

Polls to be held on Oct 8: Sana F.P. Report

GUJRANWALA: As the date for upcoming polls well in the debate, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah on Tuesday reiterated that general elections would be held on October 8 under the caretaker setup. Talking to journalists in Gujranwala on Tuesday, he said the elections of national and provincial assemblies should be held at the same time according to the Constitution.

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Govt tables bill in NA to amend CJP's suo motu powers

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): In a bid to limit the discretionary powers to take suo motu notice by Pakistan's top judge, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar Tuesday tabled the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023.

The law minister, while speaking on the floor of the house, said the apex court's reputation was damaged due to the actions taken in the name of suo motu notices. "We have even seen that era when suo motu notices were taken on trivial matters [...]" also, in the past, several review cases were delayed and not fixed for hearing," the minister said.

Building on the argument, he noted that the dissenting note of the two judges has led to further concern. Tarar added that decisions taken under suo motu notices could not be appealed earlier. "It is important to give the chance to appeal an order and the parliament has always demanded that the right to appeal should be given," the law minister said.

The house has sent the proposed bill to the NA Standing Committee on Law and Justice for further approval — which will meet tomorrow (Wednesday) morning under the chair of Chaudhry Mahmood Bashir Virk. The committee will send it back to the lower house. After the NA passes the bill, it will be sent to the Senate for approval. The bill includes shifting the powers of taking suo motu notice from the chief justice to a three-member committee comprising three senior judges.

Moreover, the bill also includes a clause regarding the rights of challenging the notice which could be filed within 30 days and will then be fixed for a hearing in two weeks' time. According to the bill — every clause, appeal or matter before the

Supreme Court shall be heard and disposed of by a bench constituted by the committee comprising the CJP and two senior judges, in order of seniority. The bill also mentioned that the decision of the committee shall be by the majority. However, the two SC judges in their detailed notes had juxtaposed majority rule with "dictatorship".

They said: "Taking all decisions only by majority rule is no less dictatorship, and the absolutist approach to controversial issues is the hallmark of extremists." It was also mentioned in the bill that any matter invoking the exercise of original jurisdiction under clause (3) of Article 184 of the Constitution shall be placed before the committee constituted under section 2 for examination and if the committee is of the view that a question of public importance with reference to enforcement of any of the fundamental rights conferred by Chapter I of Part II of the constitution is involved, it shall constitute a bench comprising not less than three judges of the Supreme Court which may also include the members of the committee, for adjudication of the matter.

Meanwhile, in matters where interpretation of the constitutional provision is involved, the committee shall constitute a bench comprising not less than five judges of the apex court. The bill also grants the party to appoint counsel of its choice for filing a review application under Article 188 of the Constitution. It should be noted that the counsel, for this purpose, shall mean an advocate of the Supreme Court. "An application pleading urgency or seeking interim relief, in a cause, appeal or matter, shall be fixed for hearing within fourteen days from the date of its filing," the bill read.

Elections to be held simultaneously across country: NA

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Tuesday unanimously approved the resolution demanding to hold general elections simultaneously in the assemblies across the country to ensure political stability.

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mariyum Aurangzeb tabled the resolution stating that this house considered an unnecessary "intrusion of the judiciary as the reason of political instability". She continued that the House also endorsed the decision of four judges of the apex court in the suo motu case relating to holding elections and supported their opinion whereas it hoped that the "Supreme Court would abstain from meddling into the political and administrative matters of the country".

She read out loud the motion before the house stating, "Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is an independent institution and is bound to hold free

and fair elections under Article 218 of the Constitution. No infringement to be made to the constitutional rights of the ECP and the Commission should be allowed to hold elections as per its prerogative under favourable conditions".

"This House also declared that political consistency is necessary to ensure economic stability. It also believes that in order to hold free and fair elections, Article 224 should be implemented in its true letter and spirit as per the Article 218 of the Constitution," she added. "Therefore, the general elections should be held simultaneously across the country so that real political stability can be further promoted. The resolution also demanded that the constitutional matters that required collective wisdom, the Supreme Court's full bench will hold the proceedings on that matter", she concluded.

Cabinet approves bill to amend top court's suo motu powers

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): In a bid to limit the discretionary powers to take suo motu notice by Pakistan's top judge, the federal cabinet on Tuesday approved the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023, sources told media.

The development came a day after two Supreme Court judges — Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail — raised questions over the powers of the CJP, saying the apex court "cannot be dependent on the solitary decision of one man, the Chief Justice". Following the approval, the bill will now be tabled in the National Assembly for clearance from the lower house of parliament.

The sources told that after the approval of the bill a committee comprising three senior judges will take the decision regarding the suo motu notice. Moreover, the amended bill also includes a clause regarding the rights of challenging the notice which could be filed within 30 days and will then be fixed for a hearing in two weeks' time. They further added that the house will send the proposed bill to the NA Standing Committee on Law and Justice for further approval — which will meet today (Wednesday) morning under the chair of Chaudhry Mahmood Bashir Virk.

It was also learnt that the standing committee will be tasked to pass the bill tomorrow after which the National Assembly will give its final nod. After the clearance from all platforms, the bill will be tabled in Senate on Thursday for final approval. According to the bill — a copy of which was seen by TheNews.com — every clause, appeal or matter before the Supreme Court shall be heard and disposed of by a bench constituted by the committee comprising the CJP and two senior judges, in order of seniority. The bill also mentioned that the decision of the committee shall be by the majority. However, the two SC judges in their detailed notes had juxtaposed majority rule with "dictatorship". They said: "Taking all decisions only by majority rule is no less dictatorship, and the absolutist approach to controversial issues is the hallmark of extremists."

PDM a group of thieves: Imran

LAHORE (Agencies): Contrary to his traditional stance that he would never hold talks with the "crooks and looters" — the terms he often uses for the leadership of Pakistan Democratic Movement — PTI Chairman Imran Khan said Tuesday that he was ready to sit in all kinds of all parties conference (APC) for "upholding the Constitution".

Khan made the remarks during a meeting with Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE) President Kazim Khan, who called on him at his Zaman Park residence in Lahore on Tuesday. During the meeting, the PTI chairman, then in the same breath added: "PDM is not a political alliance but a group of thieves."

The Frontier Post

PM asks legislators to decide if they side with 'law of jungle' or rule of law

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday asked the parliamentarians to categorically decide if they wanted to continue with the prevailing 'law of the jungle' in the country or legislate for upholding the rule of law.

"Today, the fight is between democracy and fascism... It is high time that we take a decision with collective wisdom," he said in his address on the floor of the National Assembly. PM Sharif said the country was at the watershed of history and it was important for the parliament to legislate on "matters concerning the country".

He said the 1973 Constitution had defined the ambit of the State institutions and set a red line about their functioning. "Today this Constitution has become a joke and the country is suffering from a serious situation," he said. The prime minister said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan was enjoying immunity from the rule of law despite his persistent black-mailing and abuse of the judiciary.

"We need a categorical decision if we want to give relief to the nation or the 'favoured one' who does not abide by the law," he said. He pointed out that Khan, who was habitual of not appearing before courts and frequently mocked the judiciary, was still getting extensions in bail. Sharif recalled that senior leadership of his party faced imprisonment for fake cases registered against them, however, no leniency was extended to them.

"On the other hand, he [Imran Khan] has got a long 'innings'. Every court in the country is granting him an extension. Is this the criteria of justice," he raised a question before the House. He said the three pillars of the State, including legislature, judiciary, and

executive, had to play their due role, otherwise, the time would be left with regrets only. "We have to decide for the future of the nation and take guidance from law and constitution," he said.

The prime minister termed as a 'ray of hope' the 4-3 decision of judges in a suo moto case regarding elections that dismissed the proceedings contending that the chief justice of Pakistan does not have the power to restructure benches without the consent of the respective judges. PM Sharif felicitated the nation 50 years of the formulation of the 1973 Constitution and said the polity was a binding force among all federating units of the country. The prime minister lambasted the tenure of Imran Khan which he said pushed the country to the brink of economic default.

He mentioned Khan's violation of the pledges with the International Monetary Fund led to a serious economic crisis with an increase in foreign debt and inflation. He said Imran Khan misguidedly the public through his so-called "regime change" narrative, however, later took a U-turn on his own stance. "A liar and non-serious person incurred a big loss to the country. The biggest fraud of the country's history has deceived the public in the name of the State of Medina," he said.

He said the government was trying to mend the relations with friendly countries that suffered damage during the tenure of Imran Khan. The prime minister said the hypocrisy was at its height as Imran Khan had now hired a US lobbying firm besides holding meetings with diplomats. "He has created a big divide among the nation and no one is questioning him," he said. "Law will take its



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing the National Assembly session.

course and this non-serious person would not be allowed to incur further damage to the country."

He regretted that Khan was openly criticizing the brave armed forces, which was making the enemies of the country happy. He mentioned that the immense sacrifices rendered by 80,000 Pakistanis including the army, police, law enforcement agencies, and citizens saved the country from terrorism. During Imran Khan's tenure, he said, the terrorists returned to their safe havens and added that the matter needed an investigation.

Sharif said talks with Khan were not possible until he apologized to the nation for his ills. "If he genuinely wants to sit down for negotiations, he should first seek forgiveness from the nation for his wrong-doings," he said. "As a Pakistani, parliamentarian and the head of the country, I request the

House to take urgent notice of the situation that Imran Niazi has created in the country," he said.

"The parliament needs to take solid action, otherwise history will not spare us. Imran is trying to bury the 1973 Constitution." Regarding the audio leak of a conversation with a supreme court judge, the prime minister made a request to the superior court for a forensic of the audio. "Politicians are put in jails in no time, but how many judges have been ousted on corruption," he said.

"The parliamentarians need to decide if they will act as a herd of cattle or have the audacity to decide about their future themselves," he said. The prime minister said the country was facing a difficult situation even after 70 years of its establishment and only the rule of law could help to address the constitutional and political crisis.

CJP says ECP hastily penned decision to delay polls in Punjab

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial Tuesday said the decision to postpone polls in Punjab was penned in haste by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). The CJP passed the remark after the Supreme Court resumed the hearing on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) petition challenging the ECP decision on the Punjab elections.

During the hearing, Justice Jamal Mandokhail asked the ECP what would become of the date for the election if its decision for delaying the vote was revoked. The hearing was then postponed till 11:30am today (Wednesday). A day after a scathing dissenting note from Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail on the March 1 verdict on Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa polls, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial remarked that it was their "opinion" and had no link with the ongoing case.

CJP Bandial is heading the five-member larger bench hearing the plea. Apart from the CJP, the bench includes Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Amin-Ud-Din Khan and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail. The Imran Khan-led party had challenged the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to defer the Punjab polls till October 8. The electoral body's announcement came after financial and security authorities expressed their inability to support the electoral process.

Following this, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali also urged the electoral body to hold general elections on the same date (October 8) as the Punjab polls given the growing security threats from terror groups operating from the Pakistan-Afghanistan border regions. At the outset of the hearing, CJP Bandial welcomed the newly appointed Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Usman Awan.

While seeing "good friend" Farooq H Naek, the CJP remarked that the court would need the assistance of the senior lawyer on the matter.

The CJP remarked that the court does not want to drag this matter. He said that ECP's jurisdiction as per yesterday's order will be seen by the court, while the request of the ruling coalition parties to become a party in the case will be looked into later.

"Rule of law and democracy are two sides of a same coin. There should be mutual tolerance, patience and law and order" CJP Bandial observed.

Meanwhile, Naek interjected and told the bench that they were also stakeholders in the case. At this, the CJP assured the senior lawyer that no one denied Naek's importance but he believed that they shouldn't engage in a legal controversy. He said that the parties had to decide the direction of the circumstances while the court had to keep the facts in view.

"On the March 1 verdict my stance is that the law empowers the president to give a date for the elections. If you want clarification on the March 1 decision then file a separate petition," said the CJP. He added that the "simple question" in the case was whether the ECP could change the election date or not. "If ECP has the power then the matter will be resolved," said the CJP.

On the other hand, the attorney general contended that if the court decision was 4-3 then there was no order. He added that if it was not a court order then the president could not give the election date. "The March 1 decision should be decided first," said the AGP.

At this, CJP Bandial remarked that right now the case was not about giving the election date but about the delay. He added that elections were necessary for a democracy. "Two honourable judges gave a decision. It's the opinion of those two judges but is not related to the current case. Do not bypass a sensitive matter," remarked the CJP. The AGP responded that the current petition was seeking the implementation of the court orders in the March 1 judgment. At this, CJP Bandial remarked that the bench members were there to review the questions raised in the petition. Apex court's jurisdiction wasn't limited to just the petition, he added.

On this point, AGP interjected and appealed for the formation of a full court on the matter. "It is a request that this is an important matter and if the bench deems it appropriate then a full court should be formed," said the AGP. However, Justice Mandokhail remarked that the number of judges who favoured the March 1 ruling was an internal matter of the apex court. "Just tell if the Constitution requires conducting elections in 90 days or not, and whether the ECP can postpone the date of election," he asked.

Upon hearing Justice Mandokhail, the CJP thanked the judge for clearing the matter. Meanwhile, PTI's lawyer Barrister Ali Zafar maintained that every institution had to work while staying within its constitutional bounds. At this, CJP Bandial remarked that he expected the PTI's senior leadership to have the same behaviour as expressed by the lawyer. He also asked the lawyer whether he talked to the senior party leaders.

"PTI would have to be the first [one to speak] because they have approached the court," the chief justice stated. He advised the parties of the case to avoid differences saying that there was violence, intolerance and an economic crisis in the country.

At this, Barrister Zafar maintained that these crises would intensify if the elections were delayed. CJP Bandial then remarked that it would order the government only if PTI takes the initiative. Moving on, Justice Khan asked if the 90-day period before the election could be shortened. At this, Justice Ahsan remarked that the ECP was bound to give the schedule for polls within 90 days.

(Continued on Back Page)

Pakistan to skip US summit: FO

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan on Tuesday chose not to participate in the democracy summit taking place in Washington this week, opting instead to engage with the US on a bilateral basis to encourage democratic values. The virtual summit, led by the United States, China and Türkiye have not been invited to the summit.

The issue of Pakistan's participation in the Second Summit for Democracy in the US had been under discussion for some time, particularly because it could potentially upset its all-weather friend China, which had not been invited to the summit. Like the first democracy summit in 2021, both India and Pakistan were invited to the summit this time. India attended the last meeting and may do so this year as well. Pakistan had opted out of the first summit, reportedly on back of the Biden administration's refusal to reach out to the then-prime minister Imran Khan.

In a statement issued on Tuesday the Foreign Office said Pakistan values its friendship with the United States. "Under the Biden Administration, this relationship has widened and expanded substantially. We remain committed to further solidifying this relationship for peace, stability, and prosperity in the region," the statement said. Explaining the rationale for not taking a part in the summit, the FO said Pakistan had not been part of the summit process that commenced in 2021 and required countries to make certain national commitments.



PESHAWAR: People blocked the Ring Road during a protest against shortage of flour supply on government rate.

PHC stops appointment of Pro-VC at UoP

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has stopped appointment of Pro Vice Chancellor at University of Peshawar (UoP) while ordered respondents including Secretary Higher Education Archives Department along with VC and Registrar UOP to submit reply, on Tuesday.

The divisional bench comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice SM Attique Shah heard writ petition of Prof. Dr. Muhammad Yaseen, Dean Faculty of Numerical & Physical Sciences, one of senior most dean serving in

UOP while Saifullah Mubib Kakakhel Advocate appeared before PHC. He argued that the recommendation for appointment on the post of Pro-Vice Chancellor, UOP in which as per section 12A of KP Universities Act, 2012 three Senior most professors names are to be sent and considered for appointment which was not followed.

The counsel Nauman Kakakhel argued that previously the petitioner was de-notified by the Governor/Chancellor of UoP and another professor namely Prof. Dr. Qamar uz Zaman from the faculty of numerical and physical sciences

was appointed as Dean by the respondents. The said notification and de-notification were declared as illegal by the Peshawar High Court but respondents are violating the judgment of the court by showing Prof. Dr. Qamar Uz Zaman as Dean in the official website as well as in correspondence.

The counsel further argued that his client was not even called for important meetings in which policy decisions were taken and he was ignored and a person whose notification of appointment was declared illegal was called by respondents to harass, humiliate, torture and to degrade the petitioner.

He further said that the judgment has not been followed and therefore the vice chancellor and acting registrar, UOP have committed contempt of court. He stated that contempt petition has also been filed by his client against the abovementioned persons.

The court after hearing the arguments of counsel for petitioner, stopped the respondents from appointment on the post of Pro-Vice Chancellor, UoP and comments were called from VC, UoP, Registrar, UoP and Secretary Higher Education Archives Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



Teachers deprived from salaries while high-ups receiving benefits: CJ

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Qaiser Rashid observed that unfortunately community teachers are deprived from salaries one and half year especially during month of Ramazan despite Education's department high-ups receiving their benefits on time, on Tuesday.

The divisional comprising of Chief Justice PHC Justice Qaiser Rashid and Justice Shakeel Ahmad

heard writ petition of community teachers belongs to Malakand and other districts seeking release of salaries which closed since July 2021 while Additional Advocate General Syed Sikandar Shah along with Education's department representative appeared before court.

During hearing education's department representative informed that the petitioners were employees National Commission for Human Development and Basic Education Comm-

unity Schools Project which was devolved by federation to provinces without provision of funds. He added that the salaries of petitioners are closed since July 2021 due lack of funds while on the other hand qualification is also an issue because B.A is minimum education required.

However, Chief Justice Qaiser Rashid remarked that what were you doing regarding their qualification till court's notice and added that they are deprived from salaries

from more than one year. Education's representative informed that the department has written to finance while finance department is ready to release the funds for community teachers.

In the meantime, Chief Justice observed that why you didn't granting salaries when secretary education and finance department are ready for provision of funds in this regard while ordered to submit detail report before court and adjourned further hearing.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister Adnan Jalil presiding over a review meeting of KP Technical Board.

KPEZDMC held 7th annual general meeting

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The 7th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of KPEZDMC, held on March 27, 2023, at the company's Head Office appreciated the financial performance of the company for the period ending June 30, 2022. The company's income, and the total assets have shown a steady increase over the past year, which is a testament to the company's strong management and commitment to excellence.

The meeting was chaired by Capt. (R) Kamran Ahmed Afridi, Secretary IC&TE/Chairman Board of Directors along with other shareholders represented by Finance Department, P&D Department, Labor Department and Environment Department. Other participants included Chairman Finance and Strategy Committee Mr. Sahibzada Salim Ur Rehman, Chairman Audit

& Risk Management Committee Mr Fayyaz Ahmad Jarral and Chief Executive Officer KPEZDMC, Mr. Javed Iqbal Khattak, Chief Financial Officer Mr. Shahid Iqbal Khattak and Company Secretary Mr. Abdul Mussawar Dar along with finance team.

The house was updated that the Company has posted a surplus of PKR 29 million (Rs 35 million in FY2021) with total income of PKR 1,025 million in FY 2022 (Rs 926.5 million in FY2021). The total assets of the company have increased to PKR 15.8 billion in FY 2022 from PKR 13.0 billion in FY 2021.

CEO presented that the Company has generated funds of around Rs 3.1 billion in FY2022, which also include Rs 541 million received as ADP. Three new Zones have been launched during the year including D. I. Khan Economic Zone, Rashakai Special Economic Zone

and Chitral Economic Zone and area measuring 219 acres have been allotted. The Company launched also contributed around PKR 93 million to the government treasury in the form of duties and taxes during the year.

CFO shared that the Company has achieved resolution of all qualifications in the Auditors' reports that were mainly inherited from Defunct Sarhad Development Authority relating to early 90's. KPEZDMC has now obtained Pakistan Center for Philanthropy (PCP) Certification inevitable for NPO status under Income Tax Ordinance, 2001.

Mr. Kamran Ahmed Afridi, Secretary IC&TE, expressed his gratitude to the Board of Directors, shareholders, and stakeholders for their support and trust in the Company. He appreciated the lead of Mr. Javed Khattak (CEO) and thanked the Company's management team and

employees for their hard work and dedication.

"We are committed to continuing our efforts to drive economic growth in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and contribute to the development of the region. We believe that our success is a result of our commitment to excellence and our focus on providing our clients with the best possible facilitation," he said.

KPEZDMC is a leading Economic Zones Development & Management Company from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, focused on developing and managing economic zones that attract local and foreign investment, promote industrialization, and create employment opportunities. The Company's strong financial performance is a testament to its success in achieving these objectives, and is a success story for the rest of the Public Sector Enterprises across the country.

109 shopkeepers arrested in crackdown

PESHAWAR (APP): The District administration Peshawar arrested 109 shopkeepers during a crackdown against profiteers in various localities of the provincial metropolis on Tuesday.

The arrested shopkeepers include milkmen, bakers (nanbais), fruit & vegetable vendors, grocers and others.

The shopkeepers were arrested for profiteering, lacking official price list, selling of under-weight roti and unhygienic conditions in their facilities.

On the directives of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar, the officers of district administration carried out inspection of on shopkeepers on Charsadda Road, Dalazak Road, Kohat Road, University Road, Hayatabad, Mathani, Tehkal, Gulabhar, Warsak Road and various localities of interior city and collectively inspected 514 shops and out of them arrested 109 persons while 54 other were issued warning for bringing improvement and avoiding of profiteering.

First time people getting free flour in Ramadan

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker Minister for Livestock and Agriculture, Abdul Haleem Qasuria has said that for the first time in country, cost-free flour was being provided to the deserving people in the holy month of Ramadan.

In a statement to media here on Tuesday, the minister said it was quite welcoming that the provincial government has assigned the responsibility of distribution of free flour to the administrative secretaries adding it will be helpful in streamlining the process of flour distribution.

He urged upon the people to send a single person from the family to get their share of flour so that crowding and mismanagement could be averted at flour distribution points and everyone get flour without any difficulty.

The minister also urged the government and Food Department to increase the number of flour distribution points so that people may not face problems at the places. He said all those registered with Benazir Income Support Program will get their share of cost free flour. He added that all available resources would be utilized to provide relief to the people.

