

SC returns PTI's plea

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Monday returned a plea by the PTI party, requesting elections in KP province, citing objections and incompleteness of the document. According to the Registrar's Office, PTI failed to pay the required fee for the petition submitted for KP elections. Additionally, the plea lacked adequate reasoning for the constitutional request and had unclear pages, leading to its rejection.

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LHC reserves verdict

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday reserved its verdict on a petition seeking Imran Khan's removal as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman. A larger bench headed by LHC Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan heard the request filed by a citizen Junaid, in which he named the deposed premier and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) as parties.

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Parliament joint sitting passes SC Bill

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Joint Sitting of Parliament on Monday passed the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023 amid protest by the PTI lawmakers mostly belonging to upper house.

Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar moved the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023 which was passed by the Parliament. It is to mention that President Dr Arif Alvi had returned the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023 for reconsideration to the Parliament as per the provisions of Article 75 of the Constitution. The minister read out the message of the President who returned the bill for reconsideration. He said that bill was discussed in detail in National Assembly and it was also approved by the Senate.

The minister responded to the objections of the bill and said the "President used inappropriate words while returning this bill and used a biased approach". He said that he should think "as the President rather than a political worker". The minister said it was the demand of the bar associations and councils to introduce the bill and they had supported the bill. This bill, he said, was an old demand of the Bar Council which said that the indiscriminate use of 184(3) should be stopped.

The joint sitting of Parliament reconsidered it and passed the legislative proposal. Former Minister for Law and Justice and Senator Farooq H. Naek and JUI-F Senator Kamran Murtaza spoke on the various sections of the bill and were of the view that was the right time of legislation which would ensure reforms in judicial affairs. MNA Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja moved amendments in the bill and the Minister for Law and Justice did not oppose them. He said that these amendments will bring more clarity to the judicial affairs and ensure transparency while forming bench.

However, the amendments moved by JJ Senator Mushtaq Ahmed were rejected. It is mentioned that the President shall give his assent within ten days, failing which such assent shall be deemed to have been given. Sub-Article 2 of Article 75 of the Constitution of Pakistan states "When the President has returned a Bill to the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament), it shall be considered by the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) in joint sitting and, if it is again passed, with or without amendment, by the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament), by the votes of the majority of the members of both Houses present and voting; it shall be deemed for the purposes of the Constitution to have been passed by both Houses and shall be presented to the President, and the President shall give his assent within ten days, failing which such assent shall be deemed to have been

given.

The passed bill – the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023 – aims at giving the power of taking suo motu notice to a three-member committee comprising senior judges including Chief Justice. It also aims to have transparent proceedings in the apex court and includes the right to appeal. Regarding the constitution of benches, the bill states that every cause, matter or appeal before the apex court would be heard and disposed of by a bench constituted by a committee comprising the CJP and the two senior-most judges. It added that the decisions of the committee would be taken by a majority.

Regarding exercising the apex court's original jurisdiction, the bill said that any matter invoking the use of Article 184(3) would first be placed before the above mentioned committee. The bill says that if the committee is of the view that a question of public importance with reference to the 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 of Pakistan which may also include the members of the committee, for adjudication of the matter.

On matters where the interpretation of the Constitution is required, the bill said the above mentioned committee would compose a bench comprising no less than five apex court judges for the task. Regarding appeals for any verdict by an apex court bench that exercised Article 184(3)'s jurisdiction, the bill said that the appeal will lie within 30 days of the bench's order to a larger Supreme Court bench. It added that the appeal would be fixed for hearing within a period not exceeding 14 days. It added that this right of appeal would also extend retrospectively to those aggrieved persons against whom an order was made under Article 184(3) prior to the commencement of the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill 2023, on the condition that the appeal was filed within 30 days of the act's commencement.

The bill additionally said that a party would have the right to appoint its counsel of choice for filing a review application under Article 188 of the Constitution. Furthermore, it states that an application pleading urgency or seeking interim relief, filed in a cause, appeal or matter, shall be fixed for hearing within 14 days from the date of its filing. The bill said that its provisions would have effect notwithstanding anything contained in any other law, rules, or regulations for the time being in force or judgment of any court, including the Supreme Court and high courts.

Parliament adopts resolution for simultaneous polls of all assemblies

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The parliament's joint sitting Monday adopted a resolution stressing the holding of general elections of the national and the provincial assemblies simultaneously to "strengthen the federation".

Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi and Senator Kamran Murtaza moved two identical resolutions aimed to promote political stability and foster unity among the provinces. The resolutions argued that organising general elections of all the assemblies simultaneously. The resolutions emphasised the significance of appointing neutral caretaker set-ups to ensure impartiality and fairness during the elections.

The resolutions also argued that holding separate elections in Punjab, the largest federating unit with over 50% of the National Assembly seats, would inevitably impact the outcome of general elections to the National Assembly seats in Punjab. Therefore, it could potentially marginalise the smaller provinces' role in the federation, the resolutions noted.

Amid the session, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senators staged a token walkout from the house to register their protest. "Hold elections and save the country," the PTI senators chanted. The development comes after a three-member bench of the Supreme Court unanimously declared the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) order to delay the election in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa "unconstitutional".

The three-member bench — led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Munib Akhtar, and Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan — also ordered the electoral body to hold elections in the province on May 14 and asked the government to provide funds to the ECP for holding the polls. The ECP postponed the date of the election in Punjab to October 8 — initially scheduled to take place on April 30 — citing a resurgence of terror attacks, a shortage of security personnel and an unprecedented economic crisis.

The coalition government has rejected the top court's decision and has already tabled a bill in both houses of the parliament — National Assembly and Senate — pertaining to funds for general elections. The PTI has slammed the government's move and declared the decision to reject the apex court's decision "baseless", claiming that the parliament did not have the authority to dismiss a court order. The two assemblies were dissolved in January on the orders of PTI Chairman Imran Khan as he demanded the government hold elections across the country. But PM Shehbaz Sharif has rejected the idea.

that there have been reports of an explosion near the Burma Hotel located on Sariab Road. As per the report, the Quetta blast occurred near the SHO's vehicle on Saryab Road, however, SHO Ehsan Marwat and other staff were luckily unharmd.

It should be noted that earlier today, a bomb blast took place in Qandhari Bazar in which at least four people including two policemen were killed and 18 were injured. The SSP Operations said that probably, the bomb was fixed on a motorcycle that exploded at the Bacha Chowk in Qandhari Bazar. He said the condition of the two injured persons is serious in the hospital.

al was installed in a motorcycle. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the blast in Balochistan's capital city with prayers for the martyrs and offered condolences to their families. The premier has also prayed for the speedy recovery of those injured in the explosion directing relevant authorities to ensure all possible medical aid for them. He also sought a report from the authorities concerned on the terror attack sharing the state's resolve to crush the ill intentions of terrorists.

Meanwhile, Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, was rocked by an explosion for the second time in a single day. Rescue sources said

Four martyred in blast near police vehicle in Quetta

QUETTA (Agencies): In the latest terror incident, four people — including two policemen — were martyred Monday after an explosion near a police vehicle in the city's Shahrah-e-Iqbal area. Officials told media that at least 15 people were also injured in the blast which left several cars and motorcycles in the vicinity damaged.

Bodies of all the deceased have been shifted to the Civil Hospital, hospital administration said. Those killed in the blast also include a minor girl. Civil Defence Director Rafu Mandokhail said that three to four kilos of explosives were used in the blast, while the explosive materi-



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing a convention to mark Golden Jubilee of 1973 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

PM vows to ensure sanctity of Constitution

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday vowed to ensure the sanctity of the Constitution by making Pakistan economically developed and independent and by facilitating common people. "Constitution is the protector and guiding principle of Pakistan and we can sacrifice our lives to protect it," he said in his message to the nation.

The prime minister felicitated the nation on the completion of 50 years of the 1973 Constitution of the country. He also paid tributes to all the political parties, leaders, and parliamentarians who formulated the constitution for the country.

"We pay tribute to all the respected personalities who elevated the sanctity of the

Constitution and continue to play role in its strength during the last 50 years," he added. PM Shehbaz said the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 was the extract of the vision of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, and other founders of Pakistan. He said the Constitution of Pakistan kept the nation united. Terming it the mother of all state institutions, he said Constitution is a unanimously agreed upon civil agreement among all the stakeholders living in Pakistan.

The prime minister said despite untoward incidents and conspiracies that happened in the past, the Constitution maintained its existence in the country. He said Zulfikar Ali Bhutto

was not only the architect of the Constitution but also the one to sacrifice his own life for its sanctity. "I particularly salute Benazir Bhutto and Muhammad Nawaz Sharif who played a historic role in promoting, saving, and upholding the Constitution of Pakistan," he added.

He said it was a pleasant coincidence in the country's history that on the occasion of the Constitution's golden jubilee celebrations, all the pro-democracy, people-friendly, and pro-constitution parties were in power. He said the golden jubilee of the Constitution coincided with the time when political parties with the help of the Constitution ousted the selected ruling group from power.

Zardari urges PM to hold talks with opposition

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President of Pakistan and President Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians, Asif Ali Zardari addressing the National Assembly said that he is a witness of history. "By the grace of the Almighty Allah, we were able to restore the 1973 Constitution. However, what was dreamt by Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Wali Khan, Mufti Mehmood and others remains to be fulfilled".

The Constitution of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was suspended in the garb of a new religious order. The PPP has never used religion for its political gain. I have spent fourteen years of solitary confinement in prison and walked the halls of history, President Zardari said. Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto used to say that some things are taken to the grave. This is because we are among those who created Pakistan and also are responsible for protecting it. We will not leave the future generations with a divided country. We will not let anyone play with the Constitution. Those trying

to create enmity among allies will not be successful. This is not the first time that the court has given a notice. Masood Sharif was also given a notice to explain himself for bugging the court. He is on record to have stated that the court was engaging in politics and it was his duty as the DG of the Intelligence Bureau to intervene.

The Pakistan Peoples Party has always raised the slogan of Pakistan. We have been protecting Pakistan and our determination is the same today. As long as we can, we will help the country and its democracy flourish. People keep saying that the country will default and go bankrupt. Did Japan go bankrupt? Did Korea go bankrupt? There was a time when Argentina's currency was at par with the dollar and today, it is faring below ours. There was a time when India, a country ten times bigger than ours, had only a billion dollar in its reserves and sent its gold to Switzerland to get a tranche from the IMF. Pakistan will surely emerge, and we will see to it that it does. Our country is that of commodities and they hold value in the world today.

President Zardari said that he has witnessed suomotus against him. Attempts were made to conjure witnesses but were unsuccessful. My sister was taken to the prison at midnight on the occasion of Eid. No suo-motu was taken at the time. There were cameras in our washrooms, and we submitted applications but no development took place. A listening device was caught in my hospital room and presented before the court but no action was taken.

We unitedly made the 18th Amendment and NFC Awards possible. We raised our voices for the rights of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Balochistan will evolve and is home to people with political minds, but we have to talk to them and engage them. Currently, an enemy state has created an environment that does not allow for talks to take place. However, we will go to Balochistan and to KP. Under PPP, Pakistan signed the currency swap with five countries. Today, the world is following suit as counties such as China, Russia, Malaysia and India are beginning inter-currency transactions.

Complaint lodged with SJC for removal of CJP, 3 judges

ISLAMABAD (INP): Another complaint has been filed in the Supreme Judicial Council against Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Umar Ata Bandial and three other judges seeking their removal. The complaint was filed by Sardar Salman Dogar advocate in the Supreme Judicial Council.

The complainant pleaded with the SJC to remove Chief Justice Bandial, Justice Munib Akhtar, and Justice Ijazul Ahsan from their posts. Another complaint against Justice Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi has also been filed in the SJC. The copies of the complaint have been dispatched to other members of the Supreme Judicial Council.

The complainant accused all four judges including CJP Bandial of 'misconduct' in the Ghulam Mehmood Dogar case and Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa polls case. He said that these justices violated Article 209. Earlier, on April 7, a complaint was lodged with the Supreme Judicial Council calling for the removal of Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Umar Ata Bandial.

The complaint, filed by lawyer Raja Sibtain Khan, alleged that the chief justice engaged in misconduct by dividing judges into groups and securing their support to influence the outcome of a case. The complaint claimed that the actions of the chief justice violated the Constitution and the fundamental rights of the people of Pakistan, and demonstrated unfaithfulness and disloyalty to the State. The complainant has called for an investigation into the matter and for the chief justice to be removed from his position. Complaints against the CJP and other judges have been lodged amid a standoff between the PDM government and judiciary over the matter of holding elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Bilawal believes dialogue can steer country out of crises

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in his address at the National Assembly said that today is a historical day for the nation. On this very day in 1973, the foundation of Pakistan's federal, democratic and Islamic Constitution was laid.

The people of Pakistan combatted dictators and faced a plethora of obstacles to emerge as a united nation. The glue that binds all provinces of Pakistan is its Constitution. This day should be included in our syllabus to apprise the future generations of how the basis of the Constitution was laid on 10 April, 1973. This is the day when democracy triumphed and paved the way for Pakistan's constitutional journey. On this very day, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto united a divided nation under the Parliament to give the country an Islamic and democratic Constitution, and subsequently, a voice to the poor

people of the country.

The penalty he received for this was being martyred. The irony is that those responsible for defending the Constitution were the very entities involved in this crime. A dictator was imposed on the nation, who planted the seeds of extremism and terrorism in the country, the aftermath of which is still being dealt with today. The dictator also introduced the politics of hatred and vengeance that is still combated today.

On this very day in 1986, a young woman had reached Lahore to call that dictator out and stood against him. The entire country stood shoulder to shoulder with the brave woman. The dictator's empire shuddered at her very arrival. Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto lit the torch of democracy and began the journey of the restoration of the 1973 Constitution. She struggled for 30 years for the restoration of the 1973 Constitution. After Dictator Zia-ul-Haq, another dictator, General Pervez

Musharraf planted the same seeds of hatred and terrorism. Phony puppets who pretended to be politicians were created. Today too, those who have benefitted from the undermining of democracy and the Constitution are gathered under one flag, that of the PTI. They are still following the undemocratic politics that began with General Zia and continued with General Musharraf.

In 2006, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif signed the Charter of Democracy to express their resolve to contest the elections as per their respective manifestos and to face each other in one battleground, that of the elections. They were determined to not let any third party benefit from the competition among political parties. Undemocratic forces often benefit from the enmity among political parties. Since the CoD was signed and it was agreed that political parties would engage in politics and combat one another within boundaries, the

same undemocratic forces started concocting their own agenda. They realised that if the democratic forces gathered together, they would be left with no space in the political and economic spheres in the society.

Through the restoration of the 1973 Constitution, the provinces were not only given their rights but also their identity. This had happened for the first time in the history of the country. In 2013, it was the first time in the country's history that a peaceful transition of power from one elected government to another took place. This was a make or break moment in the history of the country's political struggle, as a result of which, we experienced some political stability despite the conspiracies. It is a result of the political stability that the country experienced economic stability from 2008 to 2013. This was also a time when projects such as the CPEC brought an influx of opportunities for the people.

Just as we struggled for the sake of

democracy for 30 years, certain entities were conspiring against it ever since. It was unbearable for those very entities to see Pakistan flourish as a democratic country. As a response to our accomplishments, a Frankenstein-esque experiment was imposed on us. A selected rule was established in the country with the aim of not only having a puppet sit on the seat of the PM, but to reverse the accomplishments of the past decade. The aim was to reverse the 1973 Constitution. The very Constitution that had united the nation after the creation of Bangladesh.

The ten-year doctrine was made unsuccessful in three years, that too, on April 10, 2022. For the first time in the country's history, a selected puppet was sent home not with the aid of the judiciary or the establishment, but through a democratic method of the no-confidence. The entirety of the country's political parties assumed the responsibility of helping the country emerge from the crises that

began with the selected puppet. As our hard work continued, so did the conspiracies against our efforts. We kept tolerating the conspiracies for the sake of the country, its institutions and the system. However, it is imperative that on the Golden Jubilee of the Constitution, those conspiracies are unveiled.

The doctrine did not end with the removal of the selected puppet. Till today, there are still entities in every institution who are against this democratic journey. Not only are they against this Constitution on an ideological level, but are also opposing this democratic path for their personal benefit. They do not want for the unity among us to prevail. They still want to usurp the power given to the people through the Constitution and the 18th Amendment and establish a 'One Unit' selected rule. The main characters of the conspiracy hatched in the past three years have still not been revealed before the nation.



PFA stops production of Nimko unit

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) raided at a snacks manufacturing unit on Peco Road Liaqatabad and stopped its production by imposing an emergency prohibition order.

A spokesperson for the PFA said the authority took action against a 'Nimko' unit due to using reused oil for frying nimko, open sewerage in the production area, poor cleanliness arrangements and preserved ready-to-eat products on the floor's surface. He added that the food business operator also failed to present the oil and raw material record to the raiding team. Further action was underway.

Hot weather forecast for Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Meteorological Department on Monday predicted hot and dry weather in most districts of the Sindh province during the next 24 hours.

The minimum and maximum temperatures recorded in Karachi 35-37 degrees Centigrade, Hyderabad 38-40 degrees Centigrade, Sukkur 38-40 degrees Centigrade, Thatta 37-39 degrees Centigrade, Mohenjodaro 38-40 degrees Centigrade, Dadu 36-38 degrees Centigrade, Mitthi 41-43 degrees Centigrade, and in Nawabshah 39-41 degrees Centigrade. Mainly, hot and dry weather is likely to prevail in the province.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Monday issued a power suspension programme for Tuesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work.

According to IESCO spokesperson, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 07:00 AM to 11:00 AM. Islamabad Circle, CM Pak Zong, Rahara, Tramri, Chhata Bakhtawar, Lahtrar Road, ISI, Curry (Old Navy) Feeders.

‘50,000 youth to be equipped with latest IT training after Eid’

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori has said that 50,000 youth would be provided with the latest Information Technology (IT) training at the Governor House after Eid. He said the youth after the training would be able to earn 0.3 to 0.5mln per month.

He stated this while visiting Sindhi Hotel at New Karachi, where he also did 19th Sehri and interacted with the citizens.

He said, 'I am ready to do everything to resolve the problems of the people.'

The governor said, 'I am grateful to the people for the title of people's governor.' The citizens were in surprise while seeing the governor among them.

Kamran Tessori said that the purpose of visiting such places was to meet the people and listen to their problems.

He said that the administration should visit markets and implement official prices, adding the Iftari would be held in Governor's house during the whole month of Ramazan.

The governor said that he would visit every place and met the people.

Administrator Karachi inspects condition of ailing elephant

KARACHI (APP): Administrator Karachi Dr Syed Saif-ur-Rahman has said that the instructions of the experts of the international welfare organization Four Paws are being fully implemented for the treatment of the elephant at the Karachi Zoo.

The condition of the elephant is getting better and it is hoped that the treatment and other measures prescribed for her recovery will yield good results.

He said this on Monday while visiting the Karachi Zoo, the administrator went to the enclosure of zoo elephant Noor Jahan and inspected the ongoing treatment.

The zoo doctor and other concerned staff have been instructed to inform without delay whatever is needed for the treatment of the elephant so that it can be managed immediately.

The Administrator Karachi inquired from Dr Amir Ismail, Deputy Director Abida Rais and other staff of the zoo

about the treatment of the elephant Noor Jahan and the changes being made in the enclosure of the elephant in the light of the instructions of the Four Paws team and directed them to Whatever measures are suggested should be implemented.

He also directed the staff of the zoo to keep the experts of International Four Paws continuously informed about the treatment and current condition of Noor Jahan the elephant through video conferencing so that according to the latest instructions, Treatment and rehabilitation can continue.

He expressed his satisfaction that the treatment of the elephant by the Foreign experts has yielded positive results and proper progress has been made in this regard. Animal welfare is a top priority and all possible measures are being taken for the care of zoo animals and birds.

Conference on energy saving in industries

LAHORE (APP): The industry can not compete international market without curbing technical inefficiency as the local industry is facing cost challenges besides more than 50 per cent energy losses only due to lack of technology and inefficient workforce. It was stated by the Alamgir Chaudhary, Chief Executive Officer NPO, in a conference arranged by the National Productivity Organization (NPO), the Ministry of Industries & Production, in collaboration with Cluster Development initiative (CDI) & Punjab Small Industries Corporation (PSIC) on Sharing of Lesson Learned under the Energy Efficiency Competitive Reinforcement Initiative, Auto Parts/Leather Footwear at a local hotel on Monday.

The CEO said that the NPO was working to make the industry capable to save energy through guidance and training after evaluating their energy usage, he also revealed that almost all the major industrial units were found wasting 40 to 60 per cent energy due to lack of technology and

inefficient workforce.

Hammad Altaf, Senior Energy Auditor NPO, informed about their visits in different industrial units, and identified so many leakages of energy in motors, compressors, lights, fans and guided the staff to fulfil the task of saving 30 to 40 per cent energy in their units.

Anus Haroon, General Secretary Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts & Accessories Manufacturers (PAAPAM) and other owners of industrial units sharing their success stories regarding saving energy, thanked the NPO for guiding them and launching a successful energy efficiency drive and its implementation in their units.

Secretary Industries Punjab Ehsan Bhutta said the Punjab government was always with the industry and tried to create conducive environment for business.

He praised the initiative started by the NPO and said that the same type of drives would be started for small industries in Punjab.



LAHORE: Volunteers preparing food for people to break their fast during holy month of Ramadan.

CM chairs meeting to review anti-terrorists operation

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi on Monday chaired a meeting at his office to review anti-terrorist operation in the Kacha area.

The CTD briefed the meeting about presence of miscreants in the Kacha area. The meeting was told that Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab police will conduct a joint operation against terrorists in the Kacha area for the first time. More than 11,000 personnel of the Punjab police will take part in this extensive operation, said a handout issued here.

The meeting decided to set up permanent infrastructure after eliminating terrorists' hideouts and vowed

that the writ of the state will be ensured in any case.

The CM asserted that the terrorists, challenging the government's writ in the Kacha area, will not find a place to hide and their facilitators will also be brought under the net of the law. He directed health secretaries to immediately send a mobile hospital and 4x4 ambulances to the Kacha area. The meeting was told that a plan has been chalked out to construct bridges, roads and checkpoints. It also thanked the Pakistan Army for the provision of modern weaponry and technology to conduct this operation. The CM congratulated DPO

Rahim Yar Khan and the investigation team for the safe recovery of two kidnapped children from Khanpur. He noted that the police showed professionalism by quickly identifying the children. The chief secretary, IG police, ACS (Home), Joint DG Intelligence Bureau, CTD, special branch and Addl IGs of Operations Wing of Punjab, health secretaries and senior officials of law enforcement agencies attended the meeting. Addl IG (South Punjab), commissioner DG Khan, commissioner Bahawalpur, RPO DG Khan, RPO Bahawalpur and others attended the meeting through video link.

DC visits examination centres

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rafia Haider here on Monday visited various examination centers on emergency basis to review the arrangements for matriculation examination such as security, electricity, water and staff. On this occasion, she told media men that paper of chemistry of 10th class was being conducted today under Lahore Board and the exams of 10th class would be continued till 17th April. She added that the exams of class IX would be started from 18th April and continue till 12th May. DC Lahore Rafia Haider said that fool proof security arrangements were being ensured in all examination centers. She said that strict action would be taken against those who would cheat in examination centers and zero tolerance policy would be implemented in this regard. She mentioned that police personnel were performing security duties outside examination centers. She said that District Administration would coordinate with Lahore Board in case of any complaint. "The concerned officers would be remained on duty at each examination center till the last paper on a daily basis," she added.

Nasir Shah terms 1973 constitution as binding string for all provinces

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Local Government Minister Nasir Hussain Shah, on Monday, said that the unanimous constitution of 1973 is the binding string for all the federating units and April 10 will always be remembered in the history of Pakistan as the "Constitution Day".

The minister, in a statement issued here, felicitated the nation on the occa-

sion of the Golden Jubilee of unanimous Constitution of 1973 and paid tribute to the heroes who played their role in framing the unanimous constitution of the country.

"Whenever the constitution is referred to in the country's history, the name of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto will be mentioned as well as the day of April 10 is very important for the nation and the

country", he maintained.

He said that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto will always be remembered with honour and respect in the history of the country and in the hearts of the people in form of the unanimous constitution of 1973.

Nasir Shah said that on the 50th anniversary of the Constitution of Pakistan everyone should pledge to protect it.

