

FO flays Israeli attack F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has strongly condemned the attack on the consular section of the Iranian Embassy in Damascus, Syria. FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch in a statement here on Tuesday termed the attack an unacceptable violation of sovereignty of Syria and undermining its stability and security. The spokesperson said the attack is a violation of international laws and the UN Charter.



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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif casting his vote at the Senate elections at Parliament House.

PM for mechanism to double country's exports

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday directed for formulation of a strategy aimed at two-fold increase in the country's exports within next five years.

He also asked the Ministry of Trade for compiling of such a strategy in consultation with the successful entrepreneurs and stakeholders. The prime minister chaired a high level meeting on the export sector.

The meeting was attended by ministers including Jam Kamal, Rana Tanveer Hussain, prominent e-Commerce entrepreneurs like CEO Utopia Jabran Niaz, Zeeshan Shah, Salman Ahmed and other relevant authorities. PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

During the meeting, the prime minister directed for extending facilitation to exporters in the e-Commerce sector who had been exporting country's product to the world, besides resolution of the issues of "Made in Pakistan" brand exporters. He said that they were taking steps for maximum utilization of the export sector, adding for the promotion of IT, domestic use item, textile and other exceptional sectors, the relevant stakeholders should be taken on board. The meeting was apprised of proposals and recommendations for the development of export sector and the strategy in this regard. The prime minister

Iranian envoy calls on PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday and discussed matters of mutual concern.

The prime minister thanked the President of Iran, Dr. Ebrahim Raisi, for his congratulatory message and telephone call to him following his re-election. He underscored that Pakistan attached great importance to Iran and the two countries enjoyed historic and brotherly relations.

The prime minister fondly recalled his meeting with the Iranian President when they jointly inaugurated a border market and an electricity transmission line in May 2023. The two leaders had also met on the sidelines of the SCO Summit in Samarkand in 2022. He stressed the need for both sides to work together to enhance trade, energy cooperation, road and rail connectivity, cultural exchanges, counter terrorism efforts and security cooperation. The prime minister appreciated Iran's support on the issue of Jammu & Kashmir. The situation in Palestine was also discussed in the meeting. The Iranian Ambassador thanked the prime minister for receiving him and shared an overview of the current state of bilateral relations. He also affirmed Iran's desire to further strengthen its relations with Pakistan in all areas of mutual interest.

underlined for submission of recommendations over promotion of such industries that were exporting such items which had been part of the global value chains.

Shehbaz directs to build Daanish Schools in all three GB divisions: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the authorities concerned to build Daanish Schools across all three divisions of Gilgit Baltistan to impart world-class education and accommodation facilities to students from low-income groups.

The prime minister, in a meeting with GB Chief Minister Gulbar Khan who

called on him, also constituted a committee to look into the issues faced by GB that would present its recommendations after consultation with the stakeholders.

The prime minister assured the GB chief minister that uplifting the GB people by providing them with education and health facilities was among the federal government's priorities. He also sought recommendations on the ways to exploit the immense tourism potential of GB, besides instructing to expedite work on Attabad and Harpo hydropower projects.

ECP unveils by-polls schedule

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday announced schedule for by-polls on six National Assembly and 17 provincial assembly seats which would be held on April 21.

The top electoral body issued a notification regarding the election programme for vacant NA and PA seats where reelection will be organised next week. According to the notification, the by-polls will be held on six NA, 12 Punjab Assembly, 2 Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly, 2 Balochistan Assembly, and one Sindh Assembly seats.

A total of 239 candidates were going to participate in the forthcoming by-elections, including 50 contenders for NA seats, of which Pakistan Peoples Party leader Aseefa Bhutto-Zardari was elected unopposed in NA-207 constituency. Another PPP leader Zubair Ahmed Junejo was also elected without facing any contest on PS-80 Dadu seat.

Subsequently, 23 candidates were contesting by-polls for KP Assembly seats, 154 candidates for Punjab Assembly seats, and 12 candidates for Balochistan Assembly seats. The ECP spokesperson said polling material has been provided to the provincial election commissioner, whereas, all district returning officers (DROs) and returning officers (ROs) were fulfilling their duties in accordance with the by-polls' schedule.

KP CM says won't allow oath-taking on reserved seats

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: After the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) postponed the Senate polls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur reiterated that they won't allow lawmakers elected on reserved seats to take an oath.

"Those who became [assembly] members illegally will not be allowed to take oath [...] We will not compromise on our constitutional right," Gandapur said while speaking to the media outside the KP Assembly in Peshawar on Tuesday. His remarks come after Senate elections were postponed in the province by the ECP after it was moved by the opposition parties in the wake of their ongoing stand-off with the government over the oath-taking issue.

Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Ahmad Karim Kundi, in a plea filed with the commission, had said that 25 of his party's members have not yet been sworn in and requested that the polls be postponed. In response to the postponement of polls, the chief minister, while lamenting the allocation of reserved seats to other political parties, said that the Constitution was "repeatedly being violated".

"We will fight this and will not back down," Gandapur said, further stressing that the party would "strongly protest" against the move. He further announced that a resolution would be passed regarding the future course of action in the parliamentary party's meeting.

Meanwhile, reacting to the development, KP Assembly Opposition leader

Ibadullah Khan fired a broadside at the KP chief minister saying that "these people neither obey the courts nor the ECP [...] but only obey 'prisoner 804' (a reference to the incarcerated Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf founder Imran Khan)". "The assembly speaker is the custodian of the house [who] is absent today and failed to fulfil his duty," Khan said while speaking to the media outside the KP Assembly.

"Our position is that the Senate polls should be held only after the swearing-in of the elected members. "Senate elections didn't take place due to the government's stubbornness. It is unfortunate that, unlike the rest of the country, Senate elections are not being held here [in KP]". The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader said.

Suspected anthrax-laced letters to IHC chief justice

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Just a day after the Supreme Court of Pakistan took suo motu notice over allegations of the Islamabad High Court's chief justice and other judges against spy agencies, the IHC chief justice among eight judges received "suspected anthrax-laced letters", media reported citing sources on Tuesday.

A police team comprising experts launched a thorough probe to collect facts and ascertain powdery substance after the eight IHC judges received "suspected anthrax powder along with a threatening message". The letter was sent by a woman namely Resham without mentioning her address, the sources said.

They added that a staffer of a judge accidentally dropped the envelope containing the suspicious powdery substance and later he felt extreme irritation in eyes and burns on skin around his lips. Following the incident, Islamabad

Inspector General (IG) and Deputy Inspector General (DIG) police have been summoned to the Islamabad High Court. All suspicious letters have been handed over the police for further investigation.

The development came just a day after the Supreme Court took suo motu notice and formed a seven-member bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa to hear the matter after the six IHC judges blamed spy agencies for meddling in judicial affairs.

ECP postpones Senate polls in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Election Commissioner of Pakistan (ECP) has postponed the Senate elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Election Commissioner Shamshad Khan announced commission's decision as returning officer for the KP Assembly.

Earlier, Opposition lawmakers in KP Assembly had submitted a resolution to the provincial election commissioner to postpone the Senate elections. Arrangements were complete for conducting Senate elections in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly. The staff for holding Senate elections was present in the assembly, however, polling for the uppper house election could not be started even after 10 am.

The request for deferment of elections was submitted by Ahmed Karim Kundi of the opposition to the provincial election commissioner. The opposition member took the stance that 25 members on reserved seats had not taken oath as yet so the election should be postponed.

The provincial election commissioner had approached the Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja on the request of the opposition. In a related development, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has summoned the session of party's parliamentary body after Iftar on Tuesday.

The Frontier Post

PTI seeks permission for rally F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: PTI on Tuesday wrote an application to the DC Rawalpindi in which it sought his permission for the party's public gathering at Liaquat Bagh on April 19. In her application, PTI North Punjab President Seemabia Tahir Satti said that she was an honourable citizen of Pakistan and had always raised her voice for the rule of law and the supremacy of the constitution in the country.



Public Notice

Published Under Section 17(I) of the Land Use and Building Control Act.2021

To solicit suggestions/ opinions/objections on the Draft Master Plans (2042) of Kohat, Bannu and D.I Khan Cities

The Land Use and Building Control Authority of the Local Government, Election and Rural Development Department (LGE & RDD), Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has undertaken a significant initiative by developing Master Plans for the planned growth of Kohat, Bannu and D.I Khan Cities. These master plans aim to comprehensively address a range of critical urban issues including Housing, Public Transport, Environment, Water Supply, Sanitation and Solid Waste Management, Industry & Trade, as well as the Conservation of Agricultural land and Cultural Heritage.

In this regard, the Urban Policy Unit (UPU), of the Planning and Development Department, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has developed comprehensive master plans for Kohat, Bannu and D.I Khan Cities by hiring reputed and well-experienced consulting firm National Engineering Services Pakistan (Pvt) Limited (NESPAK), Lahore. Draft of these Master Plans are available on the UPU website: www.urbanpolicyunitgkp.pk for public scrutiny.

In order to further improve the proposed Master Plans, the Urban Policy Unit, KPK, requests the General Public, Government, Semi-Government, Non-Government, Civil Society Organizations, and Private Sector Institutions, to send their suggestions/ opinions/ objections (if any) to UPU by letter/email/phone/(WhatsApp. 0334-9157932) within 15 days of the publication of this advertisement for consideration.

All suggestions shall be reviewed & accordingly incorporated in the proposed Draft Master Plans 2022-42 of Kohat, Bannu and D.I Khan Cities.

For more details please contact :
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PESHAWAR: Member provincial assembly Aurangzeb Orakzai called on Adviser to CM on Information, Barrister Saif.

PDMA works on Monsoon Contingency Plan 2024

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: In response to the looming threat of monsoon-related disasters, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tuesday embarked on a comprehensive contingency plan for the year 2024.

The plan aims to engage all relevant stakeholders in identifying potential hazards, vulnerabilities, and risks associated with the monsoon season. By mapping available resources, the authorities seek to minimize disaster risks and ensure a well-coordinated response to any emergencies that may arise.

In a recent pre-planning meeting, chaired by the Director of Disaster Risk Management at PDMA, Said Nawab, representatives from various provincial line departments came together to lay the groundwork for the upcoming monsoon season. Director PDMA highlighted the importance of collaboration, stating, "We have initiated the process of Monsoon Contingency Planning 2024 by involving all stakeholders. These series of meetings will continue throughout April, with the aim of finalizing the contingency plan by the end of May 2024."

The PDMA has taken proactive measures to assign specific roles and responsibilities to each department involved in the monsoon plan. Furthermore, tools for data collection have been developed and shared with stakeholders, providing valuable information on district-specific hazards, vulnerability profiles, and potential impacts.

The comprehensive approach adopted by the authorities underscores their commitment to prevention, mitigation, and response strategies in anticipation of the upcoming monsoon season. Through effective coordination and proactive planning, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa aims to mitigate the impact of monsoon-related disasters and safeguard the well-being of its residents.

New Commissioner takes charge in Peshawar

Syed Adnan



PESHAWAR: Marks the commencement of a new era in the administrative landscape of Peshawar Division as Riaz Mehsud, a seasoned BS-20 officer, assumes the prestigious role of Commissioner. After an extensive period of anticipation, Riaz Mehsud officially took charge, ushering in a wave of optimism and renewed commitment to public service.

Known for his unwavering dedication to community welfare, Commissioner Riaz Mehsud wasted no time in initiating efforts to facilitate the residents of Peshawar Division. In a statement issued shortly after assuming office, he pledged to embark on a comprehensive anti-encroachment campaign across the provincial capital and neighboring districts following the conclusion of Eid festivities. This ambitious endeavor aims to reclaim public spaces and

enhance the aesthetic appeal of the region, underscoring the Commissioner's vision to further embellish the beauty of the capital city.

Highlighting his previous successful initiatives, Commissioner Mehsud emphasized his commitment to addressing pressing societal issues, particularly the rehabilitation of drug addicts. During his previous tenure, his efforts in this regard garnered widespread acclaim and public appreciation. Pledging to reignite this crucial endeavor, he affirmed his determination to steer the youth away from the scourge of narcotics, thereby fostering a healthier and more resilient society.

Speaking on his plans for the future, Commissioner Mehsud reiterated his dedication to upholding the principles of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in governance. He expressed his firm resolve to collaborate closely with all stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and the general public, to ensure the effective implementation of developmental initiatives and the delivery of quality services to the citizens of Peshawar Division.

As Commissioner Riaz Mehsud embarks on this pivotal chapter of public service, his appointment heralds a renewed sense of hope and optimism for the residents of Peshawar Division, underscoring the enduring commitment to progress and prosperity.

Haleem-biryani mix add colour to Iftar parties in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Known as city of hospitality, Peshawar's food outlets of Haleem and Biryani started attracting a substantial number of buyers due to its mouthwatering taste and deliciousness during Iftar parties in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Qisa Khwani, Namak Mandi, Fawara Chowk and other famous bazaars with plenty of Haleem and Biryani shops are making roaring business these days as food exchange and outdoor iftar parties gain pace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Like other food sellers, Zard Ali, an expert of haleem-biryani mix dish was seen supervising his staff as they mixed a deep yellow stew in giant cauldron at Namak Mandi where a large number of customers were assembled around the food stall enjoying haleem-biryani combination and other mouthwatering cuisines during Iftar parties.

Traced its origins to the Arab world, Haleem is a mixture of meat, wheat and pulses that are pounded and slow-cooked in large pots until all the ingredients properly merged together to form a thick and dense stew. Introduced in the Indo-Pak subcontinent by Arab expats, haleem has evolved into a most sought-after dish in Pakistan with the addition of the distinct flavors of local spices and was being preferred at Iftar parties.

On the other hand, Biryani was originated in South Asia and is a flavorful mix of rice, beef, mutton or chicken as well as vegetables like potatoes added colour to Iftar parties in KP. "Biryani and Haleem mix is my favourite dish and my iftar seemed incomplete without it," said Riazul Haq, a former PST teacher while talking to APP at Namak Mandi Peshawar.

As the two dishes are usually eaten separately, people have also developed a taste for a mix of the two. In Peshawar, the food vendors are selling the fusion dish to attract foodies for Iftar in outdoor parties. Rehman Ullah who runs a restaurant at Qissa Khwani said that he has been serving this special blend in Ramadan since 1955 and its sale increases during weddings, hageeqa of new borns, engagements and other happy events.

Rehman said he was proud to carryforward the legacy of his forefathers who were an expert of preparation of mixed dish of biryani and haleem that attract foods even from Afghanistan. "Its recipe has been brought from Karachi and later tried in Peshawar by my grandfather and now mashaallah, my sons were also support me in this business."

KP govt's health care initiative for transgenders lauded

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Civil Society Alliance Young Omang, a leading National advocate for the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) of young people, commends the recent ground-breaking decision by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government to set up separate wards for transgender individuals in all District Headquarters (DHQ) hospitals. This progressive move, advised by Governor Haji Ghulam Ali, is a significant step toward eliminating discrimination and enhancing healthcare accessibility for the marginalized transgender community in the province.

Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, responding promptly to the healthcare needs of the transgender population, has advocated for immediate medical services to improve their health status. Mr. Haji Zubair Ali, has significantly contributed in raising this awareness among stakeholders.

Young Omang Pakistan, represented by its dynamic member organizations, including Chanan Development Association (CDA), Aahung, Bargad, Blue Veins, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA), Indus Resource Centre (IRC), and Rahnuma – Family Planning Association of Pakistan (RFPAP), believes in a human rights-based approach to health and inclusivity. This decision by the KP government aligns perfectly with Young Omang's mission to ensure comprehensive and accessible healthcare services for all, particularly the underserved transgender community.

According to Young Omang, the lack of specialized healthcare services has long been a critical barrier for transgender individuals, leading to poor health outcomes and perpetuating social stigma. Establishing dedicated wards is a landmark initiative that promises to address these challenges effectively, ensuring dignity, respect, and equal treatment in healthcare settings.

Qamar Naseem, a noted advocate for transgender rights, expressed his gratitude: "The commendable leadership of Governor Haji Ghulam Ali and Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, with the active support of Ms. Mashal Yousafzai, marks a historic advancement in our collective quest for an inclusive society. Their decisive actions will significantly elevate the health and social status of the transgender community in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa."

Transgender activists Sobia Khan, Arzu, and Farzana Jan collectively praised the KP government's initiative: "We are deeply thankful for this life-changing policy. It recognizes our right to health care and respects our identity and dignity. We hope this will pave the way for more inclusive health and social policies."

Health Minister approves promotion of 305 nurses

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Minister Health Syed Qasim Ali Shah on Tuesday approved promotion and placement of 305 nursing staff promoted through departmental promotion committee in the Health Department.

Minister Syed Qasim Ali Shah stated that The Director General of Health Services will issue announcements regarding the placement of these nurses in various hospitals of the province. Following the approval of the Minister of Health, the services of these

nurses will be assigned to different hospitals across the province.

Out of these nurses, 156 have been promoted based on education, and 136 on seniority. The Minister of Health emphasized that promotion in service is a fundamental right of employees, and placements will address the shortage of nurses in various hospitals of the province.

On the other hand, Minister of Health, Syed Qasim Ali Shah, chaired a meeting with a delegation representing Young Doctors Association, Provincial

Doctors Association, and other forums led by Doctor Nabi Jan Afridi focal person to health minister for health community.

During the meeting, discussions were held regarding the installation of pre-paid electric meters at Lady Reading Hospital doctor's hostel and concerns of medical officers regarding this matter. The Minister of Health instructed the relevant authorities to take immediate action on this issue. It is worth noting that doctors involved in this matter protested vehemently yesterday.

Delegation of car dealers calls on Excise Minister

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A delegation, led by Ghulam Bilal Javed, Chairman of All Pakistan Car Dealers Association, and President of Peshawar Traders Chamber, met with the Provincial Minister for Excise, Taxation and Narcotics, Khaleeq Ur Rehman here on Tuesday.

The focus of the discussion was on a critical issue affecting the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A few months ago, the association successfully advocated for the approval of an Islamabad Excise facilitation desk to assist Peshawar residents with the verification of Islamabad registered

vehicles.

However, the KP caretaker government abruptly halted this process. In response, the delegation, under Ghulam Bilal Javed's leadership, urged the Provincial Minister to reinstate the desk.

Ghulam Bilal Javed highlighted the significant inconvenience and financial burden faced by Peshawar residents in traveling to Islamabad for vehicle verification, costing them approximately twenty-five thousand rupees and consuming their entire day.

The Islamabad Excise facilitation desk had greatly benefited residents of Charsadda, Mardan, Swabi,

and other districts. Ghulam Bilal Javed urged the Provincial Minister to promptly reinstate the desk for the public's convenience.

Provincial Minister Khaleeq Ur Rehman attentively listened to all the concerns and assured the delegation that he would discuss the matter with the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and make a decision after Eid. The delegation included prominent members such as Maaz Ullah Khan from All Pakistan Car Dealers Association Peshawar, Vice President of Peshawar Traders Chamber, Basit Khan, and others.

Minister Food announces cash prize for journalists

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Food, Zahir Shah Toru, attended as a special guest in the Ramadan Night Sports Gala arranged by the Peshawar Press Club, aiming to promote the health and well-being of journalists. He also announced a cash prize of Rs. 100,000 for journalists.

Zahir Shah Toru lauded the initiative by the club, especially during Ramadan, to encourage sports and recreational activities among journalists. Toru extended and emphasized the importance of participating in such events for political leaders also, advocating for a healthy lifestyle.

Speaking at the event held at the Peshawar Press

Club, Toru highlighted the efforts of the provincial government, in enhancing the welfare of journalists. He pledged ongoing support for journalists' priorities in the government's agenda.

During the gala, Toru took part in a friendly badminton match with the President of the Peshawar Press Club, Arshad Aziz Malik.



PESHAWAR: President Press Club, Arshad Aziz Malik presenting shield to KP Food Minister, Zahir Shah Toru.

Iftar ‘Dastarkhwan’ brings people of all faiths closer in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): With the start of last Ashra of Ramazanul Mubarak in Pakistan, the people of all faiths including Muslimes and Sikhs started arranging Aftar Dastarkhwan for underprivileged and poor fasting people as a goodwill gestures. Besides Muslims, the minorities including Sikhs, Hindus and Christians also serve food as a goodwill gesture among fasting people and underprivileged in Peshawar.

It is aimed to promote fraternity, respect and honor among people of different schools of thoughts in Ramazan and bring people closer irrespective of caste and religion. The Sikh community living in different parts of the country including Peshawar arranged Iftari (serving of food for breaking fast) and food distribution among fasting Muslims with the aim of reflecting the sentiments of reverence they had for the holy month of Ramazan.

As the last ashra of Ramzan begins, Sikh residents in Peshawar come out for arranging iftar dinners, announcing special discounts on their shops for fasting Muslims besides helping the poor fasting faithful by providing them edible goods at their doorsteps. Exudes with high spirit of sharing and compassion, Rawandar Singh, a 40-years old Sikh, is all smiles as he seeks solace in dolling out dates and Pakora among fasting Muslims during Aftar on returning home from his shop in Hashtnagri.

Wearing the traditional turban, Rawandar was seen distributing packets of dates and other edible items among the fasting Muslims in

Hashtnagri bazaar here Tuesday. Rawandar's father Awtah Sindh had started the noble practice and passed on to his son since 2012. "I feel inner peace and satisfaction while doing the noble practice in Ramazan."

"The soothing movement of distributing Aftar's items including dates, Pakora, Jalebi and others food dishes are still alive as fresh as today when I keenly observe my late father Awtah Singh handing over packets of Aftar food to Muslim brothers all along way from Hashtnagri to Mohalla Jogan Ramdas in interior City," Rawandar Singh told APP while distributing dates and Pakora among fasting Muslims ahead of Iftar. "I strongly believe in interfaith harmony, love and brotherhood. Distribution of food in Ramazan is our mark of respect and admiration for our fasting Muslims' brothers besides giving us inner peace and satisfaction," Rawandar who is being helped by his son in dolling out of dates and Pakora told APP.