Representatives directed to ensure presence

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali has directed elected local government representatives to ensure their presence in their officer for public facilitation.

He was talking to a delegation of local government representatives at his residence here on Tuesday. He said that local government representatives should ensure their presence in offices on 8:00 PM.

He said that local government representatives should work in liaison with people keeping in view their expectations and problems. He also directed to take action against those officials found guilty of ignoring their responsibilities.

Conversion greenbelts to commercial area: PHC orders DG PDA

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Qaiser Rashid and Justice Shakeel Ahmad ordered Director General (DG) Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) to appear today (on Wednesday) before court in case regarding conversion of green belt into commercial area, on Tuesday.

The counsel Zia-ur-Rehman Khan Advocate informed that PDA has proposed to convert green belt near Shah Kas to commercial area while added that

PHC has already suspended such proposal while in 2013 PDA had assured court in this regard.

In the meantime, Chief Justice observed that it is an environmental issue and added that court has already issued direction regarding green belts while remarked that PDA recently has issued notification for conversion of green belt to commercial area which is declared null and void.

PDA's lawyer Barrister Waqar informed that court had issued clear directions regarding green belts and

the authority didn't converting green spaces into commercial but it is only grievances of petitioners, however, Chief Justice remarked that it is only reservation then concerned officer appear before court to address the issue.

The divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice PHC Justice Qaiser Rashid and Justice Shakeel Ahmad observed that Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) shouldn't alter Hayatabad's master plan while ordered DG to appear before court today (on Wednesday).

‘Pakistan can prosper if institutions work in constitutional domain’

PESHAWAR (APP): Former advocate general Esa Khan said here Tuesday that Pakistan could achieve heights of economic progress and prosperity if all the state institutions work under its constitutional domain.

"All the state institutions including legislature, government and judiciary derive strength from the 1973 constitution and determine their powers. If these institutions work under its constitutional ambit with national cohesion, there are high probabilities of resolving the prevailing economic and political challenges in the shortest possible time," said Esa Khan, former Advocate General KP while talking to APP.

In the past, he said that democracy was derailed on four occasions in Pakistan due to intervention of state institutions in each others' domain and ultimately people of the country suffer for long. Besides the judiciary, he said the 1973 constitution provides great powers to the legislature and the government where the executive authority of the state vests with the Prime Minister.

Esa Khan said the observations recorded by the two senior judges of the Supreme Court including Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel in its 27 page order was of serious nature and needed proper consideration.

The legal expert said there was no harm if the PTI's petition about elections in KP and Punjab provinces were heard by the full bench of the Supreme Court to resolve the ongoing controversy regarding acceptance or dismissal of the case after the March 1, 2023 Supreme Court's judgment.

He said the country can't afford political instability and confrontation among state institutions keeping in view of the current difficult economic situation. Esa Khan said that restraining from judicial activism was imperative for smooth functioning of the legislature and government to take the ship of democracy to safe shore.

LG representatives deprived from powers in PTI govt

PESHAWAR (APP): Awami National Party leader, Arbab Usman Khan here Tuesday said the former Pakistan Tahrir e Insaaf government has deprived the local government representatives of constitutional power after making unnecessary amendments in the LG Act.

In a statement here, Arbab Usman said that depriving LG representatives from constitutional powers by the incompetent rulers of PTI was against the spirit of the local bodies act. The amendments have made the LG system ineffective in KP, he added.

He said problems of poor sanitation, rusty water pipes and filth in water channels and other civic problems at tehsil and village councils was due to the toothless LG system in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Usman said the LG representatives were facing great problems to address problems of people in their respective constituencies due to lack of funds and authority. The PTI has politically victimized the LG representatives after making uncalled for amendments in the LG Act that prevented the devolution of powers at the grass-roots and hence people's problems remain unsolved at local level, he added.

He said thousands of elected representatives including mayors, chairmen, women, peasant, minorities and general councillors were deprived of their rights by the PTI. The unavailability of funds and lack of authority have shattered the confidence of people on the LG system.

Arbab Usman highly appreciated the prime minister's free of charge flour scheme for millions of poor people during Ramazan and expressed the hope that it would be continued after the holy month.

He urged the provincial government to simplify the free atta distribution procedure so that the essential commodity could be provided to deserving people in a dignified way.

PCTP fines 10,585 motorcyclists in one month

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar City Traffic Police (PCTP) issued 10,585 challans to motorcyclists in one month for not wearing a helmet.

The spokesman of KP police on Tuesday said that the traffic police had imposed and collected a total fine of Rs 1.585 million from the violators and deposit in the provincial kitty.

Similarly, the traffic police, while ensuring smooth flow of traffic on the roads issued challans to 2306 people in a week for parking vehicles in no parking zone.

The traffic police had urged the people to cooperate with the traffic police and strictly observe the traffic rules for smooth flow of traffic besides the safety of their own and the others.

KP CS reviews flour distribution

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry on Tuesday chaired a meeting and reviewed various measures for good governance and public welfare.

The administrative secretaries of all departments were present at the meeting, where they were directed to closely monitor the distribution of flour and prices of food items in their respective districts.

Furthermore, a plantation campaign is being launched in anticipation of spring, and the administrative secretaries have been tasked with monitoring the polio campaign at the district level.

The implementation of the dengue control plan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also been emphasized.

Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry also provided an update on the flour distribution process, stating that so far, 1.2 million families have received flour, and in total, 5.7 million families will be provided with free flour under the Atta scheme.

Students' role termed vital

PESHAWAR (APP): Students and educated citizens can play a vital role in ensuring transparency and good governance in public sector institutions and students should add their important share in holding institutions accountable by using access to information laws.

These views were expressed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Commission Assistant Director Communication Syed Saadat Jahan in an awareness program on Access to Information Act at Government Girls Degree College Dabgarai Garden here on Tuesday.

The program was attended by the principal and faculty members of the said college as well as students in large numbers.

He further said that students can play their role in transparency of admission and job selection procedures in educational institutions by using the Access to Information Act.

Monsoon contingency plan 2023 continue to identify hazards

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the guidance of Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Department is working on monsoon contingency plan 2023 in consultation with all the stakeholders in order to identify Monsoon Hazards, Vulnerabilities, Risks and Resource mapping for minimizing disaster risks and timely coordinated response.

Contingency Plan outcomes reinforce prevention, mitigation and response to monsoon related disasters.

In this connection a pre planning orientation meeting was held with representatives of provincial line departments under the chairmanship of Director Disaster Risk Management PDMA Muhammad Amin.

On this occasion Muhammad Amin said "we started the process of Monsoon Contingency Planning 2023 by involving all stakeholders and these series of meetings will be continued in the month of April and hopefully contingency plan will be developed by the end of May 2023.

PDMA determined roles and responsibilities in monsoon plan for each department. Tools for data

collection are developed and shared with all stakeholders including information regarding district and sector specific hazards and vulnerability profile, hazard impact, damages, compensation paid, resource mapping, need assessment and coordination".

He added that natural hazards and subsequent disasters caused massive losses to people's life and livelihoods. He further said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had faced a lot of financial and human losses due to floods in 2022. Due to the better strategy and presence of the system (Disaster Risk Management) in the provinces more than 400,000 people were shifted to safe places.

The climate change has increased the vulnerability, as weather patterns are shifting. The Monsoon Contingency Plan will categorize the districts Vulnerability and Risk Assessment into very high, high, medium and low categories. The peculiar geography, terrain and natural resources make the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa vulnerable to a number of climate contingencies during both summers and winters.

Spokesperson PDMA Taimur Ali said that PDMA has initiated the process of introducing proactive preparedness

regime under guidelines established by National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) for streamlining response at provincial and district levels in coordination with all stakeholders.

Taimur Ali further said, the process of contingency planning for major hazards shall enable initiation of requisite mitigation measures and to undertake a coordinated response to minimize the loss of life and property in the events of disasters. It is stakeholders' inclusive exercise that takes stock of what exists in terms of resources, hazards analysis to determine the likely relief caseloads as a planning assumption.

He further said Pakistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular are vulnerable to various hazards due to adverse effects of climate change.

PDMA Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is an active Disaster Management Organization at the provincial level that deals with Disaster Management, Disaster Risk Reduction, Preparedness and Planning. PDMA has also installed flood Early Warning System (EWS) in the upper catchment areas. This System has been installed on seven main rivers of the province to monitor the water level.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali listening problems of during a meeting with local representatives.



In brief

Rescue official killed in Kasur

KASUR (INP): A rescue official was shot dead over a property dispute in the area of Khadian police station in Kasur on Tuesday. According to police, the rescue official was killed by his nephew, who barged into his uncle the house and opened indiscriminate fire at him and in result the rescue official was killed at the spot. The accused fled after committing the murder of his uncle. The police after receiving the information of murder reached at the crime scene and took the dead body into custody. The police collected all possible evidence from the crime scene, police said. The officials added that the body of the deceased has been shifted to DHQ Hospital for post-mortem and raids are being conducted to arrest the suspect.

Secretary visits distribution point F.P. Report

KOHAT: Secretary Excise and Taxation, Adeel Shah on Tuesday visited Kohat and inspected distribution of flour among deserving people under BISF. He was accompanied by Deputy Commissioner, Azmat Ullah Wazir. He also met with people and inspects working of mobile application. Secretary also visited Afridi Flour Mills Darra Adam Khel and inspects weight and quality of flour. He also directed district administration to look into concerns of people regarding flour distribution.

Dacoits roaming freely F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: The mobile snatchers and robbers had made miserable the livelihood of public in the premises of Mardan district especially in Takhtbhai police station while residents demanded stern actions against culprits otherwise they will be compelled to arrange protest on larger scale. According to details, because last evening unknown dacoits snatch mobile from passenger in rickshaw as result the victim fell into the road while faced critical injuries at Sari Behlol area. The victim Abdul Wajid was shifted to hospital for treatment while a complaint has been registered at Sari Behlol police post against unknown motorcyclists.

RPO signs MoU with Lab

MULTAN (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Capt (ret'd) Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Chughtai Medical Laboratory for offering a discount to police officials across the region. In a ceremony held here on Monday with representatives of Chughtai Lab, the laboratory administration would offer 35 percent discount on executive health screening, 25 per cent discount on all lab tests, 15 per cent on radiology-related tests, 10 pc on home service and an eight per cent discount on pharmacy. Speaking on the occasion, Capt (ret'd) Muhammad Sohail Chaudhry said that the police officials from Multan, Lodhran, Khanewal and Vehari would be facilitated. He said that various initiatives were being taken for the welfare of police officials as per directives of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr Usman Anwar. The regional police officer added that more agreements would be made with other schools, colleges and medical laboratories for welfare of officials and their families.

Absconder among five held; arms, valuables recovered

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: The district police during ongoing crackdown against anti-social elements, arrested five accused including an absconder and recovered weapons, ammunition and stolen items from their possession.

According to a police spokesman, the team had intensified actions against criminals following the directions of District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaiserani. A team of Shaheed Nawab Police station led by SDPO Kashif Sattar and SHO Aslam Khan arrested absconder Sami Ullah, son of Muhammad Ali resident of Badnikhel during blockade and recovered a Kalashnikov along with 15 cartridges. The arrested absconder was wanted to police in several murder and attempt to murder cases.

Similarly, a team of Sadar Police Station led by SHO Tariq Saleem and Incharge Investigation

Amjad Hussain arrested three accused namely Sardar Khan, Muhammad Shoaib and Abdul Rehman who were residents of Taxila.

The police also recovered a stolen Jeep car bearing registration number (LEA-5147), copy of registration book of Jeep, one 30-bore pistol, one wallet, two ATM cards, one health card and a driving license from their possession. Likewise, the Sadar police in another operation, arrested accused Shehryar, a resident of Kot-Essa and recovered a stolen battery from him.

Admn continues action against profiteers: The district administration is taking tangible measures to extend relief to citizens during the holy month of Ramzan by ensuring the provision of edible items at affordable prices.

As part of such efforts, Assistant Commissioner Dera Farhan Ahmed along with Tehsildar Dera Sajid Saleem visited Syndicate

Mor vegetable market, Tank Adda and adjacent markets and checked the prices and quality of food items at various shops.

During the inspection, the AC found several shopkeepers involved in overcharging customers. He confiscated their national identity cards and imposed a fine on them after completing the mandatory legal process.

The AC Dera said the district administration was committed to extending relief to the people by providing them edible items at cheaper rates and directed shopkeepers to display notified price lists at prominent. He said that operations against profiteers would continue indiscriminately and in that regard, no one would be allowed to take law into their own hands and sell food items at exorbitant rates. He also appealed to people to register their complaints in his office so that timely action could be taken against violators.

Free flour distribution continues in NMDs

F.P. Report

KHAR: Like other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the distribution of free of charge flour continued in all seven merged tribal districts under the Prime Minister's package.

Free of cost atta (flour) was being provided to hundreds of thousands of deserving tribal people in Khyber, Bajaur, Mohmand, Orakzai, Kuram, North Waziristan and South Waziristan tribal districts where special distribution centres and points were established by the district administration.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Bajaur, Faiz

Muhammad visited atta distribution centres and flour mills at Khar where he inspected the distribution procedure. He checked standard, weight and record of the atta and directed the authorities concerned to simplify the distribution procedure for quick dispersal of the commodity to deserving people during Ramzan.

The additional deputy commissioner directed the authorities concerned to provide free flour to elderly people, persons with disabilities and women on priority basis. The counters were set in these districts in collaboration with the National Database

Registration Authority and Districts Administration.

He said that three bags of flour may be provided to each family simultaneously to save their time and transportation costs during Ramazan. Over one million people would be benefited from the PM landmark free atta programme in the country including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The tribal people thanked the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for provision of free atta to them during Ramazan and expressed the hope that the pro people project would continue after Ramazanul Mubarak in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Action to be taken agianst absent employees

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Deputy Commissioner Lower Dir, Iftikhar Ahmad chairing a meeting here Tuesday directed education department to compile list of employees that are absent from duties since long time.

The meeting was briefed by District Monitoring Officer, Tariq Jamal, Deputy District Education Officer, Mehboob Ullah about education related matters. Addressing the meeting, DC directed to compile a report of absent employees for submitting to higher authorities.

He also directed to fill vacant posts and computer teachers on priority basis besides provision of basic facilities including potable water in schools. He said data of schools that have electricity poles on their premises would be shared with Wapda for removal. The meeting was also attended by Additional

Deputy Commissioner, Jan Muhammad, District Education Officer(F), and representatives of Wapda and Education Monitoring Authority.

Al-Khidmat Foundation kicks-off cheap bread drive: For the purpose of providing bread to the citizens at a cheap price during Ramazan, Lower Dir Al-khidmat Foundation has set up ovens in Timergara, Adenzai, Khal and Lal Qila, on Tuesday.

Al-Khidmat examined the cheap bread program. On this occasion, Al-Khidmat District Vice President ijaz Arshad, Circle President Fahim-U-Din, Inayat Ullah, Khan Ji, JI Youth and a large number of local members and workers were present. Under this scheme, the supply of bread at half price will continue to the beneficiaries from the 1st of Ramadan until the 30th of Ramadan. He said that the

price of bread in the market is 20 rupees, while al-Khidmat is being provided at 10 rupees from cheap ovens.

He said that in the month of Ramadan, cheap ovens have been installed in Timergara city, including Adenzai, Khal and Lal Qila, while another cheap oven will be opened in Timergara city soon. He said that the mission of Al-Khidmat is to serve the suffering humanity.

Jamia Faorqia secures top position: The honor of Jamia Farooqia Hajjiabad Lower dir, the student Muhammad Sulaiman won the first position in the annual examination of Wafaq ul Madaris at the national level. Muhammad Sulaiman, son of Amir Rahman, a resident of Lower dir, obtained a total of 579 marks and secured the first position in the country in the annual examination.

Police arrests six culprits including murderers



Aftab Hussain

SHANGLA: Police has arrested six alleged culprits including three involved in murder while recovered stolen items from thieves on their identification, on Tuesday.

This was disclosed by District Police Officer (DPO) Shangla while addressing media personnel and claimed that police has

arrested three murderers allegedly involved in killing of their maternal nephew while termed it as suicide.

According to details, Fazal Akram was shot killed by Pervaiz Khan and Zahid Khan whom are the maternal uncles of deceased while lodged case of suicide. However, latterly they pressurized women present at the time to nomi-

nate Sher Bahadur in the offense in statement recorded before court.

Moreover, police also arrested three thieves namely Muhammad Ali while other two were arrested on the identification of first one culprit. The other two culprits were identified as Akbar Khan and real brother of complainant namely Feroz Khan.

Young lawyers urged to play active role in reforming society

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The District and session judge Lower Dir Ms Phool Bibi has said the judiciary has become a last hope for the nation's integrity and stability. She was addressing a lawyers' function after administering oaths to the newly elected cabinet members of the district bar Timergara as chief guest here on Tuesday.

Besides bar's members and judicial staff, civil judge Ms Zaib un Nissa, senior civil judge Farmanullah, civil judge Asif Kamal, civil judge Ahmad Danial and civil judge Imran Ahmad were also in attendance. The function was also addressed by the bar's president advocate Kifayat Yar Bukhari, former president Muhammad Tariq, general secretary Ajman Nawab and others. Those who were sworn in included president Kifayat Yar Bukhari, vice president Muhammad Yar Khan, general secretary Ajman Nawab, joint secretary Imdadullah, finance secretary Khurshid Khan, librarian Junaid Khan and executive member Muhammad Yousaf.

Ms Phool Bibi asked the young lawyers to keep learning values and manners from their seniors. "We read law in our books but values and manners are not learnt from books", she said, adding that the young generation should recognize its strength and



importance in nation's building. She said the youth formed 60 per cent of the total population in Pakistan and they could bring a real change in society if they were united and committed for a greater cause.

About the coordination of the bench and bar, the district and session judge said that it was essential for the establishment of rule of law. She said the country was passing through a crucial time and the legal fraternity should realize the sensitivity of the current situation. She said that youth were the backbone of the nation and they should play an active role to reform the society. About the issues faced by the bar, she said they would be resolved soon as she had taken them up with the district

administration and other relevant institutions.

The newly elected president of the bar advocate Kifayat Yar Bukhari while addressing the function said that all issues faced by the bar would be resolved with consensus. In his lengthy speech he shed light on the current political and economic situation in the country and said that politicians and state institutions were responsible for the whole mess. He said that he would utilize his energies and capabilities for smooth delivery of justice. He said the bar would fully cooperate to ensure justice with the people. Mr Bukhari said that all members of the bar would be taken into confidence before making important decisions.

GHS Parang students visits Mohmand Dam F.P. Report

GHALANAI: Security Forces arranged a visit for the students of Government High School Parang Ghar to Mohmand Dam. The purpose of the visit was to give awareness to the youth about different projects and their importance.

During the visit, the students were briefed about the history of Mohmand district, the contribution of locals in maintaining peace and the significance of the Mohmand Dam project. The students greatly appreciated the opportunity to learn about such important projects and requested more such extra-curricular activities to enhance their knowledge.

They also commended the role of Law Enforcement Agencies in providing a healthy platform for them to learn and grow and said that "We would like to express our gratitude to the Frontier Corps North for organizing such an informative and enlightening visit. We believe that such initiatives will not only benefit the students but also help them to become responsible citizens who are aware of their surroundings and can contribute positively to society."

Fair distribution of flour directed Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFAZABAD: Commissioner Gujranwala Naveed Haider Sharazi and RPO Haider Ashraf visited free flour distribution points in Hafizabad and Pindi Bhattian, on Monday. They reviewed arrangements and process of flour distribution. DC Hafizabad Umar Farooq Warrach and DPO Dr. Fahad Ahmad and other officers were also accompanied by them.

Commissioner directed the district administration Hafizabad to increase flour distribution points and counters for convenience of the deserving people. Commissioner said during the visit that first time in the history of the county flour was being distributed free of cost among deserving people which was a poor friendly

steps of Prime Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif and Chief Minister of the Punjab. Commissioner said that government was providing Rs. 64 billion subsidy for giving relief to the poor and less resources people during the Holy Month of Ramadan.

2 students die

ATTOCK (PPI): Two students, riding a motorcycle, were killed when a speeding car ran over their motorcycle near Teen Mela Chowk of Attock on Tuesday.

The accident occurred on the main highway of Attock where the speeding car hit the bike, killing two students on the spot. On receiving information of the accident, the Rescue 1122 rushed the spot and shifted the bodies to the district hospital.

Suspension of Rana's warrants: Court accepts plea

GUIJRANWALA (PPI): An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Gujranwala Tuesday accepted a plea seeking suspension of Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah's non-bailable arrest warrants. The ATC heard the petition against Rana Sanaullah's non-bailable arrest warrants. The court also ordered Rana Sanaullah to submit a surety bonds of Rs0.5 million and adjourned the hearing of the case till April 28.

It merits here to mention that Rana Sanaullah also filed an application in the

court seeking exemption from court appearance. On March 7, the ATC Gujranwala dismissed Rana's request for exemption from appearance and issued a non-bailable arrest warrant.

His non-bailable arrest warrant was issued by ATC judge Rana Zahid Iqbal Khan. The court ordered the police to arrest Rana and produce him on March 28. On February 24, the ATC had issued a non-bailable arrest warrant for the interior minister in a case registered at Industrial

police station Gujarat and ordered the police to arrest and produce him on March 7.

During the hearing, Rana's lawyer Advocate Abdul Majeed had appeared in the court and filed a request for exemption of Sanaullah's appearance in the court due to official engagements and that he would appear in the court in the next hearing. However, the court had issued a non-bailable arrest warrant while rejecting the plea of exemption from attendance.

'Free flour distribution a trap to death for poor'

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Pakistan Boys' scout's association (PBSA) Commissioner Sardar Waqar Shahzad has said that "Free Atta Scheme" is becoming a death trap for the poor, malnourished, working classes, fasting people and especially for women and children in Swat.

He expressed these views while talking to media, he further said that It can be seen as a worst example of mismanagement where human beings are put into endless queues, monitored by highest administrative authority (By PM, as seen in Multan). "Why will someone make a

person to wait till death, to get the basic food staples, in an agriculture-based economy, such a shame and pity?" he added.