91 illegal profiteers receive fines of Rs0.394 million

KARACHI (APP): The Karachi administration on Monday, imposed fines of more than Rs 0.394 million on 91 vendors during the ongoing campaign against overcharging. The administration on the 19th of Ramazan ul Mubarak imposed a fine of Rs102,000 on 8 bakeries, Rs 32,000 on 5

poultry shops, Rs 68,000 on 13 grocery stores, Rs 37,000 on 10 meat sellers, Rs 14,000 on 16 vegetable sellers, Rs 26,000 on 16 fruit sellers and Rs 104,000 on 16 milk sellers while Rs10,000 was imposed on a flour seller, said a statement issued here by the commissioner office.

Essarani cuts Easter cake at Trinity Cathedral Church

E.P Report

KARACHI: Provincial Minorities Affairs Minister Giyan Chand Essarani arrived at Holy Trinity Cathedral Church on Monday. President Pakistan Peoples Party Karachi Division Mushtaq Mattu and others accompanied him.

The Provincial Minister has cut the Easter cake along with Bishop Frederick John. Iqbal Khurram, Anwar Sardar, Locus Peter and others were also present on this occasion.



Minister extended Easter greetings to the Christian community and added that Easter bring message

of love, brotherhood and harmony.

Mr. Essarani prayed, Easter bring joy, new opportunities and prosperity to the Christian community. 'Christian community has played a significant role in the development and prosperity of Pakistan,' the minister added.

CDA decides no building map would be approved without construction of water recharging well, tank

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) Board, in its meeting held on Monday, decided that no building map would be approved without the construction of a water recharging well and tank. The board's sixth meeting of the year was chaired by Chairman Captain (Retd) Noor ul Amin Mengal at the CDA headquarters. In the meeting, the CDA board approved the Establishment of the Building and Housing Control Wing. The board decided that rainwater harvesting has been made mandatory in residential and commercial buildings in Islamabad. It was decided that no building map shall be approved without the construction of a water recharging well and tank.

It should be noted that

the Building Housing Control Wing has been made fully empowered. Establishment of Building control wing will help prevent illegal constructions and enforce building by-laws. Similarly, 50 teams of field staff will perform their duties in the building control wing. The building control team will consist of one assistant director and two surveyors. Moreover, the CDA board also approved the rules and regulations for strengthening Sanitation Directorate and Environment Wing and gave it the authority to impose fines and punishments. The Board delegated the authority to determine the fee to the CDA Chairman. Apart from this, the board also approved the amendments in the ICT Building Control By-Laws

Regulation 2002. While building bylaws have also been approved for construction on IJP and Murree Road. In the meeting, the ratio of Mouve area to floor area was increased from 3,000 yards to 15,000 yards. Similarly, the floor area ratio for H series sector institutional building has been increased. The CDA board also decided to increase the floor area ratio of the educational plots of Zone 2, 4 and 5 of Islamabad.

Name Correction

My correct name is Muhammad Abbas Afridi while mistakenly written in my Educational documents as Muhammad Abbas. please make the required correction in it. Muhammad Abbas Afridi S/o Sameen Jan

KOHAT UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
Kohat 26000, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.
Ph. # 0922-52914032, 5291501

Auction Tender Notice

(Single Stage, Single Envelop)

Kohat University of Science & Technology, Kohat invites sealed tenders for the disposal of used/unserviceable items (200 KVA Generator, Iron & wooden scrap, batteries, tyres, used Answer Sheets and newspapers in bulks) "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS". Which can be inspected (LOT-wise) on any working day (Mondays to Fridays) between 8:00 am to 1:00 pm at Store Section KUST.

Tender documents (Single form for all lots) containing Terms & Conditions and form can be collected from the office of Secretary, UAC KUST (Manager ORIC, Mr. Shahid ul Islam) on cash payment of Rs.1000/- for Tender Form (non-refundable) or can be downloaded from University website i.e. www.kust.edu.pk, and cost thereof may be attached in the shape of Bank draft with the tender form.

Sealed tender alongwith call deposit (Refundable) will be received up to 11:00 AM on or before **02/05/2023** opened at 11:30 AM on the same day in the Senate hall KUST in the presence of the bidders, who may choose to attend. Earnest money will have to be attached as given in tender documents. Applicable taxes will have to be deposited accordingly by firm in addition to bid price. Bidders may opt for ONE or more than one LOT(S) on a single form. However, successful bidder will be announced for each lot separately based on highest bid for each LOT.

Convener
University Auction Committee
KUST Ph. # 0922-5291 4032

Career Opportunity

A Public Sector Organization invites applications from Pakistani Nationals from respective district for following positions on Apprentice basis initially for One Year (extendable if required):-

Position & Age Limit	Qualification/ Experience	Vacancy Location
Naib Qasid (Age: 30 years)	Primary + Preferably 1x Year Relevant Experience	• Besham • Chakisar • Kandia
Sanitary Worker (Age: 28 years)	Preferably 1x Years Relevant Experience	• Dandai • Kandia
Security Guard (Age: 40 years)	Primary + (Ex-Servicemen will be preferred)	• Aluch • Kandia • Besham
Driver (Age: 30 years)	Primary + (Valid HTV Licence)	• Besham

Terms and Conditions:-

- Interested candidates are required to send their applications (title of post to be written on top right corner of envelope) along with CVs having details regarding Education, CNIC#, Date of Birth, Domicile & Experience within 7x days of advertisement.
- Only shortlisted candidates will be called for Interview
- Candidates from respective Tehsil will be preferred.
- 5 years' relaxation in age will be granted as per Govt. rules.
- Disable and Minority Quota is reserved.
- Candidate can be disqualified at any stage of recruitment/selection process in case false information is provided.
- Selected candidates have to serve at concerned offices and no request for posting to other district will be entertained; however, Management reserves the right to post him/her at any other district on requirement basis.
- TA/DA will not be admissible.
- Candidate can appear for test/interview against one Position only

ADDRESS
PO BOX No 276, GPO Peshawar

PID(I) 6219/23



CJ orders to shift prisoners from unhygienic spaces

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Justice Peshawar High Court Justice Musarrat Hilali paid a surprise visit to the Central Jail, Peshawar on Monday. This was her 2nd visit to Jails as District Jail Mardan was first visited on 8th April where numerous issues were identified and concerned authorities were issued directions for remedial actions.

During the visit, it was found that juvenile prisoners were kept in a small and unhygienic Barrack where inmates were affected by different skin diseases. This could cause the spread of other communicable diseases as well. The Superintendent Jail was directed to shift the inmates to a place that should have all basic facilities. The Judicial Magistrate was asked to

conduct a Jail visit and to decide petty nature cases at the earliest.

It was observed that many under-trial prisoners were kept in a small Barrack where there was no space even to sit properly. The overcrowded Barrack persons complained that they have no adequate management regarding their food and other allied facilities.

PHC Chief Justice showed displeasure on account of such mismanagement and directed all to positively fix the areas of improvement specifically raised during the visit. A strict follow-up mechanism will be devised to ensure that basic facilities are provided to all the inmates as per law.

Chief Justice also visited the female Barrack and found it in good hygienic condition.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Provincial Minister Syed Masood Shah presiding over 3rd meeting of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cabinet.

‘Country’s progress linked with agri uplift’

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker Minister for Communication and Works, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha on Monday held a meeting with officers of the Agriculture Department Swat at his office.

At the meeting, the Minister was briefed in detail regarding ongoing projects including in agriculture, livestock and fisheries sectors, besides soil conservation, poultry farming, dairy farming, veterinary, water reservoirs and river embankments.

The Minister said Pakistan is basically an agricultural country and its progress and prosperity is only possible by focusing on its agriculture sector.

He said the fruits produced by Swat orchards are supplied to the entire country and abroad. He stressed the agriculture officers to pay special focus on enhancing the production of fruits in Swat.

The caretaker Minister also laid emphasis on development of poultry industry and dairy farming. He said climate change is also affecting our water resources that could be dangerous for our agriculture sector. He stressed the need for protecting water reservoirs for the future generations.

He said the government would try to further improve the agriculture sector adding the issues faced by the farmers would be addressed on a priority basis.

Denial of salaries to UoP employees on Easter, ahead of Eid condemned

PESHAWAR (APP): All employees of University of Peshawar (UoP), civil society and minority communities on Monday strongly condemned denial of salaries to Christian employees of the varsity on the eve of Easter and Muslim employees in Ramadan and ahead of Eid ul Fitr by the Vice Chancellor and termed it sheer violation of human rights.

Since all the university employees were on a strike against the Vice Chancellor from a month, therefore the VC denied the salaries to Christian employees on Easter, said Dr Salman Khan, General Secretary Peshawar University Teachers’ Association (PUTA).

He deplored that the university administration on the will of the VC had also not paid salaries to other employees including teachers in the month of Ramadan, which he said was violation of human rights and the issue would be taken up with the Human Rights’ Commission.

Dr Salman further warned that all the protesting employees of the varsity would extend the scope of their protest against corrupt practices and irregularities committed by the VC and take to the streets, adding that the Chancellor, provincial government, VC and university administration would be responsible for any law and order situation.

He said that the protesting employees had time and again brought into the notice of the Governor and the Chief Minister about the irregularities and illegalities against the VC and requested his immediate removal and an impartial inquiry against him.

“If the VC proves himself innocent before the inquiry committee then the Chancellor can restore his contract otherwise he should

be punished under the law,” PUTA secretary said.

Advocate Nawaz Khosa referring to an order of the Supreme Court said that salary was right of an employee and it is not a donation which any public institution or its head can stop anytime, adding that the apex court ordered strict legal action against the officer responsible.

Jatinder Singh, Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter of the National Peace Council for Interfaith Harmony, condemning non-payment of salaries to Christian employees by the UoP said that it was the basic right of every individual to stage peaceful protest and under the constitutional nobody can deprives him/ her of salary due to the reason.

He urged the KP Governor and Chancellor of provincial public sector universities Ghulam Ali and Chief Minister to take

notice of this act by the VC of KP university.

“In the month of Ramadan the minority communities host Iftar dinners for fasting Muslim and despite being a Muslim the VC was not releasing salaries to its Muslim employees,” he deplored and condemned.

Dr Muhammad Naem of Computer Science department, University of Peshawar said that VC UoP was trying to convert the prestigious institution of higher education into a private school and intended to take more work from employees on low or no wages, adding that he was allegedly involved in exploitation of daily wage and visiting faculty of the university as well.

He assured that the teachers are committed to arrange extra classes for the period of protest for students to save their precious time and semester, however

he said that in presence of the sitting VC the teachers and all other employees of the varsity were not ready to work.

Registrar UoP Saifullah Khan in a video message said that all the university employees were on a protest therefore the salaries could not be prepared and transferred in accounts of the employees.

He said that on the directives of VC Idress Khan an advance of Rs 30,000 was given to each Christian employee a day before Easter.

Meanwhile, all the university employees, civil society, representatives of minority communities urged the Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Chief Minister to take notice of the issue and denial of salaries to UoP employees adding that non-payment of salaries in Ramadan and ahead of Eid ul Fitr was an unjustified act.

ANP expresses concern over closure of UoP

PESHAWAR (APP) President Awami National Party (ANP) Aimal Wali Khan on Monday expressed concern over month-long closure of University of Peshawar due to protest by all employees of the varsity and demanded removal of the Vice Chancellor.

In a statement issued here, it was said that all the teachers, employees and students’ bodies were on a protest from a month but neither the Chancellor nor the government took notice of the issue.

He said that ANP was concerned about the closure of one of the prestigious institutions of higher education of the country, adding that ANP could not

remain silent over worries of the thousands of parents and students.

It said that the VC UoP had miserably failed to run the affairs of the varsity in a smooth manner and instead of resolving issues he had further aggravated the financial and administrative problems.

Aimal deplored the non-payment of salaries to employees and termed it an illegal and unjustified act.

He said that ANP believes that the demand of resignation or removal of VC Idress Khan by the teachers, employees and students was justified and the Governor and Chief Minister should have to take notice of the issue.

Fauzia Bibi records statement Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Former Member Provincial Assembly Fauzia Bibi has recorded her statement against former Prime Minister Imran Khan before Additional District and Session Judge Peshawar Aftab Iqbal in defamation suit, on Monday.

During hearing former MPA counsel Ghufuran Ullah Shah Advocate and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman lawyer Qazi Anwar appeared before court.

The petitioner Fauzia Bibi has recorded her statement before court while total five persons had been recorded their statements in this regard while court has adjourned hearing for cross-exam of the petitioner’s statement till 4th May.

It is worthy to mention that Fauzia Bibi has approached court against Imran Khan for placing false allegation during press conference that petitioner has sold her vote in Senate election 2018 then former MPA filed defamation suit against PTI’s chairman.

‘Housing societies not priority’ F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Agriculture and livestock Abdul Haleem Qasuria on Monday expressed regret over the conversion of agricultural lands into housing societies and said that if constructions on cultivable land are not stopped in time, it will have a very negative impact on our agriculture.

He said agriculture has an important role in the strengthening of the economy and housing societies should not be given priority over agricultural lands. He expressed these views at a meeting regarding illegal conversion of agricultural lands into housing societies wherein relevant officers were also present.

He showed serious concern over the illegal constructions and occupation of agricultural land by housing societies in particular and in this regard strictly instructed the officers of the concerned institutions to take timely and effective measures for the protection of agricultural lands.

Pakistan is an agricultural country and according to an estimate, 70% of the people depend on agriculture. The provincial minister said that without any planning constructions on the lands are causing the decrease of valuable resources day by day, which will cause problems for the nation in the future.

CM’ aide proposes setup of Indus like hospital in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Special Assistant to KP Caretaker CM on Labour, Malik Meher Elahi has proposed and expressed wish for the establishment of a big hospital on the pattern of Indus Hospital on the available land of the labour department to provide free health facilities to the people.

He was presiding over a meeting of the Labour Department here on Monday during which the special assistant was given a detail briefing regarding different sections, operational management, daily performance of the subsidiary organizations and challenges faced by the department.

Besides, Secretary Labour, Mohammad Fakhare Alam Khan, Director Labour Irfanullah, Director

General (DG) Employees Social Security Institute (ESSI), Aeenullah, Director (Admn) Dr Bilal and Secretary Workers Welfare Board, Irfanullah Wazir, others authorities were also present on the occasion.

On this occasion, DG ESSI Aeenullah gave a detailed briefing regarding the role, budget, hospitals, laboratories, social security officers and other sections of the department while Dr Bilal gave detailed briefing regarding labour colonies and held consultation for various already constructed and availability of land for the construction of new labour colonies.

Director Labour Irfanullah gave detailed briefing to the special assistant regarding the duties of labour inspectors in

Peshawar city and other big cities of the province.

Speaking on the occasion, the Special Assistant to the KP CM on Labour, Malik Meher Elahi proposed the construction of a big hospital on the pattern of Indus Hospital to provide free medical facilities to the people, which prompted the Secretary Labour to convene a meeting over the matter during the current week and also directed the concerned authorities to attend the meeting.

The special assistant said that the issues and challenges of the department would be taken up with the Governor and Caretaker Chief Minister of the province and will make all out efforts to resolve the problems of the department on priority basis.

Minister conduct Hajj draw

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Minister for Local Government, Elections and Rural Development, Sawal Nazir Khan Advocate and Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali on Monday jointly conducted the Hajj draw for the supporting staff of Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP).

Secretary Local Govt, Amir Afaaq, CEO WSSP Nasir and officers of the WSSSP were present on the occasion.

The Minister picked the names of two lucky class-four employees of the WSSP including Waheed Gul and Imran through the draw for Hajj pilgrimage.

The Minister and others congratulated both the employees and said these two lucky employees have been chosen to perform one of the five important practices of Islam. Special prayers were also offered on the occasion for the prosperity and security of the motherland.

14,604 anti polio teams formed

PESHAWAR (APP): To eradicate polio, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government along with relevant agencies has formed 14,604 anti polio teams to vaccinate over 3.1 million children under five years of age in different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

According to the Emergency Operation Centre for Polio eradication, the special campaign would be launched at his risk areas of Bannu and DI Khan division, Peshawar, Nowshera and Swat districts besides Afghans’ refugees camps.

The teams include 13,068 mobile, 768 fixed and 75 roaming that would visit door to door and house to house to vaccinate children under five years of age.

People have been requested to cooperate with polio teams and bring their kids to nearby hospitals and basic health units in case of non-arrival of the vaccinators.

Power suspension notified

PESHAWAR (APP): Pesco on Monday notified power suspension from 220 KV Bannu Grid Station April 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., resultant consumers of 132 KV Bannu, Gurguri, Karak, Tall, Parachinar, Mir Ali, Miranshah, Ramzak, Lachi, Ali Zai grid connected 11 KV feeders would face inconvenience.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister Sawal Nazir Khan Advocate and Mayor Haji Zubair Ali conducting Hajj draw for supporting staff of WSSP.

PIC maintains honor of ISO certified hospital

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan’s first ISO Quality Management System certified public sector hospital Peshawar Institute of Cardiology (PIC) has proved the best ever international standard hospital by fulfilling the Surveillance Audit requirements.

Spokesperson of PIC Riffat Anjum on Monday said that during the audit, the hospital was found to

have documented, implemented, and maintained its QMS in compliance with the requirements.

She said evidence of compliance was successfully verified, and continuation to the certification was recommended by the audit team.

PIC has already an honor of the first ever public sector hospital in the country by getting ISO 9001-2015

certification in 2022.

Maintaining the ISO standard of the hospital involves the tireless efforts of all the hospital staff, Spokesperson.

Peshawar institute of cardiology inaugurated December 2020. The KP’s first cardiac hospital providing the best and international standard health care not only in the province but to all patients of the country.

Dr Attiqur Rehman passes away

PESHAWAR (APP): The elder brother of former Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami late Qazi Hussain Ahmad, Dr Attiq-ur-Rehman died, said a press release issued here on Monday.

Deceased was the brother of late Maulana Abdul Qadoos, late Dr Abdul Saboo and father of Salman Ahmad and Dr Adnan Ahmad.

His funeral prayers would be offered today (Monday) at 9:30 P.M in Masjid Zaid Bin Haris, Zahid Market, Phase-2 Hayatabad, Fateha Khwani would be offered in his residence House No.292, Street No. 8, Sector H-1, Phase-2 near Sunday Bazaar at Hayatabad.

Hot and dry weather to prevail in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Monday predicted that mainly hot and dry weather is expected over most districts of the province.

However, the Center said that light rain-thunderstorms with gusty winds are likely to occur over isolated places in Chitral, Upper Dir, Bajaur, Khyber and Kurram district.

During the last 24 hours mainly dry weather occurred over most districts of the province. However, isolated light rain occurred in Chitral district.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 32/18, Chitral 25/08, Timergara 29/14, Dir 27/08, Mirkhani 23/06, Kalam 21/03, Drosh 24/11, Saidu Sharif 30/10, Pattan 31/13, Malam Jabba 18/07, Takht Bhai 33/13, Kakul 27/11, Balakot 31/09, Parachinar 18/04, Bannu 34/15, Cherat 26/10, D.I. Khan 38/20.

The highest temperature recorded in the province was 38°C in Dera Ismail Khan.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Provincial Minister Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha in a meeting with officials of Agriculture department.



In brief

Action against DEO (F) sought F.P. Report

WANA: The tribesmen argued caretaker advisor for education along with other competent authorities to disciplinary actions against District Education Officer and Deputy Education Officer (Female) South Waziristan, on Monday. The tribesman claimed that DEO Female Ghulam Fatima along with Deputy Education Officer don't turn a single stone for welfare of students and uplift of female education in their jurisdiction. The tribesmen claimed that both DEOs are operating the department on nepotism and corruption while Bilal a clerk at education department is a front man for the corrupt officials. The tribesmen claimed that DEO has appointed male officers for inspections and visits to girl's schools which is against law and norms of Pakhtun society. They argued caretaker Advisor along with Secretary and Director Elementary and Secondary Education to initiate disciplinary actions against DEO Female Ghulam Fatima and Deputy Education Officer along Clerk Bilal working a front man for the corrupt officers.

DC visits bazaars to check price lists F.P. Report

JAMRUD: Deputy Commissioner, Khyber Abu Nasir paid a surprise visit to Jamrud and Sakhi Pul Bazaars and checked price lists of various food items. Flanked by Additional Assistant Commissioner (revenue) Dr Amir Zeb and Tehsildar Jamrud Asif Ali Shah DC, Khyber examined different sections of the Bazaar and checked price lists and quality of fruits, vegetables and other edibles in addition with facilities observed, provided to the believers in the holy month of Ramadan. Two persons were also arrested while collecting illicit money from the hand pushcarts in Jamrud Bazaar and were put behind the bars for further legal process. The district administrative officer urged the traders to strictly follow the price lists and no one would permit to fleece the residents by charging extra in Ramadan. He also directed the handcart owners in Jamrud Bazaar to continue their business at the site, reserved for them and avoid violating price lists.

Bullets raided body found

ATTOK (APP): Bullets raided body of a woman found in a deserted place near Islamabad- DI Khan motorway in village Dhoter Malkan near Nilhad in the limits of Pindigheb Police station on Saturday. According to police, some passersby spotted a body lying at a deserted place, who rushed to inform the police. On getting information, the Police shifted the body to THQ hospital for autopsy. The woman's body was two to three days old and she was shot somewhere else. Later, the police said that the deceased body was dumped to conceal the crime. Meanwhile, the body was not identified till filing this news report. The Pindigheb Police registered a murder case against unknown assailants and started further investigation.

Robber injured

KASUR (INP): The police have arrested an injured robber after an alleged police encounter in Kasur on Monday, police official told media. A citizen called police and informed that two robbers had stolen a loader rickshaw and cash from a laborer at Divalpur Road near Sadar Police Station in Kasur.

RPO orders foolproof security for Yaum-e-Ali events

FAISALABAD (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Dr Muhammad Abid Khan has directed the police heads of four districts of Faisalabad region to ensure foolproof security arrangements on Yaum-e-Ali.

During a meeting on Monday, he said that Yaum-e-Shahadat-e-Hazrat Ali (May Allah be pleased with him) would be observed here Wednesday, April 12, 2023 (21st Ramzan-ul-Mubarak 1444 Hijrah). Hence City Police Officer (CPO) Faisalabad and District Police Officers (DPOs) Jhang, Toba Tek Singh and Chiniot should evolve a comprehensive strategy for tight security arrangements on Yaum-e-Ali.

He said that SP and DSP rank officers should be deputed for supervision of security arrangements besides deputing sufficient staff of security of Majalis and processions. In this

connection, a central control room should also be established in each district of the region for keeping vigilant eye on security arrangements as well as on movement of suspects and miscreants.

He also directed the CPO and DPOs to establish police pickets at all entry and exist points besides ensuring screening and sweeping of procession routes and Majalis sites through staff of special branch.

The lady police should also be deputed for checking of female participants whereas teams of elite force, mobile squads, quick response force and dolphin force should also be remain active throughout the day. The RPO also directed traffic officers of all districts to ensure smooth flow of vehicular traffic by taking prompt action against violators of traffic rules and regulations without any discrimination.

Chemical factory gutted, 2 injured: Two persons were injured due to a fire, which erupted in a chemical factory in the area of Sandal Bar police station. Rescue 1122 spokesman said here on Monday that fire erupted in 'Behzad & Co' unit, situated at Chak No 61-JB Dharoran on Narwala Road to Jhang Road bypass due to short-circuiting.

The fire engulfed the entire surroundings and burnt precious material. Two persons including factory owner Khalid Aziz (63) and Mazhar Hussain (60) received serious burn injuries on 50 per cent parts of their bodies. Receiving information, Rescue 1122 teams rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control after hectic efforts. The injured were shifted to Allied Hospital where doctors were striving to save their lives, he added.

‘Training held for minorities to develop capacity building’

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: The six-day training workshop organized by the Minority Affairs Department for the youth belonging to the religious minority community of Malakand Division has concluded in Mingora.

In the workshop organized on the topic of capacity building and skill building, the youth from the districts of Malakand Division received training on basic issues related to employment and skilling. The workshop was addressed by Assistant Commissioners of Swat District and highlighted

various aspects of preparation for Provincial Management Service. Additional Deputy Commissioner Swat Sohail Ahmed was the chief guest of the concluding session.

Addressing the youth participating in the workshop, Additional Deputy Commissioner Swat Sohail Ahmed called the preparation of the exams seriously and hard work in the preparation as the first condition. He said that it does not matter whether the student is private or regular if he works hard and said that he himself has been a private student

and passed the PMS exam.

ADC Sohail said that participation in the competitive examination is mandatory for success and the examination provides equal opportunities to all citizens, there is a lot of talent in the youth of the minority community but little guidance is needed and in such a case. This kind of workshop is a very good initiative. The youth who participated in the workshop asked questions to the experts while taking interest in the workshop. At the end of the training workshop, Basakhi and Easter cakes were also cut.

