

PM reviews flour distribution
F.P. Report

FAISALABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday arrived here to review the arrangements at different points set up for distribution of free flour among the deserving people. During his visit, the prime minister interacted with the people gathered there to receive the free atta bags under PM's Special Ramadan Package for the poor and needy people.

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FAISALABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visits free flour distribution points.

CJP
summons
JCP meeting
on 13th

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial has summoned a meeting of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) on Thursday (April 13) to consider the confirmation of Justice Musarrat Hilali as regular chief justice of the Peshawar High Court. Justice Hilali has been performing the duties of acting chief justice of the PHC since April 1, 2023.

CJP Bandial will head the meeting of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP), which comprises four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court, a former judge, the federal law minister, the attorney general for Pakistan, a senior advocate nominated by the Pakistan Bar Council, and one representative of the provincial and Islamabad bar councils. After confirmation, the committee would propose the PHC CJ's name to the Parliamentary Committee on Appointment of Judges in Superior Courts.

The development comes after Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP), Bandial and SC's Senior Puisne Judge Qazi Faez Isa held a meeting, sources told media, which took place in a "pleasant atmosphere". The sources said matters related to the top court came under discussion during the meeting, while Justice Isa also brought up his participation in the special National Assembly session. The meeting holds importance as there seems to be an apparent divide in the top court as several judges have had different opinions on the cases related to the election in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Pakistan did help with
moving US helicopters

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: National Security Spokesperson for the White House, John Kirby while replying to a question by *The Frontier Post* said that while US was withdrawing from Afghanistan in August 2021, Pakistan helped in moving some US helicopters and that it was done with the permission of Pakistan.

John Kirby made these remarks when *The Frontier Post* asked why services of a close ally like Pakistan were not acquired when the US was withdrawing from Afghanistan. It is pertinent to mention here that President Biden has been severely criticized in the US for the manner in which US withdrew from Afghanistan. In this regard last week President Biden's administration released some classi-



fied documents to the public and US Congress highlighting the circumstances which led to such embarrassing withdrawal.

These classified documents especially highlighted the intelligence failure from the US government side, surrendering of the Afghan army to the Taliban

and escaping of the former President Ashraf Ghani from Afghanistan.

John Kirby while replying to the question further added that the withdrawal would have not been possible without the help of "US ally's and partners" and mentioned that Pakistan was and continue to suffer from terrorists activities from the "spine" between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Frontier Post also asked John Kirby that despite the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan being shot four times, President Biden did not call him and whether President Biden can make an effort to bring on table the Pakistani politicians and military so the country can be saved from further deterioration. John Kirby replied by saying that the US wants to see a stable Pakistan in the region.

‘Dark era over as media
now enjoying full freedom’

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Tuesday said the four-year "dark era" for media and journalists was now over as the coalition government had granted full freedom of speech and expression.

Briefing the Senate's Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting, she said the incumbent government fully believed in freedom of media and press.

During the last year of Pakistan Democratic

Movement (PDM) rule, neither any channel was closed nor any programme was off-aired, the minister said.

"No one now breaks the noses or the ribs of journalists." Responding to a query of Senator Faisal Javed, who presided over the meeting, she asked him to "bring facts and figures and then talk". The present government, she said, had not filed cases against any journalist under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act.

"Who had placed media ban on Nawaz Sharif? Who arrested Irfan

Siddiqui at midnight?", she asked. When Faisal Javed Khan claimed that some news channels were blocked during the past one year, the minister challenged him to give the name of the channel which was closed. However, the committee chairman failed to give any information in that regard. Senators Irfan Siddiqui and Waqar Mehdhi proposed that media house owners should be called to the meeting to get first hand comparative analysis on media freedom during the tenure of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and the PDM.

AJK PM
disqualified
over contempt
of court

MUZAFFARABAD (Agencies): In a major setback to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) High Court on Tuesday disqualified Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Sardar Tanveer Ilyas for contempt of court.

The decision of the high court comes after Ilyas was summoned to AJK's supreme court and high court for using a "threatening tone" in one of his speeches. The court declared Ilyas ineligible from holding any public office and asked AJK's Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Abdul Rasheed Sulehria to hold polls for a new prime minister. Earlier, PM Ilyas appeared before the high court where he was welcomed by members of the PTI.

A full bench, led by Justice Sadaqat Hussain Raja, conducted the hearing of the case. During the hearing, the clips featuring the prime minister were played. AJK PM Ilyas gave an unconditional apology to the court, saying "I apologise unconditionally if any of my words hurt the judge." The AJK premier was sentenced till the rising of the court.

The full bench of the AJK High Court summoned Ilyas today in a contempt notice taken on his speech at a public meeting. An order was issued by a two-member bench on a newspaper clipping citing the speech of the prime minister. The bench stated that the decision was taken in a meeting of the judges where the issue was discussed at a considerable length and all of them noted that the overall conduct of the prime minister was contemptuous.

The high court registrar had been directed to issue a notice to the AJK prime minister through his principal secretary to appear in person before the court today and explain his position. The registrar had also been directed to fix the matter before the full bench. Ilyas, a day earlier, had criticised the stay orders issued by the courts and said the practice was affecting the performance of the government.

The stay orders were a temporary order that must be decided within days but they lingered for years, he added. Following his high court appearance, Ilyas appeared in the AJK Supreme Court in the contempt of court case. During the hearing, AJK Chief Justice Raja Saeed Akram Khan asked him: "This is your speech?" He reprimanded the PTI leader for his statements, saying it was Ilyas's responsibility to support the courts. The AJK CJ then asked: "Why didn't you come here when you had a problem with the judiciary?" He said the judiciary had shown "tolerance" towards the premier's criticism in the assembly.

Focus on to
revive country's
economy: PM

— Says coalition govt's one year marks
success story of overcoming tough challenges

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said the completion of the one-year of coalition government marked a successful tenure that resulted in Pakistan's restored credibility, and overcoming of the country's financial and energy challenges.

"I can inform people that over the last one year, we have largely succeeded in establishing Pakistan's credibility as a partner and friend," he wrote in a Twitter thread. PM Sharif said, "Today marks the completion of one year since I took oath as PM of a coalition government. This has been a time of massive challenges and difficulties."

"It was a long journey, but sustained efforts made it possible," he said. Sharif recalled that the passage of No-Confidence Vote against former prime minister Imran Khan Niazi's government was unprecedented. "[It was unprecedented] not because the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) came into power, but because almost all of Pakistan's political forces came together to use the forum of parliament to vote out an unpopular govt through constitutional means," he said.

The prime minister said the coming together of political parties with different manifestos for a common national cause represented a "major step forward in the country's political evolution". "Reconciliation and cooperation, instead of confrontation and vendetta marked the new politics post-April '22," he said. He said despite the economic landmines laid by Imran Khan and the disruptions in global fuel and food supply lines, Pakistan's economy continued to stay afloat.

"All predictions of default turned out to be false alarms. Sincere efforts are underway to revive the economy," he said. Sharif said the coalition government has been at pains to repair, rebuild and deepen

Pakistan's diplomatic relations that were dealt a severe blow by the 'Niazi regime'. He said Pakistan faced unprecedented floods last year. The decisiveness with which the government undertook rescue, relief and rehabilitation efforts, provided social protection to millions of people and mobilized international community has been acknowledged by the world as outstanding, he added.

He mentioned that the government employed climate diplomacy to present Pakistan's case on the international stage. "As Chair of G77 plus China, we were instrumental in the establishment of loss and damage fund. Pledges of US\$ 9 billion at Geneva moot are evidence of our successful diplomacy," he said. He said in the last one year, the coalition government made efforts to diversify the energy mix with the aim to provide relief to the citizens.

"The renewed focus on solar, hydel, and coal power projects is aimed at replacing the costlier sources of power generation with cheaper ones," he said. The prime minister pointed out that inflation hit people hard globally, adding that geo-strategic rivalries, increase in prices of fuel and food commodities and historic floods are some of the key factors responsible for inflation.

"Mindful of its impact, the government has expanded the social safety net and provided targeted subsidies," he said. He said under the watch of the PDM government, Pakistan managed to exit the Financial Action Task Force's grey list, thanks to the excellent inter-ministerial coordination as well as support extended by the military leadership. He said building on the public transport infrastructure, government, since its inception in April last year, focused on early completion of the development and transport infrastructure projects in Islamabad. "Idea was to provide ease, comfort and affordable mobility to the people," he said.

COAS expresses confidence
in capabilities of HIT

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir Tuesday visited Heavy Industries Taxila (HIT), said a statement issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).

He was briefed about technical capabilities of HIT, progress of on-going projects, indigenization efforts and recently undertaken modernisation measures.

COAS visited various factories of HIT and witnessed manufacturing, rebuild and upgrade of tanks, APCs, enhanced protection solutions, remote weapon systems and indigenous 155 mm Artillery gun barrels for Pak Army.

Security forces kill 3 terrorists

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security Forces conducted an IBO in general area Nurur, Bannu District on reported presence of terrorists on 10/11 April night, said a statement issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). During conduct of the operation, fierce fire exchange took place between own troops and terrorists. Resultantly, all three terrorists were sent to hell. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorists. The killed terrorists remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces and killing of innocent citizens.

COAS remarked that HIT is a hub of knowledge economy and R&D which is key to achieve self-reliance in defence production and contributes towards national exports and economy.

COAS expressed his full confidence in capabilities of its personnel and appreciated the commitment of offi-

cers and workforce to transform HIT into a modern defence production establishment for meeting requirements of Armed Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) at par with international standards. Earlier on arrival, COAS was received by Chairman HIT.



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TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY



Youm-e-Ali (A.S) arrangements finalized

KARACHI (APP): Administrator DMC East Syed Shakeel Ahmed along with officials concerned reviewed the arrangements of Youm-e-Ali (A.S) "martyrdom anniversary of Hazrat Ali (A.S)" at Nishtar Park here on Tuesday.

On this occasion, the administrator said that arrangements of Youm-e-Ali (A.S) had been completed in District East, including for Majlis at Nishtar Park and the routes of the procession.

Deputy Commissioner East Tabrez Marri and SSP East Zubair Nazir expressed satisfaction over the municipal arrangements and said that facilities had been ensured to the mourners. Secretary Jafaria Alliance Shabbar Raza Zaidi said on the occasion that it was a good thing that the municipal arrangements had been completed in advance, for which he expressed his gratitude to Syed Shakeel Ahmed and also showed satisfaction on security arrangements.

CPWB Chairperson visits Child Protection Institute Gujranwala

LAHORE (APP): Child Protection & Welfare Bureau (CPWB) Chairperson Sarah Ahmad visited the Child Protection Institute in Gujranwala to assess the quality of care, education and other services being provided to the abandoned children.

A spokesman for the CPWB said that during the visit, the CPWB chairperson distributed Eid gifts to the children and engaged them in games to lift their spirits. Moreover, Sarah Ahmad presided over a meeting with the institute's staff to evaluate their performance and provide guidance for improving the care of children and facilities.