Sardar Waqar said that this system of "Free Atta Scheme" even brought endless disgrace to the self-respect of the people receiving it while alive, and to the nation as a whole. He advised the management it in better way, that Government can transfer the money into the accounts of these poor people, and let them buy from wherever they want, near to their home, out of fasting hours, by sending anyone to market, avoiding killing queues.

"Use welfare organizations and NGOs like Saylani, Chippa Dastarkhwan, JDC, and Bahria Dastarkhwan to do in a better way, with dignity for the receivers, if our government cannot do it" he added. Sardar Waqar said that Government shall use Pakistan Boys Scouts and other volunteers to help out in this scheme.

The most important message for the public, please look into your near families and neighbors don't let any poor sleep hungry, help out in micro levels whatever you can do. Allah does have mercy on them, who have mercy on the creatures of earth.

UAF ranked 66th best University of World

FAISALABAD (APP): The University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) has emerged 66th best university of the globe in the subject Agriculture and Forestry and 12th best in Asia as per global renowned QS World University Ranking 2023.

It was stated by UAF Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqbal Ahmad Khan while addressing the deans and directors meeting. He appreciated the role and untiring efforts of the campus community for achieving the said goal.

Prof Dr Iqbal Ahmad

Khan said the UAF was opening up a new avenue of progress and prosperity. Last year, the University was at 74th in world ranking in subject category agriculture and forestry and 14th in Asia. The university stands in every renowned ranking of the globe.

He said that the university was committed to address agricultural problems, rural development, produce tangible researches, skilled manpower with leadership qualities; outreach and strengthened academia industry linkages

that would help build knowledge based economy. He was of the view that in a month, the university varieties of Okra, chia, rose, and sugarcane were approved.

Director Office of Research Innovation and Commercialization Dr Jafar Jaskani added that in the new QS ranking, the UAF stands at the overall score 69.3, International research networks 54.7, the citations per paper 83.4 and the H-index citations are 84.5, academic and employer reputation score 60.9 and 82.2, respectively.

Fleeing robber arrested in injured condition

WAH CANTT (APP): A fleeing robber was arrested in injured condition after a brief encounter with police near the heavy mechanical complex (HMC) in the limits of Taxila Police station in the early hours of Tuesday.

According to the police spokesman, three masked men equipped with pistols riding on a motorcycle snatched mobile and cash from Afzal and fled away. As the victim made a call on rescue 15, a team of Taxila Police led by station house officer Sarmad Ilyas intercepted the fleeing robbers near the canal, and

after a brief exchange of fire, one of the robbers was arrested in injured condition while two of his companions managed to flee from the crime scene successfully.

Station house officer Sarmad Ilyas informed that the arrested robber was identified as Hazrat Khan - an Afghan national. He said that the suspect was earlier arrested and sent to jail in many robbery, dacoity and street crime cases and now was on the bail. Responding to a question, he said that the injured robber's condition is out of danger and was admitted to

a local hospital in police custody.

Bid to smuggle heroin foiled

QUETTA (INP): The Customs officials have foiled a smuggling bid worth Rs 110 million at Quetta-Karachi highway.

As per details, the custom officials conducted a raid near a check post on Quetta Karachi highway and recovered heroin worth Rs 110 million from a car. The raid was conducted on intelligence based information, the driver of the car fled the incident spot.



US Senate votes to advance repeal of Iraq War authorisation

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The United States Senate has backed a measure expected to clear the way for a vote to repeal two authorisations for war in Iraq. The chamber voted 65 to 28 to limit debate over whether to end two "Authorizations for Use of Military Force" (AUMFs) - one from 1991 that coincided with the Gulf War and a second from 2002, approved in the lead-up to the 2003 Iraq invasion.

That support exceeded the 60-vote minimum needed to advance the legislation. The final vote to repeal is expected later this week. Vote takes place as the US marks the 20th anniversary of the 2003 Iraq War. All 28 votes against measure came from Republican Senators. Typically, under the US Constitution, Congress wields the exclusive power to declare war. But with the two Iraq war authorisations, Congress granted open-ended authority to the presidency to exercise force in the region.

That, some argue, has allowed the presidency to gain too much power over military action. It has also spurred criticism that these "zombie" authorisations have fuelled "forever wars" that are no longer justified. In the minutes before vote, Democratic Senator Bob Menendez of New Jersey called the measure a means of exercising the chamber's

"most solemn duty": to decide "when and under what circumstances" to send Americans "into harm's way". "It is a recognition that Congress not only has the power to declare war but also should have the responsibility to end wars," Menendez said in his speech, urging his fellow Senators to approve measure. Menendez also blasted the war authorisations as "obsolete and outdated". He argued that US President Joe Biden has "sufficient authority to defend against threats" without them, pointing to recent military air raids in Syria.

"If we're going to debate whether to provide the president additional authorities, then we should have that debate separately. But it should not be under the cloak of keeping old authorisations on the book, authorisations that are not needed to meet any current threat," Menendez said. But several of his Republican colleagues in the Senate took to the floor to argue in favour of retaining the Iraq war authorisations, on the basis that a repeal might limit the US's ability to take action in the Middle East. Texas Senator John Cornyn, for instance, asserted that while the political situation in Iraq has changed, the threats to US interests remained. He also cited Iraqi security as a motivation.

"American forces are no longer there to counter threats from Iraq. We are now there to counter threats to Iraq. That includes threats from Iran, the number-one state sponsor of international terrorism," Cornyn said in his speech. "Despite the fact that Iraq is now our partner, that doesn't mean it's time to abandon our security interests in the region. America still has very real adversaries in the Middle East who would do us and our allies harm if they go the chance."

South Carolina Republican Lindsey Graham, meanwhile, delivered a fiery speech saying that repealing the war authorisations would embolden US adversaries. "Here's what you're doing. You're sending the signal by doing this that we're leaving. We're withdrawing."

That we don't have the will as a nation to see this thing through. There's nothing good that comes from this," he said, ending his speech by calling the prospect of a repeal "one of the most ill-conceived ideas after 9/11". On Twitter after the vote, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer announced that the chamber would vote on the final passage of the repeal later this week. "Americans want to see an end to endless wars in the Middle East," he wrote.

Queen Elizabeth II asked Germany for pricey horses

BERLIN (AP): Two horses fit for a queen, please. That's what Britain's Queen Elizabeth II had asked for as a gift during her state visit to Germany in 1978, weekly Der Spiegel reported. The expensive present raised eyebrows among German bureaucrats at the time, who noted that the Holsteiner and the gray Elizabeth requested cost more than any other offering made to a visiting head of state since the end of World War II.

Nevertheless, Germany's then-President Walter Scheel approved the gift in the interests of good bilateral relations. Der Spiegel reported citing previously confidential archive papers. The magazine reported that the papers also noted the late monarch's aperitif preferences - gin and tonic - and dislike of helicopters. Records showed that the British embassy had concerns about possible protests if Elizabeth visited Dresden during her trip in 1992. In the end she did attend a church service and was largely welcomed by locals in the city that was flattened by Allied bombing raids during the war, Der Spiegel reported. Another sensitive issue during the trip was the question of whether Elizabeth would make a speech at the Bundestag. Der Spiegel reported that it was then Chancellor Helmut Kohl who raised objections, possibly because of his lingering anger at Britain's efforts to block German reunification a few years earlier.

In total, Elizabeth made five state visits to Germany, most recently in 2015, though only files older than 30 years were released. The report comes days before Elizabeth's son, King Charles III, makes his first state visit to Germany. The monarch was originally meant to visit France first, but plans for that trip were postponed due to anti-government protests in the country. Charles' three-day visit to Germany will include stops in Berlin, Brandenburg and Hamburg as part of a diplomatic outreach effort before his coronation on May 6. Unlike his mother, Charles will be permitted to speak before the Bundestag.

Britain's royal family has ancestral ties to Germany. Before changing its name to Windsor due to concerns about anti-German sentiment during World War I the family bore the name Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, indicating its German heritage.

Russia warns Armenia against allying with ICC

LONDON (Reuters): Russia has warned Armenia of "serious consequences" if it submits to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC) which has issued an arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin, the RIA news agency reported. The ICC issued the warrant this month, accusing Putin of the war crime of illegally deporting hundreds of children from Ukraine, a move condemned by the Kremlin as a meaningless and outrageously partisan decision.

Armenia, a traditional Russian ally whose ties with Moscow have frayed badly since Putin gave the order to invade Ukraine in what he called a "special military operation", is moving towards becoming a state party to the Rome Statute, a move that would bring it under the jurisdiction of the ICC. RIA, a state Russian news agency, cited a source in the Russian Foreign Ministry as saying that Moscow regarded Armenia's ICC plans as "unacceptable". It said Russia had warned Yerevan of "extremely negative consequences" for bilateral relations if it went ahead with the plan, which would need to be ratified by the Armenian parliament following approval by the constitutional court. "Moscow considers official Yerevan's plans to accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to be absolutely unacceptable against the background of the recent illegal and legally null and void warrants of the ICC against the Russian leadership," RIA cited the Russian Foreign Ministry source as saying.

In France, streets and fields seethe with protest

PARIS (AP): A big day has come for French high school student Elisa Fares. At age 17, she is taking part in her first protest. In a country that taught the world about people power with its revolution of 1789 - and a country again seething with anger against its leaders - graduating from bystander to demonstrator is a generations-old rite of passage. Fares looks both excited and nervous as she prepares to march down Paris streets where people for centuries have similarly defied authority and declared: "Non!"

Two friends, neither older than 18 but already protest veterans whose parents took them to demonstrations when they were little, are showing Fares the ropes. They've readied eye-drops and gas masks in case police fire tear gas - as they have done repeatedly in recent weeks. "The French are known for fighting and we'll fight," says one of the friends, Celine Marionneau, also 17. "My mother goes to a lot of demonstrations ... She says if you have things to say, you should protest." For French President Emmanuel Macron, the look of determination on their young faces only heralds deepening crisis. His government has ignited a firestorm of anger with unpopular pension reforms that he railroaded through parliament and which, most notably, push the legal retirement age from 62 to 64.

Furious not just with the prospect of working for longer but also with the way Macron imposed it, his opponents have switched to full-on disobedience mode. They're regularly striking and demonstrating and threatening to make his second and final term as president even more difficult than his first. It, too, was rocked by months of protests - often violent - by so-called yellow vest campaigners against social injustice. Fares, the first-time protester, said her mother had been against her taking to the streets but has now given her blessing.

"She said that if I wanted to fight, she wouldn't stop me," the teen says. Critics accuse Macron of effectively ruling by decree, likening him to France's kings of old. Their reign finished badly: In the French Revolution, King Louis XVI ended up on the guillotine. There's no danger of that happening to Macron. But hobbled in parliament and contested



on the streets piled high with reeking garbage uncollected by striking workers, he's being given a tough lesson, again, about French people power. Freshly scrawled slogans in Paris reference 1789. So drastically has Macron lost the initiative that he was forced to indefinitely postpone a planned state visit this week by King Charles III. Germany, not France, will now get the honor of being the first overseas ally to host Charles as monarch. The France leg of Charles' tour would have coincided with a new round of strikes and demonstrations planned for Tuesday that are again likely to mobilize many hundreds of thousands of protesters. Macron said the royal visit likely would have become their target, which risked creating a "detestable situation." Encouraged by that victory, the protest movement is plowing on and picking up new recruits, including some so young that it will be many decades before they'll be directly impacted by the pushed-back retirement age. Their involvement is a worrisome development for Macron, because it suggests that protests are evolving, broadening from workplace and retirement concerns to a more generalized malaise with the president and his governance.

Violence is picking up, too. Police and environmental activists fought pitched battles over the weekend in rural western France, resulting in dozens of injuries. Officers fired more than 4,000 nonlethal dispersion grenades in fending off hundreds of protesters who rained down rocks, powerful fireworks and gasoline bombs on police lines. "Anger and resentment," says former President François Hollande, Macron's predecessor, "are at a level that I have

rarely seen." For Fares, whose first demonstration was a peaceful protest in Paris this weekend, the final straw was Macron's decision to not let legislators vote on his retirement reform, because he wasn't sure of winning a majority for it. Instead, he ordered his prime minister to skirt parliament by using a special constitutional power to ram the bill through. It was the 11th time that Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne had to resort to the so-called Article 49.3 power in just 10 months - a telling sign of Macron's fragility since he lost his parliamentary majority in an election last June. "It's an attack on democracy," Fares said. "It annoyed me too much." Her friend Luna Dessommès, 18, added hopefully: "We have to use the movement to politicize more and more young people."

At age 76, veteran protester Gilbert Leblanc has been through it all before. He was a yellow vest; by his count, he took part in more than 220 of their protests in Macron's first term, rallying to the cry that the former banker was too pro-business and "the president of the rich." Long before that, Leblanc cut his teeth in seminal civil unrest that reshaped France in May 1968. He says that when he tells awe-struck young protesters that he was a "soixante-huitard" - a '68 veteran - they "want to take selfies with me." This winter, he has kept his heating off, instead saving the money for train fares to the capital, so he can protest every weekend, he said. "My grandfather who fought in World War I, got the war medal. He would rise from his grave if he saw me sitting at home, in my sofa, not doing anything," Leblanc said. "Everything we've obtained has been with our tears and blood."

Russian town shocked by case of child's Ukraine drawing

MOSCOW (AFP): In the Russian town of Yefremov, residents say they are shocked by the case of a 13-year-old daughter because of her drawing criticising Moscow's offensive. Located around 300 kilometres (186 miles) from the Russian capital, the town of 37,000 people has all the outward signs of patriotic support for the year-long campaign seen across the country.

"For A World Without Nazism" reads a billboard on the main street -- alongside the letters "Z" and "V" used by Russian forces in Ukraine. But its inhabitants are quietly divided over the fighting and have been shaken in recent weeks by a case that has become a testament to the repression of any criticism of the offensive. It all began last year when 13-year-old Maria Moskal'yova made a drawing at school showing missiles next to a Russian flag heading towards a woman and child standing by a Ukrainian flag. Her headmistress immediately contacted the police, who said they found comments criticising the offensive on the

social media profiles of the girl's father, 54-year-old Alexei Moskal'yov.

Moskal'yov is due to go on trial on a charge of "discrediting Russia's armed forces" which carries a maximum sentence of up to three years in prison under a law adopted last year. Moskal'yov is also at risk of losing parental rights in a separate trial set to begin on April 6, according to his lawyer Vladimir Bilyenko. Since March 1, Moskal'yov has been under house arrest while his daughter has been taken to an orphanage and forbidden from calling her father, according to town councillor Olga Podolskaya. The mother is estranged from the family. The case in this otherwise placid town in Russia's Tula region has garnered national attention and led to an online petition calling for the child to be returned to her father.

Even Yevgeny Prigozhin, head of the Wagner paramilitary force spearheading Russia's offensive, has voiced support for Maria and criticised local authorities for their actions. In the streets of Yefremov, few inhabitants were prepared to

speaking openly about the case -- or about their views on the campaign in Ukraine. "Separating a father from his daughter is horrible. She just expressed a point of view," said Alexandra, a student. A pensioner who declined to give her name said her life had changed since February 24, 2022 -- the day Russian troops crossed into Ukraine. "I'm not accusing anyone. I see victims on both sides. I want this to be over as soon as possible," she said. At the local cemetery, several fresh graves of soldiers killed in what Russia calls its "special military operation" could be seen.

The offensive has felt even closer to home in the past month with three Ukrainian drones reported to have struck in the region. These developments have increased concern in a small town where everyone knows each other. In the central square, two elderly women with red arm bands said they were part of a neighbourhood watch initiative set up by residents to report any suspicious activity. "They told us there is a risk of an attack and we

have to keep order," said one of the women, who were sitting on a bench. Alexander Salikhov, a 66-year-old retired engineer, said he wanted peace but added that "we have to free Russian lands" in Ukraine.

Dmitry, a 50-year-old businessman, said he had gone bankrupt because of Western sanctions which have caused major disruption in supply chains. "What does the future hold? The power is in the hands of the security services and we are on the brink of nuclear war," he said. Podolskaya said residents were conflicted. "They are depressed. They do not understand what is happening. But they cannot take to the streets. They are afraid of getting sacked -- they have mortgages and children," she said. Marianna, a pregnant 31-year-old, said she was more optimistic although she said she was worried about her husband getting mobilised. "We hope it will end and our son will be born in a peaceful world and he will not have to fear military action," she said, revealing that the couple plan to call him Bogdan -- a popular Ukrainian name.

Prince Harry, Elton John appear at UK court in privacy lawsuit

LONDON (Reuters): Britain's Prince Harry and singer Elton John made a surprise appearance at London's High Court as they and five others began a lawsuit against the publisher of the Daily Mail paper over years of alleged phone-tapping and privacy breaches. Harry, the younger son of King Charles, has brought a lawsuit against Associated Newspapers (ANL), along with John, and his husband David Furnish, as well as actors Elizabeth Hurley and Sadie Frost.

They allege they were victims of "numerous unlawful acts" carried out by journalists or private investigators working on behalf of ANL titles the Daily Mail and the Mail. These included hacking mobile phone messages, bugging calls, getting private information such as medical records by deception or "blagging", and "commissioning the breaking and entry into private property", their lawyer David Sherborne said. The alleged activity ran from 1993 to 2011, and even up to 2018, ANL, which is seeking to have the case thrown out, said in a state-

ment it categorically denied the allegations and would vigorously defend them if necessary.

Harry, who flew in from his California home, sat just feet away from reporters, watching intently and taking notes. His spokesperson said he wanted to be there to show his support. Elton John, Furnish, Frost and another claimant, Doreen Lawrence, mother of Black teenager Stephen Lawrence who was murdered in a 1993 racist attack, were also in court. None of the claimants, who also included former lawyer Simon Hughes, are expected to speak during the four-day preliminary hearing, which they were not required to attend.

Harry hugged Lawrence at the end of the day's hearing and chatted to her and Furnish, and gave a thumbs up to crowds outside as he left court. He is not expected to see his father King Charles or elder brother William while he is in London, while his attendance at the new monarch's coronation in May is still not confirmed. In his claim, Harry accuses the papers of using unlawful means to

obtain stories about him from at least early 2001 until at least late 2013, and said his brother William and the mother of William's wife Kate had also been targeted.

It alleges they had sought information about private flight details of his ex-girlfriend Chelsy Davy, and hacked mobile phone voice-mail messages and bugged the landlines of his friends, with a hardware tap put on the phone on one of them, Guy Pelly. The actions had meant he was "largely deprived of important aspects of his teenage years" and the suspicion and paranoia they caused led to him losing friends as "everyone became a 'suspect'", the claim said. The unlawful attempts to find out details of the royal's private travel plans were also a significant security risk "which was as grossly irresponsible as it was dangerous", the document said.

In court submissions, ANL said the claims were based on inference rather than evidence, and that the claimants had provided little or no evidence of unlawful information gathering by its journalists - which it strongly denies.

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Judges' Schism, institutions need constitution not democracy

RECENTLY, two judges of the Supreme Court have expressed concerns and raised questions over the unlimited powers of the chief justice of Pakistan (CJP), and termed the court's decision as a solitary action or a one-man show. According to the details, in a 27-page detailed ruling regarding the judgment in Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) plea over the delay in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa elections, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail expressed the need to revisit the powers enjoyed by the office of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Umar Ata Bandial. The judges of the apex court were of the view that the top court cannot be dependent on the solitary decision of the Chief Justice, but must be regulated through a rule-based system approved by all Judges of the Court under Article 191 of the Constitution, in all judicial matters of court's jurisdiction under Article 184(3) including the exercise of suo motu jurisdiction, the constitution of Benches to hear such cases, the constitution of Regular Benches to hear all the other cases instituted in this Court along with the constitution of Special Benches, etc. The two adjudicators noted that in the persuasion of one-man policies, the apex court may become an autocratic and insulated institution that can surely go against the rights and interests of the people.

The decades-long corruption, nepotism, and absence of accountability coupled with a division on party lines/ political affiliation, likes, and dislikes have not only weakened all State institutions of Pakistan, but also led to decay, defamation, and bureaucratic strife in important institutions of the country. Meanwhile, an abundance of political cases, pressure from the ruling government and opposition, unnecessary media coverage during the hearings, and unessential remarks by the adjudicators not only create hype in the public but also put the worst effects on the discipline and performance of the top courts. Similarly, misuse of high offices by the previous judges, involvement in political and administrative matters, seeking public interest above the law/constitutions, disputed decisions, and media/ social media rating had badly tarnished the image of the judiciary and politicized the work of the adjudicators in the past.

Unfortunately, our nation has witnessed multiple obscene incidents in our judicial history ranging from the Supreme Court attack to Justice Qayum's scandal, unceremonial arrest of the top adjudicator to the proudful lawyer's movement and reinstatement of the judges, while regretful intimidation of the bench from the bar, slow delivery of justice and a persistent political interference in the top ranking institution. Although, successive Chief Justices vowed to resolve the issues relating to the judicial system but failed in delivering their promise during their term in office because massive investment is required for the constitution of new courts, recruitment of judges and lower staff, etc for eradication of corruption and speedy compensation of justice to the public.

As for inter-judge rivalry and the recent dissenting note of two judges is concerned, the apex court is not a political forum that works on a democratic line, and runs its routine administrative business through a poll or a bargaining system rather it is a constitutional body generally formed by a specific number of judges headed by the Chief Justice of Pakistan. Legally, the Chief Justice has sole authority to work in the best interest of its institution, the public, and the country in line with the provisions of the constitution. The judges may have differences over certain matters, which must be raised appropriately because it plays an accountability role and is essential for making home in order.

Realistically, unethical and irrational politics had ruined every institution in the country including the judiciary. The warring political groups had brought several political issues to the courts and now trying to influence the judiciary by persuasion, propaganda campaigns, and direct attack on the judiciary that creates distrust among the judges and undermined the judicial system in the country. The nation supports the judiciary and the top adjudicator and hopes for an impartial service of justice. At the same time, the descending judges must use official forums including the judicial commission to confirm/ validate their views and address their grievances so a healthy tradition of self-accountability moves forward amicably, and more transparency, merit, and openness could be brought to the judicial system of the country.