D I Khan police arrest two outlaws

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: The Dera police have arrested two accused and recovered weapons and ammunition from their possession in the limits of Paroa police station.

According to a police spokesperson, Khan in an operation against criminal elements, a police team led by Paroa police station SHO Gul Sher netted the accused, Yasir, a resident of South Waziristan and Salam, a resident of Waziristan.

They also recovered a stolen mobile phone, besides a 30-bore pistol

with 5 cartridges and a 12-bore repeater gun with 06 cartridges from their possession. Police have registered a case and started investigation.

Rescue 1122 Tank responds to 22 emergencies: The district's emergency service- rescue 1122 Tank tackled a total of 22 emergencies during the last week with the average response time recorded at seven minutes under the supervision of District Emergency Officer Engr Waqas Alam, says its spokesman.

Giving details, the spokesman said the rescue service responded to differ-

ent kinds of emergencies over the week which include 15 medical, two road accidents and five emergencies.

He said the control room received a total of 390 emergency calls including 148 for information. He said the rescue 1122 service also provided services in 10 referral-related emergencies including one within the district and in nine emergencies patients were shifted to other districts. He said the rescue 1122 teams were fully equipped with all necessary equipment and they had been efficiently rendering their services during emergencies.

Youth Jirga protest against alleged embezzlement

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Dir Youth Jirga held a protest against the alleged corruption of crores of rupees in the purchase of land for Timergara Medical College (TMC). Hospital equipment and Doctors Colony to resume the protest movement after Eid-ul-Fitr and Governor House and DG Health.

According to details, as many as 136 people have been recruited for various posts in Timergara Medical College, but they are sitting in their homes and receiving salaries, while Timergara Medical College is locked. In this regard, Dir Youth Jirga President Atiqur Rehman, Village Council Chairman

Shah Hasan, Akhunzada Saeedullah, Kaleemullah, Wajidullah, Azizullah and others addressed a conference at Timergara Press Club and said that Timergara Medical There has been widespread malpractice in the college.

Merit has been violated in the recruitments. They alleged that the price of each scale was Rs 1 lac if someone has on scale 15 he give 15 lacs someone on 16 he give 16 lacs. He said that corruption was also committed in the purchase of equipment worth Rs. 250 crores for Timergara Hospital and the land purchased in hilly area which was not suitable for Doctors Colony was also allegedly involved in corruption. He has given applications and files

with proofs to former Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zubair Niazi, NAB, FIA, Custodian Chief Minister, Chief Secretary, regarding massive corruption in Timergara Medical, but unfortunately no action has been taken yet.

And no inquiry was done which is a question mark. He said that the DG Health involved in the alleged corruption was transferred twice in a week and decisions were made back which is unprecedented in the history of Pakistan. Should DG Health Dr. Shaukat Ali be immediately removed and the alleged corruption be investigated? If this is not done, we will start the protest movement again after Eidul Fitr.



SHANGLA: People holding a rally regarding enrollment drive in government schools. — F.P. photo

The poetic majesty of Abbottabad: A town immortalized in verse

Syed Saqib Hussain

NESTLED in the foothills of the Himalayas lies a town that has captured the hearts of many. Abbottabad, with its stunning natural beauty and rich cultural heritage, is a place that has left an indelible mark on the lives of all those who have lived or visited there. And one man, in particular, was so deeply attached to this idyllic paradise that he immortalized his emotions in a poignant and evocative poem titled "Town Abbottabad."

*I remember the day when I first came here
And smelt the sweet Abbottabad's air*

*The trees and the ground covered with snow
Gave us indeed a brilliant show
To me the place seemed like a dream*

*And far ran a lonesome stream
The wind hissed as if welcoming us
The pine swayed creating a lot of fuss*

*And the tiny cuckoo sang it away
A song very melodious and gay
I adored the place from the first sight*

And was happy that my coming here was right

And eight good years here passed very soon

And we leave you perhaps on a sunny noon

Oh Abbottabad we are leaving you now

To your natural beauty do I bow

*Perhaps your winds sound will never reach my ear
My gift for you is few sad tears
I bid you farewell with a heavy heart*

Never from my mind will your memories thwart

James Abbott, a British soldier and administrator, founded Abbottabad in the mid-19th century. His love for the town was so great that he penned a beautiful poem about his beloved town. Titled "Town Abbottabad" the poem is a nostalgic ode to the natural beauty of Abbottabad. In it, Abbott describes his first impressions of the town, including the sweet smell of its air, the snow-covered ground, and the lonesome stream that ran through it. He goes on to describe the swaying pine trees, the melodious song of the cuckoo, and the sound of the wind that welcomed him.

Abbott's emotional attachment to Abbottabad is evident throughout the poem. He adores the place from the first sight and reflects on the eight good years spent there, which passed all too quickly. The poet bids farewell to the town with a heavy heart, acknowledging that he may never hear the sound of its winds again. The final lines of the poem convey the depth of the poet's emotional attachment, as he vows that memories of Abbottabad will never be forgotten.

The poem's literary value lies in its vivid sensory descriptions, emotive language, and powerful imagery. The poet's use of sensory language allows the reader to imagine the sights, smells, and sounds of

Abbottabad, creating a dreamlike atmosphere that is enchanting to the senses. The poem's emotive language captures the sentimental value of Abbottabad to its visitors and residents, as well as the natural beauty that is captivating.

Abbottabad is a town that has seen many changes over the years. From its early days as a British cantonment to its modern-day status as a bustling city, Abbottabad has seen a significant deterioration in its natural beauty and cultural heritage yet the town is still home to numerous historical sites, including the famous Ilyasi Mosque and the historic St. Luke's Church, chiseled stone buildings, military training outfits, academic intuitions and boarding schools. Its natural beauty is also renowned, with the town serving as a gateway to some of the most beautiful mountain ranges in the world.

But what truly sets Abbottabad apart is its emotional significance. For those who have lived or visited there, Abbottabad is more than just a town. It is a place that captures the heart and soul of all who come into contact with it. Abbott's poem is a testament to this emotional attachment, and it has endured for over one and a half century, evoking powerful emotions in all those who read it.

The poem has become an emblem of love for Abbottabad's beauty, culture and history. The town's emotional significance adds to its allure, making it a place that will forever hold a special place in the hearts of all those who have experienced its magic.

Dacoits gang busted in Mardan F.P. Report

MARDAN: Police have arrested 02 members alleged gang of inter-district dacoity while Stolen property 1 lakh rupees in cash seized mobile phones and the pistol used in the incident recovered, the mobile phones recovered in the stolen property were referred to the original owners.

According to the details, reports of snatching mobile phones and cash from innocent citizens at night in the police station city limits were registered in police station city. District Police Chief Najib-ur-Rehman took strict notice of this and issued orders to arrest the accused under the supervision of DSP City Circle Inam Jan Khan.

The district police, under the leadership of SHO Moqaddam Khan, gained access and arrested 02 accused involved in the incident thanks to the professional strategy. 01 lakh rupees in cash, seized mobile phones and the pistol used in the incident along with several cartridges were seized from the arrested accused. Later, mobile phones recovered in stolen goods were referred to the original owners.

Enrollment drive at govt schools kicks-off

F.P. Report

BUNER: District Education Officer (DEO) Iftikhar-ul-Ghani formally launched enrollment drive in government schools by signing admission forms in a crowded ceremony was held at government high school Swari followed by a walk to University of Buner in the Swari Bazaar.

The ADO Farooq Khan, SDOs, teachers, students, NCHD coordinator, In charge program Azhar

Saeed participated. DEO in his address to gathering at Swari High School and participants of the walk at Swari Bazaar this time more than twenty thousand out of school's children would be enrolled so as to play due role. He was vocal to say though number of out of school's children was many times high in the province but this year 1.6 million out of school's children enrollment would be ensured.

DEO elaborated for this

purpose every teacher and every student would have to play due role by visiting every home and identification of every out of school child so as to bring him school. DEO appealed participants of the gathering and walk that they must play due role in enrollment of every out of schools children so as to make sure every child be educated to play his due role in the society and to turn homeland prosperous developed and longer peaceful.

Three cops injured in firing

QUETTA (PPI): At least three police officials were wounded in firing incident in Kachlak area near Quetta.

According to details, some unidentified miscreants opened fire and injured three officials of Eagle Squad in Kachlak area near Quetta. The attacker managed to escape from the scene after the incident.

The injured police officials were shifted to a nearby hospital. On the other hand, some unidentified persons opened fire and killed two persons, including a woman, in Baloch Colony area of Satellite

Town in Quetta on Sunday. Rescue teams reached the spot and shifted the dead bodies to a nearby hospital.

Administrations cooperating in ration distribution: Minister for Home, Tribal Affairs and PDMA, Mir Ziaullah Langove, has said that district administrations of all the districts of the province were extending cooperation to ensure fair and transparent distribution of ration amongst the deserving families of the province.

These views were expressed by him during visit to Ration Packaging

Unit of Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Balochistan here on Monday. He said that after the announcement made by the Chief Minister Balochistan regarding distribution of ration amongst the poor and deserving families of the province, the process of procuring ration and its subsequent distribution amongst the deserving families had been started, adding that it was continuously being monitored to check the quantity and quality of procured ration to be distributed amongst the poor families.

Funds for transportation for 7th digital census field staff sought

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Malgari Ustazan (MU), All Primary Teachers Association (APTA) and Insaf Teachers' Association have demanded the federal government and its concerned ministry to ensure payment of the amount allocated for hiring vehicles for supervisors and enumerators of the 7th digital census. In their separate statements the teachers' organizations have complained that the field staff of the 7th digital census was not provided with adequate funds meant for their pick and drop during their duties.

They said the digital census was started on March 1st, and ended on April 4th during which the field staff performed their duties as Supervisors along with six enumerators in each block. The field operation started without arranging transport for the field staff. The field staff (Supervisors and Enumerators) hired private vehicles for transportation purposes and left no stone unturned to perform their duties, thus contributing to the national cause. The statements said, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics Letter No 2 (6) 2021-PBS/FO Islamabad, 29 March 2023, it was clarified that funds

had been provided for hiring of vehicles (Rs 7000 per day along with POL and Driver for 35 days) for transportation of field staff. But the Census in-charge, according to the field staff, was reluctant to pay the amount.

According to the teachers' organizations each supervisor was paid Rs 60,000 and Rs 40,000 for transportation instead of Rs 180,000 for the entire month at the rate of Rs 6000 per pick and drop by the Bureau of Statistics. They said that it was circulated by the office of Assistant Commissioner that the remaining amount would be given as security and other items.

The Malgari Ustazan Provincial Vice President Zahid Khan, Vice President Malakand Division Rahmatuddin, former ASDEO Anwar Khan, Sultan Mehmood Taran, Laeq Shah and others demanded that the Bureau of Statistics should issue clear instructions in that regard so that all doubts are removed.

Al-Khidmat foundation observes World Orphan Day: Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF) arranged an Iftar dinner at its Aghoosh center Gulabad to mark the World Orphans Day here the other day. District Police Officer Tariq Iqbal was chief guest on the occasion

while social and political volunteers and area elders attended the event.

The function on this occasion was addressed by the AKF deputy general secretary Fazal Mahmood, district president Hafizullah Khaksar, JI district chief Izazul Mulk Afkari, JI tehsil emir Dr Bashir Muhammad and in-charge Aghoosh center Gulabad Saeedullah. They lauded the AKF services for the uplift of widows and orphans in society and said the Foundation fulfilled a great responsibility by facilitating and supporting the orphan children. The speakers said that

unfortunately about 4.8 million orphans in Pakistan were deprived of support.

The said the AKF had been sponsoring 22 thousand orphans in Pakistan while 1800 others were being provided with free education, health care and residential facilities at its Aghoosh centers. The DPOTariq Iqbal praised the Foundation for its efforts and support for the orphans. He said that providing good education and building the children's character was a big challenge in the country as education did not mean getting a degree rather it was something else.



India’s Indigenous people pay price of tiger conservation

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Officials were celebrating just hours away from several of India's major tiger reserves when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in the southern city of Mysuru that the country's tiger population has steadily grown to more than 3,000 since its flagship conservation programme began 50 years ago over concerns that the numbers of the big cats were dwindling. "India is a country where protecting nature is part of our culture," Modi said in his speech. "This is why we have many unique achievements in wildlife conservation."

Modi also launched the International Big Cats Alliance, which he said will focus on the protection and conservation of seven big cat species: the tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard, puma, jaguar and cheetah. But Indigenous people, known as Adivasi in India, say wildlife conservation projects have displaced members of their community over the past half-century. Adivasi communities in Karnataka organised protests last month to highlight how their people, who have lived in forests for centuries, have been kept out of conservation efforts. Project Tiger began in 1973 after a census of the big cats found India's tigers were quickly going extinct through habitat loss, unregulated sport hunting, increased poaching and retaliatory killings by people. Lawmakers and officials tried to address these issues, but the conservation model centered around creating protected reserves where ecosystems can function undisturbed by people.

Several Indigenous groups say the conservation strategies, deeply influenced by American environmentalism, have meant uprooting numerous communities who had lived in the forests for millennia. Members of several Adivasi groups set up the Nagarahole Adivasi Forest Rights Establishment Committee to protest against evictions from their ancestral lands and seek a voice in how the forests are managed. "Nagarahole was one of the first forests to be brought under Project Tiger, and our parents and grandparents were probably among the first to be forced out of the forests in the name of conservation," said JA Shivu, 27, who belongs to the Jenu Kuruba tribe. "We have lost all rights to visit our lands, temples or even collect honey from the forests. How can we continue living like this?" The fewer than 40,000 Jenu Kuruba people are one of the

75 tribal groups whom the Indian government classifies as particularly vulnerable. Jenu, which means honey in the southern Indian Kannada language, is the tribe's primary source of income. Its members collect it from beehives in the forests to sell. Adivasi communities like the Jenu Kurubas are among the poorest in India. Experts say conservation policies that try to create a pristine wilderness have been influenced by prejudices against local communities. India's Ministry of Tribal Affairs has repeatedly said it is working on Adivasi rights. Only about one percent of the more than 100 million Adivasis in India have been granted any rights over forest lands despite a government forest rights law, passed in 2006, which aims to "undo the historical injustice" for forest communities. Indigenous people are also losing their lands to climate change with more frequent forest fires spurred by extreme heat and unpredictable rainfall.

India is home to more than 75 percent of the world's wild tiger population. India has more tigers than its protected spaces can hold, and the cats are also now living at the edges of cities and in sugar cane fields. Tigers have disappeared on Bali and Java, and China's tigers are likely extinct in the wild. The Sunda Island tiger subspecies is found only in Sumatra. Many have praised India's efforts to safeguard this endangered species as a success. "Project Tiger hardly has a parallel in the world since a scheme of this scale and magnitude has not been so successful elsewhere," said SP Yadav, a senior Indian government official in charge of Project Tiger. But critics say the social costs of fortress conservation, in which forest departments protect wildlife and prevent local communities from entering forest regions, is high.

Sharachandra Lele of the Bengaluru-based Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment said the conservation model is outdated. "There are already successful examples of forests managed by local communities in collaboration with government officials, and tiger numbers have actually increased even while people have benefitted in these regions," he said. Someone who agrees is Vidya Athreya, director of the Wildlife Conservation Society in India, who has been studying interactions between large cats and humans for the past two decades.

DeSantis to make 1st public appearance

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP): Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is set to make his first public appearance in South Carolina, a state where votes will be critical if he launches an expected 2024 presidential bid. State Sen. Josh Kimbrell told The Associated Press that he would host DeSantis for an event on April 19 in Spartanburg, in South Carolina's heavily Republican Upstate.

DeSantis' first public visit to South Carolina, home of the leadoff presidential primary in the South, comes amid a brisk travel schedule during which the governor has taken his "Florida Blueprint" tour to Pennsylvania, New York and Michigan in recent weeks. With an anticipated presidential bid in the offing, the travel has opened up an avenue for DeSantis to lay out some of his policy achievements in Florida, setting up possible contrasts with potential GOP

rivals, including former President Donald Trump.

Kimbrell told the AP that he had been hoping to bring DeSantis to South Carolina for months now, arguing that politically savvy Republicans in the early voting state are accustomed to having multiple chances to get to know presidential candidates, in person. "I've told everybody associated with his team, 'You've got to get here early and often,'" said Kimbrell, who has already joined efforts with a political action committee urging DeSantis to get into the race. "I've tried to make it clear to them that, if you want to win, you've got to get here early." South Carolina for months has been hosting GOP candidates, including Trump, former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley and former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson. There have also been trips from many of those anticipated to join the field, including former Vice President Mike

Pence. Later this week, after a swing through Iowa and New Hampshire, Sen. Tim Scott returns home to South Carolina for a summit with donors, as he mulls a bid of his own. While this would be DeSantis' first public South Carolina event, he was in the state last year for a gubernatorial fundraiser. The event near Charleston was attended by some of Trump's top donors in the state.

To Kimbrell, who said he agrees with Trump on policy but not "on the way he approached things personally," DeSantis is well-positioned to be a better alternative to Trump, but needs to start spending more time in South Carolina. "I believe that Ron DeSantis is as popular among my base as Trump is," Kimbrell said, of his heavily GOP district. "But you can't just mail it in. He's going to have to press the flesh, roll his sleeves up, and get really serious."

Zelenskyy condemns Russian strikes on Orthodox Palm Sunday

KYIV (Agencies): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has condemned Russian air strikes carried out during the Orthodox Church's observance of Palm Sunday, including an attack that killed a 50-year-old man and his 11-year-old daughter. "This is how the terrorist state marks Palm Sunday," Zelenskyy said in his nightly video address. "This is how Russia places itself in even greater isolation from the world."

Ukrainian emergency services said the man and his daughter were killed after Russian forces struck a residential building in the southeastern city of Zaporizhzhia. A woman believed to be the wife and mother of the victims was found alive under rubble at the site of the attack. Russia's defence ministry said it had destroyed 70,000 tonnes of fuel near Zaporizhzhia as well as warehouses storing missiles, ammunition and artillery in the Zaporizhzhia and Donetsk regions. Zelenskyy's remarks came as Ukraine's military reported Russian strikes across the front,

with the fighting most concentrated on the eastern cities of Bakhmut and Avdiivka.

Zelenskyy praised military units defending positions in the east and expressed hope that the next Palm Sunday would take place at a time of "peace and freedom for all our people". Most of Ukraine's 43 million people are Orthodox Christians who follow the Julian Calendar designed by Roman emperor Julius Caesar, meaning they celebrate Easter a week later than the majority of Christians in the West. Pope Francis, the head of the Catholic church, used his traditional Easter address to ask God to "comfort the wounded and all those who have lost loved ones" and "help the beloved Ukrainian people on their journey towards peace, and shed the light of Easter upon the people of Russia".

The Ukrainian military has reported repelling more than 40 attacks by Russian forces over the past 24 hours, including unsuccessful advances on areas west of the eastern

city of Bakhmut. Bakhmut, a city in Donetsk, has been the site of the longest battle in Russia's 13-month war against Ukraine. Analysts say the Kremlin views taking Bakhmut as an important step towards capturing strategically important and heavily-fortified cities and towns in the Donbas region such as Chasiv Yar, Kramatorsk and Sloviansk. Ukrainian officials have pledged to defend Bakhmut against repeated Russian attacks, but Zelenskyy has acknowledged that troops could be pulled back if they are at risk of being encircled.

Ukrainian officials also reported that Kharkiv in the northeast and Zaporizhia in the southeast came under missile, rocket and artillery fire. Kharkiv Governor Oleh Syniehubov said two men in the city of Kupiansk died after residential areas were struck by multiple rocket launchers. Syniehubov said a 30-year-old man was also hospitalised in serious condition after shelling of the city of Chuhuiv.

Tunisia migrant boat shipwrecks leave 27 dead or missing

TUNIS (BBC): Twenty-seven people are dead or missing after two migrant boats sank off the east coast of Tunisia. The first boat left Tunisia for Italy, with 37 on board. Twenty are missing while 17 have been rescued, a court spokesperson in the city of Sfax said. Four bodies were recovered from a beach after a second boat sank.

Thirty-six people who were on the second boat were rescued and three are missing, the spokesperson said. The spokesperson, Faouzi Masmoudi, said the boats were made of iron sheets. Since the start of March, there have been at least seven similar shipwrecks off Tunisia, with around 100 people dead or missing. Parts of the Tunisian coastline are only about 150 kilometres from Lampedusa, an Italian island frequently used as a crossing point to the mainland.

Its proximity to Italy has seen Tunisia overtake Libya as the main departure point for people fleeing conflict and dire poverty in the Middle East and Africa, seeking a better life in Europe. In the first three months of this year, more than 14,000 migrants - most of whom are from sub-Saharan Africa - have been intercepted trying to reach Europe from Tunisia, according to the country's coastguard. The number is five times higher than for the corresponding period last year. The figures for 2023 are "up very sharply because there are many more departures", said Houssein Jebabli, spokesperson for the Tunisian national guard. Migrants often pay vast sums of money to be transported in unsafe vessels by people smugglers.

Mr Masmoudi, the Sfax court spokesperson, said it was crucial that the traffickers themselves are detained, as he announced investigations into both boat accidents. The aim, he said, was to find "the organisers of these attempted crossings who made them embark on iron sheet boats, which do not offer minimum safety conditions at all but which are cheaper to manufacture than wooden ones".

Taiwanese celebrate freedom

TAIPEI (AFP): Retired lecturer Donald Ho was out for his morning stroll in a busy downtown park, anxious about what Chinese jets and ships holding war games around Taiwan meant for freedom in the self-ruled island. "I am a little worried, I would be lying to you if I say that I am not," the 73-year-old told AFP in Taipei.

"The problem is sovereignty. I want independence but they (China) just regard Taiwan as a province," he said. Beijing launched three days of military drills dubbed "Joint Sword" to rehearse the encirclement of the island after a meeting between Taiwan's president and the US House Speaker. It was the biggest military action by Beijing around Taiwan, which it claims as its own territory, since launching huge drills last August following a visit by former House speaker Nancy Pelosi. "If a war broke out, both sides will suffer quite a lot. Just like the situation in Ukraine."

Other Taiwanese were out stretching their legs or practising tai-chi in Daan Park unbowed by the new military movements offshore. "Go to the city, everybody is eating, dancing, laughing, everything," said retired businessman Jasper Lee, 75. "China, they are stuck in their brain, they think Taiwan belongs to them." - "Like brothers" - Taiwanese of all ages were keen to shake off the Chinese threat while reiterating that being free was paramount. "We have to keep our life going. We cannot just stop our life," said 16-year-old student Nathan Green, a dual Australian-Taiwanese national. "I don't like a government that is like a prison. I don't like a government that wants to control our people. I like a government that is free," he said.

Ukraine children returned from Russia after alleged deportation

KYIV (Agencies): More than 30 children have been reunited with their families in Ukraine this week after a long operation to bring them back from Russia, where they had been taken from occupied areas during the war, a humanitarian group has said. Kyiv has estimated nearly 19,500 children have been taken to Russia since Moscow invaded in February last year, in what it condemns as illegal deportations.

Moscow, which controls parts of Ukraine's east and south, has denied abducting children and said they have been transported away for their own safety. The Save Ukraine charity said the children and their relatives had crossed the border into Kyiv-controlled territory. According to released footage, the children, who carried suitcases and bags, crossed the border on foot and later boarded a bus to continue their journey.

"Now, the fifth rescue mission is nearing its completion. It was special regarding the number of children we managed to return and also because of its complexity," said Mykola Kuleba, the founder of Save Ukraine. Kuleba praised the "heroic mothers" who had travelled to retrieve their children in what he called the "most difficult" of the charity's rescue missions to date. The group helped the Ukrainian relatives of children who had been taken to Russia with the logistics, transport and planning needed to embark on the long journey to fetch their children and bring them back.

A grandmother who had been due to reunite with two of her grandchildren died suddenly on the trip from "stress" and the children had to remain in Russia, Kuleba, Ukraine's former commissioner for children's rights, told a media briefing in Kyiv. Writing on Facebook, he said the Ukrainian relatives had been subjected to a "13-hour interrogation" at Russia's FSB security service. Kuleba said that all the children who have been brought back to Ukraine by Save Ukraine had said that no one in Russia was trying to find their parents in Ukraine. "There were kids who changed their locations five times in five months, some children say that they were living with rats and cockroaches," he said. The children were taken to what Russians called summer camps from occupied parts of



Ukraine's Kharkiv and Kherson regions, Kuleba said.