Dewa Singh and his son Tajinder Singh, who are associated with telecommunication business in Hashtnagri Peshawar said inviting people of different faiths in Aftar parties here sends a strong message of love and brotherhood to world. "Without winning hearts and minds, we can't come closer to each other and could not develop a society whose inhabitants enjoy equal rights and respect for each other's belief," they said.

Arranging Aftar parties and Ramzan camps for Muslims is not a new practice for us. Our forefathers

did the same thing to express warmth, love and friendship to our Muslims brothers of Peshawar during Ramazan," they said, adding they are serving Aftar's foods to over dozens of fasting persons on daily basis and vowed to continue to do so in remaining days of holy month. Roadside Aftar parties arranged by Muslims philanthropists are being seen at Qisa Khwani, University Road, Lady Reading Hospital, Takhto Jumat Cantonment and Ramadas where philanthropists invite people of different faiths for joint Aftar parties in an environment of sharing and care.

The long sheets filled with food, dates, pakora, jalebi snacks, fruits and sweet beverages get fully occupied by passerby, labourers and other segments of the society irrespective of caste, colour and creed. Many faithfuls are found sharing their feeling of happiness over seeing Sikh youth standing in front of their doors for distribution of food items to break fast.

"In Ramzan, we have distributed food items in over 200 deserving Muslim families for providing them ease in fulfillment of their religious obligation," said Jatinder Singh, Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter of National Peace Council for Interfaith Harmony. Each of the ration pack consists of essential items including cooking oil, rice, pulses, chick pea, beans, sugar and tea, he added.

The price of ration has almost doubled this year from Rs. 4500 to Rs. 7500 because of inflation. He said donations are coming from people

from diversified faiths and second phase of distribution of food rations will be completed ahead of Eidul Fitr.

Apart from arranging Iftari we are also focusing on provision of edible goods to fasting Muslims at their doorsteps, Jatinder told APP. "Being a dweller of city since generations, we know who is in need of financial support in our locality so we extend them help." "The objective behind this practice by Sikhs is to promote love, fraternity, respect and honor among people of different faiths and strengthen bonds of friendship with muslims," remarked Jatinder Singh. "We are living in this country from generations and wants to convey the message of mutual coexistence and brotherhood among its citizens", he continued. Jatinder said our Muslims neighbours and friends also mark respect to holy occasions of Sikhs by extending goods wishes. Similarly both Muslims and Sikhs attend occasions of happiness and bereavement from both sides to maintain the bond of unity, neighbourhood and humanity.

The measures taken by Sikh community of Peshawar are receiving commendations from people and social media users are displaying these news as beauty of Pakistan where people of different religions are living in harmony and respect of each other. Khayam Khan, a graduate from Peshawar who serves as volunteer in iftar dinner arranged by Sikhs, said he share these pictures on social media with a pride that how people of different faiths are living in conformity in our country.

"In each Ramzan I spare time and participate in such iftar dinners to acknowledge the good initiative taken by Sikh community members," he said. Haroon Sarbdayal, a representative of Hindu community in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and a founding member of Pakistan Council of World Religions said that all prophets and founders of all religions had promoted peace, forgiveness, patience, love and tolerance through their teachings, actions and deeds.

He said misperceptions among followers of different faiths could be removed by enhancing interaction and dialogues among all religious communities. "We need to promote 'acceptance' instead of 'tolerance' because the former is more effective in establishing durable peace, patience, tolerance and pluralism in a prosperous society." He said Ramazan is the month of tolerance and patience in which Hindu Community has started arranging Aftar parties for their Muslim brothers in KP.

In Peshawar, he said a grand Aftar party would be arranged in last days of Ramazan where leaders of all religions would be invited. He said such noble practices were already in progress in Sindh province which has a considerably higher Hindu population than Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He suggested establishment of common study centres for followers of all religions where they could interact and understand each other's religion and organizing of Aftar parties to bring people closer.

Hifazat Ullah Khan, Chairman

Islamic and Arabic Studies, Islamia College Peshawar told APP that the Muslims seek forgiveness and mercy in this holy month besides having a blessed night of Lalatul Qadar." Highly appreciating the minorities' goodwill gestures of arranging Aftar parties and Aftar Dastarkhwan' for Rozadars, he said these noble practices brings Muslims and minorities closer and increased their understanding about each others' faiths.

He said inviting each others for Aftar parties cement bonds of love and brotherhood among people of all religions including Islam and Christianity. The principles of interfaith harmony and mutual coexistence were clearly set out in Madina Charter (Meesaq-e-Madina) and Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's historic address on August 11, 1947 to the members of constituent assembly and 1973 constitution.

"The Madina Charter had provided complete and unprecedented religious freedoms to followers of all religions and there is a need of constant debate and discussion on its different clauses and articles for education and guidance of all imperative for lasting peace in the society." Terming charity an important component of Islam, he said it is more significant in Ramazan and people should give it to reputable charity organisations having an excellent service and clean accounts record. He said a list of reputable charities organisations was available in NECTA website, adding extra care should be made so that their charity can't go into the wrong hands.



In brief

Hand grenade hurled at house

QUETTA (PPI): A hand grenade was hurled at a house near Allah Wala Masjid inside Qambrani Road area of Quetta on Tuesday, however, no loss of life was reported. According to police, unidentified miscreants hurled a hand grenade at a house near Allah Wala Masjid at Qambrani Road area of the provincial capital, however, no loss has been reported. Further investigation was being conducted by the concerned authorities. Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Kohlu has terminated the services of Levies Daffedar Muhammad Sharif posted at Levies Thana Lassezai owing to gross misconduct and involvement in theft incident. An order issued by the Deputy Commissioner, Kohlu says, "In exercise of powers conferred under Rule- 4(1)(b)(iii) of Balochistan Levies Force Disciplinary Rules 2015, the Deputy Commissioner Kohlu is pleased to "terminate the services" of Levies Daffedar Muhammad Sharif posted at Levies Thana Lassezai owing to gross misconduct and involvement in theft incident, with immediate effect till further orders."

Four cops among six injured

BAHAWALPUR (INP): A speeding bus hit a police van on Motorway M-5 near Och Sharif Interchange on Tuesday, resulting in 6 people including 4 policemen being seriously injured. Police sources said here that a police van of Rajanpur police was on its way on Motorway M-5 when it was hit by a speedy passenger coach near Uch Sharif Interchange in the Uch Sharif area of Bahawalpur district. As a result, six people including four police personnel sustained serious wounds. The rescuers and ambulances rushed to the scene and shifted the injured to Uch Sharif Hospital for emergency medical treatment. "The police van after getting medical examination of two suspects from a health center was returning to the police station when it was hit by a speedy bus," the police sources said. The local police have been investigating the incident. Further probe was underway.

Two brothers shot dead

BAHAWALNAGAR (INP): Unidentified armed men gunned down two real brothers in Kora Khoh area of Bahawalnagar on Tuesday. According to details, two brothers riding a motorcycle on their way to appear in court in a case were ambushed to unknown gunmen. Both brothers identified as Sabir and Nanha Khan were killed in the firing and attackers fled the scene of crime. Police and rescue teams visited the crime scene, and shifted the bodies to hospital for postmortem. Police said that the incident seems to be outcome of personal enmity. However, a case has been registered into the incident and investigations were underway.

Murder case solved, one held

MULTAN (INP): Shah Rukan-e-Alam police solved a robbery-cum-murder case and arrested the accused besides recovering weapon from his possession here on Tuesday. Holding a press conference here, the City Police Officer (CPO) Sadiq Ali Dogar said that 21-year old Muhammad Hussain s/o Abdul Ghaffar resident of Shah Rukan-e-Alam Colony was returning home when he was intercepted by an unknown outlaw at Shah Faisal Colony Ghaus-pura on March 07.



QUETTA: Acting Governor Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Achakzai addressing an event 'Promoting Social Cohesion.'

Govt committed to mitigate issues of people

F.P. Report

HAFIZABAD: Chairperson Chief Minister's Special Initiative Committee and Ex-Federal Minister Saira Afzal Tara said that present government is committed to mitigate problems of people and Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif is taking practical measures to provide maximum relief to the people.

She was talking to people at Sukheki Mandi after an Ifar Dinner hosted by prominent rice dealers Chaudhry Hamid Yaseen and Sheikh Ijaz Bashir. MPA Mian Shahid Hussain Bhatti, Mujtiba Jamal Chaudhary, ex-District Naib Nazim Mian Zahid Hussain Bhatti, ex-Chairman District Zakat Committee Chaudhry Nasrullah Khan Bhatti, ex-Chairman Municipal Committee Sukehki Mandi Chaudhary Nasir Qayyum Bhatti, ex-Members MC Chaudhary Tajammal Raza Advocate, Malik Maqsood

Ahmad, Javed Ajiz, Abdul Shakoor Gujjar, President Anjuman Tajran Sukheki Mandi Sheikh Tariq Mehmood, Chaudhry Shazad Bhatti and a large number of traders, farmers, workers of PMLN were also attended the function.

Saira Afzal Tara further said that fruits of Chief Minister's Initiatives would be started reaching to the people at their doorsteps shortly and with distribution of Ramzan Ration Package, the poor and less-resources people get relief in the greet extant. She listened individual and collective problems of people patiently and assured that doctors would be appointed at Rural Health Centre Sukheki shortly and other problems would also be addressed gradually.

Youm-e-Hazrat Ali (RA) observed Youm-e-Hazrat Ali (RA) observed with religious respect, fever and zeal in Hafizabad, on Monday. In this regard, three processions taken out in Hafizabad, Rasulpur

Tarar and Pindi Bhattian and Majalis and congregations held at various Masajid and other places.

Ulema and Zakreen to pay rich tribute to Hazrat Ali (R.A) and urged the Muslim to follow footsteps of the Hazrat Ali (RA) for success in this world and hereafter. They highlighted the services rendered by the Hazrat Ali (RA) in their cerimans for promoting Islamic teaching.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Sundas Irshad and DPO Faisal Gulzar visited routes of the processions and places of majalis to check security arrangements made to maintain peaceful atmosphere in the district. They also visited examination centre at government college Hafizabad and reviewed arrangements made to hold examination transparently as well as to prevent interference of 'Booti Mafia'. Chief Executive Officer Education Hafizabad Sohail Azhar Kan was also accompanied by them.

Rickshaw driver abducts, rapes Varsity student

BAHAWALNAGAR (INP): In yet another sexual assault incident, a female student of Islamia University Bahawalnagar was 'abducted and raped' by a rickshaw driver. As per details, a rickshaw driver abducted the university's female student with the help of his accomplice and raped her multiple times.

According to police, the rapists made videos and took pictures of the rap-victim girl and took her thumb impression on a blank paper. A case has been registered against the rapists on the complaint of the female student, while raids were being conducted for arrest. Last month, a 12-year-old girl was 'raped' in Islamabad's F-9 park.

The child's mother, who is a widow and a housemaid, filed a complaint at Margalla Police Station, alleging that the child was taken out of her house in F-11/1 by a woman named Mehreen and later to F-9 Park. However, the child returned home crying at 11 pm and told the mother she was 'sexually assaulted'. The mother told police that she is divorced and lives alone with her daughter and makes ends meet by working in people's houses as a maid.

KBA elects new cabinet

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Kohat Bar Association (KBA) elected Dr. Ajam as president for 2nd time consecutively. In the Kohat District Bar Association Elections 2024, after a tight contest, Dr. Ameer Ajam Advocate elected President for 2nd time defeating Aman Khan Bangash by 3 votes.

According to details, polling for the Presidency Slot of District Bar Association Kohat was held in which Dr. Ameer Ajam Advocate won the contest by getting 121 votes while his rival Aman Khan Bangash Advocate got 118 votes. Chairman of the Elections 2024 Mazaahir Advocate announced the victory of Dr. Ameer Ajam Advocate however his rival candidate Aman Bangash Advocate submitted a request for recounting.

Shahid Hayat Advocate elected unopposed Vice President of the Kohat Bar Association. In other positions, Tariq Altaf Advocate elected General Secretary while Wahid Meraj Advocate and Aziz ur Rahman Advocate elected as Joint Secretary and Finance Secretary respectively.

Mayar asks PHC CJ over LG inactivity, lack of power

Anees Takar

MARDAN: Mayor Mardan Hamayatullah Mayar has addressed an open letter to the Chief Justice of Peshawar High Court (PHC) highlighting the issue of local government inactivity leading to a lack of authority and funds. He alleges that the previous government in the KP amended the local government act and paralyzed the LG financially and administratively.

The letter, a scathing critique of judicial neglect and governmental apathy references multiple petitions filed against the government including those by Mayar himself and others like Zubair Ali and Yousaf Khan. The letter begins by emphasizing the population of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa KP exceeding four crores and its constitutional right to local representation and governance under Articles 7, 17, 32, 37(i) and 140A of the Pakistani constitution.

Mayor highlights the two-stage local government elections held on December 19, 2021, and March 31,

2022, along with the subsequent establishment of elected representatives' offices at the local level in March and June 2022, respectively. However, he criticizes the amendments made to the KP Local Government (Amendment) Act 2019 by the previous PTI government which reduced the powers of local governments and abolished Section 30(2)(b) regarding grants to local governments through the Financial Commission awards.

He alleges that this action has rendered local governments administratively and financially paralyzed, with no office established at the tehsil level from 2019 to 2024.

Furthermore, Mayor points out the transfer of administrative and financial powers of nine social service departments to the district and tehsil administrations, effectively dismantling the district and tehsil governments' system. Despite the legal framework introduced through the Local Government Act 2013 and amended in 2019, practical steps to establish

local government offices have not been taken.

The letter also addresses the failure of the judiciary to address petitions and provide relief to elected representatives, who have been protesting against the provincial government's actions for over two years. Mayar alleges a lack of action by the courts and contends that the judiciary has been swayed by the provincial government's influence, delaying or dismissing cases against it.

Mayar concludes the letter by urging the Peshawar High Court to uphold the rule of law and ensure justice for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He emphasizes the plight of the province's 42,000 elected representatives, who are awaiting a verdict in favor of justice and public governance. In the copy distributed, Mayar includes key government officials, including the Chief Minister, Minister for Local Government, Law Minister, Advocate General, and Secretaries of Local Government and Law.

Employees hold protest for salaries

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Employees Welfare Association (EWA) at University of Larkana staged a protest demonstration in front of the Main Admin Block and chanted slogans for non-payment of salaries for four months and reinstatement of the suspended employees.

On this occasion, the office bearers of the Employees Association Sahir Hussain Pechoho, Huzoor Bakhsh Dipar, Muzaffar Ali Gadhehi, Bilawal Jokio, Salim Ahmed Khaskheli, Ghulam Abbas Chandio, Najamuddin Sario, Manzoor Ali Jatoi, Tariq Ali Leghari, Shahzad Baghio and others said in front of the media. All the campuses of Larkana have been merged into a university called the University of Larkana, in which nearly 500 employees have been shut down without pay for the last 4 months.

During the protest, the university administration assured us that all legitimate demands will be granted along with the release of all your salaries, but unfortunately, the administration has turned away from what it has done and the salaries have not been released to the employees and a few days ago. The university admin-

istration has suspended 14 employees including the office bearers of the association without justification and banned them from entering the university and for further action, the law administration has formed a committee.

The employee appeared before the committee and gave his statement and said that the salary has not been issued for the last 4 months, while the vice-chancellor and the registrar gave in writing that on this date all other demands including the salary have been approved and they have been notified. Will also be taken out, but unfortunately, till now, the problems have not been solved and the remaining salaries have not been released, only the university administration is giving support day by day, which we will do in strict terms. We would like to inform the administration that there is a desperate situation in our homes, while the housewives who are tired of taking loans day by day to support their children, the employees are not being paid, forcing the employees to work peacefully.

The protestors claimed that they should be banned by suspending them. They said that if Asan's problems are not resolved, a protest camp will be established in

front of the main gate of Kan University on April 3, in which representatives of All Sindh Universities Employees Federation and representatives of political, social organizations and civil society of Sindh will also participate. will do They appealed to the relevant higher authorities to take notice of the matter and make strict inquiries from the university administration to reinstate the suspended employees and release the remaining salaries and do justice by accepting all the legitimate demands.

Cops capture two robbers

KANDHKOT (PPI): Kandhkot police on Tuesday claimed to have arrested two robbers in injured condition during an encounter with them.

According to a police report, the robbers were looting people in the city when a Kandhkot A-section police team rushed to the scene, where encounter took place there. During crossfire for some time, the police succeeded to capture two robbers in injured condition, however, their one accomplice escaped from the scene.



HYDERABAD: People break their fast on iftar during holy fasting month of Ramazan at Hyder Chowk.

11 bogies of freight train derail near Chaghai

CHAGAI (PPI): Eleven bogies of a freight train traveling from Quetta to Zahedan were derailed in Chagai district on Tuesday.

According to the details, a total of 11 bogies from the freight car have veered off the tracks, prompting swift action from railway officials. The derailment has resulted in the suspension of train services between Iran and Pakistan, affecting both incoming and outgoing routes.

Railway authorities have confirmed that trains traveling to and from Zahedan have been stopped until further notice, as a result of the incident. Meanwhile, the rescue teams from the railways have been dispatched to the scene to assess the situation and initiate necessary measures.

Earlier this year, an accident was reported where two bogies of a freight train derailed near Dera Nawab railway station. According

to the details, the freight train was en route from Karachi to Lahore when two of its bogies derailed near Dera Nawab railway station.

The railway authorities closed the up and down tracks due to the accident, which affected the railway operations at various stations. The authorities stated that the track clearance work is underway which will take some time to restore the affected railway operations.

Anti-thief campaign: PTI backed MPA attacks PESCO team

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Peshawar Electricity Supply Company (PESCO) Sub Divisional Officer (SDO) Mardan asked police for registration of First Information Report (FIR) against PTI backed Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Abdul Salam Afridi and other associates in City Police Station.

According to the text, Abdul Salam Afridi MPA along with other associates in the presence of DSP City Ejaz Khan and other police personnel attacked the office of XEN Mardan Division and tried to target the PESCO officers threatened to kill him, while the officials defended SDO and moved him to a safe place.

The speeches challenging the

institutions, Criticized PESCO. He said that copies of the request to file FIR against them were also sent to the Interior Minister, DIG Mardan Division and DPO Mardan. Now let us give duties or block the way of these people.

All Pakistan WAPDA Hydro Electric Workers Union strongly condemned this attack and if the FIR is not registered against these bullies by Monday, All Pakistan WAPDA Hydro Electric Workers Union will react strongly and call for protest in Mardan-I Division including all sub-divisions.

Admin fails before profiteers: Mardan administration failed to implement the administrative writ, milk sellers started charging arbitrary prices, sale of chemical mixed milk and curd is common, government checking

is a question mark, people are suffering due to inflation and citizens are demanding to take immediate notice from the higher authorities.

According to the details, the urban areas of Mardan Bank Road, Mardan Khas, Toru chowk, Babu Mohallah, Khawaja Ganj, Bicket Gunj, Mir Afzal Khan Bazar, Bari Cham, Sikandari Koruna, Guli Bagh, Hoti, Mall mandi Bazar, Baghdada, Nahar Chowk, Shamsi Road, Kas Koruna, Bajli Ghar, Chatu chowk and other urban and suburban areas, instead of Rs. 170 fixed by the Milk Price Control Committee Rs. 220 per kg while curd was sold at Rs. 220 per kg instead of Rs. 180. Also, under the nose of the administration, there is a lot of milk mixed with chemicals

and water in the market and citizens are forced to buy unhealthy milk at high prices.

Meanwhile, district administration has referred the citizens to the profiteering tailors due to inflation. As the tailors have started charging 1400 to 1600 rupees for tailoring a normal suit and up to 2000 rupees for fancy tailoring which has put poor citizens under the pressure of inflation.

According to details, the poor people shown their inability to prepare new clothes for their children on Eid, Majority of the citizens who have bought clothes of low price to make their children participate in the joy of eid but cannot pay more than the cost of the clothes for tailoring a suit.

Due to the negligence of the district administration, thou-

sands of tailors in Gaju Khan Road, Shaheen Market, Ghareeb Market, Wahab Plaza, Meena Market, Bicket Gunj, Nahar Chowk, Eidgah Road, Shamsi Road, Kas Koruna, Baghdada, Maqam Chowk and other commercial centers there is no fixed rate and citizens are being robbed with both hands by charging arbitrary prices. The citizens demanded from the Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to issue an immediate price list for the poor performance of the Mardan district administration.

BISE conducts online marking: Education Board Mardan has announced the online marking of three subjects of Matriculation and Inter exams this year. Board Chairman Farid Ahmad Khattak termed the ini-

tiative as an important step towards bringing transparency in the examination system and termed it as a continuation of ongoing reforms in the board.

In a statement issued by the Controller of Examinations Prof. Ishrat Ali, it is said that online marking of English, Physics and Chemistry papers has been done in class 9th and 10th thus there will be e-sheet marking of English, Physics and Chemistry papers in the first year and e-sheet marking exams as well. Meanwhile, Board Chairman Farid Ahmad Khattak said that this initiative is an important step towards bringing transparency in the marking system and it is a continuation of the reforms that have been started since last year. He said that there will be no compromise on merit.



Gaza’s al-Shifa hospital in ruins after two-week Israeli raid

GAZA (BBC): Israel’s military has pulled out of al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City after a two-week raid that has left most of the major medical complex in ruins. Gaza’s Hamas-run health ministry said dozens of bodies had been found and locals said nearby areas were razed. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said it had killed 200 "terrorists", detained over 500 more and found weapons and intelligence "throughout the hospital".

The IDF said it raided al-Shifa because Hamas had regrouped there. The two-week operation saw intense fighting and Israeli air strikes in nearby buildings and the surrounding area. Wards were attacked because Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives were using them as a base, the IDF said, accusing them of fighting inside medical departments, setting off explosives and burning hospital buildings. Images published following the Israeli withdrawal showed Palestinians walking near the charred main buildings with chunks of wall missing and carrying bodies wrapped in blankets. Graphic photos showed corpses partially exposed on the churned ground.

