

Irfan Qadir resigns

ISLAMABAD (INP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Accountability and Interior Affairs Irfan Qadir Wednesday resigned from his post. According to the official sources, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif accepted the resignation of Irfan Qadir as the special assistant. The notification, issued regarding the acceptance of his resignation, will be implemented with immediate effect.



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NA passes bill to curtail CJP’s suo motu powers

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): In a bid to bolster checks and balances in the higher judiciary, the National Assembly passed the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023, tabled to limit Pakistan’s top judge’s discretionary powers to take suo motu notice. The bill was passed hours after National Assembly Standing Committee on Law and Justice gave its consent.

The bill was moved by the government after two Supreme Court judges — Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail — raised questions over the powers of the chief justice of Pakistan (CJP), saying the apex court “cannot be dependent on the solitary decision of one man, the Chief Justice”. The debate was held in the NA after the sub-committee passed it by including some amendments, which include: Right to appeal against the suo motu verdicts taken up to 30 days before the passing of the Lawyers’ Protection Act; Any case that involves interpreting the Constitution will not have a bench with fewer than five judges; Following the nod from the lower house, the bill will now be presented in the Senate on Thursday (today).

Sharing his take on the bill, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that the power of one person in the supreme court is being divided among three members. “An attempt

was being made to give an impression that [we] are reducing or snatching away the Supreme Court’s powers,” he said, clarifying that the house is making the entire process transparent. The minister added that the Parliament is supreme and parliamentarians are the creators of the Constitution using their constitutional right to legislate. “We are definitely not taking away the power of the Supreme Court, but the house is using its right. We are using our right to legislate,” the politician, who is also a member of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), said.

He added that the legislation is being enacted in two days and all essentials have been completed. Asif maintained that this law should have been passed long ago, recalling that an attempt was made to introduce this legislation 15 years ago. “The bar was in favour at that time, while the bench resisted and we did not succeed.” The minister said the parliament is also empowering two judges and that it is giving the right to appeal as well.

The PML-N stalwart also suggested revisiting Article 209 of the Constitution which pertains to the Supreme Judicial Council. The defence minister questioned the judiciary’s decision to disqualify the country’s two prime ministers. “We are taught about democracy and the Constitution, so the structure of this

[Supreme Court] institution should also be democratised.” He added that the parliament should not be apologetic about exercising its right to legislate, and maintained that lawmakers should exhibit the right they possess through the constitution and law. Asif said that the judiciary’s decisions can become part of the legislation, but it must accept by the parliament.

“They have the right to scrutinise the law we make, but not the right to legislate,” the minister said, highlighting how the judiciary is scrutinising actions of the parliament. “Once again the legislature is before the court for scrutiny,” he remarked, adding that no institution of the power structure has people’s mandate except for the parliament. During the debate, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar said that the legislation will bring an “end to the one-man show”.

Commenting on the agenda of introducing the bill, which received several amendments, he added that legislation should be done for public benefit. “Institutions are strengthened by systems, not individuals,” the minister, who represents the PML-N in the parliament, said. He asserted that the house has not given the Supreme Court authority of making benches for the prime minister or interior minister.

“This law has neither reduced nor increased the Supreme Court’s power. It will further improve the court’s per-

formance,” he said. Tarar maintained that the parliament will fulfil its constitutional responsibility to remove ambiguity. Earlier, during the standing committee meeting, Tarar said that the bill aims to have transparent proceedings in the top court. “This bill was an old demand of the Bar Council which said that indiscriminate use of 184(3) should be stopped,” he added. Tarar said that the bill includes the right to appeal, adding that it was time for the Parliament to legislate on it now. “After Iftikhar Chaudhry, three other judges avoided taking the suo motu notice,” said the law minister, adding that former CJP Saqib Nisar used the suo motu notice without any hesitation.

The minister said that voices were raised against the “one-man show” and that recently, a dissenting note of the two judges of the Supreme Court had also come to the fore. “Demands were made that Parliament should introduce a law on this,” he said. He added that the Bar raised its voice on the freedom of court and that two groups praised the bill. Tarar said that the committee proposed in the bill would regulate the matter, adding that every case and appeal before the Supreme Court would be heard and wrapped up by the bench formed by the committee.

The committee will comprise the CJP and two senior judges, said the

PML-N leader. Tarar said that the bill is in the legal interest and added that it is a constitutional freedom for a person to change their lawyer. “The right to appeal the pending cases will also be amended in the bill,” he stated. PML-N leader Mohsin Shahnawaz Ranjha said that Constitution and legislation are Parliament’s job while its interpretation is the judiciary’s job. “Let us do our job and let them do theirs,” he added.

Moreover, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal Pakistan’s (MMAP) Alia Kamran said that this is the right time to bring the bill. The bill includes shifting the powers of taking suo motu notice from the chief justice to a three-member committee comprising senior judges. Moreover, the bill also includes a clause regarding the right of challenging the decision which could be filed within 30 days and will then be fixed for a hearing in two weeks.

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 the 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, filed in a cause, appeal or matter, shall be fixed for hearing within fourteen days from the date of its filing,” the bill read.



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

Shehbaz assures to address complaint of gas load shedding

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has assured to address the complaint of gas load-shedding during Sehara and Iftar time.

Responding to the point of Agha Rafiullah in the National Assembly on Wednesday, the Prime Minister said he has already taken notice of this complaint and a meeting to address the issues will be held today.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly was informed on Wednesday that agreements are being signed with different countries including those in Europe for the export of Pakistani manpower. Parliamentary Secretary for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Agha Rafiullah told the house during question hour that an MoU in this regard had been signed with Germany.

The Parliamentary Secretary said special courts will be established to address the property related matters of overseas Pakistanis who are contributing to the socio economic development of the country through remittances. Minister of State for Law Shahadat Awan said the government has taken practical steps and released special grants for the uplift of hockey. He said we have restored the departmental sports to enhance the talent pool.

National Assembly also held discussion on Supreme Court Practice and Procedure Bill, 2023. Earlier, the Bill was moved by Minister for Law Azam Nazeer Tarar. Speaking on the occasion, the Law Minister said it is a people-friendly legislation and the office bearers of bar associations have also supported this bill. He said the relevant standing committee also

held threadbare discussion on the bill and cleared it.

In his remarks, Opposition Leader Raja Riaz noted that the bill would strengthen the judiciary and help provide justice to the common man. He said the bill also represents the aspirations of the legal fraternity. Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman rejected the impression of a confrontation between parliament and the judiciary. She said enacting legislation is the right of the parliament.

Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said there is an across the board support for Supreme Court Practice and Procedure Bill, which is not aimed at usurping the powers of the judiciary. He said the powers of one man rather are being devolved to the three judges of the Supreme Court. The Minister said the mandate of the people and the constitution gives us the right to legislate. He said this legislation should have been done much earlier.

In his speech, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said the Supreme Court Practice and Procedure Bill will empower the country’s judiciary. He termed the bill as historic. He pointed out that the country is faced with multiple crises and there is need for unity to steer it out of them. The House will now meet again tomorrow (Thursday) at 12:00 pm.

PM hails removal of Pakistan from EU’s High Risk Countries list: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday hailed the removal of Pakistan from the European Union’s list of “High-Risk Third Countries”, saying it would facilitate the country’s businesses, individuals and entities.

Maryam warns CJP against ‘following’ Imran

KASUR (Agencies): PML-N Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz on Wednesday advised Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial to not “follow” PTI Chairman Imran Khan, claiming that the latter had later turned his back on those “facilitating” him.

Addressing a party rally in Kasur, she said: “The courts are taking suo motu notice today on the words of this madman (Imran). So I want to tell you, with great respect, Umar Ata Bandial sahab do not follow after this man. He has used every facilitator of his and later turned on him.” Maryam said the country’s situation would not have deteriorated to this extent if the CJP had “punished” Imran for violating the Constitution at the time of the no-confidence vote.

“The nation is asking why someone who committed such a serious crime was let go scot free,” she said. Maryam also questioned why the CJP only took notice of matters concerning the Constitution when Imran talked about them. The PML-N chief organiser alleged that Imran was being currently “facilitated” by a few judges. Lashing out at former CJPs Saqib Nisar and Asif Khosa, she alleged their children were present in the visitor’s gallery on the day of the verdict against PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif in the Panama Papers case and “were celebrating that Nawaz Sharif was about to be disqualified”.

Referring to comments made by CJP Bandial earlier this week regarding queues for subsidised wheat and the cost of elections during the SC hearing on postponement of polls in Punjab, she said: “There are long lines for wheat in the country but look closely [...] there are longer lines of those seeking justice.

SC seeks assurance from respondents to reduce political tension in country

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday sought assurance from the respondents to reduce the political tension in the country and adjourned the hearing till Thursday in a case with regard to the elections in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab.

A five-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial heard the case filed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). At the outset of hearing, PPP’s lawyer Farouk H. Naek prayed to the court to form a full bench for interpretation of the apex court’s verdict of March 1, which, he said, necessary for the requirement of justice to clarify whether the said judgment was passed with a majority of 4-3 or 3-2.

The chief justice remarked that the court could decide the matter when a separate plea in that regard would be before it. He asked the lawyer to file a written application for the purpose. Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail inquired how the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had implemented the judgment and issued the election schedule when it did not have any court order to that effect. The ECP’s lawyer, Sajeeel Swati,

replied that the Commission probably might not understand the order properly.

Justice Munib Akhtar observed whether the March 1 decision did not state that it was an order with a majority of 4-3. The five judges heard the case in open court and then gave the judgment. Justice Mandokhail said the short order also mentioned that a dissenting note had been given, which stated that the two members agreed with the decision of Justice Yahya Afridi and Justice Athar Minalah. Whether the judgment of the two dissenting judges had evaporated, he asked.

The ECP’s lawyer said as regards the 4-3 majority judgment, he had not taken instructions from his client. The Commission had tried its best to hold transparent elections and proposed a date for polling under Section-57. Besides the people’s right to vote, he said, the ECP had to keep their security in view as well. Article 17 of the Constitution ensured the execution of the right to vote in a peaceful environment, while the security institutions refused to perform security duty for the polls. He said the ECP had written letters to the Army, Rangers

and Frontier Constabulary for the provision of security. The ECP also held a meeting with the sensitive institutions which reported that terrorists had entered Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from Afghanistan, and the reports if directed could be produced, he added. The chief justice remarked that the reports related to the terrorists’ presence in KP were serious.

The lawyer said the presence of banned organizations in Bhakhar and Mianwali was also mentioned in the reports. He said a total of 412,000 personnel were required for security. The ECP knew in February that the elections were not possible for next six to eight months. Justice Munib remarked that the ECP was depending on the letters it had written on February 8, while the court had given its judgment on March 1. Why the ECP proposed the date of April 30 for polling to the president if it wanted to hold elections in October, he asked.

The ECP’s lawyer said he had given the reference of the reports of security agencies just as a background, however, the Commission

(Continued on Back Page)

Top court’s special bench orders suspending ‘all’ suo motu cases

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A special Supreme Court bench, with a two to one majority, Wednesday ordered suspending all suo motu cases — under Article 184(3) of the Constitution — until amendments are made to the Supreme Court Rules governing the chief justice’s discretionary powers.

The special bench order came on the suo motu case related to examining the grant of 20 additional marks to a Hafiz-e-Quran student while admitting them for an MBBS/BDS degree. Justice Qazi Faiz Isa led the bench, which comprised Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan and Justice Shahid Waheed. Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial had formed the three-member special bench to hear the case, but Justice Isa objected to the constitution of the bench.

Justice Waheed — who also wrote a dissenting note against the order — raised objections and said that “the points raised and discussed in the

order were not subject to the case”. The order, penned by Justice Isa, mentioned: “The Supreme Court Rules, 1980 (the Rules) neither permit nor envisage special benches. However, a Special Bench comprising of three Judges’ was constituted to hear this case.” Regarding Article 184(3) of the Constitution, the order said there are three categories of cases. When a formal application seeking enforcement of fundamental rights is filed; When suo motu notice is taken by the Supreme Court or its judges; and Cases of immense constitutional importance and significance (which may also be those in the first and second category).

“Order XXV of the Rules only attends to the first category of cases. There is no procedure prescribed for the second and third category of cases. The situation is exacerbated as there is no appeal against a decision under Article 184(3) of the Constitution,” the order mentioned.

The order said rules also do not

provide how to attend to the following matters: How such cases be listed for hearing; How bench/benches to hear such cases be constituted; and How judges hearing them are selected. The majority order further said the Supreme Court comprises the CJP and all judges.

“The Constitution does not grant the Chief Justice unilateral and arbitrary power to decide the above matters. With respect, the Chief Justice cannot substitute his personal wisdom with that of the Constitution,” the order stated. Collective determination by the chief justice and the judges of the Supreme Court can also not be assumed by an individual, albeit the chief justice, the order said. “The interest of citizens therefore will be best served to postpone the hearing of this case, and of all other cases under article 184(3) of the Constitution, till the matters noted hereinabove are first attended to by making requisite rules in terms of article 191 of the Constitution.”

Imran responsible for economic crisis: FM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in his address at the National Assembly on Wednesday said that Pakistan is facing a perfect storm.

Over the decades, Pakistan has combatted crises of varying degrees, ranging from economic and political to constitutional and democratic. Currently, Pakistan and its people are facing a multitude of challenges simultaneously, part of which is owed to a former PM [Imran Khan] who took it upon himself to destroy the country’s economy.

The Covid-19 pandemic’s devastating impact as well as the conflict between Ukraine and Russia has added to the quagmire. In the midst of all this, Pakistan has faced one of the most severe climate catastrophes experienced by the region, resulting in the submersion of one-third of the country underwater. The

people are bearing the brunt of this disaster till date.

It is unfortunate that we are also witnessing the resurfacing of terrorist outlets that had earlier been driven out, such as the TTP, Majed Brigade and BLA. The very same PM who led the country to the brink of default, allowed for the nation to be engulfed in the flames of terror. Our country has combatted terrorists and extremists as a nation, from the police and the military to politicians and civilians accepting martyrdom for the sake of peace. We, as a nation, achieved what the rest of the world and NATO could not in Afghanistan. We had reduced the capacity of these terror organisations to the extent that they were not even able to recruit people. It is our misfortune that a PM was imposed on us, who behind the backs of the people, decided to pardon the terrorists who had attacked the children of APS and had the blood of the innocent people of the country on

their hands. The incompetent and selected PM pardoned and released these terrorists and brought them to KPK and former tribal territories in flocks of thousands. The people of the tribal areas rendered huge sacrifices to face these terrorists courageously. Just as the tribal areas were starting to progress, this incompetent former PM decided to bring these terrorists from Afghanistan.

Even today when Pakistan faces this influx of crises, including those related to its security, economy and democracy, it is owed to one selected PM. We brought forth political stability by forgetting the bitter past and moving towards consensus for the sake of the nation. Just as we signed the Charter of Democracy, restored democracy and the 18th Amendment along with giving KP its identity and the provinces their rights through the NFC Award, undemocratic forces began a hybrid war against this democratic consensus among the political parties. This

war was being fought through a plethora of means, including the media as politicians were hand-picked and faced character assassination as well as cases. The purpose of this was to damage the trust that the Pakistani people had in not only the politicians, but the democratic system as a whole. Why did General Hameed Gul bring Imran Khan into politics in 1996? Then, the role of General Pasha, General Ziaheer-ul-Islam and General Faiz Hameed is before the people to see. They were all involved in the hybrid war against the democratic system of the country. Iftikhar Chaudhary laid the basis of the dictatorial role of the Chief Justice, the very monopoly that is being raised as a concern today by the court’s own judges. He too was part of the hybrid war, that began as anti-PPP but had deep-rooted aims, which revolved around abolishing the 18th Amendment and ridiculing democracy.



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LWMC fires 172 employees over absenteeism

LAHORE (APP): The management of Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) has dismissed from service 172 employees over absenteeism. According to a spokesperson for LWMC, Chief Executive Officer Babar Sahib Din ordered for strict monitoring of the employees and made major decisions to improve the sanitation system of the city.

The LWMC issued a notification of dismissal of 172 employees and also sent back 125 regular employees to the Municipal Corporation Lahore (MCL). Also, 47 in-sourced staff were also terminated.

The LWMC CEO said that carelessness in matters of cleanliness of the city would not be tolerated at any cost. He said the entire LWMC system was being monitored digitally. Attendance of workers in the field, time of vehicle departure, and arrival from workshop are being monitored through modern online applications.

In the last three months, more than 400 employees had been sent home for taking long leave without prior permission.

Furthermore, digital registration of stock had also been formally started. All workshops are being monitored with the help of modern CCTV cameras, the spokesperson added.

Fake lady doctor arrested

KARACHI (APP): A fake lady doctor involved in looting patients was arrested from the limits of Eidgah police station on Wednesday. According to SSP City Arif Aziz, the accused used to enter the Civil Hospital dressed as a doctor and carry out the thefts. She used to steal mobile phones and jewellery by injecting anaesthesia into the patients.

Accused identified as Ruqayya Kanwal, used to target patients in different wards of the hospital.

A case had been registered and further investigation was underway.

Additional IGP for strict actions against crimes

KARACHI (APP): Additional Inspector General of Police Karachi Javed Alam Odho on Wednesday chaired a high-level meeting at Karachi Police Office (KPO).

Zonal DIGPs, DIGP - CIA, District SSPs, SSPs Investigation and other senior officers participated in the meeting.

The three zonal DIGPs briefed the Karachi Police chief regarding the performance of their zones.

He directed the officers concerned to work on a strict strategy to enhance the police actions against proclaimed offenders and absconders, coordinated actions against street crimes, drug peddling, gambling dens, gutka and other crimes. The Additional IGP issued instructions to take strict measures to control the increasing incidents of kidnapping for ransom, theft of motorcycles and vehicles in the city.

Silence of Pakistani leadership over Dr Aafia detention slammed

KARACHI (PPI): Aafia Movement Pakistan has appealed to the nation and prayer leaders for special prayers in the ongoing holy month of Ramadan for early release of Dr Aafia Siddiqui.

In a statement here Wednesday, Aafia Movement spokesman Muhammad Ayub said that March 30, 2003 was the black day in the history of Pakistan when innocent Aafia Siddiqui was kidnapped along with her three minor children, trafficked to Afghanistan and illegally handed over to the officials of the USA.

He said that two decades have already passed to this shameful act of human trafficking and illegal detention of Dr Aafia Siddiqui but no justice is as yet doled out to this innocent victim of human trafficking.

He said the silence of Pakistani and US political leadership to this inhuman crime is just more shameful. He said during the last two decades Dr Aafia has endured the worst torture in the US detention facilities.

He said in January 2023, noted British human rights lawyer Clive Safford

Smith, who is an American citizen also, met with Dr Aafia and as per his report the physical and mental health of Dr Aafia Siddiqui is worrisome.

He said the political and economic conditions of Pakistan have worried every citizen. In these circumstances, Dr Fowzia Siddiqui and other members of Aafia family have put aside all other things and they just want repatriation of Aafia to Pakistan so that the blemish of 'daughter sellers' could be removed from the face of the Pakistani nation.

He said during the last two decades Pakistan has seen 12 prime ministers from Zafarullah Khan Jamali to Mian Shahbaz Sharif, but still many opportunities to seek release of Aafia Siddiqui were just wasted.

However, Aafia Movement Pakistan leader and noted neurophysician of the country Dr Fowzia Siddiqui has appealed to the religious scholars and prayer leaders for special prayers especially during Friday prayers for early release and repatriation of Dr Aafia Siddiqui.

CS visits Gujranwala, Gujrat and Mandi Bahauddin

LAHORE (APP): Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman on Wednesday visited Gujranwala, Gujrat and Mandi Bahauddin and reviewed arrangements at the points set up for provision of free flour to deserving people under the Ramzan Package.

According to a hand-out, the chief secretary said that distribution of free flour under the Ramzan package was a

big initiative of the government.

He directed the officers to make special arrangements to maintain discipline at the flour points and complete the process of flour distribution in minimum possible time to avoid rush.

Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman appealed to the citizens to cooperate with the district administration.

He also issued orders to

increase the number of flour distribution staff at the trucking points.

The chief secretary also inspected an under-construction road from Mandi Bahauddin to Sarae Alamgir.

Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman said that the development schemes should be completed within the time frame and the quality and speed of construction work should be improved.

Sindh Govt extends all out support to SFA: Secy Food

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Secretary Food Raja Khurram Shahzad has said that Sindh Government was extending every possible support and resources to Sindh Food Authority to further improve its performance. He said this on the occasion of giving two vehicles to the SFA in the Director General Excise and Taxation and Anti-Narcotics Office, said a statement on Wednesday.

Raja Khurram said that Sindh Food Minister Mukesh Kumar Chawla directed that Sindh people should be provided with quality and adulteration-free food items.

He said that one vehicle has been given to Sukkur and Larkana divisions and the

other to Hyderabad and Mirpurkhas special divisions.

Addressing the ceremony, Director General SFA Agha Fakhar expressed his gratitude to Mukesh Kumar Chawla and Secretary Food Raja Khurram Shahzad and expressed confidence that these vehicles will help further improve the performance of SFA.

He further said that we are making every possible effort to ensure the supply of quality and unadulterated food items to the people of Sindh.

To achieve this objective, teams have been formed at the district level to take continuous action against the elements involved in adulteration.

HEC halts admissions in Metropolitan University Karachi

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has halted admissions in Metropolitan University, Karachi and advised parents and students not to apply to the institution.

According to official sources in HEC on Wednesday, Metropolitan University, Karachi was chartered by the Government of Sindh in the private sector and recognised by Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan. The university was allowed to offer undergraduate degree programmes (i.e., BBA, BS-Commerce, BS-

Education, and BS-Islamic Studies) with 40 seats per semester only through its principal seat located at Sector 34-A, KDA Scheme # 33, Main University Road, Malir Cantt, Karachi, the sources informed.

Accordingly, HEC shall recognise/attest the degrees of students enrolled in only the above-mentioned degree programmes as per data shared by the university in line with HEC directions/guidelines and subject to fulfilment of all legal/codal formalities.

However, due to gross violations, operating through unauthorised cam-

puses/study centres (located at Sukkur, Larkana, Quetta, Rawalakot, Islamabad, and Chakwal) and non-adherence to HEC guidelines, the admissions of Metropolitan University, Karachi have been stopped by the Commission w.e.f. August 5, 2022.

"Students and the public at large are hereby advised not to seek admission to Metropolitan University, Karachi. Otherwise, the degrees of students enrolled in the Metropolitan University after the cutoff date (i.e., August 5, 2022) shall not be recognised by HEC," the sources added.



LAHORE: Iranian Consul General Mehran Mohd along with President Press Club Azam Chaudhry addressing during the meeting at Press Club.

Amir Mir inspects free flour centers

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information Aamir Mir here on Wednesday visited three free flour distribution points in Model Bazaar Harbanspura, Siddique Palace Marquee, and Taj Palace Asim Town to review facilities being provided to the citizens by Punjab government.

The provincial minister ordered to form a separate queue at the Harbanspura free flour distribution point for the convenience of elderly citizens, and for women accompanied by children.

The administration was also

instructed to eliminate queues from the main road to protect them from the sun. He said that arrangements should be made for the queues and seating of the beneficiaries at a safe place away from the road.

Amir Mir reprimanded the in-charge Ali Shahid for poor arrangements at the Siddique Palace and directed Assistant Commissioner Shalamar Town to appoint someone afresh.

The minister directed to immediately establish information counters at entry points of centres, and also

directed to increase the number of staff at the free flour points for better management.

Government employees should perform their duties sincerely and treat the beneficiaries with utmost kindness, he advised.

Amir Mir clarified that negligence from official duty or mistreatment towards free flour beneficiaries would not be tolerated at any cost.