There was no immediate comment from Moscow. Three children - two boys and a girl - were present at the media briefing in Kyiv. Save Ukraine said they were returned to Ukraine on a previous rescue mission last month that returned 18 children in total. The three children said they had been separated from their parents who were pressured by Russian authorities to send their children to Russian summer camps for what was billed as two weeks, from occupied parts of Kherson and Kharkiv regions. The children at the briefing said they were forced to remain at the summer camps for four to six months and were moved from one place to another during their stay.

"We were treated like animals. We were closed in a separate building," said Vitally, a child from Kherson region whose age was not clear. He added that they were told their parents no longer wanted them. Al Jazeera's Jonah Hull, reporting from Kyiv, said it is believed many thousands of Ukrainian children remain in Russia. "Some of them, accompanied by their parents, have made active decisions to stay in Russia. But it is alleged a lot more were illegally deported. According to the evidence of some of those who have returned, sometimes they were held against their will and subjected to demeaning treatment, propaganda and indoctrination".

Iraq demands Turkey apologise over attack on Sulaimaniyah airport

BAGHDAD (Agencies): The Iraqi government has called on Turkey to apologise for an attack on an airport in the country's northern Kurdish region, while a US official confirmed there had been an attack on a convoy with US military personnel in the area but said there were no casualties. The Iraqi demand came as a Turkish Defence Ministry official told the Reuters news agency that no Turkish Armed Forces operation had taken place in that region in recent days.

Iraq's presidency said the attack took place in the vicinity of the Sulaimaniyah airport in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region, denouncing it as a "flagrant aggression" against its sovereignty. It said Ankara had no legal justification to continue "intimidating civilians under the pretext that forces hostile to it are present on Iraqi soil". "In this regard, we call on the Turkish government to take responsibility and present an official apology," it said. Turkey, which has spent decades

fighting Kurdish armed groups in its east, has conducted several military operations including air raids in northern Iraq and northern Syria against Kurdish-led forces there.

Ankara views the Kurdish-led forces as "terrorists" allied with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party or PKK. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which is backed by the United States, said in a statement that its leader, Mazloum Abdi, was at the Sulaimaniyah airport at the time of the attack but "no harm was done". Abdi condemned the attack, telling the Kurdish North Press Agency that at the time of the shelling, he was in the convoy that included troops from the US-led coalition and members of the Iraqi Kurdish anti-terrorism force. Asked about the reason behind the attack, Abdi said, "It is a clear message from the Turks that they are both- ering and oppose our international relations and they want to damage them."

About 900 US troops

remain in Syria, most in the Kurdish-administered northeast, as part of a US-led coalition battling remnants of the ISIL (ISIS) armed group. An informed source close to the leadership of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the party that controls the Sulaimaniyah area, and two Kurdish security officials also confirmed to Reuters that Abdi and three US military personnel were near the airport. Al Jazeera's Ameer Fendi, citing sources at the Sulaimaniyah airport, said the attack "damaged a large part of the facility's outer fence, but did not cause any casualties". He noted that the attack came days after Turkey closed its airspace to aircraft travelling to and from Sulaimaniyah due to what it said was intensified activity by PKK fighters, and said the shelling had escalated tensions between the main parties in the Iraqi Kurdish government. A statement from the Iraqi Kurdish regional government, which is primarily controlled by the Kurdistan Democratic Party, appeared

to blame the PUK for events. It accused them of provoking an attack on the airport and using "government institutions" for "illegal activities". Ankara has close ties to the Kurdistan Democratic Party, which is the largest party in the semi-autonomous Kurdish region and is dominant in the regional capital, Erbil. Its rival, the PUK, has closer ties to the PKK and is dominant in Sulaimaniyah.

Fendi, reporting from Erbil, said, "The presidency of the Iraqi Kurdish region has called on the two parties to stop exchanging accusations and to investigate the circumstances of this recent shelling. "This tense atmosphere between the two sides of the Kurdish Regional Government comes at a time when the airspace in Turkey remains closed to flights coming from Sulaimaniyah airport, and at a time when many say the differences between both parties of the government should come to an end ... as people here get ready for legislative elections scheduled for later this year," he added.

8 people missing in fiery collapse of Marseille building

MARSEILLE, France (AP): Eight people remained missing after the building they lived in exploded and collapsed near the port of Marseille, leaving mounds of burning debris hampering rescue operations, officials said. More than 100 firefighters worked against a ticking clock to extinguish flames deep within the rubble of the five-story building, but more than 17 hours later "the situation is not yet stabilized," Marseille Prosecutor Dominique Laurens said at an evening news conference.

Earlier in the day, officials had thought that between four and 10 people may have been trapped. Laurens said police have yet to confirm the apparent disappearance of a ninth person who lived in a next-door building. Five people suffered minor injuries from the collapse, which occurred shortly before 1 a.m. Marseille Mayor Benoit Payan said two buildings that share walls with the one that collapsed were partially brought down before one later caved in, another com-

plication in the search and rescue operation. The buildings were among evacuated structures. Drones and probes have been used to examine the scene for signs of life. The burning debris was too hot for dogs in the firefighters' canine team to work, though smoke still bothered them, the prosecutor said.

"We cannot intervene in a very classic way," Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said during a morning visit to the site. He said the fire was burning a few meters under the mounds of debris and that both water and foam represent a danger to victims' survival. An investigation has been opened for involuntary injury, at least initially sidestepping possible criminal intentions. A gas explosion was among the tracks to check, said Laurens, the prosecutor. But the start of the probe also was limited by the heat of the blaze. "The flames weren't pink. They were blue," Payan said.

Firefighters, with the help of urban rescue experts, worked through the

night and all day in a slow race against time. The delicate operation aimed to keep firefighters safe, prevent further harm to people potentially trapped in the rubble and not compromise vulnerable buildings nearby, already partially collapsed. Some 30 buildings in the area were evacuated, Darmanin said. Lauren, the prosecutor, said that firefighters "are really in a complicated situation, dangerous for them." Work is progressing but with safety precautions, she said. "We heard an explosion ... a very strong explosion which made us jump, and that's it," said Marie Ciret, who was among those evacuated. "We looked outside the window at what was happening. We saw smoke, stones, and people running."

The building that collapsed is located on a narrow street less than a kilometer (a half-mile) from Marseille's iconic old port, adding to an array of difficulties for firefighters and rescue workers. The prosecutor said the building and those next door "are not at

all substandard buildings." Robots were reportedly being deployed. A crane was brought in to clear rubble and firefighters were at one point seen in TV video hosing parts of the debris from a window in a nearby apartment as plumes of smoke rose skyward. "We're trying to drown the fire while preserving the lives of eventual victims under the rubble," Lionel Mathieu, commander of the Marseille fire brigade, said during a televised briefing. "Firefighters are gauging minute by minute the best way to put out the fire," Payan, the mayor, said. "We must prepare ourselves to have victims," he said grimly. The collapsed building is located in an old quarter in the center of France's second-largest city. The noise from the explosion resounded in other neighborhoods. Nearby streets were blocked off. French President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne both tweeted their thoughts for people affected and thanks to the firefighters.

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JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

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

Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001
Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

Macron’s quest for European sovereignty

FRENCH President Emmanuel Macron has declared that Europe had no interest in an acceleration of the crisis over Taiwan and should pursue a strategy independent of both Washington and Beijing. According to the French President, the worst thing would be that the Europeans become adapt to the American rhythm or a Chinese overreaction regarding the Taiwan dispute. Macron advised Europe to fund its defense industry, develop nuclear and renewable energy and reduce dependence on the American dollar to limit its reliance on the United States. Macron categorically mentioned that the EU member states should avoid becoming vassals and that the bloc could function as a third pole in geopolitics alongside the United States and China.

Recently, President Emmanuel Macron paid a three-day state visit to China along with European Commission President Ursula Van Der Leyen, high-ranking EU officials, and a 50-member strong business delegation of the French industrial giants to lay new foundations of trade and economic cooperation with the second largest economy of the world. The stated purpose of this visit was to bring new vitality to Beijing-Brussels ties along with convincing Beijing to adopt a bigger role in ending the yearlong Russian aggression against Ukraine. Meanwhile, Macron's visit to Beijing owes tremendous importance for Paris to consolidate its trade partnership with Beijing amid dwindling bilateral ties between China and European Union. Historically, Franch-Chinese trade and the economic partnership grew rapidly under Macron and both nations struck a \$40 billion trade deal in March 2019 amid an inflamed US-China trade war and the EU's concerns regarding Beijing's monopoly in EU-China bilateral trade.

French President and European Commission President Ursula Van Der Leyen had made a great diplomatic offensive to reset EU-China economic relations and secure Beijing's support to end the war in Ukraine. Although it was a successful comeback of the French President regarding France-China ties yet it might be a counterproductive maneuver in respect of a viable solution to the Ukraine war because many Western nations including the US, and the UK are strong opponents to any proposed Chinese role in Ukraine conflict, meanwhile, normalization of EU-China trade and economic ties does not suit to global interests of a western nation, hence its prospects are very limited.

In a wider global geostrategic matrix, Macron-led France is circumspect about the enhanced US role in European domestic and external affairs particularly Europe trade and foreign relations with the rest of the world. French President had been a vocal supporter of the EU's independent foreign policy, strategic autonomy, military preparedness, and self-sufficiency in the defense industry to reduce its reliance on the US war machine. Interestingly, Macron's quest for Europe's total sovereignty was doubled down after the United States and the UK betrayed their European ally by concluding the AUKUS Security Pact with Australia which completely scraped France's billions of dollar Submarines construction deal with Canberra.

Emmanuel Jean-Michael Macron, a young revolutionary French politician had always taken a solitary flight in French politics and proved worthless of his bold ideas and visionary leadership throughout his political career. He has been a strong advocate of economic, social, and security reforms in the European Union along with an outright overhauling and liberalization of the NATO alliance that was experiencing a brain dead due to the US's unrestricted control of 30 nations' collective security alliance. Historically, multiple European nations remained concerned about the EU's blind following of Washington in global affairs that not only pushed the bloc into US-ignited global wars but also cost billions of dollars of hard-earned taxpayers' money in defense spending and tarnished the EU image in the world. Now, President Macron had raised a strong voice for EU liberation from American influence and supported global trade and economic cooperation instead of trade rivalries, however, European sick men and leading economies, including Great Britain and Germany are less likely to support Marcon's idea because independence and sovereignty demand boldness and sacrifice, which is dearly lacked by European nations. Although, Macron's idea is more relevant and offers the utmost prospects for peace and stability in a highly volatile world, however, a sane voice is less like to affect the minds of determined jingoists in the West.

DURING the 2016 presidential elections in the US, candidate Donald Trump's confidence in his chances of winning was so high he believed he was invincible. He summed up that position by famously declaring during a campaign stop in Iowa: "I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue (in New York) and shoot someone, and I wouldn't lose any voters."

Seven years later, former president Trump rode in an SUV from his Fifth Avenue home in a "surreal" trip, as he described it, to the Manhattan Criminal Court to be arraigned, after his indictment by a grand jury on charges of paying hush money to an adult film actress, Stormy Daniels, on the eve of the 2016 elections. This was a historic day because Trump became the first-ever president, or former president, to be indicted on criminal charges. Trump was anything but overconfident in the pictures that were taken in the New York courtroom. Reports indicated that he was almost completely silent, only uttering the words "not guilty." But this did not last long however. After his arraignment and after the indictment was unsealed in the courtroom - and he pleaded not guilty to 34 felony charges of falsifying business records - he left for his home in Florida. Once there, Trump's overconfidence was again on full display.

In his Mar-a-Lago home at a big gathering of his family and supporters, Trump lashed out at the district attorney, the court system and the case against him. Defiant, he said the indictment was the latest in an "onslaught of fraudulent investigations," the case was "fake" and was aimed at manipulating the 2024 elections. He said the charges "should be dropped immediately" because it was "massive election interference at a scale never

seen before in our country, beginning with the radical left George Soros-backed prosecutor Alvin Braggs of New York." He accused the judge in the case of bias: "I have a Trump-hating judge with a Trump-hating wife and family whose daughter worked for Kamala Harris (the US vice president)."

Trump's main defense is based on his claim that this is a politically motivated case, that the district attorney and the Democrats are weaponizing the justice system against him, to pre-

him at the top of the Republican ticket.

A month ago and before the indictment, Trump looked like yesterday's candidate. The Republican Party was moving on, and a new generation of candidates were emerging as a real threat to him. Many Republican leaders were calling on the party and its base to move beyond Trump. Then enter the indictment. The Republicans circled the

Republican Party and the rising star among the party's candidates. After the indictment his support among Republicans shot to a 26-point lead above DeSantis (57 percent to 31 percent), according to Axios.

In an NPR/PBS NewsHour poll, 8 in 10 Republicans had a favorable opinion of Trump, and three quarters thought he should be president again. But the picture was differ-

He said the charges "should be dropped immediately" because it was "massive election interference at a scale never seen before in our country, beginning with the radical left George Soros-backed prosecutor Alvin Braggs of New York." He accused the judge in the case of bias: "I have a Trump-hating judge with a Trump-hating wife and family whose daughter worked for Kamala Harris (the US vice president)." Trump's main defense is based on his claim that this is a politically motivated case, that the district attorney and the Democrats are weaponizing the justice system against him, to prevent him from running in the 2024 elections. But it was clear from his speech after his court appearance that he was trying to use the election campaign and his supporters as the first line of defense against the charges. If he becomes the Republican nominee for president, he seems to believe that will protect him politically.

vent him from running in the 2024 elections. But it was clear from his speech after his court appearance that he was trying to use the election campaign and his supporters as the first line of defense against the charges. If he becomes the Republican nominee for president, he seems to believe that will protect him politically. By claiming to be a victim of a political "witch hunt" by the Democrats - as his supporters and even his Republican competitors are saying - he surely hopes this will keep

wagons, and Trump's victimhood brought him renewed support from all the wings of the party and the public at large. We witnessed a Trump revival among the Republicans, in addition to some sympathy from the general public. Almost every Republican in public office, and all his election campaign rivals, rushed to defend him and say that they considered the indictment politically motivated. Polls put him ahead of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis who was considered the new face of the

ent with the American public where 6 in 10 overall said he should not be president. Among independents, the numbers were higher where two-thirds believed he should not be president. The Trump pump in the polls is predictable because he is perceived to be a victim of a politically motivated campaign. But his lead might not hold as the court case drags on and the expected three new legal cases against him move forward. These cases are considered more serious and perilous for the former

It’s the Donald J Trump Show ... and the world’s tyrants are its biggest fans

FROM the country that gave the world Hollywood movies, Broadway musicals, and TV soaps, sitcoms and talk shows such as Dallas, Friends and Oprah comes more sensational mass entertainment: real-time political farce. The Donald J Trump Show, a tragicomedy-cum-courtroom drama, opened in Manhattan last week. This one will run and run.

Trump played himself: sulky, entitled, vindictive. Other cast members include Stormy Daniels, his leading lady, a former porn star who teasingly refers to her breasts as Thunder and Lightning; an ex-Playboy model; a doorman in the know; a publisher rejoicing in the name of Pecker; and a shady, turncoat lawyer. The plot is gripping too, though unoriginal. The villain, as scripted by Trump, is Alvin Bragg, prosecutor and demonic tormentor. Bragg is secretly egged on from the wings by President Joe Biden and liberal co-conspirators bent on preventing the much-traduced hero winning re-election. You couldn't make it up - except "stable genius" Trump did.

While Americans may

cringe or fume, the first instalment of the Trump Show, which saw him indicted on 34 charges of fraud, left international audiences open-mouthed. Some laughed, some sneered, some calculated. Once again, the US has proved its exceptionalism, but not in a good way. Amid the vitriol and hoopla, friends and foes are asking questions. Has the trial inadvertently provided a potent platform for Trump's staged comeback? Is the once-exemplary American republic, that beacon of democracy and justice, that shining city upon a hill, imploding under the weight of internal rancour, self-loathing and division? Should the US still be taken seriously by the world at large?

Collateral damage is already mounting. The presidency, constitution and democratic governance risk permanent reputational harm. US global influence and moral authority may not survive sustained mockery. Enemies look on with glee. It boosts their story-line of inexorable American decline. For them, it's the end of empire show. Take Russia and its paranoid,

Simon Tisdall

delusional, Trump-like president, Vladimir Putin. His Ukraine invasion is a total bust, yet hermetically-sealed Putin may be the last person to realise, insiders say. He got more, not less Nato last week when Finland joined the alliance. His thinking, like his army, is stuck in Donbas mud.

Yet Trump's shenanigans offer Putin a lifeline. The Russian simply has to stick it out until, as he hopes, his American admirer beats the rap and he, or someone very like him, ousts Biden next year. As in 2016, Putin will do all he can to help with disinformation, cyber-attacks and dirty tricks. Meanwhile, he takes a US reporter hostage to make Biden look weak. "Putin's narrative of international politics has three broad themes: democratic decay in the west, the failures of western foreign policy, and the decline of the liberal international order," analysts Erin Baggett Carter, Brett Carter and Larry Diamond noted recently. The demeaning Trump spectacle reinforces all three of these supposed trends.

Xi Jinping, China's leader, will be keen, too, to exploit any Trump revival to advance his plans for global hegemony and an authoritarian new world order. Beijing's propaganda feeds off US domestic dysfunction, Washington gridlock, corruption, racial tensions and gun crime - to which Trump and his MAGA minions contribute hugely. Internationally, Trump's antics give Xi a window to derail a distracted Biden's democracy agenda and outmanoeuvre the US. "Trump's foreign policy was shortsighted, transactional, mercenary, untrustworthy, boorish, personalist, and profoundly illiberal," analyst Jonathan Kirshner wrote after Biden's victory in 2020.

As Xi might say, what's not to like? He would heartily applaud a repeat performance. For the Chinese Communist party, Trump's return to the limelight is a gift from the geopolitical and theatrical gods. Xi's not alone. Israel's failed coup leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Saudis' Biden-baiting crown prince, Mohammed

bin Salman, and nuke-coveting, misogynistic Iranian mullahs are all avid Trump fans. Who knows? Perhaps North Korea's Ionesome dictator, Kim Jong-un, will start getting love letters again, sealed with a slobbery kiss.

It's just about plausible to view Trump's belated indictment as evidence of American democracy's enduring strength, demonstrating that no one is above the law. Biden will cling to that thought as he contemplates a re-election battle with an opponent whose position as Republican frontrunner and record fundraiser appears greatly boosted by his Perry Mason tribute act. Biden was totally overshadowed last week - not a good look for a sitting president. Although he doubtless hopes its impact will fade, the ratings-grabbing Trump Show could make it much harder "to command the national conversation," as political commentator Peter Baker puts it. Trump will surely be a constant distraction, and his showboating an incentive for House Republicans to turn what's left of Biden's term into a legislative wasteland.

public could also be very tired of the Trump story by next summer, and people might have an aversion to electing an indicted politician to the highest post in the land.

Things could have turned out differently for Trump had he changed his style in politics. President Richard Nixon faced the Watergate scandal which forced him to resign in 1974 before he was impeached by Congress. Nixon could have faced criminal charges of obstruction of justice after he resigned but he was pardoned by President Gerald Ford out of concern for the "public interest." One of the main factors that affected the decision to pardon Nixon was that the "prosecution would 'aggravate' the nation's divisions." Ford did not want to start his term amidst domestic turmoil. President Bill Clinton, who was accused of lying under oath about his relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky, struck a deal with prosecutors in 2001, in which he accepted the suspension of his law license for five years in his home state of Arkansas.

This will not happen with Trump. His instinct, experts say, is not to concede the truth but to fight back. His wife Melania was quoted as saying that his "signature skill is to punch back 10 times harder." This was Trump's reaction during his impeachment trials, and it is his reaction in this new battle with the courts now. It is unlikely his cases will end up with deals being made.

The main argument for prosecution in the case of Trump is that of "the principle of equal justice," especially because of the number and serious nature of the charges, particularly the Jan. 6 attack on Congress. No matter the outcome of Trump's legal battles, one thing now being established is that in America, no one is above the law.

The Guardian

The US should not worry about China-Gulf relations

IN the span of just six months, China has made great diplomatic strides in two regions the United States considers of vital importance: the Middle East and Eastern Europe. In November, Beijing struck a deal with Doha to supply liquified natural gas over 27 years - the longest such agreement to date, which came as the US's European allies struggled to secure their own gas supplies. In February, it put forward a "peace plan" to end the war in Ukraine, positioning itself as a powerful mediator.

And then in early March, China brokered a Saudi-Iran rapprochement which led to the restoration of full diplomatic relations between the two archenemies. All of this has naturally left the Americans quite anxious, especially about the engagement of its Gulf allies with Beijing.

But Washington has to recognise that its own

diplomatic decision-making under the Obama administration, with its "pivot to Asia", triggered fears in the region about a US departure. And it is not just Gulf countries that are worried. In a personal communication with one of the authors, a former European Union ambassador to Iraq referred to the lack of Western engagement in Iraq as a "catastrophic negligence" with "high costs" and said that "China is now building partnerships with Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE and other regional players in an attempt to occupy the vacuum" that the West has left.

The Americans are scrambling to prove that the "pivot to Asia" would not mean diminished influence in the Gulf. But Washington should not obsess too much about the region's relationship with China, as it remains quite superficial. Instead, it should be more concerned about Israel's engagement with Beijing

Sultan Barakat & Lakshmi Venugopal Menon

and the destabilising role it is playing in the region. In recent years, trade volumes between China and the Gulf have indeed increased. Four out of the six Gulf Cooperation Council states now have significantly larger bilateral trade with China than with the US. This could be worrying for Washington, but it must understand that Chinese energy needs remain at the heart of the China-Gulf ties.

In other words, these relations are primarily transactional rather than strategic. The recent Chinese-brokered Saudi-Iran deal could mean that China is attempting to transcend this nature of the relationship and compete with the US for regional influence, but surpassing the US's standing will be quite a challenge.

The US remains the top security partner of the Gulf and maintains multifaceted

relations with Gulf states, which encompass not just trade but also close military, diplomatic, cultural, educational and social ties. The hurried abandonment of the Chinese military base in the UAE after an intervention from Washington in 2021 reflects this reality.

By contrast, Israel has maintained substantial technological cooperation with China since the 1980s. There have even been accusations that Israeli companies sold sensitive high-tech military equipment to Beijing, although the sales have reportedly stopped under US pressure. Still, Israel has continued to sell spyware to the Chinese authorities and has welcomed large Chinese investments in its tech sector, which reached \$325m in 2018. For a long while, the Israeli authorities failed to regulate investments in companies involved in

dual-use technology production, which has made Washington nervous.

Trade relations between China and Israel have blossomed, especially under the leadership of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In 2021 bilateral trade reached \$22.8bn. Chinese companies also won tenders for large infrastructural projects, such as a strategic port near Haifa, which has worried US defence officials given the potential for Chinese espionage on US navy vessels docking there.

The Chinese and Israeli governments are also negotiating a free trade agreement; if signed, it will be the first in the Middle East. In other words, Israel is way ahead of the Gulf in the depth of its relations with China and has engaged in practices that may be much more threatening to US interests than the energy deals the Gulf countries have struck with Beijing.

What is more, Israel has played a role as a spoiler of regional stability. It has fuelled tensions with Iran and encouraged conflict. It has also engaged in attacks on Iranian soil and sought to undermine the Iran nuclear deal which the US put much effort into negotiating. Given Washington's own efforts to reach an agreement with Tehran, the Saudi-Iranian deal, brokered by China, should not be seen in a negative light. If the US wants to curb Chinese influence in the region, then it should look to Israel, not the Gulf. Its engagement with the region, on the other hand, would benefit from clear reassurances of its reliability as an ally and respect for the internal dynamics and economic aspirations of the Gulf states. It would be wise for the Americans to start talking to the Arabs the way they talk to the Israelis - as equal partners.

Aljazeera

Israel will be incinerated by these fires Netanyahu ignites

Baria Alamuddin

AS three of the world's great faiths celebrate the festivals of Ramadan, Easter and Passover in the cradle of those religions, various parties have been deliberately provoking tension toward all-out conflict. Exchanges of rockets across the Lebanon-Israel-Syria borders are evidence of an inflammatory situation that nobody has control of.

Attacks by Israeli security forces on Ramazan worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque, in which about 40 Palestinians were injured and 350 arrested, are symptomatic of these escalatory tendencies. Why was the mosque raided when there was no credible security threat? Simply because Israeli officials currently calling the shots are wedded to an approach of maximum harassment and kneejerk overreaction. About 1,000 radical settlers then stormed Al-Aqsa on April 9, and Jordan warned Israel of the "catastrophic consequences" of deliberately inflaming the situation around Jerusalem's holy sites.