The health ministry said dozens of bodies, some decomposed, had been found in and around the medical complex, which was now "completely out of service". A doctor told AFP news agency more than 20 bodies had been recovered, some crushed by withdrawing vehicles. A spokesperson for Gaza’s Hamas-run civil emergency service said Israeli forces had used bulldozers to dig up the grounds of the complex and exhume buried bodies. The Hamas government media office said Israeli forces had killed 400 Palestinians in al-Shifa and the surrounding area, including a female doctor and her son, who was also a doctor. In an update, IDF Spokesperson Rear Adm Daniel Hagari said the IDF had taken "special efforts not to harm any patients, any medical staff, or any civilians in the area. "Patients who remained in the compound were provided with medical supplies and water." He added that 200 people he described as "terrorists" had been killed. Over 900 people were detained, of whom more than 500 were, he said, subsequently found to be affiliated with Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad - which Israel, the UK and other countries proscribe as terrorist organisations. Interrogation of the suspects had yielded "significant intelligence", he added. Earlier, the IDF said "forces



found large quantities of weapons, intelligence documents throughout the hospital, encountered terrorists in close-quarters battles and engaged in combat while avoiding harm to the medical staff and patients". The World Health Organization (WHO) said that 21 patients had died, with patients moved a number of times and held without medical care.

Dr Amira al-Safady at al-Shifa told the BBC’s Gaza Lifeline radio that about 16 people who were in the intensive care unit died after being moved, because she and other doctors no longer had the equipment to treat them. Three days later, troops told medical staff to bury them outside, she said. The IDF has been asked for comment. It says troops set up temporary infrastructure for medical treatment at al-Shifa, with video showing troops setting up a small number of beds. Patient Barra al-Shawish told Reuters news agency that the Israeli troops had allowed in a "very small amount of food". "No treatment, no medicine, nothing, and bombing for 24 hours that didn’t stop and immense destruction in the hospital," he said. Some of the patients were being moved to al-Ahli hospital, about 3km (1.8 miles) to the south-east, a medic at al-Shifa told Reuters. Gaza’s hospitals have been a main focus of the current war, with thousands of Palestinians seeking shelter from Israeli bombardment in their grounds and Israeli forces storming the facilities because they say Hamas fighters are present there. Israel has long accused Hamas of using civilian health infrastructure as a cover to launch its operations, which the group denies. Two weeks ago, it took hundreds of Israeli forces just a few hours to approach and enter the Gaza Strip’s largest

hospital. That was in marked contrast to their first controversial raid there in November, when it took several weeks for large numbers of tanks and vehicles, backed by heavy air strikes, to close in on the site. For supporters of the Israeli military, this has been evidence of the gains it has made during the war and its tactical success, launching a surprise attack on the enemy to strike it hard. An IDF spokesman previously referred to the operation as "one of the most successful of the war so far" because of the intelligence gleaned, as well as numbers killed and detained.

However, some commentators suggest the second al-Shifa raid highlights flaws in Israel’s military strategy for the war. They argue that it shows the ease with which Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad fighters were able to regroup after Israel pulled its forces out of northern Gaza and the urgent need to come up with a convincing post-war plan to govern the territory. The Gaza health ministry appealed for international help to restart medical care at Nasser hospital in the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis. The biggest hospital in southern Gaza has been out of action since the Israeli military stormed it in February.

The war began when Hamas fighters stormed into southern Israel on 7 October, killing about 1,200 people and seizing 253 hostages, according to Israeli tallies. About 130 of the hostages remain in captivity, at least 34 of whom are presumed dead. More than 32,800 Palestinians have been killed and 75,000 injured in Gaza since Israel launched its military campaign, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. It says 70% of those killed were women and children.

74 migrants have been found in a wooden boat

ATHENS (AP): Dozens of migrants found in a wooden boat in the Mediterranean Sea between northern Africa and southern Europe have been transported to the Greek island of Crete, Greece’s coast guard said. Crete has recently seen a rise in migrant arrivals from Libya, which Greece’s government promised to address with more funding and extra coast guard personnel.

The boat with 74 people on board was found 25 nautical miles (46 kilometers, 29 miles) south of the small Greek island of Gavdos, the coast guard said, adding that a patrol boat transported the 73 men and one woman to Crete. It was not immediately clear where or when the boat had launched or what countries the passengers were from. No injuries or illnesses were reported among them. They were taken to a temporary shelter. Greece is a major entry point into the European Union for people fleeing conflict and poverty in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Gavdos, which lies 27 nautical miles south of Crete, and Crete’s southern coastline have seen an increase in migrant arrivals in recent months. In several cases, the coast guard said they had crossed the Mediterranean from the eastern Libyan port of Tobruk, having paid smuggling gangs up to \$5,000 each.

The influx has put pressure on authorities on Gavdos, a summer tourism destination about 29 square kilometers (11 square miles) in size that has just a few dozen residents in the off season. Greece’s migration minister, Dimitris Kairidis, visited Crete and Gavdos and pledged to increase ministry funding for the area, adding that the government was also providing additional coast guard staffing there. "We have both the funds and the means," Kairidis said. "Crete will not be left alone, and even less so Gavdos, which is a very small island with few permanent residents."

DR Congo leader names Tuluka as PM

DR CONGO: Democratic Republic of Congo’s President Felix Tshisekedi has appointed the country’s first-ever female prime minister, naming planning minister Judith Suminwa to the role. An economist, she takes over as prime minister from Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde, following Tshisekedi’s sweeping re-election as president on December 20.

Tshisekedi’s inauguration for a second term in January kick-started a lengthy search for a majority coalition in the National Assembly - a key step before a prime minister could be named and a government formed. "I am aware of the great responsibility ... We will work for peace and the development of the country," Suminwa said on national television.

Tshisekedi officially triumphed with 73.47 percent of the vote in December, and the election passed largely peacefully in a country long torn by violence and instability. The opposition branded the ballot a sham. Voting was officially extended by a day due to logistical snarls, and polls were open for days afterwards in remote areas. Parties supporting Tshisekedi garnered more than 90 percent of the seats in parliament, allowing him to legislate with ease. The new prime minister will be tasked with pushing the president’s declared priorities of employment, youth, women and national cohesion for the nation of about 100 million people.

Tshisekedi first became president in 2019 promising to improve living conditions in the DR Congo - which boasts mineral riches but has a largely impoverished population - and put an end to 25 years of bloodshed in the east. The president failed to keep those promises, but he campaigned for a second term on his achievements such as free primary medication, asking for another mandate to "consolidate" the progress. According to the United Nations, some seven million people have been internally displaced by conflict in the DR Congo, one of the world’s poorest countries. — Aljazeera

Why does South Asia have world’s worst air pollution?

DHAKA: In 2023, Bangladesh recorded the worst air quality of 134 countries monitored by the Swiss climate group, IQAir. Pakistan and India were close behind, with the report showing that South Asia suffers from the worst pollution in the world overall. Here are some insights from the report and what it tells us about the South Asian countries’ governments.

The report provides an overview of PM2.5 air quality data from 7,812 cities across the world. PM2.5 refers to fine particulate matter which is 2.5 microns or smaller in diameter and is dangerous because it can pass deep into the human respiratory tract. These particles are released during natural events such as dust storms and wildfires, or can be caused by human activities such as coal burning or agricultural work.

According to World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, average annual levels of PM2.5 should not surpass 5 micrograms per cubic metre. Only 10 countries listed in the report comply with this standard, however. They include French Polynesia - which has the cleanest air in the world according to the report - New Zealand, Finland and Estonia, among others. Bangladesh’s PM2.5 levels stand at 79.9 micrograms per cubic metre, nearly 16 times higher than the WHO recommends. Pakistan scored 73.7 while India’s air had 54.4 micrograms of PM2.5 particles per cubic metre on average over the last year.

Within each of the countries monitored by IQAir, air quality can vary hugely from city to city. Begusarai, the industrial and financial capital of India’s Bihar, with refineries and power stations, had a whopping 118.9 micrograms of PM2.5 particles per cubic metre on average in 2023. New Delhi had 92.7, while Dhaka in Bangladesh had 80.2 and Pakistan’s smog-ridden Lahore recorded an average of 99.5.

Eighty-three cities in India have air with more than 10 times the recommended limit of 5 micrograms per cubic metre. According to the IQAir report, this compares with San Juan in Puerto Rico, the least polluted city in the world, with only 2.7 micrograms of PM2.5 particles per cubic metre on average in 2023. Wellington in New Zealand comes second, with 3.1 micrograms and Canberra in Australia has 3.8 micrograms. The report found that poor air quality in South Asia is often down to "brick kiln and other industrial emissions, agricultural waste burning, and cremation practices". It added that the burning of solid fuel for cooking and heating, especially during colder months, adds to the air pollution.

In Bangladesh, there are an estimated

Israel to take US Rafah concerns into consideration

WASHINGTON: Israeli officials have agreed to take the United States’ "concerns" about a possible invasion of Rafah in Gaza into consideration after a virtual meeting, the White House has said. It remains unclear whether the talks will push Israel to delay or cancel its planned assault on the crowded southern Gaza city, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have taken shelter.

Officials from both countries had a "constructive engagement on Rafa", the US White House said in a statement. The meeting was attended by government experts and senior representatives, including US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and his Israeli counterpart Tzachi Hanegbi, according to the statement.

"The US side expressed its concerns with various courses of action in Rafah. The Israeli side agreed to take these concerns into account and to have follow up discussions between experts," the White House said, adding that further discussions will be held,

including another meeting as early as next week. The possible invasion of Rafah has been a rare point of public disagreement between the administration of US President Joe Biden and Israel. The city, which sits at the border with Egypt, is now home to more than 1.5 million people, the overwhelming majority of whom have been displaced from their homes by the Israeli offensive. Rafah is also the main gateway for humanitarian aid reaching the territory. US officials have warned that a ground operation in Gaza would be a "mistake", stressing that civilians trapped in the city have nowhere else to go. Washington has also expressed concern over a ground assault’s potential effects on the already dire humanitarian situation in Gaza.

But Israel has emphasised that a major attack on Rafah is needed to defeat the remaining Hamas battalions. The US has said it shares the goal of eliminating Hamas, but there are alternative methods of targeting the Palestinian group without an all-out Rafah invasion. Israel’s European

allies have also voiced opposition to a Rafah assault. The talks had originally been set for last month. But they were rescheduled after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cancelled Israel’s delegation to Washington, DC, in protest of a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for a ceasefire, which the Biden administration did not veto. Earlier, White House spokeswoman Karine Jean-Pierre said the meeting was held virtually because the US wanted to "move very quickly" on the issue.

"If they are going to move forward with a military operation, we have to have this conversation. We have to understand how they’re going to move forward," Jean-Pierre told reporters. Despite cautioning against a Rafah invasion, the Biden administration has said repeatedly that there are no red lines in Gaza that would hinder the US aid and weapons transfers to Israel. The war on Gaza has killed close to 33,000 Palestinians, and Israel’s blockade of the territory has brought it to the verge of famine. — Aljazeera

Pentagon reveals official reported symptoms of ‘Havana Syndrome’

WASHINGTON: A spokesperson for the Pentagon has confirmed that a senior official from the United States had reported symptoms corresponding to so-called Havana Syndrome after attending last year’s NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Sabrina Singh made the announcement to reporters, a day after a group of news outlets pointed to links between the mysterious ailment and alleged Russian operatives. "I can confirm that a senior DOD [Department of Defense] official experienced symptoms similar to those reported in anomalous health incidents," Singh said.

Reports of Havana Syndrome stretch back to 2016, when US embassy staff in Havana, Cuba, started to report unexplained symptoms including ringing ears, migraines, vertigo and cognitive dysfunction. Other instances involving diplomats with similar symptoms have since been reported elsewhere, including in China and Austria. Experts have been trying to determine what may have caused the symptoms, with some speculating that foreign adversaries could have directed

energy waves at the diplomats to cause their ailments. However, in 2023, the US intelligence community concluded that it was "very unlikely" that a "foreign adversary is responsible" for the reported cases. Still, a news investigation released raised questions about whether Russia was indeed involved in the mysterious health incidents - and whether the US government has been too quick to dismiss possible links. The report was the product of a joint investigation by the US news show 60 Minutes, the German newspaper Der Spiegel and The Insider, an investigative news outlet focussed on Russia. It highlighted evidence suggesting that members of a Russian military unit known by the number 29155 were present several times when US officials reported symptoms consistent with Havana Syndrome. The Insider reporter Christo Grozev said he found documents showing a member of the 29155 unit received a bonus for working on the "potential capabilities of non-lethal acoustic weapons". The Insider also indicated that the purported attacks may have started years before the symptoms were detected in Havana. It

pointed to incidents in November 2014 in Frankfurt, Germany, when US consulate officials reported similar symptoms. The Russian government denied the reports, calling them "baseless" and "unfounded". "This is not a new topic at all. For many years, the topic of the so-called Havana Syndrome has been exaggerated in the press," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "But no one has ever published or expressed any convincing evidence of these unfounded accusations anywhere." Last month, the National Institutes of Health, a US government agency, found no evidence of brain injuries or other "biological abnormalities" in government employees allegedly stricken with Havana Syndrome.

But it did note that "these symptoms are very real, cause significant disruption in the lives of those affected and can be quite prolonged, disabling and difficult to treat". Speaking to the show 60 Minutes, a counterintelligence agent for the Federal Bureau of Investigation - identified only by her first name, Carrie - described her experience dealing with Havana Syndrome in Florida. "It was like a dentist drilling

on steroids," she said. "It was like a high-pitched, metallic drilling noise, and it knocked me forward - like a 45-degree angle." In 2021, the US Congress passed the Helping American Victims Afflicted by Neurological Attacks (HAVANA) Act to provide compensation for government employees suffering from symptoms related to the mysterious health incidents. Also, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre briefly addressed the reports, reaffirming that the administration of President Joe Biden would continue to push for resources to investigate the source of the symptoms. "We have taken this very seriously," she said, while deferring specific questions to the intelligence community.

"We are going to continue to emphasise the importance of prioritizing, making sure that personnel are protected. And we are going to do everything that we can. This is something that this president believes is important," she added. "Look, we’re going to continue to do a comprehensive examination of the effects here that we’re seeing and the potential causes of AHI [anomalous health incidents]." — Aljazeera

Lawmakers submit request for removal of Peru’s president

LIMA (AP): Pressure mounted against Peruvian President Dina Boluarte as lawmakers submitted to Parliament a request to remove her from office for "permanent moral incapacity" three days after police broke down the front door of her residence to search for luxury watches tied to an investigation.

The request was submitted by lawmakers from various parties including Peru Libre to which Boluarte once belonged. To remove Boluarte, the move requires 87 votes from the 130-seat unicameral Parliament, and so far, five parties that together have 54 votes expressed support for the president following the raid. Boluarte is being prelimi-

narily investigated for allegedly acquiring an undisclosed collection of luxury watches since becoming vice president and social inclusion minister in July 2021 and then president in December 2022. She has denied the illicit enrichment accusations.

Lawmakers in their request cite the investigation against Boluarte as well as countrywide problems, such as rise in crime. Armed police officers broke down the front door of Boluarte’s house with a battering ram in search of Rolex watches as part of the investigation. The raid marked the first time in Peru’s history that police forcibly entered the home

of a sitting president.

The probe began in mid-March after a TV show spotlighted Boluarte wearing a Rolex watch that is worth up to \$14,000 in Peru. Other TV shows later mentioned at least two more Rolexes. Boluarte, a 61-year-old lawyer, was a modest district official before entering then-President Pedro Castillo’s government on a monthly salary of \$8,136 in July 2021. Boluarte later assumed the presidency with a lower salary of \$4,200 per month. Shortly thereafter, she began to display the luxury watches. Boluarte did not list the three watches in an obligatory asset declaration form.

Boluarte also lost three Cabinet members when the

ministers of interior, education and women resigned. Interior Minister Víctor Torres told reporters his resignation was due to a family matter while the heads of the Ministry of Women, Nancy Tolentino, and of Education, Miriam Ponce, did not offer reasons in the announcements they shared on social media. The president quickly swore in their replacements as well as new ministers of agriculture, production and foreign trade. Boluarte became president in December 2022, when she replaced then-president Pedro Castillo, who was dismissed by Parliament and is now imprisoned while being investigated for alleged corruption and rebellion.

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Local bodies and political antagonism

MAYOR Mardan Hamayatullah Mayar has written an open letter to the Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) highlighting the issue of local government inactivity and powerlessness, leading to a lack of authority, funds, and nonproductiveness of the local bodies. The mayor alleged that the PTI government in KP amended the local government act and paralyzed the Local bodies financially and administratively. Mayor pointed out the rescinding of administrative and financial powers of nine social service departments from the district and tehsil administrations, effectively dismantling the system at the district and tehsil levels. Mayor accused the judiciary of being swayed by the provincial authorities, delaying or dismissing cases filed by the public representatives against the provincial government for the restoration of the genuine architecture and real soul of the local bodies system.

The local bodies could not take root in Pakistan's political system, and diverse experiments of past rulers from President Ayub's Basic Democracy to General Zia's local body governments, from President Musharraf's devolution of powers to Municipalities to current day rebirth of the British era's Petwars and Tahsildar rule by the so-called political champions, all such endeavors stopped short of fulfilling public demands over the past seven and a half decades. Multiple efforts failed to bring the desired results largely due to the prejudice and impaired application of those systems by politicians and bureaucracy. At the time, no local government was functional in any of the federating units and the Federal capital because no party from across the political spectrum intended to decentralize the power and devolve authority due to its vested political interests. Meanwhile, each party has its view and appreciation of the 18th Amendment and Article 140-A of the Constitution. Henceforth, democratically elected public leaders obstruct the devolution of power to the grassroots level and resist the local bodies' autonomy, contrary to the essence of democracy and service delivery to the public.

Awfully, the letter authored by Mayor Mardan is a true portrait parle of Pakistan's local government system and a scathing critique of judicial neglect and governmental apathy, with multiple references to petitions filed against the provincial government including those by Mayor himself and numerous other local bodies elected officials waiting for handing over of authority and funds over the past few years. Historically, the PTI government in KP made amendments to the KP Local Government (Amendment) Act 2019 and revoked Section 30(2)(b) which reduced the powers of local governments and put curbs on grants to local governments through the NFC award respectively. Meanwhile, similar policies were implemented by other provincial governments in Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and GB while transferring that authority and grants to MPAs to further their political agenda instead of nation-building and service delivery to the public. Meanwhile, the inaction of the judiciary in addressing complaints of the public leaders further complicated the situation and eroded public interests in the institutions.

Historically, the local bodies and their service delivery had always been a concern for major political parties due to their malignant intent regarding the vote bank and political influence at the constituency level. Political parties perceive local bodies as a breeding ground for their political influence and each party intends to instate its workers in lucrative positions so both party and leader improve their image through public work on public expenses. Thus, all political parties are wary of the non-political local government system which is undoubtedly most suitable for grass route growth but fatal for the vested interests of Political groups without any exception.

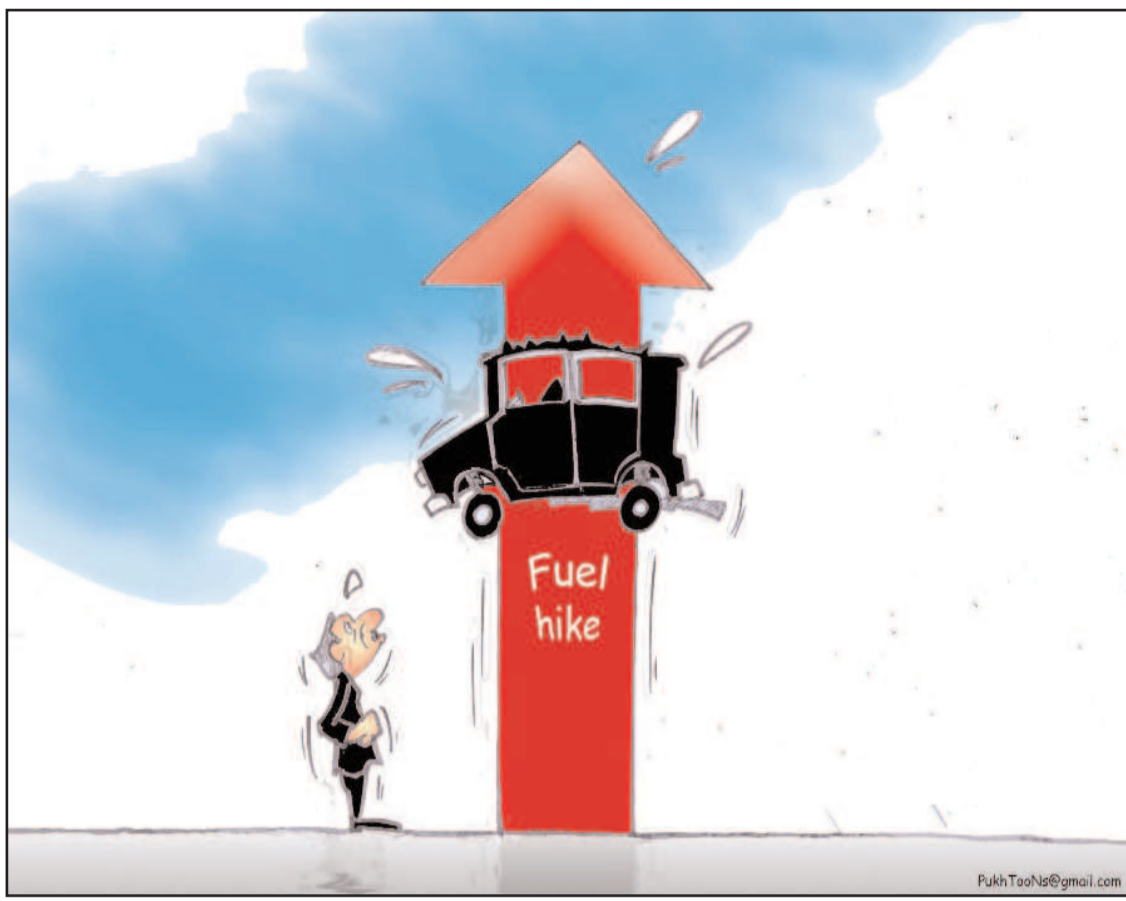
No political party ever voiced in support of such a local government system that empowers the masses and fulfills their needs to the optimum level, rather feudal politics always upheld its communal interest and tried to slash the powers and curb funding to the local governments. There is a genuine need for the devolution of power and strengthening of local bodies so the people can benefit from the true dividends of democracy in this country. Presently, Mayor Mardan has raised the issue at the national level, hopefully, this endeavor might end prevailing political antagonism and pave the way for the onset of grass route level democracy in the country.