He also said that from today, government was providing two bags of 10 kg flour to the beneficiaries so that the people could get better relief in this time of inflation.

Evening shift in OPD, LGH eulogized

LAHORE (APP): The evening shift of the outdoor department in the Lahore General Hospital (LGH) is a blessing for citizens.

These views were expressed by International Human Rights Movement Central Chairman Muhammad Nasir Iqbal Khan during his visit to the OPD, LGH here on Wednesday.

He said that a large number of people were benefiting from this facility every day. Citizens who were unable to go outdoors in the morning for their medical issues during the day due to their personal engagements, now they could avail OPD evening shift after leaving their offices, he added. He appreciated the Principal PGMI/AMC/LGH Prof Muhammad Al-Fareed Zafar who was striving for welfare of the poor and the sick and said that far-reaching reforms of the principal for further innovation in the medical facilities available at the LGH were unable to be denied. Nasir Iqbal said the LGH was the only government hospital in Punjab where a second shift of OPD was working for the convenience of citizens. He demanded that government hospitals of all four provinces including Punjab should start evening shifts in their respective outdoor departments by imitating the LGH.

He said that in this era of high inflation, providing modern medical facilities as well as free medicines to citizens in outdoor department of the LGH was certainly a desirable initiative according to the government's policy.

DMC East launches plantation around mosques

KARACHI (APP): The Administration district East has launched a tree plantation campaign to develop greenery around the mosques and Imambargahs situated in the district East here. Administrator DMC East Syed Shakeel Ahmed along with officials concerned also planted saplings in various mosques in Gulistan-e-Jauhar and Baitul Mukarram Masjid at Gulshan-e-Iqbal, said a statement on Wednesday.

He said that we were reaching mosques and Imambargahs of different areas for plantation. The mosques where places are not available for plantation, we will provide saplings in large pots.

In a complaint centre set up at Numaish Chowranghi dozens of complaints are being received every day, which are being resolved within 24 hours.

IG Sindh directs to launch drive to arrest absconders

KARACHI (APP): Inspector General of Sindh Police Ghulam Nabi Memon on Wednesday directed that a 15-day long special campaign be launched to arrest the absconders. He said this while chairing a meeting regarding Information Technology here, said a statement.

The participants of the meeting were briefed that around 216 accused were arrested during raids and snap checking as well as by

using "Talaash app". Nine wanted and 21 absconders were among the arrested accused, they said.

The IGP Sindh directed the officials concerned that the data containing the complete details of the absconders and wanted to be accused of different districts of Sindh should be updated. He said that letters should be sent to the concerned departments to block the computerized

national identity cards and freeze bank accounts of those absconders and wanted suspects whose complete details are available on the record. He said legal action should be taken to declare the absconding accused as wanted. Additional IGP Finance and Welfare Sindh, DIG IT, DIG Finance along with Admin CPO and Establishment-I Sindh were in attendance on the occasion.

Free medical camp conducted by security forces at Govt Primary School Khyali Kor

F.P. Report

MOHMAND: A free medical camp was conducted by security forces at Govt Primary School Khyali Kor district Mohmand (near the Pakistan-Afghan border) under the supervision of the Pakistan Army Medical team. The medical team consisted of doctors and nursing assistants who provided necessary medical assistance to the patients of the area.

A total of 858 patients were checked during the medical camp, which included 238 males, 286 females and 334 children. Patients were provided with medical advice and referrals for further treatment, if required. The medical team also distributed free medicines to the patients.

The local residents of the area appreciated the



efforts undertaken by the security forces and expressed their gratitude towards the Pakistan Army Medical team for conducting the free medical camp. The residents also expressed their desire that such medical camps should be a regular feature in the area.

The medical camp was a part of the ongoing efforts of the security forces to provide necessary medical

assistance to the people living in the far-flung areas of the country. The security forces are committed to providing healthcare facilities to the people and ensuring their well-being.

The security forces will continue to work towards the betterment of the people living in the remote areas of the country by conducting such medical camps and providing necessary medical assistance.

CCPO Lahore visits PSCA

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Lahore Additional IG Bilal Siddique Kamyana, on Wednesday visited Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA). Chief Operating Officer Punjab Safe Cities Authority Kamran Khan welcomed the CCPO.

Bilal Siddique Kamyana presided over a meeting of senior police officers of Lahore Police district in Punjab Safe Cities Authority. DIG Operations Afzal Ahmad Kausar, COO Punjab Safe Cities Authority Kamran Khan, SSP Operations Sohaib Ashraf, SP Security Dost Muhammad, all SsP of Operations and Investigation Wings, SP Dolphin Squad Zohaib Ranjha, SP CRO Ayesha Butt and other concerned officers attended the

meeting. Chief Operating Officer PSCA Kamran Khan briefed the CCPO Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana in detail regarding the aims and objectives of Punjab Safe Cities Authority, it's working and services provided to Lahore police and other departments. Kamran Khan informed that PSCA had been providing the latest information technology based services to Lahore police for smart policing.

CCPO Bilal Siddique Kamyana appreciated the services of Punjab Safe Cities Authority regarding the maintenance of law and order in the city, crime control and traffic management. He said that the Lahore Police should make full use of the IT based facilities of the Punjab Safe Cities Authority to ensure

effective crime fighting. The facilities provided by PSCA had proved to be very helpful to Lahore police in crime prevention and detection, he added.

The CCPO Lahore further said that all units of Lahore Police should make further improvements in emergency response, traffic management, counter surveillance, crime control and service delivery through electronic evidence through CCTV cameras of PSCA. He said that the Punjab Safe Cities Authority's CCTV cameras had greatly helped police in the arrest of thieves, dacoits and dangerous offenders and court absconders with the use of face recognition and vehicle owner tracing technology.



LAHORE: Workers are busy frying samosas for Iftar at Lakshmi Chowk during the holy month of Ramadan.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali in a meeting with Mayors elected from tribal districts of province.

Labor Department sector of global importance: Manzoor

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Labour, Excise and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi has said that labour is a sector of global importance, so the officials of this department should focus to make its performance better and more transparent.

This would enable the KP govt to increase the capacity of our manpower and production but also our rating and reputation would enhance globally, he added.

He was speaking at a briefing on the performance of the Labour Directorate at his office Civil Secretariat Peshawar. On this occasion, Director Labour Irfanullah Khan briefed the minister in detail about the perform-

ance of Labour Directorate especially on implementing labour laws in the province, labor-friendly legislation, ensuring weights and measures, working of the labour courts and tribunals, as well as the welfare of workers, social security and increasing labours productivity.

Haji Manzoor Afridi expressed satisfaction that the labour laws of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in terms of legislation are acknowledged at the national level and even other provinces

imitated and followed our labour laws. Similarly, he said that although our province is very backward from industrialization point of view, but even then no registered factory closed down in the province for the past three decades and all kind of compensations have been paid to the workers on time, which speaks volumes for the good performance of the KP labour Directorate.

The minister directed that in addition to the effective

implementation of the labour laws, full attention should be paid to the welfare of the working class and increase in their productivity so that our province is rapidly on the path of industrial and economic prosperity. He directed to remove the shortage of staff in the district offices of Labour Directorate all over the province including the merged districts and to fill up all the vacant posts as soon as possible.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister Labour and Excise Haji Manzoor Afridi being briefed on performance of Labour Directorate by Director Irfanullah Khan.

YDA lauds dissolution of MTI policy board — demands audit of SIC, MTI hospitals

PESHAWAR (APP): The Young Doctors Association (YDA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Wednesday appreciated the caretaker provincial government for dissolving the Medical Teaching Institutions (MTI) policy board and hoped that a notification of dissolution of the board of governors would also be issued soon.

In a statement issued here, the Young Doctors Association (YDA) said that it was a long-awaited demand of the doctors' community which was fulfilled by the interim government of the province, adding that the role of Special Assistant to the CM Dr. Riaz Anwar and Health Advisor Dr. Abid Jamil was

highly commendable. They urged the chief minister to also order notification of the dissolution of the board of governors of MTI as well.

It said that the previous government of PTI spent billions of rupees on Medical Teaching Institutions (MTI) hospitals and colleges in the name of people's welfare, adding that the government should also order a probe into the amount spent.

Dr. Hafeez Orakzai of Young Doctors Association (YDA) alleged that the past government committed billions of rupees in corruption and irregularities in the name of Sehat Insaf Card (SIC) which had not been

audited. He demanded an immediate probe and audit of SIC and Medical Teaching Institutions (MTI) hospitals.

He said that PTI ran the periphery hospitals on public-private partnership but despite that, all the patients were referred to Peshawar because the past government did not concentrate on the conditions of the hospitals due to the poor policies of the former health minister.

It is worth mentioning here that the secretary health department of KP on March 25 notified the dissolution of the policy board of Medical Teaching Institutions (MTI) at the provincial level.

PHC calls Full Court Reference today for outgoing CJ

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A full court reference will be held today (on Thursday) to pay tribute to honorable Chief Justice Peshawar High Court Justice Qaiser Rashid Khan on the eve of his lordship laying off robes on attaining the age of superannuation on 30th March 2023.

Meanwhile, President of Pakistan has pleased to appoint Justice Rooh-ul-Amin Khan as Chief Justice Peshawar High Court for one day because he is attaining superannuation on 31st March.

Moreover, President of Pakistan is also issued a notification regarding appointment of Justice Musrati Hilali to act as Chief Justice Peshawar High Court from 1st April 2023.

Secretary chairs meeting on flour distribution

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has assigned the responsibility of supervision of free flour distribution to the Secretary Industries.

In this regard an online meeting was chaired by the Secretary Industries here on Wednesday that was attended by the Commissioner D I Khan Division, Nisar Ahmad, Commissioner Peshawar, Director Industries and Commerce, deputy commissioners, district food controllers through video link.

At the meeting various aspects and methods of flour availability and distribution were discussed. Secretary Industries was apprised about the distribution of free flour so far made in the province. The Secretary expressed satisfaction over distribution of free flour to the deserving people.

He said strict supervision of the process of flour distribution should be conducted so that no deserving person remains deprived of the facility. The meeting also agreed upon taking solid steps for provision of other daily use items in the markets at prescribed rates.

Hamza Foundation services praised

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Abdullah Khan has visited Hamza Foundation Welfare Thalassaemia Hospital and Blood Transfusion Services Peshawar, on Wednesday.

Founding Chairman Ijaz Khan and Dr. Tariq Khan Medical Director Hamza Foundation briefed in detail the Chief guest about the welfare services of the organization for its registered 1452 poor Thalassaemia, Hemophilia and Blood cancer patients. The Chief guest visited different sections of the organization took great interest in newly installed Elisa (Cia-Cobas e 411) screening machine, met with patients and parents, he highly appreciated the free welfare services of the organization.

DIG promised that he will continue his support and help of Hamza Foundation for its noble cause through blood and also through financial donation and Zakat. On this occasion Chairman HF Ijaz Khan has thanked the chief guest for his visit during the holy month of Ramadan and also presented shield of Hamza Foundation to the chief guest.

87 shopkeepers arrested

PESHAWAR (APP): District administration Peshawar during a crackdown against profiteers arrested 87 shopkeepers including the managers of some mega malls in various localities of the district on Wednesday.

On the directives of DC Peshawar, Shah Fahad, the officers of the district administration carried out an inspection of bazaars in various localities including the interior city and inspected a total of 348 shops and arrested 87 shopkeepers.

Property tax from PTA: PHC stops Excise& taxation

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice SM Attique Shah stopped Excise& Taxation from receiving property tax from Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), on Wednesday.

PHC has also stopped provincial government from any adverse actions in this regard while PTA's lawyer Jahanzeb Mehsud Advocate appeared before court.

The counsel informed

that PTA is a federal department while its operations are carried out as per procedure and rules of federation, but from last few years Excise& Taxation is demanding property tax while the petitioner submit it with observations.

PTA's lawyer further argued that PHC has already declared null and void notification issued to State Bank in this regard by stating that Federal Government didn't liable to submit property tax while added that telecommunication authority is also a federal department.

However, Assistant Advocate General Yasin Raza argued that the writ petition is not maintainable because PTA has already submitted property tax while approached PHC after four- or five-year following submission of taxes consecutively.

PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice SM Attique Shah stopped Excise& Taxation department from receiving property tax from Pakistan Telecommunication Authority and ordered respondents to submit reply in this regard.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Kaka Khel addressing a press conference.

Hilali to become first female CJ of PHC on Apr 1

PESHAWAR (APP): Justice Musarrat Hilali would become the first female Chief Justice of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) on April 1 after the retirement of current Chief Justice Qaiser Rasheed.

She would be the second female who would become CJ of a high court after Justice Tahira Safdar, the CJ of Balochistan High Court.

Justice Musarrat Hilali was among the senior-most judges of PHC and would serve as CJ till her retirement. Born in Peshawar on August 08, 1961, she received Law Degree from Khyber Law College

Peshawar University and enrolled as an Advocate of District Courts in 1983, as an Advocate of the High Court in 1988 and as an Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2006.

Being a female she had several achievements in her career including being the first female elected office bear on the post of Secretary at the bar from 1988-1989, vice president at the bar (twice) from 1992 to 1994, General Secretary 1997-1998, first female twice elected as an executive member of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) from 2007-2008

and 2008-2009.

She was also the first female Additional Advocate General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from November 2001 to March 2004 and was later appointed as the first female Chairperson Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Environmental Protection Tribunal. She also served as the first female Ombudsman for the Protection against Harassment of Women at Workplace.

She was elevated to the Bench as Additional Judge on March 26, 2013, and confirmed as a permanent judge of the Peshawar High Court on March 13, 2014.

Security Forces distribute bedding, clothes and seeds



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Frontier Corps North, in collaboration with international NGOs, conducted a social engagement campaign in the Shalman area of Khyber district. The aim of the campaign was to provide assistance to the needy families residing in border villages, including Gohar, Gulab, Samsai and Shinpook.

As part of the campaign, the Frontier Corps North distributed bedding and

new clothes to 150 families in the aforementioned villages.

Each set of bedding and clothes included male and female shawls, quilts, pillows, shawls for boys & girls, caps, gloves, socks, children's sweaters for boys & girls and bedsheets.

In addition to the distribution of bedding and new clothes, the Frontier Corps North also provided high-quality hybrid seeds of cucumber, bitter gourd and hybrid tomato to the farmers to enable them to

cultivate crops that are more resilient and productive, which in turn will help to improve their livelihoods.

Locals appreciated the efforts of the Frontier Corps North and said that "it's a commendable effort to alleviate the suffering of the underprivileged families in the border villages of Shalman. We hope that such initiatives will continue in the future and make a positive impact on the lives of the people in these communities".

City police seizes 118 KG hashish from a car

PESHAWAR (APP): The city police have seized 118-kilogram hashish from secret cavities of a motorcar near the Chamkani area, however, the accused escaped from the scene.

According to a Peshawar police spokesman, on a tip-

off that a huge cache of narcotics was being smuggled out down the country via motorway, the chamkani police was alerted.

Meanwhile, the suspected car appeared on the scene from Peshawar's side and was overpowered after a little

chase that led to the recovery of 118-kilogram of hashish concealed in its secret cavities.

However, the smugglers escaped from the scene by taking advantage of the nearby crops. Police registered a case and started investigation.

Police seized large cache of illegal weapons

PESHAWAR (APP): Bhana Mari Police on Wednesday recovered a large number of illegal weapons, ammunition and parts from a warehouse on the service road of the main ring road service road and arrested the alleged armed smuggler.

According to detail, a police team under the supervision of DSP Suburban Mukhtiar Ali along with SHO Bhana Mari Mudassar Hayat, recovered a large number of illegal arms, ammunition and parts from the warehouse situated on the service road of the main Ring Road.

The Police have arrested one alleged armed smuggler Sanaullah, son of Shafiq for possessing illegal weapons.

The arrested accused was the resident of Barber Mashukhel.

As soon as the opportunity arose, preparations were being made to smuggle arms and ammunition to Punjab and other districts.

The alleged accused confessed to his crime during the preliminary investigation, Police said.

UoP terminates contract of security company

PESHAWAR (APP): The administration of the University of Peshawar (UoP) has terminated the contract of a private security company after the killing of its security supervisor allegedly by a security guard.

The decision has been taken in the wake of a protest by the Peshawar University Teachers' Association (PUTA) and other

administrative employees against the killing of a lecturer and a security supervisor by security guards at Islamia College University and UoP respectively.

The decision was taken after the involvement of security guards in both the murder incidents was proved and it was established by the police during the interrogation that the

security guard of the private company was untrained.

According to a UoP official, more than 50 personnel of a private security company, the university's own security guards and police were responsible for security at UoP and now the security of University of Peshawar would be handed over to the police.



PESHAWAR: People buying chilies from a shop in Peepal Mandi.



In brief

'Sasti Roti Tandoor' opened F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: Al-Khidmat Foundation has kicks-off "Sasti Roti Tandoor" for provision of bread on Rs10 to marginalized segments of society during Ramazan at Takhtbhai, on Wednesday. According to details, the 'Sasti Roti Tandoor' was inaugurated by Jammata-e-Islami district Emir Ghulam Rasool, former Member Provincial Assembly Mian Nadir Shah and Former tehsil Nazim Muhammad Nawaz Tahir with the aim to ensure provision of bread to every poor and deprived segment of society. JI Emir Nauman Yousaf and Maulana Abdullah addressed the inaugural ceremony while claimed that the tandoor is established for provision of subsidized bread to marginalized segments with dignity. The speakers argued well to do persons to cooperate with Al-Khadmit foundation and support deprived segments during month of Ramazan.

Distribution of flour reviewed F.P. Report

MULTAN: Under the Ramazan package of the Punjab government, free flour is being provided to the citizens - Provincial Minister for Communications and Works and Excise Bilal Afzal and Commissioner Aamir Khattak visited the free flour points of Khanewal and Jahaniyan - Provincial Minister Bilal Afzal gave free flour on this occasion. Provincial Minister reviewed the supply of flour and expressed satisfaction over the arrangements. He also inquired about the supply of free flour from the citizens present on the occasion. Speaking to the media on this occasion, Minister Bilal Afzal said that Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has given a historic Ramazan package to the people of the province. Commissioner Multan Division Aamir Khattak said on this occasion that the divisional and district administrations of the four districts are monitoring the supply of free flour themselves. The best arrangements are our first priority. While giving a briefing, he said that so far more than 4 lakh bags of free flour have been distributed in the district, the number of counters has been increased at the centers where there is a rush - the DPO Umer Farooq said that foolproof security arrangements have been made by the police.

Two youths killed in mishap

MORO (INP): Two youths lost their lives when a motorcycle collided with a trailer at the National Highway near Moro on Wednesday. Rescue officials said the deceased have been identified as Qadir Bakhsh and Mushtaq. They both belonged to Gul Muhammad Jaysar village of Moro. A police team reached the site of the accident and shifted the dead bodies to a hospital. The police carried out all the necessary legal formalities. A protest was also held by the bereaved family on the accidental death of the two young men.

Citizens' boycott cut fruit sale

FAISALABAD (INP): After the boycott of fruit items by the citizens the sale of fruit items in Faisalabad division was reportedly drastically decreased by at least 50pc. The campaign was launched on social media by the concerned citizens of Karachi against the hike in fruit prices in Ramazan and it had reached the Punjab cities too.

ADC Kohat along with WSSCK officials pay visits to various areas

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Kohat Ms. Reena Suhrawardy on Wednesday paid visit to various areas of Kohat city along with the Water and Sanitation Services Company Kohat (WSSCK) Deputy General Manager Tahir Afif and Chief Sanitary Inspector Muhammad Sohail.

According to the details, shared by the WSSCK Media cell here, the Additional Deputy Commissioner Kohat Reena Suhrawardy along with Deputy General Manager of WSSCK Tahir Afif and Chief Sanitary Inspector Muhammad Sohail visited different areas of Kohat city and especially reviewed the cleaning of major and small drains.

The WSSCK Deputy General Manager Tahir Afif and Chief Sanitary Inspector Muhammad Sohail and Additional Deputy Commissioner Kohat Rina Suhrawardy visited the Komen Hangu Road, Sabzi Mandi Bazar, Main Bazar, Zargran Bazar and Miyankhel Bazar. During the visit, Deputy General Manager Tahir Afif briefed the senior official on the problems faced in connection with cleanliness.



They were told that almost all small drains in the bazaars have been encroached due to which sanitation staff face difficulty in cleaning.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Kohat Reena Suhrawardy expressed satisfaction over the ongoing cleaning plan undertaken by WSSCK.

Reena Suhrawdy said that special attention is needed for cleaning

drains and for this the district administration has taken steps to remove encroachments. Together with will organize the whole plan. WSSCK Manager Media and Communication Asma Ali, Assistant Manager Sewerage and Drainage Iqra Fayaz, Assistant Manager Solid Waste Management Imad and Assistant Engineer Abdullah were also present on the occasion of the visit.

Three dacoits killed in alleged police encounter

BAHAWALPUR (INP): Three dacoits were killed in an alleged police encounter at Head Rajkan area in Bahawalpur on Wednesday.

A police official said the dacoits killed in the encounter identified as Haji Ahmed, Sadiq Hussain and Sohail Asghar and belonged to Muzaffargarh district. He said that three motorcycles, two pistols and one Kalashnikov had been recovered from them.

He further said the slain dacoits had killed a youth, Sajid Ali, a few days ago in Head Rajkan area and they were also wanted by police in several cases of murders and robberies. The DPO said the dead bodies of the dacoits have been shifted to hospital for medico-legal procedures. He added that

the protection of life and property of people would be ensured at all costs.

Meanwhile, police claimed to have resolved a decade old case pertaining to mysterious "disappearance" of an 11-year-old boy by recovering the remains of his body from a pit in the house of a woman.

District Police Officer Syed Muhaammad Abbas told media that 11 years old Shahid Iqbal had gone disappeared mysteriously in 2013. The boy's father got registered an FIR (No.297/13), alleging abduction of his son under section 363 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) at the Abbasnagar police station.

The police interrogated several suspects but failed in solving the case for a decade. District police spokesperson Umar

Saleem told media that the DPO, while reviewing the old cases, took notice of the boy's disappearance and directed the officials to launch a fresh probe into the matter.

The police officials, with the help of modern technology traced a suspect, Mukhtar Bibi, who during interrogation revealed that the boy got "accidentally" shot dead by her son Rashid. The woman said that fearing arrest of her son; she dumped the boy's body in her courtyard. On identification by the woman, the police, after digging the floor of the house's courtyard, recovered the remains of the boy's body and sent it for an autopsy. The police said that the woman's son was absconding and yet to be arrested.

Re-opening academic activities at UoP sought F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Islami Jamiat Tulba (IJT), University of Malakand chapter staged a protest rally against the closure of the University of Peshawar and demanded its immediate re-opening.

The IJT workers on the call of their provincial organization came on the road and gathered in front of the varsity's main gate. Addressing the demonstration, the IJT nazim, University of Malakand Hafiz Hanifullah and general secretary Maaz Khan said that the educational activities had been suspended in the University of Peshawar for the last one month.

The speakers said the varsity's faculty had boycotted classes due to which the students were suffering hard. They said the protesting teachers should immediately end their strike and the university and its affiliated colleges should be re-opened for learning.

Flour quota to be double from today F.P. Report

HANGU: Free flour quota should be double from today (on Thursday) across Hangu district while total 23 thousand sacks will be distributed among residents and it should be available at utility stores, on Wednesday.

This was revealed by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Hangu Fazal Akbar while talking to media personnel at his office and added that with fortune no mishap has reported since start of Ramzan. He claimed that administration is committed to provide free flour to residents indiscriminately and peacefully.

DC said that a new utility store has been established at Raeesan which has increased number to 13 stores while 23 thousand sack of flour should be available at the facilities freely.

