB Leipzig in the second leg of their Champions League last-16 tie on Wednesday night. Reuters and AFP said the 64-year-old Italian had been charged with two crimes of tax fraud. "Although he himself declared himself to be a tax resident in Spain and indicated that his home was in Madrid, he only declared in his tax returns the personal remuneration received from Real Madrid," the prosecutor said in a statement, reported by AFP. He was also accused of having "simulated" the transfer of his image rights to entities "without any real activity" based outside of Spain to avoid paying taxes.

Citizens asked to use alternative routes during PSL matches

RAWALPINDI (INP): City Traffic Police (CTP), Rawalpindi here on Wednesday advised the citizens to use alternate routes to avoid inconvenience as Double Road had been closed due to PSL matches. Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Taimur Khan informed that a comprehensive traffic plan had been devised for the convenience of the public regarding the PSL cricket matches. He said more than 365 traffic police officers and jawans were performing special duties, including seven Deputy Superintendents of police (DSPs), 40 inspectors, 318 traffic wardens and traffic assistants. He said the CTP had made special arrangements to keep the traffic flowing on alternative routes during matches. During the movement of

cricket teams, additional personnel were deployed by making special arrangements to keep traffic flowing on alternate routes. For the convenience of cricket fans, parking facilities had also been provided at three places, including Civil Aviation Ground Shaheen Chowk, Shahbaz Sharif Park near Shaheen Chowk and Graduate Degree College Satellite Town. Besides, the shuttle service was also being provided to access the stadium from the parking area, he said. The CTO said during the match, awareness banners regarding alternative routes and parking were also displayed on the main highways of Rawalpindi for the convenience of the citizens and to keep the traffic flowing on alternative routes so that the citizens remain updated.

Through the official social media pages of traffic police and radio station 88.6, the citizens were also being provided with moment-to-moment information about the diversion points and traffic situation, he added. According to the details, Murree Road remained completely closed from Faizabad to Double Road during this time and the traffic coming from Islamabad was diverted from Faizabad to Expressway. Traffic moving towards Islamabad would be able to enter Islamabad by using 6th Road Said Pur Road while traffic coming from Ghousia Chowk would be diverted to Farooq Azam Road, Kurri Road. During the cricket match, both sides of Stadium Road from 9th Avenue Chowk to Double Road would be completely closed to traffic.

Overseas training for softball players will be sponsored by Combaxx Sports

KARACHI (APP): Omar Saeed, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Combaxx Sports, an international brand of sports equipment has said that softball is becoming the favourite sport of the youth in the country. He our organization will do its best to improve the infrastructure of this sport in Pakistan and for the welfare of the players. As a technical partner, every year Combaxx Sports will sponsor two athletes (one male and one female) nominated by the Softball Federation of Pakistan for training abroad. He expressed these views on the occasion of a meeting with the delegation led by Softball Federation of Pakistan President Asif

Azeem, Senior Vice President of the Federation Professor Dr. Farhan Essa, Chairperson Yasmin Hyder, Vice Presidents Farah Saeed, Tehmina Asif, Dr. Hina Jamshed, Abdul Wahab Sultan, Director of Siccotel and Muhammad Zubair Macha, General Manager of Compaxx Sports were also present on the occasion. CEO Combaxx Sports Omar Saeed said that we want to see sports flourishing in the country and we wish that softball players, like other sports, can get world-class equipment in their country. Combaxx Sports will provide scholarships to 5 deserving softball players every month by providing financial support in addi-

tion to an annual awards ceremony for players who have won medals for Pakistan at the national and international levels and a women's sports event will also be sponsored every year. President of the Federation Asif Azeem said that becoming a technical partner of Combaxx Sports, coming forward to sponsor the players is a welcome process and an honour for the softball federation. This will not only provide the talented players with world-class training and coaching opportunities in foreign countries but also provide financial support and encouragement to the deserving players by giving them monthly financial help as well.



In brief

Singing competition held

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Intercollegiate singing competition held here at Islamabad Model College for Girls (IMCG) F-11/3 to celebrate Pakistani music and culture, bringing together 12 colleges of the city. It was an honor to have Rizwan ul Haq from Vital Signs as esteemed chief guest at the event, said a press release. The judging panel, consisting of Shahroz Khan, Sameen Khawaja, Waqas Niazi, and Umar Bari, brought expertise and fairness to the competition, ensuring a platform for showcasing talent. Principal Farah Hamid encouraged and appreciated the students' dedication and passion for music. "Together, we created an unforgettable evening, fostering a love for our rich musical heritage and inspiring the next generation of performers". The competition consisted of two categories, 1st was Pakistani old golden hit songs of 1960's in which one participants from each colleges showed talent, while the 2nd phase was famous Qawalis in which group of students tune their talent and audience was charged with their melodious performances. In singing FG Home economics, college F-11/1 stood first while IMCG I-10/4 got 2nd Position. The host college and IMCG Korang Town bagged the third position.

Two dacoit gangs busted

RAWALPINDI (APP): The district police here on Wednesday busted two dacoit gangs and arrested five accused besides recovering a snatched motorcycle, Rs 40,000 cash, weapons and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Taxila police held five dacoits, members of two gangs namely Fayyaz, Aaraz, Sajjad, Huzafa and Ahsan. The police also recovered a snatched motorcycle, cash Rs 40,000, weapons and other items from their possession. The accused have been shifted to jail for identification parade. Superintendent of Police, Potohar, Nisar Nawaz directed police to accelerate operation to net the outlaws.

Eight drug peddlers netted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders and other law-breakers here on Wednesday arrested eight accused besides recovering charras, liquor, weapons and other items from their possession. A police spokesperson said that New Town police held Ahmed for having 1060 grams charras while another accused, Asif was netted with five liters liquor. Kahuta police rounded up Asad with 40 liquor bottles. Pirwadhai police arrested Tariq for having 540 grams charras and Rawat police held an accused namely Faisal for carrying 520 grams charras. Taxila police nabbed Shehzad and recovered 10 liters liquor. Similarly, Airport police arrested Abdul Matlab for possessing eight liters liquor. Westridge police in their operation arrested Iqtadar and recovered a 30 bore pistol. Saddar Wah police also recovered a 30 bore pistol from the possession of Amjad. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations are underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other law-breakers, he added.