Energy security and TAPI project

PRESIDENT Asif Ali Zardari called for the early completion of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Gas Pipeline project to help meet Pakistan's urgent energy needs. During a meeting with Turkmenistan's Envoy to Pakistan, President Zardari called for an early finalization of the Transit Trade Agreement with Turkmenistan to further boost bilateral cooperation between the two countries. According to President Zardari, the agreement, once signed, would help expand trade, promote regional connectivity as well as enhance economic activities in the region.

The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline is a 1,814 km trans-country natural gas pipeline running across four countries. The Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline will begin in Turkmenistan and traverse Afghanistan to enter Pakistan and India. The magnificent trans-nations project aims to transport natural gas from Turkmenistan to the other three neighboring countries, enhancing energy security and promoting economic cooperation between Central and South Asian regions. The Quad Nation Energy project is of utmost importance for energy-deficient Pakistan which is embattled with acute electricity load-shedding, high-energy prices, and massive circular debts of energy-producing and distributing firms since the beginning of the 21st century.

The plan for the TAPI project was originally conceived in the 1990s to generate revenue from Turkmenistan's gas reserves by exporting natural gas via Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. An inter-governmental agreement (IGA) was signed in 2010 by the heads of four member nations and construction work kicked start by a stone-laying ceremony at Turkmen Galkynysh gas fields in December 2015. The project was expected to be operationalized by 2021 but due to security and political concerns construction work in AfPak and Pak-India sections could not begin so far. According to the plan, Pakistan and India each were to receive 42 percent shares, while Kabul would have to purchase 16% gas when it gets fully operationalized in due course of time. As said, more than 1.5 billion people in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India are expected to benefit from the long-term energy security provided by the project. In addition, the project is expected to boost the revenues of Turkmenistan via the sale of gas. Afghanistan and Pakistan will also receive benefits through transit fees, job opportunities and other financial dividends. Although, the TAPI gas pipeline project is a magnificent endeavour which can bring a revolutionary change of development and affluence in the whole of South Asia until and unless the interstate rivalries, biases, hate politics and warmongering of the regional leaders come to an end.

**Netanyahu may soon leave power but his legacy will live on**

Chris Doyle

FOR much of the last 14 months, vast numbers of Israeli protesters have congregated to demand the ousting of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The latest, which have taken place over the last week, have been some of the largest ever, certainly since Oct. 7. At first, the protests were to defend the independence of Israel's judiciary, but since the Hamas attacks they have shifted to demanding accountability for all that has happened.

Conventional wisdom has it that, at some point in the coming weeks or months, Netanyahu will be unceremoniously booted out of the Israeli prime minister's office. Many believe that his next stop will be jail, given the serious charges of corruption and bribery leveled against him. Should that happen, it would be a brutal fall from grace for Israel's longest-serving prime minister. Should he survive in office, even Niccolò Machiavelli would be in awe.

As ever, Netanyahu is proving tough to shift. He has no sense of shame or embarrassment. He oversaw the greatest security failure in recent Israeli history, arguably since October 1973. He is yet to even apologize for that. Admitting he is wrong is not really in the 74-year-old Israeli leader's DNA. However, he was forced to do so in October after trying to blame the security establishment for the atrocities, claiming they did not warn him. One doubts he will be too fazed by the incessant protests that have bedeviled his latest stint in office.

Many in his Likud party, no doubt with his approval, have turned on the protesters. One Likud Knesset member, Tali Gottlib, compared them to "terrorists." Staying in power, or at least in office, has always meant more to Netanyahu than developing a serious vision for the future of Israel. Even starving Palestinians in Gaza to the point of famine and having Israel on trial for genocide is worth it. He is also prepared, much to the alarm of many Israelis, to imperil the strategic relationship with the US that has shielded Israel in particular since 1967.

Does Netanyahu deserve the moniker "Mr.

Security?" Even before Oct. 7, he had failed in many Israeli eyes. Hezbollah had built up a formidable arsenal to the north. And for all the Bibi bluster, Iran is now far closer to getting a nuclear weapon and its influence has spread across the region. Hamas in Gaza clearly developed capabilities that were a shock even to the Israeli security establishment. As for the West Bank, Netanyahu has lost control over the settler

Hamas fighter killed, new generations will be signing up, seeking revenge - and also out of despair at not being able to change anything except by force.

It is a view of the world that perceives negotiating with an opponent or an enemy as a weakness. Netanyahu has never believed in negotiating with the Palestinians or engaging with the Palestinian nationalist movement. This is why he opposed the Oslo Accords. He, like Ariel

Leveling Gaza and turning it into one giant pot-holed parking lot and mass cemetery will not bring security. For every Hamas fighter killed, new generations will be signing up, seeking revenge - and also out of despair at not being able to change anything except by force. It is a view of the world that perceives negotiating with an opponent or an enemy as a weakness. Netanyahu has never believed in negotiating with the Palestinians or engaging with the Palestinian nationalist movement. This is why he opposed the Oslo Accords. He, like Ariel Sharon before him, has done everything in his power to weaken them. He has basically deployed a full diplomatic freeze against the Palestinian Authority and enjoyed undermining its position in Palestinian society.

movement, with much of it veering toward the even more extreme groups under the leadership of Bezael Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir.

Bringing those extremists into the government coalition was a disastrous move. Netanyahu legitimized extremist groups and politicians who had in the past been outlawed. Israel's security is hardly helped by racists taking over major ministries.

But there is also Netanyahu's very two-dimensional view of security. This is where the Israeli hammer can only see nails to bang. Leveling Gaza and turning it into one giant pot-holed parking lot and mass cemetery will not bring security. For every

Sharon before him, has done everything in his power to weaken them. He has basically deployed a full diplomatic freeze against the Palestinian Authority and enjoyed undermining its position in Palestinian society.

The most damaging fallout is with the families of the Israeli hostages. Last week, some of them told Netanyahu to his face that they get treated better in the White House.

Netanyahu is certainly suffering on the popularity front, with most Israelis wanting early elections. Only about a quarter of Israeli Jews trust him, with his leading opponent Benny Gantz way ahead. But polling shows that the PM's warlike policies are popular

among Israeli Jews. Some 87 percent believe that the number of Palestinian fatalities, at more than 30,000, is justified. And 43 percent think that Israel is holding back too much and should be using more force.

Given that Israelis, including many on the right of the political spectrum, cannot trust him, is it any wonder that many world leaders have not done so either? Bill Clinton was known to avoid Netanyahu. Barack Obama and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France were once caught on microphone discussing how fed up they were with him. President Joe Biden did not even invite the Israeli PM to the White House after his election victory. A bilateral meeting did not happen until September 2023, nine months after Netanyahu had returned to office. Even then, it was not in the White House but in New York. Many other world leaders are cautious about embracing Netanyahu too warmly.

So many questions surround the Israeli premier. What is it that has kept him in office for so long? Has he just been fortunate to have such pathetically weak opposition? Is he a political wizard or a dead man walking? This is not clear but he is undoubtedly the outstanding Israeli political operator of his generation. He is not a great strategist and, when Israelis look back on his era, it will be hard to pick out amazing achievements. His longevity is built on an understanding of the nuts and bolts of how to position himself and how to starve opponents of attention and reduce their credibility. Above all, he has never exhibited any self-doubt.

But at some point, Netanyahu will exit the political scene for good. For many Israelis and others, that day cannot come soon enough. Yet the caveat is that his legacy will live on and the ultra-nationalist settler-supporting "Greater Israel" vision will persist. On the Israeli political side of this conflict - of course the Palestinian political house also requires an overhaul - it will take more than the demise of one man to push forward the chances for peace. It needs a fresh approach; one that is hard to imagine can rise out of the rubble of the atrocities in Gaza.

Daesh back on the warpath

Baria Alamuddin

THE massacre at a public event in Moscow last week, which killed at least 140 people, was one of the largest terrorist attacks in recent years, coming just a few weeks after another mass-fatality attack in Iran at the tomb of Quds Force commander Qassem Soleimani.

In a message marking the 10th anniversary of the group's 2014 expansionary phase, Daesh's spokesman celebrated these recent attacks and urged his audiences to migrate to join the group's many branches around the world, while also inciting Muslims in the West to carry out attacks.

Observers warn we may be on the cusp of a new wave of expansionist global terrorist activity; particularly after the thwarting of plots in locations like Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, France and Turkiye, along with dozens of recent terrorism-related arrests. European governments have moved to their highest alert levels for many years.

The entity accredited with many of these audacious plots is Daesh's "Khorasan" branch, or Daesh-K, which is based in Afghanistan and is active throughout Central and South Asia. This branch appears to have exploited security shortcomings by prioritizing for recruitment Central Asian diaspora populations that are able to migrate between states like Russia and Turkiye with minimal visa requirements; particularly with Moscow desperate to supplement its labor force after losing hundreds of thousands in the senseless Ukraine carnage.

Russia's sprawling security services fatefully took their eyes off the ball during the Ukraine conflict, while being unproductively used to crack down on Vladimir Putin's political enemies. More embarrassingly for the Kremlin, it had been given prior specific intelligence from its arch-enemy, the CIA. Not only did it fail to successfully act on this intelligence - it then clumsily sought to blame America and Ukraine after the attack. The unusually brutal, highly publicized torturing of the Tajik attack suspects is likely to further inflame disenchanted Muslim minority populations in Russia. Such abuses were quickly exploited in Daesh's propaganda to incite further "massacres."

Daesh-K appears keen to distinguish itself from rival branches through audacious mass-casualty attacks and a deluge of fire-breathing propaganda in a plethora of languages, inciting violence against a broad spectrum of enemies. Although the Taliban have had some successes cracking down on Daesh operations inside Afghanistan, Daesh-K appears to be positioning itself as the principal proponent of global religious extremism. Despite their shared origins, the Taliban and Daesh are mortal enemies, denouncing each other as "sellouts" or "extremists" while locked in a furious vicious circle of tit-for-tat attacks.

For several years, Daesh appeared to be languishing in the doldrums and out of the public eye, with attacks in its former "caliphate" in Iraq and Syria decreasing year on year and the deaths of numerous leadership

figures. However, attacks have recently surged in Syria - including during a 10-day campaign this January, during which the group claimed more than 110 attacks worldwide. There was also a flurry of mass-casualty, Daesh-claimed attacks around Pakistan's recent elections. Experts warn that, since the demise of the so-called caliphate, Daesh has developed increasingly sophisticated means of communicating and transferring funds and munitions between far-flung branches via obscure terrorism transit hubs.

The Gaza crisis has been energetically exploited by extremists, who are appealing to those angered by Israel's genocidal campaign to join their ranks. Images of mutilated babies, shattered families and levelled cities are perfect recruitment fodder. US national intelligence director Avril Haines warned that "the Gaza conflict will have a generational impact on terrorism." Nevertheless, America and Israel failed to learn their lesson: that war crimes and atrocities will inevitably be exploited by terrorist groups. Clumsy Western messaging - such as states like Britain and Germany uncritically siding with Israel as the Gaza death toll soared - was a gift to propagandists.

Daesh was never definitively "defeated" in Syria and Iraq, and these murderous groups have bounced back from bigger setbacks in the past. With Iran and Israel fomenting instability in Syria, the perfect breeding ground is perpetuated for Daesh, which has been encouraging militants to ready themselves for fresh attacks on the immense detention centers that hold vast numbers of terror suspects and family members. A mass breakout would be a perfect opportunity to replenish their ranks.

As we witnessed in 2014, the manpower, wealth and battle-readiness of extremist groups can increase exponentially, almost overnight, mobilizing supporters through the cynical exploitation of emotive issues like Palestine. Global leaders who appear incapable of grappling with more than one foreign policy crisis at a time must quickly get serious about the terror threat. It is insufficient for intelligence agencies simply to increase domestic vigilance for halting imminent plots. Terrorists must be prevented from freely exploiting social media platforms like Telegram. Vast ungoverned spaces throughout failed states like Syria, Yemen, Mali, Somalia, Libya and Afghanistan cannot be allowed to again become havens for the planning and staging of worldwide terror operations. The Gaza slaughter must be brought to an immediate halt.

If the civilized world and global organizations had not spectacularly failed in their duty to promote stability and development in the planet's poorest states, terrorist groups would have had nowhere to gain a foothold in the first place. Like bloodsucking leeches, entities like Daesh thrive and feast upon the evil and instability already present in the world, compelling us to work infinitely harder to promote peace, justice and humanitarian values.

Arab News

Critical partnership

Muhammad Habib & Pieter Pandie

IPEF since its inauguration. Now the real question is whether the IPEF has served its initial purposes or is functioning as a geopolitical instrument. From the perspective of a staunch supporter of non-alignment, Indonesia would be the first participant to resist the temptation to geopoliticize this initiative. Indonesia believes that there is no value in pushing China away from the economic conversation.

Nevertheless, that does not mean Indonesia and China should be satisfied with their current cooperation. The two countries must continuously improve their entangled supply chain by adhering to higher environmental, social, and governance standards. Only with better standards can the Asia-based supply chain capture the global demand and compete with those of Europe and the US.

Affordable products may bring the world the quantity it needs but only sustainable production can answer the great challenges of this century. As two major economies in Asia, both China and Indonesia reserve much capital to rally support from other countries in the Global South in favor of a high-quality supply chain without any geopolitical requirements.

Discussions regarding geopolitics unquestionably remain tied with the IPEF. It would be a waste of time and resources if China and Indonesia are heavily focused on one single initiative. What the two countries may have to start doing is elevating their commitment to jointly oversee the implementation of Belt and Road projects in Indonesia. All industrial parks under the partnership between the two countries

must begin to use renewable energy power plants, invest in the best occupational safety measures possible, and publish relevant development information for the public. Pursuing multilateral actions must not be forgotten too. Beijing and Jakarta can advance sustainable development and green economy provisions in the currently negotiated upgrade of the Free Trade Area between China and the Association of Southeast Asia Nations. This area of cooperation has not been thoroughly explored in the industrial sector.

The other option is going the Regional

Comprehensive Economic Partnership route. Since there is no sustainability chapter in the RCEP, the low hanging fruit that China and Indonesia can harvest is exploring ways to build up the sustainability capacities of the RCEP Support Unit. The unit could act as an anchor to mainstream sustainable agenda across RCEP member countries and sectors. As challenging as it may sound given Indonesia's inclination toward coal and palm oil, this idea may be the rational pathway to make the supply chain resilient against geopolitical disruptions and climate change. It is time to seize the opportunity together and focus on what actually matters.

The China Daily

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Is Japan leaving pacifism behind?

Jio Kamata

JAPANESE postwar pacifism reached its pinnacle in 1976. That year, Prime Minister Takeo Miki adopted two measures representing the tide of the moment: a cap on the annual defense budget equal to 1% of gross national product, and a de facto ban on arms exports applying to allies and enemies alike.

For a long time, both policies were considered a national credo and were embraced fully, with pride, by major politicians. This sense of pride was reflected in remarks the same year as Miki's reforms by Foreign Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, then considered a mainstream conservative: "We should be reluctant to consider whether or not our country will participate in (arms sales). Even if we can earn some foreign currency surplus, our country has not come to ruin so far as to make money by exporting weapons, and we should continue to do so as a country with higher ideals."

Reflecting on Miyazawa's comments, one could see hubris in implicating nations that export arms as being in "ruin" and holding lesser ideals. However, for people like the foreign minister, who experienced war during their formative years, it was a moral imperative to resist a slippery slope that might lead to the revival of militarism in some shape or form. Also, Japanese policymakers at the time believed that focusing their attention on economic development, rather than military affairs, was the best course of action.

Miyazawa passed away 17 years ago, but it would be interesting to hear his view on how Prime Minister Fumio Kishida - his distant relative and successor to the diplomat's now-defunct faction - has altered the policies Miyazawa's generation held dear. Almost all the defense budgets that Kishida has passed have exceeded the 1% cap and his government aims for defense spending to reach 2% of gross

domestic product. Furthermore, the incumbent wants to further loosen restrictions on arms exports, which his critics argue would propel Japan into becoming a "merchant of death."

A precedent was set last year when the government for the first time opened the path for Japan to export lethal arms to countries from which it acquires licensing permits - with the view that such a revision was needed to assist the United States' ongoing effort to arm Ukraine.

To help backfill Ukraine's depleting missile stock, Japan announced it would provide Patriot missiles to the US - missiles manufactured in Japan based on the permission of American manufacturers. That, in theory, would allow Washington to continue supporting Ukraine while maintaining enough missile stock to contend with other crises.

Recently, opposition in Japan spiked when the possibility of another exception to the lethal arms embargo emerged. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party wanted to pave the way for a forthcoming next-generation fighter jet - a joint project undertaken by Japan with Italy and the United Kingdom - to be exported to nations that are not involved in the manufacturing process. Just a few weeks ago, Komeito, the LDP's junior coalition partner, opposed the change - then flipped its position once Kishida clarified his stance.

The prime minister emphasized that approval of arms exports to third countries would only apply to fighter jets - and even then these would only be exported to non-combatant nations. Also, Kishida emphasized that any decision on whether to export fighter jets should be approved unanimously by the Cabinet.

Komeito leaders described

Kishida's explanation as "valid," "clear and detailed," and on March 15 agreed with the LDP to greenlight the third-party export of fighter jets. On its website, Komeito highlighted the need to allow such exports to advance the codevelopment of fighter jets and reiterated that the policy change was a matter of "national interest." On Tuesday last week, Kishida sanctioned a Cabinet decision making the measure an official policy.

In an interview with Jiji, Tomoko Tamura, the newly elected head of the Japanese Communist Party, quoted Miyazawa's comments from decades ago and criticized Kishida by saying that he is pushing Japan into "ruin." However, Japanese pacifists who quote Miyazawa liberally ignore his "realist" side, which they might not have fully come to terms with. Miyazawa was a pacifist in the sense that he insisted Japan should refrain from involving itself in war by sending troops and weapons abroad. Nevertheless, he did not ignore the need to adopt adequate measures to defend his country if faced with immediate danger.

In the 1990s, as regional tensions began to rise along Cold War lines - particularly the Korean Peninsula's 38th parallel and the Taiwan Strait - the worldview of Miyazawa, who was prime minister from 1991 to 1993, transformed.

Foreseeing the ramifications of China's early steps to becoming an economic and military giant as well as North Korea's missile capability development, Miyazawa veered toward stances that would later align with those of late former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe - not generally remembered as a pacifist. For example, when Miyazawa was invited in 2001 to speak at an event marking the 50th anniversary of the San Francisco Peace Conference, he stressed the need to broaden the con-

stitutional interpretation prohibiting Tokyo from collaborating with the American military absent a direct threat to Japan's security.

At the time, the government viewed Japan as possessing the right to individual self-defense - to protect itself on its own behalf - but could not exercise collective self-defense that involved military action with a close ally without Japan being directly under attack.

Miyazawa proposed that Japan "recognize the right of collective self-defense as an extension of the right of individual self-defense," which would allow Tokyo to undertake operations to defend the US military without legal obstacles. And this was the exact line of thinking that Abe took when he reinterpreted the Constitution in 2014 to authorize the "limited" exercise of collective self-defense, which would only allow Japan to join forces with foreign militaries when its survival is at stake. Although Miyazawa might have opposed Abe's means, which revised the interpretation merely by the Cabinet's will, he would not have disagreed with Abe's intent - to maximize security by expanding the definition of self-defense.

Japanese pacifism is reaching a turning point after the greenlighting of exports of next-generation fighter jets. For people who quote Miyazawa's 1976 comments on arms exports, the government's decision crosses a moral Rubicon. Given that the public is almost evenly divided on the issue, there is a reluctance to embark into the uncharted territory of lethal weapons exports. However, what is also true is that Japanese people are increasingly coming to realize that they are living in an unsettled region and to understand the need to step things up for their own safety. Albeit with deep hesitation, the country is beginning to reconfigure the meaning of pacifism, just as Miyazawa did.

The Japan Times

A man dreaming of a corpse

Ghassan Charbel

HE lies down to sleep. He is exhausted. This is the toughest war Israel has ever fought. Fighting armies was easier than this. Its headlines would have been known and these armies would eventually be broken. Strike their airports and headquarters and burn their tanks. They can be forced to swallow the bitter pill and stop the fighting without reclaiming their land. The deterrence power was perfect.

This war is unlike all the others. Before going to bed, he goes over reports. The Al-Shifa compound refuses to die. The army claims to have brought it to heel, but it still resists. Many battles need to be fought before the battle of Rafah.

He goes through the numbers. Hundreds of officers and soldiers have been killed, while thousands have been wounded and crippled. The economic losses are terrible, but this is an existential war. Where is Israel's might? Where is its long arm that stretched to Entebbe in Uganda, carried out assassinations in Tunisia, struck reactors in Iraq and killed in Tehran, Damascus and Beirut?

The story is about more than just the hostages held in Hamas' tunnels. They number no more than a sixth of the army's casualties. Their return is necessary, but not enough to compensate for and justify the losses. Moreover, stopping the war once they return will be a bitter pill to swallow. Stopping the war is terrible and painful. It simply means the formation of investigations committees. It would mark the end of a horrifying chapter in rule. It is a dreadful end for a man called the "King of Israel."