Balochistan govt to run green buses

QUETTA (INP): Balochistan government has decided to start green bus service in Quetta in the span of three months. According to official sources, Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Abdul Qudus Bizenjo has directed the Chief Secretary to ensure the start of green bus service in the provincial capital within three months, which will provide decent travel facilities to the citizens of Quetta.

During the tenure of former Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan, the Balochistan government had prepared a plan to purchase 100 buses to provide better travel services in Quetta, but the transport department initially purchased eight buses to run to Baleli and Sariab in the first phase.

20 booked for blockage of road, hate speech

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A recent incident in Mardan has stirred up quite a bit of controversy, as over 20 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) supporters have been accused of not only blocking main road, but also delivering a hateful speech against various institutions including the Pakistan army and government.

According to sources, the Station House Officer City Police Station, Muqadam Khan, has filed First Information Report (FIR) charging former PTI district president Sher Bahadur and Ismail, a resident of Par Hoti, along with the other 20 PTI supporters for their alleged misconduct. The FIR filed by Muqadam Khan states that on March 14th, the accused led a protest rally at Bacha Khan Chowk where they proceeded to block the road for several hours, causing disruption to all kinds of traffic.

The rally was organized as a means of protesting against the potential arrest of PTI chairman Imran Khan. It was also mentioned in the FIR that during the rally, the accused

delivered a speech filled with hatred towards various institutions, and even tried to incite the people to revolt against the government and the Pakistan army.

Sources, further revealed that Ismail, who is one of the accused, happens to be the PS of former provincial minister Mohammad Atif Khan. As a result, the police have registered a case against all the accused under multiple sections of the law, including sections 341, 505, 120 (B), 16, 18 MPO, 147, 148, and 149.

Food authority sealed two factories: District Administration and Halal Food joint operation, two factories producing unhealthy food and fake drinks were sealed, legal action was initiated against the owners, the elements playing with the lives of the citizens will continue to be held accountable authorities.

According to the details, on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Mardan Capt. Retired Abdur Rahman, Additional Assistant Commissioner Headquarters Junaid Khalid along with Food Safety Officer of Food Safety and KP Food Zubair Ali Shah and other person-

nel raided two local factories in Par Hoti area where they seized a huge quantity of fake drinks including unhealthy food. The factories were sealed while legal action was initiated against the owners under the Food Act.

Truck driver looted on gunpoint: In Takhtbhai, motorcycle-riding suspects robbed a truck driver of a private company at gunpoint. The accused managed to escape from the incident.

According to the details, two-armed motorcycle-riding accused on Malakand Road in Takhtbhai managed to escape after robbing the truck driver of a private company, Imtiaz Khan, resident of Mardan with Rs 5 lakh cash.

Driver Imtiaz Khan told the local police that vehicle number Mardan C-4663 stopped near Aasar-e-Qadema Chowk by two unknown motorcycle-riding robbers overpowered him at gunpoint in the crowded market and took five lakh rupees in cash from him and escaped. Takhtbhai police registered a case on the report of the truck driver and started investigation.

Parang Police bust gang of car-lifters

F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: Parang Police, Charsadda busted an inter-provincial gang of car-lifters and arrested two accused including one Afghan national, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

According to details Arshad Jan, a resident of Shabqadar has registered a complaint of the lifting of a Suzuki Carry van from near a ground of Government College Charsadda and police registering a report against unknown accused initiated investigation.

During investigation, the investigation team headed by SP (Investigation), Alamzeb Khan and comprising Station House Officer (SHO) Bismillah Jan and Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Saleem Khan and other personnel succeeded in arrest of the real accused including Gul Khan son of Omar Gul, resident of Sar Dheri and Jamal Khan. One of the accused is stated to be an Afghan national.

During investigation, the

revealed names of their accomplices. On the information obtained from the arrested accused, the police have recovered six stolen vehicles and arrest of more accused and recovery of stolen vehicles is also expected. Raids for the arrest of more members of the gang were continued.

Meanwhile, Police have also arrested an accused Fawad son of Wisal, resident of Shabi Khel, district Charsadda for involvement in mobile snatching. Police have recovered seven snatched mobile sets and a pistol used during committing crimes.

Samina: Racism lead to Islamophobia across globe

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri strongly condemned the attack of the Israeli army on the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the desecration of the Holy Quran in the Netherlands. Expulsion and desecration of the mosque is highly condemnable. Such actions are a clear violation of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people such as religious freedom. The international community, in particular, should stop the Israeli aggression that started at the beginning of this year.

In her statement, she strongly condemned the desecration of the Holy Quran in the Netherlands. As a result of bigotry, inhumanity and Islamophobia, the continuation of such incidents calls into question the legal framework. We believe that freedom of expression should come

with responsibilities, she added. It is the responsibility of the international community to stop such heinous acts. There is a need to discourage those elements who incite religious hatred and violence. A strong voice of Pakistan in United Nations, which is being seen as valuable in the Muslim Ummah.

She said that Islam is a peaceful religion and there is no room for extremism or terrorism in Islam.

The religion of Islam gives a message of peace to the whole world and Allah Almighty sent Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (peace be upon him) to the world by making him a mercy to the world, whose teachings give a message of peace not only to Muslims but to the whole world and he teaches peace and love. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that after 9/11, incidents of violence against Muslims increased

and hateful incidents against Muslims took place in the western world. Religious freedom is the basic right of every person and there is no expression of hatred against any religion in Islam and this practice has been declared as favorite and strictly prohibited. She further said that in various countries, especially our eternal enemy India, Islamophobia is used to achieve political goals and express hateful feelings against Muslims.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri also said that the whole world, especially in the western world Actions are needed for awareness and remedy against Islamophobia because it increases violence and hatred against Muslims. She said that hatred against Islam and Muslims must be stopped while promotion of religious tolerance is the need of the hour to end Islamophobia.

Iftar arrangements for Afghan citizens

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Iftar preparations for pedestrians' mostly Afghan nationals were set up here at Torkham crossing. Under the banner of Tanzeem-e-Nojawan Qabail, since the first Ramzan, the passengers were facilitated to break their fast while travelling either side of the border.

One of the organizers, Israr Shinwari said that they had started the initiative with self financing and observing their spirit, philanthropists joined them in the noble cause. They prepared two dishes beside pakora, fruit cold drinks and offered it daily to approximately from 300 to 500 pedestrians, he added. Israr said that last year



they had observed that due to lack of Iftar arrangements, the Afghan passengers were remained without their break fasting therefore consulting with his companions' they started setting up dastarkhwan for the pedestrians', daily wagers and laborers in Torkham to benefit them.

In the same way dastarkhwan was arranged by the local administration in Landi Kotal Bazaar to serve dozens of non-locals, poor etc. being observed fast. Other philanthropists regularly set up Iftar arrangements for the believers in mosques in the Bazaar.



‘We are all Chinese’, ex-Taiwan president says while visiting China

NANJING (Reuters): People on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are ethnically Chinese and share the same ancestor, former Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou said at the start of a historic visit to China that Taiwan's ruling party has criticised. Ma, in office from 2008-2016, is the first former or current Taiwanese president to visit China since the defeated Republic of China government fled to Taiwan in 1949 at the end of a civil war with the Communists.

He is visiting amid heightened tension as Beijing uses political and military means to try and pressure democratically governed Taiwan into accepting Chinese sovereignty. Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party has questioned why he is visiting just after China took away another Taiwanese diplomatic ally, Honduras, leaving the island with official diplomatic ties with only 13 countries. In comments in the eastern Chinese city of Nanjing at the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, where the man celebrated for overthrowing the last Chinese emperor in 1911 and ushering a republic is buried, Ma praised Sun's contributions.

"People on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are Chinese people, and are both descendants of the Yan and Yellow Emperors," Ma said, in comments provided by his office. Ma used wording in Chinese meaning people of Chinese ethnicity, rather than referring to their nationality. Descendants of the Yan and Yellow Emperors is an expression referring to a common ancestor for Chinese



people. Most Taiwanese no longer identify as Chinese, according to polls. Sun is officially still considered the father of the Republic of China, which remains Taiwan's official name.

Sun is also lauded by the Communist Party for the overthrow of the Qing dynasty, but the governments in Beijing and Taipei do not recognise each other. Ma's visit is part of outreach by Taiwan's main opposition party, the Kuomintang (KMT), to China in hopes of reducing tensions. The KMT traditionally favours close relations with China, but strongly denies being pro-Beijing. Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen has repeatedly offered talks with China, but has

been rejected as China considers her a separatist. She says only Taiwan's people can decide their future. Ma, a senior KMT member, said he hoped for peace.

"We sincerely hope that the two sides will work together to pursue peace, avoid war, and strive to revitalise China," he said, again using an expression that refers to the Chinese people as an ethnicity rather than a nationality. "This is an unavoidable responsibility of Chinese people on both sides of the Strait, and we must work hard." Ma is not scheduled to meet with any senior Chinese leaders on this trip. He and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in Singapore in 2015.

Ukraine minister thanks UK

KYIV (Reuters): Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov gave Britain the thumbs up as he took a ride in what he said was the first British Challenger 2 main battle tank to arrive in Ukraine. Britain said in January it would send 14 of the tanks to Ukraine, which is preparing for a possible counter-offensive against Russian forces that invaded 13 months ago.

Reznikov wrote on Twitter that the tanks had "recently arrived in our country" and posted a video that showed him sitting in one of a long line of tanks in an open field, all of them flying Ukraine's yellow and blue flag. "It was a pleasure to take the first Ukrainian Challenger 2 MBT (main battle tank) for a spin," Reznikov wrote. "These fantastic machines will soon begin their combat missions."

In the video, he gave the thumbs up sign and thanked British Defence Secretary Ben Wallace for the tanks. "Marvellous, Ben," he said in English. "It's...very good stuff. Thank you very much from Ukraine to the United Kingdom." Germany's defence ministry said that 18 Leopard 2 battle tanks and 40 Marder infantry fighting vehicles had also arrived in Ukraine.

Arctic Council under pressure

OSLO/LONDON (Reuters): Norway said it will prioritise a smooth transition with Russia as it plans to assume the chair of the Moscow-helmed Arctic Council on May 11, but will not commit to restarting stalled cooperation given the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Arctic Council was created in 1996 to discuss issues affecting the polar region, ranging from pollution to local economic development to search-and-rescue missions.

Norway announced its priorities, noting it would focus its work as chair on climate change, the oceans, sustainable economic development and the peoples of the Arctic. The Arctic Council comprises the eight Arctic states of Russia, the United States, Canada, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Sweden and Denmark. Other nations, including China and India, are official observers to the council's activities. At the time of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February last year, Russia was halfway through its two-year chairmanship of the council which rotates between members.

This led the other seven Arctic nations to soon pause cooperation with Moscow, putting about a third of the Council's 130 projects on hold because they had direct Russian involvement. Russia called the action "regrettable".

Russia's possible degree of involvement with the Council once Norway takes over is still unclear. For now, the focus is squarely on attaining a seamless shift from Russia to Norway. "We want an orderly transition," Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Eivind Vad Petersson told Reuters, adding, "Norway is in contact with Russia to prepare the transition." "At the same time, it is out of the question to have senior political officials going to a ministerial event in Russia and we have communicated that clearly to Russia." Asked whether the pause would continue under Norway's chairmanship, Petersson said: "We will not be able to communicate on the future work of the council until we have taken up the chairship role."

A trouble-free transition of the chairmanship is not yet guaranteed. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov had earlier extended an invitation to Arctic officials to attend a transition ceremony in Salekhard, Siberia. Instead, Norway said the transition event will take place digitally and will be limited to the level of civil servants, not political leaders. Russian Arctic Ambassador Nikolay Korchunov, chair of the Senior Arctic Officials to the council, told Reuters the transition would "pre-suppose active and responsible participation of all Arctic Council member states in this preparatory process."

Ukraine using long-range US artillery: Russia

MOCOW (AFP): Moscow announced it had for the first time downed a long-range rocket supplied to Ukraine by the United States, weapons Kyiv said were key to an anticipated counter-attack against Russian forces. The statement from Russia's defence ministry came a day after Ukraine said it received modern Leopard and Challenger battle tanks from Germany and the United Kingdom to push back Moscow's army in east and southern Ukraine.

Fighting in recent months between Russian and Ukrainian forces has concentrated on the eastern city Bakhmut, and Kyiv says it is holding out in the Donetsk region urban hub to exhaust Russian forces and then more easily push them back. "Air defence (forces) downed... a GLSDB guided rocket," Russia's defence ministry said in a statement, referring to ground-launched small diameter bombs produced by Boeing and the Saab Group. These devices have a range of up to 150 kilometres (93 miles), which would threaten Russian positions and supply depots far behind the front lines. The Pentagon announced last month it was providing Ukraine with the artillery as part of a \$2.2 billion arms package.

"This gives them a longer-range capability... that will enable them to conduct operations in defence of their country and to take back their sovereign territory," Pentagon spokesman Pat Ryder said at the time. Ukraine had been asking the United States for munitions that can fly farther than the HIMARS rockets, which have an 80-kilometre range. The West had been wary of supplying the weapons over concerns Kyiv could use them to target Russia.

HIMARS played an important role in Ukraine's recapture of Kherson in the south last year but the GLSDB potentially gives Ukraine forces an ability to strike anywhere in the Russian-held parts of Ukraine. That could threaten key Russian supply lines, arms depots and air bases. The Kremlin has consistently said the Western arms deliveries to Ukraine would ultimately not have any impact on the battlefield and only prolong the conflict and Ukrainians' suffering.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky at the time tweeted his thanks to President Joe Biden for the new aid. "The more long-range our weapons are and the more mobile our troops are the sooner Russia's brutal aggression will end," he

said. Russia's key military objective of its invasion is the complete capture of the Donetsk region, which it already claimed to have annexed last year even as fighting there is ongoing.

The longest and bloodiest battle of the war so far is unfolding in Bakhmut, a largely emptied and destroyed salt mining town. The commander of Ukraine's ground forces Oleksandr Syrskyi said that Russian forces were still working to encircle the city. "Our main task is to wear down the masses of enemy forces and inflict heavy losses on them. This will make it possible to create the needed conditions to facilitate the liberation of Ukrainian land and speed up our victory," he added. A key concern for both sides is ammunition supplies. Both Russia and Kyiv are racing to shore up supplies with the EU vowing last week a 2 billion euro munitions package.

Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu meanwhile visited ammunition production facilities in central Russia, the ministry said, and praised work to increase production of shells for the armed forces in Ukraine. "By the end of this year, the manufacture of individual units will increase by 7-8 times," the ministry added in the statement.

Taiwan told to ‘pack up and leave’ Honduras

TEGUCIGALPA (Reuters): Taiwan must vacate its embassy in Honduras within 30 days, a senior Honduran official said, after President Xiomara Castro severed ties with Taiwan in favor of China in a bid for more investment and jobs from the Asian giant.

Deputy Foreign Minister Antonio Garcia issued the order on local television, following the government's announcement over the weekend that it had opened formal diplomatic relations with Beijing while simultaneously ending its decades-long relationship with Taiwan.

Castro's main conservative opposition later announced it would reverse the opening to China if it regains power. China has long argued that democratically ruled Taiwan is part of its own territory with no right to state-to-state ties, a position Taipei strongly rejects. Communist-run China demands that countries it has ties with must adopt its position. Taipei's embassy in Tegucigalpa's

leafy Palmira neighborhood was for years one of the Central American capital's most prominent foreign outposts, as well as the country's second-biggest embassy after the US embassy.

In his remarks, Garcia said 30 days "is more than enough time to pack up and leave," adding that officials aim for an "orderly, friendly" exit. Taiwan Foreign Ministry spokesman Jeff Liu said 30 days was an "international norm", and that they would comment further later. The move by Honduras came just before former Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou began a historic visit to China, the first by a former or current Taiwanese president since the defeated Republic of China government fled to Taiwan in 1949 at the end of a civil war with the Communists. The visit has been sharply criticized by Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party.

The Honduras deputy minister also stressed the need for a diplomatic mis-

sion to China. "We have to go there to explore the big projects that China can give us," he said, suggesting that China could invest some \$10 billion in Honduras in a boon for local workers. The foreign ministry also announced that Honduran students with scholarships in Taiwan would be able to transfer their studies to China. Liu said Honduran students' scholarships would last until the end of the current term, and then they would be provided one-way tickets home.

The move leaves Taiwan with only 13 formal allies, mostly poor and developing countries in Central America, the Caribbean and the Pacific. In its own statement, the conservative National Party pledged to re-establish ties with Taiwan if it can retake the Honduran presidency in 2026. "We will do the impossible to restore relations with our brothers and sisters in the Republic of Taiwan," it said, promising to enshrine allegiance to Taiwan in the country's constitution.

Humza Yousaf confirmed as new Scottish leader

EDINBURGH (AFP): Scotland's parliament confirmed Humza Yousaf will replace Nicola Sturgeon as first minister, the devolved nation's youngest and the first Muslim leader of a government in western Europe. Yousaf, 37, narrowly won a Scottish National Party (SNP) leadership battle to clinch the party's top job, vowing to rejuvenate the stalled pursuit of independence for Scotland.

He then secured the nominations of a majority of lawmakers in the early afternoon vote to become the new first minister, and will be formally sworn in at a ceremony. Ahead of the confirmatory vote, Yousaf acknowledged he had "some very big shoes to fill" succeeding Sturgeon, but vowed to "continue to ensure that Scotland is a positive, progressive voice on the world stage". "I will stand up unequivocally for this parliament and against any attempts to undermine devolution," he said, referring to the UK government reforms that handed Scotland a host of powers over domestic policy in 1999. "I will work every hour of every day to harness the potential of Scotland and every single person," the new SNP leader added.

In the hours before the vote, Sturgeon sent her formal letter of resignation to King Charles III, and left

the first minister's official residence in Edinburgh for the last time. Yousaf will be sworn into the role following formal approval from the king -- whom he wants to dislodge in favour of an elected head of state for Scotland. SNP leaders took pride in Scotland becoming the first democracy in western Europe to appoint a Muslim as leader.

"I think what it says about the UK is that we are a welcoming group of nations, and Scotland in particular," Stephen Flynn, the party's leader in the UK parliament, told AFP. He contrasted that with UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservative government seeking "to outlaw asylum seekers" through new legislation to tackle boatloads of migrants crossing the Channel. The seismic shift in Scottish politics follows Sturgeon's surprise resignation announcement last month after more than eight years at the helm. It followed a stormy period for her government, during which support for independence has slipped.

Recent surveys show around 45 percent of Scots back Scotland leaving the United Kingdom -- the same tally recorded in a 2014 referendum which London insists settled the matter for a generation. Yousaf pledged to be "the generation that delivers independence for

Scotland," promising to "kickstart" a civic movement to achieve it and to ask London again to allow another vote. But Sunak's spokesman promptly told reporters that he should focus on economic and policy issues "that matter" to Scottish voters. Yousaf, who was health minister in Sturgeon's last cabinet, narrowly topped the SNP contest with 52 percent of members' preferential ranked votes.

He attracted criticism over his record in several roles in government. He now faces a bigger challenge to win over the wider Scottish electorate, with a UK general election expected within the next 18 months. An Ipsos poll conducted shortly before he was announced as SNP leader showed that half of Scots feel that the country is heading in the wrong direction, while just a quarter feel it is heading in the right direction. Despite winning a succession of elections under Sturgeon, the SNP also faces bitter divisions following the three-way leadership battle. Sturgeon's last months in power were overshadowed by the backlash against a new Scottish law allowing anyone over 16 to change their gender without a medical diagnosis. As debate raged, the UK government used an unprecedented veto to block the legislation.

Brazil has a new biggest favela, and not in Rio de Janeiro

SOL NASCENTE (AP): The buzzing main avenue of this poor Brazilian neighborhood is filled with people popping off buses after work or grabbing a bite. Teens attend an open-air rap battle and gymnastics class. Hymns and prayers from tiny church services spill into the night. It's an ordinary in Brazil's biggest favela, or low-income neighborhood. And for the first time since poverty, lack of opportunity and economic inequality caused favelas to mushroom across many of the nation's cities, that superlative doesn't belong to a favela in Rio de Janeiro.

Sol Nascente (Rising Sun, in English) is just 21 miles (34 kilometers) from capital Brasilia in the Federal District, whose GDP per capita is by far higher than any Brazilian state, underscoring the inequality between affluent public servants' neighborhoods and the district's outskirts. The number of households in Sol Nascente has swelled 31% since 2010 to more than 32,000, surpassing Rio's hillside Rocinha favela that had been Brazil's most populous, according to preliminary data from the ongoing census. Rocinha has almost 31,000 households, the data show. Along Sol Nascente's unpaved dirt roads of self-built homes and inside the main strip's busy stores and restaurants, no one The Associated

Press spoke welcomed the new ranking.

"We still need lots of things, like basic sanitation and infrastructure, but people nowadays have better conditions. Some even have a car," said street vendors Francisca Célia, 43. Célia added that, despite its challenges, Sol Nascente isn't nearly as disorganized nor dangerous as the favelas she saw when visiting Rio three years ago. Plus, available plots of land are much bigger. "It's a paradise here," she said. The growth of Sol Nascente's population reflects new arrivals searching for cheap or unoccupied land to build homes, whereas elsewhere in the Federal District poor people often pay relatively high rents. It also mirrors the surge of people living in working-class neighborhoods nationwide, driven by a generalized housing crisis caused by deep recession and higher rent prices, the effects of which were compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Marcelo Neri, an economist and social researcher at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a university and think tank. The number of people living in areas the national statistics institute classifies as "subnormal agglomerates" jumped 40% to 16 million people since the 2010 census, according to the institute's preliminary data, reviewed by the AP. Brazil's popula-

tion as a whole grew less than 9% in that period. Subnormal agglomerates include not just favelas, but also other terms used in Brazil to describe urban areas with irregular occupation and deficient public services. Residents of Sol Nascente acknowledge that it once was a favela, but told the AP that many areas of the community have outgrown that term.

The statistics institute ceases to consider communities subnormal agglomerates once most residents gain legal title to their properties or all essential services are available, according to the institute's geography coordinator, Cayo Franco. Favelas grow as settlers move onto unoccupied public and private land, whether on steep hillsides or flatland, like Sol Nascente. Sol Nascente still has poor public transport and unpaved, impassable roads, which flood frequently during the months of summer rains. Only some residents have obtained legal title, and services aren't universally accessible.

"I pay electricity, water, taxes, but there's no sewage nor asphalt here in front," said Débora Alencar, 39, who moved to Sol Nascente 15 years ago after finding the opportunity to buy land and build a house. "This is where I gained dignity," she added. Alencar runs a collective that receives food, clothing

and school materials for the needy. It also provides vocational training for manicurists and make-up artists, as well as dance and theater classes.

She has also been a community representative since 2019, negotiating with the Federal District's government for investments. She said she has secured some improvements, but not enough. A common characteristic among favelas is that the stigma lingers even after residents obtain titles and services, according to Theresa Williamson, executive director of non-profit Catalytic Communities, a Rio-based non-profit that studies favelas. That sentiment is familiar to Nayara Miguel, a housewife with two kids in a tidy area of Sol Nascente that now has electricity and water, and where the local government recently paved streets and installed public lighting. The federal government's cities ministry has earmarked funds for a housing project there.

"For me, this isn't a favela; it's a city," said Miguel, 30. "Of course, it's lacking a lot: I couldn't get a spot in daycare for my daughter, so I can't work; we can get to the hospital, but there's no doctor there to attend to us." Neighboring areas still feature shacks. Bruno Ferreira and his wife have been carving out a life in a destitute area of Sol Nascente for the last seven years.