She directed the district officer to collaborate with the Technical Education & Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) for providing technical and vocational education to the children, thereby enabling them to secure livelihoods in the practical world.

Two held for selling expired food items

KARACHI (APP): Zaman Town police on Tuesday arrested two accused for their alleged involvement in the sale of expired food items. According to the police spokesman, the arrested accused Irfan and Rafiq were selling expired food items and household items by changing their expiry dates.

A huge quantity of expired food items hazardous to health was also recovered from their possession. The recovered items include infant milk powder, baby lotion cream, spices, cold drinks and other items.

During the initial investigation, the accused admitted that they used to buy expired items from various markets, etc. at cheap rates and sell them at high prices after extending or modifying their expiry dates.

Police have registered a case against the arrested accused while further investigation was underway.

Yasmin vows not to let PDM escape elections

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Central Punjab President Yasmin Rashid on Tuesday announced that the party would not let the corrupt Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) to escape elections.

Speaking at a meeting with party leaders from different cities, Ms Rashid slammed the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) courtiers for their lies during the holy month of Ramadan.

Ms Rashid criticised PMLN leader Attaullah Tarar for trying but failing to hide the corruption and loot made by his party. She also accused Nawaz Sharif's

supporters of attacking the judiciary to avoid elections and demanded that Mr Tarar bring back the "fugitive" and "convicted" criminal Mr Sharif to the country.

Ms Rashid further stated that the PDM government had shaken the public with high inflation in just one year, destroying the country's economy. She added that the rupee had depreciated significantly compared to the dollar in the same period. The PTI leader reiterated that PTI would not let the PDM escape elections. The PTI was determined to hold the PDM accountable for its mismanagement and corruption, which caused significant harm to the country's economy and people.

Wafaqi Mohtasib directs to pay pension benefits

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: An employee of the Federal Government was granted pension benefits amounting to Rs 94, 78,415, after 9 years of his retirement, on the intervention and direction of Wafaqi Mohtasib, Mr.Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi.

Mr. Muhammad Akhlaq, who retired on 18th June 2014 after having rendered 41 years of services in a Federal Government

Department, was being kept deprived of his pension benefits on flimsy grounds for many years.

After exhausting all forums, Mr. Muhammad Akhlaq lodged complaint with Wafaqi Mohtasib seeking relief against the maladministration being committed to him. The said petition was decided within 30 days in favor of the complainant and concerned department was directed to pay the complainant, Mr. Muhammad

Akhlaq, Rs:9478,415 as pension benefits.

The case was vigorously pursued with AGPR by the Implementation Wing of the Wafaqi Mohtasib and finally after 9 years of retirement, the employee received his pension benefits. The complainant has confirmed receipt of his dues along with arrears in his account and expressed his gratitude to the Wafaqi Mohtasib for providing him the rightful relief.

Memon imposes fines of Rs.0.459m on illegal profiteers

KARACHI (APP): The Karachi administration's campaign against overpricing continued in all the districts of the metropolis on Tuesday and 142 vendors were fined Rs.0.459 million for overcharging consumers. The Commissioner Karachi, Muhammad Iqbal Memon, directed all deputy commissioners to further gear up the action against the illegal profiteering while all the magistrates were instructed to conduct field visits and take action against the shopkeepers charging more than the fixed prices for ensuring relief to the citizens.

According to a statement issued here by the commissioner office, the administration on the 20th of Ramadan ul Mubarak imposed fines of Rs.151,000 on 19 vendors in the district South, fines of Rs.149000 were imposed on 18 vendors in district Central, fines of Rs.40000 on 24 shopkeepers in district East, Rs.38000 on 34 vendors in district West, Rs.8000 on 12 vendors in district Malir, Rs.64000 on 28 illegal profiteers in district Korangi and fines of Rs.9000 were imposed on 7 vendors in district Kiamari.

As per details, nine bakeries were

also fined Rs.56000, 26 poultry shops received fines of Rs.55000, 27 grocery stores received fines of Rs.145000, 2 meat sellers received fines of Rs.1000 each, 21 vegetable sellers received fines of Rs.25000, 33 fruit sellers received fines of Rs.39000 and 24 milk sellers received fines of Rs.131000 while a fine of Rs.5000 was imposed on a flour seller.

The commissioner further instructed that if any vendor or shopkeeper was found charging more than the fixed prices of essential items his commodities should be sold at the prescribed rates by holding on the spot auction in presence of the concerned vendors.

He said that the Karachi administration has also made arrangements to set up a Bachat Bazaar under the supervision of all Deputy Commissioners to ensure the availability of items of daily use to citizens at official rates.

The commissioner appealed to the citizens to register their complaints against the illegal profiteering at Commissioner Karachi's control room by calling telephone numbers 02199203443 or 02199205645.

CCPO reviews crime control statistics

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Additional IG Bilal Siddique Kamyana on Tuesday presided over meetings separately to review crime control statistics of Sadar and Iqbal Town divisions as well as status of cases under investigation.

He reviewed the overall performance of circle officers, SHOs and in charge investigation for the last three months. He expressed his displeasure over the poor performance of the SHOs in arrest of drug dealers, recovery of narcotics and illegal weapons, enforcement of the National Action Plan, the Punjab Security of Vulnerable Establishment Act, arrest of notorious criminals and proclaimed offenders, whereas he reprimanded in-charge investigations for failing in to com-

plete the investigation of cases of heinous crimes, including murder, attempted murder, kidnapping and robbery, in given timeline. The CCPO said that if any SHO was caught involved in backing up organized crimes, including drugs dealing, gambling and brothels, strict legal and departmental action would be taken.

The performance of SDPOs, SHOs and in charge investigations would be evaluated by their performance in recovery of drugs and illegal weapons, implementation on National Action Plan, local and special laws, security of vulnerable Establishment Act and rapid investigation of pending cases. The CCPO directed the officers not to arrest the innocent persons in nominated cases if found not guilty and send the actual culprit to jail.



KARACHI: Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon speaking on Iftar-dinner at the Karachi Press Club.

Biomedical Engineering College, Cellular & Gene Therapies unit to be established at GIMS: CM Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah while presiding over a meeting on Tuesday decided to establish Cellular and Gene Therapies and a Biomedical College at Gambat Institute of Medical Sciences.

"I want to speed up the measures to establish Gambat as the first-ever Medical City in the province by establishing all the health facilities along both the banks of Rohri Canal," he said. The meeting was held at CM House and was attended by Minister Health Dr. Azra Pechuho, Minister U&B Ismail Rahu, Parliamentary Secretary of Health Qasim Soomro, Chief Secretary Sindh Sohail Rajput, Chairman P&D Hassan Naqvi, PSCM Fayaz Jatoti, Secretary Colleges Ahmad Bux Narejo, Secretary Schools Akbar Leghari, VC NED Prof Sarosh Lodhi, Secretary Health Zulfiqar Shah, Director GIMS Dr. Bhatt and other concerned.

The CM said that he had announced declaring Gambat as the health city in his budget speech and now the time had matured to fulfill the commitment made with the people of the province by providing them with all the health-related facilities at Gambat. He said that the Liver Transplantation unit was operating at

GIMS successfully and over 700 transplant procedures had been adopted so far. The CM said Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari recently inaugurated the Lung Transplant unit at Gambat and their Buns unit was also operating successfully, therefore patients from all over Pakistan were coming here for the treatment.

Cellular & Gene Therapist Dr. Shahzad Sarwar of GIMS giving a comprehensive presentation to the chief minister said that cellular and Gene Therapy was emerging as a rapid development for healthcare.

He said that cellular and gene therapy involves the use of cells and genes to treat diseases. Gene therapy modifies a person's genes to treat or cure diseases. Similarly, cell therapy uses cells from either the patient or a donor to treat diseases. Cellular therapy is the transplantation of human cells to replace or repair damaged tissue and/or cells. Some of the cells that may be used include various types of stem cells, lymphocytes, dendritic cells, and pancreatic islet cells. Human gene therapy aims to modify or manipulate the expression of a gene or to alter the pathological process to treat a disease. It can work by editing-replacing the

disease-causing gene with a healthy one; silencing-inactivating a disease-causing gene that is not functioning properly and addition-Introducing a new, or modified gene into the body to help treat a disease.

Meanwhile, the CM directed Vice Chancellor NED University to establish a Biomedical Engineering college at Gambat. "I would suggest both of you that VC NED and Director Gambat Institute of Health Sciences, to sit together a prepare a plan to establish a Biomedical college," he said. The CM also approved a proposal presented by Dr. Bhatti of GIMS to establish Cellular and Gene Therapies at GIMS. It was pointed out that the land along both embankments of Rohri Canal at Gambat would be utilized to establish different health facilities for long-term care and primary health care.

The city would become the epitome of medical tourism. The CM directed Secretary Works to prepare a feasibility plan to construct a flyover from the National Highway to Gambat Health City and plan to connect the Rohri Canal embankments through a bridge. He also directed Chief Secretary Sohail Rajput to hire a consultant for the establishment of Gambat as a Health City.

Administrator for preparation of development schemes for FY2023-24

KARACHI (APP): Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saif-ur-Rehman has said that the development schemes for the financial year 2023-24 should be prepared soon and presented in the next meeting, to finalize before sending them to the government for approval.

All the schemes regarding municipal services, parks and medical & health services should be prioritized and every effort should be made to ensure the timely and correct utilization of development funds.

He gave these instructions while presiding over the meeting to review annual development schemes for the financial year 2023-24 in his office on Tuesday.

Municipal Commissioner Syed Shujaat Hussain, Finance Advisor Ghulam Murtaza Bhutto, Director General Technical Services Azhar Hussain Shah, Director General Parks Junaid-ullah Khan, Senior Director Municipal Services Noman Arshad, Senior Director Culture and Sports

Saif Abbas Husni, Senior Director Medical and Health Services Dr Asif Nadeem, Senior Director I.T Bashir Siddiqui, Director Finance Mahmood Baig and other officers were in attendance. The participants reviewed the progress on the development schemes in the financial year 2022-23, the progress on the development schemes related to various departments of KMC and the preparation of the proposed schemes for the next financial year 2023-24 and other relevant matters. Dr Syed Saif-ur-Rahman inquired about the details of the schemes related to their departments from the heads of the Information Technology Department, Parks and Horticulture, Municipal Services, Culture and Sports, Engineering and Medical and Health Services Department.

He instructed them to set priorities for the schemes to be included for the next financial year and to give more importance to the most urgent works

and also to ensure timely and efficient utilization of the release from the government. He said that the speed of work on the already ongoing schemes should be accelerated and the reasons for the schemes on which the work has stopped should be immediately informed, he said that the officers should come to the next meeting with full preparation with all supported papers and documents.

In order to complete all these works as soon as possible, he directed that showing the same work in two schemes should be avoided and for this, all the concerned departments should work in collaboration with the engineering and finance department.