ISLAMABAD: CDA workers lift ups vendor's setup during an anti-encroachment campaign at F-7 Markaz.

Irfan Siddiqui urges PTI to stop blame game, focus on public issues

ISLAMABAD (APP): PML-N Senator Irfan Siddiqui Wednesday advised Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf to stop blame game of rigging and only focus on public related issues as there is dire need for mutual unity for political and economic stability in the country. Talking to a Private news channel, he said that the country can move forward with unity, discipline and faith and the blame game trend started by

Chairman PTI is breaking all three ultimately weakening the country.

PML-N leadership remains steadfast in their commitment to guide Pakistan through its current economic and political challenges, with a focus on unity, effective governance, and public welfare, he added. He stressed that for the importance of avoiding baseless allegations and confusion during this critical phase for the country.

Responding to a question, he affirmed that the general elections were conducted fairly, freely, and transparently, adding, the PTI should not make matters worse as dialogue is the only way forward to end the current political chaos in the country.

"The PTI leadership only pushing the country towards a much bigger crisis by hatching such conspiracies and with blame game politics", he added.

Various cultural organizations finalize preparations to mark Int'l Women Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): Cultural organizations including Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) and National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage – Lok Virsa finalized preparations to celebrate International Women's Day on March 8.

PNCA would present a workshop titled "Urban Nature: transformation and transferences by Nameera Najib and Tayeba Batool in connection with the International Women's Day, Director General PNCA Muhammad Ayoub Jamali told APP.

The goal of this workshop is to explore creative

ways of looking at human-nature relations in the city. Workshop participants can expert to learn about etching techniques on linoleum (Lino) sheets.

This workshop is open to all adults above 18 years, who are interested in artistic techniques and creative conversations about the city and its environment.

While Chief Commissioner Islamabad in collaboration with Lok Virsa and UNESCO will arrange special cultural event titled "Breaking Barriers" featuring artisans at work stalls, cultural performances and an exhibition, Executive

Director Lok Virsa Muhammad Uzair Khan told APP.

Three-day Aurat Hunar Mela would be inaugurated at Lok Virsa on March 8. This is the annual flagship event of Devcom-Pakistan (Development Communications Network) to mark the UN's International Women's Day.

This year the event is being organized in collaboration with the Lok Virsa and National Heritage and Culture Division.

Many other organizations would also organize a series of functions and activities to mark the day.

ANF recovers 122 kg drugs in 11 operations; arrests 12 accused

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 11 operations across the country managed to recover 122 kg drugs and arrested 12 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed that 36 kg opium was recovered near Ring Road Peshawar and 22 kg methadone was recovered from Liberty Chowk Lahore area while an accused was also arrested during the operation. 18 kg hashish was recovered from Torkham Road Khyber and in fourth operation, 12 kg hashish and 7 kg opium were recovered near Faisalabad road. An accused was also netted.

10 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused arrested in Balochistan.

7 kg hashish, 100 grams heroin and 50 grams Ice drug were recovered from a

drug smuggler nabbed near Qasimabad in Hyderabad. The spokesman informed that 3.6 kg hashish was recovered near Labor Colony Peshawar and three suspects were arrested.

ANF Lahore recovered 2 kg hashish from a parcel sent to Karachi at Cargo Office Lahore.

2 kg Ice was seized from a courier office in Lahore and two suspects were rounded up. 1.4 kg hashish, three 30 bore pistols with 7 magazines and 15 rounds were recovered from an accused arrested in Gilgit.

In 11th operation, 900 grams hashish was recovered from two accused rounded up in Dina, Jhelum.

Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.

PTDC highlights Pakistan's tourism potential at ITB Berlin

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), in collaboration with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), Pakistan mission in Germany, provincial tourism departments, and private tour operator companies is proudly representing Pakistan at Internationale Tourismus Börse (ITB) Berlin 2024, a leading international travel expo of tourism.

From 5th to 7th March 2024, over 5,500 exhibitors from 170 countries are showcasing the potential of their tourism destinations in Berlin, Germany. This year's theme is "Beauty has an Address", said a news

release on Wednesday. Managing Director of PTDC, Aftab ur Rehman Rana, in his message on this occasion, informed that Pakistan's flag is once again waving among the flags of nations at the world's biggest travel show at Messe Berlin Exhibition Ground.

PTDC has managed to send a delegation of 11 exhibitors to showcase Pakistan's rich tourism potential in this leading global travel show. He said that Pakistan's participation in ITB Berlin 2024 is aligned with the country's tourism strategy to boost foreign tourist arrivals and foster positive perceptions of Pakistan on the global stage. He emphasized,

"PTDC is empowering the private sector to be part of important global business forums of the tourism sector and develop B2B and B2C linkages".

He stressed the pivotal role of Pakistan's participation in this global exhibition to build the image of the country as a safe tourist destination for foreign tourists. He emphasized that the event serves as a crucial platform to unveil Pakistan's untapped tourism potential and forge essential business-to-business relations with international stakeholders, particularly with European countries, which are key players in the global tourism industry.

Eat Safe Kids" awareness seminar held

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) on Wednesday organized a seminar in connection with its ongoing "PFA's Eat Safe Kids" program at Government High School Special Education for Boys. Assistant Commissioner Cantt Qandeel Fatima attended the seminar as a special guest. The aim of the program was to provide guidance to parents and teachers to promote balanced diet in children and adopt a better lifestyle.