Video shows guards walking away during fire that killed 38

CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico (AP): After migrants in northern Mexico placed mattresses against the bars of their detention cell and set them on fire, guards quickly walked away and made no apparent attempt to release the men before smoke filled the room and killed 38 men, surveillance video showed. Hours after the fire broke out, rows of bodies were laid out under shimmering silver sheets outside the immigration detention facility in Ciudad Juarez, which is across the US border from El Paso, Texas, and a major crossing point for migrants.

Authorities originally reported 40 dead, but later said some may have been counted twice in the confusion. Twenty-eight people were injured and were in "delicate-serious" condition, according to the National Immigration Institute. At the time of the blaze, 68 men from Central and South America were being held at the facility, the agency said. The institute said almost all were from Guatemala, Honduras, Venezuela and El Salvador. In the video, two people dressed as guards rush into the camera frame, and at least one migrant appears by the metal gate on the other side. But the guards

did not appear to make any effort to open the cell doors and instead ran away as billowing clouds of smoke filled the structure within seconds.

Adán Augusto López, Mexico's interior secretary, confirmed the authenticity of the video in an interview with local journalist Joaquín López Doriga. Immigration authorities identified the dead and injured as being from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador, according to a statement from the Mexican attorney general's office. Mexico President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said the fire was started by migrants in protest after learning they would be deported.

"They never imagined that this would cause this terrible misfortune," López Obrador said. The deaths forced the government to rent refrigerated trailers to hold the migrants' bodies, Chihuahua state prosecutor Cesar Jáuregui told reporters. The detention facility is across the street from Juarez's city hall. At a nearby hospital, Viangly Infante Padrón, a 31-year-old Venezuelan migrant seeking asylum in the US with her husband and three children, waited for her husband, who was being

treated for smoke inhalation. The previous evening, she was waiting outside the detention center for his release when the fire broke out.

"There was smoke everywhere. The ones they let out were the women, and those (employees) with immigration," she said. "The men, they never took them out until the firefighters arrived." She saw several dead bodies before finding her husband in an ambulance. "I was desperate because I saw a dead body, a body, a body, and I didn't see him anywhere." Earlier, about 100 migrants gathered outside the immigration facility's doors to demand information about relatives. Katiuska Márquez, a 23-year-old Venezuelan woman with her two children, ages 2 and 4, was seeking her half-brother, Orlando Maldonado, who had been traveling with her.

"We want to know if he is alive or if he's dead," she said. She wondered how all the guards who were inside made it out alive and only the migrants died. "How could they not get them out?" Authorities did not immediately answer that question. Márquez and Maldonado were detained with the children and about 20 others. They had

been in Juarez waiting for an appointment from US authorities to request asylum. They were staying in a rented room where 10 people were living, paying for it with the money they begged in the street. "I was at a spotlight with a piece of cardboard asking for what I needed for my children, and people were helping me with food," she said. Suddenly agents came and detained everyone. Everyone was taken to the immigration facility but only the men were placed in the cells. Three hours later, the women and children were released. Tensions between authorities and migrants had apparently been running high in recent weeks in Ciudad Juarez, where shelters are full of people waiting for opportunities to cross into the US or for the asylum process to play out.

More than 30 migrant shelters and other advocacy organizations published an open letter March 9 that complained of a criminalization of migrants and asylum seekers in the city. It accused authorities of abusing migrants and using excessive force in rounding them up, including complaints that municipal police questioned people in the street about their immigration status without cause.

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JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

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E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

A nation, who needs no enemy

CHIEF Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) has observed that Agricultural land should never be used for commercial activities and if any project is underway then how should an alternative be utilized in this regard? During a hearing regarding the establishment of an Industrial Estate on agricultural land by the KP Small Industrial Board in Swabi, the court expressed its inability in halting the ongoing construction of the Industrial Estate. The fact-finding commission constituted by the honorable Court informed the jury that the proposed Industrial Estate is being constructed on agricultural land and crops are grown on the sites. According to the Agricultural Department, only 83 acres of proposed land are barren out of a thousand acres of Greenland, which is also under cultivation by the farmers. The defense counsel highlighted that agriculture is meant only for the livelihood of local residents while the authorities declared their agricultural land as barren in a bid to establish the industrial estate.

Once, resources-rich and agricultural Pakistan has now been turned into a food-deficient state and a consumer market for multinational companies, and grain-producing nations in Europe and North America. Realistically, this change in status and transformation from a grower nation to a consumer hub did not happen overnight but it was the outcome of persistent insane and politically motivated policies of our leaders and bureaucracy that created a disastrous situation in the country. Today's Pakistan is entirely dependent on imports in fulfilling most of its needs ranging from vegetables and pulses to automobiles, modern machinery, and locomotives. There are multiple reasons for the agricultural degradation of the country, however, less cultivable land, a lack of irrigation facilities, exhaustion, and salination of soil, and anti-farming policies of the government such as the construction of infrastructure, housing, and commercial projects remained a major setback for the country's agri-industry over the past decades. Recently, there had been tremendous outrage in the media regarding the construction of housing and commercial projects over thousands of acres of highly cultivatable green land in Gujranwala, Multan, Hyderabad, and Peshawar that caused grave concerns regarding policies of the rulers that persistently widened food insecurity and caused great challenges for economic sovereignty of the country.

In fact, there are specific legislations such as agricultural and industrial policies, policies for commercial and housing projects, governmental building codes as well as environmental guidelines that govern the use of all kinds of land for different purposes. However, the Pakistani leaders and government institutions had always toed a stubborn policy and displayed nonseriousness and laxity in the implementation of national decisions regarding developmental goals, and administrative and legal issues. This tendency always played role in making up major catastrophes in the past. Historically, our important policy decisions had always been influenced by the business cartels, institutional motives of civilian and military bureaucracy, and greed of the influential that high-rise commercial plazas and private housing colonies had been constructed on valuable government/military land in the heart of major cities in the country. Meanwhile, the giant of Real Estate runs through thousands of acres of cultivated land across the country and risks environmental pollution, grain shortages, and food insecurity.

The apex court has expressed its inability in providing alternative solutions and reprimanding the culprits, censuring the government institutions that did not stand up to their responsibility and directly contributed to the construction of an unlawful industrial complex over Greenland. In fact, this was not the first time that laid-down procedures and relevant laws had been violated vehemently for vested political or monetary interests. The courts must take a stren action against the officials concerned and order alternative/ remedial measures so this hateful tendency could be overcome, otherwise, a dark and long-suffering future awaits our future generations.

Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq wars constrain US foreign policy

THIS week marks the 50th anniversary of the withdrawal of US combat troops from Vietnam, as agreed in the Paris Peace Accords. The war was the first that the US lost (possibly excepting the War of 1812) and it had a huge impact on how Americans think about foreign policy. More recently, the US also lost the war in Afghanistan. The outcome in Iraq is debatable but clearly it was less than a success. The combination of these three wars has made the American public more wary of full-scale military engagements abroad.

There are important differences between the three wars. For example, they began in different ways. The Vietnam War began as a slow escalation over a period of years in the context of the Cold War. The war in Afghanistan started quickly and with little discussion in response to the 9/11 attacks on the US. Washington took more time to prepare for the Iraq war, but the actual invasion happened quickly. Another essential difference was that many soldiers who fought in Southeast Asia were conscripted, while only the "volunteer" military fought in Afghanistan and Iraq.

There are also important similarities between the wars. In all three, there was initially significant support for military action among foreign policy elites and much of the public. That support faded as casualties increased and success remained elusive - and as leaders failed to define what success would actual-

ly look like. In all three, US policymakers lacked a solid understanding about the cultural and local political context of the countries where US soldiers were fighting. Political leaders made misleading statements - at best - in all three wars in order to gain public support for military operations. Today, foreign policy and military experts dis-

strongly shaped the Baby Boomer generation, who today are aged between 59 and 77 years. The post-9/11 wars shaped the perspectives of Generation X (aged 43 to 58 years) and Millennials (aged 27 to 42). Most American voters today have experienced losing wars and government

Kerry Boyd Anderson

tionally engaging in an escalatory spiral with no exit strategy. There is widespread reluctance to send soldiers into ground combat; many Americans are more comfortable with limited military and intelligence operations - and, more cautiously, airstrikes - than with putting "boots on

cal divides. Left-wing progressives and right-wing populists ask why the US spends so much money abroad rather than at home. Moderates from both political parties believe in the value of projecting US power and influence abroad but are more hesitant about taking military risks than in the past.

The Vietnam War did not

The Vietnam War strongly shaped the Baby Boomer generation, who today are aged between 59 and 77 years. The post-9/11 wars shaped the perspectives of Generation X (aged 43 to 58 years) and Millennials (aged 27 to 42). Most American voters today have experienced losing wars and government deception about those wars - a major difference from the Second World War generation. This reality deeply shapes Americans' attitudes toward foreign policy and their government. Despite ongoing debates about the wars, much of the public feels that there are some clear takeaways. One is that the US should be more careful about entering a war - and particularly about intentionally or unintentionally engaging in an escalatory spiral with no exit strategy. There is widespread reluctance to send soldiers into ground combat; many Americans are more comfortable with limited military and intelligence operations - and, more cautiously, airstrikes - than with putting "boots on the ground." While Americans might still respond to future situations with a burst of patriotism, they are also likely to start questioning leaders' statements and motivations earlier than in past conflicts. Finally, there is essentially no public support for nation-building, which is widely seen as having failed in Afghanistan and, more arguably, Iraq. These concerns cut across politi-

agree on what went wrong in the wars, making it difficult to draw broadly accepted lessons for the future. The wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq have shaped the worldviews of several generations of Americans. Vietnam had the greatest impact, partly because it directly affected far more American families and shattered the idea of a reliably victorious America. The Vietnam War

deception about those wars - a major difference from the Second World War generation. This reality deeply shapes Americans' attitudes toward foreign policy and their government.

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the ground." While Americans might still respond to future situations with a burst of patriotism, they are also likely to start questioning leaders' statements and motivations earlier than in past conflicts. Finally, there is essentially no public support for nation-building, which is widely seen as having failed in Afghanistan and, more arguably, Iraq. These concerns cut across politi-

prevent the US from engaging in future warfare, but it did shape when and how. Foreign policy scholars point to the shadow of Vietnam as one reason why Ronald Reagan withdrew US Marines from Lebanon after the 1983 barracks bombing in Beirut. During the first Gulf War, George H.W. Bush had the Vietnam experience in mind when deciding how far to go into Iraq. Bill Clinton consid-

ered the impacts of Vietnam when determining how involved the US should be in the Balkans war. Barack Obama considered lessons from Vietnam when deciding how much action to take in Syria. Donald Trump resisted calls from more hawkish members of his administration to go to war with Iran, knowing that his political base did not want further extensive military engagements. Similarly, the experience of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are unlikely to prevent US participation in future wars, but their political and military impacts will shape how, where and when Washington proceeds. While there is significant support for providing Ukraine with weapons and other assistance, there is almost no mention among US politicians of sending combat soldiers to Ukraine. While the US will retaliate against Iranian-affiliated targets after incidents such as last week's drone strike in Syria, Washington will work hard to avoid a full-scale war with Iran.

There are potential exceptions. There is strong bipartisan support for countering China, and US leaders would likely have more room to manage public opinion in response to perceived Chinese threats. If the US homeland was directly attacked again, there would likely be a surge of sentiment in favor of a military response. However, Americans will be quicker to question the value and long-term goals of military actions that involve significant numbers of soldiers on the ground.

How criminal culture has led Russian society toward militaristic madness

IN early March, a video made the rounds in which an elderly Russian woman says of Ukrainians: "You need to kill them all, and their children too. They're a rot that has spread and they don't like us. They're neither brothers nor sisters to us." Her words, which clearly echo Russian television propaganda, expressed a horrifying desire for violence. Such views are by no means isolated - indeed, many Russian supporters of the war favor radical solutions to solve the "Ukrainian question."

How can the brutalization of an entire strand of Russian society be explained? How can the violence, cruelty, and aggression that are usually suppressed in human nature have surfaced so brazenly? Such people are willing to give up comfort, and even their once-precious stability, for the sake of victory over a propaganda-fabricated enemy embodied by Ukraine and the West. To understand the reasons behind this shift, we must first turn not to the populace itself, but rather to

those who rose to power during the post-Soviet transition as their social background, behavior, and character are significant. Analyzing the Nazis' rise to power, historical sociologist Norbert Elias wrote that the forces that came to power in Germany were able to "brutalize" society. These forces rejected democracy, were consumed with hatred for Weimar politicians, and were driven by a thirst for national revenge.

Although direct parallels rarely work in history, it can be said that, as a result of the crisis of the 1990s, groups with an authoritarian and militarist ethos also came to power in Russia. These groups were able to crush the weak roots of an emerging Russian democracy and actively resisted the country's pursuit of peaceful development. The collapse of the Soviet Union broke the old social structure and triggered new processes of social mobility. In the struggle to control previously state-run industries and new capitalist property, so-called "violent entrepreneurs" began to rise to the top - groups such

as street gangs, war veterans and organized crime groups that successfully used violence for profit and advancement. These groupings fought among themselves for power and property at every level of society, with the battle for resources being joined by law enforcement officers, Interior Ministry employees, and the FSB, which occasionally worked in tandem with criminal groups. The behavioral patterns that formed in this environment were based on the primacy of force.

By the early 2000s, once the main battles over assets had died down, it seemed that the country was gradually ready to embark on a path of peaceful development. With the strengthening of the state, economic recovery, and the country's entry into the system of global ties and institutions, violence should have faded into the shadows. But that did not happen. After being installed in the Kremlin by Yeltsin's entourage at the end of the 1990s, Putin and his associates - who had gone through the battles of

the previous decade - perceived the power now placed in their hands as a personal instrument of control and wealth accumulation. Now they were the kingpins.

This group neither understood nor needed democracy, which they saw as a chaotic and difficult-to-manage process. Moreover, before their rise to power, Vladimir Putin and his inner circle were second-order figures - not particularly well-educated, with a string of failures in their wake, burdened by insecurities and resentments.

Even though at first many of them did not subscribe to nationalist ideology, and might even have considered themselves to be Western-oriented, they gradually drifted toward nationalism. As was the case with Hitler and his associates, nationalist ideology gave both the authorities and the masses a sense of power and superiority. Revenge against the democrats who "ruined the country" and then against the West, from which Putin

and his entourage felt peripheral, was long overdue, taking shape after the 2011 Bolotnaya Square protests and the annexation of Crimea three years later. The annexation of Crimea was a "victory" enthusiastically received by the population that doubled as one over those who envisaged Russia's peaceful development. Those who rejoiced that "Crimea is ours" did not realize at the time that a major war lay ahead of them.

The further accumulation of military power and the rise of a militaristic ethos only strengthened the Kremlin's ambitions. As Sergei Karaganov, one of Putin's main ideologues, said shortly before the invasion of Ukraine began: "The process of restoring Russian statehood, Russian influence, Russian power, which had been going on for quite a long time, had simply come to the surface ... Now as our strength, especially military strength, has accumulated and the geopolitical situation has changed, we felt the right to demand things, not to ask for them." Confident that they now had the requisite

military strength, Russia's top brass was finally ready to take its revenge on a West they saw as weak and incapable of fighting back with any resolve.

The war in Ukraine is the climax of a process that introduced violence to Russian society and marginalized forces backing the country's peaceful development. Contrary to the expectations of the early 2000s, the Russian authorities did not monopolize violence but widely diffused it, whether through the use of nationalist and paramilitary groups, extrajudicial reprisals against journalists and political opponents, or the glorification of the army in kindergartens and schools. Returning to the brutal impulses and fantasies we now find among parts of Russian society, the fusion of Putin's regime and citizens around violence has been a long time in the making. We can only hope that new forces committed to peaceful development will come to power in post-war Russia and that the civilizing process will finally be given a chance.

The Moscow Times

Israel is losing the support of US Democrats

IT seems almost futile to try to convince the vast majority of Israelis that ignoring the Palestinian issue will not make it go away. Whether it is a result of a wishful thinking or despair at the failure to reach an amicable agreement acceptable to both peoples, many Israelis simply refuse to internalize that their country's open-ended occupation, which deprives another nation of its right to self-determination, is unsustainable and immoral and, in the process, erodes Israel's democracy.

Nevertheless, if these insights do not filter through, there are reminders, though probably not enough, that not only is the democratic system suffering as a result of the occupation of Palestinian land and people, but that it is also leading to an erosion in public support outside the country - support to which Israel attaches great importance. Those who either sweep the Palestinian issue under the carpet because they do not believe there is a solution or would like to expand the settlements and eventually annex parts or all of the West Bank are also relying on the

dwindling interest in the issue shown by the international community. The world may not endorse, and may even condemn, Israel's behavior toward the Palestinians of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but it is showing very few signs of being prepared to do anything that might change this sorry state of affairs.

Geopolitical changes in the Middle East and North Africa, together with the changing priorities of the US and Europe, are a source of complacency among Israelis, who feel that they can do as they wish when it comes to Palestinians and their land.

Hence, a new and most revealing survey by Gallup on views among Americans concerning Israelis and Palestinians should dent this complacency, as it shows there is a gradual shift in public opinion, especially among Democrats, toward supporting the Palestinian people. For the first time, this survey found that Democrats are more likely to show more sympathy for the Palestinians than for Israelis, despite holding a favorable view of Israel. In reply to the question, "In the Middle East situation, are your sympathies more

with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?" 49 percent of Democrats sympathized more with the Palestinians and 38 percent sympathized more with the Israelis. This is a significant gap that might be the beginning of a change in the dynamic of the relationship between the two countries, especially while the Democrats are in power, and with even more significance when they control both the White House and Capitol Hill.

If there is any surprise in these results, it is that it has taken 56 years of occupation and decades of failed peace processes to reach the point where US public opinion, especially among the young, is starting to shift to the weaker side in the conflict. This is not necessarily support for the Palestinian leadership, which hardly enjoys the support of its own people, and it is not in support of militancy, but it is a very humane reaction to the never-ending suffering of other people. It is still the case that, overall, Republicans still overwhelmingly support Israel, although the jury is out on whether their views may

change in light of the assault on the judiciary by the current Israeli government. Politicians taking control of the judiciary might resonate with some of the more Trumpian elements of the Republican Party, but not with the more moderate factions.

The Gallup survey reinforced a similar poll carried out this year by the Pew Research Center, which also found that American voters' feelings have warmed toward the Palestinian people. This does not mean that the US public has any clear view regarding the best possible solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, but roughly a third of them support some version of a two-state solution. Worryingly for many Israelis, 27 percent of Americans would prefer a single state to emerge, run jointly by Israelis and Palestinians. This might be a naive approach, but it is nevertheless the reflection of a desire to see people enjoy equal rights. There is a continuing trend among the more progressive elements of the Democratic Party of questioning Washington's uncritical support of Israel, as it becomes

apparent that the latter is not adhering to both countries' shared values, either by its assault on the democratic system or in its relations with the Palestinians. Furthermore, the continuing occupation of Palestinian land also harms US interests in the region and beyond. For a country that has put itself on a pedestal as a champion of human rights, on some occasions more justifiably so than on others, supporting Israel come hell or high water is compromising both US integrity and the cause of global justice and human rights.

Changes in public perception do not take place overnight and neither has the erosion of Israel's democracy, but they reach a point where the balance tips and politicians can no longer ignore them. Driving the change in America are the youths of a more progressive persuasion, many of whom have been exposed to a liberal arts education and with it the human rights discourse, which makes it impossible for them to remain apathetic to the plight of the Palestinians, whether in the West Bank or Gaza, or of the refugees across the Middle East. There is also a growing number of politi-

cians who are ready to challenge the cozy and credulous approach to Israel at a time when what is desperately needed is a frank exchange between two allies, especially as one of them is gradually going off the rails when it comes to its liberal democratic values and institutions, and is destroying any chance of future coexistence with the Palestinians. There is a tendency in Israel to take the friendship and support of the US for granted and to ignore geopolitical changes.

The younger generation in the US is less aware of, or sees as less relevant, the historical underpinnings of this relationship. Young Americans are less connected to what is perceived in the country as the heroic times of the founding of the state of Israel against the odds 75 years ago. What is relevant to them right now is watching an Israeli government on a march to destroy both its own democracy and the right of another people not only to self-determination, but to lead a normal life with dignity. American politicians might lag behind in their response to these changes, but the question is for how long?

Britain is failed by a political class incapable of doing what it promises

WHO said this? "I announce today that we will be introducing - first in 20 of the worst crime hotspots and then across the whole of Britain - targeted policing to cut burglary and crime." Was it Rishi Sunak on Monday or Tony Blair in 1998? Actually it was the latter, but it might well have been our current Prime Minister, even if his pilot scheme is only in 10 crime "hotspots" rather than 20. Most people may well have responded to Mr Sunak's crackdown in the way he would have hoped, with gratitude that someone is, at last, getting to grips with this menace. More cynical types, like me, think: haven't we heard all this before?

True, the various policies down the years have had slight differences. Mr Blair's involved anti-social behaviour orders, which were abolished by the Coalition government. Mr Sunak envisages yobs who vandalise public places being required to clean up within 48 hours of receiving a sanction. New Labour wanted to frogmarch miscreants to cash-points to draw out the money to pay their on-the-spot fines for loutish behaviour. This was widely denounced as unworkable and was, indeed, abandoned. It came to be seen as emblematic of New Labour "spin" - an impractical idea put out to garner headlines but never to see the light of day. At the time, the Tories in opposition called it "ridiculous" and yet some of Mr Sunak's initiatives have a very Blairite feel about them.

This is not to say that they are unnecessary. Twenty-five years ago, Mr Blair was right to identify anti-social behaviour as a

blight on the lives of people in the neighbourhoods most vulnerable to this sort of nefarious activity. Vandalism, graffiti, harassment, drug-taking and general mayhem are a daily reality for millions. Imposing order is the job of the authorities through the police, unless they want to leave it to vigilantes to sort out. Promising to do something about this state of affairs is, therefore, a governmental duty. Failing to tackle it, having said they would, however, is among the greatest failures of successive administrations. Pledging to tackle so-called low-level crime is the go-to initiative for any administration keen to change the political narrative in its favour. Sir Keir Starmer promised almost the same approach only last week. Yet our political leaders seem oblivious to the fact that this constant need to relaunch crime-busting measures suggests previous efforts have failed. Mr Blair promised zero tolerance; Mr Sunak envisaged ending anti-social behaviour "once and for all". Sir Keir said "Labour will make Britain's streets safe". This time we really mean business. Does anyone believe it?