FOR a compelling three and a half hours last week, former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson faced his parliamentary inquisitors. The issue focused on the possibility that Johnson had deliberately misled the House of Commons over whether COVID-19 rules had been followed at 10 Downing Street during the lockdown era. He had told the Commons that no rules or guidance were broken. The police, however, issued 126 fixed penalty notices regarding lockdown events in and around the prime minister's residence. The hangover of Johnson's so-called partygate scandal is a long and painful one.

Johnson knew what was on the line - his future political career and personal credibility. He even had a haircut ahead of the hearing. He adopted his uber-serious tone, mostly respectful to the committee but on occasions riled by the questioning. If the Commons Select Committee of Privileges finds him guilty and imposes a 10-day suspension or more, this could lead to a by-election and end Johnson's parliamentary career. Although it may just come to Johnson being

forced to make an apology to Parliament - a humiliation in itself. Johnson has always embraced theater and drama. He is a master of political chicanery. But here, he was not in control; he was at the mercy of the others. Rishi Sunak's team timed a major vote on a key part of the revised Northern Ireland protocol, the Windsor Framework, right in the middle of Johnson's session. The protocol was a disastrous part of Johnson's "oven-ready" Brexit deal that, through patient diplomacy, Sunak and his team have calmly renegotiated with the EU.

The stage management was media heaven. Barely had Johnson worked up a head of steam than he had to exit the inquisition to go and vote in a losing cause that mattered to him personally. Johnson was being hit from all sides. The ex-PM had become the face of a reckless past; the disastrous Tory psychodrama he oversaw. Contrast that with Sunak. The new prime minister was boosted by all this, as he exuded ever more calm and responsibility. His image was of the new hard-working captain at the tiller. The good ship Britannia had a new helmsman who was not sailing it straight at icebergs.

Given the tenor of the

questioning, the seven-member privileges committee is likely to recommend some form of censure. It is examining if Johnson misled Parliament and if this was "inadvertent, reckless or intentional." Johnson insisted that lockdown leaving dos were "essential for work purposes." At first glance, this might appear trivial. But ordinary Britons remember what it was like. Millions of working people across the country stuck to the rules, not even getting to say goodbye to loved ones on their deathbeds. Johnson, to many, stinks of entitled privilege - a man to whom the rules never applied. This time, he set the rules. He imposed a strict lockdown on the entire country but, where he worked, the rules did not seem to count.

The committee also did not look impressed. Sir Bernard Jenkin, a senior Conservative committee member, pushed back at Johnson. "The guidance does not say you can have a thank you party and as many people in the room as you like," he said. These parties were necessary in Johnson's world, with cheese and wine an integral part. He could not explain why his wife, Carrie, their

son and his interior designer, Lulu Lytle, were at his birthday celebration in the Cabinet Room in May 2020. This hardly looked like a necessity. Cabinet Secretary Simon Case made clear in his evidence that he never told the PM that the rules and guidance had been followed at all times. This contradicted Johnson's claims. Meanwhile, Johnson could only find 21 fellow Tory Brexiteers to vote against the Windsor Framework, even if this did include fellow former Prime Minister Liz Truss. The protocol passed by 515 votes to 29. On an issue of such supreme importance to the Brexiteer wing of the party, this was barely a revolt.

All in all, it was a bad week for Brexiteers and the far right of the Conservative Party. Neither Johnson nor Brexit have quite the allure of a few years ago. The country's political world wants to move on from both. To the extent that Johnson is the most high-profile flag-waver for the hardcore Brexiteer crowd, this was a huge blow to his prestige. The man who once referred to himself as "big dog" was left whimpering on the sidelines. The country has

grown tired of the Brexiteers blaming everything and everyone but themselves. Fault always lies elsewhere. Johnson is the epitome of this and he now finds himself left with only die-hard loyalists proclaiming eternal fealty, attached to him like fossilized barnacles. Last week may have brought the curtain down on Johnson's mercurial political career. It would be wrong to write him off totally. He still enjoys a cult-like following. But his antics have worn out. The recent revelation that he wanted to award his own father a knighthood was a poignant reminder of his stunning lack of judgment and self-awareness.

British politics may be less colorful if this is the final act of Johnson's political career, but it might be somewhat more professional and effective. Sunak must have been purring. The crucial vote on Northern Ireland passed with ease, meaning there was no need to bank on Labour's support. His calm diplomacy has achieved what most agree is a vastly improved arrangement. Relations with the EU have improved drastically, including with France. Sunak and President Emmanuel Macron this

month held the first bilateral Anglo-French summit since 2018, with the media touting the two leaders' relationship as "Le Bromance." The meeting led to the signing of a deal on handling the flow of immigrants across the English Channel. Gone are the days - for now at least - of bitter British fusillades of anti-EU bile being launched on an almost daily basis. Sunak is basically saying that the grown-ups are back in charge.

The prime minister's standing is strengthened and his main rival is flailing. The question of who leads the Conservatives into the next general election may have been answered, even if the local elections in May prove to be perilous. For the first time in months, the Labour Party is out of its comfort zone. Yes, it is well ahead in the polls, but what appeared to be a landslide in the offing may actually become a proper electoral contest. Sunak still has his challenges. Inflation is going up, taxation is at record levels, industrial unrest is rampant and living standards are falling. But the signs are that Britain is ready to return to the more sober echelons of international politics.

Arab News

Canada's McCarthyism and the spies stirring a yellow peril scare

Andrew Mitrovica

Igrew up in a neurotic, faraway island called Australia during the 1960s. Even as a youngster, I knew, like millions of frightened Australians, that it seemed only a matter of time before a big, bad boogeyman swooped down and overwhelmed the country, turning it from a sun-kissed land of liberty into a dark, sullen place of brutal, Maoist conformity. Back then, the looming threat was called "the yellow peril" and the creeping boogeyman was China's Chairman Mao, who school children, like me, were taught had sinister designs to overrun our not-so-far-away island.

The manufactured mania reached an almost paralyzing pitch when, in 1967, Australia's prime minister, Harold Holt, went for a swim in the ocean one bright Sunday afternoon and never came back. The all-hands-on-deck search for the missing prime minister proved futile. In the absence of a body or the good sense to conclude that Holt had probably drowned, "yellow peril"-fuelled conspiracy theories flourished. Countless unnerved Australians, like me, were conditioned to treat them seriously. One "theory" that took firm root quickly was that the prime minister had, all along, been a traitor who fled the country in swim trunks before being unmasked. His grateful Chinese handlers had arranged to pick up their prized agent just

off the Australian coast via a submarine. Such was the frenzy's pervasive power that many Australians believed this nonsense and were sure that the feared invasion by China had begun in earnest.

There was, of course, no invasion and Australia remains, for the most part, a sun-kissed and free island. I am sharing this trip down irrational memory lane because a jarring echo of the "yellow peril" mayhem has gripped the snow-kissed, neurotic country I have, for decades, called home: Canada. The déjà-vu-like hysteria has been ginned up by reporters, columnists and politicians who have played willing and eager handmaidens to what amounts to a handful of anonymous so-called "security officials" who populate Canada's vast, largely unaccountable and crappy "intelligence infrastructure".

China, the boogeyman du jour, is said to have interfered in at least two recent Canadian federal elections and perhaps one municipal election. Cue the apoplectic outbursts among columnists and politicians who wail in polite code that the scheming "yellow" hordes have undermined the "integrity" of how Canadians vote and who they vote for. This, despite the fact that a bashful, "senior" spook - who appears to have a number of reporters and news organisations in their front and back pockets - has acknowledged that China had no impact on the

outcome of those elections. Oh, never mind. Beyond leaking "top secret" stuff about Canada's compromised-but-not-compromised elections, the unnamed spooks have accused, by name, sitting and former members of parliament and the Ontario legislature of Chinese descent of being, in effect, fifth columnists working in Beijing's interest.

To date, none of Canada's suddenly loquacious spooks has found the mettle or courage to step out of the comfortable shadows to point an accusatory finger at their fellow Canadians whom they have, implicitly or explicitly, branded as Chinese "assets". Instead, earlier this month, one of the unidentified "security officials" was provided prime, front-page real estate in The Globe and Mail newspaper to write a flowery, self-serving defence of their decision to launder selective secrets that have triggered the latest wave of "yellow peril" hysteria and questioned the allegiances of elected legislators. To buttress the credibility of its coveted source, the Globe's editors have, unsurprisingly, touted the anonymous official as a "whistleblower".

During my long career as an investigative reporter, I have had the privilege of meeting and writing about brave people who have chosen to expose wrongdoing knowing that the conse-

quences of their truth-telling will be swift, blunt and life-altering. Unlike the Globe's sneaky leaker, these whistleblowers have not only attacked their names to their allegations but have also been prepared to defend themselves, their motives and their understanding of the truth in public, not behind the convenient curtain of anonymity. Not so The Globe's mystery leaker who, in the name of patriotism and duty, has cast doubt on the patriotism and duty of other Canadians who have been forced in the House of Commons to deny tearfully that they have been disloyal to the maple leaf. One rationale The Globe's leaker used to remain in the shadows is that they might lose their job, or worse, go to jail, for laundering secrets to friendly journalists.

Reminder to the leaker and the Globe: that's what bona fide whistleblowers do. Reluctantly, they risk their livelihoods and even their freedom to shine a necessary light on often state-sanctioned negligence, deceit or lawlessness. The Globe's leaker is no Daniel Ellsberg - the former military analyst who provided the New York Times with a copy of the Pentagon Papers which revealed all about America's criminal, imperialist adventure in Vietnam. Ellsberg faced scores of charges that would have sent him to

prison for more than a century. Still, as a man of conscience, he arrived in court, ready to answer the charges that were later dismissed. The Globe's leaker is no Edward Snowden - the ex-National Security Agency contractor who shared reams of secrets with reporters at The Washington Post and The Guardian which exposed how a network of electronic spy agencies was breaking the law by eavesdropping on citizens they were meant to protect.

Snowden, and his young family, have found safe refuge in Moscow, far from the retributive clutches of vindictive American authorities who mean to make a stiff and unmistakable example of him. I wrote a book brimming with secrets. I named corrupt CSIS officers who broke the law. My book, Covert Entry: Spies, Lies and Crimes Inside Canada's Secret Service, includes details of their illicit modus operandi and photographs of them.

I risked going to jail, too. And my name is on the front jacket of my book. So, it's time for Canada's leaky happy spies to come out - come out from wherever you are if you are going to tar other Canadians as seditious tools of Beijing. While we wait, The Globe's sneaky leaker wrote, cross their heart and hope to die, that all they wanted to do was to start a "conversation" about "what it is that we expect of our government" and they are shocked

that their good-faith effort has caused such "ugliness and division" in the country. The naïveté and failure to accept responsibility for the McCarthyite-reminiscent madness they have provoked is astounding, isn't it? This self-appointed guardian of Canadian democracy lights an ethnic-laced bush fire and feeds it - drip by drip - with gasoline and has the audacity to claim that they never intended for any of the "ugliness or division" to happen.

My goodness, the blindness and hubris. If you think race and ethnicity don't play an essential role in the calculation of how Canada's myopic "intelligence infrastructure" identifies its adversaries, you have not been paying attention. In 2017, five Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) officers and analysts sued the spy agency for \$35m, alleging that it was a cesspool of racism, intolerance and Islamophobia where anti-Muslim slurs and gay-bashing are an institutional norm.

The parties settled out of court to save, no doubt, CSIS from having to air its sordid laundry. If that's how CSIS treats its own, imagine how it treats "outsiders" - in or outside parliament. Muslim Canadians have always been considered the suspicious "other" by Canada's rank, xenophobic spies. These days, they are joined by Chinese Canadians. It is as shameful as it is predictable.

'Wiping out' Palestinians is an old Israeli adage

Ramzy Baroud

BY his own admission, Israeli Finance Minister Bezael Smotrich is a "fascist homophobe." This declaration, which he made in January, should be enough to accentuate the violent nature of the political concoction created by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu last December. Though Smotrich is not the only politician in Netanyahu's Cabinet with a track record of violence, both real and rhetorical, he is a special case. Unlike his boss, Smotrich does not feel the need for double-speak or occasional diplomacy.

In recent months, Smotrich has become internationally famous, not because of any financial genius that could resolve Israel's impending economic problems, which will arise as a result of the weakening of the country's legal system. Nor does the man have the answers to Israel's inherent socioeconomic inequality - or even an interest in finding any. None of this. Smotrich is mostly popular for his racism. In 2016, Smotrich made headlines when he suggested that Jewish and Palestinian women should be separated in maternity

wards. His logic was as bigoted as it was foolish: "My wife really isn't a racist, but after giving birth she wants to rest and doesn't want those mass parties that are the norm among the families of Arab women after birth."

At the time, Smotrich was a Knesset member representing the Jewish Home party. He later joined the Union of Right-Wing Parties, Yamina, the Jewish Home and Yamina again, before finally landing on his current Religious Zionist Party. This indicates that Smotrich, himself an illegal Jewish settler from Kedumim in the occupied West Bank, has found an ideological home in most of Israel's current right-wing political platforms.

In Israel's right-wing parties, racism is an important prerequisite to succeed in politics. In fact, this is precisely how Itamar Ben-Gvir rose from being a youth leader of the extremist Kach party to becoming the country's national security minister. Now, both of these characters, Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, hold the keys to the fate of many Palestinian communities and both are eager to expand illegal Jewish settlements, regardless of the illegality of such an action

and the likely bloodbath resulting from it. When hundreds of illegal Israeli Jewish settlers torched the Palestinian village of Huwara last month, burning many homes, killing one Palestinian and wounding more than 100 others, Smotrich had something to say about the violence. He objected, not to the pogrom against a peaceful Palestinian community, but because, in his view, the village should have been "wiped out" by the Israeli army, not settlers.

Smotrich later explained his comments as a "slip of the tongue in a storm of emotions," but this unconvincing statement was a result of a compromise due to practical concerns over Smotrich's travel access to various Western countries. When the mainstream Western media quickly bypassed Smotrich's outright call for genocide in Huwara, the man returned to his old, racist language. There is "no such thing as Palestinians" because there's no such thing as the Palestinian people," Smotrich preached to an enthusiastic crowd of supporters during a recent visit to France. "The Palestinian people is an

invention that is less than 100 years old," he added.

To make matters worse, Smotrich was speaking from a podium that featured a map of the so-called Greater Israel, which includes modern-day Jordan and other Arab lands.

Three days later, the Jordanian Parliament voted in favor of a resolution that recommended the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador in Amman. But where is Washington amid this Israeli political chaos? US State Department Spokesman Ned Price referred to Smotrich's Huwara comments as "repugnant" and called on Netanyahu to publicly disavow them. Of course, Netanyahu did not rein in Smotrich and the US did not challenge Israel any further. Not even official Israeli calls for the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians seem to impact the "unbreakable bond" between Washington and Tel Aviv.

But throughout the discussion and rage over Smotrich's comments, many of us, wittingly or otherwise, ignored some fundamental facts about racism in Israel and its founding Zionist ideology. First, Smotrich is a high-

ranking elected official and a member of the most stable government in Israel in years. He is not an aberration. His extremist ideology is now the mainstream thinking in the "most right-wing government in Israel's history." Second, Smotrich's call for the destruction of Huwara was not an alien position in Israel's history of ethnic cleansing and "incremental genocide." Aside from the destruction and depopulation of more than 500 villages and towns in historic Palestine during the Nakba of 1947-48, Israel's ongoing colonial expansion in the Occupied Territories is a continuation of the same violent legacy. Every illegal Israeli Jewish settlement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem stands atop Palestinian land, be it the ruins of an ethnically cleansed village, an orchard or a privately owned farm. Numerous Huwaras have had to be wiped out for this colonial regime to be sustained.

Third, the map of the so-called Greater Israel is not a recent invention by Smotrich, Ben-Gvir or Netanyahu. It is older than the state of Israel, as it was adopted by Revisionist Zionist groups such as the Betar movement and the Irgun, which

played a critical role in the establishment of Israel on the ruins of Palestine. And, finally, the racist notion that Palestinians do not exist, although functional in terms of dehumanizing Palestinians, is also an old trope. It is directly linked to the Zionist slogan that Palestine was a "land without a people for a people without a land." Many derivatives of this racist colonial slogan have been uttered by Israeli politicians throughout the years, including most famously Prime Minister Golda Meir, who said in 1969 that "there were no such thing as Palestinians ... They did not exist." Though the world may have grown less tolerant of such racism, Israel itself has remained the same. Indeed, the Smotrich and Ben-Gvir generation is just the logical descendant of that of David Ben-Gurion and Meir. Therefore, condemning Smotrich's comments while continuing to embrace Israel and celebrate Zionism is not only hypocritical, but also useless. Smotrich knows this well, thus his continued racism, desire for colonial expansion and outright call for the destruction of entire Palestinian communities.

The German Greens and the ills of green party politics

Clara S Thompson

EARLIER this month, the European Union was expected to vote on a law banning the sale of combustion-engine cars by 2035. But the legislation, which had been months in the making, was blocked by the German government which had initially supported it. The about-face was yet another major disappointment for environmentalists coming from a government, which paradoxically includes a green party as a coalition partner.

While it was the liberal Free Democratic Party pushing for this position within the coalition in order to get a concession favouring the car industry (which it succeeded in doing), this development demonstrated yet again how the Greens are struggling to push through an adequate climate agenda in Germany. Just several weeks earlier, the leadership of that same Green Party watched on as the German police brutally cleared climate protesters trying to prevent the razing of the village of Lützerath to make way for the expansion of a lignite coal mine. Worse still, that leadership participated in striking a deal with the coal mine's owner, energy company RWE, which happens to be Europe's single largest carbon emitter. They claimed the deal was good for the climate, as supposedly it was going to accelerate phasing out coal and thus help meet Germany's climate goals.

Studies, however, have shown that this is not the case; if Germany is to meet the 1.5C temperature increase limit set in the Paris Agreement, which the German government has signed and said it will abide by, then it must stop burning coal within the next two or three years, not 2030. Last summer, the Greens also worked to open liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals with contract terms of at least 15 years. The party leadership justified their actions with the 'gas shortage' following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, but many of us environmentalists wondered why we need such long-term gas contracts that run way past the period neces-

sary to expand renewable energy production to meet demand. Looking at the policies the Green Party is supporting these days, one may think that it lost its ways and succumbed to realpolitik when it came to power at the federal level in 2021. But these "Einzelfälle" (isolated cases) - as the party leadership likes to frame them - of striking deals and making compromises on the climate agenda are not isolated at all. Even before the Green Party joined Chancellor Olaf Scholz's government, we were used to their leadership taking decisions that directly clashed with the party's own political platform.

In the summer of 2020, for example, I was among the hundreds of protesters who protested the clearing of part of a 250-year-old forest in the German state of Hesse to make way for a highway. Although the Green Party was not involved in the decision to build the road, as part of the Hesse state government, it could have blocked the project on account of violations of the German and EU water law. But it chose not to. The Green Party's minister of transport in Hesse, Tarek Al-Wazir, justified the decision to go forward with the construction by saying that it was taken democratically and was not the party's responsibility. Indeed, there is quite a track record of "isolated cases" in the Green Party's recent history. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that even with a green party in power, Germany is nowhere near fulfilling its plan to reduce emissions in order to meet the 1.5-degree target. According to Wolfgang Lucht, a sustainability science professor at Humboldt University, Germany is currently planning to emit about twice more CO2 than it could afford to within its Paris Agreement commitments.

The disappointment and frustration that many climate activists are feeling are hard to describe. Perhaps it suffices to say that after Lützerath, offices of the Green Party were attacked, occupied and decorated with "traitors" graffiti. Many climate

activists like myself believe that the top leadership of the party have grown too pragmatic and lost sight of their original goals of promoting climate justice. Indeed, it is difficult to see how green party politics in their current form can lead the way in ending Germany's and the world's dependence on fossil fuels and take the radical climate action needed to avert a climate apocalypse. The question many of us are asking is whether we should give up on green politics, stop voting for the party and focus our energy on the climate movement, which is unrestrained by narrow partisan interests and corporate pressure. Some members of the Greens already have made that choice by leaving the party. But, as emotions run high, it is important to think strategically. If we give up on the Green Party, wouldn't we lose an important tool - one of just a few at our disposal - to affect change at the political level? And wouldn't that play into the hands of the "enemy" - the big corporate polluters? It is clear that green parties are unlikely to follow the same radical agenda as the climate movement. They face harsh dilemmas when in power, as they navigate the complexities of policymaking and balance the demands of their voters with the realities of governing in a coalition.

But that does not mean that we should give up and stop pressuring them to live up to their electoral promises. And it does not mean that we should close our eyes to the fact that many within the party itself disprove of striking deals with big corporations and succumbing to pressure from various lobbies. Young members of the party, called the "Green Youth", have been speaking up and criticising the leadership for their controversial decisions. They seem quite eager to change the course the party has taken and have been conspicuously present at climate protests, including at Lützerath.

"We wouldn't be Green Youth if we didn't put pressure within the party and in parliaments - that's why we're taking to the streets", Luna Afra

Evans, the Berlin spokeswoman for the youth branch of the Greens, said in an interview in January, as the organisation mobilised its members to go protest in Lützerath. She called the deal with RWE "a rotten compromise" and said that a "significant part of the Green Party does not support it". There has been open dissent even within the higher ranks of the party. MP Kathrin Henneberger, who ran for office on a platform of saving Lützerath, was the only member of the party to abstain during the vote on the resolution to demolish the village. "Since Lützerath, debates have been conducted differently. Many have recognised that when the climate movement draws a red line, this must also be taken seriously. Nor must we allow the interests of fossil fuel companies like RWE to prevail," she told me in a private exchange.