Nutritionists educated children, parents and teachers about choosing nutritious foods for children while parents were trained to prepare nutritious and healthy lunch boxes for children. The children were also informed about the prevention of harmful food and its effects on health. Parents were also trained on the consumption of vitamin-rich foods, fruits and vegetables according to children's height, weight and physical health. On the occasion, Assistant Commissioner Qandeel Fatima said that children were our future and it was our responsibility to take care of their health.

Women empowerment key to ensure progressive, inclusive society: Samina

ISLAMABAD (APP): First Lady Begum Samina Alvi, On Wednesday while emphasizing the importance of women's role in the country's development, said that a progressive and inclusive society could not be possible without empowering women in every sector of life.

Addressing an event organized in connection with International Women Day by the Behbud Association of Pakistan, Samina Alvi said it was the responsibility of everybody to ensure a conducive environment for girls and women to provide proper education and training, enabling them to live a life with dignity and respect.

Appreciating the role of the association in empowering women, she said that since its inception, the Behbud Association has empowered around one million women by providing skills and training in various fields. She said women comprised half of the total population of the country, and their participation was very important to ensuring the economic development of the country. The first lady pointed out that the women's literacy rate in the county was much lower as compared to the men. She said Pakistan also needed to improve its current rating of 142 out of 147 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index.

She said improving the women's literacy rate would automatically improve the overall literacy rate of the country, as educated women will never let their children

become illiterate.

As regards her campaign on creating awareness about breast cancer, Samina Alvi said self-examination was very critical to ensuring early diagnosis of the disease, adding that early diagnosis of breast cancer was curable.

Similarly, she also called for creating awareness about mental health, which is very important to avoid mental stress and keep people healthy.

She urged the business community, especially, to help establish vocational training centers for the differently abled to enable them to stand on their own two feet and contribute towards the country's development.

Earlier, the first lady distributed shields among the staff of the association.

Lt. General Dr Nigar Johar, on the occasion said the Behbud Association was playing important role in empowering women. She said Islam had taught women to have equal opportunities to work shoulder to shoulder with men.

President of the Behbud Association of Pakistan, Abida Malik, informed me that a 100-bed hospital was under construction under the umbrella of the association and would be completed within one year.

The Behbud president also appreciated Samina Alvi for playing a remarkable role in creating awareness about breast cancer and other health and social issues.

Price Magistrates given three-day deadline to improve performance

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak here on Wednesday gave three-day deadline to improve performance to the price magistrates of Rawalpindi division. Chairing a meeting, the Commissioner said that strict action would be taken against the magistrates if they could not improve their performance in three days.

Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners and Price Magistrates of all the five districts of the division participated in the meeting. On the special instructions of the Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam

Nawaz, the supply of essential commodities in open markets at official rates would be ensured, he said adding the wholesalers and retailers must declare all their stocks within 24 hours otherwise the goods would be confiscated.

The Commissioner directed the administration officers that the magistrates whose inspections were less than 100 during March, should be issued show cause notices.

If the performance of the Price Magistrates could not be improved within three days, action would be taken against them, he warned.

Crackdown against the

hoarders and profiteers on the special instructions of Chief Minister Punjab had been launched. Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners had given a deadline to the dealers and retailers to register all stocks within 24 hours and after the given period, the unregistered stocks would be confiscated.

Engr. Aamir Khattak ordered the price magistrates to remain in the field and take prompt action on the complaints received from the consumers. Performance of the price magistrates would be evaluated on daily basis, he said.

British Council's measures for betterment of climate, environment lauded

ISLAMABAD (APP): The participants of a meeting here on Wednesday lauded British Council for taking measures for the betterment of environment and climate and hoped to start more society focused approaches. The meeting was held between the official team of British Council, Reach out to Asia (ROTA), and Higher Education Commission with Executive body members of the cabinet of Green Youth Movement Gym Club of International Islamic University (IIU).

The meeting was chaired by Vice President, Research and Enterprise, Prof. Dr. Ahmed Shuja Syed as well Dean Faculty of Sciences Prof. Dr. Irfan Khan, Incharge female campus Dr. Summiyya Chughtai and Focal persons of initiative Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Naser and Dr. Sarah Amir were also present.

The executive body presented the 2 years progress report through a presentation. Gym Captain Kainat Bangash gave a detailed presentation about the activities, thematic approaches, contributions, achievements, success stories and way forward. She apprised that according to HEC guidelines the club was continuing its activities and in the present year it was focusing on Agriculture and forestry, and liquid and solid

waste. She also briefed about the food waste audit, training, workshops, international collaborations and waste audit at the campus.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdulla Faraj Al-Abdulla, Executive Director, Reach Out To Asia appreciated the efforts of the club as well as elaborated that the ROTA and British Council were jointly providing support and encouragement to the projects that are of inclusive value.

He guided the executive body of the club about impact-making public benefiting projects.

He assured that youth would be provided requisite awareness, guidance and support for the betterment of climate change and service of the society. On the occasion, Geroge Kerisa Tavola, ROTA Engagement Manager, thanked the IIUI on the behalf of the British Council for taking measures for the betterment of environment and climate.

He hoped that this initiative of the IIUI students would provide a foundation to launch more society focused approaches. Dr. Ahmed Shuja Syed hailing the initiative of the students' body and interest of the ROTA and British Council added that the university had focused on an engagement based approach for climate change and green movements.

He specially mentioned the Strategic plan devised by IIUI in which life at campus was part of the core objectives. He said pursuing the strategic plans and university ranking requirements, the IIUI was working on academia industry linkage and societal impact based research.

He said the university's management would be keen to map the plan and work as a bridge to connect the climate saving agencies and academia. Prof. Dr. Irfan Khan, earlier, welcomed the team and introduced the executive body of the club.

He discussed the 2 years progress and patronage of this initiative.

He hoped that this network of well-versed students would be soon able to join a major initiative of society service and climate friendly approach. Dr. Summiyya Chughtai said on the occasion that the club had shown its impact in the campus and it had been a source of motivation for students to make the campus clean and green. Focal Person, Dr. Sarah Amir shared her experience of mentoring the club members and also discussed the future objectives of the initiative. The Green Youth Movement Gym members also presented the recycled material made souvenirs to the visiting team officials.