Moreover, new laws are not required. One of Mr Sunak's plans is to ban the use of laughing gas principally because the canisters are left around in the streets. But that does not require a new law; it needs the existing laws on littering to be enforced. Over the past 30 years, we have had umpteen criminal justice Bills and countless statutory measures. Entire forests must have been chopped down to provide the consultation documents, White

Philip Johnston

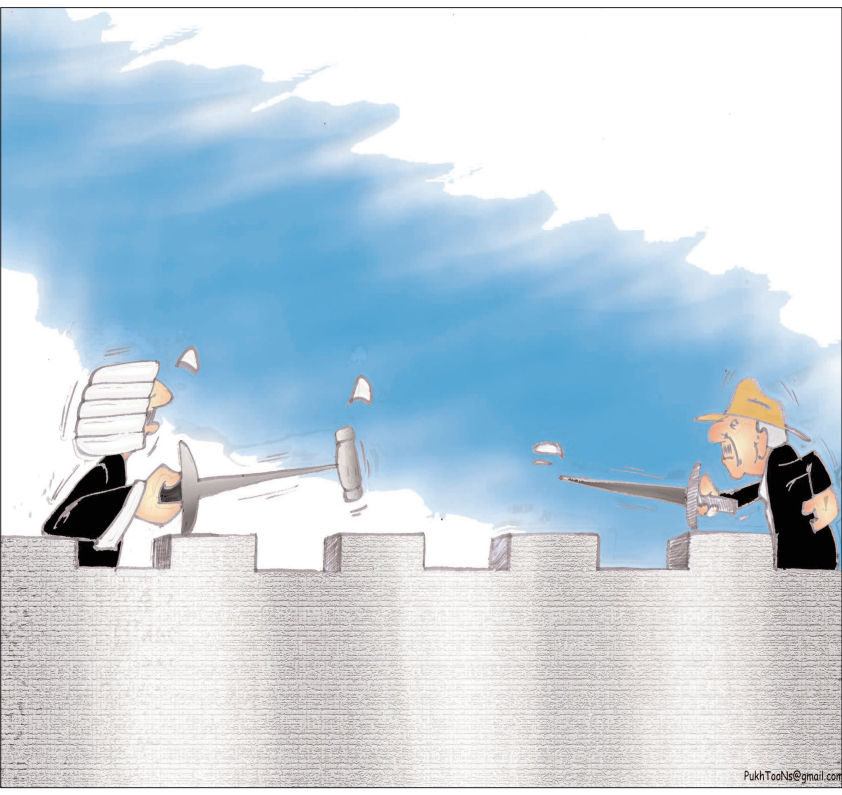
Papers, press releases and legislation to accompany these attempts to tackle the law breakers. Theresa May, as home secretary, promised a "blitz on crime". Her Labour predecessor David Blunkett unveiled "radical reforms" aimed at making the criminal justice system and police more accountable and accessible to the public. Before him, Michael Howard came up with a 27-point strategy to allay public concerns about soaring offending rates. All the way back to Willie Whitelaw and his "short, sharp shock" for repeat offenders, ministers have tried and failed to get a grip on this.

Just a few years ago, Priti Patel proposed sentencing low-level offenders to a programme of cleaning up litter and graffiti. This is not dissimilar to Mr Sunak's plan to dress them in vis jackets so that everyone can see the punishment at work. But this is already available to the courts under the Community Payback scheme and some 100,000 offenders are duly dealt with each year. Nor is it new to make them wear hi-vis jackets while on the programmes, as that happens already. If Mr Sunak really wants to look tough, he should emulate the legendary Arizona sheriff Joe Arpaio who made offenders parade in pink clothes. Pointing out that much of this has been done before is not to say the issue should not be addressed. Far from it: feeling secure on the streets and in the home is something we all want, and showing that the Government cares is critical to maintaining public confidence in the police and support for the ruling party.

But this is not a function of the number of initiatives. The Labour government of 1997 to 2010 introduced more new laws and created more imprisonable offences than any in history. When voters were asked in 1997 by the pollsters Ipsos Mori what they considered to be the most important issue facing the country, 26 per cent said crime.

When the same question was asked at the end of Labour's tenure, the proportion identifying crime as their main concern was 25 per cent. Often, the more governments talk about crime, the more people fret about it even when they personally are not its victims or when it is declining. Michael Gove said at the weekend that if small amounts of bad behaviour are not dealt with in a neighbourhood, it rapidly goes downhill. This, he said, was known as the "broken windows theory" as though it was some recent discovery and not an approach pioneered in 1990s New York. There it required a much-increased visible police presence on the streets and tougher punishments. Without more bobbies on the beat to catch offenders or deter them, no number of new laws will make the slightest difference. Crime isn't the only area of political déjà vu. We are told that people who refuse to work even though they are capable of taking a job will lose benefits, but that's been said before. The Government has committed to a new nuclear programme some 30 years after abandoning the last in a dash for gas. If there is one thing guaranteed to undermine faith in the political process, it is to promise and not deliver over and over again. It needs to stop.

The Telegraph



The war over Israel's identity is far from over

After more than 12 weeks of anti-government protests, culminating in Sunday night's mass demonstrations following the sacking of Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, a beleaguered Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu finally caved in to pressure and announced on Monday evening that he was suspending the passing of a controversial law to limit the powers of the judiciary.

On Monday, as Israel went through a series of general strikes that paralyzed the country amid an unprecedented state of polarization, with signs that the country was inching toward violent confrontations between those who are against the judicial overhaul and those, on the far right, who support it, Netanyahu decided he had no more moves to make. In his evening speech, Netanyahu said he wanted to avert civil war and was keen on preserving unity. He added that he was ready for dialogue, which he had always supported. In fact, he had ignored numerous appeals by President Isaac Herzog to sit with the opposition and find a compromise. And when Herzog proposed his own compromise, Netanyahu and his extremist partners in the ruling coalition brushed it away.

But by prolonging the crisis, Netanyahu has painted himself into a corner. He now finds himself between a rock and a hard place. If he scraps the proposed reforms, his coalition government will surely collapse, throwing the country into a vortex and killing his political career. And if he pushes on in a few weeks' time, the protests and the strikes, not to mention the serious divisions within the military establishment, will resurface. Now, in order to keep his shaky coalition united, he has struck a deal

Osama Al-Sharif

with ultranationalist Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir, who agreed to the suspension of the judicial overhaul plan in return for him being allowed to head his own armed militia outside the jurisdiction of the army and police.

In reality, Netanyahu has done more damage to Israel's security and unity in the space of a few months than any external foe has ever done since the state was created. Netanyahu is an opportunist who is ready to do anything to protect himself from being removed from office as his corruption trial continues. He is also using the far right, a mixture of religious and ideological extremists, to deliver his objective of weakening - and in effect neutralizing - the Supreme Court in Israel. It is a symbiotic relationship, in which the far right is using Netanyahu's judicial coup to change the character of the Israeli state. And this is what it boils down to in the end. The anti-government camp wants to defend the identity of the state as a secular and democratic entity, even if it is only for the benefit of its Jewish citizens. Supporters of the coalition government - what can only be described as a "dream team," bringing together the far right, ultranationalists, settlers, Orthodox Jews and religious Zionists - have a wide and conflicting agenda, ranging from turning Israel into a religious autocracy, with Taliban-like beliefs, to extending Israeli rule over all of the West Bank and beyond.

Netanyahu was able to hammer together a coalition that few in Israel believed would last for long - but long enough to pass laws that would keep him from jail. It now appears that his gambit has failed. The reaction to his constitu-

tional coup has been resounding, with leaders of allied countries and Jewish groups across the globe, including the US, united in rejecting it. It also pushed former army, police and intelligence officers, as well as politicians from all shades of the political spectrum, to issue a warning that Israel is heading toward dictatorship. The timing of this crisis is also crucial. The West Bank is on fire, with the Israeli army losing control of the security situation as settlers and Palestinian activists engage in retaliatory attacks. Tensions are also rife along the northern borders with Lebanon, while there are fears that Iran could be weeks away from building a nuclear weapon. The military establishment has warned that the Israeli army is witnessing deep divisions, with public calls for mutiny by thousands of reservists.

The opposition, which can claim victory over the coalition, will be emboldened by Netanyahu's decision to back down - for now. But this is just one battle in a long war that is now raging between the secular-liberal camp and the extremists. Former Prime Minister Yair Lapid promised on Monday that he would push to adopt a written constitution for Israel; one that codifies the separation of powers and prevents a future constitutional coup. This war will rage on for years, with what some analysts have called the "soul of Israel" at stake. It is unfortunate that the fight for a democratic and secular Israel is not linked to ending the occupation. It should be. Israel cannot free itself from the tyranny of self-serving racist, ultranationalist and ultrareligious groups unless it finally delinks itself from the Palestinian people and allows them to live in freedom and security along its side.

S Africa mulls options after ICC's Putin arrest order

With an International Criminal Court arrest warrant out for Vladimir Putin, South Africa is weighing what to do if the Russian president accepts an earlier invitation to attend an August summit in the country. The court in The Hague issued an arrest warrant for the Russian leader on March 17 for war crimes involving the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia. South Africa is a signatory to the ICC's Rome Statute that obligates countries to execute the court's international arrest warrants.

But Pretoria is also a close ally with Moscow and has refrained from criticizing Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine - going as far as holding bilateral talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov earlier this year and hosting Russian war ships in February for joint military exercises. Naledi Pandor, South Africa's minister for international relations, told local radio station SAfm in an interview that the government was awaiting a refreshed legal opinion on the matter and would then consider its options. "It is a

Kate Bartlett

difficult situation, but, you know, I think that the Cabinet needs to discuss this," she said. "Once I have the opinion I will take it to Cabinet, so our actions will be guided by the overall views of government." However, the minister demurred on the possibility of withdrawing Putin's invitation to the summit of the group of emerging economic powers known as BRICS - Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. South Africa is due to host a summit of the bloc's leaders this August. Moscow has not yet confirmed whether Putin will attend in person.

Pandor also criticized the ICC for not having what she called an "evenhanded approach" to all leaders responsible for abuses of international law, and for focusing on some states rather than others. But Darren Bergman, shadow minister for international relations with South Africa's main opposition party the Democratic Alliance, said the government must stick by its ICC commitments. "The Democratic Alliance believes that the Cabinet

should not be extending the invitation any more to President Putin and therefore should withdraw that invitation," he said. "If they do not, they should be ready to effect the warrant of arrest on President Putin." Steven Gruzdt, a Russia analyst at the South African Institute for International Affairs, told VOA there are a number of routes the government could take. It could dodge the issue by making the BRICS summit virtual, withdraw from the court entirely, or, most likely, he said, they could try looking for some sort of diplomatic immunity for Putin as a sitting head of state.

"We've seen this dilemma before," he said. "In 2015, Omar al-Bashir of Sudan came to South Africa for the African Union Summit and South Africa was ordered to arrest him. There was a local court order. But this was ignored and defied, and he was allowed to escape from a military base." Lunga Ngengelele, a spokesman for South Africa's Department of International Relations and Cooperation told VOA the Cabinet would likely discuss the matter this week.

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No French president can wage war against his own people

Ambrose Evans-Pritchard

FRANCE has entered a Marxian state of pre-insurrection. Orderly protest over the retirement age has mutated into a deeper crisis of the regime, with political violence feeding on political repression in a vicious cycle with no visible end. This is not because the French people have a cultural vocation for riots. It is the structure of the Fifth Republic itself that renders France prey to outbursts of angry protest. The constitution creates an over-mighty Cromwellian executive that invites trouble.

The text, rammed through by Charles de Gaulle in 1958, gives the French president sweeping powers to emasculate parliament and pass laws by decree (Article 49.3) - a "government that knows how to govern", as he put it. When this power is abused, or seen to be abused, the National Assembly is fatally exposed as a hollow vessel. The opposition has nowhere to go but the streets. This in turn has led to a militarised anti-protest police that is pathologically prone to escalation. They fired 4,000 tear gas grenades at eco-radicals agitating over a hole in the ground in Les Deux-Sèvres over the weekend, two shells for every tree-hugger. Emmanuel Macron has chosen to rely on decree powers as a method of government since losing his majority in the Assembly last June, rather than trimming his sails and accepting that he no longer has the votes for his neo-liberal assault on sacred modele français.

In this he misjudges his mandate. The French people elected him - faute de mieux - to block Marine Le Pen and her hard-Right Rassemblement, not because they endorse his detested Gallie Thatcherism. They emphatically qualified his victory weeks later by stripping his party of legislative dominion. It is one thing to override

parliament on minor matters. It is another to impose a root-branch reform of the beloved pension system against the overwhelming majority of the country, after having lost the national argument, and after having signalled clearly that he would not cross this Rubicon. Over 72pc of the French people oppose his plan, and opinion has hardened the more they learn about the details. For sheer political pyrotechnics, it is as if the Tories had tried force through the privatisation of the NHS after proroguing Parliament. "It is an abuse of democracy: for this to end in a 49:3 strikes me as incredible and dangerous," said Laurent Berger, head of the largest trade union (CFDT).

The French people were open to reform in principle. A working consensus could have been found with the right political chemistry. But Mr Macron's idea of consultations is to lecture the slow-witted. He refused at every stage to talk to the unions, allied in a single front for the first time since the Paris uprising of May 1968. For two months they carried out enormous kaleidoscopic marches in towns across France. They did so with discipline and high civic spirit. It made no difference. The gilets jaunes secured more by waging guerrilla warfare. Mr Berger warned that France would erupt if the Elysée shunned compromise, and so it has proved. Five of the country's seven refineries are closed by strikes. At least 42 departments are running out of fuel. Trains and flights have been disrupted for weeks. Some 7,200 tonnes of rubbish rot uncollected on the streets of Paris. The nation is in the tenth day of what amounts to a general strike.

Mr Macron's calamitous reaction to this insinuation has been to go on television to compare the protesters - in spirit, two-thirds of France - to the Trumpian mobs that stormed Capitol

Hill in a conspiracy to overthrow American democracy. This has not gone down well. As a matter of strict economic rationalism, one cannot fault Mr Macron for trying to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64 and shaking up a pension system designed for an age when people died in their 70s. "When I started working, there were 10 million retirees. Today there are 17 million, and by the 2030s there will be 20 million. Do you think we can keep going with the same rules?" he said. French men leave the workforce at an average age of 60.4 and can then look forward to 23.5 years of gardening and long lunches: women can expect 27.1 years. This compares to 20.1 and 23.1 years respectively in Germany. They can take paid retirement at 62 at an average 74pc of their former salary, compared to 29pc in Britain for public pensions. It costs the state 14pc of GDP, viz Germany (10.1), the US (7.1), or Britain (6.2). It is a vast intergenerational transfer from the young to the old.

It also leaves France on a ruinous debt trajectory. "Financially, we have our back against the wall and a knife at our throat," said Agnès Verdier-Molinié from the French Research Institute on Public Administration (IFRAP). She said the country had been anaesthetised by zero rates and QE bond purchases that soaked up 300bn (€264bn) of annual debt issuance. Covid habits of quoi qu'il en coûte (whatever it takes) led to last year's indiscriminate subsidy of electricity, gas and petrol for rich and poor alike, all entrenching a sense that the public purse has no limits. "We're at the end of that magic money. The financial risks weighing on France are enormous," she said.

France had a lower debt-to-GDP ratio than Germany as recently as 2007 - 64pc viz 65pc (IMF data). This year France will be 113pc, and

Germany 68pc. The IMF says France's debt ratio will keep rising through the 2020s long after peers have retrenched, unless something fundamental changes. That divergence makes monetary union unworkable over time. Mr Macron pledged a "grand bargain" with Germany when he burst on the EU scene in 2017. France would grasp the nettle of reform with its version of Germany's Hartz IV reforms, make itself a fit partner for euro condominium: in exchange, Berlin would drop its resistance to fiscal union (ie, shared debts), and finally agree to establish the euro on viable foundations. Without pension reform, the grand bargain is dead, and Mr Macron's even grander ambitions for a 'sovereign' Europe slip away. So yes, the stakes are high. The Elysée Palace is playing the clock, betting that public support for the strikes will subside and that the penetration of the protests by "black bloc" anarchists will work to the government's advantage. As the weeks go by Mr Macron will prevail as the defender of public order. He will show who is boss and he will have his pension reform in the end. That at least is the gamble.

Mr Macron is offering no way out of this quagmire. He refuses to withdraw the pension plan and to go back to the drawing board. He also refuses to dissolve parliament and settle the matter via fresh elections, knowing that his Renaissance Party would be crushed. If the polls are right, the next Assembly would be a raucous bedlam of the hard-Right and hard-Left, dare one say like the German Reichstag in June 1932. Le Pen would command the largest force, entitled to become prime minister under "cohabitation" rules. The chief outcome of Mr Macron's astounding lack of political Fingerspitzengefühl is to turn the old Front National into the foremost electoral force of France. The disaster is complete.

Kurds to play kingmakers as Turkiye prepares to vote

Zaid M. Belbagi

LAST month's earthquake and the subsequent flooding are a somber reflection of the sad state of Türkiye's Kurds. However, the natural disaster has the government on the back foot, providing an electoral opening for Türkiye's opposition, including a pivotal role for its Kurds. With the government trailing in opinion polls ahead of the elections in May, the country's opposition parties are jockeying to unseat the ruling party of two decades, with the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party, known as the HDP, a potential kingmaker.

There is no doubt that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his ruling AK Party are facing their toughest election since coming to power. With inflation at 55 percent, the government has managed to slow its rise over the last few months. However, this is still far too high and is directly impacting consumer prices, which have been independently estimated to have risen to 126 percent. Persistent inflation has been a thorn in the side of the government's hopes of a post-pandemic economic rebirth. And the unprecedented earthquake damage in the country's south is a significant setback, as the government prepares to plow millions into recovery. It is hoped that such large-scale spending and industrial

production could jump-start the economy, though there is of course the risk that they instead spur a rebound in inflationary pressures.

Within this challenging context, the government is still committed to its contested economic policies, which are focused on slashing interest rates to combat inflation. This was reiterated by the central bank last month dropping its benchmark interest rate by half a percentage point to 8.5 percent in the hope that the cheaper borrowing would bolster earthquake recovery efforts. The \$40 billion cost of repairing the earthquake damage is likely to be doubled once reconstruction has been accounted for.

Given the president's promise to rebuild devastated regions within a year, the state of the Turkish economy will be central to the upcoming elections. With foreign investors shying away from committing to the economy, many had hoped that an input of some semblance of economic orthodoxy would not only improve the economic situation but also the government's administrative credentials.

Such hopes faded last week, as economic czar and former Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Simsek recommitted himself to his politi-

cal retirement. The economist saw Türkiye through the 2008 financial crisis, undertaking far-reaching reforms and advocating the kind of free market economics that would win Türkiye international friends. With the lira having shed 80 percent of its value against the dollar since his resignation from politics, Simsek's reputation for sound fiscal management would have been a great boost to the government's credentials.

Citing private sector career commitments, his exclusion from any future government is a blow to the ruling party as it pivots once more toward economic orthodoxy given the weak lira and the wider inflationary situation. Simsek, a native Kurd, finds himself in a similarly enviable political situation to his kin, who for decades have lacked the demographic and electoral numbers to pursue their agenda, but now find themselves central to both the opposition and the government in what will be a hotly contested election.

The Nation Alliance opposition bloc, which hopes to roll back the government's economic policies, had a significant change in its fortunes last Wednesday as the HDP (which has the support of more than 10 percent of the electorate) confirmed it would not nominate

its own presidential candidate. Though the HDP did not expressly state that it would unite with the bloc, it signaled a growing role for the party, especially as its votes will be crucial if the opposition is to exceed the 50 percent required to win the presidential election, as well as to potentially secure a majority in parliament in the polls on the same day. The opposition leader, retired civil servant Kemal Kilicdaroglu, will still have his work cut out, however, as recent polls by MAK and Türkiye Raporu had him only between four and nine percentage points ahead of Erdogan.

Nevertheless, elections always favor the incumbent and, despite his probity and reputation for reliability, Kilicdaroglu may lack the charisma needed to take on Türkiye's populist president. The bespectacled septuagenarian party has stepped away from its focus on secularism, but his Alawi faith and ethnic roots may not sit well with the Sunni Anatolian bedrock of Erdogan's AK Party. In a system that has been configured to strongly favor the office of the president, the opposition's ambitions may seem overly optimistic. However, whoever prevails and goes on to lead Türkiye will have some intractable problems to solve.

Arab News



32nd Annual General Meeting of BOP held

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The 32nd Annual General Meeting of the members of The Bank of Punjab was held at Avari Hotel, Shahra-e-Quaid-e-Azam, Lahore on Wednesday. The meeting was attended by members of the Board of Directors, Bank's Senior Management and a large number of shareholders.

During the Annual General Meeting, a brief presentation on Bank's financial performance was given to the shareholders.

The participants were apprised that during the year 2022, Bank's Balance Sheet grew by 24% and reached the level of Rs.1.48 Trillion. As on December 31, 2022, Bank's deposits stood at the level of Rs.1.23 Trillion showing a commendable growth of 22%. With prudent management of resources, aggressive business expansion and introduction of new products & services, the Bank has been able to post before tax profit of Rs. 18.51 billion during year 2022.

The Effective Tax Rate increased by 10% over the corresponding period vide Finance Act 2022. Accordingly, the Bank posted After Tax Profit of Rs. 10.83 Billion. Earnings per Share (EPS) for year

2022 remained at Rs. 3.64 per share against Rs. 4.18 per share during year 2021.

During the year 2022, Net Interest Margin (NIM) improved to Rs. 30.76 billion as against Rs. 29.88 billion during year 2021. Non-Markup/Interest Income (excluding gains on securities) increased to Rs. 10.23 billion as against Rs. 6.12 billion showing a substantial increase of 67%.

During the year, Bank's NPLs reduced to Rs. 51.56 billion on account of recovery/regularization with net recoveries/reversal of Rs. 0.47 billion during the year.

Investments and Gross Advances were recorded at Rs. 638.26 billion and Rs. 634.38 billion, respectively. Book Value per share (excluding surplus on assets) improved to Rs. 22.65 as against Rs. 21.26 as on December 31, 2021.

As on December 31, 2022, Bank's Equity improved to Rs. 65.05 billion as against Rs. 54.83 billion as on December 31, 2021. The Bank, during the year, managed to improve its risk profile despite the economy being besieged by severe challenges.

In addition, BOP was also able to raise Tier 1 capital via TFC issue of Rs. 8.02 billion exhibiting the faith the market has in

BOP's financial strength. Bank's CAR and LR stood at 13.11% and 3.46% respectively as of December 31, 2022.

The shareholders were apprised that keeping in view Bank's Strategic Business Plan envisaging aggressive business growth and further CAPEX commitments in the areas of Information Technology & Digitalization, requiring strong capital base, the Board announced and recommended a Stock Dividend of 10% for Shareholders for the year 2022 as against 12.50% Stock Dividend announced for the year 2021.

The shareholders were also informed that in recognition of Bank's strong financial position, The Pakistan Credit Rating Agency (PACRA) has maintained Bank's long term entity rating at "AA+" with short term rating being already at the highest rank of "A1+".

The Bank currently has a countrywide network of 780 online branches, including 140 Tagwa Islamic Banking Branches.

Further, the Bank is providing 24/7 banking services to the customers through its vast network of 706 ATMs and other Digital Banking Services. During the year 2022 the bank

expanded its branch network by 116 branches and is targeting further expansion of network with increased emphasis on Islamic branches.

The shareholders were apprised that BOP has been awarded with 11 prestigious domestic and international awards and accreditations during one year which is unprecedented and exceptional in the industry, including; the Corporate Finance House of the Year 2021 - Fixed Income award from the CFA society of Pakistan, and PBA's Best Bank for Small & Medium Enterprises 2022 Award.

Thereafter, a question answer session was also held and all queries of the shareholders were satisfactorily responded by the Board and the Senior Management. The shareholders were highly appreciative of Bank's good financial performance.

In the end, the shareholders approved financial statements of the Bank for the year 2022 along with a Stock Dividend of 10.00% for shareholders. Further, appointment of M/s A.F. Ferguson, Chartered Accountants, as Bank's Statutory Auditors for the year 2023 was also approved by the shareholders along with other agenda items.



LAHORE: Members of Board of Directors of Bank of Punjab and Senior Management officials during 32nd Annual General Meeting.

Collection of govt duties, taxes on 30th and 31st

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: In order to facilitate the taxpayers in payment of Government duties / taxes, it has been decided on the request of Federal Board of Revenue that all branches of banks including National Bank of Pakistan and field offices of SBP Banking Services Corporation shall observe

extended banking hours until 04:00 P.M. and 06:00 P.M. on 30th and 31st March, 2023 respectively for collection of government taxes through ADC's Over-the-Counter facility. NIFT shall arrange a special clearing at 06:00 P.M. on 31st March, 2023 (Friday) for the same day clearing of payment instruments deposited at NBP's authorized branches for customs collections. For this purpose, all banks shall arrange to keep their clearing related branches open till such time that is necessary to facilitate the special clearing by NIFT on March 31, 2023 (Friday).