As much as we are disappointed and frustrated with the Green Party, we should not give up on it. We need to recognise that there is potential for radical change from within the party's own ranks and encourage it. We also need to continue scrutinising the party's policies and hold them to account whenever they veer away from their own declared environmental goals. Indeed, if the climate movement, strong as it has been in Germany, continues to build pressure from the outside and from within the party, there is a good chance that we can prevent other "isolated incidents" from happening. As we battle the formidable enemy that corporate polluters are, we must learn from them. As the noose around their fossil fuel profits tightens, they have employed every tactic, every opportunity to fight back; and they have definitely not given up on trying to influence global and national politics. We, too, should be strategic in our fight. While I absolutely understand the frustration and have felt it myself many times over the past years, I believe that we still have a long way to go before we achieve real climate action. And until then, we will need to work strategically with all the allies we can get, even if they are sometimes swayed by realpolitik.



Neutral diplomacy needed to end Russia-Ukraine war

THE Western discourse on "peace building" focuses on the localization of conflicts. Western think tanks have developed strong informal diplomatic activities regarding, for example, the Iranian nuclear program or the so-called Saudi-Iran cold war but, surprisingly, there are very few Track II diplomatic meetings dealing with the main conflict of our times - the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Except for some Swiss think tanks supporting the Turkish mediation and the grain agreement, main Western think tanks such as the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace have decided to close their offices in Moscow at a time when they are most needed. The official justification is the Russian decision to close Western institutions based on Russian soil for security reasons. Nevertheless, the absence of Western think tank offices in Tehran has never prevented them from organizing informal meetings between US and Iranian researchers to find common ground to solve the Iranian nuclear issue or to discuss Iranian missile and drone activities in a nonofficial format. Moreover, the justification for this kind of informal meeting is the absence of official discussions during periods of tension, such as when the US-Iranian indirect official channels were not openly functioning because of the Trump administration's maximum pressure campaign and Iranian intransigence.

Another reason mentioned to explain this lack of Track II diplomatic activities in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is the absence of Ukrainian institutions willing to take part in such informal peace

activities. The Ukrainian determination to win the war can best explain the absence of Ukrainian partners for Track II diplomacy activities. This would come as a surprise to non-Western states and research institutions, which have often been contacted by their Western counterparts to participate in informal meetings to bring peace to war-torn arenas like Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Libya.

This apparent contradiction between the efforts of Western think tanks to initiate peace activities internationally and their refusal to organize Track II diplomatic activities in regard to the Ukrainian war can be best explained by the politicization of the latter in the West. Indeed, the discourse of most Western think tanks on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is not based on the search for a diplomatic compromise but rather is designed to amplify the Western discourse on the Russian "invasion" of Ukraine and to become an informational player in the war of narratives regarding the conflict. Given this absence of Western think tanks' peace activities and their decision to take sides on the Russian war in Ukraine, one has to wonder what their reaction would be if non-Western think tanks contacted them to be part of Track II diplomatic activities to end the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The issue of Western military support is an important part of the peace equation because it is decisive for Ukraine's ability to sustain a long-term war effort against Russia. Peace efforts cannot be led by Western institutions that are currently involved in building the Ukrainian narrative and helping Ukraine to win the

hearts and minds of global public opinion. In this context, there is a need for non-Western think tanks to lead the efforts to secure peace and support European stability. The war in Ukraine is having international ramifications. Therefore, it is only logical that non-Western institutions could be interested in offering their services to organize Track II diplomatic activities to avoid the economic cost and human suffering of a prolonged war on European soil. The role of Track II diplomacy is recognized internationally in helping to overcome the crisis of trust between conflicting or warring parties. It is needed to rebuild trust not only between the Ukrainian and Russian political leaderships, but also between Russian and Western political actors. A grassroots approach is required in the absence of top-level political talks.

Neutral Middle Eastern think tanks can help to rebuild trust between these states, which are at odds with one another in the international arena. Such institutions can become a platform for Track II diplomatic meetings between Ukrainian, Russian and Western experts and scholars. This would be in the interest not only of Europeans but of the whole world, given the international ramifications of this war. What is clear is that the Western, Ukrainian and Russian sides are using game theory to decide their next moves, with the conflict turning into a zero-sum game. This makes it much harder to initiate peace efforts, as acceptance on either side of such efforts could be seen as a loss for them and a gain for the other side. This makes it much harder to calculate possible moves and outcomes, with each side waiting to see who blinks first.

Xi's plan to annex Russian territory is there for all to see

THE long-debated agreement on "Power of Siberia 2" (POS2) - a massive pipeline project to pump gas from Western Siberia to China via Mongolia - has become emblematic of the one-sided and slightly abusive relationship between China and Russia since the start of the Ukraine war. It is not good news for Moscow.

Ahead of Xi Jinping's recent visit to Russia, Putin boldly announced that the pipeline deal was ready to be signed off, prematurely labelling it "the deal of the century". But Xi, unmoved by such excessive zeal, declined to sign anything. No mention whatsoever of POS2 appears in the official statements Xi made during the meetings. In the final joint communiqué, all a disappointed Putin could comment was that more work still had to be done "on study and approval". It is in this context that we should read Xi's parting words to Putin - oracular and ominous - that referred to "changes coming, such as haven't been seen for a century", which "we can push forward together". China watchers have been poring over these words for every last nuance, but it's pretty clear that Xi was framing himself as leader,

Matthew Henderson

with Putin nominally by his side, of a revisionist assault on the liberal world order.

Beijing's vision for the People's Republic of China's centenary in 2049 is the global triumph of a "fully developed, rich and powerful China". This will not include sharing power with a chaotic Russian kleptocracy. The harder Xi focuses his efforts on realising the "China Dream", the more implacably will his political and economic coercion be directed at Putin and Russia, and the weaker and more dependent both will become. Xi's revisionist goals entail wiping out the shame of historical territorial losses.

He has imposed Communist authority on Hong Kong, seeks to do so in Taiwan, and undoubtedly has the same ambition for the 600,000 square kilometres - three times the area of Great Britain - which Tsarist Russia wrested from Opium War-weakened Manchuria control in 1858-60 under the Treaties of Aigun and Peking. This area includes parts of Siberia, from which Putin's much-vaunted pipeline deal would extract resources to sell to China. Since the Chinese Communist Party regime

derives much of what it parades as "legitimacy" from these revanchist campaigns, paying Putin for Siberian resources feels like buying family silver back from a robber. Beijing regards its loss of Mongolian lands in the same way, given the crucial Soviet role in breaking Mongolia away from the remnants of Chinese authority in the early 20th century.

Already, cross-border economic activity in Siberia by uncensored Chinese communities, including in Khabarovsk and Vladivostok, tacitly revive historical Chinese claims to this resource-rich and highly strategic region. For decades, Chinese gangsters have been smuggling precious Siberian resources back to China through a porous frontier - often in collusion with Russian criminals. It's a clear breach of Russian sovereignty. Putin's disastrous assault on Ukraine may have drawn his gaze far away from Russia's 4,200km border with China, along with many thousands of soldiers who should guard it, but the Chinese remain focused. Xi Jinping's zero-sum ambition for the "great rejuvenation of China" is imposing itself step by step on Russian soil.

The Telegraph

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Britain, be warned: with ‘stop boats’ policies you brutalise migrants - and damage yourselves

THE order came directly from the minister for defence and the instruction was explicit. "No personnalising or humanising images" had to be taken of those who had come to Australia by boat, seeking asylum. "Don't humanise the refugees" was the command to government officials recording the new arrivals to Australian soil in 2001.

The imperative was neither safety, nor concern for the welfare or privacy of those seeking asylum; it was political. Those who came by boat seeking sanctuary, the government insisted, were "potential terrorists", "illegals", "threats to national security": the types of people it claimed - falsely - would throw their children overboard. Images that might humanise the desperate men, women and children who had arrived on those leaky boats would belie the government's assertions.

In 2001 in Australia there was an election to be won, and the conservative government had just implemented an adamantine new asylum policy - one that would mean those who arrived by boat would be sent for offshore processing on the tiny Pacific island state of Nauru and to the remote Manus Island in Papua New Guinea to be detained indefinitely. The government had presented the people of Australia with something to fear, and now it could insist that it alone could protect them from it. Australia's self-described headline asylum policies, now being openly and crudely copied by the UK, serve a blunt electoral purpose, but they also do real damage - both to the people unfortunate enough to be caught up in them, and to the countries that

Ben Doherty

choose to enact them. You risk sleepwalking into that tragic scenario. Despite wide criticism of Suella Braverman's illegal migration bill, Tory MPs are manoeuvring today to make it even harsher.

In the UK, the voters being targeted are the so-called red wall voters. The Australian equivalent then were the "Howard's battlers" in the western suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne. John Howard won the 2001 election, and the next one, by promising to be tough on "illegal immigration". A decade later, Tony Abbott built a campaign on a three-word slogan: "Stop the boats". Politically, the message was simple and resonant. Rishi Sunak has decided that it still is in the UK today. Politicians who opposed the measures were decried as "soft on borders". They secretly wanted "unlimited migration", which was loaded with allusions to crime, terrorism and "illiterate" refugees taking Australian jobs.

Since it was implemented in 2001, Australia's offshore detention regime - of the exact kind being proposed in the UK's Rwanda plan - has suffered the indignity of a thousand exposures: from the UN, from courts foreign and domestic, from Senate inquiries and government reports, public service whistleblowers, media investigations, human rights groups and legal challenges. All of it has been laid bare: the refugees shot, stabbed or murdered by guards; children sent to adult prisons where they were preyed upon; systemic sexual abuse; the repeated suicide attempts; the mass hunger strikes; the seriously ill neglected until it was too late and

they died; the public servants who ignored the pleas of doctors to move patients, so again they died.

Australia is living with the legacy of these brutal policies: the broken lives of those detained, and an Australian population reckoning with this having been deliberately done, in their name and with their money. Because, in the Australian example, the cruelty was not a byproduct but the point. The government took a group of people who had committed no crime - it is legal to arrive in a country by any means to seek asylum - and punished them, demonstratively and for a very long time, in order to deter others. Australia is reckoning with its recent history. A federal election last year saw a surge in the Green vote, and a swathe of independents elected to previously blue-ribbon conservative seats: all on platforms promising more humane treatment of refugees. Offshore processing, however, remains policy for both major parties: government and opposition. The argument made in favour of Australia's policies is that they have "stopped the boats" and saved lives at sea. But saving lives at sea does not necessarily mandate that those saved must be punished, month after month, year after year, in indefinite and arbitrary detention.

And the policy never did "stop the boats". In the 12 months after offshore detention restarted in 2012, more people arrived by sea seeking asylum than at any time in Australian history. Within three months, Australia's offshore processing centres were completely overwhelmed, and the government had to stop send-

ing people to them. No one has been sent offshore since 2014 - those that remain in the centres have been held there since then. The arrival of boats to Australian shores was dramatically slowed (though never stopped entirely) largely through the intervention of Australia's navy, which physically intercepts the boats, forcing their occupants back to the countries they left. Australia's pushbacks of asylum seeker boats are illegal under international law and "may intentionally put lives at risk", the UN has said. On occasions, Australian government agents have even paid boat skippers to turn their vessels around, leading to allegations that the government could be implicated in "people trafficking". Regardless, Australia's policies are held up, overtly in the UK debate, as exemplars for the world. This is hardly surprising, since some of their architects, such as the Tory strategist Lynton Crosby - a former electioneer for Howard - and Howard's foreign minister Alexander Downer, are now working in the UK. The political imperative radiates outwards. As more states choose policies of deterrence over protection, other states feel pressured to do the same: to lock down borders, to build walls, to stop boats. The ongoing suffering of those still caught within Australia's offshore regime is especially upsetting because it is unnecessary. It is a catastrophe of conscious political creation, and it carries with it a warning. We have seen a nation damaged and demoralised by policies that may be briefly politically advantageous, but that most voters know deep down to be cruel and ignoble. People will suffer. Think of that before the UK chooses this path.

Water investment critical to a sustainable and just economy

Ambroise Fayolle & Henk Ovink

TOGETHER with air, water is arguably the planet's most important natural resource. Functioning water systems are one of the technological pillars of civilization, which often means a water crisis is a matter of life or death. Today, about 2 billion people lack access to safe drinking water, and about half the world's population experiences severe water scarcity for at least part of the year. Our limited freshwater resources are already overburdened by growing populations and water-thirsty economies. By 2030, global water demand will exceed the sustainable supply by 40 percent.

As demand for water grows and temperatures rise, water scarcity will threaten more lives and livelihoods - and therefore the stability of societies around the world. How can we turn the tide so that water empowers communities, secures our economies and keeps the planet livable? As with other global public issues, such as a clean environment, there is a tendency to focus on the costs of improvement today rather than on the greater long-term benefits of investing in the preservation of natural resources. The water sector is underfunded and chronically short of capacity to meet demand. But if we want to achieve the UN's Sustainable

Development Goal of ensuring clean water and proper sanitation for everyone, we must increase the current global spending on water fourfold, to more than \$1 trillion a year (equivalent to 1.21 percent of global gross domestic product). We also must make up for the \$470 billion we lose every year through flood damage and poor irrigation.

By protecting the environment and the climate, every cent we invest in the water sector will boost our economies, now and in the future. When the European Investment Bank provided a €200 million (\$215 million) loan to Jordan in December to finance a desalination plant on the Red Sea coast and a pipeline to the capital, Amman, the country's planning and international cooperation minister, Zeina Toukan, described the projects as crucial for both water security and comprehensive economic development. We all need to adopt similar thinking about how we value and manage water. As is the case with many other challenges, the public sector cannot fill this large investment gap alone. Businesses also have an important role to play. According to the CDP, a not-for-profit organization that collects environmental impact data, more than \$300 billion of business

value is at risk globally if no action is taken to address water scarcity. Yet it would cost less than a fifth of that amount - \$55 billion - to tackle the problem.

If businesses deploy new technologies to reduce their water consumption and exploit wastewater as a source of energy, heat, nutrients and materials, they can reduce their environmental footprint and free up more water for use by others. The CDP places the value of such "water-related opportunities" at \$711 billion, reflecting not only savings on water use but also the growth of long-term potential markets in water-smart technology and the benefits of better community relations. But because water is cheap in most parts of the world, businesses often have little incentive to invest in saving water or in boosting the efficiency of water-intensive production processes. To persuade the private sector to focus on water-system preservation, we firstly need to start thinking of the money spent on water as a real investment, rather than as a cost that can never be recovered.

Secondly, the right value must be assigned to this water in order to create the necessary incentives for users and businesses to use it more efficiently, and for preservation to be

economically rewarding. In the case of water, this requires a delicate balancing act because affordable access to drinkable water and proper sanitation is a recognized human right, which means it is nonnegotiable. Thirdly, global cooperation and new cross-border programs to mobilize greater investments in water would help to overcome market failures and prevent water from being politicized and weaponized. Last week's UN Water Conference in New York, the first such gathering since 1977, was a unique opportunity to discuss water security, to tackle the crisis head-on and to acknowledge that water investment is as critical to a sustainable and just economy as is investment in clean energy.

We can establish new guidelines for fixing the water cycle and ensuring a more holistic approach to sustainable development everywhere, from the Netherlands and Luxembourg to Nigeria and Laos. And we must find more ways to incentivize water financing from public and private sources that are willing to wait for their investments to bear fruit. Water is what will carry the Sustainable Development Goals across the finish line. We must finally start recognizing it as a fundamental part of our investment portfolios, and put it at the center of our economic policies.



ISLAMABAD: MoS for Petroleum Dr. Musadik Malik in a meeting with delegation of Barrick Gold Corporation, led by its president and CEO Mark Bristow. Canadian High Commissioner to Pakistan Ms. Leslie Scanlon also present.

PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 82 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) had witnessed a bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 82.00 points, with a positive change of 0.20 percent, closing at 40,082.37 against 40,000.37 points on the previous day.

A total of 87,215,381 shares were traded during the day as compared to 64,511,856 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 3,312 billion against Rs 2,501 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 319 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 141 of them recorded gains and 145 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 33 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Telecard Limited with 23,781,500 shares at Rs 8.15 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 4,170,588 shares at Rs 1.20 per share, and K-Electric Ltd. with 3,769,542 shares at Rs 2.08 per share.

Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 575.00 per share

price, closing at Rs18500.00, whereas the runner-up was Rafhan Maize with a Rs 531.49 rise in its per share price to Rs 8088.99.

Pak Services witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 82.00 per share closing at Rs 1017.00, followed by Blessed Tex. with a Rs 27.74 decline to close at Rs 342.25.

Rupee gains 02 paisas against dollar

Pakistan rupee gained 02 paisas against the dollar in the interbank trading on Tuesday and closed at Rs 283.55 against the previous day's closing of Rs 283.57.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 284.3 and Rs 287.1 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs1.9 and closed at Rs 307.05 against the last day's closing of Rs 305.15, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and closed at Rs 2.16; whereas a surge of Rs 1.95 was wit-

nessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 349.33 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 347.38.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham went down by 01 paisa and Saudi Riyal increased by 01 paisa to close at Rs 77.20 and Rs 75.49 respectively.

Gold prices increase by Rs 1000 to Rs. 205,600 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs1000 and was sold at Rs 205,600 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs 204,600 the previous day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 857 to Rs 176,268 from Rs 175,411, whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went up to Rs 161,580 from Rs 160,794.

The price of per tola silver and ten-gram silver remained unchanged to close at Rs 2050 and Rs 1929 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market dipped by US\$7 to \$1957 against its sale at \$1950, the association reported.

SCCI President felicitates Riazuddin

SIALKOT (APP): Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCI) President Abdul Ghafoor Malik extended his heartfelt congratulations to Riazuddin Sheikh on receiving the prestigious Sitara-i-Imtiaz award from the President of Pakistan on March 23, 2023.

In a press statement issued here on Tuesday, the SCCI President said that this was truly an outstanding achievement and a testament to the dedication, hard work, and contributions of Riazuddin Sheikh towards the development and progress of Pakistan in general and Sialkot in particular.

He said that Sitara-i-Imtiaz was the third-highest civilian award of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and it was a great honour to be recognized with such a prestigious award.

Malik said that Riazuddin Sheikh's outstanding work and accomplishments had not gone unnoticed, and this award was a well-deserved recognition of his significant contributions to the socio-economic development of the city of Sialkot.

Riazuddin Sheikh's achievements and commitment to excellence serve as an inspiration to the business community of Sialkot and shall continue to be a shining example for the generations to come, he added.

Tea imports reduced by 6.54% in 8 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Tea imports into the country during the eight months of current financial year reduced by 6.54 percent as compared the imports of corresponding period of last year.

About 159,552 metric tons of tea valuing \$396,449 million imported from July-February, 2022-23 as compared the imports of 177,613 metric tons costing \$423.857 million of same period last year, according to the data released by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics here on Tuesday.

During the period under review, the imports of spices also went down by 34.31 percent as it was recorded at 102,898 metric tons worth \$104.158 million as compared the imports of 102,869 metric tons costing \$158.560 million of same period last year.

During the period under review, the imports of dry fruits and nuts decreased by 43.43 percent and recorded at 35,448 metric tons valuing \$26.895 million as against the imports of 70,045 metric tons valuing \$47.702 million of same period last year.

However, during the period under review the imports of wheat un-milled into the country grew by 16.36 percent and over 2,202 million metric tons of the grains worth \$875.919 million imported as compared the imports of 2,094 million metric tons valuing \$752.765 million of same period of last year.

It is worth mentioning here that food group exports from the country during last eight months of current financial year decreased by 6.08 percent as compared the exports of the same period last year.

During the period from July-February, 2022-23, food commodities valuing \$3,226 billion exported as compared the exports of \$3,434 billion of same period last year.

Pakistan may revolutionise its online business: PCJCCI

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki said on Tuesday that Pakistan might bring a revolution in online business with the help of Chinese companies, already working in the country.

Speaking at a think-tank session held here at PCJCCI Secretariat, he said that 10 legal fintech companies were working in Pakistan

and out of them four were Chinese companies including Seed Creed Financial Services, Micro Creed Financial Services Limited and Hammra Financial Services Limited.

The joint chambers' president suggested that those companies could also

connect the Pakistani fintech industry with WeChat and Alipay. He mentioned that WeChat had already revolutionized online business in China, as the users could buy and sell their daily items online through WeChat. He added that there was a dire need to synchronize these brands

with the fintech industry of Pakistan and the state-run financial institutions.

The PCJCCI Senior Vice President Fang Yulong said that any Pakistani fintech company such as UBL Omni, Jazz Cash and EasyPaisa etc. could be developed on the pattern of WeChat.

Currently, local fintech companies are moving in the opposite direction of international fintech firms.

We need to coordinate and make it a unique and common platform, which is accessible to everyone. Pakistan has a good 4G system and it is also moving towards 5G. Pakistan should make its network capable of new technology," he observed.

Sharing his views, the Vice President Hamza Khalid said, "We should engage the youth of Pakistan to develop human resources; we can also introduce training courses in collaboration with Chinese trainers for technological transfer."

According to the data provided by WeChat management to WealthPK, the monthly deals of the firm reached 1.309 billion, registering an increase of 3.7

percent. In January 2022, the WeChat Open Class disclosed to the media that mini-programmes of the company were growing rapidly in overseas business, with the number of monthly deals increasing by 268 percent, and the monthly average number of daily transactions increasing by 897 percent. "In this way we can also train our companies to boost our economy and to facilitate our people," he suggested.

Salahuddin Hanif, Secretary General, said that this was the best time to improve the skills of people as they already have latest mobile phones, local machines and latest equipment so they just need to improve their skills.

US, China, UK remained top three destinations of Pakistani exports

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United States (US) remained the top export destination of Pakistani products during the eight months of the current fiscal year (2022-23), followed by China and the United Kingdom (UK).

Total exports to the US during July-February (2022-23) were recorded at US\$ 4044.494 million against the exports of US\$ 4410.227 million during July-February (2021-22), showing a decline of 8.29 percent, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

This was followed by China, wherein Pakistan exported goods worth US\$ 1334.747 million against

the exports of US\$ 1841.168 million last year, showing a decrease of 27.50 percent.

UK was the third top export destination, where Pakistan exported goods worth US\$ 1329.832 million during the months under review against the exports of US\$ 1472.927 million during last year, showing a decline of 9.71 percent, SBP data revealed.