We see the same gratuitously provocative approach applied to settlement expansion, demolition of homes, and security crackdowns in Palestinian areas. Newly appointed extremist Israeli ministers enjoying their first taste of power are spoiling for a fight, even castigating Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for not going far enough. Tensions have been further exacerbated by the killing of two British Israelis in the Jordan Valley and a car ramming in Tel Aviv. In the lead-up to Easter there was a surge in hate crimes against Christians and Christian holy places by Jewish fanatics who increasingly feel that they can act

with impunity - including desecrating graves and carrying out violent attacks against Palestinian Christians. In his Easter message, the Pope made a general reference to Jerusalem tension, but global Christian institutions should be taking up this cause more vigorously.

Who fired 34 rockets into Israel from Lebanon? Israel appears happy to buy into the fiction that it was Hamas, but these strikes certainly emanated from locations where nothing happens without Hezbollah's blessing. And who believes that Hamas would have embarked on such adventures without Hezbollah approval, even if the latter would prefer a fig leaf of deniability for the time being? Hundreds of thousands of protesters rightly believe that Netanyahu's latest efforts to eviscerate the judiciary and turn his extremist allies into omnipotent paramilitary warlords pose an existential threat to Israel's future.

Hassan Nasrallah likewise has become a prisoner of his own ever-more bellicose rhetoric, threatening to unleash war with Israel at the slightest provocation - a war that

Hezbollah and Lebanon are in no position to wage. Hezbollah may possess far greater missile capabilities than in 2006, but we should be under no illusions that Israel's military would make short work of Lebanon. The civilian loss of life would be horrific - and no country is set to rush to Lebanon's aid. These developments demonstrate the fundamental long-term weakness of Israel's position. As long as it refuses to make peace with an ever-multiplying Palestinian population, it can only futilely run around in circles igniting fires and putting them out. Israel could easily win a war against Hezbollah, but in doing so it would create a new generation of implacable enemies. Israel says it wants peace with Arab states, but shows no readiness to do what it would take to stimulate genuine peace and put a halt to the endless cycle of conflict.

Israeli officials are unnerved by the recent Saudi-Iran deal, and partial Arab rapprochement with Bashar Assad in Syria. Meanwhile Iran-backed paramilitary forces encircle Israel from numerous states, and Tehran gets ever closer to the nuclear and ballistic capacity which it gloats could wipe Israel off the map. Last week the US deployed a guided missile submarine to the Gulf region after specific Iranian threats to Israeli and regional shipping. Because Israel has got away with killing and oppressing Palestinians in the past, it believes that its ongoing repression won't carry a cost. This is a dangerous mistake, as the situation has been transformed in ways that Netanyahu apparently fails to comprehend - not least the likelihood of

triggering a new intifada.

Furthermore, Israel's increasingly radicalized and anti-democratic trajectory will ultimately lose it the international friends it has always relied upon for financial and military support. Through America and Europe condoning and facilitating its actions, Israel became the over-demanding spoilt child of the West. If the West really is still a friend, it is morally obliged to draw Israel back from the brink of self-destruction. Israel can deny the historic reality of Palestine all it wants, but this only blinds it to the demographic fact that Palestinians are trending toward being the majority. If Israel refuses to make peace now from a position of relative strength, a time will come when it is compelled to beg for peace while it still possesses some remnants of a state to negotiate with.

There is likewise a growing awakening throughout Lebanon, and specifically among Hezbollah's supporters, that this Tehran-backed entity is less an agent of protection and "resistance," and more a catalyst for Lebanon's destruction. Many media commentators look at these recent escalations and complacently tell us that war is unlikely because the parties don't desire it. Instead they should be warning that these parties are not rational actors, are not fully in control of events, and have done much to fan the flames through their incompetence and self-interested agendas. Following the chaos of recent days, war is an increasingly likely prospect. We should collectively be doing everything in our power to halt these maniacs before they take us all to hell.

Arab News



US, Russia must work to prevent confrontation

De. Haid Haid

A recent spike in Russian military activity over Syria, coupled with the downing of an American drone by a Russian fighter jet in the Black Sea, is prompting fears that Moscow and Washington are on a collision course to confrontation. While scuffles and standoffs between Russia and the US in northeast Syria are not new, developments this month have sparked concern among analysts that a more serious skirmish is possible. De-escalation is urgently needed to prevent the situation from spiraling out of control.

American and Russian militaries have operated in an uneasy coexistence in Syria since the Kremlin sent forces there in 2015 to support the Syrian regime. US troops were deployed to northeast Syria in 2014 to counter Daesh in cooperation with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. Today, approximately 900 US service members remain to keep a potential resurgence of Daesh at bay.

Notably, the US and Russia established communication channels in 2015 to prevent direct military encounters. But since March 1, US forces have reported a surge in Russian air force activity in Syria. According to American commanders, Russian aircraft are acting aggressively toward US bases in a manner not typical of an organized military force. For instance, armed Russian jets reportedly flew sorties over American bases in the country nearly every day last month, violating the deconfliction between the two countries. Lt. Gen. Alexus G. Grynkewich, the top US Air Force general in the Middle East, said Russia's aggressive posture

in Syria is linked to the return of Russian commanders after failing in Ukraine. "To me, it's very, very concerning," he said. "I believe that some of those Russian leaders are trying to rebuild their reputation."

The erratic behavior, previously a nuisance, became a major concern for the Pentagon after a Russian Su-27 fighter jet damaged a US Reaper drone west of Crimea, causing it to crash into international waters. In a statement, the US military's European Command criticized the pilot's "unsafe and unprofessional" interception, and said that the Russian fighter dumped fuel and flew recklessly in front of the drone before striking its propeller. For its part, the Russian Defense Ministry denied the allegations and claimed that an increase in US drone flights off the coast of Crimea is "provocative in nature."

Crimea is a Ukrainian peninsula that Russia annexed in 2014 and now uses as a major military base for its war on Ukraine. As such, the drone incident highlights the dangers of miscalculation and the threat of escalation between Russia and NATO - particularly as the West continues to increase its military support to Ukraine. But although the drone incident was serious, the situation in Syria presents greater risks. According to US officials, Russian forces in Syria are no longer informing them about their movements, violating protocols that require the air force that flies into areas controlled by the other party to announce operations in advance.

Hence, when unannounced Russian aircraft enter what the US regards as

its airspace, American warplanes intercept them. US officials argue that they are obliged to monitor Russian aircraft movements in their airspace closely to ensure the safety of their forces on the ground, and to prevent potential mishaps. The US recently increased its military presence in the Middle East, in response to the heightened aggression in Syria. In addition to deploying a squadron of A-10 attack aircraft ahead of schedule, a carrier strike group was ordered to remain in the region to support US forces. Through these actions, the US is signaling that it will take all necessary measures to defend its forces in Syria and the wider region.

These developments are even more concerning amid the absence of clear procedures to prevent what happened in the Black Sea from occurring in Syria. If such an event were to unfold, the US would likely interpret it as deliberate, which could lead to a further escalation of tensions in the region. Unfortunately, recent developments indicate that such a scenario is no longer a remote possibility. In times of crisis, even the slightest misunderstanding can lead to miscalculations and grave mistakes. While wise people are needed to prevent catastrophic outcomes, this approach is not foolproof.

With the risk of escalation in Syria climbing, there is an urgent need for clear deconfliction protocols between US and Russian forces. A military hotline is only useful if both sides pick up the phone. To avert disaster in Syria, Washington and Moscow must work to prevent confrontation - and move quickly to contain the fallout if it occurs again.

Why DeSantis' 2024 presidential bid is at risk

Dalia Al-Aqidi

THE indictment of former US President Donald Trump has sent shockwaves through the political landscape. Many wonder how it could impact the 2024 presidential election and whether the GOP will stand behind Trump. One person who may be particularly affected is the young and charismatic Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis - widely seen as a potential contender for the Republican nomination.

For the past few years, DeSantis has been a strong supporter of Trump and has often been compared to him in terms of his policies and style. He has also been a vocal critic of the investigation into Trump's alleged ties to Russia and has defended the former president on numerous occasions. However, if the former president is proven to be guilty, it could have serious implications for DeSantis. On the one hand, it could further solidify his support among Trump's base, as he would be seen as one of the few politicians willing to stand up to what many Republicans see as a politically motivated witch hunt. On the other hand, it could also make him a liability for the party, as Democrats would surely use the indictment as evidence of Republican corruption and ties to Trump.

There are a few different ways in which a Trump indictment could impact DeSantis' presidential bid. First, it could potentially galvanize Trump's MAGA (Make America Great Again)

base and make DeSantis a more appealing candidate to those who are still loyal to the real estate mogul. Many Trump supporters saw the investigation into his alleged ties to Russia as a politically motivated attack by Democrats and the media, and they might view DeSantis as someone who was, and is, willing to stand up to these forces.

At the same time, the indictment could also hurt DeSantis' chances with more moderate Republicans and independent voters. These voters may view the indictment as evidence of corruption and cronyism within the GOP, and they may be less likely to support a candidate who is seen as being too closely aligned with Trump. Another factor to consider is how the indictment will impact the Republican Party as a whole. If Trump is convicted, it could further deepen the divisions within the party between his loyalists and more traditional Republicans. Therefore, this could make it more difficult for any Republican candidate to win the nomination, as they would need to navigate these internal divisions and build a coalition that can appeal to both wings of the party.

However, it is possible that a conviction could also serve as a wake-up call for the party, forcing it to confront some of the more extreme elements within its ranks. This could create an opportunity for a candidate

such as DeSantis, who has been seen as a bridge between the two factions of the party to emerge as a unifying figure who can appeal to both Trump loyalists and more moderate Republicans. Ultimately, the impact of a Trump conviction on the Florida governor's presidential bid will depend on several factors, including how the trial is perceived by the public, how the GOP responds to it, and who else decides to run for the nomination. If DeSantis can navigate these challenges and build a broad coalition of support, he could emerge as a strong contender for the presidency in 2024.

One thing is for sure, the 2024 presidential election is shaping up to be one of the most controversial and unpredictable elections in modern history. With so much at stake for both parties and so many different factors at play, it is impossible to say for sure how any single event will affect the outcome. What is clear is that Trump's indictment or conviction will be a significant factor in the race, and one that political observers on both sides of the aisle will be watching closely. Without any doubt, indicating a former president is a seismic event in American politics, with far-reaching implications for the Republican Party. Whether it ultimately spells the end of Trump's political career or leads to a renewed push for his presidency, it is likely to be one of the defining moments in modern American politics.

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Eritrea's government should not be allowed to harm peace in Ethiopia

Samuel Zewdie Hagos

LONG-SIMMERING political tensions between the Ethiopian federal government and the Tigray regional state, led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), erupted into a military conflict on November 3, 2020. Neighbouring Eritrea entered the war early on, sending troops to Tigray to help the federal government.

Exactly two years later, on November 3, 2022, the Ethiopian government and the TPLF agreed to a "permanent cessation of hostilities", effectively ending the civil war which by then had already claimed thousands of lives, displaced millions and brought many others to the brink of starvation. The Eritrean government, however, refused to withdraw its forces, who stand accused of various human rights violations, from Tigray and continued its provocations against the TPLF. Tigray residents accused the Eritrean soldiers of continuing to loot, arrest, and kill civilians long after the ceasefire. The Eritrean government has also been accused of providing financial and military aid as well as logistic support to armed groups from Amhara regional states that remain in Tigray and are also alleged to be involved in unlawful and violent activities in other parts of Ethiopia.

Now, nearly six months after the agreement on cessation of hostilities, Eritrean forces are still in Tigray and there are growing concerns that the actions of the government in Asmara may derail Ethiopia's crucial peace process and push the country, and with it the wider region, into renewed conflict. Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki says he is determined to

continue his country's decades-old conflict with the TPLF, which was in control of Ethiopia during Eritrea's 30-year independence war against the country.

He, however, does not appear to be pursuing a prolonged conflict with the leadership of the regional state solely to settle historical grievances. In an interview published by the Eritrean Ministry of Information in February, Afwerki accused the TPLF of being mercenaries working to maintain Western hegemony in the Horn of Africa. The Tigray war, he claimed "was not really a TPLF agenda; but essentially the agenda of Washington". It was a result of the TPLF's willingness to serve as a foot soldier in Washington's quest to facilitate a return to the "unipolar world order", he argued. He pointed to the invasion of Ukraine as an example of the US-led struggle to maintain a unipolar world, and claimed the US uses "proxies, such as the TPLF clique and others, to create chaos everywhere".

All in all, it is obvious that Afwerki believes in Tigray his troops helped the Ethiopian government defeat not only a rebellious regional administration but a plot to alter the world order to the detriment of Eritrean and African sovereignty. This suggests Afwerki will continue to agitate for further conflict with the TPLF even if the group adheres to all the conditions of the agreement for the cessation of hostilities and agrees to respect the authority of the Ethiopian federal government. This attitude, which casts TPLF as an American proxy inherently hostile to regional pow-

ers, could prove harmful not only for the people of Tigray but all Ethiopians, Eritreans and Africans for several reasons.

First and foremost, the Eritrean government's insistence on keeping its troops in Tigray and supporting Amhara groups could undermine the efforts of the international community to build a sustainable peace architecture in Tigray and trigger a new conflict in Ethiopia. Given the myriad accusations of human rights violations and war crimes directed at Eritrean soldiers, their continued presence in Ethiopia could lay the ground for more atrocities and make it impossible for Tigrayans to build their lives back. Furthermore, the Eritrean government's continued involvement in Ethiopian conflicts could negatively affect the wellbeing of the many Eritrean refugees currently residing in Ethiopia.

Before the recent conflict, about 100,000 Eritrean refugees lived in camps in Tigray. For a long time, they were safe in Ethiopia. But when the war erupted, these refugees and other Eritrean civilians in the regional state found themselves being targeted by all warring parties, including Eritrean forces. They have been subjected to siege tactics, deprived of any kind of aid for long periods of time, and fallen victim to targeted attacks. Reportedly, some were also forcibly returned to Eritrea in violation of the principle of non-refoulement. The Eritrean government's refusal to leave Tigray and allow Ethiopians to resolve the conflict between themselves means that remaining Eritrean refugees in the regional state are still under threat.

As it turns 75, the need for WHO remains as vital as ever

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

TURNING history's page on its deadliest conflict, countries came together in 1948 to heal a bloodied world. Following years of war, distrust and pain, nations elevated the physical and mental wellbeing of people to a new level, forging a global pact and purpose to safeguard and advance health for all.

Lofty sentiment transformed into practical reality 75 years ago with the entry into force of the Constitution of the World Health Organization, and WHO's founding as the specialised United Nations agency dedicated to promoting human health. WHO was given a unique mandate to advance the wellbeing of all people, and a unique ability to convene all governments and partners at the same table. Fast forward to today, as WHO celebrates its 75th anniversary year from World Health Day on April 7, this mandate and convening ability remain as vital as ever. At the same time, the world needs a renewal of this commitment to put the health of all people first, from our grandparents to our children born today and in the future.

COVID-19, conflict, climate change and commercial causes of ill-health, like unhealthy foods and tobacco, offer real reminders of how precarious our lives are, and how, without constant commitment to advancing our collective wellbeing, the fortunes of vulnerable communities worldwide will remain at risk. A seminal line in WHO's Constitution states "the enjoyment of the highest attainable

standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition".

This has guided WHO's work to promote, provide and protect health for all. There have been many achievements along the way. Among the best-known is the eradication of the ancient scourge of smallpox. Today, the world is on the verge of also eradicating polio, with annual cases reducing by 99.9 percent since the 1980s. Other successes include eliminating, or near-elimination of, five tropical diseases, making childhood immunisation close to universal, and setting global standards for safe drinking water.

Furthermore, WHO has supported countries to adopt a landmark treaty on tobacco control, regulate aggressive marketing of breastmilk substitutes, and report on health emergencies with the potential of global spread. WHO played a catalytic role in advancing the development and rollout of the first-ever vaccines against Ebola and malaria, which are now saving lives across Africa. WHO's work in humanitarian settings has provided life-saving care to millions. The list continues. As WHO marks its 75th year, there is much that the organisation, and the countries that created it, can be proud of.

But great challenges remain. COVID has shown how we, as a global community, are only as safe from pandemic threats as the least

prepared nation. Too many people lack access to quality, affordable health services, instead suffering from preventable or treatable ill-health. Modern concerns compound this, like the impacts of the climate crisis that endanger millions from flood and drought, rampant air pollution, and the wanton misinformation and disinformation bedevilling people's health choices.

There are also threats to people's wellbeing driven by factors beyond health, including conflict, economic and commercial. To meet these challenges, WHO has been changing and adapting to deliver better today, and for the next 75 years. Our work focuses on five areas: improving the level of health of all people; ensuring everyone has equitable access to quality, affordable health services; protecting the world against novel and known pathogens; empowering science and scientific information to support good health; and strengthening WHO to meet today's and tomorrow's demands.

In COVID's wake, we are supporting countries negotiating an historic pandemic accord, rooted in the WHO Constitution, to prevent and respond to future pandemic threats collectively. Nations are also amending the International Health Regulations to make them relevant to a post-COVID world, and strengthening WHO's financial, governance and operational base for a safer and healthier world. The reasons for such meas-

ures are clear. COVID set back progress on achieving the health-related Sustainable Development Goals, and caused incalculable human, social and economic losses. So we must reclaim lost gains by redoubling efforts to make universal health coverage a reality for all, driven by primary healthcare, and strengthening national and global systems, from state-of-the-art surveillance to investing in country preparedness, to make a more secure world.

The lifeblood of WHO's work is science and evidence. Data-driven guidance remains core work, helping WHO and countries invest resources where health needs are greatest. Access to evidence-based advice also helps people make sound health choices. This is critical today because, as COVID has shown, misinformation and disinformation have made decision-making even harder and, in extreme cases, deadly. WHO has been transforming its operations to effectively implement work on all these fronts, and more, with a clear-eyed focus on delivering impact at the community level. Today, 75 years later, and after a new virus showed how vulnerable the world remains, the need for WHO is as vital now as ever. If the organisation had not been created all those years ago, we would have to create it today. So on WHO's birthday, I thank all countries and partners for their commitment to laying WHO's foundations in 1948, and continuing to strengthen them for a healthier, safer and fairer future for all.



PSX loses 213.75 points, closing at 39,835.90 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) declined by 213.75 points on Monday, showing a negative change of 0.53 percent, closing at 39,835.90 points against 40,049.65 points the previous day.

A total of 105,892,904 shares were traded during the day as compared to 135,135,452 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 1.835 billion against Rs 3.201 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 341 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 134 of them recorded gains and 186 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 21 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 34,131,174

shares at Rs 1.19 per share, JS Bank Ltd. with 10,396,500 shares at Rs 4.46 per share, and K-Electric with 5,622,178 shares at Rs 2.01 per share.

Khyber Textile witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 39.80 per share price, closing at Rs 570.52, whereas the runner-up was Murree Brewery with a Rs 14.85 rise in its per share price to Rs 334.85.

Sapphire Fiber witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 75.55 per share closing at Rs 942.33, followed by Pak Services with a Rs 66.06 decline to close at Rs 825.55.

Rupee sheds Rs 2.44 against dollar

Pakistan rupee weakened by Rs 2.44 against the Dollar in the interbank trading on Monday and closed at Rs 287.08 against the previous day's closing of

Rs 284.64.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 288.25 and Rs 291 respectively.

The price of the Euro appreciated by Rs 2.37 to close at Rs 313.15 against the last day's closing of Rs310.78, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen gained 02 paise to close at Rs 2.17; whereas an increase of Rs2.31 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 356.47 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs354.16.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal rose by 66 paise each to close at Rs 78.17 and Rs 76.52 respectively.

Gold prices increase by

Rs 3100 to Rs 217,700 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 3100 and was sold at Rs 217,700 on Monday against its sale at Rs 214,600 the previous day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also increased by Rs 2656 to Rs 186,643 from Rs 183,985, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up to Rs 171,089 from Rs 168,653.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs30 to close at Rs 2480 while that of ten-gram silver also surged by Rs 25.72 to close at Rs 2126.20.

The price of gold in the international market dipped by US\$ 06 to \$2002 against its sale at \$2008, the association reported.



PESHAWAR: Vendor selling and displaying different food items to attract customers at Sadar Bazaar.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Two ships namely, CMA CGM Figaro and Olympia carrying Containers, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal.

Meanwhile two more ships, Scirocco and Ullswater carrying Mogas and LPG also arrived at outer anchorage of the port on Monday morning.

PQA berths were engaged by 05 ships during the last 24 hours, out of them three ships, Cap Carmel, Olympia and CMA CGM Figaro left the Port on Monday morning, while another ship Torm Discoverer is expected to sail on today.

A cargo volume 83,596 tones, comprising 49,195 tones imports Cargo and 34,401 tones export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,777 Containers (966 TEUs Imports and 1,811 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 08 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them three ships, Uranus J, Green Point and Ullswater & three more ships, Al Safat, MSC Munddra-VIII and Simaisma scheduled to load/offload Cement, Condensate, Containers, LPG and LNG are expected to take berths at MW, FOTCO, SSGC, QICF and EETL respectively on Monday.

‘Sufficient stock available’

ISLAMABAD (APP): In order to support the poor segment of society in the holy month of Ramadan, the Utility Store Corporation of Pakistan (USC) has ensured sufficient supply of all subsidized items across the country.

According to USC spokesperson, the corporation was providing a special subsidy on 19 basic items under the Prime Minister's Ramadan Relief Package, said a news release issued on Monday.

The subsidized items include sugar, ghee, cooking oil, flour, dates, gram flour, pulses, rice, tea, spices and squashes/syrup, he added. He said that all the items were being provided at a lower price than the general market.

Apart from the subsidized items, the prices of other branded items had also been drastically reduced, the spokesman added.

AI market to top \$26b in 2026: report

BEIJING (APP): China's artificial intelligence (AI) market value is expected to reach 26.44 billion US dollars in 2026, an industry report showed.

The spending of the country's AI market is forecast to hit 14.75 billion dollars in 2023, accounting for about 10 percent of the world total, said a report from global market research firm International Data Corporation (IDC).

The report projected the compound annual growth rate of China's AI market to surpass 20 percent during the 2021-2026 period.

Optimistic about the long-term expansion of China's AI market, IDC emphasized the importance of innovation and upgrading of AI technology in promoting the better landing of application scenarios.

UBL partners with AKS iQ

F.P. Report

KARACHI: United Bank Limited (UBL) has partnered with AKS iQ, a leading Reg Tech company, to implement an advanced trade-based anti-money laundering (TBML) solution in line with the Bank's commitment to innovation and digitization.

This high-tech solution will enable UBL to execute import and export transactions in a highly automated environment while conducting Anti-Money Laundering (AML) checks with greater flexibility, mitigate operational and compliance issues and facilitate data-driven decision-making across key departments, improving service standards, customer experience and reducing risk levels.

The partnership agreement was signed at UBL's Head Office in Karachi by

Mr. Shazad G. Dada, President & CEO, UBL and Mr. Yahya Ghaznavi, CEO, AKS iQ. Senior executives from both companies, including Mr. Sajid Hussain, Group Executive – Operations, Mr. Irfan Farooq Memon, Group Executive – Compliance, Mr. Muhammad Faisal Anwar, CIO, from UBL, and Mr. Omer Many, CDO and Dr. Asim Imdad, CIO from AKS iQ, were also present at the signing ceremony.

At the event, Mr. Shazad G. Dada, President & CEO UBL said “As Pakistan's most progressive and innovative bank, UBL is committed to implementing state-of-the-art technology systems to enhance customer experience and improve operations. This key partnership will enable the Bank to enhance the management of its existing

risk portfolio, mitigate operational and compliance issues and facilitate data-driven decision-making across key departments.”

Mr. Yahya Ghaznavi, CEO of AKS iQ, shared his enthusiasm for the collaboration, saying, “We are proud to partner with UBL, a bank committed to innovation and automation. Our fully automated, AI-enabled trade-based AML solution will enhance efficiency and help achieve a paperless environment, contributing to a safer and sustainable financial ecosystem in the country. This partnership underscores AKS iQ's dedication to offering cutting-edge trade automation and compliance solutions that enable financial institutions to efficiently navigate the evolving operational complexities and regulatory landscape.”

RCCI to organize Build 2023 Expo on May 19-21

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has planned to organize the third BUILD 2023 Expo in the third week of May.

RCCI President Saqib Rafiq, in a statement, said to empower businesses, the RCCI had always endeavoured to promote and strengthen the industry by organizing a multitude of events on both national and international levels, including various conferences and exhibitions.