He will not swallow the pill to please Joe Biden and his electoral chances. He knows America. How hard it is to be its enemy and to be its ally. The leaders of Europe are cowards who fear human rights organizations and social media. The "free world" is no longer free.

Since the beginning of the Al-Aqsa Flood operation, he has asked the same question to the Mossad and Shabak officials and every day he is left disappointed. They do not know that a war as horrific as this cannot end with the simple return of the hostages and the humiliating price of releasing them. This is a major war that can only end with a hefty corpse: that of the mastermind of the flood. He is haunted every night by the corpse of Yahya Sinwar.

The world of assassinations is rich and diverse. It is an industry that can

adjust to the changes of the age. In the age of artificial intelligence, the dagger has become outdated. A whole people can be assassinated by stealing their land and expelling them from it. By planting it with settlements and settlers. By using the weapons of displacement, hunger and thirst.

Making a Nakba is an art that demands cruelty, perseverance and allies. Enemies, their voices, breaths and fingerprints, can be tracked down. The age has moved on from daggers and bullets to drones. Ultimately, the journey must end with a corpse floating on the river of the long conflict.

There is no room for two people. A corpse is necessary. A tree cannot survive with another right next to it that is fighting for room for its roots. In conflicts, it is either kill or be killed. The corpse of your enemy is the ultimate prize. It will reassure, comfort and save you. It is a medal of honor and a shining point on your resume and in your history. He did not invent assassinations. It is an art that has been alive in Israel for five decades. In September 1972, the Black September group dealt a deadly blow. Its gunmen stormed the Israeli apartments at the Munich Olympic Games and held several athletes hostage, demanding the release of prisoners detained by Israel. The end was bloody. Eleven Israeli athletes were killed.

Israel was dealt a massive shock. The security forces informed Prime Minister Golda Meir of a plan. After some hesitation, she approved Operation Wrath of God, which called for the assassination of everyone involved in the Munich attack. Thus, the world witnessed a long series of assassinations, whose arenas included Beirut and several European capitals. That period consolidated one rule: the corpses of Israel's greatest enemies always carried the signature of the prime minister.

There is no end space here to list all the assassinations and signatures, but some examples will suffice. The corpses of Kamal Adwan, Abu Youssef Al-Najjar and Kamal Nasser in Beirut carried the signature of Meir and the assassinations were led by an officer called Ehud Barak. The corpse of Khalil Al-Wazir, aka Abu Jihad, one of the founders of Fatah, carried the signature of Yitzhak Shamir.

Later, Barak, as the Israeli army's chief of staff, would order the assassination of Hezbollah

Secretary-General Abbas Al-Musawi, whose corpse would also carry Shamir's signature. The corpse of Fathi Shaqaqi, founder and Secretary-General of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, would carry Yitzhak Rabin's signature. The corpses of Ahmed Yassin, the founder of Hamas, his successor Abdulaziz Al-Rantisi and Al-Qassam Brigades general Salah Shehade would carry the signature of Ariel Sharon. The corpse of Imad Mughniyeh, a prominent Hezbollah member, would carry the signature of Ehud Olmert, who also signed off on the corpses of two Iranian nuclear scientists. The corpse of Yahya Ayyash, Hamas' chief bombmaker, would carry the signature of Shimon Peres.

Benjamin Netanyahu is in no need of corpses and signatures.

From Mahmoud Al-Mabhouh and Ahmed Jabari to Saleh Al-Aroui and Marwan Issa. Israel's longest-serving prime minister now has the deadly need for a hefty corpse. Netanyahu has old scores to settle with Hamas, even though he has banked on making gains from the division between the Palestinians. When he was PM in 1997, a proposal was made to him to assassinate Hamas leader Khaled Meshal in Amman. It was a difficult decision. Israel and Jordan have a peace treaty. The Mossad ruled out the use of bombs and bullets, but instead opted for poison.

One of the perpetrators managed to poison Meshal, but he was caught by the security forces. King Hussein deemed the operation an insult and threatened to review the peace treaty. Washington intervened and asked that Netanyahu immediately dispatch an antidote that would save Meshal, and so it was. King Hussein wanted more and insisted on the release of Yassin, who Sharon would later assassinate.

Netanyahu is now dreaming of Sinwar's corpse. This corpse may allow him to claim "victory," perhaps stop the war and say that Israel captured the man who launched the Al-Aqsa Flood.

He cannot apply the Chinese proverb that says a man awaiting vengeance needs only to sit on the bank of the river and wait: his enemy's corpse will soon float by. He wants the corpse now to cover his mistakes and sins. He wants to use it to cover the fragility of the state called Israel. He refuses to learn. The abundance of signatures on corpses did not bring security to Israel, which itself appears to have been born from an assassination operation.

How Turkiye can help prevent war spreading to Lebanon

Dr. Dania Koleilat Khatib

YOAV Gallant, the Israeli defense minister, on Friday renewed his threat to Lebanon following an assassination operation on a Hezbollah officer in the south of the country. He said that Israel was moving "from defense to pursuit of Hezbollah." He noted that Israel had already killed more than 320 members of the group, adding: "Wherever we need to act, we will act."

Hezbollah is cornered. Although it is trying to avoid an all-out confrontation, the group might be pushed into one. As Israel pokes the group and hunts down its operatives one by one, it might have no option but to retaliate. This would be disastrous: Israel would destroy Beirut and Hezbollah would destroy northern Israel.

On the regional level, we are witnessing a convergence: Turkiye is getting closer to both Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Erdogan in February visited Egypt for the first time in more than a decade and has also been liaising with Riyadh on Gaza. Meanwhile, in November, Ebrahim Raisi became the first Iranian president to visit Saudi Arabia in more than 10 years, as he met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi during an Organization of Islamic Cooperation summit in Jeddah.

Everyone knows that cooperation is needed to face the calamity in Gaza. Despite the mistrust that plagues regional relations, there is a necessity to come together to face the looming danger Gaza poses for the entire region. Regional states do not want the war to expand to Lebanon.

We need a buffer. The UN

Interim Force in Lebanon was supposed to create this buffer, but today it is being proved that it is not enough. Here, Turkiye can play a role, as UNIFIL already has a Turkish contingent. This can be the starting point for an increase in military cooperation between Lebanon and Turkiye. An increased Turkish presence could offer a graceful exit for both Hezbollah and Israel. Israel would not hit a NATO member and Turkiye would make sure Hezbollah kept its weapons in the basement.

On the other hand, Ankara would want something in return for protecting Lebanon and, by default, protecting Hezbollah from total destruction. More than this, a war would mean the political end of the group. An Israeli war on Lebanon would devastate the country and have terrible consequences for the region. Turkiye would probably want a concession on Syria from Iran. It wants to see Bashar Assad weakened and for Syria to be made safe for refugees to return. The Syrian refugees hosted by Turkiye are causing a domestic problem, as there is growing popular discontent with their presence.

Iran cherishes Assad of course, but not as much as it values Hezbollah. In fact, the initial reason for Iran's involvement in Syria was to prevent the fall of the regime, which would have disrupted its link to Hezbollah, the jewel in the crown of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Iran has been offering Assad its unwavering support. This Iranian support has prevented the Syrian president from making any concessions

to the opposition, which is why the Geneva peace talks have proven futile.

Syrian newspaper Enab Baladi reported last month that Saudi Arabia is now preparing a conference that will bring together Assad and the opposition in order to come up with a new constitution for the country. If the Iranians pressure Assad and he agrees to a settlement and a new constitution, this would be a diplomatic win for Saudi Arabia. It would also be a way for Turkiye to cement its rapprochement with the Kingdom.

Iran would be willing to make such a compromise because a war between Hezbollah and Israel would be lethal for the Tehran-backed group. Hence, the Turkish presence might be looked at as a necessity. The US might also accept such an agreement. The limiting of Israel's ability to maneuver in Lebanon would be welcomed in the current circumstances. The Netanyahu government, which is controlled by extremists, is becoming a burden and embarrassment for the US. A functioning buffer zone would make the White House's job of taming Benjamin Netanyahu and his far-right allies much easier. It would also facilitate US special envoy Amos Hochstein's task of delimiting the southern Lebanese border with Israel and force everyone to respect UN Security Council Resolution 1701 without resorting to war.

Of course, Hezbollah would not welcome a Turkish presence in the south of Lebanon, as this would greatly limit its movements. However, faced with a choice between devastation and accepting the presence of Turkish troops, the

latter might be seen as the lesser evil. As I have written previously, getting Hezbollah to withdraw from the south would be extremely difficult as the group is entrenched in society. Its members live there. Hence, the best bet is to make sure the group keeps its weapons in the basement. UNIFIL has been unable to make sure this is the case, but a Turkish presence would be more forceful.

On the other hand, Turkiye would also make sure Israel does not conduct any operations in Lebanon. The Israelis would not want to face the Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drone. The Turkish troops could also make sure that neither Hezbollah nor Israel breaches the terms of UNSC Resolution 1701.

However, for Lebanon to have any type of arrangement with Turkiye, it needs a functioning government. A caretaker government cannot enter into such an agreement with another state. Here, Hezbollah needs to make another concession: allowing the election of a president and the formation of a government. Both the president and the government need to be acceptable to the international community. So far, Hezbollah has been insisting on Suleiman Frangieh. Iran might have to exert pressure on the group to accept a consensual president. Tehran wants to avoid an all-out war at all costs. Though Iran leaves internal Lebanese matters to Hezbollah, it could pressure the group if its security is threatened. In the current circumstances, a Turkish presence in Lebanon might be the best option to prevent an assault on the country. It would provide a buffer that might prevent an undesired escalation.

Princess of Wales's true service has been in saving William from wallowing like his brother

Petronella Wyatt

Iam not concerned about the state of the Crown. It is only numbskulls who claim it is in crisis. Unlike democracy, the British monarchy, because it values tradition, avoids becoming a self-limiting disease.

But as the Princess of Wales recovers from being forced into disclosing her cancer diagnosis, the nation should ponder the incalculable debt this woman is owed and pause in wonder. Looking back at the troubles that have beset the Royal family - the death of the late Queen, the King's own illness, the ugly web in which Prince Andrew has entangled himself, and the one-trick ponies in Montecito - we can comfort ourselves with one solid bond in the bank of our collective future.

The woman who was once called plain Kate Middleton has proved to be the jewel in the crown. There have been doubters and naysayers, notably in the verdant hills of California, with its 50 shades of envy. This is a tale of two women, and for the Duchess of Sussex the popularity of Catherine is a bitter pill. Did Harry and Meghan not say that the words duty and fulfillment are an oxymoron? If so, constraint has never suited anyone so well.

Royal wives are not usually presentable. Caroline of Brunswick

was so lumen that her husband, George IV, had her banned from her own coronation. Princess Diana was an exception, but I would argue that Catherine surpasses her, only growing in poise by virtue of no inner lack.

There are only two kinds of royals in this world: the sanguine and the chronically unhappy. The latter, including Meghan, kick and squall against their fate, seeing the golden chalice as one filled with poison, and hoping, like Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, that it will pass from their lips. They exist in a state of Byronic unhappiness, thinking their wisdom has seen through all their supposed advantages, and in doing so has become aware there is nothing left to live for aside from selling tomato leaf soap and candles scented with woe to Femaila neanderthalensis.

Then there are those like Catherine. This sort of royal sees not what they can't do but what they can, perceiving that public service is not a prison but a means of liberation from futility.

In the 13 years since her marriage, the Princess has reached a state of equanimity possessed by the late Queen, of whom she is increasingly reminiscent.

We would do well to consider

the difference Catherine has made to her husband, the future king. Two boys walked behind the coffin of their mother, Princess Diana, in 1997. At the time, and in the years after, we often made the mistake of thinking it would be William who developed an eeyorish attitude to life.

On occasion he seemed palpably uneasy in the presence of the media, or performing royal engagements. For a while, Harry seemed the happy prince, with all his mother's charm and people-pleasing ways. But while the country blinked, something changed. Shored and ballasted by meeting a girl called Kate Middleton, William looked duty squarely in the eye and decided not to flinch. As Harry began to drown, his older brother, with Catherine's assistance, reached the shores of home.

Of all the moments in the history of our monarchy, this may prove to be one of the most significant. For in saving William, Kate might be said to have saved the Crown. It is also advantageous that she is the Swan of all time. Her chestnut hair seems lit by the sun's afterglow; her complexion appears saturated by mists. It would be pernicious, however, to call her a "machine-made princess", as the writer

Hilary Mantel once cruelly described her. As befits a future queen, Kate has shown she has grown-up moments, but as the public has finally comprehended, she is not a figure in a stained-glass window.

As we have seen recently, she is human, and friends say she lives with a mischievous child inside her which will stand her health in good stead. "Catherine is William's strength and stay because she is so normal," a royal insider told me. "Despite vile rumours, some emanating from America, their marriage could not be stronger." The Royal family, composed as it is of human beings, can throw us some curve balls. So far in its history, the British nation has overlooked these in the hope of getting something better in the future. The search is over.

In William and Catherine, the Windsors have played a blinder. Our future king and queen, despite their current travails, have all the optimism of youth and the wisdom of experience. Moreover, they share the love that springs up when two people have seen the worst of life as well as the best, the bond that comes from camaraderie and putting others first, besides which the passion that is sometimes called by that name is as evanescent as steam. Britain and the monarchy are safe in their hands.

Scotland's hate crime law

Simon Jenkins

IT is right that expressions of hatred against groups based on race and ethnicity are illegal. Whether these laws have ended hatred or merely driven it underground - a not unwelcome outcome - is a matter of opinion. But Scotland's law against hate crime, implemented this week, extends state intervention to the "stirring of hatred" against a range of groups defined by age, disability, faith, sexual orientation, transgender identity or being intersex. Controversially, it does not extend to women - the Scottish government says a separate misogyny law is in the works.

The pitfalls in the new law have led to three years of heated debate in the Scottish parliament. The prosecution need only prove that a remark was "likely" rather than "intended" to offend. A crime could be committed if "a reasonable person would consider it threatening, abusive or insulting".

The extension of hatred to include "insulting" conduct is radical. It is one thing for Scotland's first minister, Humza Yousaf, to accuse objectors of overreacting. He will not be the law's interpreter. It will be for the police in the first instance and then the courts to judge the extent of the insult. The victim of a Scottish insult will be at liberty to report it to a police station for possible prosecution - with a maximum of seven years in jail - merely on the grounds that they feel their group to be insulted.

Even if the police decide

to take no action, they may register the report as a "hate incident", not considered a crime. This has already occurred to an MSP, Murdo Fraser, who stated on social media that: "Choosing to identify as non-binary is as valid as choosing to identify as a cat. I'm not sure governments should be spending time on action plans for either." The police have defended the recording of hate incidents, saying it helps them "monitor tensions within communities, enabling appropriate police responses". But is that their job?

Reactions to the law have focused on the difficulty of coherently defining the crime. The Scottish Police Federation has already warned of a lack of training for what is expected to be a "huge uplift" in complaints requiring investigation. A Glasgow law professor, Adam Tomkins, points out that there is nothing to stop allegations of hate speech made in the privacy of the family. This has echoes of Mao's Cultural Revolution. Nor is there protection for schools, clubs or private institutions. In effect, the law proposes a potentially massive extension of police discretion into the private and social life of Scotland.

A different concern is where the law leaves free speech north of the border. The land of Reformation and the Enlightenment appears set on becoming the seedbed of state censorship. Elon Musk of X (formerly Twitter) has already made this claim, though it

is hard to see how the Scottish police are going to monitor the digital universe. The Edinburgh festival has reportedly been assured of its safety as the police have promised not to censure actors or satirists, but they will presumably feel obliged to record any "non-crime hate incidents".

The Scottish government is eager to stress its commitment to open debate. It argues that it is merely extending the clamphdown on causing racial offence to other potentially harmed minorities. The act explicitly mentions adherence to the European convention on human rights and its protection for "ideas that offend, shock or disturb". Quite how that marmies with the remainder of the act is a mystery, one that legislators have left to the forces of law and order to resolve.

Britain's race laws have not eliminated discussion of racial issues, so it is possible that Scotland's messy attempt at state censorship will not be unduly restrictive. It may reduce some of the toxicity of today's "culture wars", which would be welcome. The risk is that it will weaken the informal disciplines by which we conduct public conversation. For tolerance, courtesy, understanding and community reprimand, it will substitute the long arm of the law. Institutions, universities, churches and clubs will not be trusted as fit places to conduct debate. They must fear the police. That is a sign not of social advance, but of social failure.

The Guardian



PSX turns around to bullish trend, gains 89 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Tuesday turned around to bullish trend, gaining 89.94 points, a slight positive change of 0.13 percent, closing at 66,886.26 points against 66,796.32 points the previous trading day.

A total of 239,650,377 shares valuing Rs.8,940 billion were traded during the day as compared to 238,829,562 shares valuing

Rs.8,365 billion the last day. Some 342 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 160 of them recorded gains and 153 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 29 remained unchanged.

In future market, as many as 309 companies traded shares in the market, out of which 130 recorded gains, 176 witnessed losses whereas share prices of 3 companies remained

unchanged. In PSX, the three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 32,343,929 shares at Rs.1.35 per share, PTCL with 27,131,713 shares with Rs.16.46 per share and Pak Reinsurance with 13,127,500 shares at Rs.15.46 per share.

Hallmark Company Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.39.60 per share price, closing at Rs.576.07,

whereas the runner-up was Pak Services Limited with a Rs.34.50 rise in its per share price to Rs.974.50. Pakistan Tobacco Company Limited witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.47.85 per share closing at Rs.1,075.10, followed by Abbott Laboratories (Pakistan) Limited with Rs.23.22 decline to close at Rs.455.56.

PRL's upgrade supplemental agreement with OGRA

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Refinery Limited (PRL) is all set to sign a supplemental agreement with the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA). This agreement will pave the way for a transformative upgrade and expansion project that will double PRL's refining capacity, from 50,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 100,000 bpd. Crucially, the project will also enable PRL to produce EURO V standard fuel, which will save the company billions of rupees annually in penalties for non-compliance with environmental regulations.

These agreements fol-

lowed the inking of a deal with the regulator, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA), to access incentives outlined in the new refinery policy. The upcoming signing of the supplemental agreement will significantly enhance the incentives offered in the amended brownfield policy approved in February 2024, highlighting PRL's proactive approach to regulatory compliance and its determination to capitalize on the incentives outlined in the new refinery policy.

The expansion undertaken by PRL represents an investment aiming at ensuring long-term sustainabili-

ty, with plans to increase Motor Spirit production by more than six times, High-Speed Diesel by three times, and the eventual elimination of Furnace Oil from its product portfolio. Without these upgrades and expansion, the long-term sustainable operation of the company will remain a question mark.

In the meantime, PRL is ensuring that its existing operations remain sustainable by focusing on operational excellence. Consequently, PRL achieved and surpassed production targets for the second quarter of 2023-24, demonstrating a significant improvement in its production mix and setting new

industry standards.

Despite economic challenges and low local demand for furnace oil, PRL's financial performance remains robust. The company recorded a second-quarter financial close at 2.0 billion after the record profit of 4.5 billion in the first quarter of this year. The six-month profit stands at 6.5 billion, marking the fourth consecutive year of profit for PRL, which includes the highest ever profit of 12.5 billion in 2022. PRL's commitment to maximizing production efficiency and revenue, even in challenging market conditions, is evident in its strategic choices.

Recent letter from the so-called AOOA misleading and based on outright lies

E.P. Report

KARACHI: The recent letter/communication from the so-called/self-proclaimed Aircraft Owners and Operators Association appears to be yet another desperate attempt to defame the leadership of the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority.

This letter is full of baseless allegations and the author has deliberately maligned the federal and punjab governments with a totally concocted story. Both the federal and punjab governments jointly approved this project, where 52% ownership is with CAA and 48% with Punjab Government. It is

evident that the author of this letter is trying to manipulate people into believing his concocted story, with some apparent malafide and malicious motives. The decision to relocate flying operations from Walton Aerodrome in 2021 due to serious safety concerns to a more suitable location, with the land being transferred to the Government of Punjab for commercial purposes, was made by the Federal Government.

This decision by the Federal Cabinet was made under the authority granted by the Civil Aviation Ordinance of 1960, which empowers the Government to prioritize

public safety. The move was necessary due to the increasing risks associated with aviation activities in the vicinity of Walton Aerodrome, given the presence of large commercial and residential areas.

In accordance with the decision of the Federal Cabinet, the land at Walton Aerodrome was transferred to the Government of Punjab (GoPb) / Lahore Central Business District Development Authority (LCBDDA), later renamed as Punjab Central Business District Development Authority (PCBDDA), through a revenue sharing arrangement between the Civil Aviation Authority and the Government of

Punjab. It is important to note that the decision to relocate Walton Aerodrome to Muridke was not the result of any collusion between government officials and land mafias, as concocted in the letter.

CAA has purchased 480 acres of land in Muridke from Punjab Government to establish a new General Aviation Aerodrome which is in final stage of completion. The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) upholds a steadfast commitment to maintaining and enhancing civil aviation safety standards, and strives to ensure that all aspects of air travel within Pakistan adhere to the highest safety protocols.

Shareholders of BML's vision to excel in Islamic Banking

E.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Bank Makramah Limited (BML) held its 18th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the shareholders, headed by Mr. Abdulla Nasser Abdulla Hussain Lootah,

Chairman of the Board of Directors of BML.

Addressing the shareholders and the bank's senior management, Mr. Abdulla said, "As we gather for our AGM, I am excited to share BML's vision towards contributing to the future of

Islamic banking. With a global outlook, we're pioneering a futuristic approach, ensuring convenience to customers through the digitisation of processes. At Bank Makramah we pride ourselves in embracing modernity and introducing tailor-

made technological solutions to transform our banking services. Together, we're shaping a new era of banking that is both innovative and inclusive. Thank you for your continued trust and support as we embark on this journey towards excellence."