Among other countries, Pakistani exports to Germany stood at US\$ 1141.651 million against US\$ 1132.029 million last year, showing an increase of 0.84 percent while the exports to UAE were recorded at US\$ 945.023

million against US\$ 1180.589 million last year.

During July-February (2022-23), the exports to Holland were recorded at US\$ 982.076 million against US\$ 923.911 million whereas the exports to Afghanistan stood at US\$ 346.522 million against US\$296.109 million.

Pakistan's exports to Italy were recorded at US\$ 759.390 million against the exports of US\$ 831.691 million while the exports to Spain were recorded at US\$ 922.379 million against US\$ 699.382 million last year.

Whereas, the exports to Bangladesh stood at US\$ 525.017 million against

US\$ 559.135 million.

Similarly, the exports to France during the months under review were recorded at US\$ 393.592 million against US\$ 334.009 million while the exports to Saudi Arabia stood at US\$ 300.613 million against US\$ 260.260 million.

Pakistan's exports to Türkiye were recorded at US\$ 207.245 million during the current year compared to US\$ 206.538 million last year whereas the exports to Canada stood at US\$ 315.120 million against US\$ 255.460 million, and Australia stood at US\$ 202.538 million during the current year against US\$ 181.102 million during last year.

Shareholders of Soneri Bank approve 2022 annual results

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The annual audited financial statements of Soneri Bank Limited for the year ended 31 December 2022 were approved by the shareholders of the Bank in their 31st AGM held in Lahore and through video-link via Zoom on Monday, 27 March 2023. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Alauddin Feerasta, Chairman of the Board, with Mr. Muhtashim Ahmad Ashai, President and Chief Executive Officer and other members of the Board of Directors also in attendance.

The Bank posted profit before tax (PBT) of Rs. 4,554 million and profit after tax (PAT) of Rs. 1,883 million in the year 2022, as compared to Rs. 5,149 million and Rs. 2,854 million respectively in 2021. Earnings per share (EPS) for the year was reported at Rs. 1.71 per share for the current year, as compared to Rs. 2.59 for the comparative prior year. During the meeting, the shareholders approved the final cash dividend for the year ended 31 December 2022 at 10.00 percent i.e. Rs. 1.00 per share, as recommended earlier by the Board of Directors.

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Alibaba announced Tuesday that it would split into six business groups in one of the most significant overhauls of a leading Chinese tech firm to date. The Hangzhou-based firm is one of China's most prominent tech giants, with business operations spanning cloud computing, e-commerce, logistics, media and entertainment, and artificial intelligence.

Daniel Zhang, the company's chairman and CEO, said in a statement that the restructuring would enable each separate business to pursue its own fundraising and public listing plans. Alibaba claimed the moves were intended to "unlock shareholder value and foster market competitiveness".

Under the new arrangement, each of the six newly established units will be managed by its own CEO and board of directors.

A key exception to the restructuring is Taobao Tmall Commerce Group -- the operator of one of China's top online purchasing platforms -- which will remain wholly owned by Alibaba Group.

Zhang will remain in his post as CEO of the company, although day-to-day operations of the individual business units will be ceded to the new management bodies.

The company said the new structure would bring greater market visibility to the value of its diverse business operations.

These changes will not affect Alibaba shares currently listed in New York and Hong Kong, the firm said.

Aiming for a more



Briefing the shareholders on the financial results, the President and CEO mentioned that Bank's Net Interest income for the year was reported at Rs. 11,267 million, increasing by 3.01 percent against Rs. 10,938 million for the prior year, while non-interest income increased by 20.21 percent to end at Rs. 5,157 million as against Rs. 4,290 million for the last year. He also mentioned that despite inflationary pressures, growth in expenses was restricted at 20.16 percent as compared to the prior year with Non-markup expenses reported at Rs. 12,245 mil-

lion for the year ended December 2022. He further explained that due to the changes introduced by the Finance Act 2022, the overall effective tax rate for the Bank for the year ended 31 December 2022 stood at 58.65 percent (2021: 44.57 percent).

Bank's Deposits registered an increase of 1.64 percent when compared to 31 December 2021, ending at Rs. 409,643 million at 31 December 2022. However, the Bank's CA mix improved to 32.73 percent in December 2022 as against 27.17 percent at December 2021, with year end Current deposits at Rs.

134,080 million as against Rs. 109,494 million at the year end 2021.

The Bank's net advances portfolio increased to Rs. 208,434 million as at 31 December 2022, 25.95 percent higher than the year end 2021 level, while the Bank's Non-performing loans to total Advances ratio improved to 4.71 percent (December 2021: 5.95 percent). Specific coverage was at 71.61 percent (December 2021: 76.51 percent).

The Bank's ADR at 31 December 2022 was at 52.67%, and Capital Adequacy Ratio was reported at 15.19%.

Alibaba to split into 6 groups, separate IPOs expected

BEIJING (AFP/APP): Alibaba announced Tuesday that it would split into six business groups in one of the most significant overhauls of a leading Chinese tech firm to date.

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These changes will not affect Alibaba shares currently listed in New York and Hong Kong, the firm said.

Aiming for a more

"nimble structure", the reorganisation will also involve cuts to the firm's middle and back office functions.

Recent years have seen the internet giant face unprecedented headwinds as Beijing has imposed tighter restrictions on the domestic tech industry.

Combined revenue at China's internet companies shrank by just over one percent to 1.46 trillion yuan (\$212 billion) in 2022, the first contraction in almost a decade, according to data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Alibaba founder Jack Ma has kept a low profile since late 2020, when a speech he made attacking Chinese regulators was followed by Beijing pulling the plug on Alibaba affiliate Ant

Group's planned IPO.

Having ballooned into a sprawling corporate behemoth since its founding in 1999, the company has been seeking new ways to drive growth and reinvigorate its development.

Referring to the plan as a "transformation", Zhang said in the statement that it would make Alibaba "more agile, enhance decision-making, and enable faster responses to market changes".

Ma has been spotted around the world over the past two years, but made a rare public appearance in China on Monday after his fall from grace.

The celebrity entrepreneur has recently emphasised the need for Alibaba to embrace artificial intelligence technology, as new tools such as ChatGPT appear poised to reshape the global industry.

Classified

IN THE COURT OF SIQIB KHAN SENIOR CIVIL JUDGE FAMILY COURT BANNU, Suit No.251/FC institution 08.10.2022 Next date of hearing is 30.03.2023, Title: Mst: Salma Naz vs Munawar Syed Shah, To: Munawar syed Shah Son Syed Shah R/o Shahbaz Shah Eiski Sheikhann P/o Jahan Shah Tehsil & Bannu. The defendants are informed through this notice to appear in this court on 30.03.2023. After this no excus would be accepted and ex-parte proceedings shall be initiated against you. Given under my hand and seal of this court.



In brief

Haris Rauf appointed as DSP
ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan star fast bowler Haris Rauf was made an honorary Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) by Islamabad Capital Territory Police (ICPT) as their 'Goodwill Ambassador' here on Tuesday. Haris Rauf, the mainstay of Pakistan's cricket team's pace attack, thanked the police department for the honour and praised their efforts for maintaining the law and order despite the most difficult circumstances. IG Islamabad Dr Akbar Nasir Khan conferred honorary rank on Haris Rauf.

Tenpin Bowling C'ship in April

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ramadan Tenpin Bowling Championship would be played in April under the auspices of the Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation (PTBF) at the Leisure Bowling Club, Jinnah Park, Rawalpindi. According to details, a meeting of the organizing committee would be held on Saturday regarding the arrangements for this one-day event. The meeting would be held under the chairmanship of Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation President Ijaz ur Rehman. He would also announce the date of the event.

Floodlight Rockball Tournament

KARACHI (APP): All Pakistan Abdul Razzaq Arain Memorial Floodlight Rockball Tournament under the auspices of Sindh Rockball Association would start from April 8 at Mini Sports Complex, Nazimabad. According to Secretary General of Pakistan Rockball Federation Uma Laila Kulsoom Pakistan Rockball Federation would also collaborate in organizing the event and all the arrangements for the tournament had been done in that regard. A total of 32 teams from across the country would participate in the grand event. The teams would be divided into four groups. Two teams from each group would qualify for the quarterfinals. The tournament would continue till April 12, she added. Uma Laila Kulsoom said trophies, certificates and other prizes would be awarded to the winning players at the end of the tournament. It is pertinent to mention here that the said tournament takes place every year in Ramazan.

Tyson Fury can 'redeem himself'

NEW YORK (BBC): Anthony Joshua says Tyson Fury can "redeem himself from the circus" of a collapsed undisputed heavyweight bout by agreeing to fight him. Talks between Oleksandr Usyk, the WBO, WBA (Super) and IBF champion, and WBC title-holder Fury broke down last week. Joshua, 33, faces American Jermaine Franklin on Saturday in his first bout in 2023. He says he wants an all-British fight with Fury, whatever the outcome against Franklin at the O2 Arena. Joshua said: "There's no better time to get Fury in the ring than now because he needs me to redeem himself from this circus, this meltdown. "He needs me so there's no better time than for him to call my name out and I'm someone that will take on any challenge." Joshua was in talks with his British rival over a fight last year following successive losses to Usyk, but could not reach an agreement and Fury fought Derek Chisora at Wembley Stadium in December instead.

Afridi praise Shadab, wishes him more success

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Pakistani Skipper, Shahid Afridi, was all praise for all-rounder Shadab Khan who broke his record of becoming the leading wicket-taker for Pakistan in T20 Internationals and wished him more success in the future to come.

Shadab Khan sent Ibrahim Zadran to the pavilion in the third T20I against Afghanistan making his 99th wicket in T20Is, and exceeding Shahid Afridi's record of 98 wickets. "Mubarak @76Shadabkhan aap mera record tor dia. You

have been a great performer for Pakistan and I wish you more success. Good win for Pakistan last night, glad that Saim and Ihsanullah showed their talent. We need to continue to back our youngsters," Afridi tweeted on Shahdab's achievement.

Shadab Khan, who was named Skipper in the series against Afghanistan, has also become the first Pakistan bowler to take 100 wickets in T20I's. Meanwhile, Saeed Ajmal and Umar Gul were next in line with 85 wickets, fol-

lowed by Haris Rauf in the list with 72 wickets.

Pakistan won the last T20I against Afghanistan but lost the three-match series by 2-1. It may be mentioned that Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Fakhar Zaman and Haris Rauf were rested from Pakistan's squad in the series against Afghanistan in Sharjah. While Imad Wasim was recalled in the squad, and star PSL 2023 performers Saim Ayub and Ihsanullah received call-ups to the national team for the first time.

Adviser to CM Punjab on Sports visits cricket stadiums

LAHORE (APP): Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz and Director General Sports Board Punjab (SBP) Muhammad Tariq Qureshi visited cricket stadiums of Gaushala and Karol Ghati on Tuesday.

Director Youth Affairs Syed Umair Hassan, Divisional Sports Officer Lahore Tariq Khanzada, District Sports Officer Tanveer Shah and other officials were also present.

Wahab Riaz and Tariq Qureshi inspected pitches, pavilions and different parts of both cricket grounds during their visits. The latter gave a detailed briefing saying that Karol Ghati and Gaushala cricket grounds had been equipped with all facilities and the venues could play a key role in promotion of sports among the younger generation.

Wahab Riaz directed the officials concerned that no effort should be spared in providing modern sports facilities to the players. "Without modern facilities, the dream of development of sports cannot be fulfilled. Provision of modern facilities will play a significant role in tracing fresh talented play-

ers," he added.

He said that these sports facilities will help Pakistan in producing several world class sports stars and athletes in future. "Our country has plenty of potential in every field including sports. It just needs proper grooming and international level facilities and training and Sports Board Punjab is doing exactly the same thing to make the future of Pakistan sports bright," he further said.

Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports urged the young athletes to take maximum benefit from these wonderful sports facilities. "These venues are equipped with all modern facilities and the main objective of these sports projects is to find fresh sports talent especially from remote areas," he added.

Earlier, Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab accompanied by Director General Sports inspected different sports venues and facilities at Nishtar Park Sports Complex. Wahab Riaz inspected Punjab International Swimming Complex, Ladies Pool and Gymnasium, Punjab International Tennis Stadium, tennis hostel, State of the Art

Tennis Courts, Sports Board Punjab's cricket academy and NPSC Gymnasium Hall and enquired about the working and other key features of these sports facilities.

Muhammad Tariq Qureshi gave a thorough briefing to Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz about multiple features and details of valuable sports facilities in Nishtar Park Sports Complex.

Wahab Riaz was quite impressed with modern sports venues and facilities built in Nishtar Park Sports Complex.

Muhammad Tariq Qureshi, on this occasion, said that Sports Board Punjab is providing best facilities to the players to express their abilities. "The cricket academy is playing an important role in grooming new cricket talent," he said.

He further said that Sports Board Punjab is expanding the infrastructure to provide modern facilities to the players. "The sports projects have been established in the surroundings of Lahore to provide modern facilities to talented male and female players," he added.

Poland beat Albania in Euro 2024 qualifier

WARSAW (Xinhua/APP): Karol Swiderski's goal gave Poland a 1-0 victory in their Euro 2024 qualifier against Albania in Warsaw on Monday.

Poland returned to winning ways after having lost 3-1 against the Czech Republic in the first round of matches in Fernando Santos' first match in charge of Poland.

Robert Lewandowski and his teammates took the initiative from the very

beginning but they had a problem creating chances, and it took them over 40 minutes to break the deadlock. Winger Jakub Kaminski hit the post from distance but Swiderski tapped in the rebound from close range to put Poland ahead. After the break, Sylvinho's team tried to level the result but Wojciech Szczesny saved two dangerous shots from Kristjan Asllani. In the closing stages, Myrto

Uzuni could have snatched a point for Albania, but the 27-year-old missed the target. "I'm happy that I scored and that we won the game. We have a new coach so we need time, but in the first half we showed some good football. I'm glad that after the defeat against the Czech Republic, we replied in a good way. Booking a ticket for Euro 2024 is the only scenario we have in our heads," Swiderski said afterwards.

FIFA to pay clubs \$355m for sending players to World Cups

ZURICH (INP): FIFA's compensation paid to clubs that release players for the men's World Cup has been increased by nearly 70 per cent to \$355 million for the 2026 and 2030 tournaments, the global soccer governing body and the European Club Association (ECA) said.

The Club Benefits Programme affords clubs a share of national team competition revenues in return for releasing players and also protects clubs in case their players are injured on international duty.

The previous amount earmarked for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups was \$209 million. A renewed

Memorandum of Understanding was signed on Monday at the ECA General Assembly in Budapest, Hungary.

"We are delighted to have signed this landmark agreement," ECA Chairman Nasser Al-Khelaifi said. "The MoU recognises the central role of clubs in football globally and ensures that they are properly represented in decision making around issues which affect them."

Earlier this month, FIFA had announced a 32-team Club World Cup will be played every four years from June 2025, replacing its annual competition which featured seven

teams. The decision was met with opposition from leagues such as Spain's LaLiga but the MoU will now have both FIFA and the ECA working together on its various sporting and commercial aspects for the 2025 edition.

"FIFA and ECA will also now establish closer working practices on a future new Club World Cup... and working together on future editions including on potential structures for managing the commercial rights going forward." FIFA also announced a newly structured international calendar which its president Gianni Infantino said had been endorsed by the ECA.

Jokic leads Nuggets over Sixers, Timberwolves deny Kings

LOS ANGELES (AFP/APP): The Denver Nuggets continued their march toward the Western Conference top seed Monday with a 116-111 win over Philadelphia, while the Sacramento Kings' hopes of ending a 16-year NBA play-off drought remained on hold.

Two-time reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Nikola Jokic had his 29th

triple-double of the season for Denver with 25 points, 17 rebounds and 12 assists.

But he was unhappy that the Nuggets let a 20-point fourth-quarter lead dwindle to just three with 28.9 seconds remaining against a Sixers team missing star center Joel Embiid and playmaker James Harden.

"We didn't do a good job

today," Jokic said. "We had control of the whole game, and then in the fourth quarter, we lost control. We took bad shots, we didn't play defense, and that's why they came back."

The Nuggets pushed their lead to three and a half games over Memphis atop the West with a fourth straight victory.

Why Pakistan's loss to Afghanistan might not be such a bad thing

LAHORE (Agenices): Almost seven years ago, Pakistan turned up in Manchester on a cool September night to cap off a miserable white-ball tour with a one-off T20I. The prospects for a relatively inexperienced Pakistani side looked bleak; they had just come off a wretched 2016 T20 World Cup campaign, while England's incipient rise to the top of the white-ball game was picking up steam. The ODI series just prior hadn't gone to plan for the visitors, brushed aside 4-1, including a humbling defeat that saw England post a then-world record 444 at Trent Bridge.

Pakistan made a number of changes from that ill-fated T20 World Cup five months prior. Shahid Afridi was finally done away with, and Sarfaraz Ahmed was handed the captaincy. Mohammad Sami was phased out, and 22-year-old Hasan Ali made his debut. Mohammad Rizwan earned a recall after six months. Another slight, unassuming 21-year-old also made his T20I debut; Babar Azam would go on to hit the winning runs in a nine-wicket romp.

That night sent Pakistan on a journey that allowed this game to assume great importance in hindsight. New captain Sarfaraz led the side to 11-straight T20I series wins. Rizwan went on to become one of the most consistent T20 openers in the world. Hasan took home the player-of-the-series award when Pakistan won the 2017 Champions Trophy nine months

later. And Babar, well, you get the point. England on the other hand didn't really care about the loss. Not as much as they did about the chance to test new players transitioning into a new system. One that resulted in the ODI World Cup win in 2019 and, further down the line, the T20 World Cup win in 2022. That old nine-wicket thumping in Manchester wasn't a harbinger of anything inauspicious; nine of those who started that game would also start at least one of those World Cup finals.

Which brings us to Pakistan's historic defeat at Afghanistan's hands over the past week and why it might not be such a bad thing.

Pakistan were right in giving their newfound PSL stars a go in international cricket. They have the time now, with the next T20 World Cup almost two years away, to supplement the talent they have with the experience they will need.

Saim Ayub lit up the PSL. Mohammad Harris was the catalyst for a Pakistan revival at last year's T20 World Cup. As opening batters, they are very different to Babar and Rizwan, but given the way T20 cricket is being played right now, it almost feels like they are the conventional choice rather than their more decorated, more conservative counterparts. Only, Ayub and Harris found themselves thrown in on surfaces that were much better suited to the accumulating instincts, as well as superior techniques, of Babar and Rizwan.

The value of this series to Pakistan was never about bringing home that T20 trophy, ornate as it was. Shadab Khan, Babar's deputy for some time now, had the opportunity to juggle his all-round role with the captaincy. He was allowed to make his mistakes while the stakes aren't suffocatingly high. Things didn't go perfectly to plan but it was important that Pakistan found out what life beyond Babar will look like. Shadab might never end up being a permanent captain for Pakistan, but there were few better occasions to see what he can do, something that he himself touched upon at the end of the series.

"Unfortunately, we didn't win the series," Shadab said. "But the way our youngsters showed their talent was very exciting, and I'm confident they'll end up becoming stars. The conditions were evidently totally different to the PSL, and young players can get nervous when they put on the green shirt for the first time. But what I liked was how quickly they adapted. After two difficult matches, they showed in the third their calibre and quality. "These conditions were new for them, and they should learn from it. Those who succeeded in this series and those who failed we might need to work on game awareness a little bit, about when to play what shot. But they're young, and when you're nervous, you make mistakes. But with their talent and attitude, they'll pick up these things quickly."

Persistent rain forces abandonment of Christchurch ODI

CHRISTCHURCH (Agencies): Unrelenting rain in Christchurch meant that the second ODI between New Zealand and Sri Lanka was washed out without even the toss taking place. While rain had been forecast for much of the day, there had nevertheless been hope of a shortened match getting underway at some point.

But as the day wore on and the rain persisted at the Hagley Oval, that prospect looked less and less likely. The cut-off time for a 20-over game, the minimum allowed for rain-curtailed ODI, had been marked for 7.02pm local time, but with the rains persisting, the umpires called the game off following the final inspection at 4.25pm.

As a result, the teams split points, with Sri Lanka's hopes of automatic World Cup qualification being hit further. The top eight teams from the Super League table get direct entry in the World Cup, but Sri Lanka are currently placed ninth after 82 points, and have just one more match remaining in the cycle - the third ODI against New Zealand in three days' time.

While a win will take them above West Indies and thus up to eighth, Sri Lanka will hope that



tenth-placed South Africa win at most one out of their two upcoming ODIs against Netherlands. That will leave South Africa stuck at 88 points, and allow Sri Lanka, who will finish on 92 should they beat New Zealand, to scrape through to the World Cup.

However, New Zealand are set to end the Super League as table toppers despite the washout in Christchurch, and even if they lose to Sri Lanka in the third ODI in Hamilton. They have

165 points at the moment - ten clear of England, who are second - but will have hoped that their fringe players get enough practice ahead of the World Cup.

Also, the washout has meant they can't lose the ongoing series against Sri Lanka, as they had thumped them by 198 runs in the first ODI in Auckland on Saturday.

In fact, they will finish the Super League having lost just one ODI series.

Ben Stokes has injection in knee before IPL stint with Chennai Super Kings

LONDON (BBC): England Test captain Ben Stokes had an injection in his troublesome left knee before departing for his stint in the Indian Premier League. Stokes, 31, struggled with the long-standing problem in the second Test against New Zealand in February.

He had a scan on his return to the UK and although nothing untoward was revealed, had the injection prior to joining up with Chennai Super Kings.

Chennai meet defending champions Gujarat Titans in Friday's IPL

opener. Super Kings paid £1.6m to sign Stokes in December's auction.

Batting coach Mike Hussey said the all-rounder is likely to play as a specialist batter in the opening stages of the tournament.

"He's ready to go as a batsman from the start, the bowling might be wait and see. I know he had his first very light bowl this week since he had his injections in his knee," said the Australian.

"My understanding is he won't be bowling much at all in the first few games of the tournament, or it might be a few weeks. Hopefully we'll get him bowling at some stage in the tournament."