He said that the PC-I, tender and approval process of development schemes are completed without delay and an effective and comprehensive strategy is adopted in this regard so that the citizens can get the fruits of the works carried out by Karachi Metropolitan Corporation.

PFA discards 1,200kg expired meat

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) set ablaze 1,200 kilograms of expired meat as per eco-friendly policy at the PAMCO Furnace during a raid on a godown in Bakar Mandi.

PFA also lodged a First Information Report (FIR) against the accused in the nearest police station over violation of the Punjab Pure Food Regulations. The raid was conducted under the supervision of PFA Director General Raja Jahangir Anwar.

He said the raid was conducted against the supplier in Bakar Mandi and foiled an attempt to supply expired, unhygienic and sick animal's meat that was stored in the warehouse.

The director general said 30 mounds of meat was to be supplied to different restaurants at cheap rates after a fake stamp which was used to show the meat verified by the concerned authority.

He said that butchers could sell only approved veterinary stamp meat of animals in the market.

KU VC inaugurates chest pain unit, establishes EPI counter at Clinic

KARACHI (APP): Vice Chancellor University of Karachi Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi on Tuesday inaugurated the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) Counter and the Chest Pain Unit at the KU Clinic.

The KU in collaboration with the District Health Office East established the EPI at its Clinic to protect the newborn to two years old children by immunizing them against childhood tuberculosis, poliomyelitis, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, measles, hepatitis B, Haemophilus, influenza type b (Hib) and pneumococcal and inactivated polio vaccine. The KU faculty, employees, and people living in the neighbourhood areas would also avail the facilities from the newly established EPI Counter.

The DHO East official would provide the EPI vaccinations to the children.

Meanwhile, the KU also inaugurated its Chest Pain

Unit in its Clinic and installs the electrocardiogram (ECG) machine to monitor the heart's rhythm and electrical activity at the initial stage.

A local pharmaceutical firm, PharmEvo as per its memorandum of understanding, has provided the ECG machine to the University of Karachi.

On this occasion, Dr Khalid Iraqi expressed that one of the biggest problems in our society is that the majority of people do not have an idea about the importance of timely diagnosis and treatment.

He observed that usually lack awareness regarding diseases create a lot of complications.

He mentioned that we are trying to convert our clinic into a mini-hospital and hoped that gradually more medical facilities would be available in the clinic. He shared that there are a large number of children in our society who are

not vaccinated as their parents are not informed about the availability of essential vaccines and injections.

"We are working on increasing the supply of more medical facilities and equipment at the clinic and we are in touch with both public and private sectors in this regard."

He mentioned that KU has established the Covid-19 vaccination centre with the help of the provincial government to facilitate teachers, administrative staff, and employees as well as people living in the surrounding and hoped that the EPI Counter would provide good service.

Meanwhile, a medical officer at the KU Clinic Dr Akmal Waheed said that the installation of an ECG machine will facilitate the timely diagnosis of heart diseases and in case of a cardiac arrest, it will be easy for us to refer the matter to the relevant hospitals immediately.



LAHORE: Farmers and traders gather around the trucks of watermelons during auction as shopkeepers participating in bidding of fruit (Watermelon) at fruit market in the Provincial Capital.



Anti-polio drive starts from 14th

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A new five-day campaign of Sub-National Immunization Days (SNIDs) would be initiated from 14th April to vaccinate 3.1 million children under-five years of age in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The campaign would vaccinate eligible children in seven districts of Bannu and D.I.Khan divisions, outbreak districts of Peshawar, Nowshera and Swat, Afghan Refugee Camps across the province and specific high-risk union councils on Pak-Afghan border.

It was agreed in a meeting of Provincial Taskforce on Polio Eradication, held here at Civil Secretariat on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary. Administrative secretaries, divisional commissioners, deputy commissioners, officials of security forces

and police, international partners and others attended the meeting.

The forum was informed that during this campaign Polio drops will be administered to more than 1.08 million children under the age of five in Bannu and D. I Khan divisions, over 1.7 million children in outbreak districts of Peshawar, Nowshera & Swat, 71688 children in Afghan Refugee Camps and 192,173 children will be vaccinated in specific union councils situated on Pak-Afghan border.

Addressing the meeting, the Chief Secretary said that despite multiple challenges, putting in place arrangements for such campaigns underlines the commitment of the government for the protection of our children against lifetime disabilities and stressed that all segments of society especially the parents should also come forward and extend their cooperation for the success of these campaigns to ensure a polio-free future for our children. The CS stressed on timely coordination, achievement of assigned targets and improving quality of the campaigns.

The forum resolved its commitment to eradicate polio from the country. The meeting was further informed that for upcoming campaign, 14,604 teams of trained polio workers including 13,068 mobile teams, 769 fixed teams, 693 transit teams and 74 roaming teams have been deployed. Besides 3,316 area in-charges have also been appointed for the vigilant supervision of these teams to make sure that all children in the target areas are administered with polio drops.

In order to ensure fool-proof security of the polio teams, 25,957 security personnel have been deployed in the target areas.

Governor condoles with CM over nephew's demise

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali on Tuesday went to the residence of caretaker Chief Minister KP, Muhammad Azam Khan in Prang Babakhel area of Charsadda district to condole over the demise of his nephew, Umar Shehzad.

The Governor expressed sympathy with the bereaved family and offered Fateha for the departed soul. The Governor while offering condolence with the Chief Minister Azam Khan and members of the bereaved family, prayed for eternal peace to the departed soul and courage and patience for the family to bear the irreparable loss with fortitude.

Special Assistant to the caretaker CM, Malik Meher Ilahi, Shiraz Akram Bacha and former Interior Secretary Akhtar Ali Shah also accompanied the Governor.

PHC upheld lifetime imprisonment in murder

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has upheld judgement of trial court in famous Kalu Khan murder case convicted killer for lifetime imprisonment along with fine while turnaround appeal against the conviction, on Tuesday.

The counsel for complainant Syed Mubashir Shah informed that Rahim resident Kalu Khan killed Shah Fahad in 2017 while Model Criminal Court Swabi has convicted him for lifetime imprisonment and imposed fine.

The petitioner Rahim has approached PHC against trial court decision for acquittal.

PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah has sustain Criminal Model Court judgement of lifetime and fine and rejected appeal against the conviction.

100 inmates to be shifted from Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): The authorities of Peshawar Prison have decided to shift at least 100 inmates to other prisons of the province to ensure maintenance of peace inside jails.

According to jail authorities, the decision was taken in the aftermath of a clash between inmates of Peshawar Prison some days back and deployment of KP police inside the jail.

The authorities said in the wake of the present situation and to maintain peace it has been decided to shift the load of prisoners to other prisons.

As per the recommendation, the inmates would be shifted to Mardan, Haripur, Abbottabad and other prisons of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Arrangements were taking place at various KP prisons, the authorities said, adding that possibly the shifting of inmates would take place from next Saturday.

Police arrest smuggler

PESHAWAR (APP): The city police arrested a weapons smuggler and recovered arms and ammunition from his motorcar in the Faqirabad area on Tuesday.

According to the police spokesperson, on a tip-off that arms and ammunition in large quantities would be smuggled down the country, ASP Faqirabad, Syed Talal Ahmad Shah and his team intercepted a car for search.

The accused identified as Faizan alias Latif Khan instead accelerated the vehicle and was overpowered at Haji camp ada after a little chase.

During the search of the car's hidden cavities, police recovered 15 rifles and a Kalashnikov besides others arms and ammunition.

A case has been registered against the arrested accused while further investigation was underway.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali offering fateha for departed soul of nephew of Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan.

CCTV cameras installation in progress at prison: Minister

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Prisons Hidayatullah Afridi on Tuesday said that the installation of video cameras in the Central Jail Peshawar is in progress, which will monitor the supply of mobile phones and drugs to the prisoners while the contact of the prisoners with outside facilitators will also cease.

Expressing his anger over the recent quarrel in the jail, the said minister said that the prisoners involved in the incident should be closely monitored so that such incidents do not take place in future which bring disrepute to the

administration and the government, while the administration should inform the government and the public about their activities inside the prison through the social media.

He expressed these views during a briefing at the Peshawar office of the Inspector General of Prisons. The advisor was told that the prison has a separate hostel for female prisoners and solarization facility during load shedding while the number of rooms for the staff has increased so that they can perform their services with peace of mind and full integrity.

He asked the IG Prisons to provide him with a list of the entire staff of the jail and that all the jail employees should keep two SIMs

in their mobile phones so that it is easy to communicate with them.

He was told that six districts jails in the province are in the process of completion but are pending due to lack of funds. If required funds were made available for completing the construction work of the said jails, the load of prisoners on Central Jail Peshawar could be lessened to a great extent that will bring positive results.

Hidayatullah Afridi was told that female, she male and male prisoners have been kept in separate barracks and a large library containing about 6500 books was built for them which they can use all the time.

Sports tournaments are

also organized in the jail for the inmates which is having a good effect on them.

The Jail Hospital provides the best medical facilities to the sick inmates and has the services of eight qualified doctors, along with religious and contemporary studies are also taught to all the inmates in the Jail. Hot water is provided to the inmates in winter.

Hidayatullah thanked the Qarshi Company and Al-Khidmat Foundation for their cooperation as those prisoners who cannot afford to pay the fines are released from jail by paying their fines. He assured the IG and Deputy IG prisons of all possible support from the government.

Jashan-e-Baharan' Orakzai festival to be held May

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism Authority is initiating to promote tourism in the province especially in merged districts, in this regard 'the Jashan-e-Baharan' festival will be held in the first week of May in Orakzai district, said Tourism Authority Spokesman Muhammad Saad on Tuesday.

He said that the Authority is utilizing all available resources to promote tourism in the adjoining districts of the province.

He said that new tourist spot has been introduced in Orakzai that will promote tourism more in province.

Saad said that there are

many beautiful and tourist places in Orakzai district, adding the Authority will give full attention to promote it and provide facilities to tourists.

Kalaya, Samana, Golestan Qila, Feroz Khel, Zera and Landok, Nanwar Ghar, Khlawat, Tui Khula Waterfall and Spinkai are many tourist attractions places in district Orakzai, said Saad.

He said that camping pods would be installed for tourists in Samana area by June 2023. Plantation campaign with support of Pakistan Army and Forest Department would be started soon in these areas, said Saad. Various tour opera-

tors and travel agents were given a visit of Orakzai, Muhammad Saad added.

"Tourguide training workshop will also be held for local youth and a guide map related to Orakzai tourist spots has been prepared and various tourist signboards have also been displayed for tourists".

An information desk for tourists has also been installed in Orakzai, Spokesman Saad added. DG M. Bakhtiar Khan said that the Tourism Authority is taking measures for the promotion of tourism in KP. He said that steps taken towards the promotion of tourism would yield encouraging results.