ISLAMABAD: Students enjoy horse ride during Annual Funfair at Model College G10/4.

Six dead in traffic accident

KABUL (Ariana News): Local officials in Ghazni province of Afghanistan said on Wednesday that a traffic accident happened late Tuesday night on the Kabul – Kandahar highway in Nani area of Ghazni province leaving six people dead and thirty two injured. Children and women are among the victims, local officials said. According to the officials all the injured were transferred to health centers in Ghazni province of Afghanistan.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Shabaan 25, 1445 — Thursday, March 07, 2024

Ashgabat hosts expo

KABUL (Ariana News): Turkmen-Afghan Business Forum currently being held in Ashgabat in Turkmenistan and goods from Afghan manufacturers are being exhibited. Businessmen from the two countries holding talks within the framework of the exhibition. The exhibition will be of great importance in expanding bilateral trade and economic cooperation between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, increasing trade turnover and developing business cooperation with Afghan companies.

Volker stresses priority of women's rights

KABUL (Khaama Press): In a recent declaration, Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, emphasized the importance of prioritizing women's and girls' rights in Afghanistan. His remarks were aimed at all stakeholders involved in the Afghan context.

Türk addressed the 55th session of the Human Rights Council, where he pointed out the extensive violations of rights faced by women and girls in the nation.

Echoing Türk's concerns, Richard Bennett, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, highlighted the severe state of human

rights there, with a particular focus on the plight of women and girls.

Bennett stressed the necessity for any engagement with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to fundamentally respect human rights, singling out women's rights as paramount.

He warned that failing to prioritize women's rights could be perceived as a lack of commitment to the cause of women globally, underscoring the broader implications of the situation in Afghanistan.

On February 29, Bennett presented a report to the UN Human Rights Council detailing the continuing deterioration of human

rights in Afghanistan, more than two years after the Taliban assumed control.

In addition to human rights issues, Türk also expressed alarm over the suppression of media and journalism by the Taliban, including actions like banning photographs of people in Kandahar and preventing women from participating in radio programs in Khost.

Despite these reports, Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson of the de facto administration denies committing human rights abuses, claiming a commitment to women's rights and accusing Western countries of leveraging these accusations to exert pressure on Afghanistan's government.

Afghanistan favorable route for Turkmenistan

KABUL (BNA): During his visit to Turkmenistan, Nouruddin Azizi, the Acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, met with local officials in the city and port of Turkmenbashi. Azizi deemed the Turkmenbashi port as a suitable transit point for Afghanistan and the countries in the Caspian Sea region.

Azizi emphasized that Afghanistan's route is particularly suitable for Turkmenistan's access to South Asian markets. He stated that both Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, with their advantageous geographical positions, could experience further economic growth by utilizing this benefit.

He added that the use of the Turkmenbashi port has facilitated the transfer of essential raw materials to Afghanistan. The aim is to maximize the country's transit sector through this route.

Azizi traveled to Turkmenistan to inaugurate the first Turkmen-Afghan Trade Communication Conference, attend an exhibition of Afghan products, and meet with Turkmen authorities. The goal of these meetings was to enhance commercial and transit cooperation between the two countries.

Leila wins Geuzen Holland Prize

KABUL (Khaama Press): Leila Haidari, the founder of the "Mother Camp" organization, has been honoured with the prestigious Geuzen Holland Prize, awarded annually to individuals or entities making significant contributions to the education and human rights sectors.

This accolade recognizes Haidari's tireless efforts in supporting girls' education and human rights in Afghanistan, highlighting the critical role she plays in advocating for educational opportunities for Afghan girls.

Currently, Haidari oversees an educational institution catering to over 500 girls, established in 2021, demonstrating her commitment to empowering young women through education.

In addition to her educational initiatives, Haidari previously established a clinic for drug rehabilitation in Afghanistan, offering vital healthcare services to those in need, further exemplifying her dedication to humanitarian causes.

Despite residing outside Afghanistan presently, Haidari continues her advocacy work in the realm of human rights, underscoring her enduring commitment to making a positive impact on society.

The upcoming ceremony where Haidari is set to receive the Geuzen Holland Prize symbolizes global recognition of her efforts in advancing human rights and education, serving as inspiration for others to follow suit.

The Geuzen Prize, established in 1987 and awarded in the Netherlands, signifies the international acknowledgement of individuals and organizations championing human rights and educational endeavours.

This prestigious award underscores the importance of recognizing and honouring individuals who strive to promote human rights and educational opportunities, setting a precedent for positive change.

The attention given to the Geuzen Prize reflects a global commitment to strengthening human rights and expanding educational opportunities for all individuals, particularly women and girls, across diverse communities worldwide.

Haidari's recognition serves as a reminder of the ongoing need to support and uplift those dedicated to fostering positive change, even in challenging environments such as Afghanistan.

Afghanistan to witness economic growth: Kabir



KABUL (TOLOnews): The deputy prime minister for political affairs, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, said that within the next few years, Afghanistan will grow not only politically but also economically.

During the commencement ceremony of the national tree-planting campaign under the slogan "Planting Trees, Eradicating Drought" in Badam Bagh, Kabul, and at the Qosh Tepa Canal, Kabir called the completion of this project as a revolution in agriculture for the country.

He said: "Efforts are underway for water management, and surveys have been conducted in all districts of Afghanistan for the construction of dams to prevent drought and man-

age water throughout the districts."

According to him, climate change has posed various challenges to countries worldwide, especially Afghanistan. Internal conflicts, deforestation, and illegal logging have exacerbated issues such as air pollution and drought in recent years.

In the event, the deputy prime minister for political affairs considered the lack of a standard water supply system as the reason for the scarcity of drinking water in Kabul, assuring that the Islamic Emirate plans to build large dams for national water management.