Stokes has previously said he will miss the latter stages of the IPL, which ends on 28 May, in order to prepare for England's Test against Ireland, beginning on 1 June.

In the second Test against New Zealand, which England thrillingly lost by one run after enforcing the follow-on, Stokes did not bowl and suffered with his knee when batting on the final day.

"I'm not going to lie - it is very frustrating knowing that I've got something holding me back in terms of my body," he said at the time.

England Test coach Brendon McCullum also said that Stokes would not be jeopardising his fitness for the summer's Ashes series by taking part in the IPL. "I've no concerns that the skipper will be totally looked after and I also believe that the Ashes is the script that the skipper is waiting to write, so he'll be sweet," said the New Zealander.

Tsitsipas wins after long wait in Miami, Halys rise continues

MIAMI (AFP/APP): World number three Stefanos Tsitsipas finally got his Miami Open campaign under way on Monday with a 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 win over Cristian Garin while Argentine Francisco Cerundolo upset fifth-seeded Felix Auger-Aliassime.

There were no shortage of upsets at Hard Rock Stadium with 12th seeded American Francis Tiafoe beaten by 59th ranked Italian Lorenzo Sonego in straight sets.

France's Adrian Mannarino beat seventh-seeded Pole Hubert Hurkacz and American qualifier Christopher Eubanks defeated Gregoire Barrere in straight sets. Tsitsipas arrived in Miami a week ago, had a first round bye and then had a walkover win in the second round when Richard Gasquet pulled out with injury.

"It has almost felt like a vacation this past week, staying in Miami. I glad I got started. It was a difficult match against an opponent who has played good tennis against good opponents in the past," said the Greek. Tsitsipas has not been on court much in recent weeks. He withdrew from Acapulco due to a shoulder injury and was beaten in his opening match at Indian Wells this month.

The rest has, however, helped Tsitsipas to recover a little from his injury and although he was not at his sharpest, he did enough to book his place in the fourth round against Karen Khachanov.

Tsitsipas broke at 4-4 in the third set to make sure of his progress against the Chilean, who enjoyed plenty of support from the South Florida crowd.

Khachanov defeated Czech Jiri Lehecka 6-2, 6-4 to reach the Miami last 16 for the first time.

Cerundolo was knocked out of Indian Wells in straight sets by Canadian Auger-Aliassime two weeks ago, but it was a very different game on the faster courts in South Florida. The 25th-seeded Argentine was on top from the outset, taking the first set 6-2 and he kept his nerve to triumph 7-5 in the second. Miami is a happy hunting ground for Cerundolo, who made a surprise run to the semi-finals last year, and he relished the vocal support from his fans in the crowd. "That was another important win for me, I think I played really good from beginning to end," he said. "It is super nice to play here, a lot of Argentinians, a lot of people, so I really enjoyed it. Last year

was amazing, so I'm really excited to be in the round of 16 again and to try to keep winning," he added.

Exciting American Tiafoe was tipped by many observers to go deep in the tournament but he fell 6-3, 6-4 to Sonego in a game disrupted by a second set rain delay of over an hour.

Mannarino, playing inventive tennis, beat Hurkacz 7-6 (7/5) 7-6 (7/0) but will face a tricky test against the 26-year-old Eubanks who will break into the top 100 for the first time in his career thanks to his victory over 65th ranked Barrere, who had beaten Britain's Cam Norrie in the previous round. Eubanks trailed 6-2 in a second-set tie-break before a rain delay of more than an hour and he won seven of the next eight points for an emotional 6-3, 7-6 (9/7) victory.

French qualifier Quentin Halys hit 15 aces as he beat American Mackenzie McDonald 7-6 (7/2), 6-3 to set up a fourth round clash with world number five Daniil Medvedev.

Halys had never won a match at ATP 1000 level prior to this tournament but has beaten Spain's Pedro Martinez and Australian Alex de Minaur before taking out McDonald.



In brief

IRSA releases 50,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 50,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 65,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1423.86 feet and was 25.86 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 18,200 cusecs while outflow as 7,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1095.75 feet, which was 45.75 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded at 18,000 cusecs and 14,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur has recorded at 26,500, 37,200, 37,200, and 7,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 15,600 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 6,600 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Three bike lifters arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested three bike lifters and recovered seven stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, a team under the supervision of SHO, Gungmandi Police Station managed to net two bike lifters namely Abid and Sajid and recovered three stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. In another raid, Wah Cantt police rounded up a bike lifter namely Shubhan and recovered four stolen motorcycles from his possession. Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are underway. Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Capt. @ Amir Khan Niazi said the accomplices and facilitators of the accused would also be sent behind the bars. He said that the operations against the law-breakers would be accelerated further.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Tuesday issued a power suspension programme for Wednesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 7 am to 11 am, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Chahan, Chauntra, Rajjar, Chakri, SPD, SPF Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Zeshan Colony, Nust Road Feeders From: 06:00 AM to 10:00 AM, F-17/1, F-17/2, Nogazi Feeders and suburbs.

Man shot dead in Saddar area

RAWALPINDI (APP): A man was shot dead and three others were injured in a firing incident at Hathi Chowk in Saddar area of Rawalpindi Cantt on Tuesday. A police spokesman said according to initial reports, some unknown gunmen resorted to firing, killing Azam Khan on the spot and injuring fired and injured Raja Sajid, Haider Shah and Abu Bakr. Superintendent of Police (SP) Potohar Malik Tariq Mehboob said evidence was being collected from the crime scene. Investigation was underway from all angles, and the accused involved in the incident would be arrested and brought to justice, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets Speaker National Assembly Raja Parvez Ashraf at Parliament House Islamabad.

OPF resolved 28,526 complaints of OPS against 33,892 registered complaints: Senate body

ISLAMABAD (APP): Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) has established a complaint cell for the timely resolution of problems of Overseas Pakistanis and as of now, 28,526 complaints have been resolved against the 33,892 registered complaints.

This was stated by the Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (MOPHRD) Shabnam Amir Khan during the briefing to the Senate Standing Committee meeting. A meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on MOPHRD was held at Parliament House on Tuesday with Senator Anwar ul Haq Kakar in Chair, said a press release.

She said that OPF is aiming to establish dedicated fast-track courts in all provinces of Pakistan for the protection of properties and quick redressal of property disputes of overseas Pakistanis. Senator Anwar ul

Haq Kakar commended the initiative and uttered it as a 'step in the right direction'. Besides, a comprehensive plan is needed to redress the problems confronted by overseas Pakistanis at airports, he commented.

The Senate Committee was briefed about the functions, roles, priorities and future plans of the Ministry and its attached departments. Shabnam apprised the Committee that Ministry for Overseas Pakistanis was created as an independent ministry in 2008, however, it was merged with Human Resource Development in 2013 and currently, there are four autonomous bodies working under the ministry which includes Employees Old Age Benefits Institution (EOBI), Overseas Pakistani Foundation (OPF), Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) and Workers Welfare Fund (WWF).

She said that the primary function of the ministry is to ensure well being of overseas

Pakistanis and by keeping in view this goal, the ministry initiated policies aimed to streamline the problems confronted by overseas Pakistanis and their dependents and besides the ministry also motivates the overseas citizens to strengthen their links with the mother country. As of now, there are 48 officers and 198 officials working in the ministry and around 67 posts are vacant against the total 313 sanctioned posts, she informed.

Moreover, the Committee was briefed about the working of the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF). Dr. Amer Sheikh, MD OPF, informed the committee that the major function of the foundation is to ensure social welfare of emigrants and their families in Pakistan and abroad and to achieve this milestone, OPF has established housing societies, educational institutions and also offered scholarships for offsprings of overseas Pakistanis in field of science, technology and art.

DC visits free flour distribution points

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema here on Tuesday visited Liaquat Bagh and Stadium Road free flour mega distribution points and reviewed the flour delivery process and other administrative matters. The DC also interacted with the citizens and inquired about the arrangements and flour supply.

Hasan Waqar Cheema said that the government was making efforts to provide relief to the citizens and supply free flour to deserving families.

He informed that over 200,000 families had been provided flour while the target of 500,000 deserving families was set for Rawalpindi district under the scheme.

Two flour bags are being given to the deserving families who were earlier provided one bag, he said adding, the government had enhanced the supply of free flour bags to facilitate the citizens.

The process of distributing free flour to more than 500,000 deserving families in the Rawalpindi district was going on, he said.

Police arrest 14 for possessing illegal weapons

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district police on the directives of Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi conducted raids in different areas and netted 14 accused for possessing illegal weapons. According to a police spokesman, Rattaamral, Pirwadhai, Rwp Cantt, R.A.Bazar,

Race Course, Civil Lines, Taxila, Saddar Wah, Jatli, Dhamial, Rawat, and Kalar Syedan police rounded up 14 accused namely Muhammad Umar, Asmatullah, Shakeel, Saqib, Fawad, Arslan, Babar Nawaz, Nasrullah, Faisal ur Rehman, Numan, Rizwan, Ibrahim, Ghulam Sarwar and Safeer Ali and recovered 20 9mm pistols, nine 30 bore pistols and ammunition from their possession.

The SSP said that strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against the lawbreakers and operations against aerial firing and illegal weapon holders would continue.

Provision of basic rights to each child collective responsibility

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Parliamentary Caucus on Child Rights Tuesday said that provision of basic rights to each child was the collective responsibility of all.

The meeting was held under the Convenership of MNA Ms Mehnaz Akber Aziz. She reiterated that the National Plan on Child Protection must be enacted to safeguard children's rights.

She said that the bright future of the country was interlinked with provision of basic human rights to each child.

She also said, "National Action plan to be made by the Government as the draft is already in the Ministry of Human Rights

and needs to be expedited."

She also said that one strong oversight body was required for implementation of National Action Plan

The Caucus deliberated on reviewing the laws and policies regarding child protection and welfare.

Qadir Khan Mandokhail and Ms Asiya Azeem stressed on the need to speed up the formulation of an action plan regarding the wellbeing of children. Chairperson National commission on Human Rights also briefed the Caucus meeting regarding basic constitutional provision to safeguard the basic rights of children.

17.41 million children vaccinated in first phase of Polio drive

ISLAMABAD (APP): The government has successfully completed the first phase of polio vaccination campaign to immunize more than 17.41 million children under the age of five years in Sindh and Punjab.

The five-day vaccination campaign was held in two phases due to the concurring activities of the seventh national census.

In the first phase, over 17.41 million children under the age of five in 13 districts of Punjab and 16 districts of Sindh and Islamabad were vaccinated from March 13 to 17.

The second phase will be held from April 03 to 07 – during the second week of Ramadan – to vaccinate more than 4.12 million children in 12 districts of Balochistan and 26 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the seven endemic districts in the southern region of the province.

Federal Minister for Health Abdul Qadir Patel urged parents and caregivers to ensure that their

children receive the life-saving polio vaccine so that they remain protected from poliovirus, which has been found circulating in environmental samples. "The presence of wild polio in the environment shows that the virus is circulating in our communities and posing a serious risk to our children," said Abdul Qadir Patel, the minister. "During Ramadan, population movements can increase the risk of further spread, therefore, it is critical that parents and caregivers vaccinate their children in this and every campaign," the minister said.

"We have specifically designed this March campaign to reach areas where population movement is not just frequent but also expected during Ramadan and Eid festival," said Dr Shahzad Baig, National Emergency Operations Center. "It is essential that we reach as many children as possible with the vaccine now to curb polio transmission," he added.

No human case has been reported in Pakistan since September 2022 when a polio outbreak paralyzed 20 children – all of them in southern KP districts.

Wild poliovirus was detected for the first time this year in sewage samples collected from two separate sites in Lahore in January.

Two more samples have since then tested positive for polio – wild polio has been detected in a sample collected from D.I. Khan and variant poliovirus has been detected from Ghotki.

The polio programme has taken all efforts to ensure the vaccination of children to keep them safe from this highly infectious disease in the context of positive environmental samples detected in some places. The Sehat Tahhafuz Helpline 1166 and 24/7 WhatsApp Helpline 0346-777-65-46 will be available to assist parents and caregivers in reporting missed children and providing related information.

Ministry rules out possibility in last date extension of Hajj applications

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony on Tuesday ruled out the possibility of last date extension for Hajj applications.

The Ministry's Spokesperson Muhammad Umar Butt, talking to APP, urged the aspirant pilgrims to submit their Hajj applications and dues in time.

Giving a break-up of the Hajj applications, he informed that the ministry had received 44, 621 Hajj applications through designated banks so far.

He said it had received 40,313 applications under Government Hajj Scheme while 4,308 applications under Sponsorship Hajj Scheme.

He said the designated banks remained open across the country for the collection of Hajj applications and dues to facilitate the intending pilgrims on the weekend.

On Saturday, the ministry scored a total of 4,468 Hajj applications of which 3,960 applications were received under the Government Hajj Scheme and 508 under the Sponsorship Hajj Scheme, he said adding that on Sunday the ministry collected a total of 2,679 Hajj applications out of which 2,371 applications received under Government Hajj Scheme while 308 applications under Sponsorship Hajj Scheme. Umar Butt further said Meezan Bank had topped by collecting 9,142 Hajj applications including 940 applications under Sponsorship Hajj Scheme to date.

He said the overseas Pakistanis could submit a health certificate issued from

abroad in the bank or they could furnish a medical fitness certificate before their Hajj flight. He said those who had not yet received the coronavirus vaccine, could also submit the application. "However, they will have a full dose of the vaccine and submit the certificate to the banks before their departure to Saudi Arabia. Apart from NADRA [National Database and Registration Authority], a foreign vaccine certificate will also be acceptable," he maintained.

He clarified that it was not necessary for the person sending sponsorship to have a blood relation with the pilgrim. But it was essential to send the name, Computerized National Identity Card number, and contact number of the pilgrim along with the money, he added.

According to other official sources in the ministry, a reduction of Rs.45,000 was expected in the Hajj expenses under the Government Hajj Scheme. If the Pakistani currency did not fall further, the benefit would be transferred to pilgrims by the ministry, they added.

They said the ministry was trying to make the Hajj package cheaper as the negotiation with the Saudi government was underway.

They said after the reduction, the Government Hajj Scheme for the northern region would be from Rs.1,175,000 to Rs.1,130,000 while it would be from Rs.1,1 65,000 to Rs.1,120,000 for the southern region.



ISLAMABAD: Free food distributed among the needy people during the holy month of Ramadan at Aahpara.

Minister criticized PTI leadership for using 'cruelty language' to destabilize system

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Energy Khurram Dastgir on Tuesday criticized Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leadership for using 'cruelty language' to destabilize the country and urged them to avoid following the policy of agitation with the government.

Talking to a Private news channel, he advised the leadership of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), to promote civilized language during a public meeting, adding, Khan sahib has destroyed the country as well as its culture and poli-

tics with his abusive language. The writ of the state and the government will be established at all costs, he said, adding, whosoever tried to challenge it he will be dealt with an iron hand.

Anyone who raised hands against the police will not be acceptable, he warned. Replying to a question, he replied that the general elections will be held in October this year, adding, after the budget, we will be able to hold elections and Army officers will also be available for security purposes during

the elections.

The provincial elections have been postponed by the Election Commission of Pakistan, not by the government, he said, adding, the provincial government was not able to provide funds for the elections and foolproof security was also a problem right now.

To another question, he replied that PML-N is fully prepared for the elections, adding, we will assured free and fair elections in the country with the consensus of all provincial governments.

Citizens laud govt for providing '19 subsidies rate basic items' available in USC stores

ISLAMABAD (APP): Citizens on Tuesday lauded the government's move for providing relief to the public during the month of Ramzan where a sufficient stock of all the 19 subsidized items is available at Utility Stores Corporations (USC) outlets. The government had announced a special Ramzan relief package worth Rs 5 billion at utility stores across the country to provide maximum relief to the poor segment of society during the holy month, said a report aired by PTV news channel.

In order to facilitate the public, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has extended the scope of the relief package by increasing the number of subsidized items to 19, Utility store's manager Shahzad from Quetta said.

The items being provided at subsidized rates include flour, ghee, sugar, cooking oil, tea, dates, besan, dal mash, dal mong, milk, drinks, and spices, he added.

Smooth supply of all commodities across the country was being ensured during Ramzan on the strict directives of the government, said Sohail Akhtar an Incharge of utility store from Islamabad.

Another senior USC officer in Punjab said that the management was committed to providing relief to the general public during Ramadan by playing its role as a price moderator and deterrent to profiteering, hoarding, and black-marketing.

A female consumer Shamim Akhtar said USC during the month is providing exhaustive services to its customers by acquiring self-accountability, transparency, and efficiency in its operations.

A customer Syed Muhammad Mehmood said that consumers enrolled in the Benazir Income support Program are also eligible to get food items at subsidized rates from the Utility Stores outlets.

He said that through a transparent system, we are getting subsidized rates for essential kitchen items in USC stores and there is no shortage of any item.

Another customer appealed that government would continue this subsidy rate item sale in stores as through this online system, consumers are being facilitated in purchasing subsidized items at utility stores. This system is saving not only the precious time of customers but will enable subsidizing items (flour, sugar, ghee, rice, pulses) in a very transparent manner, he added. The government was providing quality food items and giving the best services to the customers this Ramzan, said a woman.

USC has made the subsidy system more transparent, digitalize and through a comprehensive system by installing vigilant cameras inside and outside stores for strictly monitoring workers' dealing with customers, said another store manager.

Kabir condemned attack

KABUL (Agencies): Deputy Prime Minister, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, condemning the attack said Khawarij is defeated and they are taking revenge on the innocent people. The Islamic Emirate taking serious action against the Khawarij they are defeated and are now taking revenge on innocent people, said Deputy Prime Minister Kabir. Unfortunately, the enemies of Islam and Afghanistan once again attacked our fasting compatriots in the holy month of Ramadan, he said.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Ramazan 07, 1444 — Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Businessman rescued

KABUL (Agencies): Police rescued a businessman from the grip of abductors. The Kabul police in the 15th police district rescued a businessman who was abducted by kidnappers two months back. Hassamuddin was abducted two months back, from around his residential place in Kabul, and he was rescued by police efforts said a police Qari Ezatullah. 4 people were arrested on charges and a rocket launcher, a stun gun with two barrels, and other tools were recovered from the detainees, he said.

Human Rights situation rapidly deteriorating

KABUL (Khaama Press): Amnesty International has published a detailed report about the human rights situation in Afghanistan in the past two years, adding since the Taliban's return to power, 237 people have been executed without trial.

The 416-pager article was published on Tuesday (March 28), covering human rights situations worldwide in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

Part of the report focuses on Afghanistan's situation in 2021 and 2022, and the generic assessment of the international organization indicates that the human rights situation is rapidly deteriorating in this country.

According to the report, from Nov 18 – Dec 16, more than 100 people have been flogged in public in

sports stadiums in different parts of the country, and in December, an alleged criminal was publicly executed in western Farah province for the first time. The execution was described as a "hateful act" by the international community.

Amnesty International's report further states that restrictions on ordinary people's lives, women's and girls' education, as well as restrictions on the media, have increased and the ways to improve the human rights situation have come to a standstill.

Furthermore, arbitrary arrests, not allowing peaceful protests, and oppressing and killing protesters have increased, and the de facto authorities are trying to implement these acts in illegal ways.

The report highlights that previous government employees, members of the National Resistant Front (NRF), and those who do not accept the orders of the Taliban are targeted.

Quoting UNAMA, the report indicates that more than 2,100 innocent civilians were killed and injured in terrorist attacks from August 2021 to June 2022 in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, restrictions on women's rights to education and work have been described as clear violations of human rights. School girls above grade six have been deprived of attending classes, and from December onward, doors of universities and educational institutions remained closed for female students throughout Afghanistan.

IS-K claims responsibility for attack in Kabul

KABUL (Khaama Press): Islamic State claimed on its Telegram account its responsibility for the suicide attack that killed at least six civilians in Afghanistan's capital Kabul on Monday, Reuters News Agency reported.

Moreover, IS-K published the details of a suicide bomber, saying that the attack was carried out by "Abdul Hameed Khorasani."

This is the second attack by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the first was in January that killed and wounded more than 20 people.

The attack came after the remarks of the Taliban's Foreign Minister, Muttaqi, who claimed that the Islamic State does not have a presence in Afghanistan.

The attack was condemned by several national and international individuals and organizations, including the UN mission in Afghanistan.

"Reports of numerous casualties in today's attack in Kabul-at least one child among them. It is unacceptable that ordinary Afghans continue to be targeted as they go about their daily lives," UNAMA said in a tweet.

UN spotlights harm from unexploded ordnance

KABUL (TOLONews): UNICEF Afghanistan tweeted that "more than 700 children were killed or maimed" because of unexploded ordnance and other "war remnants" in 2022.

According to UNICEF Afghanistan's Twitter account, this number means an average of two children every day.

"Last week, 8 children lost their lives due to unexploded ordnance in Afghanistan," UNICEF Afghanistan said. "They lost their lives playing with unexploded ordnance and collecting metal scraps to sell."

No details were provided in the tweets about the recent deaths.

The Directorate of Mine Action Coordination said that it has cleared more than 100,000 square meters of land in Afghanistan.

"We have more than 60 awareness teams in Afghanistan. The video clips about public awareness have been made and the teams are going to the rural areas and villages to increase people's awareness," said Qari Nooruddin Rustam Khail, head of the directorate.

Residents of Kabul expressed concerns, saying that children collect metals to sell because of poverty.

The residents said their lack of awareness about ordnance caused them harm.

"Due to poverty and unemployment, they (children) are forced to go to the mountains, collect sticks or coal for food. They are being martyred in these mines that are planted from the previous years," said Rokai, a resident of Kabul.

9m people at risk of acute starvation in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): David Beasley Executive Director of the UN World Food Program (WFP) warns of possible starvation to hit Afghanistan hardest if funding is not received immediately.

According to the WFP report, roughly nine million people in Afghanistan are on the verge of facing acute starvation amid the unprecedented economic and humanitarian crisis.

Mr. Beasley wrote on Twitter that the world cannot turn its back on the Afghan people in this hour of unprecedented crisis, and donor countries and aid organizations should generously contribute to help the people of Afghanistan during these difficult times.