DEO Peshawar kicks-off enrollment campaign



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: District Education Department Peshawar Sajjad Akhtar has kicks-off enrollment drive to ensure maximum number of students in the academic session, on Tuesday.

The drive was initiated with the support of National commission for

Human Development Peshawar, formally kicked off enrollment Drive 2023 in Peshawar on Tuesday.

In this regard a walk was organized from Govt. Primary School, Jogawara to G.T. Road. Sajjad Akhtar, DEO Peshawar, Tahir Sharif, Deputy Director NCHD Peshawar, Latifullah, Asst Director,

ShahJehan Khan, Asst Director, NCHD Peshawar, DDEO, SDEOs, ASDEOs, Teachers, Students and volunteers Participated on the occasion.

The participants displayed placard, banner and slogan inscribed with importance of education as well as impact of maximum enrollment on public and society.

Minister inaugurate drama studio

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister of Religious Affairs and Information Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah said Radio Pakistan has always produced extra ordinary dramas besides creating awareness through its transmission.

Addressing a function at broadcasting house in Peshawar on Tuesday, he paid rich tributes to the broadcaster Syed Abdul Jabbar for his meritorious services for production of quality drama.

The minister said radio Pakistan and Pakistan tele-

vision have jointly worked for giving better entertainment and quality programs and news.

Speaking on this occasion, station director Radio Pakistan Peshawar Syeda Iffat Jabbar said all available resources are being utilized for making radio Pakistan Peshawar a model station.

She said quality of programmes and its content are being improved according to modern requirements.

She paid rich tributes to all its staff and sections for lending a hand in making the station a model one from its own resources.



On this occasion, the station director distributed certificates among the staff. Earlier, the caretaker minister inaugurated a drama studio in the broad-

casting house on the name of ex-broadcaster Syed Abdul Jabbar and the father of station director radio Pakistan Peshawar Syeda Iffat Jabbar.



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary KP Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary presiding over a meeting of Provincial Task Force on Polio Eradication.

Golden jubilee celebrations of constitution PPP congratulates nation and leadership

PESHAWAR (APP): Acting Provincial President PPP of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Minister of State Mohammad Ali Shah has congratulated the party leadership, workers and nation over celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of the Constitution of 1973.

In a statement issued here on Tuesday, the PPP stalwart linked the celebrations of the Constitution's golden jubilee with the realization that by following the Constitution the country could be saved from any threat or crises. He said the PPP under the leadership of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had given a complete Constitution to the country. Mohammad Ali Shah

Bacha said that PPP had a long history of generous services for the promotion of democracy, adding that for this purpose the party had rendered unforgettable sacrifices, always represented the aspirations of the nation and kept public service at top of the priorities.

He said that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had laid the foundation stone of the PPP and played a crucial role after the fall of Dhaka in making the nation to stand on its own feet.

Mohammad Ali Shah said that through the passage of the eighth amendment, the PPP had restored the constitution as per the true spirit and also granted powers to small provinces.

The Minister of State said that PPP had laid the foundation stone of the nuclear programme and performed well during its three stints in the government.

He said that after the demise of Nusrat Bhutto and the martyrdom of Benazir Bhutto, the party continued its struggle for the restoration of democracy in the country, especially the sacrifices rendered by the latter would be written in golden words.

The PPP provincial chief said that under the leadership of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari, the party was playing its due role in strengthening democracy.

ANP to convene APC on prevailing situations

PESHAWAR (APP): President of Awami National Party (ANP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amil Wali Khan on Tuesday said that the party was apprehensive about the prevailing political and security situation of the country and would convene All Parties Conference in Islamabad on May 3.

Talking to media here at Peshawar Press Club, he said that among others the issues of elections and an

all-out comprehensive operation to get rid of the menace of terrorism would be discussed.

Referring to the decision of the National Security Committee regarding all-out operation to eliminate the scourge of terrorism in all its forms and manifestation from Pakistan, Aimal Wali said that there was a comprehensive formula of "National Action Plan" to eradicate terrorism which

was agreed by all the state institutions, political parties, and stakeholders.

"If the state is serious about eliminating terrorism, then it should ensure compliance of NAP in letter and spirit," he remarked.

He said it was imperative for all the state institutions and stakeholders to remain in their ambit for the political and economic prosperity and development of the country.

Planting drive in progress



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Security Forces has initiated a massive planting campaign in different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Under the auspices of Frontier Corps North, a total of 32,500 saplings have been planted in Khyber district, 7850 saplings in Mohmand district, 8600 saplings in Bajaur district, 9300 saplings in Swat & Dir dis-

tricts and 14,000 saplings in Chitral district.

Notably, a significant number of Miyawaki plants, known for their fast growth and environmental benefits, have been included in the plantation drive in all these districts. The aim is to promote afforestation and mitigate the adverse effects of seasonal disasters such as floods and landslides in these vulnerable areas.

The efforts of Frontier

Corps North in promoting greenery and sustainability in these districts have been ongoing for the past two years, resulting in the planting of over one million sixty-four thousand saplings during this period.

The plantation campaign continues with renewed vigor, as Security Forces remain committed to preserving the environment and protecting these areas from natural disasters.



In brief

Two carlifters killed in attack F.P. Report

SWABI: Jehangira police on Tuesday killed two members of inter-provincial Najeeb carlifter gang when they attacked a police check post in the jurisdiction of Jehangira police station. The spokesman of district police said that the two carlifters came on two different cars and opened fire at police officials deployed at Jehangira check post in an attempt to cross the check post, adding that due to the firing of the carlifter a passerby was killed on the spot. The police officials gave a befitting response and killed both the carlifters on the spot and recovered two cars, one pistol, various bullets, 22 different number plates, 10 remotes of cars, eight car keys and other devices and tools used in car theft. The police have taken the bodies and recovered items into custody and started an investigation.

One killed over child quarrelling F.P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: One person has been killed over child quarrelling during prayers at Masjid while public has blocked Malakand road in protest against the murder and demanded immediate arrest of culprits. The deceased was identified as Khayal Zaman while he was also Emir of Islami Jamaat-e-Tuluba (IJT). Police has registered First Information Report on complaint of deceased's brother. According to sources, Shayan, Farman, Suleiman sons of Ibrahim Azmat and late son of Umar Kheetab attacked the deceased with knives which has resulted into critical injury while escaped from the crime scene. Police has deployed teams for arrest of alleged murderers following public pressure and blocking Malakand-Mardan road.

DPO visits police posts

LOWER DIR (APP): District Police Officer (DPO) Lower Dir, Tariq Kamal on Tuesday visited outposts situated in Maidan Circle and reviewed security measures. He visited police posts of Sheedas, Kalpani, Kala Dheri and Maidan and reviewed security measures. He also met with police jawans and inquired about their problems. He directed police officials to remain vigilant and work in liaison to avert any untoward incident. He also directed to install CCTV cameras on boundary walls of police posts and to use protective gear while performing duties.

Action against profiteers

SUKKUR (INP): The District Administration Khairpur continued actions against profiteers on Tuesday and imposed a fine of Rs 21,000 against violators in different talukas of the district. Assistant Commissioners along with other officers recovered a fine of Rs 21,000 from 11 traders. Ramzan Bachat Bazaars were also established in eight talukas by the district administration to provide common use and essential commodities at discounted rates.

Minor girl killed

MIANWALI (PPI): An eight-year old girl was killed and four other persons were wounded when two motorcycles collided in Kundian, a city of District Mianwali in Punjab province. The accident occurred in Aliwali area near Khundian where two motorcycles collided head-on due to over-speeding, killing a minor girl on the spot and injuring four other persons



MARDAN: DSP Bashir Ahmad Yousafzai addressing a press conference after arresting snatchers, thieves.

Six dealers booked for alleged fraud in free flour

F.P. Report

MARDAN: As many as 6 dealers were arrested while 800 bags of free flour were recovered from their possession while obtained by fraudulent means to sold in open market, on Tuesday.

According to the details, the Peshawar administration took immediate action on the complaint of Assistant Commissioner Takhtbhai Gul Nawaz Khan Afridi and seized 800 bags of flour from the possession of the main 6 flour dealers of the group in Peshawar and sent them to Peshawar Jail. The car was extended.

This scandal was disclosed by Assistant Commissioner Takhtbhai Gul Nawaz Khan Afridi in a press briefing in his office that the residents of Mahal Arabi Kaly/ Halki Banda Union Council Seri Bahlul

Tehsil Takhtbhai 150/140 filed a written complaint. That some flour dealers of Peshawar have stolen the numbers of our national identity cards from our voter lists or by other bogus means.

On which Deputy Commissioner Mardan Retired Captain Abdur Rehman and Free Atta Distribution Focal Person/Additional Assistant Commissioner Mardan Ms. Howla Haqdar contacted Deputy Commissioner Peshawar and informed about the sensitive nature of the second-ary.

On which the Peshawar administration under the leadership of Assistant Commissioner Peshawar raided 6 flour dealers of Peshawar, Usman Khan, Faizan Khan, Mudassar Khan, Wali Khan. Bilal

Khan and Jalal Khan were arrested and 800 bags of free flour were recovered from their possession.

Legal action was initiated against the involved Delrans on solid grounds. In what ways did these inter-provincial groups get bags of flour by taking the national identity card numbers of the poor. On this occasion, the seized bags of flour were distributed among the people of the respective areas.

Assistant Commissioner Takhtbhai Gul Nawaz Khan Afridi appealed to the public, social circles and the media that if anyone has obtained the free flour of a poor person in a bogus manner, then take immediate action on any complaint and punish the involved elements. It will be given. Rather, Eidul Fitr will have to be spent in jail.

Culprits involved in deforestation be dealt with iron hands: DFO

F.P. Report

WANA: In Shakai area of Lower South Waziristan district, news was circulating on social media regarding deforestation for a few days, which DFO South Waziristan Wahdat Zeeshan Anwar took notice and issued orders to take strict action against those involved and the staff was immediately dispatched to the affected area along with the police

Forest department staff raided a remote area of Shakai along with police personnel. So, some people were found engaged in cutting forests, and the accused were arrested by the police on the spot.

While the involvement of many other people has also been discovered during the police investigation, the police are conducting raids to find them for their arrest and the cut wood on the spot has been seized by the government, and FIR have been registered against the accused for illegal cutting of forests.

The DFO expressed special thanks to the SHO of Shakai police station, Israr Wazir, for providing on-the-spot support and

prompt action. DFO says that the arrest of the accused was possible due to the timely assistance of SHO Police Station Shikai and taking actions. He warned local people to refrain from deforestation otherwise, those involved in deforestation will be dealt with with iron hands.

Police recovers looted state's owned ammunition: An intelligence based secret operation in the light of the special instructions of District Police Officer Shabir Hussain Marwat, in which all the weapons and ammunition taken from the police station as a result of the attack on Wana city police station last month on December 12, have been recovered from the house of a person named Bin Yamin in the village of Azam Warsak.