"The tree-planting process can energize and enhance the greening process," Abdul Latif

Nazari, Deputy Minister of Economy said.

Meanwhile, the acting Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Attaullah Omari, mentioned the efforts to standardize the agricultural system, livestock management, irrigation, and establish specific procedures to protect forests and reclaim government-encroached lands.

Omari said, "Our livestock sector is traditional, and we have plans for this sector. The first decision is to improve and transform the existing traditional breeds; we will provide breeds to our livestock farmers that are worth their efforts."

Meanwhile, the Directorate of the greenery

affairs department of the Kabul municipality highlighted tree planting as crucial in preventing floods, air pollution, and global warming, announcing that approximately 2 million fruit and non-fruit trees will be planted in 1403 (solar year).

The head of the greenery affairs department of the Kabul municipality, Abdul Wakil Mutawakil, said: "Kabul's air was polluted in the past years, but efforts by the municipality have cleaned it."

The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock reported that approximately 82 million fruit and non-fruit trees have been distributed and planted across the country in the past two years.

IE Army Chief: US controls Afghan airspace

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Chief of Army Staff of the Islamic Emirate says that Afghanistan's airspace is still under the control of the United States.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with TOLOnews, Fasihuddin Fetrat said that the country's airspace is still managed by the United States and that this country violates Afghanistan's airspace.

According to Fasihuddin Fetrat, American drones occasionally fly over the Afghanistan's airspace.

"Drones occasionally patrol, and it [Afghanistan's airspace] is still occupied by the Americans. It may enter Afghan territory from the soil of one of the neighboring countries," said Fasihuddin Fetrat, the Chief of Army Staff of the Ministry of Defense of the Islamic Emirate

Fetrat also rejects claims about the arrest of forces from the previous government, saying that no one has been arrested for this accusation so far.

"I definitely reject this, it has no basis, and no one who was in the previous regime has been arrested, imprisoned, or beaten so far, this is incorrect. If they



commit a crime, they still do not have judicial immunity," added Fasihuddin Fetrat.

According to Fetrat, the exact number of armed forces active within the Ministry of Interior, intelligence, and Ministry of Defense has reached 500,000, and the army has reached 172,000.

"We are in the initial stages, when the rule of the Islamic Emirate began, and we tried to build the Afghan army, the number that was considered was 200,000, and we are gradually progressing. We hope to complete the number we had in mind next year," stated the army chief of staff.

About the border clashes, the senior security offi-

cial of the Islamic Emirate says that these clashes have occurred in response to the incursions border forces along the Durand Line.

"It is clear that we call this line an imaginary line, occasionally invasions and assaults occur that our forces cannot ignore, and no solution is found through discussions, and the other side tries to use force, in which case we also allow our forces to use force," said Fetrat.

Fasihuddin Fetrat, in another part of his speech, rejects claims about the sale of American weapons in the country, saying that the Islamic Emirate urgently needs the leftover military equipment and does not allow anyone to sell it.

Women's full participation non-negotiable, says Rina

KABUL (Khaama Press): Rina Amiri, the Special Representative for Afghan Women's Affairs of the United States, highlighted March as "Women's History Month," emphasizing the crucial role of women's full participation in Afghan society.

Amiri emphasized the importance of Afghan women being fully involved to stop more economic problems, extremism, and the ongoing war in Afghanistan. She said this on March 6, just two days before International Women's Day.

She reiterated that addressing the situation of women in Afghanistan cannot be sidelined, underscoring its significance amidst the approaching International Women's Day on March 8th. "During #WomensHistoryMonth, we must reinforce that inclusion, human rights & the full participation of women in society cannot be



silenced or deprioritized & are essential to preventing further economic instability, radicalization & the continuation of war in Afghanistan, she said.

Despite progress, the suppressive policies of the Taliban against Afghan women persist, hindering their access to employment and education.

Taliban's oppressive measures deprive Afghan women of their fundamental rights, impeding their ability to contribute effectively to society and the economy. The discriminatory policies enforced by

the Taliban undermine the progress made in women's empowerment and equality in Afghanistan.

International efforts to support Afghan women's rights face challenges due to the Taliban's restrictive governance, necessitating continued advocacy and action.

As the world celebrates Women's History Month and approaches International Women's Day, attention to the plight of Afghan women remains crucial in fostering gender equality and societal progress.

Graduation ceremony held for 40 girls

BAMYAN (Khaama Press): The Governor's office in Bamyan province celebrated the graduation of 40 girls from a two-year health sciences program, and Governor Abdullah Sarhadi participated in the ceremony. According to Bamyan Province's press office, on Wednesday, March 6th, 40 girls completed their two-year program in this province, and Governor Sarhadi urged them to sincerely engage in the health sector.

These girls have completed their two-year pro-

gram with the support of the UNHCR. Governor Sarhadi emphasized during the event, "It is heartening to see young women enduring hardships and striving alongside their families to pursue their education, ensuring they become valuable contributors to their society and country in the future." Abdullah Sarhadi further pledged his commitment to providing opportunities for education and employment for both boys and girls in the province.

Meanwhile, these girls graduated from their pro-

gram, the Minister of Public Health of the Taliban had reported severe shortages of female doctors in some provinces. The plight of women in Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover has been a matter of concern globally, with reports of restrictions on women's education and employment opportunities surfacing.

Women's rights activists have expressed fears about the future of women's education and participation in public life under Taliban rule, citing past oppression and restrictions.

Chinese company to send Afghan engineers to China for training

KABUL (Ariana News): In a meeting with the acting minister of mines and petroleum in Kabul, the head of China's Afchin Company said he plans to send a number of Afghan engineers to China for training and capacity building this year.

Shahabuddin Delawar, Acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, met with the head of Afchin Company and his delegation in his office. In this meeting, Delawar talked about the transparency in work, about the establishment of a standard oil refiner, 2D and 3D surveys and the problems at the Angut field.