Previously, the RCCI

had successfully organized premium events of the sector: Build-2021 Construction Trade Fair and ICEE, and now it would be organizing the Build Expo 2023 on May 19th-21st, 2023, here at Topi Rakh Complex, he added.

He said the exhibition would have stalls based on various products, including property, builders, developers, construction and allied industry-related materials, ceramics, tiles, electric cables, interior, paint, and hardware.

Saqib said more than 40

allied industries were associated with the construction sector. Increasing employment opportunities would reduce unemployment in the country.

“Preparations for the expo are going on, and stalls are being booked; there will also be a musical evening and a food court on the occasion of the Build Expo 2023,” he added.

A conference with panel discussions would also be held on the sidelines of the Expo to highlight the barriers to innovation and development in the industry, he said.

Italian rice producer to attend Consumer Expo

ISLAMABAD (APP): Piero Rondolino, founder of Italy's high-end rice producer Acquerello, is looking forward to participating in the upcoming China International Consumer Products Expo (CICPE).

He hopes that his products will bring the peoples of China and Italy closer together as both boast outstanding food traditions.

The third edition of CICPE will take place between April 10 and April 15 in Haikou, the capital of the southern province of Hainan. Acquerello will join the exhibition along with 146 other Italian brands as Italy is the guest of honor this year.

Rondolino said he

expects his products to be welcomed by consumers in China, who know everything there is to know about this staple food.

This year, the exhibition area of the expo will total 120,000 square meters and will include an 80,000 square meter international section. According to China's Ministry of Commerce, over 3,100 brands from 65 countries and regions will attend the event.

“China is a great nation that has both a very important culture and a significant global economic role while respecting diversity,” Rondolino said. He said he expects the expo to be a stage where each country and company can showcase

its own culture and beauty.

Acquerello was founded in 1991 in Piemonte, a region in northern Italy. It is the first Italian producer of re-integrated aged rice, which is believed to have both gastronomic and nutritional value. Its products are characterized by aluminum tin can packaging and sell for around 11 euros (12 US dollars) per kilogram online.

Rondolino has witnessed the opening of China and the evolution it has brought. “I hope our products can do well in China, which is such a large country with varied cuisine. I must go and see if there are dishes suitable for our rice,” he said.

Tokyo shares close higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed higher on Monday as concerns over slowing economic growth eased after closely watched US jobs data met market expectations.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index rose 0.42 percent, or 115.35 points, to end at 27,633.66, while the broader Topix index added 0.56 percent, or 11.09 points, to 1,976.53.

US job gains eased in March for a second straight month, government data showed Friday, adding to signs that the world's largest economy is cooling as policymakers push on in their fight against inflation.

The data is closely

watched for its potential impact on Federal Reserve policy decisions, but analysts believe the latest figures will not be enough to prompt a pause in the bank's monetary tightening drive.

“The March US jobs data was broadly in line with expectations but fears over an economic slowdown have eased because the data is seen as an indication of steady labour market growth,” IwaiCosmo Securities said. Even so, Tokyo trading “was quiet due to market holidays in Europe and Hong Kong,” they said.

Traders will also be monitoring an inaugural press conference by the

Bank of Japan's new governor Kazuo Ueda later in the day, analysts said.

The dollar bought 132.62 yen, against 131.86 yen on Friday in Asia.

Gaming giant Nintendo soared 4.00 percent to 5,406 yen after “The Super Mario Bros. Movie” racked up such huge numbers in its North American opening weekend that analysts said it could top the list for 2023. Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing jumped 1.61 percent to 29,535 yen while Sony Group climbed 0.55 percent to 11,675 yen.

Nissan rose 0.84 percent to 488.9 yen and Toyota firmed 0.43 percent to 1,827.5 yen.

Workers’ remittances surge 27.42% on MoM basis

ISLAMABAD (APP): The overseas workers' remittances posted an increase of 27.42 percent, surging from \$1.987 million in February 2023 to \$2.532 million in March 2023.

On a year-on-year basis, the overseas workers' remittances recorded an inflow of US\$2.532 billion in March 2023, posting a decrease of 10.65 percent as compared with the same month of the previous year's inflow of \$2.834 billion, according to the latest data released by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on

Monday.

The overseas workers' remittances posted a decline of 10.82 percent from July-March (2022-23) as the remittances decreased from \$23.018 billion in July-March (2021-22) to \$20.526 billion in the period under review.

According to the remittances' inflows during March 2023 was mainly sourced from Saudi Arabia (\$563.9 million), the United Arab Emirates (\$406.7 million), the United Kingdom (\$422.0 million) and the United

States of America (\$2532.6 million).

During the corresponding month, the overseas Pakistanis living in Bahrain sent \$42.5 million, from Kuwait \$77.9 million, from Qatar \$83.6 million whereas \$93.5 million were dispatched from Oman.

Similarly, the inflows from Germany, France, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Greece, Sweden, Denmark, Ireland, and Belgium were recorded at \$58.2 million, \$42.3 million, \$9.7 million, \$44.7 million, \$78.3 million, \$30.2 million, \$7.3

million, \$7.5 million, \$11.4 million and \$9.1 million respectively.

Likewise, from Malaysia, Norway, Switzerland, Australia, Canada, and Japan, the workers dispatched \$7.1 million, \$10.6 million, \$4.4 million, \$51.6 million, \$52.6 million, and \$6.7 million respectively.

Remittances from South Africa during the month under review stood at \$13.5 million while that from South Korea stood at \$8.5 million. Similarly \$72.8 million were received from other countries.

ICCI to organize shopping festival in last week of Ramadan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry has planned to organize a shopping festival in F-7 and F-10 markets in collaboration with the ICT Administration, Municipal Corporation of Islamabad, and concerned market associations from the 21st of Ramadan till Chand Raat.

The festival will feature many activities including a traditional food area, art & crafts corner, mehndi stalls, kids' area, corporate stalls, live music stage, lucky

draws, quizzes, laser lights, lighting displays, and first aid medical camp. All entry and exit points of both markets would be decorated with gigantic arches displaying event branding.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry in his statement said that the shopping festival would increase the footfall of customers and provide a good opportunity for the traders of the area to generate more business.

He said that shopping festivals have become increasingly important in the retail world in recent years, as they not only drive sales, but they also provide a variety of brands to the customers and help them to purchase items of their choice. He hoped that the shopping festival in F-7 and F-10 markets would boost trade activities and provide customers with better choices for shopping.

Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that shopping festivals are

very effective in promoting trade activities and hoped that the shopping festival in Islamabad would provide a good opportunity for customers to buy different products at affordable prices in a festive environment.

Engineer Muhammad Azharul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that the trend of shopping festivals is on the rise in the world and it is important that all relevant institutions should facilitate organizing shopping festivals in the capital.

Asian markets edge up as traders weigh US jobs data

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian equities rose Monday in holiday-thinned trade after US jobs data indicated the Federal Reserve would likely have to hike interest rates again but soothed recent worries about a possible recession.

Cambodia's int'l trade down 14.5% in Q1

PHNOM PENH (Xinhua): Cambodia recorded 11.25 billion US dollars in its international trade during the first quarter (Q1) of 2023, down 14.5 percent from 13.16 billion dollars over the same period last year, said an official report released Monday.

The kingdom's total export was valued at 5.39 billion dollars during the January-March period this year, down 5.7% year-on-year, and total import was registered at 5.86 billion dollars, down 21.3 percent, according to the General Department of Customs and Excise's report.

The report showed that the Southeast Asian nation exported garment, footwear and travel goods products worth 2.42 billion dollars in Q1 this year, down 22 percent from 3.12 billion dollars in the same period last year.

The garment, footwear and travel goods industry is the largest foreign exchange earner for Cambodia. The sector consists of roughly 1,100 factories and branches, employing about 750,000 workers, mostly female.

The closely watched non-farm payrolls reading on Friday followed a string of figures last week showing the world's top economy was slowing down and dented investor sentiment.

Focus is now on the release of inflation figures later this week, which will play a crucial role in the Fed's decision-making when it meets early next month.

While rates are seen going up, bets are for officials to end their hiking cycle earlier than previously thought, with a nervous eye on the banking sector after last month's turmoil that saw two lenders go under and Credit Suisse taken over.

Some commentators have even suggested the Fed would announce cuts

by the end of the year.

“It seems the Fed will unlikely ‘budge’ on cuts unless the US economy is amid a deep downturn,” said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes.

“And given the still sticky inflation outlook and the less dovish drumbeat from the Fed speak, cuts may need to be removed from the market unless we enter an actual recession -- and of course, neither outcome is an excellent backdrop for equities.”

He added that the jobs report “was encouraging, signalling a subtle rebalancing of the labour market that again points to a soft landing”.

With much of the region still closed for the Easter break, trading was light

again on Monday.

Tokyo, Shanghai, Seoul, Singapore and Taipei rose but Jakarta inched down.

Expectations for another Fed hike also lifted the dollar against its peers.

Oil prices edged up as investors weighed OPEC's decision to cut output by more than a million barrels a day with the outlook for the global economy and the impact on demand.

“Economic data will form a key input this week for energy markets,” said Charu Chananana, at Saxo Capital Markets.

“Given that the OPEC decision was partly intended to drive out short sellers from the crude oil market, oil prices may be better able to reflect market fundamentals.”

Recession concerns prevail in commodity market

ISTANBUL (APP): Recession concerns increased the selling pressure in the commodity market last week and the search for a safe haven continued to raise the prices of precious metals.

Uncertainties related to the central banks' monetary policies and concerns over economic activity had impact on the commodity market.

The slowdown in the economic activity and increasing oil prices caused concerns that the fight against inflation may be interrupted.

Effects of the hawkish US Federal Reserve steps are observed in the American economy.

While the signs of a slowdown in the labor market strengthened, the situation increased the concerns in the markets that the US economy might enter a recession.

Investors, who have been between inflation and recession concerns for a long time, seem to be less interested in risky assets after the risk of recession came to the fore.

While non-farm employment fell to 236,000 in the US, the number of applications for the first-time unemployment claim rose to 228,000 in the week ending April 1, exceeding expectations.

The US factory orders data fell above the forecasts

in February. It also increased the recession concerns.

While the Institute of Supply Management's manufacturing index in the US remained below market expectations with 46.3 in March, the continuation of the contraction in the manufacturing industry was another factor that increased the recession concerns.

The US 10-year bond yield ended the week at 3.41%, down about seven basis points after seeing its lowest level since September 2022 with 3.26% last week.

Amid these developments, uncertainties regarding the Fed's actions for the next month remained strong.



In brief

Zaman injures Rauf in nets

LAHORE (INP): Pakistani players have ramped up preparations as they are riveting battle in the nets before taking up New Zealand in home T20I and ODI series, scheduled to begin from April 14. During the practice session, Zaman Khan, who is inspired by former cricketers Shoaib Akhtar and ex-Sri Lankan pacer Lasith Malinga, bowled a toe-crushing yorker to Haris Rauf in front of the stumps. The yorker seemingly injured Rauf and he was in pain after being hit on his left boot. He can be seen laying on ground after being hit by the ball and fellow players and a medical officer rushing towards him. A day earlier, Mr Khan talked to media and said with the support of the senior players in the team, the confidence of the new-comer increased. The 21-year-old cricketer recalled the T20I series against Afghanistan in Sharjah, saying, "The pitches in Sharjah were new, due to which the batters could not perform well."

Tickets to go on sale today

KARACHI (PPI): The tickets for the fourth and fifth T20 Internationals and the five One-Day Internationals between Pakistan and New Zealand will be available online from 11 April. The fans can log on to pcb.bookme.pk from 1600 to buy the tickets. The Pakistan Cricket Board has once again set affordable prices so the cricket lovers in Rawalpindi and Karachi can watch their stars in action. Tickets for the last two T20Is at Rawalpindi are priced at PKR500 for Premium enclosures (Miran Bakhsh, Shoaib Akhtar, Sohail Tanvir and Yasir Arafat) and at PKR1,000 for VIP enclosures (Imran Khan, Javed Akhtar, Azhar Mehmood and Javed Miandad). The third-floor gallery for the two matches on 20 and 24 April is available at PKR3,500. The tickets for the first two ODIs on 27 and 29 April at the Pindi Cricket Stadium will be available for PKR300 (Premium enclosure), PKR500 (VIP enclosure) and PKR3,000 (third floor gallery). Fans can buy tickets in Karachi in the range of PKR250 to PKR1,000. General enclosure (Iqbal Qasim, Nasimul Ghani, Wasim Bari, Mohammad Brothers and Intikhar Alam) tickets are available for PKR250. Fans will have to pay PKR500 for a seat in First class enclosure (Asif Iqbal, Waqar Hasan, Zaheer Abbas and Majid Khan). A seat in Premium enclosure (Quaid, Wasim Akram and Imran Khan) is available for PKR750 and VIP enclosure (Hanif Mohammad, Javed Miandad and Fazal Mahmood) is priced at PKR1,000. The final three ODIs will be played on 3, 5 and 7 May at the National Stadium.

Bangladesh quick set to miss ODI series

DUBAI (INP): Taskin Ahmed's preparation for Cricket World Cup 2023 has taken a hit with the fast bowler out of Bangladesh's Super League ODI series against Ireland in May. The quick missed Bangladesh's sole Test match against Ireland with a side strain, the same injury that will sideline him for the three 50-over matches in Chelmsford from May 9. ICC said in a blog, A usual sight in Bangladesh home training camps as a net bowler, Mrittunjoy's selection comes off the back of an impressive run in domestic cricket across both white-ball formats over the last two seasons.

Babar will remain captain, declares Sethi

KARACHI (PPI): PCB management committee chairman Najam Sethi has dispelled once and for all rumours doing rounds about Babar Azam's captaincy for the upcoming New Zealand series, stating that appointing the captain of the team is the discretion of the chairman.

Babar will remain captain for NZ series, he announced on his official twitter handle on Monday, admitting that he decided to proceed with this decision after consulting with selectors, director of cricket and head coach.

Initially, the selection committees of Shahid Afridi and Haroon Rashid had suggested a change in leadership, he continued, but later on the selector advised not to change the captain. Now we

should all support Babar Azam.

Taking to twitter, Mr Sethi wrote, "For months media and cricketing circles have been discussing pros and cons of retaining Babar Azam as captain in all formats of the game. Since this decision is ultimately Chairman's, I have sought views of Selection Committees headed by Shahid Afridi and now Haroon Rashid."

"Both Committees thought matter merited discussion but both later came to the conclusion that the status quo should be retained. I have subsequently publicly stated this position. In the final analysis my decision will be subject to the success or failure of status quo."

"I will also be guided by what the Selectors and Director

Cricket Ops and Head Coach have to say going forward. I expect they will be in the best position to advise me. Therefore we should support Babar and not make matter controversial in interests of national team."

Sethi determined not to give away Asia Cup hosting rights

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) management committee Najam Sethi, spoke out against the protracted standoff over the Asia Cup and reaffirmed his commitment to holding onto the hosting rights.

Sethi, in an interview with a

local sports channel, categorically stated that there is no chance that the PCB will lose the hosting rights of the Asia Cup and suffer huge financial loss.

"It is simple, we worked out a plan to host Asia Cup on a hybrid model. If India don't want to play in Pakistan, we will host them at a neutral venue," he said.

"We presented the hybrid model in the ACC meeting. Pakistan and India will play each other at least twice. This match generates more than half of the revenue. We have calculated the extra budget and told ACC about it. "If they [India] are agreed to play in Pakistan, they are welcome. If they want to play at a neutral venue, we are ready.

There is no option other than hosting this event otherwise we will not play."

The PCB management committee chair further revealed that the cricket board has completed its planning including the schedule of the tournament, based on the hybrid model and also presented it in the ACC meeting.

"We have prepared a schedule and already presented it in the ACC meeting. We have also made a plan for logistics. On our side, everything is final. We just need a green signal," he shared.

The upcoming edition of the Asia Cup and Pakistan's participation in the Men's ODI World Cup has been in jeopardy after the Board of Cricket Control in India (BCCI) refused to tour

Pakistan for the aforementioned tournament on political grounds.

The BCCI maintained their stance of not touring Pakistan for the Asia Cup, while the PCB was adamant that if they do not, then Pakistan might not travel to India for the World Cup in October-November.

Earlier, a report emerged that the two cricket boards were gradually moving towards a compromise and had nearly agreed to host India's matches on a neutral venue while the rest of the Asia Cup will be played in Pakistan.

As per the latest development, however, the BCCI has refused the hybrid proposal for both events and once again demanded to shift the Asia Cup entirely from Pakistan.



MONTE-CARLO: Andy Murray of Great Britain plays a backhand volley against Alex De Minaur of Australia in their first round match during day two of the Rolex Monte-Carlo Masters.

Former chief selector criticises PCB

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Former Pakistan chief selector Mohammad Wasim has criticised the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) policy of resting five senior players simultaneously for a series against full strength Afghanistan side in Sharjah last month.

Pakistan had rested captain Babar Azam along with senior players Mohammad Rizwan, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf and Shaheen Shah Afridi. Shadab led-young Pakistan side were beaten 2-1 by Afghanistan in the three-match T20I series.

Wasim told media in an exclusive interview that he supports the idea of resting seniors, but added that it should be done through a proper policy instead of abruptly making your top five players rest.

"In my opinion, your home series is the best occasion to try your youngster and rest your senior players, they had the schedule in front of them, they knew New Zealand was coming and they would come with bench strength, so they should have played those youngsters in this series," Wasim said.

"It was a bit harsh on those youngsters too to expose them against full strength Afghanistan side in difficult conditions of Sharjah, I think the New Zealand series would've been a better opportunity for them to play," the former chief selector added.

Wasim further said that even if you want to rest senior players, you don't make everyone rest together. "A senior batter was important to be with these youngsters who could guide them, mentor them during the series. The leader, Babar should've been there as we have seen how Saim and Haris excelled when they played alongside Babar. If not Babar, then Rizwan or Fakhar, but a senior was much needed there to be with youngsters," said Wasim. Replying to a question, Wasim said that it was natural for the youngster to vacate their places after one series as seniors had to return but insisted that these players should be given a proper run.

He added that players who are with the team should stay in contention for the place throughout the year as it will also strengthen the bench.

Wasim also spoke on the issue of Mohammad Amir saying that if a fast bowler wants to make a comeback, the first thing he needs to do is make himself available for selection and that is to be done by coming out of retirement.

Wawrinka wins but Murray loses in 1st round at Monte Carlo

MONACO (AP): Three-time Grand Slam winners Andy Murray and Stan Wawrinka had contrasting fortunes in the first round of the clay-court Monte Carlo Masters on Monday.

Former champion Wawrinka rallied to win 5-7, 6-3, 6-4 against Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor, sealing victory on his sixth match point. The 38-year-old Swiss, who won here in 2014, next plays American Taylor Fritz.

Murray lost 6-1, 6-3 to 14th-seeded Alex De Minaur. The 35-year-old Murray, who has a metal hip, struggled against the Australian's court speed in their first meeting on clay, losing the first set in 34 minutes after dropping serve a third time.

De Minaur served out

the match on his first match point when Murray's backhand hit the net, and he improved to 3-0 against the British player. De Minaur plays Jan Lennard Struff next. Former Wimbledon finalist Matteo Berrettini of Italy won 6-4, 6-2 against unseeded American Maxime Cressy, who served 14 double-faults.

Berrettini, who has dropped to 22nd in the rankings, next faces Francisco Cerundolo. The unseeded Argentine won 90% of his first-serve points in a 6-3, 6-4 win against 11th-seeded Briton Cameron Norrie. Diego Schwartzman won 6-4, 6-2 against Belgian David Goffin and next faces seventh-seeded Italian Jannik Sinner.

Briton Jack Draper beat

Sebastian Baez 6-3, 7-5 to set up a match against 10th-seeded Hubert Hurkacz. In Tuesday's second-round action, top-ranked Novak Djokovic of Serbia and two-time defending champion Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece start their bids to win the tournament for the third time.

Djokovic faces Russian qualifier Ivan Gakhov while Tsitsipas takes on Frenchman Benjamin Bonzi. No. 13 Alexander Zverev, a French Open semifinalist the last two years, faces Alexander Bublik — who said during last year's tournament how much he dislikes clay.

Record 11-time Monte Carlo champion Rafael Nadal and second-ranked Carlos Alcaraz pulled out of the tournament.

Guardiola ready to pit his wits against old rival Tuchel

LONDON (Agencies): Pep Guardiola is relishing the chance to pit his wits against Bayern Munich manager Thomas Tuchel as the Manchester City boss looks to avenge his team's 2021 Champions League final defeat at the German's hands.

City host Bayern in the Champions League quarter-final first leg on Tuesday as Guardiola continues his quest to lead the team to their first title in Europe's elite club competition.

It will be an intriguing tactical battle between two of the world's top managers, with Guardiola coming face to face with Tuchel two years after the German won their Champions League final showdown.

Tuchel was in charge of Chelsea when they beat City 1-0 in the final in Porto two years ago. Guardiola was accused of over-thinking his team selection for the final against Chelsea, who also beat City in the FA Cup and the Premier League during Tuchel's reign.

With Tuchel having recently taken charge of Bayern after being sacked by Chelsea in September, Guardiola has a chance for revenge over the two-legged tie. "I was sad but I congratulated him and Chelsea for the victory. It happened," Guardiola told reporters on Monday.

"We try again. Defeats and victories stick at the same level. It is forgotten just



the same. I don't pay attention to what happened in the past. It's part of the game.

"I reviewed the game a month ago and it was not as bad as I thought. It was a tight game, like they always have been against Chelsea in this period."

On locking horns with Tuchel, Guardiola added: "I try to figure out the quality they have in all departments. It would have been difficult with Julian Nagelsmann and also will be difficult against Tuchel."

"I don't pay that much attention, more attention on what I do with my team."

Guardiola knows all about Bayern's enduring quality after spending three seasons in charge of the Munich club from 2013 to 2016, a spell that included three Bundesliga titles. But just as he been unable to produce a Champions League triumph with City, he also failed to win the competition at Bayern.

"It will be strange" The 52-year-old's two Champions League victories as a manager both came with Barcelona in 2009 and 2011, and he is well aware how hard it will

be to end that long barren run this season.

"We want to try. It's an honour to be here against an elite club like Bayern and I'm happy to be here," Guardiola said. "It's not taken for granted. You have to deserve it by playing good. When I was appointed and came seven years ago people ask me this every season. I understand."

"We've tried every single season but there are teams that you face that are also good and want to win." If City are to end their wait for European glory, they will need Erling Haaland to maintain his incredible goalscoring form.

The Norway striker has reached 30 Premier League goals this season and has 44 in all competitions. "He is important for us, I cannot deny. He came to help us to be here in the Champions League, to win that, but as well as the FA Cup and the Premier League as well," Guardiola said.

"It is important to have a player who from nothing can score a goal, but we have scored many goals in this competition in the past and gone out. Maybe the problem was that we were not solid enough to defend." City will come up against a familiar face in Bayern's Portuguese international full-back Joao Cancelo, who surprisingly joined the Germans on loan in January and is eligible to play in the tie.

Pakistan veteran club wins hockey tourney

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Veterans Hockey Club (Green) won the second Mehtab Chawla Flood-Lights Ramazan Veterans Hockey Tournament by beating Karachi Fitness Club by six 6-1 in the final.

Olympian Sameer Hussain was the best player in the final.

Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori distributed the prizes.

According to a communiqué, Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori was the chief guest of the final match.

He said in his address that the hockey game in Karachi is alive because of Olympian Islahuddin.

In his academy, national sports activities continue throughout the year he dedicated his life to hockey. 'I am his big fan and my support for the promotion of the national game will always be with him.' The governor awarded Olympian Sameer Hussain the best player award and a prize of Rs10,000.

Pakistan's table tennis star Perniya Khan eyes Paris Olympics 2024

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The country's number-one table tennis player Perniya Khan on Monday said that she wants to represent Pakistan in Paris Olympics 2024.

Talking to journalists Khan said: "My target is Paris Olympics 2024. A lot of hard work is needed for that. I am confident that I will make it to the mega event."

She expressed gratitude to Advisor to Punjab Chief Minister on Sports Wahab Riaz for organising a highly competitive sports series.

Khan, who is the two-time bronze medalist in junior South Asian Federation (SAF) games, said the Ramadan sports series, organised by the Sports Board of Punjab (SBP) under the supervision of Wahab, will help athletes in longer run and such tournaments should be a regular practice.

"After a very long time, I am playing in such a high-class tournament," said Pernia. "I would like to appreciate the organisers and want such tournaments to take place regularly," she added. Khan has qualified for the final singles event. She is hopeful for not only winning singles but also the upcoming doubles event. "I have qualified for the final singles event. It is a tough competition and all national-level athletes are participating," she shared.