In which one SMG, two magazines, one bullet proof jacket, two wireless sets, two mobiles, three belts, three RPG shells including boosters, eleven hand grenades, five kilos of ammunition, 1126 SMGs. Cartridges, three IDs, one gas gun, one torch, two bags, one helmet are included, In this

attack, a soldier named Ilyas was seriously injured and was martyred.

In the month of December on 12th in the dark of night, 40 to 50 unknown terrorists attacked Wana City police station, after a fierce fight and encounter, the terrorists entered the police station.

After the attack, the South Waziristan police tried day and night, who had taken the weapons and ammunition from the spot with them. Acting on a tip-off on the 10th, the South Waziristan Police recovered all the official goods from the house of a person named Bin Yamin in the village of Azam Warsak.

Which is a great success for the South Waziristan Police, according to District Police Officer Shabbir Hussain, the South Waziristan Police have made immense sacrifices for the defense of the motherland. In which many policemen have achieved the high status of martyrdom, South Waziristan police are always ready to defend their motherland, they will not hesitate to make any further sacrifices.

Zehri: Terrorists don't deserve any exemption

F.P. Report

QUETTA: Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri has strongly condemned the bomb blasts on police vehicle near Meezan Chowk in Quetta, Kuchlak, Masjid Road, Sariab Road. In her condemnation statement, she strongly condemned the cowardly terrorist attacks yesterday and said that the enemy wants to sabotage the peace and order situation in the country, which will not be allowed to succeed in any way. Expressed deep sorrow and grief over the martyrdom of officers and ordinary citizens and said that the martyrs are the heroes of the nation.

The nation will always remember his sacrifice. She also expressed deep regret for the loss of precious lives of civilians in the blasts and said that cowardly terrorists are targeting civilians which are highly condemnable. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri further

said that incidents of terrorism in the holy month of Ramadan across the country, especially in Balochistan, are condemnable. This terrorism is part of a well-thought-out plan against which the entire nation is united and determined to thwart the cowardly acts of terrorists and the determination of the security forces and the nation will not diminish until the last terrorist is eliminated.

Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that anti-national elements are not tolerating the construction and development of the beloved country and peace and order and are carrying out cowardly attacks on unsuspecting citizens and security forces in order to achieve their nefarious goals which are strongly condemnable. She said that our brave police force is performing its duties day and night to protect us. In the performance of duty, the police force faces criminals and terrorists.

Our security forces are standing like a leaden wall in front of the enemies, due to which we breathe a sigh of relief. Together, they will defeat the conspiracies against peace. She said that the soldiers who sacrificed their lives for the safety of the country and the nation are the heroes of the nation, who always sent the terrorists to hell and proved that the anti-national elements are theirs. Enemies cannot demoralize the nation and the security forces through cowardly acts.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri warned the enemies that their cowardly attacks cannot demoralize the nation. Our security forces have always been the vanguard against terrorism. He prayed for those martyred and injured in the terrorist attacks that Allah grant the martyrs a high place in Jannat al-Firdous and speedy recovery to the injured and give patience to the bereaved.

Man dies of 'heat stroke' at flour point F.P. Report

DI KHAN: A man died due to heat stroke he suffered after standing in a queue at a free flour distribution point set up in Baisakhi ground area of Dera Ismail Khan.

The father of the deceased told police that his son Waqas started vomiting and he was not in a good state after he reached home from the free flour distribution point. The family took him to the District Headquarters (DHQ) hospital and he was later pronounced dead by the doctors. The doctors declared heat stroke to be the cause of his death.

People who had come to collect free flour at the distribution point said they came in the morning and kept standing in queues the whole day. They cried out against a lack of facilities at the distribution points.

"No facilities of any kind were available at the distribution centre," said the visitors. They alleged that officials of food and revenue departments deputed at the distribution point distributed flour on the basis of nepotism. A woman who had travelled all the way from Maddi area of Kulachi for free flour said they had to return without the commodity after paying a transportation fare as flour was being distributed among favourites.

Two robbers shot dead

NAUSHAHRO FEROZE (PPI): Two robbers were killed in a "crossfire" with police in the suburban village of G-aja Mori in Padidan, district Naushahro Feroze on Tuesday.

Police said the robbers intended to loot citizens when a police team reached the site. The suspects opened fire at the officials, but two robbers were killed in the retaliatory firing by the police.

British HC delegation meets Commissioner Malakand

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: A six-member delegation of the British High Commission Islamabad, led by Governance Adviser Matt Carter, met Commissioner Malakand Division Shahidullah Khan at Commissioner's Office Saidu Sharif on Tuesday.

The delegation members also included Economist Tufail Khan Yousafzai, Program Officer Amala Najeeb, Program Coordinator Athar Waqar, and Political Secretary Sam Fletcher. The purpose of the delegation's visit was an annual review of the Sub-National Governance Program (SNG) funded by the Foreign Commonwealth, and Development Office. The SNG provides technical support to the officers and local representatives in

tehsils on planning, budgeting, and revenue mobilization in the four districts of Malakand.

Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner Malakand Division Shahidullah Khan thanked the delegation for providing technical support through the SNG Program and hoped that the program would provide more support. He said there is a need to increase the capacity of officers and local representatives under the new system of local government. He said that local governments have to work on revenue mobilization ideas considering the local situation to show better performance in which the SNG program can be helpful.

The meeting also discussed training programs for local representatives and officers at Tehsil level. Commissioner Malakand

Division appreciated the ongoing support for solid waste management and said that waste could be better utilized by recycling and that more proposals need to be worked on. At the meeting, the commissioner also drew the attention of the delegation to Mingora traffic management and said that there is a need to work on new ideas in this regard as well.

Matt Carter, head of the delegation, said that this was his first visit to Swat and he was impressed by the natural beauty and hospitality of Swat. He said that the purpose of the annual review is to improve the targets of the SNG program by meeting with the authorities so that better work can be done on budgeting, planning, and revenue mobilization with the provincial and local governments.

Joint efforts to boost tourism

F.P. Report

KALAYA: Two days tour Guides Training program was launched on Tuesday in Kalaya, Zera, and Ghilju. A total of 45 local educated youth will be trained in three different venues. Upon completion of the training program, all participants will receive certification from the Tourism Department. The Tour Guides Training program is an important step towards promoting tourism in Orakzai.

The program will equip local youth with the necessary skills and knowledge to provide high-quality services to tourists, which will in turn enhance the tourist experience in Orakzai. This initiative is a testament to the commitment of the Security Forces



and the Tourism Department towards promoting tourism in Orakzai. The collaboration between the two entities will help in the development of a sustainable tourism industry, which will benefit the local community in terms of job creation and economic

PML-N possess potential to overcome economic crisis: Afzal

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Former Federal Parliamentary Secretary and leader of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Mian Afzal Hussain Tarar said that leadership of PML-N is capable to tear the country out of all crises and present government led by Prime Minister Mian Shahbaz Sharif is taking result-oriented measures to stable national economy which was ruined by the PTI government.

While talking to people at his residence at village Kolo Tarar near Hafizabad, he said that the whole nation was suffering the consequences of anti-people and anti-Pakistan policies. We have promoted merit in all affairs, honesty, service delivery and politics of tolerance as well as ensured self-respect and honour of the common people in the district always, he said and added that there is no room for politics of fear and harass while such tactics would not be tolerated, at all. Mian Afzal Hussain Tarar listened individual and collective problems of the people and assured resolving of grievances on merit.

Punitive spray drive against dengue directed: Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warraich directed the officers concerned to launched punitive action against those who are violating Anti-Dengue measures repeatedly including registration o cases with police stations and issued notices to shopkeepers in the district in this regard.

DC issued theses directions while presiding over the meeting of Anti-Dengue Committee held to review performance of different departments. CEO Health Dr. Fareha Akram Malik, CEO Education Wazir Ahmad Agha and other officers attended the meeting. He directed the officers of all departments to expedite preventive activities for eliminating dengue mesquites and growth of dengue larva. He directed the CEO Health that anti-dengue teams of health department to speed up indoor and outdoor activities while CEOs of municipal Committees and district council to ensure cleanliness of parks, graveyards, tyre shops and other public places and remove standing water from all places in the district.

As many as 750 bags sugar seized: Assistant Commissioner Pindi Bhattian Rashid Iqbal unearthed illegal stock of 750 bags of sugar from Khat Nakka village near Pindi Bhattian and taken over all stock in government custody.

According to details, AC Pindi Bhattian Rashid Iqbal was raided at warehouse of trader Shafaqat and recovered 750 sacks of sugar illegally stocked while application for registration for case has been submitted to police station Pindi Bhattian. AC said that hoarding and profiteers would deal with iron hand who are creating artificial shortage and inflation.

Protection of lives & property constitutional obligation:

District Police Officers Dr. Fahad Ahmad said that protection of life, property and honour is prime duty of the police and police is working round the clock to eliminate anti-social elements from society.

He expressed these views while returning stolen and looted articles of worth Rs. 28 million recovered from accused. DPO told that police have arrested 27 accused wanted in robberies, house dacoities, highway robbery, cattle lifting and motorcycle lifting from various places and recovered booty of Rs. 28 million including cash, motorcycle, cattle, gold ornaments, trucks tractor trolley, rickshaw, mobile phone and car from their possession.

DPO also told that during a special crackdown on illegal arms, the police have arrested 224 people, recovered illegal arms and registered separate cases with different police stations of the district.

As many as 100m families to be benefit from free flour scheme: Provincial Secretary for Human Resources and Minority Affairs, Punjab, Ahmad Aziz Tarar said that the government is distributing free of cost flour among 100 million families across the province including district Hafizabad which is revolutionary and poor friendly steps of the present government.

He expressed these views while visiting free flour distribution points at District Council Hall, Sports gymnasium, and government high school No. 1,

Hafizabad, on Friday. DC Hafizabad Umer Farooq Warriach and other officers were also accompanied by him. Ahmad Aziz Tarar inspected trucking points and other counters and other arrangements made for providing different facilities to people coming to receive free flour.

He appreciated the performance of district administration to make the best arrangements at the flour distribution centres and provision of different facilities to people at the centres. DC Umer Farooq gave details briefing to the Secretary about distribution of flour on merit and transparently as well as peaceful atmosphere at the 15 flour distribution points in the district.

IGP distributes certificate of appreciation: Inspector General Police, Punjab, Dr. Usman Anwar conferred commendation certificate to Sub Inspector Hafizabad police Mehwash Aslam for demonstrating bravery and good performance.

According to details, some month ago, Sub Inspector Mehwash Aslam was arrested an accused of raped case after rejection of interim bail from Lahore High Court who was fled away from the premises of the court but Mehwash Aslam followed him and caught him alone. Mehwas Aslam is first lady police officer who was appointed SHO of police station in the history of the district police Hafizabad.

She was perform her duty at

Poillce Service Centre and complete other task successfully. Prominent social worker Rukhasan Bhatti, President Awami Mahaz Hafizabad Rana Khalid Mehmood and other social workers congratulated the Sub Inspector Mehwish Aslam on showing good performance and getting good performance certificate by the IG Police Punjab.