Also, Delawar said in the field of hiring Afghans: "If there are no Afghan special-



ists, the mentioned company can hire foreigners by paying a monthly salary according to the region or

neighboring countries."

The head of Afchin company provided information regarding the surveys and

provided detailed information about the company's 2024 work plan in the form of a presentation.

Media violation monitoring body discusses press regulations

KABUL (BNA): The Media Violation Monitoring Commission convened under the chairmanship of Mullah Khairullah Khairkhah, Acting Minister of Information and Culture, held a meeting aimed at addressing media viola-

tions and promoting ethical journalism.

The session brought together key figures such as Mawlawi Ziaulhaq Haqmal, the Acting Deputy Minister of Information and Culture, Abdul Wahid Rayan, the head of publication supervision, commis-

sion members, and various media officials.

Minister Khairkhah, in his opening remarks, emphasized the significance of media accountability and the crucial role journalists play in shaping public opinion.

He highlighted the need

for unbiased reporting, accurate information dissemination, and adherence to established regulations.

The Acting Minister underlined that the freedom of the press must be exercised responsibly to avoid any potential harm to society.

Acting Minister prioritizes protection of cultural heritage

KABUL (BNA): Mullah Khairullah Khairkhah, the Acting Minister of Information and Culture, met with the CEO of MCC mining company, which holds the contract for the Mes Aynak mine, in his office on Wednesday.

During the meeting, Mullah Khairkhah emphasized the importance of cultural heritage and declared its preservation as a priority for the ministry.

He assured full cooperation in the mining of the Aynak Copper Mine and stated that historical monuments are not exclusive to one country, but their protection is the responsibility of all nations.



The CEO of MCC company expressed their commitment to conducting the mining operations of the

Aynak copper mine in a manner that ensures the protection of cultural and historical monuments. He

also requested further cooperation from the Ministry of Information and Culture in this regard.

Envoys push for Gaza truce before Ramazan starts next week

CAIRO (AFP): Envoys pushed on with efforts for a Gaza truce and hostage release deal in Cairo talks Wednesday, hoping to halt nearly five months of fighting before the start of Ramazan next week.

US President Joe Biden had urged Hamas to accept a ceasefire plan with Israel before the Muslim fasting month begins, which could be as early as Sunday, depending on the sighting of the crescent moon. As negotiators in Egypt sought to overcome tough stumbling blocks, deadly fighting again rocked Gaza where the UN warns famine looms and desperate crowds have stopped and looted food aid trucks.

Dire shortages of food and water amid the devastating Gaza war sparked by Hamas's October 7 attack have killed at least 18 people, said medics in the Hamas-controlled Palestinian territory. Biden on Tuesday called on the group to accept the truce plan brokered by US, Qatari and Egyptian mediators, saying "it's in the hands of Hamas right now."

The proposed deal would pause fighting for "at least six weeks," according to a White House statement on talks between US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and the Qatari prime minister. It would also see the "release of sick, wounded, elderly and women hostages" and allow for "a surge of humanitarian assistance," they said in a Washington meeting on Tuesday.

One known sticking point centers on an Israeli demand for Hamas to hand it a list of the about 100 hostages believed to still be alive — a task Hamas says it can't complete while bombing continues. The group said in a statement that it had "shown the required flexibility with the aim of reaching an agreement requiring a comprehensive cessation of aggression against our people." Biden stressed that "there's got to be a ceasefire because Ramazan — if we get into circumstances where this continues to Ramazan, Israel and Jerusalem could be very, very dangerous."

In past years, violence has flared during Ramazan in annexed east Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque compound — Islam's third-holiest site and Judaism's most sacred, known to Jews as the Temple Mount. Hamas has urged Muslims to flock there in great numbers, as they do every year, while some Israeli far-right politicians have argued they should be banned this year. Israel's government said on Tuesday that Muslim worshippers would initially be allowed to the site "in similar numbers" as in recent years, but that this would be followed by a weekly "situation assessment in terms of security and safety."

The Gaza war broke out after Hamas launched their attack on southern Israel that resulted in about 1,160 deaths, most of them civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli official figures. The militants also took around 250 hostages. Israel believes 99 of them remain alive in Gaza and that 31 have died. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 30,717 people,

mostly women and children, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-ruled territory.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to push on with the campaign to destroy Hamas, before or after any truce deal, while Hamas has demanded a permanent stop to fighting. In the latest combat, the army said that "a number of terrorists were identified and eliminated, including in a helicopter strike" in the southern city of Khan Yunis. "AK-47 rifles and ammunition were among the large quantity of weapons located and seized during searches."

While the war has reduced vast stretches of Gaza to a wasteland of bombed-out buildings and rubble, the siege has sparked a humanitarian disaster for its 2.4 million people. Hunger has reached "catastrophic levels" in the north, the UN World Food Programme has warned. "Children are dying of hunger-related diseases and suffering severe levels of malnutrition," it said. Gaza's health ministry reported that a 15-year-old girl became the latest child to die from malnutrition or dehydration, at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City.

More than 100 people were reported killed in bloody chaos last week when thousands swarmed aid trucks in Gaza. Gaza officials blamed Israel gunfire, while the army insisted most were trampled to death or run over. Another truck convoy was diverted by Israeli troops within Gaza late Tuesday and then stopped by "a large crowd of desperate people who looted the food," said the WFP. Jordanian, US and other planes have repeatedly airdropped food into Gaza. But WFP deputy chief Carl Skau said that "airdrops are a last resort and will not avert famine." Washington has stepped up pressure on Israel to alleviate the suffering, a message echoed by British Foreign Secretary David Cameron.

"People are dying of hunger. People are dying of otherwise preventable disease," Cameron told the House of Lords ahead of talks with visiting Israeli war cabinet member Benny Gantz. Cameron said that, as Israel is "the occupying power... it is responsible and that has consequences, including in how we look at whether Israel is compliant with international humanitarian law." Looking ahead at a post-war future, he also pointed at "the unstoppable momentum we need to see toward a two-state solution."