NIFT shall arrange a special clearing at 06:00 P.M. on 31st March, 2023 (Friday) for the same day clearing of payment instruments deposited at NBP's authorized branches for customs collections. For this purpose, all banks shall arrange to keep their clearing related branches open till such time that is necessary to facilitate the special clearing by NIFT on March 31, 2023 (Friday).

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Rupee sheds 36 paisas against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan rupee witnessed 36 paisas devaluation against the dollar in the inter-bank trading on Wednesday and closed at Rs 283.91 against the previous day's closing of Rs 283.55.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 283.7 and Rs 286.5 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 45 paisas that closed at Rs 307.50 against the last day's closing of Rs 307.05, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen closed at Rs 2.15 with a 01 paisa decrease; whereas a surge of 56 paisas was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 349.89 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 349.33.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham went up by 10 paisas and Saudi Riyal increased by 11 paisas to close at Rs 77.30 and Rs 75.60 respectively.

T-shirt exports to China increased

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan's T-shirt export industry has been experiencing enrichment in recent years.

In the first two months of 2023, the Pakistani T-shirt market increased by more than 100%, growing for the second year in a row, said Ghulam Qadir, Commercial Counsellor at the Pakistan Embassy in Beijing.

He said that Pakistan's T-shirt exports to China reached USD 5.53 million in the first two months of 2023, up by 106% compared to the same period in 2022. Despite the flood which affected cotton crops, Pakistan continues to be a significant player in the global T-shirt export industry, China Economic Net reported on Wednesday.

Ghulam Qadir said that last year, in the first two months, Pakistan exported \$2.68 million worth of t-shirts to China, whereas the whole year of 2022 Pakistan's T-shirt exports to China were USD 19.6 million. "Pakistan's T-shirt export industry has several major markets, including the United States, France, and China," he added.

PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 202.48 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Wednesday, losing 202.48 points, a negative change of 0.51 percent, closing at 39,879.89 points against 40,082.37 points the previous day.

A total of 108,795,600 shares were traded during the day as compared to 87,215,381 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs. 3.212 billion against Rs. 3.312 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 319 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 79 of them recorded gains and 203 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 37 companies remained

unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Telecard Limited with 12,447,500 shares at Rs.7.90 per share; WorldCall Telecom with 9,398,662 shares at Rs.1.18 per share and Pakistan Alumin with 7,638,000 shares at Rs.37.82 per share.

Khyber Textile witnessed a maximum increase of Rs.25.79 per share price, closing at Rs.369.70, whereas the runner-up was Shield Crop with an Rs.20.89 rise in its per share price to Rs.304.00.

Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs.497.67 per share closing at Rs.18002.33; followed by Nestle Pakistan with Rs.130.20 decline to close at Rs.5103.50.

Gold prices increase by

Rs.2300 to Rs. 207,900 per tola: The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.2300 and was sold at Rs. 207,900 on Wednesday against its sale at Rs. 205,600 the previous day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 1,973 to Rs.178,241 from Rs.176,268, whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went up to Rs.163,387 from Rs. 161,580.

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 increased by US\$ 10 to \$1967 against its sale at \$1957, the association reported.

Energy giants sign MOU to pursue green hydrogen projects in Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Leading exploration and production (E&P) companies Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), Pak-Arab Refinery Limited (PARCO), Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), Mari Petroleum Company Limited (MPCL), and Government Holdings Private Limited (GHPL) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to explore and pursue green hydrogen opportunities within and outside Pakistan. The collaboration aims to drive the energy transition towards a more sustainable future, leveraging each company's expertise and resources.

The MoU was signed by Ahmed Hayat Lak, MD/CEO OGDCL; Shahid Mahmood Khan, MD PARCO; Imran Abbasy, MD/CEO PPL; Fahim Haider, MD/CEO MPCL; and Masood Nabi, MD GHPL on behalf of their respective companies.

Federal Secretary of Petroleum Division, Capt (R) Muhammad Mahmood, witnessed the MoU signing ceremony held here on Wednesday at the OGDCL Head Office, Islamabad.

Under the MoU, OGDCL, PARCO, PPL, MPCL, and GHPL will consider joint venture projects and areas of mutual cooperation for green energy initiatives. Companies will also establish a joint fund to raise equity for

hydrogen projects. As a first step, feasibility will be conducted to formally initiate the project.

"This collaboration is a significant step towards building a more sustainable future for Pakistan and beyond," said Capt (R) Muhammad Mahmood, Federal Secretary Petroleum Division. "We are confident that by leveraging our collective expertise and resources, we can accelerate the energy transition and create a greener, cleaner, and more prosperous future," remarked Ahmed Hayat Lak, MD/CEO of OGDCL.

The MoU will be initially effective for two years from the date of signing, with the option to extend by mutual agreement. The energy giants will lead the pursuit of green hydrogen projects, engaging consultants and advisors subject to the agreement of the other parties.



OGDCL launches program to distribute 100 ambulances

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) is the largest exploration & production company in Pakistan working across the nation. The company has an impressive track record of carrying out social work in areas where it operates for welfare of local communities. OGDCL has always exceeded its CSR obligations and spent more on welfare projects for the communities nearby its operational areas.

Most of the places where company operates are remote with limited health facilities for the locals. OGDCL provides health facilities at its locations to

the locals, however in cases where emergency care is required, people face difficulty for moving the patients to hospitals. Keeping this hardship to account, OGDCL has devised a program to distribute fully equipped 100 ambulances worth Rs. 200 million to District Headquarter (DHQ), Tehsil Headquarter (THQ) hospitals and Basic Health Units (BHU) across the country.

The ambulances will play a major role in strengthening the referral system, a key aspect in achieving health coverage. The delivery of these ambulances will enhance the ability of public health services to respond to medical emergencies, provide timely referrals for patients in severe and life threatening conditions, especially

for people living in hard-to-reach areas or those not able to afford transportation. These ambulances will be distributed in collaboration with the local administration to BHUs, THQ and DHQ hospitals surrounding OGDCL operational fields.

The launch ceremony took place here on Wednesday at OGDCL Head Office Islamabad and was attended by distinguished guests. The Federal Secretary of Petroleum Division, Capt (R) Muhammad Mahmood, was the chief guest on the occasion.

Speaking at the launch ceremony, Ahmed Hayat Lak, MD/CEO, OGDCL, highlighted the importance of the program in the country's health sector and emphasized that the initiative would help improve

people's access to health services. He further added that as a responsible corporate citizen, OGDCL has not only launched several initiatives in health sector but also in education, water supply, sports, and infrastructure development. Zia Salahuddin, Executive Director (Services), OGDCL, provided a comprehensive introduction to the program, outlining the salient features of the ambulances and the modalities for their distribution.

Speaking on the occasion, the Federal Secretary of Petroleum Division Capt (R) Muhammad Mahmood emphasized the importance of the CSR program. He commended OGDCL for taking such an initiative to ensure health facilities for masses across the country.

Tokyo stocks end higher as banking fears recede

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo shares ended higher Wednesday despite losses on Wall Street, as fears of a banking crisis ebbed after weeks of turmoil.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index advanced 1.33 percent, or 365.53 points, to end at 27,883.78, while the broader Topix index rose 1.46 percent, or 28.81 points, to 1,995.48.

The dollar fetched 131.90 yen, against 130.90 yen in New York on Tuesday.

While Wall Street shares ended lower, the Tokyo market proved resilient as "excessive fears over the European financial system dwindled", IwaiCosmo Securities said.

The brokerage added that Tokyo stocks were also supported by a weakening yen and strong United States futures.

The market in Japan was supported by heavyweight SoftBank Group, which soared 6.17 percent to 5,190 yen after Chinese e-

commerce giant Alibaba, part-owned by the Japanese firm, said it would split into six business groups.

Alibaba's CEO said in a statement that the restructuring would enable each separate business to pursue its own fundraising and public listing plans.

Sony Group climbed 1.45 percent to 11,495 yen, Toyota jumped 2.57 percent to 1,852 yen and Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing added 1.35 percent to 28,355 yen.

Public Notice

Auction proceedings of mortgage property for satisfaction of decree in case Bankers Equity vs Awana Banaspati Ghee International (pvt) Ltd etc., In compliance of Order of Honourable Banking Judge, Islamabad Dated: 7/03/2023. Details of subject property/site: Plot No# 117, 188, 188/A/03 Acres, Pahse-V, Industrial Estate Hattar, Haripur. Reserve price= Rs. 120,000,000 (One hundred twenty million rupees only). Inspection of the premises shall be made on 14/04/2023 at 3:00PM Auction Proceedings at Site on, 27/04/2023 at 2:00 PM. Advertiser: Haroon Inayat Advocate. Cell No# 0334-7102054

IBM inks MoU with FUJI HD



F.P. Report

KARACHI: IMARAT Builders Mall (IBM), a complete solution for building materials, furniture, and other related construction products, has signed a strategic partnership with FUJI HD, a recognised global leader in elevator and escalator manufacturing.

With this signing, IBM aims to strengthen its position in the construction industry and provide its customers with superior quality elevators and escalators.

FUJI HD is renowned for its advanced technology and professional manufacturing capabilities. Founded in 1987, FUJI has established itself as a modernised and professional elevator manufacturer that integrates design, development, manufacturing, sales,

installation, and maintenance as a whole. The company has a global presence, serving customers in over 100 countries.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman IMARAT Group Mr. Shafiq Akbar said, "We are pleased to sign with FUJI HD, which is a global leader in elevator and escalator manufacturing."

"This partnership is a testament to our commitment to provide our customers with the best-in-class products and services," Farhan Javed, Group Director Graana.com and IMARAT Hospitality, added.

It is worth mentioning that IBM is a one-stop-shop for all construction material needs. It offers a wide range of products, including cement, steel, bricks, tiles, and sanitary fittings,

to name a few.

"With this signing, IBM aims to add FUJI's superior quality elevators and escalators to its product portfolio and provide its customers with a comprehensive range of construction solutions," said Farhan Javed, Group Director Graana.com and IMARAT Hospitality.

IMARAT Group is a leading real estate company in Pakistan with over 7 years of experience in the industry. The company has a diverse portfolio of projects, including residential, commercial, and industrial properties.

IMARAT Builders Mall (IBM) is the construction material product of the IMARAT Group and offers a wide range of products and services to customers in the construction industry.



In brief

Tottenham MD banned

Tottenham Hotspur managing director Fabio Paratici may have to step away from his role after Fifa extended his ban in Italy worldwide. Paratici was given a 30-month ban in January after his former club Juventus were found guilty of false accounting. The 50-year-old was sporting director and managing director at Juventus before joining Tottenham in June 2021. Paratici and Juventus have both appealed against the decision. Paratici's initial ban only applied to Italian football, meaning he was able to continue working at Tottenham. The extension of the ban coincides with Tottenham's search for a new manager following the departure of Antonio Conte. Conte left Spurs on Sunday with the club fourth in the Premier League but having been knocked out of the Champions League and FA Cup in recent weeks. Paratici told the club website on Tuesday he and the club were "focused" on moving forward and finding a replacement. "Fifa can confirm that following a request by the Italian FA (FIGC), the chairperson of Fifa disciplinary committee has decided to extend the sanctions imposed by FIGC on several football officials to have worldwide effect," a statement from the world's governing body read.

Hasan to join Warwickshire

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan pacer Hasan Ali would be joining the county club Warwickshire on April 1 for the upcoming season 2023. The news was revealed by Warwickshire Cricket County Club on its Twitter handle on Tuesday. Warwickshire CCC wrote, "Want some good news? Hasan Ali arrives on Saturday!" Meanwhile, Hassan on his Twitter handle wrote, "Excitement on top #youbears." He said, "I will play in both the T20 Blast and the County Championship until the end of July." It is pertinent to mention here that Hasan turned up for Lancashire for the first six matches of the 2022 LV Insurance County Championship.

Wahab reviews sports schemes

LAHORE (APP): Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz reviewed sports development schemes in Dring Stadium, E-Library, Gymnasium and hockey stadium during his Bahawalpur visit on Wednesday. Speaking on this occasion, Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz said that Dring Stadium is Pakistan's first Test cricket center and it has a historical significance. "The work on 16 sports development schemes including Up-gradation work of Dring Stadium is in progress in Bahawalpur division," he added. He said that the work on all sports development schemes will be completed soon. "The athletic track will act as a nursery for athletics in Bahawalpur. Special measures are being taken to promote sports in Bahawalpur," he maintained. Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports said that a talent hunt programme for all sports including cricket, hockey is being launched in near future. "I want to see players from Bahawalpur to represent the country at the international level". He said all possible facilities are being provided to the students in Bahawalpur e-library.

Pakistan could play their World Cup 2023 matches in Bangladesh

LAHORE (Agencies): Discussions have taken place that could see Pakistan playing its 2023 ODI World Cup matches in Bangladesh. India is the host for the tournament but given tense political relations between the two countries, the idea was discussed at the ICC meetings last week, with the hybrid Asia Cup model being looked at as a solution. Pakistan is hosting the Asia Cup but India will play their games at a neutral venue.

The idea came up on the sidelines of the board meetings in Dubai, where India's presence in the Asia Cup - and consequently Pakistan's at the World Cup - were points on the agendas of both members. It has only been mentioned as an option and no formal discussions have taken place on the

matter, but the PCB has been keen to point out that India not playing in Pakistan in an Asia Cup has a potential impact on the ICC's Champions Trophy, due to be held in Pakistan in February 2025. The Asian Cricket Council agreed in principle to look at a hybrid model that will allow the tournament to take place in Pakistan but for India's matches to be played at a neutral venue that is yet to be finalised. Options include the UAE, Oman, Sri Lanka or even England.

The India-Pakistan games will be played at the neutral venue as well as the final should India reach it.

That solution, the PCB then proposed in informal discussions could be applied to the World Cup as well. The showpiece

global event is scheduled to be played across ten venues in India from October 5. But the PCB has been saying for a while now that their participation - or the nature of their participation - in that event is dependent on what India decide with the Asia Cup. Bangladesh has been proposed as an option because of its proximity to India and that it will not present a difficult logistical hurdle to overcome.

Last year, the Asia Cup - postponed from 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic - was played in the UAE, though the hosting rights were with Sri Lanka. They had swapped those rights with Pakistan because of relations between India and Pakistan. The 2018 Asia Cup was also moved to the UAE from India for similar reasons.

Morne Morkel set to be Pakistan's bowling coach, Mickey Arthur to be consultant

LAHORE (Agencies): The PCB is set to hire former South Africa internationals Morne Morkel and Andrew Puttick as bowling and batting coach, respectively, of the Pakistan men's team. The board has also agreed to bring Mickey Arthur on as a consultant while he continues as head coach of Derbyshire.

The coaching group is designed in such a way that Arthur will play the role of team director remotely. He was also assigned to form the coaching panel that consists of all overseas personnel. Former Pakistan fielding coach Grant Bradburn will be the head coach while Cliffe Deacon (physiotherapist) and Dri-kus Saaiman (strength and conditioning) will continue with their jobs.

Morkel will formally join the side after his IPL commitment as bowling coach at Lucknow Super Giants. He has previously been with the Namibia coaching staff during the 2022 T20 World Cup in Australia and is presently bowling coach with

Durban's Super Giants in the SA20 League. He also had a stint with the New Zealand women's team during the T20 World Cup in South Africa.

Puttick, 42, will join the Pakistan squad next month. His only international appearance was for South Africa in 2005 and has since worked within South Africa as a batting consultant. He recently had a stint with the South Africa women's team as batting coach in the T20 World Cup. He was previously assistant coach during South Africa A's 2019 tour of India and was involved with the emerging side. He finished his domestic career with over 18000 domestic runs playing for Western Province and Cape Cobras.

Bradburn, the former New Zealand allrounder, had been in the Pakistan system for over three years before resigning in 2021. He first worked as the national men's side's fielding coach, since September 2018, before taking over the new role at the HPC. In May 2020 when the

National Academy was revamped, he quit the job 18 months before his contracted expired during Ramiz Raja's tenure as board chief.

With the full-time coaching staff will be on location, Arthur will work remotely in a special arrangement with the PCB. Details have emerged that he will visit Lahore next month and will return before the ODI World Cup in a preparation camp. He won't be traveling with the Pakistan team to Sri Lanka nor for any bilateral series. He will fulfil his full-time commitment with Derbyshire in England, a job he does not want to leave. Pakistan were without a full-time coaching staff since the contracts of Saqlain Mushtaq and Shaun Tait were renewed. Since then, Pakistan have played just the T20I series against Afghanistan, that they lost 2-1 with an interim coaching setup. Pakistan are set to host New Zealand for five T20Is and five ODIs starting April 14.

PCB announces details of triangular stages of U13, U16 Inter-Region Tournaments

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Cricket Board Wednesday announced the details of the triangular stages of Inter-Region U13 and Inter-Region U16 One-Day tournaments 2022-23 with Peshawar, Karachi, and Lahore regions will compete in a 30-over-a-side U13 tournament triangular stage, which will commence from April 29.

In the 50-over U16 tournament, FATA, Karachi and Lahore regions will compete in the triangular stage starting on 30 April. The top two teams from the triangular stage in U13 and U16 tournaments will compete in the final on May 5-6, respectively.

In the triangular stage of the Inter-Region U13 One-Day Tournament, Peshawar Region will take on Lahore Region on April 29. On 1 May, Peshawar Region will go against Karachi Region,

while on May 3, Karachi Region will compete against Lahore Region. All matches including the final between the top two sides are scheduled to take place at Divisional Public School in Faisalabad.

Furthermore, in the triangular stage of the Inter-Region U16 One-Day Tournament, FATA Region will feature against Lahore Region on April 30. On May 2 besides FATA Region will take on Karachi Region, while the last match of the triangular stage will be played between Karachi Region and Lahore Region on May 4. All matches including the final of the tournament will be held at the Iqbal Stadium in Faisalabad.

The Inter-Region U13 Tournament 2023 commenced on March 12 in Faisalabad and Karachi. A total of 16 regions namely

Peshawar, Abbottabad, AJK, Bahawalpur, Faisalabad, FATA,

Hyderabad, Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Larkana, Multan, Dera Murad Jamali, Quetta, Rawalpindi and Sialkot featured and were divided into three groups. In the five-team Pool 'A', Karachi Region topped the group with four wins from as many matches and bagged eight points. In the five-team Pool 'B', Lahore Region kept their 100 per cent winning record and topped the table with eight points from four outings. In six-team Pool 'C', Peshawar Region and Rawalpindi Region won four matches each and were tied on eight points, but Peshawar Region topped the pool with a better net run rate. Meanwhile, the Inter-Region U16 Tournament 2023 also began on March 12, when 16 regions were part of the competition.

US Open Wheelchair C'ships to expand quad draw size for 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): The USTA has announced that the US Open Wheelchair Championships would expand in size for the second successive year, with the final Grand Slam of the year set to feature 16 players in the quad singles field and eight teams in the quad doubles field in 2023.

The announcement comes after both the introduction of the inaugural US Open Junior Wheelchair Championships, and the doubling in size of the men's and women's draws in 2022, said a press release. In advance of the 2021 US Open, the quad field was doubled in size from four to eight competitors.

The latest expansion means that now all three senior divisions - men's, women's and quads - will have 16 competitors in

the singles field and eight teams in the doubles field for the 2023 tournament.

The 2023 US Open Wheelchair Championships would also have a new leader, as Jennifer Edmonson has been named as Tournament Director.

For more than 25 years Edmonson has been involved with the Cajun Classic in Baton Rouge, which has had Super Series status on the UNIQLQ Wheelchair Tennis Tour since 2018. Edmonson started as a tournament volunteer before taking over as tournament director, a role she has now held for more than 20 years. Beyond her role with the Cajun Classic, Edmonson is a current member of the ITF Wheelchair Tennis Committee and is in her third term as chair of the USTA National Wheelchair Committee.

Shakib's five-for and Litton's record-breaking fifty give Bangladesh 2-0 lead over Ireland

CHATTOTGRAM (Cricinfo): Shakib Al Hasan had Litton Das for company as Bangladesh dominated Ireland by 77 runs to clinch the T20I series in Chattogram. They led the way in the hosts' all-round show that provided them their second-biggest win in the format (by runs). Shakib made a quickfire 38 and then took a five-wicket haul while Litton's 83 and three catches as wicketkeeper made equal impact. Shakib's second T20I five-for also took him past Tim Southee to become the highest wicket-taker in the format.

Openers Litton and Rony Talukdar added 124 runs in 9.2 overs of the rain-shortened match. Litton cracked 83 off 41 balls before Shakib's show.

Ireland looked incomplete in all three depart-



ments, hardly stringing together a few good overs. There was a dropped catch, a few crucial misfields and then the batting fell apart in the face of Shakib's brilliance. Earlier, rain just at the stroke of the start of play had threatened to ruin chances of the game.

The first drops of rain on Wednesday afternoon fell ten minutes after the toss. The downpour stopped

after 40 minutes, when the umpires declared a 3:15pm start but minutes later, a drizzle began. The 17-overs a side match finally started at 3:40pm, a full 100 minutes after the scheduled start. But it hardly deterred or unnerved the Bangladesh openers who took off from where they left off in the first T20I.

The fastest team fifty. The fastest individual fifty.

The fastest team hundred. The biggest opening stand for the team. Litton and Rony did it all, as they smacked Ireland around the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in a memorable opening stand.

It was 9.2 overs of pure entertainment. The pair hit 13 fours and five sixes, breaking several team records, as the Ireland bowlers and fielders were ordinary. Bangladesh raced to 50 in 3.3 overs after Rony and Litton took big overs off Mark Adair and Graham Hume. It was the first time a Bangladesh opening pair had three successive fifty-plus stands.

Litton was dropped in the fourth over on 16, with George Dockrell unable to hold on to his bullet of a pull shot.

Rashid Khan new No. 1 T20I bowler in the world

DUBAI (Agencies): Rashid Khan is the new No. 1 T20I bowler in the world. He has displaced Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga at the top following his three wickets at less than a run a ball in Afghanistan's historic 2-1 series win over Pakistan in Sharjah.

Rashid has team-mate Fazalhaq Farooqi for company on the podium, with the young pacer slotting at No. 3 on the T20I bowlers' rankings after finishing as top wicket-taker for Afghanistan in the Pakistan series. Farooqi claimed five wickets and conceded just 4.75 runs to the over across the three matches to climb 12 places in the rankings.

Rashid was No. 1 as recently as November last year, having consistently been one of the format's best since first rising to the summit in February 2018.

The 2-1 result was Afghanistan's first T20I series win over Pakistan, and another bowler to make strides as a result was Mujeeb Ur Rahman, who moved from No. 10 to No. 8 after taking two-fors in the first and third games.

For Pakistan, stand-in captain Shadab Khan (who led in place of the rested Babar Azam) moved up eight spots to No. 4 on the T20I allrounder rankings, having finished as the series' third-highest run-scorer and joint-fourth-highest wicket-taker.

In the T20I batting rankings, South Africa's Rilee Rossouw moved up two places to No. 6 courtesy his 42 off 21, albeit in a losing cause against West Indies in the series-deciding third T20I in Johannesburg.

Rohit Sharma, Adam Zampa move up in ODI rankings

Following Australia's ODI series winning victory against India in Chennai, legspinner Adam Zampa has moved to a career-best sixth in the one-day bowling rankings, while India captain Rohit Sharma is up one spot to eighth in the batting rankings. Zampa had produced figures of 10-0-45-4 in that game which Australia won by 21 runs to clinch the series 2-1, while Rohit had slammed 30 off 17, sparking his gains.

Messi passed 100 international goals



CURACAO (BBC): Argentina captain Lionel Messi passed 100 international goals as he scored his 800th career goal - and 99th for Argentina - in a 2-0 win over Panama in Buenos Aires last week as part of the team's World Cup homecoming tour.