FPCC establishing think tank to advise for country's economic vision: Atif Ikram

ISLAMABAD (APP): President of the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikram has said that industrialists had a target of increasing the country's exports up to \$100 billion, which would be made possible through Vision 2030.

The FPCCI is establishing a think tank for providing advice to the country's economic growth and restructuring of the economy, which will consist of intellectual businessmen, industrialists and academia of the country, he said while addressing a press conference on the occasion of the launch of the Economic Vision 2030 and think tank on economy along with eminent industrialists here Tuesday.

This think tank, he said will consist of renowned industrialists under the leadership of former Federal Commissioner for Commerce, Dr. Ijaz Gohar, who will also advise big forums like SFIC to increase exports and invest-

ment in the country.

Atif said that this working group consisting of highly engaged businessmen and industrialists would give suggestions to the government for economic growth and will play its role in making the agenda of SIFC feasible.

He said that in addition to this, the working group in this think tank would pay special attention to foreign investment, especially in the industrial sectors including export, information technology and agriculture, besides, suggestions would be given for the improvement of tax reforms and energy sector.

He said that FPCCI was the joint apex body of all chambers in Pakistan which would also give suggestions to the government for the upcoming budget and we were in touch with the government in this regard.

Atif Ikram said that currently, the country's economy had the potential to collect Rs15,000 billion in taxes, but taxes were not collected according to their

potential. There is a need for tax reforms in the country and for this, the tax net has to be increased so that the country's revenue can be increased, he added.

The President FPCCI said that discussions had been held with the government and the work had been finalized to bring the price of electricity in line with the regional markets in which market there will be a difference in the cost of doing.

He said that according to Vision 2030, industry, Information Technology (IT), tourism, mining and agriculture were very important which will be worked on together with SIFC.

Speaking to the media on this occasion, Vice President FPCCI, Zaki Aijaz said that regional trade is very important without increasing the export will not improve and the industry will not be able to develop.

He said that the work on the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline is very important,

which will meet the needs of the country's industry at cheap rates and the wheel of the industry will run.

He said that the bank markup should be reduced so that the industrialists can get liquidity in their business and the industry can expand in the country.

He said that there should be an end to smuggling in the country and a regular plan should be adopted to prevent it so that the country can progress economically.

Zaki said that to increase the tax collection, the tax net should be increased so that there is no burden on the existing taxpayers.

He said that according to Vision 2030, export of \$100 billion is our target.

On this occasion, Chairman FPCCI Islamabad Office Karim Aziz said that industry and tourism, mining and agriculture are important sectors in the country by working on which the country can move forward and the goal of national exports can also be fulfilled.



LAHORE: Worker packing vermicelli at his workplace for supply as per increasing demand for upcoming Eidul Fitr festive.

IT exports increases by 31.79% in February 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's ICT services export remittances saw a remarkable surge to US\$ 257 million in February 2024, marking an impressive increase of 31.79 percent compared to \$195 million in February 2023.

According to the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication, ICT export remittances witnessed a substantial rise by \$ 257 million (14.94%) to reach \$ 1.977 billion during July 2023 to February 2024

of FY2023-24, compared to \$ 1.720 billion reported for the same period last year.

This surge can be attributed to the concerted efforts of the Ministry of IT & Telecommunication and the Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) in collaboration with the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) to enhance the ease of doing business environment.

Their initiatives have bolstered confidence within the IT industry, resulting in an uptick in IT & ITes

export remittance receipts.

However, it's worth noting that in comparison to January 2024, ICT services export remittances experienced a slight decline of US\$ 8 million (-3.02%) in February 2024.

Furthermore, the IT & ITes Industry achieved a trade surplus of US\$ 1.721 billion, the highest among all services, accounting for 87.05% of total ICT export remittances during July 2023 to February 2024 of FY2023-24. This represents a notable increase of

13.07% compared to the trade surplus of \$ 1.522 billion during the same period last year. In contrast, the services sector as a whole recorded a trade deficit of \$ 1.892 billion during July 2023 to February 2024 of FY2023-24. The ICT sector's exports of US\$ 1.977 billion stand out as the highest among all Services, comprising 38.92% of the total export of services, with 'Other Business Services' trailing behind at \$ 1.058 billion.

Services exports decrease by 1.37 pc in 8 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Exports of services during the first 08 months of the current financial year decreased by 1.37 percent as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of the last year.

During the period from July to February, 2023-24 exports of services were recorded at \$5.079 billion as against the exports of \$5.149 of the same period of last year, according to

the data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics released here Tuesday. During the period under review, the services imports into the country grew by 28.18 percent and it was registered at \$6.971 billion as compared to the import of \$5.438 billion in the same period last year. However, the services exports from the country on a year-on-year basis grew by 6.11 percent in February 2024 as compared to the

exports of the same month of last year. In February 2024, services valued at \$627.05 million were exported as compared to exports of \$590.96 million of the same month of last year. The imports of services into the country grew by 21.14 percent during the period under review as it were recorded at \$784.95 million against \$647.96.

On month on month basis, the services exports

decreased by 8.05 percent and imports by 22.51 percent respectively in February 2024 as compared to January 2024. During the month of February 2024, the services exports were recorded at \$627.05 million as compared to the exports of \$681.97 million of the previous month, whereas imports were registered at \$784.95 million as compared to the imports of \$1.012 billion of last month.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity was reported at the port where five ships, MSC Prelude V, Supra Duke, Goofy, Al-Areesh, UOG Sparta scheduled to load/offload Containers, Rice, Coal, LNG and Mogas, berthed at Container Terminal, Multi-Purpose Terminal, Gasport Terminal and Oil Terminal respectively on Monday.

Meanwhile three more ships, Hanze Goteborg, Ardmore Cherokee and Chemeroad Journeys scheduled to load/offload Rice, Palm oil and Chemicals also arrived at outranchorage of the port during the same day.

A total of twelve ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, MSC Prelude V, SC Taipei and Yun Ding 19 are expected to sail on today afternoon.

Pakistan's exports to China increase by 42% in 8 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's export of goods and services to China witnessed an increase of 42.02 per cent during the first eight months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

The overall exports to China were recorded at US \$1895.720 million during July-February (2023-24) against exports of US \$1334.804 million during July-February (2022-23), SBP data revealed.

On a year-to-year basis, the exports to China also surged by 20.60 per cent from \$140.166 million in February 2023, against the exports of \$169.041 million in February 2024.

Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to China decreased by 31.05 per cent during February 2024 as compared



to the exports of \$245.169 million in January 2024, the SBP data revealed. Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed an increase of 10.15 per cent in the first eight months, from US \$18.643 billion to US \$20.537 billion, the SBP data revealed.

On the other hand, the imports from China into the country during the months under review were recorded at US \$8105.831 million against US \$7065.406 million last year, showing an increase of 14.72 per cent

in July-February (2023-24). On a year-on-year basis, the imports for China witnessed an increase of 90.63 per cent from US \$601.189 million in February 2023, against the imports of US \$1146.087 million in February 2024. On a month-on-month basis, the imports from China into the country however witnessed nominal decline of 2.65 per cent during February 2024, as compared to the imports of US \$1177.373 million during January 2024, according to the data.

US stocks hit by latest inflation data; gold prices jump

NEW YORK (AFP/APP): Wall Street stocks mostly fell Monday after fresh inflation data raised questions about US monetary policy, while gold prices shot to a fresh record.

The Institute for Supply Management's March survey is the first to show US manufacturing activity rising since September 2022. But markets fixated on a 3.3 percent rise in the ISM's prices index as compared with February.

"The market turned around when ISM came up this morning," said Jack Ablin of Cresset Capital. "This is one sign that could show that the inflation is picking up more." While the Nasdaq mustered a narrow gain, both the Dow and S&P 500 retreated.

Markets have been scrutinizing inflation data to gauge the likelihood of a shift in monetary policy.

The Federal Reserve has said it expects three interest

rate cuts this year, but that plan could slide if inflation remains elevated.

US Treasury yields jumped after Monday's ISM data. In Asian trade, Seoul, Singapore and Manila rose, while there were losses in Taipei and Jakarta. Hong Kong, Sydney, Wellington, London, Paris and Frankfurt were closed for Easter Monday.

Gold hit a record high of \$2,265.73, according to Bloomberg News, extending the year's rally fueled by central bank hints at an easing of credit conditions.

It is also being supported by its attraction as a safe haven in times of turmoil, with geopolitical tensions growing. Shanghai jumped around one percent as traders welcomed news that China's manufacturing grew for the first time in half a year, giving a boost to lead-

ers as they battle to kickstart the struggling economy.

The 50.8 reading in March was the first showing expansion since September and was well above forecasts. "The industrial sector seems to be resilient, partly helped by strong exports," said Zhang Zhiwei at Pinpoint Asset Management. "If fiscal spending rises and exports remain strong, the economic momentum may improve."

But Tokyo sank more than one percent as the Bank of Japan's closely watched Tankan survey showed that confidence among Japan's largest manufacturers slipped in the first quarter, having risen for three straight quarters.

New York - Dow: DOWN 0.6 percent at 39,566.85 (close)

New York - S&P 500 - DOWN 0.2 percent at 5,243.77 (close)

New York - Nasdaq - UP

0.1 percent at 16,396.83 (close)

Tokyo - Nikkei 225: DOWN 1.4 percent at 39,803.09 (close)

Shanghai - Composite: UP 1.2 percent at 3,077.38 (close)

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: Closed for holiday

London - FTSE 100: Closed for a holiday

Dollar/yen: UP at 151.65 yen from 151.35 yen on Thursday

Euro/dollar: DOWN at \$1.0746 from \$1.0790

Pound/dollar: DOWN at \$1.2548 from \$1.2623

Euro/pound: UP at 85.61 pence from 85.48 pence

West Texas Intermediate: UP 0.6 percent at \$83.71 per barrel

Brent North Sea Crude: UP 0.5 percent at \$87.42 per barrel

New York - Dow: UP 0.1 percent at 39,807.37 points (close)



In brief

Basketball
tournament titles

ISLAMABAD (APP): Unbeatable Pakistan Army and Wapda A emerged victorious in women's and men's categories of All Pakistan 3x3 Ramadan Cup Basketball Tournament here at Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad on late Monday. In the women's final showdown, Army outfoxed Lycans A Club by 12-5 points to lift the title. Aamina Mohsin of Army emerged as the player of the match, exhibiting a stellar performance with 8 points. Hadiya was the other main contributor as she added 3 points. Mahrukh Ali scored 3 points for Lycans A. Marukh Ali scored 3 points for Lycans. In men's final, Wapda A continued their fine show to outwit Wapda B by 21-10 points. Wapda ace players Kaleemullah and Zain ul Hasan led the winning side by scoring 9 and 7 points respectively. Amir Farooq scored 6 points for the losing side. Pakistan Basketball Federation President Brig (R) Muhammad Itfikh Mansoor, who was chief guest at the concluding ceremony gave away trophies and cash prizes to the winning teams.

Babar reinstated as captain
despite past criticism

LAHORE (INP): The selectors in Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in a surprising turn of events, have opted to reinstate Babar Azam as the captain of the national T20 and ODI teams, despite previous criticism of his leadership abilities. Former all-rounder Abdul Razzaq had previously voiced doubts about Azam's leadership skills during a TV program, stating that he believed Azam should focus solely on playing rather than leading the team. His remarks had sparked widespread discussion, prompting the host to caution Razzaq about the potential impact of his words. Adding to the scrutiny, former fast bowler Wahab Riaz had also expressed concerns about Azam's captaincy record, noting the absence of significant wins in ICC or ACC events during his tenure. However, despite these reservations, the selectors, including Razzaq and Riaz, have ultimately decided to entrust Azam with the captaincy once again, signaling a renewed vote of confidence in his leadership abilities. The decision marks a pivotal moment for Azam as he looks to guide the team to future success on the international stage.

Whitlock
to retire

WELLINGTON (AFP): Sam Whitlock, the most capped player in the illustrious history of New Zealand rugby, will retire from the professional game at the end of the French club season in June, his country's federation announced on Tuesday. The 35-year-old played 153 times for the All Blacks and won back-to-back Rugby World Cups in 2011 and 2015. He narrowly missed out on becoming the first player to win three World Cups when New Zealand were beaten by a single point by South Africa in the final in Paris last year. Whitlock had come on in the 55th minute of the final, extending his own record for World Cup appearances to 26. After the final, he joined Pau in France's Top 14 on a two-year contract. The announcement he is retiring will put an end to speculation that he was set to make a return to Test rugby this year, following a reported approach by new All Blacks head coach Scott Robertson.



CHITTAGONG: Prabath Jayasuriya celebrates with team-mates after bowling Mahmudul Hasan Joy.

Sri Lanka close
on victory in second
Bangladesh Test

CHITTAGONG (AFP): Prabath Jayasuriya, Lahiru Kumara and Kamindu Mendis each claimed two wickets as Sri Lanka came within grasp of another resounding victory in the second and final Test on Tuesday.

Bangladesh were 268-7 at stumps on the fourth day in Chittagong, still needing 243 runs for an improbable win. Mehidy Hasan Miraz played an unbeaten knock of 44 to take the game into the fifth day with Taijul Islam accompanying him on 10.

Mominul Haque was the only other batsman to put up a fight, making 50 off 56 balls before he was dismissed by the spinner Jayasuriya in the last over before tea break. Mominul denied that the team had lacked preparation.

"Playing domestic cricket and international Test matches is very different," he said. Shakib Al Hasan and Liton Das put on 61 runs for the fifth wicket after Mominul's dismissal.

Off-spinner Kamundu

broke the stand as Nishan Madushka took a brilliant reflex catch at silly point to dismiss Shakib for 36.

Liton got the bottom edge in an attempt for a pull shot off Kumara to depart three overs later for 38.

Kamindu broke another promising partnership of 46 runs between Mehidy and Shahadat Hossain, trapping the latter leg before for 15.

'Strong position' Mahmudul Hasan (24), fellow opener Zakir Hasan (19), and skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto (20) were all sent back cheaply.

Jayasuriya bowled Mahmudul to break the 37-run opening stand. Zakir gave a catch to Dhananjaya de Silva off Vishwa Fernando at slip, and Lahiru clipped the bail of Najmul's off-stump.

Sri Lanka coach Chris Silverwood praised Bangladesh's fighting spirit. "I think Bangladesh played well today. They put the pressure back on the bowlers, they made life difficult for us," he said.

"I think we bowled well

in patches -- there were periods when we could have bowled better," he added. "I don't think we quite had the consistency in this innings as we showed in the first innings with the ball, but thankfully our hard work has put us in a strong position".

Resuming on 102-6, Sri Lanka batted for a little over an hour to add 55 runs to their overnight score before declaring at 157-7.

Angelo Mathews, unbeaten on 39 overnight, top-scored with 56 runs. He was bowled by Shakib after making his 41st Test fifty.

Jayasuriya was unbeaten on 28 when the declaration came, along with Vishwa Fernando, who was eight not out. Debutant pace bowler Hasan Mahmud finished with 4-65 for Bangladesh. Sri Lanka were missing Dinesh Chandimal in the field after he returned home for a family emergency. Sri Lanka, who have never lost a Test series to Bangladesh, thrashed the hosts by 328 runs in the first Test at Sylhet.



ISLAMABAD: A view of the final match between Romina and KB during Diplomatic Ramadan Tournament at Iqra University. —INP Photo

Zahoor James wins Pakistan Day
christian community snooker c'ship

PESHAWAR (APP): Promising James clinched the trophy after defeating his strong rival Shamroz Waheed in the final of the Pakistan Day Christian Community Snooker Championship organized by newly established Professional Snooker Club on Main Civil Quarters, Bana Marri here on Tuesday.

Mr. Augustin Jacob, Social and Human Rights Activist and Manager of EFU Life Assurance Ltd along with Senior Sports Journalist Ijaz Ahmad Khan graced the occasion as guest and witnessed the thrill-packed final. Head of the Club Rajash Musa, and a large number of spectators from the Christian Community, Members of the Christian Youth and Culture Organization, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were also present.

The Championship was started on March 23, 2024. The aim and objective of the Championship is to pay rich tribute to the Jawans of the security forces and Police who rendered unmatched sacrifices for protecting the motherland Pakistan. A minute of silence was also observed for the martyrs, followed by the National Anthem.

Speaking on this occasion, Mr. Augustin Jacob, Social and Human Rights Activist, said that establishment of the Snooker Club on self-basis is to provide health activities to the Christian youth and keep them away from going into the wrong hands.

Augustin Jacob said that there is no dearth of talent in Christian Youth

but they have less opportunities for healthy sports activities. He said the Christian Youth have gathered Rs. 3 million from all Christian families who contributed donations so that a playing Club would be established where the youth come and play.

He said we have requested the Directorate General Sports to extend support so that a Sports Festival would be organized for the Christian Youth, both boys and girls, but they refused their support because of the financial crunch. Anyway, all the Christian families donated funds to engage our youth in healthy sports activities.

Mr. Augustin Jacob said that the Snooker Club has three international standard tables worth Rs. 3.5 million for which we also got a place on rental basis of Rs. 40,000 per month to have healthy playing activities.

"We cannot hold our activities rather find any financial support from any quarters to hold a Festival for the Christian Youth, both boys and girls of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," Augustin Jacob said. He said we have sent a written request for this but no heat was paid so far.

He also appreciated Mr. Rajash Musa, the Head of the Snooker Club for his support and paying the Rent of the Club with giving access to Christian Youth to come and play. He said we have planned the first Christian Youth Sports Festival, carrying six discipline including Badminton (male, female), Table

Tennis (male, female), Tug of War (male, female), basketball (male, female), snooker (male), Throwball (male, female), and football (male) with musical program and hopefully we would find sponsor for the same.

He also made requests to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur and Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali, Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali to extend sponsorship for the Christian Youth Sports Festival.

Earlier, in the final Zahoor James recorded victory against Shamroz Waheed by 4-3 in the seven frames battle with Zahoor also registering his 102 break during the match. Both Zahoor James and Shamroz Waheed provided a great display of snooker which was largely enjoyed by the sitting spectators.

Rajash Musa on this occasion said that they would try to affiliate the Profession Snooker Club with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Snooker and Billiard Association very soon, so that the players of Christian Youth would also be able to participate in the main events.

At the end, Augustin Jacob and Ijaz Ahmad Khan distributed trophies and cash prizes to the winners and runners-up. The winner trophy and Rs. 10,000 was given to Zahoor James and runners-up trophy and cash prize of Rs. 5000 awarded to Shamroz Waleed. A total of 32 players participated in the Championship.

Shan Masood
wants
Pakistan, India
to play Test

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Test captain Shan Masood expressed his desire to play a Test match against India, stating it would be an honour for him to lead Pakistan against arch-rivals.

Pakistan and India have not played a Test since 2007/08 and a bilateral series in any format since 2012/13 due to the long-standing political tensions between the two neighbouring countries.

The fierce rivals, however, only came face to face in multi-national events like Asia Cup and ICC World Cups.

They last met in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2024 at Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium, which witnessed a mammoth audience of around 130,000 while their T20 World Cup 2022 tie saw around 94,000 spectators filling the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG).

"My greatest memory has been playing India in the 2022 T20 World Cup at the MCG -- it was around 94,000 people and that was surreal," stated Shan in an interview with Wisden Cricket Monthly.

"If we have a Test match in Pakistan or in India, even the Ahmedabad ground, or we play in Pakistan or in a neutral venue, I reckon an India v Pakistan match could sell out any venue in the world. It'd be great.

"You want to play the best teams in the world and India is certainly one of the best, especially when it comes to Test cricket. We just saw a very exciting India versus England series. I would love for that (India v Pakistan) to happen. It'd be a great honour to lead Pakistan against India."

Notably, India made it to the World Test Championship (WTC) final in both editions but Pakistan could not and thus the cricket fans' crave to witness a Test match between the two arch-rivals after a gap of almost 16 years, remained standstill.

Ben Stokes asks to
not be considered for
T20 World Cup

LONDON (Agencies): England all-rounder Ben Stokes has asked to not be considered for selection for this summer's T20 World Cup to focus on his fitness.

Stokes says he wants to use the break to ensure he can be "the all-rounder I want to be" across all formats. He had knee surgery over the winter and bowled just five overs during the recent five-Test series in India.

The England Test captain, 32, has already opted out of the Indian Premier League, which began last month. England are defending champions in the T20 World Cup, which takes place in the West Indies and United States in June.

That tournament is followed by home Test series for England against the West Indies and Sri Lanka, before a T20 and one-day series against Australia in September. Stokes said: "Opting out of the IPL and the World Cup will hopefully be a sacrifice that allows me to be the all-rounder I want to be for the foreseeable future."

"The recent Test tour of India highlighted how far behind I was from a bowling point of view after my



knee surgery and nine months without bowling.

"I'm looking forward to playing for Durham in the County Championship before the start of our Test summer." Stokes has had a long-term injury in his left knee, which has often prevented him from bowling. He did not bowl in the final three Ashes Tests against Australia last summer and played as a specialist batter in the 50-over World Cup in India in October and November.

The all-rounder had surgery after that tournament and recovered in time to captain the Test team in India earlier this year.

Stokes only bowled in the final Test, taking 1-17, as England lost by an innings and 64 runs to complete a 4-1 series defeat.

"You want to see Ben Stokes in any and every team, but you fully understand the journey that he's been on," said England and Wales Cricket Board chief executive Richard Gould.

"He's someone that's put his body on the line literally for years for England. Particularly with the new operation that he had just before Christmas and the promising rehabilitation he's had since, there's really good news for us.

"The fact that now he knows that he can get better and stronger, that's great for us for the next two, three, four years, however long, because in cricket terms he's still a relatively young man."

Stokes has played 43 T20 internationals for England since 2011, scoring 585 runs and taking 26 wickets. He hit an unbeaten 52 from 49 balls to help England beat Pakistan by five wickets in the 2022 T20 World Cup final in Melbourne.