Decades of complex and protracted conflicts, combined with a changing climate, gender inequalities, rapid urbanization, underemployment, and the recent regime change in the war-torn country pose considerable challenges in efforts to achieve zero Hunger and improved nutrition in



Afghanistan.

Over half of the country's population lives below the poverty line, and food insecurity is on the rise, largely due to conflict and insecurity cutting off whole communities from livelihood opportunities.

According to the latest UN reports, nine out of 10 Afghans do not eat enough, and roughly two-thirds of

the population, or 28.3 million people, are projected to need humanitarian assistance in 2023 — nearly four million more than last year.

Since the return of the Taliban to power in August 2021, followed by a severe economic crisis, the problems of ordinary people have been compounded by droughts and floods.

Families are struggling for survival as they have no other means of income to feed mouths other than relying on humanitarian aid.

Women and girls are hit hardest across the country by the ongoing humanitarian and economic crisis, and by the gender-based restrictions on their fundamental rights to education and work.

Swedish committee condemns continued ban on girls' schooling

KABUL (TOLONews): The Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA) called on the "de facto authorities" in Afghanistan to immediately reopen education facilities at all levels, to girls and boys, women and men, and "prioritize investing in education as a critical component of Afghanistan's development."

The report said that preventing girls from getting an education has no justification, on any grounds, including religion or tradition. "Education is an essential tool for empowering individuals and communities. Without education, a girl is more likely to marry at a young age and suffer from domestic violence, poverty, and health issues."

This comes as an online education center has been launched for female students in Kabul. The center was opened after female students in grade 7-12 were prevented from attending their schools for the second consecutive year. The institution is named Mawlana Educational Center.

"Indeed, in such conditions where we have been barred from schools and universities and other institutions, online courses are a good opportunity for girls to continue their education," said Sofia, a student.

The founder of the

online education center, Anita Shirzad, said that online education is the only option for girls currently in Afghanistan.

"My main concerns about our activity are power outages and internet connection. If any day power or internet is cut completely in Afghanistan, we will face serious problems," she said.

Meanwhile, female students beyond grade six called on the Islamic Emirate to reopen the doors of the schools.

"I don't think that we girls will be deprived of schools forever. I think this is a temporary ban because how is it possible that girls and women will be kept ignorantly at home?" a student said.

"We should be hopeful because every night has a dawn. Therefore, we should be hopeful and should be strong," a student said.

It has been more than 18 months since female students in grade 7-12 have been deprived of schooling.

Women's protests violently dispersed

KABUL (Khaama Press): A group of Afghan women protested in the west of Kabul city to raise their voices against a ruling that bans females from education and universities, Khaama Press has confirmed.

Scores of women gathered in the capital, Kabul, for a peaceful march in response to the continued ban on women's education. Their chanting slogans demanded to reopen of schools and universities for girls.

However, the women protesters were attacked and dispersed by the Taliban security forces, videos sent to Khaama Press showing.

According to a protester, the "women's movement for justice" was responsible for organizing the demonstrations and added at least three protesting women were detained during the rally.

Taliban security forces reportedly beat women protesters and fired into the air, and they violently dispersed protesters.

The women protesters say that since the Taliban seized power, the number of girls women's suicides has increased, women and girls attending schools and universities have decreased to zero, and early marriages have doubled.

Matiullah Wesa detained by Taliban



KABUL (Khaama Press): Matiullah Wesa, the well-known human rights activist who advocated for girls' education and the founder of Pen Path, was detained by the Taliban on Monday, his brother confirmed.

His brother Ataullah Wesa claimed that Wesa was detained by the Taliban close to their house in the Khoshal Khan Area west of Kabul, while the Taliban rejected the allegation.

Wesa was an education and human rights activist who created educational

opportunities for thousands of girls across Afghanistan within the last decade.

Wesa runs an education organization, "Pen Path", which promotes education in the remote areas of Afghanistan.

Since the closure of the girls' school by the Taliban, Wesa visited 20 out of 34 provinces of Afghanistan to provide thousands of girls' students with educational materials.

Wesa's arrest came amid the beginning of the new academic year in Afghanistan. This is the third consecutive year the

Taliban-led government has not reopened girls' schools beyond sixth grade.

On Sunday, a group of women raised their voices against the prolonged ban on Afghan women and girls' schools and universities, but the protesters were dispersed by air fire, and three of them were detained by the Taliban. The women protesters were released later by the Taliban.

Wesa's arrest was confronted with massive condemnation both nationally and internationally.

Kabul blast sparks widespread reactions

KABUL (TOLONews): The blast near the Foreign Ministry in Malik Asghar Roundabout in downtown Kabul on Monday has sparked reactions from Afghan politicians and Kabul-based diplomatic missions.

At least six people were killed and several more, including three Islamic Emirate forces, were wounded in a suicide attack near a checkpoint on the Foreign Ministry's road.

The Interior Ministry's spokesman Abdul Nafay Takor said the attacker was

gunned down reaching his target but explosives attached to his body were detonated.

Former President Hamid Karzai condemned the attack and called it against human and Islamic values.

Former chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, Abdullah Abdullah, also condemned the attack and called it an attack organized by the "enemies of the Afghan people".

He said the attack contradicts all human and

Islamic values.

The UN mission in Afghanistan, UNAMA, in a statement condemned the attack and said "it is unacceptable that ordinary Afghans continue to be targeted as they go about their daily lives."

The third deputy prime minister, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, also condemned the attack.

He said that such attacks reveal the real faces of the enemies of Islam and Afghans.

Daesh claimed responsibility for the attack.

Aid distribution not transparent, allege some Nimroz residents

ZARANJ (Pajhwok): Some residents of western Nimroz province claim the humanitarian aid distribution process is not transparent, but local officials reject their assertion.

After the political change of August 15, 2021, the international community suspended all but emergency aid to Afghanistan and the US froze nearly \$9.5 billion in assets belonging to the central bank.

However, when the economic situation of the Afghans worsened, some countries started providing food packages and other financial aid to the needy families of the country.

Some residents of Nimroz province say the humanitarian aid has positively impacted people's lives, but they claim that residents of remote areas have never received the aid at all.

Mahjabeen Narooce, a

resident of Sher Ahmad village of Zaranj city, is one of them who complain about lack of transparency in distribution of the humanitarian aid assistance.

Narooce lost her house, animals and other belongings to recent floods. She said that she had never seen aid giving officials arriving in her village.

Mahjabeen told Pajhwok Afghan News: "There is no poorer than us. Some families in Nimroz have been receiving aid package since years, but we who lost all of their belongings have never received any assistance. We applied thrice at the governor's office for assistance, but we were not allowed even to visit him".

She said all 40 families of her village were extremely poor and they had no income source. They wrote to the Disaster Management Office, but got no positive answer, she said.

Dawlat Mohammad, 65, a representative of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Shahrak Sistan area also made a similar complaint.

Dawlat Mohammad said 50 IDP families from Parwan, Kunduz and Mazar-i-Sharif lived in Zaranj and they had so far received no financial or food assistance from the government or any other humanitarian organization during the past one and a half years.

He added when the weather became very cold in winter in Nimroz, they were distributed 20 tents and 60 blankets by the Disaster Management Directorate and after their survey, they received financial assistance only once instead of six times.

Rahmatullah, one of the nomads who lives in Jungle area behind the Nadali Hill, said they were 12 families living in six tents and they

had never been distributed any assistance.

He said: "We are poor, we eat only dry bread, tea and cold water, even the Directorate of Kochis (Nomads) has never given us any assistance."

He claimed humanitarian organizations conducted their surveys only in areas which were accessible or close to their offices and majority of the aid distribution cards were given to relatives of the officials of such organizations.

Fatima, 35, a mother of five children, also complained about unjust distribution of aid packages.

She claimed their village was hit by natural disasters and the people suffered losses, but no humanitarian organizations visited their village.

Sakhi Shahbazi, an economic affairs expert, confirmed the claims of the people and said most humanitarian organizations

used to cover nearby areas to save their financial resources and thus residents of remote areas remained without any assistance.

He said lack of a proper mechanism through which deserving families could be identified, lack of a monitoring system, abuse of authority by the officials of humanitarian organizations, corruption, shortage of personnel and trained officials, interference of powerful individuals in aid distribution process were reasons of the unjust assistance distribution process.

"The aid distributing organizations spend most part of their budgets on salaries to their personnel, car rents, office rents, offices' supplies which leave a negative impact on projects they implement," Shahbazi said.

The aid can only be effective when such organizations prioritize food security and jobs generation for



deserving people, he added.

However, Danish, head of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) office of Nimroz province, rejected the aid distribution process was not transparent.

"It is not true. The aid distribution process is ongoing transparently;

those who complain want to receive more aid cards. Those who get aid cards once, they do not get the cards again that is why they complain".

He said the Ministry of Economy had announced that 50 percent of the World Food Program (WFP) aid would be given to people in

exchange for work and the remaining 50 percent to families who were without guardians or could not work.

Danish said the aid distribution process had been transparent. "The aid is being given to poor families, not everyone is entitled."

President urges world to take steps against Islamophobia

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday urged the international community to take effective steps against the growing trend of Islamophobia by discouraging extremist elements.

In this regard, he stressed promoting inter-faith harmony and dialogue among various religions to remove negative perceptions about Islam. The president strongly condemned the incidents of desecration of the Holy Quran in Denmark and The Netherlands and said that hate speech against religions could not be termed as freedom of expression.

He said the blasphemous incidents rooted in Islamophobia were hurting the sentiments of Muslims across the globe. He pointed out that blasphemy was contrary to the internationally defined principles of freedom of expression. Alvi said Islam focuses on promoting peace and brotherhood among mankind and stressed an action by the world to counter Islamophobia.

Meanwhile, President Dr Arif Alvi called for expansion of trade and economic relations with Tajikistan and said that steps should be taken to enhance trade and investment cooperation with Tajikistan for the mutual development of the two brotherly countries.

The president said this while talking to Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Tajikistan Muhammad Saeed Sarwar who called on him at Aiwan-e-Sadr. The president mentioned that Pakistan had deep historical and cultural linkages with Tajikistan and Pakistan wanted to build enhanced, result-oriented and sustainable engagements with all the Central Asian States under its "Vision Central Asia" policy.

He underscored that Pakistan remained committed to strengthening political, economic and energy connectivity with the Central Asia and that the CASA-1000 energy project was an important component of this strategy. President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release. The president

asked the ambassador to work for improving Pakistan's image, besides expanding trade, energy, and commercial relations with the host country.

He underlined the need for establishing academic linkages between the educational institutions of both countries, adding that Pakistan was offering online and distance education through the Virtual University of Pakistan and Allama Iqbal Open University, and Tajik students could benefit from it by getting access to their educational content. The president also stressed upon the need for highlighting the anti-minority and anti-Muslim policies of India as well as the atrocities being committed by the Indian Security Forces in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

The president congratulated Muhammad Saeed Sarwar on his appointment as Pakistan's ambassador to Tajikistan and urged him to work for further cementing bilateral relations with the brotherly country of Tajikistan.

Flour distribution stampede leaves 2 dead

SAHIWAL (INP): A stampede during free flour distribution here left two women dead and 45 others injured. Rescue sources said that nineteen injured persons were shifted to DHQ teaching hospital Sahiwal for medical attendance. The incident took place owing to mismanagement and flawed arrangements for free wheat flour distribution among underprivileged persons.

Police and district management officials rushed to the spot after report of the incident. It is pertinent to mention here that free of cost wheat flour being distributed among people under special Ramadan package announced by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The package is the first of its kind aimed at facilitating the poor population.

In an earlier stampede at a flour distribution point in Faisalabad last week an elderly man had died who came to get free flour from a distribution point. Rescue sources said that Muhammad Kaleem was found unconscious at the Park's main gate. He was taken to General Hospital Samanabad where he took his last breath.

In a free ration distribution stampede in 2016 several women were injured in Karachi. In September 2016 an act of charity turned into a tragedy near Karachi's Khori Garden when a stampede caused the death of 20 women and girls who had thronged to an outlet where a wholesaler was giving out food items for free. Jodia Bazaar, the city's biggest wholesale market, saw heart-wrenching scenes of poor families retrieving bodies instead of ration sacks after organisers of the free distribution were overwhelmed by the needy persons.

IHC bars police from arresting Gandapur

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Tuesday barred police from arresting Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader and former federal minister Ali Amin Gandapur.

IHC Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir took up the plea of Gandapur seeking details of cases registered against him. Raja Zahoorul Hassan advocate appeared before the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to represent the former minister. The plaintiff's lawyer stated that there are a number of cases registered against his clients at various police stations in Islamabad, but they don't have details about them.

He pleaded with the court to order police to submission of cases record against Ali Amin Gandapur. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) while barring police from arresting the PTI stalwart, sought details from the respondents after issuing notices to them for March 31.

Last week, a team of Islamabad Police reached Dera Ismail Khan for the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Amin Gandapur. A case had been registered against the former minister at Golra police station of Islamabad. Bhakkar Police has also filed a case under the Anti-Terrorism Act against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Tajikistan, Muhammad Saeed Sarwar, called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Agri land acquired for Industrial Estate in Swabi: PHC told

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Justice Qaiser Rashid observed that Agriculture land should never be used for commercial activities and if any project is underway then how should be an alternative be utilized in this regard, on Tuesday.

The divisional bench comprising of Chief Justice PHC Justice Qaiser Rashid and Justice Shakeel Ahmad heard writ petition of Maifitah Ullah and Muhammad Sohail against establishment of Industrial of Estate at Swabi on agriculture land proposed by Small Industrial Board.

The Commission Chairman Ahmad Sultan Tareen which is constituted on PHC's direction appeared before court and informed that proposed land for Industrial Estate is agriculture while crops are grown on the sites and added that some land is rainy but it is also cultivated by the framers.

However, Chief Justice inquired regarding alternate place? Commission's chairman informed that site proposed by court didn't suitable for Industrial Estate. The counsel for petitioner argued that hearing didn't possible because Small Industries Development Board (SIDB) lawyer is present

before Supreme Court and added that Agriculture's department report is available before court which stated that only 83 acres land is barren out of one thousand acres of land.

The counsel further argued that agriculture is mean only of livelihood of local residents while now their agriculture land is declaring barren to establish industrial estate. However, Chief Justice Qaiser Rashid observed that Green Bench was constituted to protect agriculture land and ensure provision of alternative barren spaces for developmental projects while extended status quo till 10th May to next hearing.

No chance of 'minus Khan' in any scenario: Fawad

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice President Fawad Chaudhry has said that there is no chance of 'minus Imran Khan' in any scenario. While talking to a private TV channel he viewed, "Plus Imran Khan is possible but there is no chance of minus Imran Khan in any scenario." He said that they will not accept minus Imran Khan formula at any cost which is tantamount to the defeat of the Pakistani nation.

He expressed suspicions that the incumbent government will not hold elections

in October as well. "The elections in October are meant to the dissolution of the government on August 18. Will this government leave the power in August?" He added that the current rulers use all tactics to stop the organisation of elections in the country. "The caretaker government's tenure cannot be extended due to constitutional restrictions."

To a question, he replied that the country will definitely see a difficult time in future even if IMF [International Monetary Fund] agreement is signed

or not. He criticised that the government has no strategy other than suppressing the opposition after destroying the national economy through its wrong decisions. "There is no difference in PML-N's strategy. There is only one difference that Maryam Nawaz is devising the party strategies now instead of Nawaz Sharif." To another question, Fawad said that the Supreme Court (SC) is bound to give its verdict in accordance with the Constitution. He added that the nation know how to implement the SC's orders.

PM directs for releasing uplift funds for NMDs

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday directed for the immediate release of development funds for the merged districts of the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

During a meeting with a five-member delegation of the National Assembly members from the merged districts, the prime minister directed the relevant authorities to get the approval of the funds required for the schemes concerned from the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet as soon as possible.

PM Shehbaz said the government was committed to prioritizing the development of the merged districts. He said the government was taking concrete steps for the development of financially weak areas of the country. The MNAs, including Minister for Religious Affairs Mufti Abdul Shakoor, Minister for Overseas Pakistanis Sajid Tori, Moulana Jamal ud Din, Ali Wazir, and Mohsin Dawar informed the prime minister about the problems and the ongoing development projects in their constituencies. Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar and Minister for Economic Affairs Division Ayaz Sadiq also attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Tuesday discussed the overall political situation of the country and other issues of mutual interest.

In a meeting here at the Parliament House in Islamabad, the two leaders also held discussion on the effective legislation and its significant role in the country's progress, prosperity and administrative affairs. Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar and Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar were also present during the meeting.

Hassaan Niazi handed over to Karachi police

KARACHI (PPI): PTI Chairman Imran Khan's nephew Hassaan Niazi was handed over to the Karachi police on Tuesday in connection with a sedition case. A four-member Karachi police team led by a sub-inspector took Hassaan Niazi into custody. Investigators said Hassaan Niazi will be produced in court tomorrow after the investigation.

Yesterday, the Lahore Anti-Terrorism Court

allowed the handing over of Hassaan Niazi to Karachi police on transit remand. The police took Hassaan Niazi to Karachi by air. A heavy contingent of police consisting of officers and officials from three police stations has reached Karachi Airport to take Hassaan Niazi into custody.

On March 26, Quetta police arrested Barrister Hassaan under Section 3 of the MPO (Maintenance of Public Order). He was

apprehended for attacking police officers and causing chaos near the Judicial Complex in G-11 in Islamabad. He was detained hours after a judicial magistrate in Quetta granted him bail against a surety bond worth Rs100,000. Niazi was not released and was instead transferred from jail to the Saddar police station. Meanwhile, the Lahore police had requested his custody.



ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry along with lawyers talking to media persons outside Supreme Court.

CJP says ECP hastily penned decision to delay polls in Punjab

(Continued from Page 1)

Barrister Zafar maintained that the electoral watchdog couldn't withdraw the order once given. "Unfortunately, no one has any doubt that elections now can't be held in 90 days," remarked Justice Mandokhail. He also wondered if there was a democratic way to resolve the issue. Justice Mandokhail lamented that no one cared about the Constitution in Pakistan anymore but elections must be held under any circumstances. "The question is, who has the authority to extend the duration of 90 days and if the assembly should be dissolved at a single person's behest," the justice added. PTI's lawyer argued that the prime minister and chief minister were the elected representatives.

At this, Justice Mandokhail remarked that the assembly could be dissolved if the prime minister's party moved a no-confidence motion against him. However, Barrister Ali Zafar contended that the assembly couldn't be dissolved in case of a no-

confidence motion. Justice Mandokhail observed that the Parliament should review the authority of a single person to dissolve the assembly. At this, Barrister Zafar said that the Parliament could debate over the authority of the PM and CM. "The Constitution doesn't allow any delay in the fundamental right of election," he maintained, adding that efforts to defer the polls were made in the recent past.

Zafar added that the ECP maintained that it couldn't give a date, while the governor said it was his authority to give the polls date. On this point, Justice Ahsan remarked that the implementation of the apex court's judgement had been done as the election schedule was issued. However, the question before the bench was whether the ECP had the authority to change the date given by the president. "Can the election commission delay [elections] beyond 90 days," he asked. Meanwhile, CJP Bandial remarked that the Election Act's Section 58 did not allow defer-

ment of the polls.

At this, Barrister Zafar maintained that the ECP based its order on two clauses from the Constitution. Justice Mandokhail then interjected that the electoral watchdog had excused itself from fulfilling the constitutional duty while stating these reasons. "What would have happened if the ECP hadn't given the date of October 8," he asked. At this, Justice Ahsan remarked that the electoral body could have approached the president for changing the election date. "All administrative institutions are bound to cooperate with the ECP. Election commission can approach only if there are solid reasons," he added. Barrister Zafar remarked: "The Article 220 of the Constitution binds all governments and institutions to cooperate with the ECP, but the electoral body made a decision after taking input from the institutions only".

He urged the court to question the electoral watchdog why it did not use its constitutional powers. He argued that Article 5 of the Constitution

would apply if the administrative institutions did not cooperate. The lawyer said that according to ECP, Article 254 gives the authority of deferring the polls. At this, Justice Mandokhail remarked that the date given by the election authority was already after 90 days period. Was the date after 90 days period correct, he asked.

Barrister Zafar said that the polls couldn't be conducted within 90 days even if the court issued an order right now. At this, Justice Mandokhail remarked that the president had also given a date after the 90 days. "Article 254 can be invoked after the job was done but not before that," he added. Moving on, Justice Ahsan observed: "In practice, if the election is not possible in 90 days, the court could issue an order". However, Justice Akhtar remarked that if the conducting of elections were not possible, the Election Commission should have approached the court. He explained that the court could be approached for the polls on the same

day if another assembly was dissolved before the date of the elections for an assembly.

"The election commission cannot automatically issue an order to postpone elections. If the Election Commission can postpone the election for 6 months, then it can do it for six years as well," he observed. At this, Justice Mandokhail remarked: "The constitution is silent on who can move the elections ahead". "Shouldn't parliament amend the constitution?" he asked. It will be best if the Parliament amends it, the justice added. "The question is what will happen to the elections that are to be held until the amendment is made," Justice Akhtar remarked. At this, Barrister Zafar maintained that the elections could never be held if they consider the basis on which elections were postponed. Justice Akhtar then remarked that if it was a matter of funds, "how will the caretaker government provide the funds?"

"Will the problems present today

not be there on October 8," he asked. At this, Barrister Zafar contended that the ECP had said in its order of March 22 that the funds had not been provided. He argued that the election commission had never requested funds. Justice Akhtar then remarked that he had read the premier's statement in the newspaper. "The federal government says that Rs500 billion tax revenue had been collected till March," he added. He said that it was surprising that the government was unable to spare Rs20 billion out of those Rs500 billion for the elections.

Moving on, Justice Ahsan observed that in practice, if the election is not possible in 90 days, the court could issue an order. However, Justice Akhtar remarked that if the conducting of elections were not possible, the Election Commission should have approached the court. He explained that the court could be approached for the polls on the same day if another assembly was dissolved before the date of the elections for an assembly.