Jabeur beats Bencic to win Charleston title



CHARLESTON (Agencies): World number five Ons Jabeur claimed her first title of the season with victory over Belinda Bencic at the Charleston Open.

Tunisia's Jabeur, runner-up at Wimbledon and the US Open in 2022, beat the Swiss 7-6 (8-6) 6-4.

Defending champion Bencic played two matches on Sunday, completing a rain-interrupted semi-final against Jessica Pegula before facing Jabeur.

It is Jabeur's fourth WTA title and second on clay. Jabeur has had a difficult start to the season and struggled with injury following her second-round Australian Open exit in January.

However, she fought back from a break down in the first set against Bencic before holding her nerve in the second to secure the title. She has now won 37 clay-court matches since the start of the 2020 season - the most of any player on the WTA Tour during that time.

Elsewhere, world number five Casper Ruud beat

Miomir Kecmanovic to win the Estoril Open and claim his first title of the year.

The world number five won five straight games in the first set before Serb Kecmanovic, ranked 40th in the world, took Ruud to a tie-break in the second. But the 24-year-old Norwegian held on to win 6-1 7-6 (7-3) in Portugal and halt his poor start to the year.

Before this week, last year's French Open and US Open runner-up had won just five of his 11 games in 2023. However, Ruud's 10th career title will be enough to push him back up to fourth in the ATP rankings on Monday.

Ronaldo and Al-Nassr's title hopes suffer at Al-Fayha

AL-FAHYA (Agencies): Cristiano Ronaldo and Al-Nassr suffered a frustrating evening on Sunday as they were held to a 0-0 draw at Al-Fayha.

Going into this Roshn Saudi League clash, the Riyadh giants were a point behind leaders Al-Ittihad with eight games of the season remaining.

How tight things are at the top means that this is a result that will be warmly welcomed in Jeddah, and the sight of defender Abdulrahman Al-Amri pounding the grass in frustration in added time at the end of the second half will also be remembered among Ittihad fans. For the supporters of Al-Nassr, it summed up the previous 90 minutes.

There were few chances in the early exchanges, although Al-Nassr's Anderson Talisca had a claim for a handball after 13 minutes. Seven minutes later, however, Al-Fayha thought they had taken the lead. Aleksandar Trajkovski fired home an unstoppable shot from outside the area but the Macedonian star had been just offside when collecting the ball.

That close call seemed to spur the visitors on, and just



from a half-volley following a nod down from Talisca.

The Brazilian had the ball in the net soon after with a low shot that squeezed inside Stojkovic's post but was adjudged to have been offside when collecting the ball. By this time, Al-Fayha were offering little going forward while the Riyadh side were becoming increasingly frantic but were simply unable to find a way through the committed home defense. It was all hands to the pump for Al-Fayha as seven minutes of added time was signalled, but in the end, the hosts, trying to climb out of the bottom half of the table, coped well with everything that the nine-time champions could throw at them. Ronaldo was less than happy as the final whistle blew and was quickly off down the tunnel.

There are still seven games remaining this season and only time will tell whether this was a valuable point for Al-Nassr as they chase league title number ten. Judging by the reactions of the Riyadh giants at full-time, this is not a game that they will look back on with any affection and is one they will quickly want to forget.



In brief

IRSA releases 67,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 67,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 47,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1435.55 feet and was 37.55 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 18,000 cusecs while outflow as 10,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1112.60 feet, which was 62.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 22,000 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 24,500, 28,600, 35,200 and 6,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 16,000 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 3,500 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

'PML-N respects court decisions'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Uzma Bukhari on Monday said that PML-N always respected court decisions. Talking to a private news channel, she said former prime minister Nawaz Sharif left the prime minister's office due to verdicts of the court and added that all the party's leaders had honoured the judiciary and its decisions. Bukhari said that the incumbent government wants to hold elections in a transparent manner and "for this, the period of October is suitable for achieving positive results". She said that process of the census was near completion and organizing elections with fresh data would help resolve many issues.

ANF recovers 820 kg opium

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Intelligence Department and Frontier Corps have recovered 820 kg of opium during a joint operation conducted in the difficult mountainous area of Mashkel, nearly 530 km from Quetta, Balochistan, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. The recovered drugs were stored at a secret place, 'Gorbander Nulla' in the mountainous area. During the operation, the drug traffickers managed to escape from the spot by taking advantage of the hilly terrain during an exchange of fire with the ANF and FC for about half an hour, he said. A case has been registered under the Narcotics Control Act and further investigation is under process. He informed that the operation conducted by ANF against drug trafficking was the biggest during this year. The spokesman further informed that about 3700 kg of seized opium recovered in different operations was burnt on the spot due to the difficulties in transporting the drug from the hilly areas and the absence of required resources with the department.

'PPP believes in supremacy of law'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party's senior leader Sardar Latif Khan Khosa on Monday said that PPP always respects the judiciary and believes in the supremacy of law. Talking to a private news channel he said, "PPP had always presented their workers and its leadership for accountability and never afraid of any kind of accountability".



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Perviz Ashraf inaugurating the unveiling ceremony of Commemorative Stamp at Parliament House.

Justice should be dispensed without any discrimination: Musadik

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik on Monday emphasized that justice should be dispensed without any discrimination and that all political leaders should be treated equally under the law. Addressing a press conference, the minister stressed the need for judicial reforms as currently the judiciary's impartiality was being "compromised".

He said a judge should remain impartial and "political biases" should not reflect in the verdicts. He cited Justice Athar Minallah's opinion that "judges should not be politicians in robes".

The minister referred to the apex court bench which heard the provincial assemblies election case, raising the question over its constitution. The number of judges in the bench was first reduced from nine to seven and then to

five, he added. Musadik Malik said "Justice should be equal for all, and personal biases should not influence the judicial system." He, however, pointed out that the leadership of different political parties were not being treated equally, citing the example of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who made 'hundreds of court appearances' without getting any relief.

Same was the case for other PML-N leaders, while on the other hand, Imran Khan was continuously getting bails, he added. "Discriminatory treatment", he said, was also evident in the case of business tycoon Malik Riaz, who had allegedly given 450 kanals of land to Imran Khan and in return, got benefits of billions of rupees from the ousted prime minister.

Musadik Malik also mentioned the case of Arif

Naqvi, who under the agreement was bound to invest billions of dollars in the power sector, but he was let scot free by the former prime minister after receiving two to three million pounds from him.

There was such a sorry state of affairs causing huge losses to national exchequer, but Imran Khan was persistently being bailed out, he added.

The minister said in the Mustafa Impex case, all the powers vested in the prime minister were given to the cabinet by the apex court and same should be case with other institutions, including judiciary. It would help strengthen the institutions instead of the individuals, he added.

The legislative bill regarding the suo moto powers, he said, would strengthen the institution with the involvement of senior judges.

Security arrangements finalised for Youm-e-Ali

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi Police have finalised the security arrangements for Youm-e-Hazrat Ali (RA).

According to the police spokesman, over 600 police personnel and jawans would perform their duties to give cover to 36 Majalis and 11 mourners' processions that will be held in the city. City Police Officer CPO Khalid Mehmood Hamdani said that the participants would be allowed to join the processions after checking through metal detectors and walk-through gates, adding that all available resources would be utilized to provide fool-proof security for processions and Majalis.

He assured that there should be no delay in strict legal action against the display of weapons, violation of the Loudspeaker Act or attempt for breach of peace.

There would be a complete ban on the parking of any vehicle or handcart on the route of the procession and near Imam Barghas, he added.

He said that it was the prime duty of the police to protect the lives and properties of people.

Shazia criticizes PTI for removing Benazir's name from BISP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Shazia Marri has strongly criticized the former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) government for removing the name of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto from the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), which was originally launched by the PPP government to assist the impoverished population of Pakistan.

Speaking on the Senate floor, Marri expressed her astonishment at the removal of Bhutto's pictures from the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and

Social Safety, and called on the former PTI government to fund their own self-promotion instead.

Marri also noted that Rs. 404 billion had been reserved for the BISP, and that the Sindh government had provided flour to 7.8 million deserving people. Meanwhile, the House rejected a resolution introduced by the PTI Senators to restart the Ehsaas Roshan Riayat program to address food inflation. The House rejected a resolution of PTI Senators urging to restart the Ehsaas Roshan Riayat program to address food inflation.

Two major hydropower projects receive funds

ISLAMABAD (INP): Two major hydropower projects have received funds, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. While Pakistan's energy sector is highly dependent on fossil fuel imports and the foreign exchange reserve has always been an issue for the country, two developments this week are highly encouraging in the green and sustainable energy sectors of the country.

First, the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) has signed a US\$240 million loan agreement to support Pakistan's Mohmand Multipurpose Dam Project (MMDP). Second, the

Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) of Pakistan has approved the Diamer Basha Power Generation Project (DBPGP) at a cost of over Rs. 1.2 trillion.

Chinese hydropower companies are already engaged in the construction of these two major hydropower projects in Pakistan, helping the country overcome its energy crises with low-cost, green, and sustainable energy.

China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC) in a JV is constructing the Mohmand Dam while Power China in a JV with

Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) is constructing the MW-1 Dam part DBPGP.

MMDP will enhance water and food security, and improve the living standard of for the people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), where almost 80% of the population resides in rural areas, boosting the region's socioeconomic development by creating employment opportunities and reducing poverty. By using renewable energy sources, the project will generate 800 MW of electricity production capacity, contributing to Pakistan's energy security.

Railways plan to upgrade two passenger trains

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways was planning for upgrading two passenger trains to provide maximum facilities to passengers and generate more revenue for the department aiming to drive it to self-sufficiency. "Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique had already issued directions to the officials concerned to make all the necessary arrangements in this regard to renovate Karachi bound trains to facilitate the masses," an official in Ministry told APP.

He said the upgradation of trains including Karakoram Express and Pak-Business Express would help the department to earn more revenue and that would be renovated on the pattern of the Green Line Train.

Replying to a question the official said

that Pakistan Railways was planning to consider various options for branding several passenger trains and railway platforms to generate maximum revenue for the department. He said the branding of the trains and platforms would address the increasing deficit of Pakistan Railways and allow private firms to advertise their products for this purpose.

The official said that initially Pakistan Railways would be offered five trains and two railway stations for branding their seat covers, internal walls of the passenger coaches, and even toilets as a pilot project. "The deficit of the department to decrease after starting this project and the minister has already directed the concerned to complete all the formalities in this regard as soon as possible," he added.

Wildlife in Zoo face worst human violence due to incompetent, poorly trained caretakers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The wildlife in captivity in various zoos across the country is facing the worst human violence at the hands of incompetent and poorly trained caretakers with no trained veterinarian or animal pathologist to help reclaim captive animals in agony and serious mental trauma causing their deaths.

A recent incident of African elephant Noor Jahan of Karachi Zoo in poor health has again revived the tragedy of maltreated Kavaan of Islamabad Zoo, the loneliest elephant in the world that after spending years of solitude due to the demise of his female partner Saheli developed serious psychological issues and health complications including injured feet and fatigued behavior.

The Asian elephant was shifted to a sanctuary in Cambodia to spend the rest of his life in peace and free to roam for miles in a jungle near other rescue elephants.

The story of Noor Jahan of Karachi Zoo is similar to that of Kavaan but with a tinge of callous carelessness of the department concerned as the female elephant got injured at the start of this year after the two females had a confrontation that damaged the kidneys and left leg of the elephant leaving her unable to walk and pass urine.

Four Paws, the same organisation that helped in sending Kavaan to Cambodia after necessary rehabilitation had brought four experts to help the ailing Noor Jahan and save her from death as she has developed serious health complications.

Talking to APP, founder of the Society for the Protection of Animal Rights Zain Mustafa said all happening in the Karachi Zoo was predicted by him several years ago when he witnessed the animal management and caretaking by the staff in a highly unprofessional manner sans any remedy available to protect, treat and improve the animal physical, mental and emotional health.

He had been engaged by the Sindh government in the previous tenure in 2017 to redesign the Zoo with better species-appropriate natural habitat, enrichment program-infused enclosures, and trained staff that help relieve the animals' agony and pain with a holistic improvement in their captive living environments.

Mr. Mustafa alleged that the Karachi Zoo project was shelved

when the government changed and it has not been revived yet, leading to the problems being exacerbated today. While discussing the Karachi Zoo tragedy, he said there were four elephants in captivity in Karachi, who are all siblings including three females and a male.

The problem is the attitude of our system and its bureaucrats who do not bother about animals as they are considered lesser beings than humans. Their cruel exploitation for entertainment and gaining of wealth is not seen as a crime, he added.

This attitude perpetuates unbridled exploitation of captive wild animals dying not only of physical but also severe mental torture after developing complex psychological and behavioral problems, he added.

"Noor Jahan and her siblings are African elephants who are difficult to rehabilitate in captivity as compared to the Asian elephants who are docile and less aggressive. Moreover, a chimpanzee and a few monkeys are in serious depression after being poorly handled in captivity and are seen often licking their cages' bars. They are slowly suffering due to psychological issues," he said.

He also decried the incompetence of Karachi Zoo's veterinarian care which was unable to cater to the elephants' needs as Noor Jahan's liver got damaged and now has only a 30% chance of survival.

Zain Mustafa believed that this whole episode would have a negative impact on the minds of the juvenile who come to see wildlife to learn about exotic animals and ended up with spectacles of dying animals in pathetic health and living conditions.

"This child will never learn about the animal but will realize only that he can control anything if humans are able to control massive wild animals. Due to witnessing animal cruelty and assault, mental illnesses are on the rise in our society like child abduction, rape, and many other heinous crimes. Behind every such crime there will be some account of animal torture or beating by that individual either male or female," he noted.

He added that throughout the country there was no trained vet that could provide professional services to handle wildlife properly in such instances. Vice President of Pakistan Wildlife Foundation Safwan Ahmed said it was very difficult to keep wild

animals in captivity as they were habitual of living in a free environment.

However, prolonged stay in captivity turned those animals into highly distressed creatures developing different psychological complications like monkeys shouting and aggressive behavior before humans, lions, or tigers strolling to and fro in the cage without any response or reaction and bears fighting each other.

He added that all these signs indicate that the animals are in poor mental health and need serious intervention by a pathologist who tries to divert the minds of mentally disturbed animals through different games and exercises that help in relieving their mental sickness.

Safwan Ahmed termed it a significant component of zoo management.

While listing solutions to the problem, he said it was paramount to train zoo staff to handle vertebrates as exotic animals need specific environments, caretakers, and facilities to live in a better way under captivity.

He added that the government was taking panic decisions whereas a proper roadmap was prepared during the redesigning of the Karachi Zoo that never got implemented.

He suggested that if zoos across the country have become unmanageable for the government then they should be privatized or turned into safari parks where at least the wildlife can live freely in a near to natural habitat environment.

He queried why the zoo administrations across the country were not accountable to anyone. He argued that it is unfortunate to see young, driven, passionate, and brave people like Advocate Owais Awan alone fighting for animal rights, this must be the fight of every Pakistani as a responsible human being contributing to society in an empathetic humanitarian manner towards better future generations. "There are many volunteers working daily with the Zoo staff to follow the recommendations for Noor Jahan's care by Dr Amir Khalil of the Four Paws team - this is the responsibility of the Zoo staff who are under a professional ethical and moral obligation to use taxpayers money towards the best care of the animals in their care. It is wonderful that civil society has stepped up to help, but the Local Government, KMC and Zoo team should see that yet again a bureaucratic failure in our system of governance is being safety-netted by the common man", he added.

Police continues its campaign to check traffic rules violations

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The campaign of Islamabad Capital Police to check violation of traffic rules is in full swing and special efforts are being made to maintain traffic discipline in the city.

The main objective of this road safety campaign is to ensure safety to the people while road users are being educated for lane discipline during driving.

Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Islamabad said that following the directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has constituted special teams to control lane violations on various roads and ensure smooth flow of traffic in the city. Strict checking is being made against those not using helmets during bike ride. Police teams remain present on all important roads and boulevards in order to educate road users about traffic rules. FM Radio

92.4 is also disseminating the messages about road safety and to educate the audience about traffic rules.

Islamabad Capital Police has appealed to the citizens to cooperate with the force by following traffic laws. He said that action would be taken against those not following lanes while drivers the sole purpose is to ensure a safe road environment in the city. Islamabad capital police hoped citizens will follow traffic rules and help police through their cooperation in ensuring a secure traffic system in the city. Those who are violating traffic rules will be fined and a safer road environment would be ensured through constant monitoring, he added.

The force issues traffic violation tickets not as a punitive measure but the purpose is to ensure a safe road environment in the Capital and secure the lives of the people, he maintained.

IESCO ensuring uninterrupted power supply during Ramazan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Executive Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) Dr. Muhammad Amjad Khan has said that the company was fulfilling its promise of an uninterrupted supply of electricity to the customers during the holy month of Ramazan, especially during Sehara

and Iftar hours. Owing to round-the-clock monitoring and alert operation formations, no major fault was reported on more than 1300 feeders and 116 grid stations of IESCO, he said in a statement issued here Monday.

Chief Executive Islamabad Electric Supply

Company (IESCO) Dr. Muhammad Amjad Khan expressed the hope all formations would continue this standard of performance in future also. He appreciated Chief Engineer Operations Muhammad Aslam Khan being an overall in-charge of all field operations activities.

Police recovered ammunition

PANJSHIR (Agencies): Security officials in Panjshir says that their forces recovered and seized a quantity of ammunition in the vicinity of Bazarak, the center of the province. The ammunitions recovered in an operation from a residential house in the village of Frubel Parakh Bazark, the center of Panjshir, said a local of security official, Mohammad Shafa Kehsar. He said that the recovered includes different types of ammunition and one person has been arrested on charge.

Weather warning issued

KABUL (Agencies): The Afghanistan Meteorological Department has issued a weather warning for seven north-eastern provinces including the Salang Pass. Heavy snow and rain has been forecast for Badakhshan, Takhar, Baghlan, Samangan, Parwan, Panjshir and Nuristan provinces. They also warned that this includes the Salang area. The warning indicates that up to 30mm of both rain and snow can be expected in the provinces.

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

Earthquake strikes Badakhshan province

BADAKHSHAN (Khaama Press): An earthquake of 4.1 struck the northeastern province of Afghanistan, Badakhshan, on Monday morning. According to the National Seismology Center of India, the tremor occurred at around 7:23 am local time on Monday with the epicentre of Badakhshan province, 26 Km Ishkasham of Tajikistan. The earthquake had a magnitude of 4.1 with 150 km depth with the epicentre

of Zebak district of Badakhshan province, and the tremor was felt across the area and neighbouring regions. So far, no casualties have been reported. The area is one of the active regions in terms of plate tectonic and approximately to the main Chamman fault, frequently causing medium to massive earthquakes in the country. Last month, the Jurm district of the province was hit with a massive quake, killing more than ten and

injuring more than hundreds, destroying more than 656 residential houses across the country and felt in neighbouring countries, including Pakistan, Tajikistan and India. Afghanistan is prone to natural disasters, including earthquakes, landslides, flash floods, drought, avalanches and heavy rains. Natural disasters significantly affect the country due to the poor response system and transportation network.

Kabul hospitals lacking doctors, equipment



KABUL (TOLOnews): Officials at the government hospital in Kabul said that they are facing a shortage of specialist doctors and equipment. “We need machinery for examinations, which is not available in our hospital, like MRI, but this service is not available in our hospital,” said Mohammad Iqbal Sediqi, deputy head of the Children’s Health Hospital. The emergency section of this hospital only has ten beds for patients and for this reason most of the time

patients do not receive emergency services, a doctor said. “Patients come here with an emergency situation but due to a shortage of beds we can’t take care of all patients,” said Abdul Khaliq Elias, a doctor. Two-year-old Shegufe has been suffering from measles and she is now hospitalized in the emergency unit. “We keep the patient in the emergency unit for five days and after their health becomes better, we transfer the patient to another unit,”

said Dawlat Hussain Afzali, Shegufeh’s physician. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Public Health said that efforts to increase human and technical capacities in hospitals are continuing. “The Ministry of Public Health has worked for all units in the last year. We bring the machines for electrocope surgery, which was not in government hospitals before. It has been activated in some hospitals,” said Sharafat Zaman, spokesman for the Public Health Ministry.

At least one of 3 Britons detained is ex-military

KABUL (TOLOnews): One of the three British detainees in Afghanistan has been identified as former UK soldier, a security source told TOLOnews. According to the source, this detainee has also spent his military mission in the southern province of Helmand—one the severe conflict-affected provinces of Afghanistan. The soldier has come to Afghanistan under the name of a journalist, the source said. “If they come here illegally, or violated the laws of Afghanistan or worked as spy for other countries, it is considered a crime and any country has the right to detain such foreign nationals and introduce them to the relevant organizations,” said Sarwar Niaza, a military analyst. The source said that the detainees held illegal weapons. Kevin Cornwell, 53, and another British national were detained on January 11, 2023, by the Islamic Emirate in Kabul. Earlier, British media reported that three Britons are being held by the Islamic Emirate. “The country should be rescued from the spies, the country should be rescued from the intelligence circles. The Islamic Emirate should not allow that these invader countries send their

intelligence representatives to our country,” said Toryalai Zazai, a military veteran. The UK Home Secretary, Suella Braverman commented on the detention of three British nationals in Afghanistan, saying that “if there are British citizens abroad, then the UK government is going to do whatever it takes to ensure that they are safe.” Prince Harry in his book said that he killed 25 people in his role as an Apache helicopter pilot during his second tour of duty in Afghanistan. Prince Harry’s remarks faced widespread criticism by the Afghans across the country.

Chromite mine extraction started



KABUL (Agencies): Officials in Khost province have announced the start of extraction at a chromite mine in Zazai Maidan district. Over the next five years, it is estimated that 11,000 tons of chromite will be extracted from the mine, generating approximately 118,600,000 Afghanis in revenue, said the head of mines and petroleum of Khost, Mohammad Sadiq. The mining process will also create work opportunities for 200 people in the area. Since the rule of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the illegal mining and smuggling of expensive stones in this province has been prevented, said the Deputy Governor of Khost Mohammad Anwar Din

Perwar. He said that apart from Razak Mangi mine, some other mines are also under discovery, after which the extraction works will start. Chromite is a mineral that is used in heat-resistant clothing, sprays, steel pipes, non-flammable products, diabetes control insulin, space satellites, missiles, weapons and in any other tools.

2 killed, 4 hurt in road accident

PAKTIA (Khaama Press): At least two people were killed, and four others were wounded due to a traffic accident in eastern Paktia province on Monday. According to Mohammad Munib Zadrán, the provincial police spokesman, at least two passengers were killed, and four others were hurt when a car went turtle on Monday in Afghanistan’s eastern province, Paktia. The injured people were taken to the nearby hospital for medical treatment, and it is said that two of the injured conditions are reported to be serious. Since last Friday, there have been four road accidents across the country. Over the previous four days, separate traffic incidents in the country’s Badakhshan, Baghlan, and Faryab provinces resulted in four fatalities and eleven injuries. According to the World Health Organization, Afghanistan claimed 6,033 lives in road traffic accidents in 2020, or 2.6% of all fatalities. The country ranked 76 in terms of accident casualties in the world. According to the officials, Hundreds of people die in the country due to irresponsible driving, congested roads, underdeveloped highways, and poorly maintained vehicles.

IEA flays Israeli raid on worshippers

KABUL (Agencies): Lately, Israeli soldiers opened fire on Muslim worshippers in al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, injuring more than 100 Palestinian worshippers and arresting around 400. The Islamic Emirate strongly condemns this brutal attack and calls it a crime against humanity. Attacking holy places and defenseless people and violence against them is against international norms and a harsh act by the invaders Israel, said a statement. “This crimes shows how harsh conditions and Muslims face Israeli oppression out there.” The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan’s statement added. Condemning this crime, the Islamic Emirate calls on all Muslims to support the rights of the oppressed Palestinians. Such anti-human acts and desecration of holy places by Israel are a clear violation of Islamic and international laws and an insult to Muslim values and sanctities.

15,000 passports distributed

KABUL (TOLOnews): A spokesman for the General Directorate of Passports said that between 8,000 to 10,000 passports are being distributed on a daily basis and that efforts are underway to increase it 15,000. Noorullah Patman, the directorate spokesman, said that 200 people have been detained on charges of corruption in the process of passport distribution. “With the start of 1401 until now, we have detained nearly 200 people on charges of forging fake documents and they have been handed over to the relevant departments,” he said. Meanwhile, some Kabul residents said that they are facing severe challenges in making payments for passport services to the banks. “We call on the government to work with every bank so the people can easily pay their fees and not face problems,” said Naeem Shah, a resident of Kabul. “We are paying the money based on this receipt. There is a lot of crowds and our problem cannot be solved. We stand in line for the banks for several days,” said Zia Amini, a resident of Kabul. Some other residents of Kabul claimed that there are fraudulent individuals who are asking for money to proceed with their passport’s issuance. However, Patman said that the fraudulent individuals have been detained.