England begin the defence of the trophy against Scotland in Barbados on 4 June, before further group matches against Australia, Oman, and Namibia.



SARGODHA: Students showing their skills in Taekwondo during Annual Prize Distribution Ceremony of Khabib Girls School and College. —APP Photo

Man City experience does not
matter in title race: Guardiola

MANCHESTER (AFP): Pep Guardiola insists Manchester City's experience of thriving under the pressure of a title race will not be the decisive factor in who wins the Premier League.

Guardiola's men are aiming to become the first side to ever win four consecutive English top-flight titles and claim their sixth Premier League crown in seven seasons.

However, City will have to come from behind in the final nine games of the campaign after a 0-0 draw at home to Arsenal on Sunday left them still in third.

The defending champions trail leaders Liverpool by three points, with City one point behind second-placed Arsenal.

The stalemate with the Gunners means City are still to beat one of the top five in the Premier League in six attempts this season.

And Guardiola stressed the need for his side to end that record when fourth-placed Aston Villa visit the Etihad Stadium on Wednesday.

"We have not many chances to drop points but there are still nine games (to go)," Guardiola said at his pre-match press conference. "Our experience is over, it doesn't count. What counts is Aston Villa."

City are unbeaten in 23 games, but their last defeat came away to Villa in December.

Guardiola labelled that 1-0 loss as City's worst performance of the season and

knows he needs a reaction against a Villa side that have been transformed in 18 months under Unai Emery.

"Aston Villa are playing to qualify for the Champions League and every team is playing for something, so the last games will be difficult to manage for all of us," added Guardiola.

"It's excellent, the way they play. Unai Emery has consistency in every season. Villa have been impressive. It's not a surprise, the quality of him, his management and the quality of the team."

John Stones could return to ease City's injury problems in defence, but Kyle Walker, Nathan Ake and goalkeeper Ederson remain out.

Tamasha brings free HD
live streaming of Pakistan
vs New Zealand T20I series

ISLAMABAD (APP): Tamasha, Pakistan's largest homegrown OTT platform, in partnership with Trans International, Pakistan's largest sports business group, has secured the digital broadcasting rights for the forthcoming Pakistan vs New Zealand T20I series.

Set to take place from April 18 to 27, with fixtures scheduled in Rawalpindi and Lahore, the five-match series guarantees thrilling cricket entertainment for enthusiasts, with three games slated for Rawalpindi on April 18, 20, and 21, and two matches in Lahore on April 25 and 27 said a news release. What makes the Pakistan vs New Zealand T20I series more worth watching is the recent changes that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has made to fortify the national cricket team, reinstating Babar Azam as captain.

Notably, Mohammad Amir and Imad Wasim have rescinded their retirement to rejoin the squad, enhancing its strength. Pakistan's potential pace attack for the T20I World Cup could comprise Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah, Mohammad Amir, Haris Rauf, Zaman Khan, and Aamer Jamal. This series serves as a crucial opportunity for Pakistan to refine their strategies and squad lineup for the upcoming ICC T20I World Cup 2024 in June.

"We are thrilled to announce the live streaming of the Pakistan vs New Zealand T20I series on Tamasha, tapping into Pakistan's enduring passion for cricket," said Aamer Ejaz, Chief Digital Officer at Jazz. "As the digital landscape evolves, Tamasha has emerged as the ultimate destination for entertain-

ment, consistently delivering content that resonates with our audience's preferences. We are committed to providing an unparalleled viewing experience, cementing Tamasha's position as the go-to platform for digital entertainment in Pakistan," he added.

Trans Group COO, Rao Usman Hashim Khan commented, "Trans Group in partnership with Tamasha is proud to have acquired the PCB bilateral live-streaming rights for the upcoming series. As Pakistan's largest sports business group, Trans Group has always stood behind Pakistan Cricket and worked in association with the PCB to enhance the commercial potential of all its rights. Trans Group sees great potential in the local digital rights space and this aggressive acquisition is a testament to that."



In brief

IRSA releases 88,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 88,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 125,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1419.34 feet and was 21.34 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 29,100 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1089.40 feet, which was 39.40 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 37,400 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 40,900, 34,100, 32,500 and 6,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 35,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 18,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

HEC to conduct USAT test

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has announced to conduct Undergraduate Studies Admission Test (USAT) for students seeking undergraduate admissions in Pakistani universities all over the country. According to the official sources, the test application is open for students who have either passed their Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSSC) or equivalent/Grade 12 education or are awaiting the final result on this level. It is pertinent to mention here that HEC has set the test date on April 28, 2024 (Tentative). HEC encouraged the students seeking for undergraduate admission to register themselves online at etc.hec.gov.pk. The registration deadline to apply for the test is April 14, 2024.

SSP Operations visits exams centers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Operations Rawalpindi, Hafiz Kamran Asghar, on the instructions of Chief Minister Punjab, here on Tuesday visited various examination centers. The SSP interacted with the teachers on duty and reviewed all the arrangements. He also issued instructions to ensure foolproof security in the examination centers. The SSP said that the security of the examination centers and transparency of the exams were being ensured. "Young generation is the future and bright face of Pakistan and it is the duty of all of us to make them civilized and competent," he added.

10 drug peddlers netted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders and other law-breakers here on Tuesday arrested 10 accused besides recovering over three kg charras, 96 liquor bottles, six pistols 30 bore, a Kalashnikov and other items from their possession. Rattaamral police held two accused namely Nakeen and Shehzad Khan with 3000 grams charras. Civil Lines police in routine snap checking stopped a vehicle and recovered 96 bottles of liquor besides arresting an accused namely Iqbal. The police spokesman informed that Patriata police netted Usama with a Kalashnikov while Sadiqabad, Cantt, Naseerabad, Kahuta and Civil Lines police conducted raids and rounded up Asif, Raheel, Sohail, Ethesham, Tariq and Faisal and recovered six 30 bore pistols and ammunition.

‘All political parties unanimously condemn terrorists attack’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, on Tuesday, unequivocally denounced the terrorist attack on Chinese nationals and said that all political parties have united in their condemnation of this despicable act.

During a meeting with the Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong, at the Chinese embassy, he conveyed profound sorrow and grief over the loss of innocent Chinese lives in the heinous terrorist attack in Shangla Besham.

He said that every Pakistani shares in the grief and sadness caused by this tragic incident.

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said that terrorists will never succeed in their nefarious designs to create a rift between the two nations. He expressed confidence that Pakistani security agencies, along with the support of the people and parliament, would soon eradicate terrorism from the soil of Pakistan.

Highlighting the significance of bilateral parliamentary cooperation, Sadiq mentioned that it was an honour for him to organize the first Speakers' Conference in 2017 to develop a shared

declaration on enhancing regional connectivity and countering terrorism.

He underscored the need to revive the Parliamentary Friendship Group (PFG) between both countries to facilitate the exchange of parliamentary experiences.

He reiterated his commitment to fostering consensus among all political parties in Parliament to devise a unified strategy for safeguarding Pak-China interests, especially projects related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

He paid homage to the deceased Chinese nationals by inscribing condolence remarks in the Visitors' Book at the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan.

Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong thanked the Government of Pakistan, its parliament, and law enforcement agencies for their support and solidarity during this challenging time.

He affirmed that such cowardly acts would not deter China from supporting Pakistan and thanked Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq for observing a minute of silence in honour of the deceased Chinese nationals during the proceedings of the National Assembly.

Ashrafi condemns Israel's aggression against Iran's consulate in Damascus

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Ulama Council (PUC) Chairman, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Tuesday vehemently condemned the Israeli brazen act of aggression against Iran's consulate in Damascus, Syria.

He, in a statement, expressed his profound dismay over the unwarranted assault on the diplomatic mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The PUC chairman described the attack as a flagrant violation of international law and a blatant disregard for diplomatic norms, emphasizing that such belligerent actions only serve to escalate tensions and destabilize the region further.

"The assault on Iran's consulate in Damascus is a reprehensible act of aggression that must be unequivocally condemned by the international community," Ashrafi said adding, "It is imperative for nations to uphold the principles of sovereignty and respect for diplomatic premises, regardless of political differences."

Ashrafi urged the United Nations Security Council to take immediate and decisive action to hold Israel accountable for its actions, stressing the need for a robust international response to deter further acts of aggression in the region.

Moreover, he said this egregious crime had garnered significant condemnation from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and other Muslim nations worldwide.

"This condemnation signifies unity among the Muslim Ummah and delivers a resolute message to Israel, rejecting its brutalities in all forms and manifestations," he maintained.

"The attack on Iran's consulate in Damascus is not just an attack on Iran, but an attack on the sanctity of diplomatic missions and the principles of international law," Ashrafi asserted adding, "We stand in solidarity with the people of Iran and call for an end to such reckless and destabilizing actions."

CDA adopting comprehensive strategy to ensure best facilities in hospitals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority (CDA) is taking concrete steps to make the Capital Hospital, a state-of-the-art, hospital besides providing best treatment facilities to the patients there.

A comprehensive strategy is being adopted so that the patients visiting the hospitals for medical treatment could not face any kind of difficulty.

In this regard, the administration of Capital Hospital has decided to purchase 'Cochlear Implant devices' for the country's first public sector

Cochlear Implant Center established in CDA Hospital with all required modern facilities for the patients. A budget of around 40 million rupees has also been allocated to implement the project. According to the details, a modern Hearing Assessment System and other devices would also be purchased from this allocated budget. In this connection, advertisements have also been given in the newspapers.

It should be noted that many deaf and speech-impaired children have been treated under the supervision of expert surgeons and doctors at the Cochlear Implant Center of the Capital Hospital.

The CDA Board granted the status of Cochlear Implant Center to make this facility more functional and a Center of Excellence to make it a specialized center for deaf and hearing patients. On this occasion, the Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) said that providing the best medical facilities to the citizens of Islamabad is one of the top priorities of this institution.

1186 FIRs registered against electricity theft in Rwp Division

RAWALPINDI (APP): 1186 FIRs had been registered against electricity theft in Rawalpindi division, said Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Engineer Aamir Khattak here on Tuesday. Chairing a meeting held here at Commissioner's Office Rawalpindi to prevent electricity theft, the commissioner informed that 1186 cases had been registered in Rawalpindi Division since 7 September 2023, while 994 accused were arrested and over Rs 88 million were recovered.

He directed the authorities to ensure 100 percent electricity theft

recoveries in all districts of the division. He ordered to complete all the arrangements for power supply especially in Murree during Eid days. Additional manpower should be deployed in Murree for Eid holidays and a backup plan should also be prepared for uninterrupted power supply during Eid holidays.

The performance of Rawalpindi Division is best in the province in terms of anti-electricity theft, Engr. Aamir Khattak informed.

He said that special attention should be given to commercial settlements as there is a high risk of power

theft. All Deputy Commissioners of the division should ensure checking in their respective districts, he instructed. Many hotels in Murree use electric heaters which should also be checked, he ordered. According to the report of the provincial government, such feeders where there are heavy line losses, the electricity thieves should be identified and arrested with a special focus on these feeders. Recovery from them should be ensured, he directed. Individual recovery should be done from electricity thieves and not the entire area or village should be fined, Aamir Khattak said.



RAWALPINDI: Madrasa students reciting holy Quran during fasting month of Ramadan at Jamia Anwaar ul Aloom near Banni chowk.

Naat competition held at AIOU

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) organized a Naat competition between students of colleges and universities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, in which 18 students from different institutions participated and recited Naats.

Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood was the chief guest while Director General Regional Services (DGRS), Dr. Malik Tauqir Ahmed Khan hosted the event. In his address, Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood said that it is a great blessing to present the Naat of our Holy Prophet (S.A.W) and there is no competition or position in it, but it is an expression of devotion and love. Vice Chancellor stated that the life of Prophet PBUH serves as a guiding principle for all humanity, offering a pathway through which they can enhance in both worlds.

Vice-Chancellor also directed to organize Qirat, Naat, speeches and national song competitions in regional offices on the request of DGRS.

Capital markets witness huge rush

ISLAMABAD (APP): With the start of the third Ashra of Ramadan, Eid shopping had gained momentum and the citizens were thronging bazaars and malls. A great rush is being witnessed in almost all shopping malls and bazaars including Jinnah Super Market, Aabpara, Karachi company, F-10 Markaz and other markets of the city.

Several local brands have begun displaying their latest Eid editions of dresses, shoes, and other essential accessories to attract buyers and gain maximum

profits. The shopkeepers have decorated their shops with colourful lights to attract customers.

A large number of women and children are thronging to markets to purchase clothes, footwear, cosmetics, henna, bangles and other items.

As the festival of Eid comes closer, the stalls of beautifully designed colourful bangles, jewellery and mehndi in the markets of the city have been set up which are attracting the customers.

Number of famous shops

also offering upto fifty percent discount to attract customers. However, the buyers also complaining of the price hike on the occasion of Eid. A customer said that parents and children are unwilling to compromise on purchasing Eid clothes and gifts no matter how much prices rise.

The sale of ready-made garments also increased in the last days of Ramadan when garment outlets displayed various ready-made clothes on sale which were attracting customers, said a shopkeeper.

Admin monitoring exam centers to ensure merit, transparency

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chairman, Rawalpindi Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (RBISE) has said that the district administration on the directives of the Chief Secretary Punjab was monitoring the 9th first annual examination 2024 centers to ensure merit and transparency. According to a RBISE spokesman, Chairman RBISE, Mohammad Adnan Khan had visited various exam centers in connection with 9th First Annual Examination 2024 and reviewed all the arrangements.

The Chairman visited Government Graduate College Choasidan Shah, Government Boys and Girls Higher Secondary School Basharat, Government Boys and Girls Higher Secondary School Sehgalabad, Government Boys and Girls High School Khanpur, Govt. Boys and Girls High School Malhal Mughlan. On complaints

about non-implementation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued by the board in Government Graduate College Choasidan Shah Exam Center, the chairman immediately suspended the staff and appointed new invigilators. The Chairman ordered the authorities to take departmental action against the arrested accused.

The Chairman said that on the instructions of Chief Secretary Punjab, the administrations of the respective districts were monitoring the examination centers established in the districts and tehils of the division on daily basis.

The spokesman further informed that Deputy Commissioner, (DC) Chakwal Madam Qaratul Ain, District Police Officer, Chakwal Samiullah Farooq, DC Attock, Rao Atif, DC Murree, Zaheer Shirazi and Assistant Commissioners of various tehils also visited various examination centers and

reviewed the arrangements.

The Assistant Commissioner, Noorpur Kallar Kahar caught the staff at govt. boys high school red handed for allowing the students to use unfair means. A FIR had been lodged against the Superintendent and all the staff and recommendation was also forwarded to the authorities concerned for a departmental inquiry.

He informed that Controller of Examinations, RBISE, Prof. Sajid Mehmood Farooqui visited Govt. High School Kasran, Govt. High School Nara, Govt. High School Toba Domail, Govt. High School Khanda and Govt. High School Jafar in connection with the 9th First Annual Examination 2024.

All the examination centers were being closely monitored, he said adding, strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against cheating mafia.

35 FIRs, Rs 132,000 fine imposed for violating dengue SOPs

RAWALPINDI (APP): As many as 35 FIRs had been registered on violations of anti-dengue SOPs from January 1 to date in various areas of the Rawalpindi district, said District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control Dr Sajjad Mehmood here Tuesday. Giving details of the penalty actions, the health officer said that the district administration, in collaboration with allied departments, had sealed 38 premises, issued tickets to 83 and a fine of Rs 132,000

was imposed on violations of dengue SOPs in 2024.

Dr Sajjad informed that around four confirmed cases had been reported in the district this year, while the number was two in 2023, and one in 2022 during the period. The health officer further stated that during indoor vector surveillance, the teams checked 1,045,853 houses and larvae were detected at 1,564 sites while during outdoor surveillance larvae were found at 300 spots while inspecting 269,547 places.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Rawalpindi Engineer Aamir Khattak directed the officials to accelerate field activities for tracing larvae and expedite surveillance in the graveyards, junkyards and under construction sites which were the vulnerable places of dengue spread.

He directed the health department to ensure the availability of required treatment and medicines in the hospitals and display posters and banners in the areas affected by dengue last year.

ANF recovers 716 kg drugs in nine operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting nine operations across the country managed to recover 716 kg drugs and arrested six accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman on Tuesday.

He said, 745 grams Ice was recovered from a Doha-bound passenger arrested at Peshawar Airport.

In another operation, 200 grams cocaine was recovered from a parcel sent to Karachi at a cargo office in Lahore.

150 kg heroin and 166 kg morphine were recovered from Chaman, the spokesman said adding, 110 kg heroin and 52 kg morphine were recovered from Yaro

Pishin. In fifth operation, 100 kg hashish was recovered from RCD Road Lasbela area. Some 70 kg hashish and 6.2 kg opium were recovered from two suspects in Pindi Bhattian, Hafizabad.

In 7th operation conducted near Northern Bypass Karachi, 50.4 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused. around 30 kg hashish was recovered from two suspects rounded up near Burhan Interchange Attock.

In 9th operation, 11 kg hashish was recovered from Orakzai area. Cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act have been registered against the arrested accused and further investigations are under process.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan, H.E Mr. Yerzhan Kistafin called on Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif.

3 new radios inaugurated

HERAT (BNA) The province of Herat witnessed the official inauguration of three new radio stations named Hurrit, Omid, and Shariat. During the ceremony, Mawlawi Hayatullah Muhajer emphasized the positive role of media and acknowledged the impact of media on the improvement of good governance within the Islamic Emirate. He reiterated that the Islamic Emirate supports media outlets whose publications comply with the laws of the Islamic Emirate and serve national interests.

Nela Bagh project to commence soon

KABUL (BNA): Sheikh Hamdullah Nomani, the Acting Minister of Urban Development and Housing, held a meeting with representatives of a Chinese state-owned enterprise to discuss the Nila Bagh project. According to a statement from the ministry, the meeting centered around the initiation of the Nila Bagh residential project, which is being constructed with financial support from China.

Asia is comparable to a living body composed of soil and water. The heart that beats inside the body is Afghanistan. The destruction of Afghanistan would be the destruction of Asia. And in its progress and prosperity lies the well-being of Asia. - Allama Iqbal

UNAMA affirms international Community’s commitment to humanitarian aid in Afghanistan



KABUL (BNA): A meeting was held between Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs, and Indrika Ratwatte, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance

Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). During the meeting, Ratwatte expressed the international community’s ongoing commitment to humanitarian aid for the people of Afghanistan. He welcomed the Islamic Emirate of

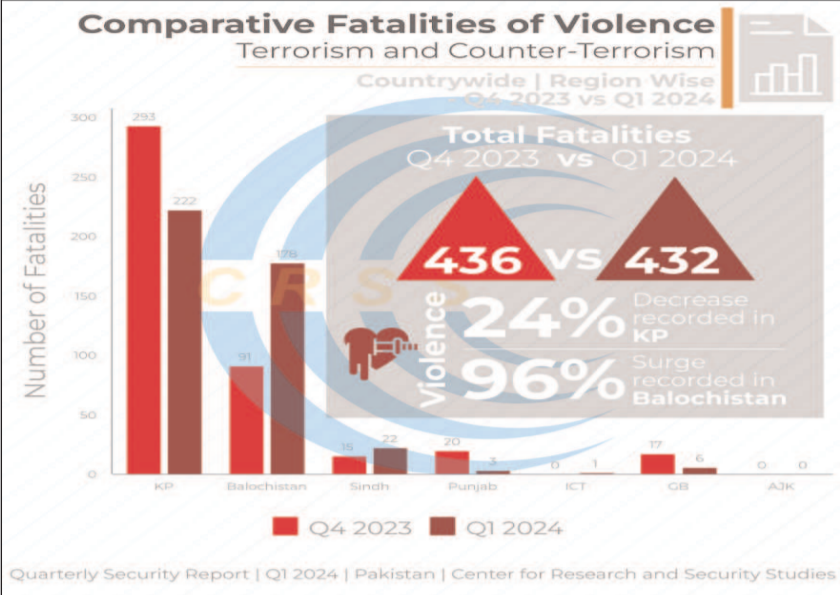
Afghanistan’s plans for distributing aid to those in need, particularly earthquake victims in Herat and returnees. Ratwatte emphasized the importance of overall security, prevention of trafficking, trade, and drug use, and combating administrative

corruption. Ratwatte further stated that the international community’s humanitarian aid to the Afghan people will continue. He urged officials of the Islamic Emirate to collaborate in facilitating the delivery of this aid to the needy. He also highlighted that the forced expulsion of migrants by neighboring countries violates international migration laws. In response, Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi expressed appreciation for the international community’s humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people. He confirmed that officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan are cooperating with international organizations and aid agencies in delivering assistance to those in need. He also underscored the ongoing, improper expulsion of Afghan migrants from neighboring countries, calling for its immediate cessation in accordance with international standards.

Violence has increased by 96% in provinces bordering Afghanistan

KABUL (BNA): A research center in Pakistan has reported that at least 432 individuals have been killed in the first three months of the year 2024 as a result of attacks by militant groups, with more than 92% of the total casualties attributed to two provinces of Pakistan that share a border with Afghanistan. The findings of a three-month study by the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), based in Islamabad, have recently been released, indicating that in January, February, and March of the current year, at least 245 terrorist attacks occurred in the country, including limited instances of counter-terrorism operations.

These attacks in the first three months of 2024 have resulted in at least 432 deaths and 370 injuries, encompassing civilians, security personnel, and, in some limited cases, militants who have been killed in engagements with Pakistani security forces. The report states that the northwestern provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and



Balochistan, both located along the Durand Line (the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan), accounted for more than 92% of the total casualties and 86% of the total attacks during this time period. The findings of this center indicate that in the first three months of the year 2024, Balochistan witnessed a staggering 96%

increase in violence, with the number of victims rising from 91 in the first three months of 2023 to 178. Despite repeated allegations against the Taliban regime for supporting the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and allowing them to operate from Afghan soil, the Taliban have consistently rejected such accusations. They claim to have

no affiliation with the TTP and assert their commitment to not permitting any individual or group to utilize Afghan territory as a base for launching attacks against neighbouring countries, including Pakistan. Despite these assertions, the accusations persist, raising concerns about the ongoing security challenges faced by the region.