Anger over Israel's Gaza campaign has grown across the Middle East, stoking violence involving Iran-backed groups in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. Yemen's Houthi rebels have attacked passing ship traffic in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, in what they call a solidarity campaign with Gaza, sparking US and British retaliatory strikes. The Houthis days ago sank a cargo ship carrying fertilizer which, environmental groups have warned, threatens an ecological disaster. The US military said Tuesday it shot down three Houthi drones and a missile fired toward one of its destroyers in the Red Sea.

COAS attends rollout ceremony of Haider Tank

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir visited Heavy Industries Taxila (HIT) on Wednesday as chief guest at the rollout ceremony of Haider Tank (Pilot Project).

The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) in a statement said the ceremony was attended by Ambassador of China, key officials of Chinese state company NORINCO, high officials of Government of Pakistan & Pakistan Army, and various military and civilian officials of HIT.

During the ceremony, HIT unveiled its new tank HAIDER, which has been indigenously manufactured through collaboration with NORINCO China and various industries of Pakistan. Haider embodies cutting-edge technology and impressive capability in the domain of tank warfare having remarkable firepower, protection and manoeuvre characteristics. Crafted with state-of-the-art advanced technologies, HAIDER stands as a testament to Pakistani defence industry's relentless pursuit of excellence in defence innovation.

Gen Asim Munir was briefed in detail about the technical capabilities of the HAIDER tank and the progress being made in achieving indigenization in arms and armament. Pakistan Army chief also visited other manufacturing facilities within the Heavy Industrial Complex and appreciated the commitment of the officers and workforce in successful achievement of another technological milestone. Earlier on arrival, COAS was received by Chairman HIT.

Indictment of Elahi, others deferred

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Indictment of former chief minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior leader Pervaiz Elahi and others in a case pertaining to illegal appointments in the Punjab Assembly was deferred on Wednesday.

It should be mentioned here that the Punjab Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) arrested Pervaiz Elahi on charges of appointing Muhammad Khan Bhatti as his principal secretary during his tenure as the chief minister. Former chief minister Punjab Pervaiz Elahi and others marked their attendance in the Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE).

At the outset of hearing, the counsel urged the court to not indict their clients in the illegal appointments case. He told the court the arguments on the indictment should resume after the lawyers study the record. At this the court deferred the indictment of Pervaiz Elahi and other accused and adjourned the hearing till March 11.

It is pertinent to mention here that PTI's Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi was re-arrested, minutes after he was discharged by a court in two corruption cases. The ACE spokesperson said Pervaiz Elahi was re-arrested in a case pertaining to illegal appointments in the Punjab Assembly. "Elahi made 12 illegal appointments of grade 17 officers in the Punjab Assembly," the spokesperson claimed. "Failed candidates were given jobs by manipulating records in the Punjab Assembly," he said, adding: "Fake testing services were used to benefit corrupt officials during the recruitment process."

Court summons IO

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An accountability court in Islamabad on Wednesday issued a notice to the investigation officer in the Toshakhana vehicles reference against Asif Zardari, Nawaz Sharif, Yousuf Raza Gilani and others and directed him to appear before court on March 19.

The accountability court conducted hearing of the Toshakhana vehicles reference against PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari, PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif and PPP leader Yousuf Raza Gilani. Accountability court judge Nasir Javed Rana heard the case.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Portugal, Dr Muhammad Khalid Ejaz, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Feb 8 elections fairness score plummets to lowest since 2013

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The 2024 general elections recorded the lowest fairness score since 2013, indicating irregularities and growing distrust in the electoral process, according to a report released by the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (Pildat) on Wednesday.

The Pildat, a leading non-governmental election watchdog, has released its assessment of the February 8 elections, highlighting a concerning decline in fairness scores compared to previous election cycles. It said the overall fairness of the 2024 elections in Pakistan received a score of 49% which is three percentage points lower than the score received for the 2018 General Election, as per the report.

Fairness assessment scores for the 2013 and 2018 elections stood at 57% and 52%, respectively. Overall, these scores, particularly the steady decline in them since 2013, are emblematic of the weakening of the democratic processes in Pakistan and they underscore the urgent need to restore public confidence in the electoral system, the election watchdog said.

The Pildat also recommended enhancing transparency and accountability measures throughout the electoral process, calling on the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to conduct a thorough investigation into the delays and deficiencies observed during the elections, particularly in result compilation, transmission, and consolidation. Despite advancements, and consolidation. Despite advancements, the pre-poll phase has stalled at a

50% fairness score since 2018, indicating persistent pre-election issues.

The report said polling day's voting process score dipped to 58% in 2024 from 64% in 2018, yet showed a rise from 44% in 2013, reflecting fluctuating levels of voter experience. Moreover, it said no progress in result management since 2018 with the score stuck at 40% highlighting a critical need for an inquiry into Election Management System (EMS) operation.

The post-poll satisfaction hit a historic low matching the 2002 score of 40% pointing to increasing public distrust in electoral outcomes, said the Pildat report. The report also highlighted the considerable delays in scheduling of the election, political repression, lack of impartiality from caretaker governments and state institutions, and worsening law and order in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan during the pre-poll phase.

On polling day, the suspension of mobile phone and internet services not only compromised the EMS but also created problems for public participation in the electoral process, it said. After polling was completed, the delay in the announcement of the provisional results beyond the deadline fixed in Section 13(3) of the Elections Act, 2017, prompted serious questions about the credibility of the election.

The election watchdog also noted that widespread allegations of discrepancy between Forms-45 and Form-47 have also added to the con-

cerns about the credibility of the election. "The delay in the publishing of Forms 45, 46, 48 and 49 on the ECP website — a violation of Section 95 (10) of Elections Act, 2017 — has further damaged the credibility of the election."