Takhar’s flood-affected families seek govt assistance

TALOQAN (Pajhwok): Flood-affected families in northern Takhar province say they are unable to rebuild their houses and no attention is being paid to their plight. Khuda-i-Noor, one of the affected people, said: “Two days ago floods hit our area at night. We were just able to save ourselves.” He told Pajhwok Afghan News: “My house was destroyed by the floods that swept away all our belongings, including food items. So far, we have not received any assistance.” Haji Barakatullah, another resident who suffered financial losses, said: “The flooding swept away everything we had. We don’t have even cooking utensils. “Having no meal to eat, we haven’t received any aid so far. We urge the government to address our problems. We cannot rebuild the damaged parts of our house.” Gull Agha, yet another

victim, said: “We had been living in danger of floods for eight years. The recent flooding has destroyed part of my house due to the government’s negligence.” He added: “I am worried floods may hit us again, they may cause us the loss of lives. The government must at least clean water streams to prevent the possible flooding of our homes.”



Mullah Ahmad Seyar Sajid, director of the national disaster management authority, confirmed the recent floods had destroyed thousands of acres of crops and dozens of houses besides killing one individual and injuring 18 more. Efforts were underway to address the problems of the affected families, said the official, who called the floods unprecedented in terms of financial losses. Sajid asked philanthropists and humanitarian agencies to help the affected people. In addition to Takhar, the recent floods have also caused a lot of financial and human losses in provinces of the country. The victims are asking the government for assistance.

In 3 provinces, 6000 poor families receive food items

KABUL (Pajhwok): More than 5,700 poor families in Nangarhar, 200 in Kabul and 64 poor families in Maidan Wardak province of Afghanistan were distributed food items. In Nangarhar, food items were given to 5757 poor families in the Khogyani district under the supervision of the provincial Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department. Qari Najibullah, director of social and development affairs of the department, said the aid was distributed with financial support of the World Food Program (WFP) and technical cooperation of Afghanistan’s Next Generation Organization. He said that each family received 6.25 kilograms of pulses, 50 kilograms of flour, five liters of cooking oil and a packet of salt. In Kabul, Ehsaas charity foundation distributed food items among 200 poor families. Zabihullah Hamidi, the foundation’s spokesman, told Pajhwok the poor families included widows and orphans and they had been identified by their team in different areas of Kabul city. He said each family was given 25 kilograms of flour, 7 kilograms of beans, 7

kilograms of sugar, five liters of oil, one kilogram of tea, 7 kilograms of rice and a quantity of dates. In Maidan Wardak province, Afghanistan’s Social Support and Livelihood Program distributed food items to 64 needy families in Maidan Shahr and Jalrez district. According to the provincial Rural Rehabilitation and Development department, each family received 100 kilograms of flour, 24.5 kilograms of rice, 10 liters of oil, 9 kilograms of beans, 5 kilograms of sugar, 6 kilograms of salt and one kilogram of tea.

Doctor criticizes media for misreporting his death

KABUL (TOLOnews): A doctor, who was reported dead by some media, expressed criticism over the inaccuracy of the media organizations. Dadullah Parsa said that some of the media made wrong reports about his murder. “They took my photo from my Facebook profile and then the media published it on Twitter, saying that the Taliban killed a military doctor on the path of Kabul-Parwan. These are inaccurate reports,” said Dadullah Parsa, a doctor. Parsa is currently working in communications in Kabul due to economic challenges. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Information and Culture said that some of the media organizations active abroad are relying on fake stories. “The issue of Dr. Dadullah is part of a series of inaccurate reports. Dozens of fake or inaccurate reports are being published,” said Hayatullah Mahajar Farahi, deputy Minister of Information and Culture. Some of the journalists called on the media organizations to remain committed to journalistic standards. “Journalistic manners should be observed by media organizations and they should pay more attention while making reports,” said Mustafa Sharyar, a journalist. “There should be accuracy in the formation and publishing of news. The accuracy should not be compromised for time’s sake, so the publishing of fake news will be prevented,” said Zia Rahman Sabawoon, a journalist. With the increase of some digital media organizations—most of which operate from abroad—the publishing of fake and inaccurate news has surged.

New books transferred to schools in Logar



LOGAR (TOLOnews): With the beginning of the new academic year, freshly printed books are being sent to some provinces. The education department in Logar said they have received more than 200,000 newly printed books that will be distributed to 275 schools. “From the first grade to the tenth grade, 203,819 books have been printed in Dari and Pashto,” said Mohammad Shahpoor Arab, spokesman of the education department in Logar. A spokesman for the Logar governor added that more than 500,000 books will be transferred to this province in near future. “In the near future, 537,000 books will be transferred from Kabul to Logar and will be distributed to schools,” said Omar Mansoor Mujahid. Meanwhile, the official of a printing factory in

Kabul said from the beginning of the solar year 1401 till now more than 4 million books have been printed. “The subjects include first grade to ninth in Dari and first grade to tenth in the Pashto language,” said Nawed Hakimi, head of the Bahir group. The newly printed books are being transferred to a number of provinces where secondary schools and high schools have not yet been opened for girls.

Afghanistan ranks 4th in crime rate rankings: WPR

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan is ranked 4th on the list of countries with the highest crime rate in 2023, according to the World Population Review (WPR). Afghanistan has the fourth-highest crime rate. Thus, more than 76 crimes are committed in the Country for every 100,000 people. The crime has various forms, including corruption, assassinations, drug trafficking, kidnapping and money laundering. In 2020, Afghanistan provided 85% of the illicit opium consumed worldwide, the report claimed. The report also added that since the Taliban regained control of the Country in 2021, despite their promise to eliminate the opium industry, it will be difficult since it is such a vital part of the Country’s struggling economy. On the other hand, the report also said that the other form of crimes could be robbery and assault due to the high unemployment rate in the Country. The countries with the ten highest crime rates, expressed per 100,000 people, globally are: 1. Venezuela (83.76) 2. Papua New Guinea (80.79) 3. South Africa (76.86) 4. Afghanistan (76.31) 5. Honduras (74.54) 6. Trinidad and Tobago (71.63) 7. Guyana (68.74) 8. El Salvador (67.79) 9. Brazil (67.49) 10. Jamaica (67.42) The total number of crimes of any kind reported divided by the total population, then multiplied by 100,000, yields the overall crime rate (because the crime rate is typically reported as X number of crimes per 100,000 people). Many factors affect crime rates, which differ widely from Country to Country. For instance, a country’s crime rate typically increases with high poverty and unemployment.

MoHE increases salaries of academic staff

KABUL (Agencies): Ministry of Higher Education has announced the increase in salaries of academic staff members of the country’s educational institutions. The salary of a full professor is 60,000 AFN, an associate professor is 45,000 AFN, an assistant professor is 38,000 AFN, a senior lecturer is 30,000 AFN, a junior lecturer is 25,000 AFN, and a candidate lecturer is 20,000 AFN. Before this, the salary of a full professor was 39,000 AFN, an associate professor was 33,000 AFN, an assistant professor was 27,000 AFN, a senior lecturer is 21,000 AFN, a junior lecturer is 18,000 AFN, and a candidate lecturer is 13,500 AFN. According to the statement, this increase is applicable from the month of Hamal of 1402 solar year (March 21, 2023).

ECP suggests changes in Election Act 2017

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Monday asked the Parliament to pass legislation empowering it to announce a date for the general elections. The demand was put forward by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja in separate letters he sent to National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf and Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani. In his letters, the CEC wrote that the conduct of elections is dependent upon the necessary arrangements to be made by the commission to ensure that the standards of honesty, justness, fairness provided in Article 218(2) are met.

"The Commission, under the Constitution, is the sole arbiter to decide as to whether conducive circumstances exist to conduct the elections or not. This mandate is not subordinate to any authority," the letters read. He has suggested amendments in Sections 57(1) and 58 of the Election Act (2017) and has requested for these amendments to be presented in the parliament.

In view of the facts and reasons stated in the letter, the ECP has asked both the NA speaker and Senate chairman to be placed before the Parliament for adoption with the following amendments:

i. "Section 57(1) The Commission shall announce the date or dates of the General Elections by notification in the official gazette and shall call upon the constituencies to elect their representatives."

ii. "Section 58 Notwithstanding anything contained in Section 57, the Commission may, at any time after the issuance of notification under sub-section (1) of that section, make such alterations in the Elections Programme

announced in that notification for the different stages of the election or may issue a fresh Election Programme with fresh poll date(s) as may, in its opinion to be recorded in writing, be necessary for the purposes of this Act." It added that the judgments of March 1 and April 5 have divested the ECP of its constitutional powers to determine as to whether conducive environment in facts and circumstances, exists for the conduct of polls in a given time, to meet the standards mentioned in Article 218(3).

The CEC mentioned that the electoral body has consistently strived to uphold the writ of law, fair play and merit in letter and spirit. However, he added that the commission's writ has been systematically challenged on several occasions. "In practice, ECP's authority has been eroded," the letters stated. CEC Raja, in his letters, wrote about the ECP's crucial disciplinary interventions in the past which were stayed and set aside, which gave wayward functionaries the message of hiding behind legal orders despite committing "serious level irregularities in discharge of their official functions". He added that the ECP's writ was severely compromised at the time. "Now the Punjab elections are round the corner and civil servants have been appointed District Returning Officers (DROs), Returning Officers (ROs) and Assistant Returning Officer (AROs). In the circumstance why would they look up to ECP?" the letters read. The letter also touched upon the issue of contempt with regard to the CEC and the members of the commission.

"The CEC and the Commission were subjected to life threats and their family members were publically harassed. When this reached a point of no return the Commission was forced to start contempt proceedings

against the contemnors and notices were issued. Yet again stays were granted even on issuance of show cause notices, although there were no final orders against which the Stay could be issued," the CEC mentioned. It further stated that the contemnors did not "bother to attend the proceedings and mentioned other such incidents of judicial overbearing, which it wrote had diluted the writ of ECP.

The CEC asked that in the given environment, can the ECP perform its bedrock duty to conduct free, fair and transparent elections. He also questioned whether administrative functionaries, political representatives and other institutions take the Commission seriously and give its directions due weightage. "And finally, can in such conditions through the administrative functionaries and other institutions, is it possible to hold the elections in Punjab and KP followed by the main elections in an effective and transparent manner?" the letters stated.

The CEC wrote that the role of the president to appoint a date for poll in the case of dissolution of the National Assembly on the advice of the prime minister or the dissolution of the lower house on expiry of the term, is not supported by any constitutional provision. It further mentioned that the role of the President to announce poll date is against the spirit of the Constitution and ultra vires of proviso of Article 222 as it has abridged and taken away the powers of the Commission mandated under Article 218(3) and 219 of the Constitution. "It is felt that supplanting/instituting these amendments have resulted in dilution of the Authority of the Constitutional mandate vested in ECP on account of the Article 218 (3)," the letters mentioned.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi giving shield to the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia in Pakistan, Mr Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, at the 5th Paigham-e-Islam Conference.

Toshakhana record: Govt challenges LHC orders

LAHORE (INP): The federal government on Monday challenged the Lahore High Court (LHC) orders to make the complete record of Toshakhana gifts received by public office holders from 1990 to 2001 public.

On March 22, a single bench of LHC ordered the government to make the complete record of Toshakhana gifts from 1990 to 2001 public. The federal government challenged the orders through the additional attorney general. A two-member bench of Justice Shahid Bilal Hasan and Justice Raza Qureshi will hear the plea.

Established in 1974, the Tusha-khana is a department under the administrative control of the Cabinet Division and stores precious gifts given to rulers, parliamentarians, bureaucrats, and officials by heads of other governments and states and foreign dignitaries. On March 12, the federal government declassified the Toshakhana records and uploaded the 466-page data from 2002 to 2023 on the Cabinet Division's website.

Those who acquired gifts from Toshakhana include former presidents, prime ministers, ministers and government officers. The names that appeared in the publicized Toshakhana records included Pervez Musharraf, Shaukat Aziz, Yousaf Raza Gillani, Nawaz Sharif, Imran Khan, Arif Alvi and Shehbaz Sharif. The Toshakhana controversy caught media attention after former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan was accused of hiding details of the gifts he received during his tenure in the government.

Imran summoned for probe

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) police have summoned PTI chief Imran Khan tomorrow on April 11 and 12 to join investigation in nine different cases. Nine cases were registered against the PTI chairman at different police stations of the federal capital including the CTD. The capital city police have asked Imran Khan to join the investigation in two cases on April 11 (Tuesday) and in 7 cases on April 12.

In this regard, notices have been sent to Imran Khan at his Zaman Park residence. Imran has been summoned by Ramna police station on April 11 in two cases. He has been asked by Police Lines to attend office on April 11 at 12:00 (Noon).

The PTI chairman has been summoned by the CTD in connection with another case. Imran has been asked to attend Khunna police station along with all related documents. He has been asked to present his stance on the said dates otherwise legal action would be taken against him. A district and sessions judge of Islamabad, while issuing notice to PTI chief Imran Khan, asked him on Sunday to appear in person before the court on April 11 in Toshakhana case.

Additional Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal ordered Imran to appear before him on Tuesday at 8:30 am on a plea filed by Election Commission of Pakistan in connection with an FIR registered against the PTI chairman at Kohsar police station over Toshakhana case.

‘Criticism me if I don’t defend Constitution’, Justice Isa tells MPs

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Justice Qazi Faez Isa has said that he is a "defender" of the Constitution and that if he failed to defend the charter, people have a right to criticise him. Addressing a special session at the National Assembly in honour of the 50th anniversary of the Constitution on Monday, the Supreme Court judge said that the country's charter gave people the freedom of speech and allowed for the freedom of the press.

"I want to say on behalf of my institution that we are defenders of the Constitution... I too have taken the oath to protect the Constitution and uphold it. Should I fail to do so, you have the right to criticise me." During the session, Justice Isa said — on the behalf of the Supreme Court — that the apex court "stood by the Constitution".

"After God, we are under the protection of the Constitution," he said. He further exalted the country's charter and said: "This book is the identity of Pakistan and its people." "As you are experts in politics, the law is my field," he said. "You can comment and criticise when you deem it right as you have done, and that critique was heard."

The justice also spoke on the role of the three estates of the country in maintaining a balance in the way things were run. "Our job is to make decisions quickly and in accordance with the Constitution. Your job is to legislate," he said, adding that parliament and the bureaucracy should aim to serve people. Justice Isa further clarified that he was impartial to the political discussion taking place at the house and did not want anyone to misconstrue his presence at the session as his agreement with what was being said.

"Before I came here I asked what today's agenda would be and I was assured that there would be no political discussion and only the Constitution would be discussed and celebrated. However, there were plenty of political discussions, which I cannot deny you the right to since it is given to you by this very constitution. However, I would like to clarify that while I have heard your discussion, it does not

mean, I agree with it." "Let me clarify, I have come to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Constitution," he said.

He then briefly spoke of his father's achievements and the history of the creation of Pakistan. "I am proud that my father was a member of the All India Central Working Committee from Balochistan and established the Muslim League in the province." "Pakistan was a dream seen by Iqbal and Jinnah, and when that dream was realised, Pakistan was the biggest Muslim country in the world. "It is unfortunate that today, we no longer have that status." He then discussed the impact of the dissolution of the constituent assembly by Governor General Ghulam Muhammad in 1954.

The move although rejected by the High Court in Sindh at the time, was overturned by the Federal Court — now the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Then lauding the decision of Justice Dorab Patel refused to take oath under General Ziaul Haq in 1981, Justice Isa asked: "If we had stood by Maulvi Tamizuddin at the time when the courts had stood by him — and rejected Ghulam Mohammad's decree — do you think we would have seen the divide we see today?" He further lauded Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's decision to celebrate the Constitution. "We need to truly cherish the Constitution," he said.

"Not because it guarantees my salary, but because it is essential for us and safeguards our rights." The Justice then appreciated the decision of the House to teach the Constitution at the school level and said it was essential for people to understand the Constitution for them to take ownership of the country. "Our Constitution guarantees some rights that other countries do not, such as the right to information." He then reiterated that he had pledged to protect the charter and that he was impartial to the political discussions carried on in the House before him. "It may be possible that tomorrow you are presented in a case before me. Do not then say that I ruled against you despite being invited here today," he joked in the conclusion of his address.

‘Constitution of Pakistan is the basic document’

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Golden Jubilee Convention of the 1973 Constitution on Monday demanded that the constitution and democratic civic education shall be made a compulsory part of the curriculum. The National Assembly organized a convention on the 50th Anniversary of the Constitution of 1973 where as the members of the Parliament presented resolutions on multiple topics of democratic and constitutional significance.

The resolution presented by Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb and unanimously adopted by the Convention held here at the National Assembly Hall also demanded that the Constitution should also be made part of the educational activities of all schools, colleges, universities, training institutions of police and other law-enforcement agencies under the control of the provincial governments.

The resolution said the Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Constitution of 1973, along with an unbiased account of constitutional and democratic developments in Pakistan, shall be included in the textbooks of all relevant subjects (like 'Pakistan Studies', 'History' or 'Social Studies', 'Urdu', 'English' or any other) taught in the schools, colleges and universities in the provinces.

It further said that extra and co-curricular activities at the educational campuses shall privilege themes related to parliamentary democracy, fundamental rights, and Constitutionalism in

Pakistan. The resolution said the public service broadcasters and independent private media under their public service obligations shall devote a fair amount of time to expand their understanding about the Constitution and its relevance as a vibrant contract between the citizens and the State.

It said that the provincial governments shall reach out to the people of Pakistan to raise awareness about the importance of the Constitution and to encourage its preservation and protection. This House resolves to uphold in letter and spirit the constitutional provision under the Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment under which the subject of education has been devolved to the provinces.

Therefore, this House urges the provincial governments to take necessary action and do the needful. The federal government shall urge all provincial governments and the government of the federating units to implement this resolution and ensure that courses on the importance of the Constitution and a study of its salient features, specifically those relating to human rights (women, minorities, children, due process, and international human rights obligations) and the trichotomy of powers, are included in the curricula of all educational institutions in the provinces.

The resolution further said, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, adopted on April 10, 1973, serves as the supreme law of the land and the cornerstone of the dem-

ocratic framework of the country. The 50th anniversary and Golden Jubilee celebrations of the adoption of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan provide an opportunity to reflect upon its significance and promote greater understanding of its provisions among the citizens of the country, especially children and youth.

Recognizing that the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is the basic document governing the structure and polity of the state, and that it is crucial for the future of Pakistan and its people to maintain the continuity of democratic governance embedded in the supremacy of the Constitution.

Acknowledging that democratic civic education is an important instrument to provide necessary knowledge, historical context and develop necessary skills to actively and effectively participate in the pursuit of democratic governance;

Mindful of the fact that a significant percentage of the population of Pakistan, particularly the youth, do not have access to formal education and are not fortunate to learn about core concepts like Constitutionalism, federalism, and representative parliamentary institutions;

Endorsing the Joint Communiqué of the 17th Speakers' Conference (April 15, 2014, Islamabad) that suggested changes in educational curriculum to inculcate in the minds of the new generation the importance of democracy and to make them aware of the democratic struggle for parliamentary democracy.

President stresses unity to overcome crisis

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday said that considering the current challenges faced by the Muslim Ummah, it was imperative to draw strength from the Islamic values and qualities.

The president said that besides, focusing on economic stability, the Muslim countries should also concentrate on seeking the knowledge, enabling them to address the contemporary challenges. The president was addressing at Paigham-e-Islam Conference as a chief guest. The event was attended by a large number of ambassadors, ulema, parliamentarians and scholars.

The president said that he was appalled at the spectacles of macabre aggression and violence unleashed on the innocent people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and Palestine. A danger of genocide was lurking over the Muslims in India as the mosques were being demolished with suppressed religious identity and freedom, he added.

He said that it was indeed a difficult time for the Muslim Ummah, but he was optimistic that through collective efforts, cooperation and unity, they would overcome all these challenges. The president further regretted that from human history, it was evident that mankind had not learnt from its bitter experiences of wrangling and tussles. The human race had witnessed large scale massacre.

He said the teachings of the Holy Quran were eternal in nature which provided guidance to the human beings. The president stressed upon teaching of certain Islamic values to the coming generations including the supreme quality of forgiveness, adding our Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) was an embodiment of this quality who forgave all his tormentors.

He further emphasized that all political leadership of the country should show magnanimity by burying their bitterness and come forward for the country's progress and prosperity. Pakistan was once a fast-developing country in the region, but now other countries were leading the path which required serious retro-spection, he opined.

The president also lauded the role of leadership of Saudi Arabia for resuming ties with Iran. Earlier, Ambassador of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki highlighted the significance of fraternal, historic and brotherly ties between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Fund allocation for KP, Punjab polls Money Bill 2023 tabled in National Assembly

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Monday tabled the Money Bill 2023 before the National Assembly (NA) to decide and discuss funds allocation for the provincial assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa elections.

The minister tabled the Bill titled "Charge Sum for General Election Provincial Assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bill 2023" in the light of the federal cabinet decision during the 51st session of the National Assembly. Setting the context for the Bill, Senator Ishaq said this House passed a resolution in the light of the multiple verdicts of the Supreme Court to assert that the Supreme Court decision of majority decision was 4-3, which has negated the suo moto notice.

However, he said the house also emphasized upon the government not to implement the 3-0 decision of the Apex Court which was a minority verdict and should not be implemented in its resolution. The finance minister underlined that the federal cabinet, in its recent meeting in the light of the resolution of this house, deliberated upon the Supreme Court decision and decided that the Apex Court decision to allocate funds for provincial assemblies' elections of KP and Punjab should be tabled before this house, which should decide the matter. He added that the Supreme Court in its decision had directed the federal government to provide Rs. 21 billion to the Election Commission of Pakistan to hold provincial elections. "These elections would be held without general elections of the National Assembly, Sindh and Balochistan assemblies," he said. The Money Bill 2023 was tabled in the light of the federal government's decision as per article 81-E of the Constitution, the minister added. He vowed that the coalition government was determined under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to purge the country from the menace of terrorism and pull out the country of its economic, political and constitutional crises so that prosperity and development would be the fate of the nation as usual. The Speaker announced that the Bill was automatically referred to the committee.

Ishaq Dar, in the preamble of his speech, mentioned that from July 2022 to till date Pakistan has repaid 12 billion dollars in foreign debt. "We are paying each foreign payment in time," he said. He said that Pakistan had 9.6 billion foreign exchange reserves at present. "Pakistan reserves stand at a total of \$9.60 billion —

\$4.10 billion available with the State Bank of Pakistan and \$5.50 billion of commercial banks," he added. The minister said that a strategy had been devised by the government to take the country's foreign exchange reserves to \$13 billion by June 30. He said that the government, under the leadership of PM Shehbaz Sharif, had also improved its relations with friendly countries and international partners. The minister said that the government had also taken measures to stop the illegal flight of capital from the country which were showing encouraging signs. He said the prime minister had recently announced austerity measures which would be adopted to control the country's expenditures.

He said that the government had designed a policy to end the un-targeted subsidy and provide targeted subsidy to deserving low-income people. He said that funds for the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) had also increased from Rs. 360 billion to Rs 400 billion. He said that the government believed in the supremacy of the Parliament and upholding the constitution and law of the land. He regretted that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf under a planned conspiracy tried to create constitutional and legal crises in the country. He was of the view that PTI had insulted people's mandate by tendering their resignation from the membership of the National Assembly.

He said that the provincial assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were dissolved on instructions of Imran Khan before the legitimate period just to create uncertainty in the country. The minister said that the elections would be held in the country as per the law and constitution, but they should be conducted across the country on the same day under the supervision of caretaker governments. He was of the view that holding elections in the country simultaneously would decrease the total expense and ensure fairness and transparency. He said the constitution ensures the supremacy and sovereignty of the parliament. Ishaq Dar said that due to the faulty policies of the PTI-led government, the country's security, economic and internal issues indicated that holding immediate elections was not in the interest of the country. He said that the process of the census was near completion at the cost of about Rs. 35 billion. The minister said, "Confusion has been created about my attending the IMF meeting. There are speculations about my participation in the IMF session, the schedule of which was issued several weeks before these meetings."



QUETTA: Police officials inspecting the site of a blast near to Qandhari Bazaar.