Civil society appreciates service of outgoing DC: Prominent social workers and educationists have paid rich tribute to Ex-DC Toqeer Ilyas Cheema and Ex-Secretary Education Punjab Waqas Ali Mehmood for restoring historic government girls high school No.1, Hafizabad which was closed some year ago by the district government Hafizabad. This was stated in a handout issued.

According to handout, hundreds of students are taking admission and studying in the school now which was restored about six month before on the demand of the parents and social workers of the city. On the other hand, MNA Chaudhry Shoukat Ali Bhatti said that this school was restored by the PTI government and it was closed in the era of PML-N era and credit of starting classes in ancient school was gone to the PTI government.

Govt commits to facilitate every religious festival: Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Umar Farooq Warriach said that Minorities are enjoying religious freedom and celebrating their

religious festival while constitution of the country protect fundamental rights of the minorities including Christian community.

While distributing financial assistance cheques among Christian families, he said that government was providing financial assistant to poor Christian families so that they could celebrate and enjoy Christmas and other religious festivals without financial problems.

DC gave away cheques of ten thousand of rupees to families each and added that district administration and police was taking all possible steps to ensure security of the Christian community on the eve of Easter in the district. CEO education inspects exam centers: Chief Executive Officer Education Hafizabad Wazir Ahmad Agha visited different examination centres of metric and reviewed arrangements to ensure holding of examination transparently in peaceful atmosphere in the district.

On this occasion, he said that the concept of 'Booti Mafia' has been eliminated due to the best arrangements made by the district administration and metric examination was underway in the district whereas Deputy Commissioner Umer Farooq Warriach and other officers of district administration were inspecting examination centres to come down chances of cheating at zero level in the examination and interference of unconcerned person in the centres.



US, Philippines hold largest war drills near disputed waters

MANILA (AP): The United States and the Philippines on Tuesday launch their largest combat exercises in decades that will involve live-fire drills, including a boat-sinking rocket assault in waters across the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait that will likely inflame China.

The annual drills by the longtime treaty allies called Balikatan - Tagalog for shoulder-to-shoulder - will run up to April 28 and involve more than 17,600 military personnel. It will be the latest display of American firepower in Asia, where Washington has repeatedly warned China over its increasingly aggressive actions in the disputed sea channel and against Taiwan. The Biden administration has been strengthening an arc of alliances in the Indo-Pacific to better counter China, including in a possible confrontation over Taiwan.

That dovetails with efforts by the Philippines under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to defend its territorial interests in the South China Sea by boosting joint military exercises with the US and allowing rotating batches of American forces to stay in more Philippine military camps under a 2014 defense pact. About 12,200 U.S military personnel, 5,400 Filipino forces and 111 Australian counterparts are taking part in the exercises, the largest in Balikatan's three-decade history. America's warships, fighter jets as well as its Patriot missiles, HIMARS rocket launchers and anti-tank Javelins, would be showcased, according to US and Philippine military officials.

"We are not provoking anybody by simply exercising," Col. Michael Logico, a Philippine spokesman for Balikatan, told reporters ahead of the start of the maneuvers. "This is actually a form of deterrence," Logico said. "Deterrence is when we are discouraging other parties from invading us."

In a live-fire drill the allied forces would stage offshore for the first



time, Logico said US and Filipino forces would sink a 200-foot (61-meter) target vessel in Philippine territorial waters off the western province of Zambales this month in a coordinated airstrike and artillery bombardment. "We will hit it with all the weapons systems that we have, both ground, navy and air," Logico said. That location facing the South China Sea and across the waters from the Taiwan Strait would likely alarm China, but Philippine military officials said the maneuver was aimed at bolstering the country's coastal defense and was not aimed at any country.

Such field scenarios would "test the allies' capabilities in combined arms live-fire, information and intelligence sharing, communications between maneuver units, logistics operations, amphibious operations," the US Embassy in Manila said. Washington and Beijing have been on a collision course over the long-seething territorial disputes involving China, the Philippines and four other governments and Beijing's goal of annexing Taiwan, by force if necessary. China last week warned against the intensifying US military deployment to the region. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said in a regular news briefing in

Beijing that it "would only lead to more tensions and less peace and stability in the region."

The Balikatan exercises were opening in the Philippines a day after China concluded three days of combat drills that simulated sealing off Taiwan, following Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with House Speaker Kevin McCarthy last week in California that infuriated Beijing. The US 7th Fleet deployed guided-missile destroyer USS Milius within 12 nautical miles of Mischief Reef, a Manila-claimed coral outcrop which China seized in the mid-1990s and turned into one of seven missile-protected island bases in the South China Sea's hotly contested Spratly archipelago. The US military has been undertaking such "freedom of navigation" operations for years to challenge China's expansive territorial claims in the busy seaway. "As long as some countries continue to claim and assert limits on rights that exceed their authority under international law, the United States will continue to defend the rights and freedoms of the sea guaranteed to all," the 7th Fleet said. "No member of the international community should be intimidated or coerced into giving up their rights and freedoms."

Ukraine, Russia exchange 200 troops in prisoner swap

KYIV (Agencies): More than 200 Russian and Ukrainian soldiers have returned home in a prisoner swap, the warring countries have said. Russia's Defence Ministry said that 106 Russian soldiers were released from Ukrainian custody as part of an agreement with Ukraine. Andriy Yermak, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's chief of staff, said that Russia freed 100 Ukrainian prisoners.

Neither announcement mentioned whether any intermediaries were involved in the agreement. Some of the Ukrainian soldiers have severe injuries and illnesses, Yermak said in a statement published on Telegram. He added that the latest of the sporadic prisoner swaps in the war that started in February 2022 was "not an easy one". He did not elaborate. Ukraine's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War alleged that almost half of the 80 men and 20 women soldiers who returned home "have serious injuries, illnesses or have been tortured". It presented no evidence for its claims.

According to Ukrainian news reports, one of the women prisoners is Valeriia Karpilenko, a border guard who had helped defend Mariupol's Azovstal steel plant. Last May, she married a Ukrainian soldier in the steel plant's basement while Russian forces surrounded the complex. Her husband was killed three days later. The freed Russians were being flown on military transport planes to Moscow for medical treatment and rehabilitation, the Defence Ministry said. Such exchanges represent one of the few areas of cooperation between Ukraine and Russia. The two sides have returned hundreds of each other's soldiers, as well as the bodies of fallen troops, since the war began. Meanwhile, Ukraine's presidential office said at least six civilians were wounded in the latest Russian shelling.

Separately, the Donetsk region's Governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said Russian forces struck a power plant and residential buildings in the eastern province. The Russians also shelled nine border villages in the provinces of Kharkiv, Sumy and Chernihiv. Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said in televised remarks that the country has nearly seven million internally displaced people, including about one million children. Most of them have abandoned their homes in the east and the south to move to safer locations in central and western Ukraine.

US deems WSJ reporter 'wrongfully detained'

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The United States has formally designated Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich as "wrongfully detained" by Russia, renewing calls for the American citizen's release. The move comes more than 10 days after Russian authorities announced they had arrested Gershkovich on spying charges that US President Joe Biden's administration dismissed as "ridiculous" early on.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's "wrongful" detention determination makes it the official US position that Gershkovich is unfairly imprisoned and opens the door for Washington to devote more resources to pushing for his release. Specifically, the designation moves Gershkovich's case to the Office of the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, which leads efforts to secure the freedom of "wrongful detainees held abroad, support their families, and end the practice of hostage diplomacy".

"Journalism is not a crime. We condemn the Kremlin's continued repression of independent voices in Russia, and its ongoing war against the truth," the State Department said in a statement.

British PM urges N Ireland politicians to go back to work

LONDON (AP): U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak praised the bravery of political leaders who struck the Good Friday peace accord 25 years ago, as he urged Northern Ireland's current politicians to return to work. While the peace deal largely brought an end to 30 years of hostilities, the Northern Ireland Assembly has been in limbo for more than a year since the main unionist party pulled out of the government to protest new post-Brexit trade rules for Northern Ireland.

Sunak discussed the importance of compromise in reaching the April 10, 1998 peace deal and called for redoubling efforts toward economic opportunity, prosperity, and stability. "It is a promise we must continue to fulfill," he said. "So we must get on with the business of governance." Sunak is set to greet US President Joe Biden when he arrives Tuesday night in Belfast for a four-day visit to Northern Ireland and Ireland. The White House said Biden would mark the progress since the agreement was struck and underscore Northern Ireland's economic potential. The US-brokered deal got Irish republican and British loyalist paramilitary groups to lay down their arms, largely ending the violence known as "the Troubles" that claimed 3,600 lives. It also ended direct British rule and set up a power-sharing government for Northern Ireland.

"As we look forward, we will celebrate those who took difficult decisions, accepted compromise, and showed leadership - showing bravery, perseverance, and political imagination," Sunak said. "We commemorate those who are no longer with us and the many who lost their lives by trying to prevent violence and protect the innocent." While an entire generation has grown up without the regular fear of violence, divisions remain over the conflict's legacy. Occasional attacks by dissidents led U.K. authorities last month to raise Northern Ireland's terrorism threat level to "severe," meaning an attack is highly likely. Police had warned that officers could be attacked in an Easter parade - for which official permission had not been granted - in Londonderry by Irish republican dissidents who opposed the Good Friday Agreement. During the otherwise peaceful demonstration in the Creggan neighborhood, a group of youths in hoods and black face masks threw fire bombs, rocks and bottles at a police Land Rover.

Police said no officers were injured and no arrests were reported. With the Troubles legacy in the backdrop, Britain's exit from the European Union has created newer political tensions over trade issues. British unionist politicians left Northern Ireland's 1.9 million people without a functioning administration when they walked out of

the power-sharing Belfast government a year ago to protest customs checks between Northern Ireland and the rest of the U.K. imposed after Brexit, which they say undermine the region's place in the United Kingdom. Last month the U.K. and the EU signed an agreement, known as the Windsor Framework, that aims to eliminate many of the checks while maintaining an open border between the north and its EU neighbor the Republic of Ireland - a key pillar of the peace process. But the Democratic Unionist Party refuses to return to government because it says the deal leaves some EU laws in place in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland Secretary Chris Heaton-Harris said he couldn't put a timeline on when power-sharing would be back up and running. "Anybody who is predicting a date by which the executive would go back in Northern Ireland would be someone who can also sell you a four-leaf clover," he told BBC Radio 4. Irish premier Leo Varadkar said he would work with Sunak to help restore the Belfast government, saying he learned from the Good Friday agreement that the two leaders need to be "in lockstep." "What we know from history is that Northern Ireland only really works when the two governments work hand in hand," he told RTE, Ireland's national public media service.