The Pildat recommended the ECP to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the delays in the transmission, consolidation, and announcement of provisional results. Moreover, the ECP was also urged to probe the lack of contingency planning to meet result issuance deadlines in case of the EMS inoperability and the failure to publish signed copies of Forms 45, 46, 48, and 49 within 14 days of polling day as required under the Elections Act, 2017.

"We also recommend that, in order to bring the controversies relating to GE2024 to a close, a clear path be decided for the way forward. There are only two possible avenues to consider. The election watchdog demanded that the number of election tribunals be adequately increased to decide all election petitions within the legal deadline of 180 days to avoid inordinate delay.

In addition to the election tribunals, the Pildat also called for constituting a commission of inquiry like the one formed to probe the 2013 general election. "The incoming National Assembly and the Senate should deliberate and decide whether a Commission of Enquiry be constituted to ensure accountability, transparency and political stability."

Ruling coalition secure two-third majority in NA

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and its allies have secured a two-third majority in the National Assembly (NA), following the allocation of reserved seats which were claimed by the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC).

The coalition government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, which includes the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Mutahida Quomi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Zia (PML-Z) and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), comprises 229 members in the lower house.

To gain two-third majority in the 336-seat of national assembly, a government needs the support of 224 lawmakers, thereby strengthening the ruling coalition's control over governance and its capability to enact legislative agendas effectively. The PML-N commands on 123

seats in the lower house, in which 75 won in the February 8 elections and nine independents who later joined the party. After the allocation of 23 reserved seats (17 for women, 4 for minorities), the total reached at 107.

Following the election commission of Pakistan (ECP) ruling on remaining reserved seats, the party clinched 15, out of 20 reserved for women and 1 out of 3 reserved for minorities, cementing its status as the largest party in the national assembly. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) holds 73 seats including 54 general seats, 16 women and another three reserved seats for minorities. Followed by the Mutahida Quami Movement (MQM) with 22 seats, including 17 general seats and five reserved seats — four women and one minority.

Furthermore, the PML-Q has obtained five seats including three general, one independent and one seat reserved for women was also allocated to it. The Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party

(IPP) has secured four general seats including one reserved for women and both the PML-Zia and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) have garnered one seat each.

The Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) holds the second position with 82 seats, while the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) was holding 11 seats in the lower house. Among these, the party won six general seats and acquired four women and one minority seat. Additionally, four political parties each have one seat: Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM), Balochistan National Party (BNP), Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), and the Awami National Party (ANP). Furthermore, there are eight independent members in the national assembly who have not yet joined any party. Two seats in the national assembly are vacant because elections for the NA-8 Bajaur constituency were not held, and the ECP has not yet issued the notification for the winning candidate of NA-146 Khanewal.

Siraj calls for fair probe into election rigging

F.P. Report

MANDI BAHAUDDIN: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Sirajul Haq has called for distribution of state-owned agricultural land among small farmers and unemployed youth, urging the government to prioritize them over foreign companies and the corporate sector.

Addressing a Kissan Convention here on Wednesday, he advocated for tax relief on the import of agricultural machinery, reduced prices for agricultural inputs, and electricity. He urged farmers to unite with JI to press for their demands, promising a sit-in in Islamabad if they stand together.

Sirajul Haq while highlighting the potential of millions of barren acres, envisioned a green revolution in the country through fair land distribution. He criticized the government formed on a fake mandate, expressing skepticism about their commitment to resolving farmers' issues. He attributed problems to corrupt rulers, emphasizing the need for a peaceful, democratic struggle to break the status quo.

The JI leader said that already tested rulers who again took oath on the basis of Form 47 could never bring about change, criticizing the first national assembly session for its lack of focus on people's issues. He called for a fair investigation into election rigging through a judicial commission and the resignation of the chief election commissioner, asserting that the JI mandate was stolen, and the party would not stay silent on the vote robbery.

The JI would continue struggle for the rule of law and justice and raise the voice for people rights at every available forum, he added. The JI Kissan chapter organized the convention, drawing a significant attendance of farmers from different areas. JI Punjab emir Dr Tariq Saleem and JI Kissan president Sardar Zafar Hussain also spoke on occasion.



TAXILA: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir visiting Heavy Industries Taxila at the rollout ceremony of Haider Tank (Pilot Project).

Nikki Haley exits presidential race

WASHINGTON: Nikki Haley, Former South Carolina governor, announced Wednesday to exit the Republican presidential race, leaving former president Donald Trump as the Republican's lone nominee and paving the way for a Trump-Biden rematch in November 2024, CNN reported.

Following a series of losses in GOP nominating contests on Super Tuesday, Haley announced to forfeit the race during remarks in Charleston, South Carolina. However, according to sources familiar with her, Haley is not expected to endorse Trump. Instead, she is calling on the former president to earn the support of voters who backed her. Her plan leaves room for her to endorse the former President before the presidential election in

November.

Haley was the last of 12 prominent candidates the former president defeated in a GOP primary that he towered from start to finish — including a landslide win in 14 of the 15 GOP contests on Super Tuesday.

In her latest speeches, Haley had begun honing her attacks on Trump, questioning his mental fitness and lumping him together with President Joe Biden, the likely Democratic nominee, as one of two "grumpy old men." Her campaign concentrated on a message of ushering in a "new generational leader" and challenging the political norms of the 20th century. Despite her political experience and name recognition, she started as a relatively dark horse, gradually becoming Trump's top contender.

As the race capped down to just Haley and Trump, she encountered setbacks in New Hampshire and her home state of South Carolina. Despite winning Washington, DC's primary shortly before Super Tuesday, it proved inadequate. In a bid to distinguish herself from Trump's vision for the Republican Party, Haley honed her attacks, expressing worries about Trump's commitment to the Constitution and dubbing his likely nomination as "suicide for our country."

While Haley continued to attract sizable crowds, rumours of a third-party bid were repeatedly rejected. In her address before South Carolina's primary, she clarified her purpose was not solely to oppose Trump but to voice concerns about both former and current presidents. — CNN