Over 40,000 Afghan victims of explosive mines in three decades

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United Nations Deputy Assistance Mission in Afghanistan stated that over the past 35 years, including children and women, 44,000 civilians in Afghanistan have been victims of mine explosions and explosive materials.

UNAMA, on Monday, April 1st, on the eve of the International Day of Mine Awareness, released a video on the social media platform X, stating that more than three thousand square kilometres of land have been cleared of mines. According to the report of this organization, in 2022, approximately 700 children were killed or injured, as documented by UNICEF, indicating that at least two children are victimized per day. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), more than 19 million square meters have been cleared across Afghanistan, and about 1,284 square kilometres of land in

Afghanistan have been identified and require clearance. Over the past four decades of conflict in Afghanistan, landmines and unexploded ordnance have remained a constant threat to civilians. The legacy of prolonged conflict has resulted in the widespread scattering of these deadly remnants

across the country, leading to tragic loss of life and severe injuries, particularly among vulnerable groups like children and women. Despite ongoing efforts to clear mines and explosive remnants of war, the danger persists, claiming lives daily and impeding both development and the return of displaced

populations. The presence of landmines not only poses immediate risks to lives but also presents long-term obstacles to humanitarian and reconstruction efforts, highlighting the urgent need for sustained action to address this critical issue and safeguard the well-being of Afghan communities.



KABUL (TOLOnews): The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) said the majority of the victims of unexploded ordnance and mines in Afghanistan are children. UNICEF reported that Afghanistan was among countries most contaminated with mines, saying that the primary victims of mines and unexploded ordnance in Afghanistan are children. "Afghanistan is one of the most weapon-contaminated nations, children bear the brunt of the consequences," UNICEF said. On the eve of the International Day of Mine

Awareness, the office of the United Nations Assistance Mission (UNAMA) also stated that over 3,000 square kilometers of land have been cleared by mine-clearing organizations in Afghanistan. UNAMA said that every year, tens of thousands of people, including women and children, lose their lives due to mines and unexploded ordnance. "Thousands of landmines and explosive remnants of war remain a threat to hundreds of communities in Afghanistan. Tens of thousands of civilians in Afghanistan, including women & children, have been killed or injured by

landmines & explosive remnants of war," UNAMA said. This comes as on Sunday, due to the detonation of unexploded ordnance in the provinces of Ghazni and Herat, ten boys and girls lost their lives, and five other children were injured. "The other day, when an unexploded mine detonated in the Giro district, it inflicted harm on many children, including both boys and girls," said Saifullah, a resident of Ghazni. "We hope that the government will make an effort to clean these areas and improve the lives of the nation," said Gul Rahman, a resident of Ghazni. Similarly, the

spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate has also expressed concern about the presence of mines in the country and said they are striving to address this challenge in cooperation with demining agencies. "We are concerned about mines because Afghanistan has gone through forty years of war, and there exist mines or unexploded ordnance which unfortunately harm people. The Islamic Emirate cooperates with institutions working in this direction, provides their security, and facilitates the environment for them," said Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesperson for the Islamic Emirate.

Gholghola and Zuhak historical sites in Bamyan to be reconstructed

KABUL (Khaama Press): Media outlets have reported that the head of UNESCO's cultural department has expressed readiness to reconstruct the historical sites of Ghulgulah and Zuhak in Bamyan province, Central Afghanistan, in the coming year. National radio and television under the control of the Taliban regime, in a report published on Sunday, March 31, have announced the meeting between Brandon Cassar, the responsible for the cultural department of UNESCO in Afghanistan, and Safiullah Ra'id, the head of information and culture of the Bamyan. However, during the first period of Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001, the group destroyed the giant statues of Bamyan, which faced widespread condemnation and demonstrated their lack of respect for the historical sites of the country. According to the report, Brandon Cassar stated in this meeting that UNESCO intends to reconstruct the



historical cities of Gholghola and Zuhak in Bamyan province. The press office of the Information and Culture Directorate in Bamyan province also confirmed the accuracy of Safiullah Ra'id's meeting with the head of the cultural department of UNESCO and added that it strives to complete unfinished cultural projects, restore ancient sites, and develop cultural heritage. UNESCO has not commented on this matter yet, and the Taliban official has not made the details of the reconstruction plan for these two historical sites public. Gholghola is an ancient city in Bamyan, which according to the

report of the Eco Cultural Institute, was built in the 6th century AD. This city is located in the Saeedabad area, facing the Buddha statues, and is built on a hill with an elevation of 100 to 140 meters. The historical city of Zuhak is also located at 350 feet, overlooking the Tagaw Valley in Bamyan.

Protests in Chaman hindering the local economy

KABUL (TOLOnews): Protesters in Chaman once again demanded an end to the economic blockade imposed by the Pakistani government. These protests have been ongoing for seven months in response to the mandatory requirement of having a passport and visa by the Pakistani government at the Spin Boldak-Chaman crossing. Protesters, who are spending their days and nights alongside roads during the month of Ramadan, have said they will continue their fight to gain their rights. According to these protesters, since the pass-

port and visa became mandatory, 15,000 people have lost their businesses and are now in a poor economic situation. Sadiq Khan Achakzai, the spokesperson for the protest movement in Chaman, said: "There is no flour, no dry bread, we ask people to bring Iftar here." Abdul Baqi, a member of the protest movement in Chaman, said: "Those who have gathered here for Iftar cannot find bread in their homes. The situation of the people is very bad. We ask the government and the people to consider our demands." Ghousullah, the

head of this protest movement, has stated that despite the many challenges facing the residents of Chaman, they will continue their fight to gain their rights. "Our people are tired, movement should be free, and they should be allowed to tend to their livelihoods," he said. Meanwhile, officials from the Kandahar Chamber of Commerce and Industries have said that since the start of the movement, the import and export process for Afghan traders has also faced challenges, and they are looking for alternative solutions.

Sayed Sarwar Amani, the head of the Kandahar Chamber of Mines and Industries, said: "The neighboring country sometimes exploits our situation. Our officials, including the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Economy, have paid attention to this issue and are working on it." Although the protesters in Chaman hoped that the arrival of the new government in Pakistan would solve their problem, the new Pakistani government has not yet taken any practical steps in this regard.



U.N. and Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development Partner for Development Projects

KABUL (BNA): A meeting was held between Mullah Mohammad Younus Akhundzada, the Acting Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, and Indrika Ratwatte, the Deputy Special Envoy of the United Nations in Afghanistan. According to a statement from the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the U.N. Deputy Special Envoy acknowledged the significant role the ministry has



played in implementing projects in rural areas. He

assured his organization's assistance and collaboration in executing developmental and water supply projects. The Acting Minister emphasized the importance of executing development projects and prioritizing humanitarian aid for fundamental projects. He stated that their responsibility is to align projects transparently and effectively with the people's priorities, ensuring sustainable benefits.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq shaking hands with President Asif Ali Zardari prior to a meeting.

Reserved MPs approach PHC against Speaker, dy Babar Swati's plea adjourned

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: The members nominated on reserved seats filed Contempt of Court plea against Speaker and Deputy Speaker at Peshawar High Court (PHC) due to violation of court's orders regarding administration oath while PHC issued notices to Election Commission along with other respondents for postponement of Senate Election at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, on Tuesday.

The contempt of court plea seeking disqualification of Speaker and Deputy Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly on violation of PHC's orders for administration of oath from members provincial assembly nominated on reserved seats.

During hearing Justice SM Attique Shah observed that why reserved members didn't took oath while in rest of the country lawmakers nominated on reserved seat administered oath of their responsibilities. He remarked that you (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf/ Sunni Ittehad Council) had

concluded a pitch-up (compromise) in Punjab and elected Senators unopposed.

In the meantime, Justice SM Attique further remarked that why the dispute is arising in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa?

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had postponed Senate Election in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by providing PHC judgement linking administration of oath from reserved members with the upper house of parliament polls, the lawyer argued.

The counsel argued that Returning Officer looking into the matter while Assembly Session wasn't called for Senate Election which is unconstitutional.

However, Justice SM Attique Shah observed that provincial assemblies as well as National Assembly have been completed as Members nominated on reserved seats took oath of their offices expect Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly in Speaker didn't complied with PHC's orders.

PHC's divisional bench comprising

Justice SM Attique Shah and Justice Syed Arshad Ali has issued notices to ECP along with other respondents for submission of reply in this regard while adjourned hearing on Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa review plea till detailed judgement.

It is worthy to mention that Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Babar Saleem Swati had filed review petition against PHC's verdict regarding administration of oath from members nominated on reserved seats.

Meanwhile, Members nominated on reserved seats for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly filed Contempt of Court plea against Speaker and Deputy Speaker while seeking their disqualification for ignorance toward PHC verdict.

Barrister Saqib Raza and Amir Javed advocate had filed Contempt of Court on behalf of Shazia Tehmash along with others in which Speaker Babar Saleem Swati and Deputy Speaker Surya Bibi were made respondents in the plea.

Khamenei promises 'Israel will be punished' for Syria strike

TEHRAN: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has promised revenge for an Israeli air raid in Syria that killed senior military officers. Iran's supreme leader declared on Tuesday that "Israel will be punished" for the attack the previous day that killed members of the Revolutionary Guards, including two generals, at the Iranian embassy compound in Damascus. The attack and rhetoric have raised concern that Israel's war in Gaza threatens to escalate major conflict across the region.

"The evil Zionist regime will be punished at the hands of our brave men. We will make them regret this crime and the other ones," Khamenei said in a message published on his official website. The statement came as Iranian state television reported that the death toll from the attack on the consulate building has risen to 13, including seven Iranians and six Syrian citizens.

Earlier, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi declared that the "cowardly crime will not go unanswered." "Having failed to destroy the will of the resistance front, the Zionist regime [Israel] has put blind assassinations back on its agenda to save itself," he said.

Hezbollah, the Iran-affiliated armed group that has been swapping attacks with Israel across the border with Lebanon since the start of Israel's war on Gaza, joined in, warning that the attack on the Iranian diplomatic premises "will not pass without the enemy receiving punishment and revenge." Israel has not declared responsibility for the Syria attack, which destroyed the consular building adjacent to the main embassy building in the upscale Mezzeh district of Damascus on Monday night.

However, Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant struck a defiant tone in comments made on Tuesday, albeit without mentioning Iran. Israel is in a war on multiple fronts "both offensively and defensively," he told parliament's Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee.

"We operate everywhere, every day, in order to prevent our enemies from gaining strength and in order to make it clear to anyone who acts against us — all over the Middle East — that the price for action against Israel will be a heavy one." The attack has further complicated the situation in the Middle East, where tension has been bubbling since the onset of the Gaza war in October. — Aljazeera

Netanyahu admits Israel strike killed aid workers

JERUSALEM (AFP): Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu admitted Tuesday that its armed forces "unintentionally" killed seven aid workers in an air strike in Gaza.

"Unfortunately, in the last day there was a tragic case of our forces unintentionally hitting innocent people in the Gaza Strip," he said as he left hospital in Jerusalem after a hernia operation. "It happens in war, we will investigate it right to the end... We are in contact with the governments, and we will do everything so that this thing does not happen again."

PTI founder acquitted in another case

'Bushra Bibi poisoned in Bani Gala sub-jail', Imran tells court

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD / RAWALPINDI: In yet another relief for the former prime minister and ex-PTI chairman Imran Khan, a court in Islamabad on Tuesday acquitted him, ex-PTI leader Asad Umar and other suspects, including PML-N MNA Raja Khurram Nawaz, in the case of vandalism registered against them at Margallah police station. Judicial Magistrate Mureed Abbas pronounced the decision.

Advocate Sardar Masroof Khan and Amina Ali appeared in the court on behalf of the suspects. The decision came only a day after the Islamabad High Court (IHC) suspended the sentence awarded by the trial court to Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in the Toshakhana case.

IHC's two-member bench, comprising IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Aurangzeb, heard Imran and Bushra's appeals against their conviction and in the reference. The court gave its ruling after the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) lawyer said the Bureau had no objection to the suspension of sentence.

Speaking on the occasion, NAB Prosecutor Amjad Pervaiz said that after reviewing the case, he had reached the conclusion that it needed to be suspended. He requested the court to suspend the sentence, adding the appeals could not be heard at this stage.

Describing the NAB's stance as 'fair', Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb remarked that he praised

the bureau for that. IHC Chief Justice (CJ) Justice Aamer Farooq said that since the court was presently seized with the hearing of appeals in the US cipher case, it did not have time to hear arguments in the Toshakhana reference. Barrister Ali Zafar, counsel for Imran and Bushra, argued that it was a different case altogether. "Therefore, I request the bench to hear the initial arguments."

Meanwhile, incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khan Tuesday apprised the court that his wife and ex-first lady Bushra Bibi was poisoned at the Bani Gala sub-jail.

The PTI founder made the claim during a hearing of the £190 million settlement case in Rawalpindi's Adiala jail. Khan informed the accountability court judge that the former first lady had marks on her skin and tongue after "being poisoned".

He sought the court's order for an inquiry into the incident and a complete medical checkup of Bushra Bibi. Khan said: "I know who is behind it." He insisted that the medical examination of the former first lady should be done by Dr Asim Yunus, a doctor at Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital and Research Centre.

At this, the court directed Khan to submit a written application seeking the medical examination of Bushra Bibi. In February this year, the PTI expressed grave concern over what it claimed serious threats to the life and health of Bushra, who has been put under house arrest at Bani

Gala. PTI Women Wing President Kanwal Shauzab pointed out that Bushra had serious health issues due to the harmful and substandard food being provided to her.

PTI lawyer Naeem Haider Panjutha had claimed that Bushra's "health worsened and she got mouth ulcers after she was given a spicy meal" during her house arrest. Bushra was placed under house arrest at her husband's Islamabad mansion after she and her husband were convicted of graft allegations. Khan and his wife were sentenced to 14 years in jail in a case that relates to accusations the ex-premier undervalued gifts from a state repository and gained profits from selling them while he held the country's top office.

During her interaction with journalists before the court appearance, the former first lady claimed that "three drops of toilet cleaner" were mixed in her food on the eve of Shab-e-Meraj. She revealed that the food and water served by the jail authority tasted bitter.

Responding to a question, Bushra said that "someone" had told her in jail that toilet cleaner was mixed in her food. She, however, refused to disclose the name of the official. "My eyes swell up, I feel pain in my chest and stomach," the former first lady claimed. Research showed that the health of a toilet cleaner victim worsens after one month, she also insisted. Bushra further said that the windows at Bani Gala were kept closed earlier but now they are open for some time.

Allies flay violations of courts, ECP orders

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD / PESHAWAR: President PML-N Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Engr Amir Muqam on Tuesday said that Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) and its allies strongly condemn the violations of Courts and ECP orders by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government.

Talking to media outside Parliament House, flanked by MNA Sardar Muhammad Yousaf and other party leaders, Engr Amir Muqam said that PTI has no respect for law and constitution. It is because of their conduct that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly was deprived of

Senate elections today. He said that these people neither obey the courts nor the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

Engr Amir Muqam who is also Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON), said that ECP had notified the elected Members on reserved seats and now they must be allowed to cast their votes.

He said that Upper House members are being elected from all over the country, except Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which is unfortunate. He said that PML-N and allies strongly condemn and protest it and demanded to initiate contempt of court proceedings

against the responsible who violated the constitution. MNA Sardar Muhammad Yousaf said that constitution violated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by denying taking oath from the elected members. He termed it injustice with the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Meanwhile, Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs Engr Ameer Muqam on Tuesday visited the Afghan Commissionerate here. It was first visit of the federal minister since he assumed charge of the ministry.

Omar Ayub notified leader of opposition in NA

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) stalwart Omar Ayub has been notified as leader of the opposition in the National Assembly, the lower house secretariat said in a statement on Tuesday.

NA Speaker Ayaz Sadiq has declared Ayub as the opposition leader after completing the due process to appoint the opposition leader. The NA speaker ratified Ayub's request, after the latter called on the former.

Opposition members Gohar Ali Khan and Malik Amir Dogar were also present in the meeting which exchanged views on the opposition leader's nomination.

The NA secretariat in a tweet said, "The speaker of the National Assembly declares Omar Ayub the Leader of the Opposition after the completion of the scrutiny process under Rule 39 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of the National Assembly." Ayub's name was proposed by the majority of the opposi-

tion. "The time for submission of papers for the nomination of the Leader of the Opposition was April 1, 2024, till 6 pm. No other candidate's papers have been received by the stipulated time," the NA said.

The PTI-SIC alliance had nominated Ayub on March 10 for the leader of the opposition. Malik Amir Dogar, Sahibzada Hamid Raza, Ali Muhammad Khan, Riaz Fatiana, Dr. Nisar Jat and others had arrived to submit the plea to the speaker's office.

Pakistan's GDP to remain below 3%: WB

ISLAMABAD (INP): The World Bank has predicted that Pakistan's gross domestic product (GDP) to remain below 3 percent in the next three years while during the current fiscal year the growth rate may touch 1.8 percent, however in 2025 growth will remain around 2.3 percent.

According to World Bank's latest outlook report on Pakistan released on Tuesday, the subdued recovery reflected the tight monetary and fiscal policy and muted economic activity amid weak business confidence. The World Bank predicted a decline in inflation next year which was likely to be 26pc this fiscal year. Inflation may reach 15 percent in fiscal year 2025.

However, inflation was expected to drop down to 11.5 percent in fiscal year 2026. World Bank report further said industrial growth may remain around 1.8 percent during the current fiscal year. According to the WB report, agricultural growth was likely to touch 2.2 percent in 2025 and 2.7 percent in 2026. While industrial growth was expected to remain 2.2 percent in FY 2025 and 2.4 percent in 2026.

While fiscal deficit was expected to reach 8 percent of GDP this fiscal year.

Fresh Israeli strike kills 7 workers in Gaza

GAZA (AP): An apparent Israeli airstrike killed six international aid workers with the World Central Kitchen and their Palestinian driver, the charity said Tuesday, in a potentially major setback to efforts to deliver aid by sea to Gaza, where Israel's offensive against Hamas has pushed hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to the brink of starvation.

The food charity, founded by celebrity chef José Andrés, said it was immediately suspending operations in the region. The source of fire late Monday could not be independently confirmed. The Israeli military expressed "sincere sorrow" over the deaths while stopping short of accepting responsibility.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the top military spokesman, said that officials are reviewing the incident at the highest levels. He says an independent investigation will be launched that "will help us reduce the risk of such an event from occurring again." Footage showed the bodies, several wearing protective gear with the charity's logo, at a hospital in the central Gaza town of Deir al-Balah. Those killed include three British nationals, an Australian, a Polish national and an American-Canadian dual citizen, according to hospital records.

Despite co-ordinating

movements with the Israeli Defense Force, the convoy was hit as it was leaving its Deir Al-Balah warehouse, after unloading more than 100 tons of humanitarian food aid brought to Gaza by sea, WCK said. "This is not only an attack against WCK, this is an attack on humanitarian organizations showing up in the most dire of situations where food is being used as a weapon of war," said Erin Gore, chief executive of World Central Kitchen. "This is unforgivable."

The Israeli military said it was doing a thorough review at the highest levels to understand the circumstances of what it called a tragic incident. "The IDF makes extensive efforts to enable the safe delivery of humanitarian aid, and has been working closely with WCK in their vital efforts to provide food and humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza," the military said.

Andres, who started WCK in 2010 by sending cooks and food to Haiti after an earthquake, earlier said he was heartbroken and grieving for the families and friends of those who died. "The Israeli government needs to stop this indiscriminate killing," he said on social media.

"It needs to stop restricting humanitarian aid, stop killing civilians and aid workers, and stop using food as a weapon. No more innocent

lives lost. Peace starts with our shared humanity. It needs to start now." In a statement, the Islamist group Hamas said the attack aimed to terrorize workers of international humanitarian agencies, deterring them from their missions. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese confirmed the death of 44-year-old aid worker Lalezawmi "Zomi" Frankom and said his government had contacted Israel to demand those responsible be held accountable.

"This is a human tragedy that should never have occurred, that is completely unacceptable and Australia will seek full and proper accountability," he told a press conference on Tuesday. Albanese said innocent civilians and humanitarian workers needed to be protected and reiterated his call for a sustainable ceasefire in Gaza along with more aid to help those suffering from "tremendous deprivation."

Poland's foreign minister asked the Israeli ambassador in Warsaw for "urgent explanations" after the killing of a Polish volunteer providing aid in Gaza. "I personally asked the Israeli ambassador @YakovLivne for urgent explanations," Radoslaw Sikorski wrote on social media platform X. "He assured me that Poland would soon receive the results of the investigation into this tragedy."

MQM-P threatens to quit govt over street crimes

F.P. Report

HYDERABAD: Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) Senator Faisal Subzwari Tuesday said his party will quit the federal government if the people of the port city continue to be killed amid the rise in street crimes across Karachi.

Lamenting the 15-year-long rule of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the province, the MQM-P senator said the demands for an operation would have come forward if such killings were happening elsewhere. "If our people continue to be killed, we will leave the government," he said, speaking with journalists in Karachi.

Karachi has been gripped by street crimes

claiming the lives of dozens of citizens who have fallen victim at the hands of criminals for the past few weeks. Many have been killed while resisting robberies and snatching incidents, particularly in the month of Ramadan during which criminals seem to have been let loose.

From January till March, at least 50 citizens have lost their lives due to street crimes. Meanwhile, six robbers have been killed in 75 police encounters while 93 accused were arrested with injuries. However, Sindh Home Minister Ziaul Hasan Lanjar termed crime "part of a daily life", alleging that the worsening state of crimes in Karachi is being "exaggerated" in local media.



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