In Ukraine, a family lives under cloud of shelling

BOHOYAVLENKA, Ukraine (AP): In a small village in eastern Ukraine the sounds of war echo in the distance while 10-year old Khrystyna Ksenofontova plays. She pets the neighborhood cats, paints and, like everyone else here, hopes the fighting will end soon. The small village of Bohoyavlenka, in Donetsk province, lies 20 kilometers (13 miles) from the active front line. Khrystyna's days are spent scrounging the bits of childhood she still can. Her family refuses to evacuate and lives under a cloud of constant shelling. She wears headphones to block out the booms of the explosions.

"(I feel) fear, trembling," she says. The explosions resound at night most of the time, she says, brushing aside her sandy blond hair. But sometimes they come in the morning, too. Her mother, Yulia, and grandmother chose not to leave the village, which had a pre-war population of 1,400, after her father died from a brain injury suffered in an attack that destroyed one of their homes. They prefer to bear the brunt of the war in their hometown

rather than be displaced and penniless, Yulia says. It's a common story along the dozens of towns and villages that span the 1,000-kilometer (more than 600-mile) front line in eastern Ukraine. Despite the severity of the fighting, many families have refused to leave their homes, rejecting evacuation attempts and choosing to risk their lives under bombardment. Aid groups concentrate on delivering food and supplying heating to these areas, where supplies are difficult to access. The majority of those who stay are the elderly, many of whom rarely ventured outside their homes before the war. It is increasingly rare to find families with young children choosing to live so close to combat lines. But Khrystyna still finds moments of delight amid the devastation.

In the basement, a litter of kittens was recently born. Picking up two, she smiles as their newborn eyes struggle to adjust to the light. She dreams of being a veterinarian. All her friends have gone. The child finds ways to occupy her time by studying - when

the power is on she studies online - and taking care of the cats. Her grandmother - the mother of Khrystyna's dead father - weeps, praying for normalcy to return to their lives.

Yulia strategizes ways to gather food to last the week. Sometimes the family travels to a nearby town where the supermarkets are still open. The shops, hospitals and schools in their village closed several months ago. Like many residents in the area, her husband was a coal miner. Before the war he worked in the nearby hilltop town of Vuhledar, which has been the site of fierce fighting for months with Ukrainian forces still holding the town. Yulia fears a much anticipated Russian counteroffensive expected in the spring will finally push them to leave. But where? She doesn't know. She wishes she could see her mother in Russian-occupied Crimea, but that is impossible now. "Everyone is worried about it (the potential counteroffensive)," she said. "Who knows, anything could happen." While she speaks, a distant boom thunders. She brushes it off. "It's normal."

Aid group says two workers shot dead in Ethiopia's Amhara region

TIGRAY (Agencies): Two aid workers with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) have been killed in Ethiopia's Amhara region, the charity said, amid civil unrest triggered by a federal government decision to disband regional special forces units. Chuol Tongyik, a security manager, and Amare Kindeya, a driver, were "shot and killed" while returning to the capital Addis Ababa from Amhara, CRS said in a statement.

CRS director of communications Kim Pozniak said that the incident occurred in the town of Kobo, where residents reported heavy artillery fire between the federal military and Amhara regional forces, but did not say whether the shootings were linked to the unrest. "Details of the murder are still unknown," CRS said in a statement. Protests and gun battles gripped several towns in Amhara over the weekend and in some places continued, according to residents. The unrest came after the government announced its intention to dissolve the federal states' security forces it said pose a threat to the country's security and to "build a strong

centralised army".

"The depth of our shock and sorrow is difficult to measure and we are angered over this senseless violence," said Zemede Zewdie, CRS country representative in Ethiopia. "CRS is a humanitarian agency dedicated to serving the most vulnerable people in Ethiopia." Amhara's regional government said that it had banned protests in Gondar, which has seen some of the largest demonstrations, imposed restrictions on the circulation of three-wheeled vehicles there and ordered bars to close by 9pm. Elsewhere in Amhara, demonstrators blocked roads and burned tyres in the streets, paralysing much of the region, Ethiopia's second largest. In response, the government imposed a curfew and shut off internet service in several areas.

Amhara politicians and activists have condemned the government order that requires special forces from each of Ethiopia's 11 regions - which enjoy a degree of autonomy - to integrate into the police or the federal army. They say disbanding Amhara's special

forces would leave the region vulnerable to attacks by neighbouring regions, including Tigray, whose leaders agreed to a truce with the federal government in November to end a two-year war that killed tens of thousands. Amhara forces fought alongside the federal army in that conflict.

Many Amharas feel betrayed by the federal government's inability to prevent the war from spilling into their region in 2021 and by its failure to stop attacks against ethnic Amharas by gunmen in Oromia, Ethiopia's biggest region. They say they will be left unprotected if their regional force is dismantled. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed says the integration of the regional special forces is needed to ensure national unity in a country with a long history of interethnic conflict. "Appropriate law enforcement measures will be taken against those who deliberately play a destructive role," he said. Ethiopia's constitution gives federal states the right to run a police force to maintain law and order. However, several states have also built up powerful regional security forces.

Talks with Houthis aim to revive Yemen truce: Saudi diplomat

CAIRO (AP): Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Yemen said his trip to the Houthi-held capital of Sanaa was aimed at reviving a cease-fire and re-starting political talks to end the nine-year conflict. Mohammed bin Saeed Al-Jaber met with Houthi officials in Sanaa for talks also attended by Omani officials. The trip came as talks between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis gained momentum after the Kingdom reached a deal with Iran last month to restore their diplomatic ties. Iran is the Houthis' main foreign backer in Yemen's conflict.

Al-Jaber said on Twitter that his trip was meant to "stabilize the truce and cease-fire, support the prisoner exchange process and explore venues of dialogue between Yemeni components to reach a sustainable, comprehensive political solution in Yemen." His comments were the first by Saudi Arabia on the visit. Yemen's conflict began in 2014 when the Iran-backed Houthis seized Sanaa and much of Yemen's north,

ousting the internationally recognized government that fled to the south then into exile in Saudi Arabia.

The Houthi move prompted a Saudi-led coalition to intervene months later in a bid to restore the internationally recognized government to power. The conflict has in recent years turned into a regional proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Saudi diplomat met with Mahdi al-Mashat, head of the Houthis' supreme political council, which runs rebel-held areas in Yemen. Yemeni and Saudi officials said Saudi Arabia and the Houthis reached a draft deal last month to revive a cease-fire that expired in October. The deal, brokered by Oman, is meant to usher in a return to political talks, said officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss closed-door negotiations. One Yemeni official said the phased roadmap includes lifting the Saudi-led coalition's air and maritime blockade on Houthi-held areas, and the rebels

would end their siege of Taiz, Yemen's third largest city. The Houthis also accepted security guarantees for Saudi Arabia, including a buffer zone with Houthi-held areas along the Yemeni-Saudi border, he added.

The Yemeni government and the rebels would also work to unify the country's central bank, and a mechanism would be established to pay salaries of all state employees - including the military - from oil and gas revenues, he said. The official said Saudi Arabia promised to support a widespread reconstruction efforts in Yemen where the war devastated its infrastructure and created one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters. Spokespeople for the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition didn't respond to requests for comment.

UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric hailed the talks as "a welcome step" that would help settle the conflict and de-escalate regional tensions. "What we're seeing is different strands, different parties that have

been in tension with each other, have been speaking," he said. Dujarric said the UN was not involved in the Sanaa talks, but "we very much hope that it can contribute to the overall peace efforts led by (UN envoy for Yemen) Hans Gruenberg for the renewal of the truce in Yemen and the restart of the intra-Yemeni political process." Yemen's internationally recognized government has welcomed what it calls Saudi Arabia's efforts to bring Yemeni parties to the negotiating table to reach a "comprehensive political agreement," according to a statement released.

Al-Jaber's trip to Sanaa came days before the implementation of a prisoner exchange deal expected to take place later this week. The deal, brokered by the UN last month, involves the release of nearly 900 war prisoners from both sides, including Saudi troops. Ahead of his trip, the Houthis said Saudi Arabia released 13 Houthi prisoners in exchange for a Saudi prisoner the Houthis freed earlier this year.

Guatemala elections: Campaigning begins amid public distrust

GUATEMALA CITY (Agencies): Campaigning began in earnest last month for Guatemala's general elections, with political messaging filling the streets, local broadcasts and social media. But less than three months before the June 25 vote, concerns are mounting among national and international observers over the integrity of the process.

"There is a lot of distrust in the environment around the election," Gabriela Carrera, a political science professor at Rafael Landivar University in Guatemala City, told Al Jazeera. "This is the result of the incapacity of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal ... combined with a series of arbitrary decisions that the magistrates have been taking." At least 30 political parties are set to contest the upcoming elections, with more than 22,000 candidates registered to run for the presidency, congress, regional parliament and councils across the country. But Guatemala's Supreme Electoral Tribunal, which governs elections, has blocked several opposition candidates from running on "dubious grounds", according to Human Rights Watch. Observers say this raises a red flag.

"The arbitrary blocking of candidates because they

represent a danger to the [political] establishment is serious," Ana Maria Mendez Dardon, the Central America director for the Washington Office on Latin America, told Al Jazeera. "It has also brought little credibility to the institutions that have to ensure the integrity of the [electoral] process." A spokesperson for the Supreme Electoral Tribunal told Al Jazeera that the body was following constitutional norms, noting that the cases in question are complex. The blocked candidates include leftist Indigenous leader Thelma Cabrera, who earned fourth place in the 2019 presidential election, and Roberto Arzu of the right-wing Podemos party. Cabrera was blocked over an alleged issue related to a payment received by her running mate while he was ombudsperson, while Arzu was barred for allegedly campaigning ahead of the legal period.

Cabrera and her supporters have protested her exclusion since February. Meanwhile, a Guatemalan prosecutor is seeking to lift the immunity of another presidential candidate, Edmond Mulet, after he called for an investigation into a judge who ordered a probe of nine journalists from El Periodico newspa-

per. Candidates usually have immunity from prosecution during an election campaign. While the Supreme Electoral Tribunal ruled against several popular candidates, it has permitted many others with alleged ties to corruption to run for office. Zury Rios, the daughter of former dictator General Efraim Rios Montt and a candidate with the right-wing Valor party, is among the presidential front-runners, according to a February CID Gallup poll. Rios, who previously served in congress from the mid-1990s to 2012, was temporarily blocked from running in 2019 because of a constitutional ban on family members of coup leaders holding the presidency. There have been a number of conflicting rulings over the years on whether such bans should be enforced.

Her candidacy is largely supported by the Guatemalan economic and military elite, but her participation has raised concerns for the families of victims affected by state-led violence during her father's dictatorship. Last month, activists and victims of Guatemala's 36-year civil war, in which more than 200,000 people were killed or forcibly disappeared, marched against her candidacy and called for

more transparency in elections. Other candidates running for legislative or mayoral positions stand accused of bribery, drug offences or other criminal charges, including some who have been sanctioned by the United States. "The Supreme Electoral Tribunal has accepted these candidates as a message of deep rejection of these types of sanctions," Mendez Dardon said. "It is saying, I don't care now."