The Paris St-Germain striker reached three figures for his country when he took a pass from Villarreal's on-loan Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Giovanni Lo Celso and fired a low shot into the bottom corner.

Three minutes later Nicolas Gonzalez out-jumped goalkeeper Eloy Room to head home from

since beating France in Qatar on penalties in December to win the World Cup. Messi scored his 800th career goal - and 99th for Argentina - in a 2-0 win over Panama in Buenos Aires last week as part of the team's World Cup homecoming tour.

The Paris St-Germain striker reached three figures for his country when he took a pass from Villarreal's on-loan Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Giovanni Lo Celso and fired a low shot into the bottom corner.

Three minutes later Nicolas Gonzalez out-jumped goalkeeper Eloy Room to head home from

four yards before the Fiorentina winger set up Messi for his second of the night. Fernandez made it 4-0 with a shot from distance before Lo Celso released Messi to notch his third in just the 37th minute.

Angel di Maria and Gonzalo Montiel rounded off the scoring in the second half but the night belonged to Messi, who extended his record as Argentina's all-time record scorer - Gabriel Batistuta is a distant second on 56. He remains third on the men's all-time international scoring list behind Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo (122) and Iran's Ali Daei (109).

Women's Ashes 2023

Australia include Phoebe Litchfield in 15-player squad

Teenager Phoebe Litchfield has been named in Australia's 15-player squad for the Women's Ashes in England.

The 19-year-old batter has not yet played a Test, but impressed with successive one-day half-centuries against Pakistan earlier this year. Fast bowler Tayla Vlaeminck, who has been out since suffering a foot injury in the 2022 Ashes, is named in the Australia A squad. A five-day Test will begin the multi-format series on 22 June.

Three T20s follow between 1-8 July, before three ODIs between 12-18 July. Four points are avail-

able in the Test and two in each of the limited-overs games, while all matches will be played at Test grounds for the first time.

Australia's Ashes squad: Meg Lanning (c), Alyssa Healy (vc), Darcie Brown, Ashleigh Gardner, Kim Garth, Grace Harris, Jess Jonassen, Alana King, Phoebe Litchfield, Tahlia McGrath, Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Megan Schutt, Annabel Sutherland, Georgia Wareham.

Australia A squad: Maitlan Brown, Lauren Cheatele, Maddy Darke, Heather Graham, Nicole Faltum, Tess Flintoff, Charli Knott, Kate Peterson, Courtney Sippel, Tayla Vlaeminck, Courtney

Webb, Amanda-Jade Wellington, Tahlia Wilson.

Australia, who are the current world champions in the T20 and 50-over format, will be looking to retain the Ashes which they have held since 2015. Litchfield is one of three uncapped players in Test cricket, alongside batter Grace Harris and former Ireland bowler Kim Garth. "Phoebe Litchfield has taken her game to the next level in the past 12 months, we view her as a long-term player for Australia and it's pleasing to reward her progress with selection in an Ashes squad," said Cricket Australia head of performance and national selector Shawn Flegler.

Carlos Alcaraz beats Tommy Paul, Elena Rybakina into semis

MIAMI (BBC): Spain's world number one Carlos Alcaraz defeated American Tommy Paul in straight sets to reach the quarter-finals of the Miami Open.

The 19-year-old US Open champion won 6-4 6-4 to extend his winning streak to nine matches.

Alcaraz must retain the Miami title in order to stay top of the ATP rankings. He will play another American, Taylor Fritz, in the last eight after the ninth seed beat Denmark's Holger Rune 6-3 6-4.

Victory in the tournament would also see him achieve the rare 'Sunshine Double' following his title win at Indian Wells earlier in March. In the women's draw, Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina progressed to the last four with a 6-3 6-0 win against Italy's Martina Trevisan.

The Kazakh 10th seed could also achieve the 'Sunshine Double' and takes a 12-match unbeaten run into her semi-final with Jessica Pegula.

The American third seed had to come back from a set down to beat Russian Anastasia Potapova 4-6 6-3 7-6 (7-2), saving two match points in an epic that finished at 1:30am.

Daniil Medvedev's fourth-round match with Quentyn Halys started after midnight but the men's fourth seed swept aside the Frenchman 6-4 6-2 in just over an hour.

"I thought it was going to be cancelled," said Medvedev. "I'm really happy I was able to play not so bad, I'm usually asleep at midnight."

In the quarter-finals the Russian will face American qualifier Christopher Eubanks, who claimed another notable scalp by beating France's Adrian Mannarino 7-6 (7-2) 7-6 (7-5).

The game was delayed by rain for about four hours with Eubanks, ranked 119th in the world, 4-2 up in the first set.

After play resumed, Mannarino forced a tie-break before losing out to the big-serving American, who

prevailed in another tie-break in the second set to reach a Masters 1,000 quarter-final for the first time in his career. Having come through the qualifiers in Miami, the 26-year-old has won six straight games and will enter the world's top 100 for the first time next week, with actor Jamie Foxx among those to congratulate him this week. "Blood, sweat and tears and true hard work has paid off for my good friend," Foxx wrote on social media. Elsewhere, Russian Karen Khachanov recorded his first victory over second seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, beating the Greek 7-6 (7-4) 6-4.

Seeded 14th, Khachanov will now play the number 25 seed, Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo, who beat Italy's Lorenzo Sonego 3-6 6-3 6-2. Sonego's compatriot 10th seed Jannik Sinner defeated Russian Andrey Rublev 6-2 6-4 and will play Finland's Emil Ruusuvuori in the last eight.



In brief

Two bike lifters arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police on Wednesday arrested two bike lifters besides recovering four stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, a team led by Station House Officer (SHO) R.A. Bazar Police Station managed to net two bike lifters namely Inam and Diam and recovered four stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation was in process. Superintendent of Potohar Police, Muhammad Waqas Khan 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.

Two days power suspension notice

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued 2-day power suspension programme for Thursday and Friday 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 on Thursday from 07:00 AM to 11:00 AM, Chakwal Circle, Kallar Kahar, C.S.Shah, Tharpal, Basharat Feeders On Friday from 07:00 AM to 11:00 AM, Islamabad Circle, CM Pak Zong, Rehara, Tarmari, Chatta Bakhtwar, Lehtrar Road, ISI, Kuri (Old Bahera) Feeders and surrounding areas.

13 anti-social elements rounded up

RAWALPINDI (APP): The district police, in their ongoing operations against lawbreakers, have conducted raids in different areas and rounded up 13 drug peddlers, bootleggers and other criminals besides seizing over 1470 grams charras, 12 liters liquor and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Taxila police conducted a raid and arrested two members of a dacoit gang namely Hamad alias Madi, ring-leader and Nasrullah. The police also recovered Rs 313,000 cash, weapons and other items from their possession. The spokesman informed that Pirwadhai police in a raid managed to net ring-leader of a bike lifter gang namely Kamran and Shakeel Khan on recovery of eight stolen motorcycles. He said, Saddar Baroni police succeeded to arrest two proclaimed offenders, Ismail and Imran, wanted in a murder case of a citizen, Habib ur Rehman. Westridge police arrested an accused namely Murad for harassing a 10 year old girl. He further said that Taxila and Dhamial police rounded up five accused, Asmatullah, Saghir Ahmed, Atif, Kamran and Shehzad, for having 1470 grams charras and 12 liters liquor. The spokesman informed that Saddar Wah police in an operation in Nawababad area managed to hold an accused namely Zubair. Dolphin force signaled to stop two motorcyclists in Nawababad area but they opened fire on the police party. After encounter, dolphin force managed to arrest an injured accused while other escaped from the scene, he said. The spokesman informed that Senior Superintendent of Police, Investigation Zunera Azfar here on Wednesday held an open kitchen at Police Lines to address public complaints. The SSP issued directives to the officers concerned to take action and submit detailed reports on the complaints submitted by the citizens in 'Khuli Kutchery'.



ISLAMABAD: Member National Assembly Aslam Bhootani calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Saudi-Iran relations to usher in new era of peace: Dr. Qibla

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) Dr. Qibla Ayaz on Wednesday said that the recent diplomatic development in Saudi Arabia and Iran relations would usher in a new era of peace and prosperity in the region.

In an exclusive talk with APP, he said it was a good omen that both the brotherly countries had resumed their diplomatic relations and agreed to reopen their embassies after a seven-year of estrangement.

Dr. Qibla appreciated the unwavering efforts of Chinese President Xi Jinping's in bridging the gap and building an enabling environment for brokering a rapprochement deal between Riyadh and Tehran. He said that this positive move was warmly

welcomed by the entire Muslim Ummah at every nook and cranny of the world including Pakistan as it would help unite and strengthen Muslim countries and, resolve issues of common interests with mutual understanding in near future. He said that the fraternal ties between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran would also help normalize the circumstances in Yemen and at the later stage in Syria.

"Both the brotherly countries were in dire need of ceasing the hostilities and healing the wounds," he said expressing the hope that the recent diplomatic development in Saudi-Iran relations would have positive impact on Pakistan as well and Pakistani break-up of the society along with

ethnic lines would definitely become better.

Dr. Qibla said it would also help Iran to improve its economic situation and decrease the negative impact of sanctions with the passage of time.

Lauding the visionary leadership of Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman in the regional and global politics, he said His Highness had special doctrine for the future because the world was no longer to be dependent on oil that was why; the Kingdom was opting for new alternative resources for generating the revenue. He further hoped that the betterment in Saudi-Iran relationship would create a new space particularly, for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the world politics.

4 nabbed, drugs recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in seven different operations against drug peddlers, arrested three drug peddlers and recovered over 646 kg of drugs from their possession, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed that ANF recovered three hashish-filled capsules from the possession of a Dubai-bound passenger, a resident of Bannu, netted at Bacha Khan International Airport Peshawar. In three different operations in Haripur, ANF recovered 2.15 kg hashish from the possession of three arrested accused residents of Haripur. The accused were allegedly involved in supplying drugs to the students of different educational institutions. He informed that in an operation near Zero Line at Torkham Border, 26.6 kg hashish concealed in plastic bags was recovered.

In the sixth operation, ANF and FC conducted a joint operation in Khyber and seized 22 kg of hashish. ANF and FC in another operation in the Noshki Balochistan area, recovered 596 kg of hashish. Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigation is in process.

PM&DC issues 8,000 registration certificates

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PM&DC) has issued over 8,000 permanent registration certificates to Pakistani doctors so far, without the requirement of the National Licensing Examination (NLE). According to an official of PM&DC, this exam was mandatory earlier as per the previous law of Pakistan Medical Council (PMC) as the local graduates had to appear and pass the NLE exam before getting their permanent registration, even after graduation from Pakistani medical and dental colleges. He said that in this regard, several protests and demonstrations were held by different doctor forums and organizations at different levels and the past government was appealed repeatedly to withdraw the said black law. Previously, as per PMC law, the NLE was undertaken by doctors who graduated from Pakistan's approved medical and dental colleges which was highly criticized by the doctors' community throughout the country.

17.41 million children vaccinated in first phase of Polio drive

ISLAMABAD (PPI): 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 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 13th to 17th of this month, according to a Radio

Pakistan's report.

The second phase will be held from 03rd to 07th of next month to vaccinate more than 4.12 million children in 12 districts of Balochistan and 26 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Federal Minister for Health Abdul Qadir Patel has 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.

Commissioner directs to organise farmer's Convention before Kharif season

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Laiqat Ali Chatha on Wednesday directed the Agriculture Department Extension to organize farmer conventions in each district of the division before the Kharif season.

He expressed these views while addressing the Divisional Agriculture Task Force sub-committee meeting at his Office.

The Commissioner said through the conventions, not only the problems of the farmers would be listened to but will provide an opportunity to create awareness among them about the use of modern technology for increasing the production of Kharif crops. He said farmers are the centre of our interests, and communication with

farmers at the UC level must be enhanced by using social media platforms.

Laiqat Ali Chatha directed to create awareness among farmers that digital girdawari is necessary to collect Bardana.

He directed the establishment of Seed corporations in the district to ensure the supply of quality seeds in abundance during the sowing season.

"Our target is to shift farmers towards high-income production in which producing fruits, flowers and vegetables can be very profitable."

At present, the cultivation of fruit and vegetables in Potohar is only three per cent, which should be increased to at least thirty per cent. The

commissioner further directed to installation of Biogas production units to deal with energy crises and devise a micro plan of new initiatives proposed. He directed the Livestock Department to formulate a policy regarding the stray dogs in the city, which were a threat to human lives.

Additional commissioner coordination Syed Nazarat Ali, Shahid Bukhari, Director Agriculture, Sadia Bano, Director Agriculture (Extension), SDO Small Dams and other concerned officers and representatives of farmers participated in the meeting while Deputy Commissioner Attock, Jhelum and Chakwal attended through video link.

Envoy lauds services of Dr Farha as psychiatrist

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The US Department of Health and Human Services will recognize Dr Farha Abbasi, a renowned psychiatrist and active member of Pakistani-American community in Michigan, as one of the nation's top women faith leaders.

The event will be hosted by Secretary of Health and Human Services Xavier Becerra tomorrow (Thursday), to honor 15 women faith leaders for their incredible work and extraordinary leadership qualities in the service of humanity, according to a Radio Pakistan's report.

Acknowledging this achievement, Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Masood Khan, in a telephonic conversation, felicitated Dr Farha for making Pakistan and Pakistani diaspora in US proud with her singular achievement. He said it is yet another feather in our cap, proving huge talent and capabilities of Pakistani diaspora. He appreciated her services in providing healing touch

to those who needed our attention the most.

Masood Khan said efforts are being made to create robust linkages between universities of Pakistan and the United States for sharing of knowledge and expertise. He said doctors' community of Pakistani descent in the United States could significantly help their Pakistani brothers and sisters in addressing issues related to mental health issues, creating greater awareness, overcoming resource constraints and most importantly removing stigma attached to such issues due to variety of reasons.

Dr Farha Abbasi is Assistant Professor in Department of Psychiatry at Michigan State University and core faculty member of the Muslim Studies Program. She is founding director of the Annual Muslim Mental Health Conference which was attended by experts from 30 countries. She also launched a Global Muslim Mental Health Conference in Malaysia and Jordan.

Patiala Jewellers Murree Road sealed

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: In pursuance of directions of Ms. Tehmina Aamer, Chief Commissioner RTO Rawalpindi, a dedicated team of City Zone on the directions of Mr Mazhar Iqbal CIR City zone on 28.3.2023 sealed the business premises (Outlet) of M/s New Patiala Jewellers Murree Road, Rawalpindi for non integration of its POS with FBR.

The team of RTO Rawalpindi faced resistance from the owner in the form of protest and not allowing the officers to seal the outlet. After hec-



tic efforts and involvement of police at the highest level the team successfully sealed the outlet at about 7 pm. The team was led by Mr. Hayat Khan

ADCIR and ably assisted by Mr. Kamranullah ADCIR, Mr. Akbar A Khan AD Mr. Qasim Saleem IRO and Mr. Wajid Mehmood AD.

Railways to complete Sibi-Harnai track by June

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways is putting maximum effort to complete the reconstruction and renovation work on the strategic Sibi-Harnai railway track with the assistance of the National Logistics Cell (NLC) and hopefully, it would be operational by June this year. "The railway track was made dysfunctional after a series of bomb blasts which damaged as many as 22 steel bridges in the highly rugged and inaccessible area," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

He said the track was badly damaged in 2006 and so far about 97 per cent of the reconstruction work of the project was completed and the remaining work would be completed soon.

The official said that Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique had also taken a keen interest in the projects and directed the concerned official to complete the project at the earliest.

In March 2016, he said that a contract for rehabilitation and restoration of the Sibbi-Harnai railway track along with the up-gradation of railway stations was awarded to the NLC as no other construction firm agreed to undertake the project due to the prevalent security situation and enormity of the task.

During the initial survey of the track, the official said it was found that 22 steel bridges of different sizes were completely destroyed and required replacement.

He said in addition, massive river protection work was to be undertaken to save the infrastructure. The quantum of work, non-availability of road access, and requisite resources made the project a formidable challenge, he added.

The official said undertaking the project with the sincerity of purpose and utmost sense of duty, NLC officers, engineers, and construction workers braved harsh weather conditions and a hostile security environment and subsequently completed 97% of the rehabilitation works in record time. The major task was the fabrication of steel bridges. The steel bridges were fabricated in Karachi and were transported all the way to the project site after being painstakingly assembled by NLC engineers in a befitting manner, he added.

He said a total of nine railway stations along with tracks had been upgraded by NLC engineers including the reconstruction of Harnai Railway Station and a complete renovation of Sibi Railways Station, which could be regarded as the finest railway station in Balochistan.

IGP Islamabad visits free flour distribution points

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, visited the free flour distribution points set up in different areas of the city to review the security and other arrangements.

During the visit, the IGP praised the police personnel and administration for their excellent security and other

arrangements. He also ordered police personnel to remain vigilant and ensure that there is no disorder at any place. Additionally, he stressed the importance of providing citizens with every possible facility while obtaining free flour.

Furthermore, the IGP directed all zonal SDPOs to visit free flour sale points in

their respective areas and put in place additional security measures at high rush points.

The IGP's visit aimed to ensure the smooth distribution of free flour to citizens during the ongoing pandemic. The Islamabad Capital Police remain committed to maintaining the highest level of security and public service.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Mohsin Aziz, Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Interior presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.

Poppy farms destroyed

BAGHLAN (Agencies): The CND officers destroyed six acres of poppy farm in the Tala wa Barfak district of Baghlan province. The provincial police spokesman, Mawlawi Sher Ahmad Burhani said that the security forces are following the order of the Supreme Leader of the IEA, based on which the cultivation and trafficking of drugs are prohibited in the country. Burhani encouraged farmers to cultivate legal plants instead of narcotics that destroy the health and life of people.

Four smugglers arrested

BALKH (Agencies): Officials of the border police of Mawlawi Sher Ahmad Burhani said that their security forces have arrested 4 people on charges of transporting illegal currency. The border police arrested 4 people who wanted to smuggle 28,829 US dollars to Iran from Mawlawi Sher Ahmad Burhani said that the Ministry of Interior in a statement.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Ramazan 08, 1444 — Thursday, March 30, 2023

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

Heavy rains and flash floods affected 645 families: UN



KABUL (TOLONews): The United Nations mission in Afghanistan said due to the recent heavy rains and flash floods in seven provinces, at least 645 families have been affected.

The organization has said that international aid organizations are assessing the delivery of life-saving aid to the affected families throughout Afghanistan during these difficult times. According to the UN agency, the low budget has restricted the organization's ability to speed up its vital aid to needy families in the country.

In the recent past, Afghanistan has witnessed heavy rains, flash floods and earthquakes, which has adversely affected the liv-

ing condition of ordinary people, and multiplied their problems for survival.

The recent natural disasters resulted in the death of at least nine people and the injury of dozens more, according to Taliban officials.

Afghanistan's acting State Minister for Natural Disaster, Mohammad Abbas Akhund has said that nearly 1800 houses have been destroyed due to flooding, and more than 20,000 acres of agricultural land have been destroyed.

Following the devastating heavy rains and flooding, some vulnerable people called on the Islamic Emirate and international aid organizations to extend their support to the flood-

affected families during these difficult times.

Amid the dire economic and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime, natural disasters have added to the problems of ordinary people.

On Tuesday, David Beasley Executive Director of the UN World Food Program (WFP) warned of possible starvation to hit Afghanistan hardest if funding is not received immediately.

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.

4.3 magnitude earthquake hit Kabul

KABUL (Khaama Press): An earthquake of magnitude 4.3 hit East of Kabul in Afghanistan early on Wednesday.

The earthquake 4.3 on the Richter scale jolted 85 km east of the capital city of Kabul, the National Center for Seismology of India reported (NCS).

The quake's epicentre was 85 km east of Kabul in the country, and the tremor was felt around 4:49 local time with a depth of 10 Km.

So far, no damage to property or casualties has been reported.

Last week, a powerful earthquake with a magnitude of 6.8 rocked Afghanistan, and the tremors were felt in neighbouring countries, Tajikistan, and India.

In the earthquake, more than ten people were killed, 25 were injured across Afghanistan and Pakistan, and several houses were destroyed.

According to the United States Geological Survey, the earthquake epicentre was the Jurm district of Badakhshan, with a depth of 180 Km.

In the earthquake, more than 665 houses were destroyed in several provinces, including Badakhshan, Takhar and Kunar.

Afghanistan is close to the Chamman fault, and the country is prone to disasters, including earthquakes, landslides, and avalanches.

Herat export volume reach over \$100m

HERAT (Agencies): The Chamber of Commerce and Investment has exported domestic products worth 102 million dollars to the outside last year.

The provincial head of Herat Chamber of Commerce and Investment, Mohammad Yunus Ghazizada, told this news agency that 76,188 tons of domestic products worth 120 million dollars exported from that province.

Dry and fresh fruits and medicinal plants have been the main items exported from Herat, he said.

Stanikzai urges US to reopen embassy in Kabul

KABUL (Khaama Press): The deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs, Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, called on the United States to reopen its embassy in Kabul.

"Let us fulfil our responsibilities. Come and open your embassy. We take care of your security. When you come, other countries will do the same. Many countries are saying in private meetings with us that if America restores its relations with you, we will come immediately," Stanikzai said during his visit to the Afghan Consulate in Dubai.

The interim government in Afghanistan seeks to expand its international relations with the world, while the US asserts that no country will recognize the current regime in Afghanistan.

In a recent briefing, the deputy spokesman of the US State Department said that restrictions on women would delay Kabul's international relations.

"We have seen this now time and time again - denying them education, denying them the ability to work, denying them the ability to participate in the provision of humanitarian assistance that benefits all Afghans," said Vedant Patel, a spokesman for the US Department of State.

He added that to the



extent that the Taliban is looking for more normal relations with countries worldwide, "that will not happen in a long time, so long as they continue to advance these repressive edicts against women and girls."

Furthermore, the US charge d'affaires, Karen Decker, asserted in a video conference with several Afghan women journalists that while the Islamic Emirate has taken over several diplomatic missions in Afghanistan, no country plans to recognize them.

Decker added that if the Taliban wants good relations with other countries,

they should have good relations with women and men in Afghanistan.

Since the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan seized control of power, the group has stepped up its persecution of women's freedom and rights.

According to the experts, the suppressive policy in the country in general and in women mainly will increase poverty, unemployment and extremism, which will eventually foster the growth of terrorism.

While the Taliban authorities reiterated that "Political issues or external

issues of the country should not be dependent on Afghanistan's internal issues, Afghanistan's internal issues are related to the people of Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan make independent decisions about the country's internal issues," stated Bilal Karimi, Taliban deputy spokesperson.

In the meantime, the international community and Islamic groups reaffirmed the necessity of lifting the prohibition on women's employment and education to have positive and regular ties with the rest of the world.

DAB launches new banking withdrawal system

KABUL (Agencies): By launching a new money withdrawal program from ATMs, Da Afghanistan Bank said on Wednesday, that it is committed to providing the necessary facilities for citizens to make payments equal to global standards.

Da Afghanistan Bank says that now citizens can

withdraw money from their bank account using an "Afpay card" at all ATMs.

The bank said in an announcement that: "There is no need to wait in long queues to receive money."

According to the bank, Afghans can get "Afpay cards" from all commercial banks in the country.

What is AfPay: AfPay is

the national card payment scheme of Afghanistan designed to enhance and promote electronic payments.

AfPay not only provides an affordable, safe, and efficient alternative to the existing banked population in the country, but it also provides an opportunity to offer lower costs to the unbanked citizens.

Decline in theatre activities in Herat worries artists



HERAT (TOLONews): A group of Herat theatre artists expressed their concerns over a decline in their activities as they marked World Theatre Day.

They said that many

artists have left the country over economic problems and restrictions on their activities. "Unfortunately, we are commemorating this day at a time when the majority of our artists are

disappointed and have left the country, and the field of employment has been taken away from them," said Fraidoon Fakuri, head of Herat theatre.

"Let the theatre thrive

and stay alive. My dream is to have a theatre hall," said artist Nematullah Hosseinzada.

According to artists, another major issue facing theatre activities in Herat is reported the prohibition of the participation of women performers in live shows.

A veteran actor from Herat theatre, Fatima Husaini, who attended the event as a spectator, said that women artists are still not permitted to attend theatre shows. "I have worked for eighteen years and now I cannot sit at home. I have been raised with this theatre," Husaini said.

The artists said that economic problems are hitting them hardest over the past one and a half years.

"Sadly, I see theatre activities vanishing day by day. We have forgotten arts," said Ghulam Farooq Sarkhush, an artist.

"We have many artists and cinematographers who made films with their personal budget, but all films halted after the establishment of the Islamic Emirate," said Mohammad Yaqoob Amini, an artist.

Head of the Information and Culture Directorate in Herat, Naeemulla Haqqani, said they support theatre and cinema artists in the province. He said the Ministry of Information and Culture plans to prepare a procedure for the presence of female artists in live theatre shows.

"Consultations are underway and we hope positive steps will be taken in this area. The Islamic Emirate fully supports its artists," said Haqqani.

Herat Theatre was inaugurated 101 years ago, although it has been many years that the province lacks a theatre or a cinema hall.

Police freed man from grip of abductors

BALKH (Agencies): Local police officials of Balkh say that a man has been rescued from the grip of human abductors in the province.

Mohmood, a resident of Hindu Kush village of Jawzjan, was kidnapped in Balkh, and later rescued by security forces, said the police spokesperson of Bakh, Mohammad Asif Waziri.

The abducted person was transporting goods, when he was abducted by abductors in Balkh he said.

US give \$1.5b to Afghanistan so far

KABUL (TOLONews): The Chargé d'Affaires of the US Mission to Afghanistan, Karen Decker, said that in the past eighteen months the US has contributed nearly \$1.5 billion in humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.

Speaking at a virtual meeting, Decker noted that this aid has been spent on education, nutrition, health, and in the areas of internally displaced persons and the reintegration of immigrants.

"One of the most important, and I think really important thing, that I took away from the conversations we had in Dubai was the need for a really robust, ongoing set of discussions with the Afghan private sector," Decker said.

According to Decker, Washington will continue its aid to Afghanistan to prevent a humanitarian crisis.

The Chargé d'Affaires of the US Mission to Afghanistan said she con-

sidered the Doha agreement unfulfilled and called for an intra-Afghan dialogue.

"I agree with you that the Doha agreements are unfinished, and that we still believe there is both a requirement for intra-Afghan dialogue to determine the future government for Afghanistan," Decker added.

"Afghans' internal issues are related to Afghans themselves. Internal and political issues should not be used as a means of political pressure. Political issues are distinct from these issues, and if there are any, the Islamic Emirate engages in active diplomacy and will resolve them through understanding," said Bilal Karimi, the Islamic Emirate's deputy spokesman.

Political analysts have diverse views on aid to Afghanistan.

Amid widespread reactions, Mujahid says Wesa being questioned

ATLANTA (Pajhwok): The Islamic Emirate says intelligence personnel have picked up education activist Matiullah Wesa for questioning about his willful actions. However, the education advocate's arrest has drawn widespread reactions.

Also, a representative of the Qalam Laar community, Wesa was arrested in the Khoshal Khan Mena area of the 5th police district of Kabul late on Monday.

His brother said: "Wesa left the mosque before I did after offer Asar prayers. On coming out of the mosque, I saw security personnel in two vehicles without number plates talking to Wesa."

Akhlaqi alleged the behaviour of the security personnel was inappropriate as they asked them to show ID cards. He added the security people took away Wesa with themselves.

Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman for the Islamic Emirate, told the BBC Wesa had been arrested for his willful activities.

He said: "He (Wesa) organises meetings and is involved in instigat-

ing people against the system. He was arrested for this reason, which is being investigated."

According to Mujahid, all governments make arrests to ensure public order. No one, however, would be treated unfairly, he assured.

Another brother of the detainee, Attullah Wesa, said in a video clip that his house had been surrounded for several hours on Tuesday.

He claimed two of his other brothers were also arrested, as well as his children, mother and wife were insulted and their privacy violated. Their mobile phones and other things were also snatched, he alleged.

Attullah said: "They are trying to arrest me, but I'm in a safe place. They mistreated us, we are the people of pen. We have worked voluntarily for 15 years and are ready for any kind of sacrifice for our people."

Reactions to Wesa's arrest

Former president Hamid Karzai expressed his concern over the arrest of Matiullah Wesa.

"I call the activities of Wesa, head of the Pen Path community, for the



good of the country and I ask the caretaker government not to refrain from any effort to release him as soon as possible."

The ex-president urged the rulers to promote the activities of the Pen Path community and to help and cooperate with it in furthering the cause of education.

Zia-ul-Faq Amarkhel, the former governor of Nangarhar, also expressed worries over the detention



of Wesa.

He tweeted that Wesa was a young man who kept the candle of education alight. He believed the young people working for the promotion of education deserved to be praised instead of being suppressed. Wesa must be freed as soon as possible, he demanded.

Hekmat Suroosh, a civil society activist, hailed Wesa as a true servant of Allah. Wesa and his family had been working tirelessly for educating

Afghan children for years, he acknowledged.

UN, EU, US and Human Rights Watch officials have also expressed their concerns over the arrest of Wesa and have called for his early release.

Pakistan's youngest Nobel peace laureate Malala Yousafzai noted Wesa's education services in terms of running mobile schools and libraries. She slammed his arrest as an assault on education.

In a tweet on Tuesday, Malala also underlined an immediate end to the ban on secondary and university education for girls in Afghanistan.

Earlier, UN Special Rapporteur Richard Bennett also expressed his concern over the arrest of Wesa. Bennett tweeted that the safety of the activist was crucial and all his legal rights must be respected.

European Union Special Representative for Afghanistan Tomas Niklasson tweeted: "I am deeply troubled by the arrest of @PenPath1 @matuillahwesa by Taliban df authorities. Mr Wesa has been advocating for access to educa-

tion for Afghan boys and girls throughout the country since 2009, in dialogue with local communities. #ReleaseMatiullahWesa."

US Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Karen Decker tweeted: "Multiple disturbing reports of Afghans being held for participating in peaceful protest, supporting Afghan aspirations. Let Matiullah Wesa & others work unhindered — consult them, don't incarcerate them. Their voices reflect the will of many Afghans."

Manzoor Ahmad Pashteen, chairman of Pashtun Tahafuz Movement, also asked for Wesa's release in a tweet. He remarked talking about education or human rights was no crime.

But Maulvi Abdul Haq Hamad, media-monitoring director at the Ministry of Information and Culture, tweeted: "I don't know Wesa, nor his case. But his activities were suspicious and the system reserves the right to question such individuals."

According to him, in fact the arrest of an individual that drew such wide reactions indicates the foiling of a sinister conspiracy.



DUBAI: Co-Chairman PPP Asif Ali Zardari in a group photo with Sindh Minister for Information Sharjeel Inam Memon, Minister for Local Government Nasir Hussain Shah and MPA Sohail Anwar after meeting.

‘Curtailing of judiciary’s power not to be allowed’

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Abid Zuberi, President of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), has asserted that the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill 2023 was aimed to suppress an institution, vowing that they will not allow anyone to curtail judiciary’s power.

Talking to journalists in Islamabad, the SCBA president noted that as per the Constitution, election should be held within 90 days of dissolution of assemblies. Abid Zuberi questioned the authority of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for changing the election date, saying that the electoral watchdog would have filed a review petition if it had any objection to the date.

The SCBA president further said that the bar association was not affiliated with any political party. “However, allegations are levelled against us for standing with a victim,” he said. “It is time to impose Article 6 on those who violated the constitution and law”, he stressed, adding that Article 5 and 90 of the constitution will be violated if elections are not held within 90 days.

Referring to Supreme Court (Practice and

Procedure) Bill 2023, Zuberi questioned the time the bill was president in the Parliament. “The bill’s aim was to suppress an institution,” he said, adding that they would not allow curtailing of judiciary’s power.

NA approves Lawyers Welfare & Protection Bill 2023: The National Assembly on Wednesday approved the Lawyers Welfare and Protection Bill 2023 with consensus. The bill was tabled by Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar.

The federal minister presented the legislation that stated that the profession of lawyers plays a pivotal role in the administration of justice, the defense of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. However, the recent incidents of assault, criminal force, intimidation, and threats caused to advocates, while they discharge their professional duties, have reached alarming heights, it said.

“This has also resulted in law and order situations and deficiencies in rendering professional services by advocates to their clients apart from causing a deep sense of fear in the minds of advocates,” the Bills said. The Bill intended that in order to protect advocates from the said assaults,

criminal force, intimidation and threats, it is necessary to enact legislation to protect advocates while discharging their professional duties.

In this regard, the Bill titled “The Lawyers Welfare and Protection Bill, 2023” was prepared wherein, a mechanism has been devised to ensure that the advocates can render professional services without fear or external influence for the ultimate cause of the administration of justice and the rule of law.

Moreover, the law was also in consonance with the various UN General Assembly Resolutions and in line with the Eighth United Nations Congress held in September, 1990 at Havana, Cuba, where it adopted the “Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers” which provides that the Governments shall ensure that layers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference and where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities. The Bill was designed to achieve the aforesaid objectives, it said.

Court issues Imran’s arrest warrant

ISLAMABAD (INP): A district and sessions court in Islamabad on Wednesday issued non-bailable arrest warrant of PTI Chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan in a case pertaining to hurling threat at a female judge.

Civil judge Malik Amman pronounced the verdict reserved earlier. He ordered issuing the non-bailable arrest warrant of Imran Khan. The judge also disposed of Imran Khan’s plea seeking exemption from appearance in the court today. The judge further directed that Imran Khan should be produced in the court on April 18.

IMF rejects Pak’s proposal on fuel subsidy

ISLAMABAD (INP): The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has rejected Pakistan’s initial proposal for subsidy on petroleum, sources said on Wednesday. “The lending institution has demanded the complete plan of the petroleum subsidy from the government,” sources said.

“The IMF has demanded a comprehensive plan of per litre 50 rupees subsidy on petroleum,” sources at the Ministry of Finance shared. Pakistan has been in virtual contact with the IMF and the institution has insisted for preparation of revised plan of subsidy on petroleum, sources said. “The government had proposed subsidy on fuel for motorcycles and small 800 CC vehicle owners,” according to sources.

The International Monetary Fund is demanding of the government for an effective and targeted subsidy to the poor segment of the society, sources added. Earlier, the IMF wanted friendly countries to honor their commitments to fund cash-strapped Pakistan before the multi-lateral lender signs off on a \$6.5 billion bailout program. Pakistan was trying to get written assurances from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) about external financing to strike a staff-level agreement with the IMF.

Sources said that the PM Office, the foreign ministry and the finance ministry have become active to meet the condition of the IMF for the confirmation of \$3 billion in external funding from Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

power Imran Khan had bulldozed the parliament and it’s norms. Sharjeel Inam Memon further said that Imran Khan had repeatedly violated the constitution and law. He asked if Imran Khan was more important than Parliament? The minister said that Election Commission of Pakistan had been 2nd target of Imran Khan. Imran Khan tried to tarnish the reputation of election commission of Pakistan and Chief election Commissioner, despite the fact that the PTI Chief appointed him. Is Imran Khan more important than the Election Commission of Pakistan?, minister asked.

He said that the justice system of the country and courts were the 3rd target of Imran Khan. Imran Khan threatened

the Honorable judges by taking their names in public addresses, brought political crowds in court premises and court rooms to exert pressure on judiciary for favorable verdicts. He added that Imran Khan openly disgraced the courts, as a result today the situation of our justice system is in front of everyone. The minister asked whether Imran Khan was more important than our judiciary.

The minister asked whether Imran Khan was more important than our judiciary. The provincial minister said that Imran Khan’s fourth target was the media and journalists. Journalists were attacked, dismissed from their jobs, TV owners were jailed in false cases.

EU Commission removes Pakistan from ‘list’ of high-risk countries

ISLAMABAD (INP): After exiting the grey list of Financial Action Task Force (FATF), Pakistan has achieved another major milestone under Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari’s leadership as European Union (EU) has removed Pakistan from the list of High Risk Third Countries.

The European Commission has removed Pakistan from the List of High Risk Third Countries, which have strategic deficiencies in their Anti Money Laundering/Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) regime. The exports from Pakistan will not be any more liable to additional conditions set by legal and economic operators.

Federal Minister for Trade Syed Naveed Qamar said that the exemption is a breeze of ease for Pakistani exporters. The minister confirmed that EU has exempted Pakistan from high-risk third countries list. Pakistan was included in this list back in 2018, the restriction has been wreaking havoc on our industry, the minister added.

Naveed Qamar said that all credit goes to Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for his tireless efforts

to get Pakistan off this list. Naveed Qamar also confirmed the development on Wednesday stating “Pakistani businesses and individuals would no longer be subjected to ‘Enhanced Customer Due Diligence’ by European legal and economic operators.” The minister further said that the EU had included Pakistan in the list of high-risk countries back in 2018. “This ban had put an unnecessary burden on our economy.”

It is worth mentioning here that UK removed Pakistan from the list of High Risk Third Countries back in November 2022. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had announced the development on Twitter. The United Kingdom (UK) had already officially removed Pakistan from its list of “High-Risk Third Countries” in recognition of the effective measures taken by the country against money laundering and terror financing.

“Some good news. The United Kingdom has officially removed Pakistan from its list of ‘High-Risk Third Countries’ following our early completion of FATF action plans,” Bilawal wrote, sharing a letter from the Foreign, Commonwealth, and

Development Office. “His Majesty’s Treasury issued an amendment to the UK’s High-Risk Third Countries’ list ON November 14, 2022, through a Statutory Instrument. The amendment removes Pakistan from the list in accordance with the decision taken by the FATF on October 21, 2022,” the official document read. “The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office recognizes the progress Pakistan has made to improve money laundering and terrorist financing controls,” it further added.

Pakistan was added to the list of undesirable 21 high-risk countries with unsatisfactory money laundering and terrorist financing controls in April last year. This list of 21 countries — released by the UK Government — included countries named by the FATF as high-risk or under increased monitoring. Pakistan shared the list at number 15 with conflict-ridden countries such as Syria, Uganda, Yemen, and Zimbabwe. However, last month (October) the FATF, a global money-laundering and terrorism-financing watchdog, finally removed Pakistan from its grey list after four years.

PTI MNAs resignations: PHC grants status quo

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has granted status quo against approval of 10 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Member National Assembly (MNA) resignation by Speaker National Assembly, on Wednesday.

PHC’s divisional bench comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice SM Attique Shah ordered Chief Election Commissioner and Speaker National Assembly along with other respondents to submit reply in this regard.

The writ petition was filed by former MNAs including Anwar Taj from Charsadda, Yaqub Khan, Gul Zafar of Bajaur, Jawad Hussain from Orakzai along with reserved members on women seats namely

Nafeesa Inayat Ullah, Sajida Zulfiqar, Noreen Farooq, Uzma Riaz, Zila Huma and Shaheen Naz seeking to declare Speaker NA orders null and void.

Barrister Gohar Khan argued that Speaker National Assembly has approved resignation of PTI MNAs unconstitutional because the petitioner had submitted resign on party’s chairman direction following his ousting from Prime Minister Office. He added that Speaker didn’t approved resigns collectively but approved quitting requests of in different number i.e. (10, 15 and 35) at various time period.

The counsel added that Speaker NA has argued that he will approved resign one by one following with meeting with each MNA but when PTI announced rejoined

ing of National Assembly then on 23rd January resigns were approved which is unconstitutional.

PTI shouldn’t object to approval of resignations of MNAs if it were approved as per law but Speaker NA opposing decisions of his well by approving 10, 12 and 20 MNAs resigns, the counsel argued. He argued that Election Commission of Pakistan didn’t fulfilling her constitutional obligation in this regard while Speaker letter written to ECP is contradictory with constitution.

The divisional bench of PHC comprised of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice SM Attique Shah granted status quo against approval of 10 PTI MNAs resignation while ordered respondents to submit comments and adjourned further hearing.

People of Khudian buried Imran’s politics, says Marriyum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday said people of Khudian (Kasur) had buried the politics of Imran Khan by attending in massive numbers in Maryam Nawaz’s Jalsa.

The minister made remarks from her Twitter handle while sharing some snaps of the massive gathering addressed by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz’s Senior Vice President and Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz in Khadian, Kasur earlier in the day.

Meanwhile, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Tuesday reproduced on her Twitter handle the historic speech delivered by the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif in the National Assembly on the passage of a bill that had restored parliamentary democracy by abolishing the 8th Constitutional Amendment. The minister, in her post which also included the text and video clips of Nawaz Sharif’s speech, actually referred to a judicial reforms bill adopted by the National Assembly earlier in the day.

Nawaz, in his speech, had said it was better if a particular act or step was taken at the right time. “Making undue noise and doing nothing are the things of the past. We should only talk about those things which we really intend to do. This is not only in the interest of Pakistan but also for the supremacy of the Parliament. “Today, the parliamentary democracy has been restored. The manner in which the whole process took place was more beautiful than the nature of the work itself. There will be only one goal before us.....”

IHC seeks reply from ECP on JI petition

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Islamabad High Court on Wednesday sought replies from Election Commission of Pakistan and others in response to a plea of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) candidate for Chairman Union Council 8, Safari Park, TMC Safoora Karachi.

Rashid Manan Azmi, the JI candidate for Chairman UC 8, TMC Safoora, has filed a petition in IHC alleging that his victory was turned into defeat through a rigged recount. Advocate Umer Ijaz Gilani appeared before a single-member bench comprising Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb in the matter saying earlier the petitioner had approached the ECP. However, when the ECP passed a non-speaking order in response to his application, he was left with no recourse but to resort to the High Court.

Advocate Gilani apprised the bench that the petitioner had initially secured as many as 2153 votes which was 27 more than the runner up candidate belonging to the Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI).



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy mission Commander being warmly welcome at Port Lattakia Syria during Pakistan Navy Ship HADR mission.

SC seeks assurance

(Continued from Page 1)

took the decision on March 22 to delay the elections. The Finance Ministry had also expressed its inability to release Rs 20 billion for elections in the current fiscal year, while there was also a shortage of 297,000 security personnel in Punjab, he added. Justice Mandokhail asked whether the Finance Ministry had already given approval for the said funds. The lawyer replied that only the ministry concerned could give the details in that regard.

The chief justice asked whether the funds for the elections, which would have to take place in the current year (2023) in all situations, were not earmarked in the budget. Attorney General for Pakistan Usman Mansoor Awan said the government would allocate funds for the polls in the next fiscal year budget.

The two assemblies were unexpectedly dissolved before time, he added.

The AGP said the expenditure for simultaneous elections of all the assemblies in the country was estimated as Rs 47 billion, and Rs 20 billion extra would have to be spent if elections in the two provinces were held separately. The ECP’s counsel said the secretary interior had also told that there were

security threats to the political leaders during the election campaign and on the polling day. The chief justice questioned whether the ECP had shared such information with the president and it was a mistake if it were not done. The reports about the security situation were serious, he said, adding it was stated that it would take six months to clear the areas. Five terrorism incidents had also taken place in Punjab.

To a query, the ECP’s counsel said it would also take six months to complete the clearance operation in Katcha areas of Punjab. The ECP had no reasons to doubt the intelligence reports, he added. Sajel Swati said the president had written a letter to the prime minister instead of the ECP regarding the change in the election date. To a query, he said without the provision of security from the army elections were not possible.

He said that 443 security threats were received in 2023 for KP, while 80 terrorism incidents claiming some 70 precious lives took place in the province. If funds and security were provided then the ECP was ready to hold polls in Punjab, he added. Justice Munib said the ECP was ready to fulfill its responsibility if the institutions cooperated with it. The ECP’s lawyer said the

Commission wrote a letter to the Federal Government on March 20, while it was informed about the Defence Ministry’s response on March 21.

Chief Justice Bandial asked whether everything would be settled on October 8. The lawyer responded the polling date was given after an interim review of the situation. The chief justice observed that it meant the ECP could further delay the polls. He directed the counsel to tell a fixed date after taking information from the ECP. The lawyer said that the security institutions had told that the security arrangements would be completed till October 8.

Justice Munib asked whether the delay in the polls was not a violation of the Constitution. Section 58 did not allow the ECP to extend the election date. To a question, the lawyer said the ECP was the authority to extend the poll date on solid reasons after the announcement of a schedule.

The chief justice observed that the court had asked the respondents to reduce political tension in the country and till that time peaceful polls were not possible. The case was then adjourned till Thursday. Meanwhile, PML-N, PPP and JUI-F filed petitions to become parties in said case.

Minimum Sadqa-e-Fitr fixed at Rs 320 per head

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Chairman Mufti Muneeb ur Rehman has declared the minimum amount for Sadqa-e-Fitr at Rs 320 per person, which is an obligatory charitable donation that Muslims are required to pay during the holy month of Ramazan.

The rate is based on the prices of staple food such as flour, dates, raisins, cheese or barley, as per the Islamic Shariah. The importance of Sadqa-e-Fitr lies in helping the poor and needy people in society, especially during the festive occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. This act helps the poor and needy during the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr and is a way for Muslims to give back to their community and earn blessings from Allah Almighty.

According to Mufti Muneeb, the market price of 2.25 kilograms of flour, the amount for Fitrana is calculated as Rs 320 per head. The faithful who want to

pay Fitrana equal to the price of barley, and dates should pay minimum Rs 480 and Rs 2,800 per head respectively. Similarly, the faithful wanted to pay Fitrana at the rate of raisin should pay Rs 6,400 per head for first class dates and Rs 4,800 per person for second class raisin.

A Muslim, who possesses food in excess of his needs, must pay Sadqa-e-Fitr before the Eid prayers. If the person is a breadwinner, he should also pay Sadqa-e-Fitr for his dependents, such as wife, children, dependent relatives or servants. Mufti Muneeb also advised the people to pay the amount to the poor before Eid-ul-Fitr so that they could also celebrate the festival. The most deserving people for Sadqa-e-Fitr are close relatives followed by neighbours and the poor.

Mufti Munibur Rehman said real spirit of Fitr and Fidyah is two-time meal of a

destitute person, so it is better to pay the meal cost of a hotel. However, those who are wealthier, they should try to pay more to extend assistance to the poor in this time of skyrocketing inflation.

If anyone had been unable to keep fast for the whole month of Ramazan, he or she should pay the whole month Fidyah as compensation worth Rs 9,600 in proportionate to flour price, Rs 14,400 for barley, Rs 84,000 for date, Rs 192,000 for raisin first class and Rs 144,000 for second class raisin. Similarly, Kufara (compensation) for leaving 30 fasts in wheat would be Rs 19,200, for wheat Rs 28,800, for barley, Rs 168,000 dates, Rs 384,000 raisin first class and Rs 2,88,000 for second class raisin. Kufara in wheat would be Rs 3,200, barley Rs 4,800, dates Rs 28,000, raisin Rs 64,000 first class and Rs 48,000 for second class raisin.

Is Imran more important than Pakistan’s security? Asks Sharjeel

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that the Pakistan had faced many difficult stages in its 75-year history, but the chaos created by PTI chief at the behest of external powers is unprecedented.

In his statements, on Wednesday, the minister said that Imran Khan has been targeting the state institutions in a planned manner. He said that parliament had remained the first target of Imran Khan. Instead of giving priority to the superior institute of Parliament, Imran chosen the way of sit-ins and long marches.

He remarked that after coming to