These are the first general elections to be held since the closure of the United Nations-backed International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, which shut its doors following the 2019 vote, after the government opted not to renew its mandate. Since then, judges, prosecutors and investigators associated with corruption or transitional justice cases related to Guatemala's civil war have been targeted by authorities and far-right groups, with some being forced into exile in recent years. The rollback of democratic institutions since the expulsion of the commission has culminated in the upcoming elections, which analysts say are the most worrying since the country's return to democracy in 1985 after years of military dictatorship.

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Bad optics for sure

JUSTICE Qazi Faez Isa has claimed that he is a defender of the Constitution and if he failed to defend the charter, people have a right to critique him. Addressing a special session at the National Assembly in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Constitution, the Supreme Court judge noted that the country's charter gave people the freedom of speech, press, and assembly. According to him, the Supreme Court and its judges are the defenders of the Constitution, as they have taken the oath to protect and uphold the national charter. Justice Isa also deliberated on the role of the three pillars of the state and the maintenance of a balance in their functioning and jurisdictions. Justice Esa stressed the parliament and the bureaucracy serve the people. The Judge claimed to be impartial to the political discussion at the house and does not want anyone to misconstrue his presence at the session.

The 1973 Constitution of the Country completed its golden jubilee on Monday and the entire Pakistani nation observed this special occasion with passion and soberness. Both houses of the parliament held a joint session to jubilate this landmark success in the parliamentary history of the country, while the intellectual circle, constitutional experts, civil society, and human rights defenders remained apprehensive about the conduct of the government leaders, and three pillars of the state including the Parliament, executive, and judiciary regarding the implementation and prestige of the charter over the past five decades, particularly in the current scenario in the country.

Historically, all three pillars of the state could not uphold the constitutional responsibility and the law was sabotaged by its creators just months after its creation. In contrast, multiple provisions had been added in the charter in the following years to cover the unlawful actions of the dictators that blatantly hurt the true spirit of democracy and defaced the soul of the Constitution. However, no adjudicator dares to raise his voice in the defense of the Constitution until or unless his position/career faced an imminent risk. As the nation is all set to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Country's constitution, the public leaders started issuing congratulatory statements, making phrasal demonstrations to express their law abidance to steal the show, whereas the ongoing political tussle and constitutional crisis is a slap on the face of such pro-democracy leaders as well as so-called constitution defenders. The ridiculous behavior and mockery of the leaders badly undermined the rule of law and caused clashes between various institutions of the country.

Apparently, the questionable conduct and selective use of constitutional provisions by the politicians, civilian and military bureaucrats seriously damaged the Constitution, meanwhile, judges' theory of necessity, self-motivated appreciation of the situation, and biased explanation of the law proved to be disastrous for the national framework and caused public frustration and distrust in the system. The recent session of the parliament and attendance by a judge of the Supreme Court amid ongoing government-judiciary tussle and executive efforts to unarm/control the judiciary did not send a good message to the public and the global community. Parliamentarians' verbal attacks against the judiciary and self-proclamation regarding the preservation of the law exposed their bias, whereas the absence of the Chief Judge and members of the Judicial Commission raised doubts regarding the presence of a lone adjudicator.

Realistically, the intra-bench division and rivalry among the judges seriously damage the institution and exposed the degradation of the judiciary and the moral decay and self-esteem of the magistrates. In fact, a lack of discipline, absence of self-esteem, and no accountability of judges not only foiled justice but also collapsed the core judicial system in the country. In fact, every influential seeks his own choice of law, judge, and justice. After all, until and unless the Judges themselves envision the true spirit of the constitution no one else could guarantee the sovereignty of the constitution in the land of Pakistan.

Israel will be incinerated by these fires Netanyahu ignites

Baria Alamuddin

AS three of the world's great faiths celebrate the festivals of Ramazan, 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? Iran and Hezbollah have been losing personnel to daily airstrikes

political stablemates to ignite one bushfire after another, fueling a situation of anarchy and volatility in Israel that has little precedent. 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 evermore 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

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 compellingly 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

Political failure has killed people in Syria before and after the earthquakes

Chris Doyle

IT has been a grim past two months since the massive earthquakes hit southern Türkiye and northern Syria. At 04:17 a.m. millions of lives changed forever. For Syrians it was the largest earthquake in more than 800 years to hit their country - since the great 1202 earthquake in Damascus, which led to floods and famine. How have these areas fared since and just how has the international community reacted?

Even now the exact number of fatalities within Syria is not clear. It may be about 5,000, probably more. The Turkish death toll stands at more than 50,000: 148 cities and towns in northwest Syria have been affected by the earthquakes. Precise figures, as ever with Syria in recent years, are a rarity, given the lack of effective governing authorities. One must pay tribute to those who have worked tirelessly on the ground to provide aid. This is never easy. In Syria, more than 101,000 people have been reached with emergency shelters since the earthquakes. Many Syrians and Turks remain in tents threatened by storms with 50 IDP camps having been flooded so far.

The UNDP estimated recovery costs in Syria at \$US14.8 billion. This again is likely to be an underestimate. One thing Syria is not short on is debris. Thus far some 80,000 m3 of debris has been removed by the humanitarian community. Plenty more remains, with towns such as Jindires in Afrin still with rubble in the streets blocking movement. Syrians also know all about displacement. More than half the population has been displaced since 2011, many more than once. More than 30,000 displacement movements were recorded in northwest Syria between Feb. 6 and Feb. 8 alone.

Arguably the urgent need is help with mental health. Those affected are still reliving the event. Many are not even aware they have trauma, and do not understand post-traumatic stress disorder. They know something is wrong and are not aware that this is usual after such an event. The trauma is universal - so for example even carers of children are traumatized. Parents cannot handle themselves let alone their beloved offspring. Yet predictably and all too sadly the horror stories that saturated the global media in the aftermath have disappeared. News moves on so rapidly that these stories are barely

visible in the rear-view mirror. The world may not have quite forgotten but the issue is certainly on the back burner. Syrians have of course suffered disaster upon disaster. These have buffeted them over 12 years. More than ever, they feel alone and abandoned. A traumatized population had to deal with yet another trauma. Having feared death from above for years courtesy of regime bombings, they now feared death from below. During the height of COVID-19, people feared to go out, but now people feared to go back in. Many Syrians have told the author that they prefer the freezing tents to the horror of going back inside buildings. The sound of the walls cracking haunts them, a memory that does not dissipate. Some have made it from emergency to mid-term shelters.

How did the various authorities fare? A considerable amount of criticism was lobbed at Turkish authorities whose disaster emergency planning was found to be inadequate. Also many died in buildings that were not fit for purpose, built without proper controls. Türkiye still needed external support. The

scale was overwhelming: 30,000 buildings that collapsed in ten cities. Many criticized its performance in the crucial first 48 hours. Imagine if Syria was a well-governed functioning state with a wealth of resources and helpful allies. It would still have struggled. Yet with divided areas of control, it was a lack of governance that made the whole Syrian situation so different to the impact in Türkiye. The regime was slow to react and largely ineffective. In opposition areas, the absence of a proper authority was one reason why here, too, many structures had been built so lamentably and collapsed so easily. Typically many of the three million IDPs in the northwest were living in buildings owned by refugees. This raises delicate legal issues.

If a refugee property collapsed in the quakes, who is the property rebuilt for? What there was in northwest Syria was an extraordinary popular civil society effort. Everyone knew that no authority or higher power was there to do the job so wherever possible, everyone contributed. As powerful as this was it did not make up for the short-

age of vital equipment and expertise. Dispatched in plentiful quantities to Türkiye, none of the heavy equipment made it across the border.

This is where the failure of the international donor community hit hardest. Aid to northwest Syria was painfully slow. The first UN convoy left on Feb. 10 but only contained standard food and hygiene packs that were being distributed prior to the earthquakes. Instead of heavy equipment and much-needed expertise, donor states typically reported to financial support of groups such as the White Helmets. The donor conference in Brussels in March was notable for the total lack of any Syrians. The Turkish foreign minister was there but there was no Syrian presence at all. It is a chasm, where nobody speaks for the Syrian public's benefit. It remains to be seen how much of the pledged 6.05 billion for Türkiye and the 911 million for Syria will actually materialize.

But funding is not even the biggest issue. The major international actors still treat Syria as an emergency crisis rather than a long-term political challenge to be resolved. Political failure killed people during and

after these earthquakes. International actors should never have allowed themselves to be restricted to one border crossing for the UN in northern Syria. If the UN could not bring aid across the border, individual states could and should have made their own arrangements. Nothing on the horizon suggests the international political malaise regarding Syria will change. Within weeks the UMN Security Council will argue over extending keeping the Bab Al-Hawa crossing open for another six months. Aid will be for emergency only not even early recovery aid. Syrians do not qualify for developmental assistance. Above all, the Syrian carcass will be left to rot. The Syrian regime will act as ever in its own narrow self-interest.

Its allies, Russia and Iran, will only be able to provide breadcrumbs in terms of aid. The Syrian opposition is impotent. Arab states will normalize relations but where is the grand plan to bring about real change? The rest of the world has backed off and resorted to the status quo ante of ignoring Syria, a reckless and dangerous approach that many will come to regret.

A very bad day for Putin

Frida Ghitis

WHAT was the worst day so far for Russian President Vladimir Putin since launching his unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine last year? It's impossible to choose one, but Tuesday, April 4, 2023, must rank high on the list. That date will be forever etched in history. No, not just because of what happened in a courtroom in Manhattan involving a certain former US president, but because of something arguably more consequential despite its lower billing in the headlines. It was the day Finland formally joined NATO.

When NATO members stood solemnly in front of the Alliance's Brussels headquarters, watching Finland's blue and white flag raised alongside the 30 others, the ceremony served almost as a declaration that Putin's war in Ukraine has failed. After all, Putin justified his invasion with two primary arguments. First, he tried to make the misguided case that Ukraine is not a real country and belongs as a part of Russia. That claim

has been debunked not only by historians, but by the Ukrainian people's fierce defense of their nation. Second, Putin argued that his goal was to prevent NATO from expanding. On that count, Putin not only failed, but in fact propelled the very development he sought to prevent. Now Russia's border with NATO countries has more than doubled in length, adding an extra 830 miles of frontier with Finland.

Finland, which was once part of the Russian empire and is therefore also potentially a target of Putin's irredentist arguments, will move quickly to fortify that long border. That's because when Russia invaded Ukraine, it sent an unmistakable signal to its neighbors that it simply could not be trusted. Of course, Finland already knew that. It was attacked by Moscow, its former imperial master, in the Winter War of 1939-1940. The Finns defended the country with mythical might, but ended up losing around 10% of their territory. In the aftermath, Finland thought the best way to protect itself was by maintaining its neutrality. But Putin disabused them of that

notion when he attacked Ukraine. In Brussels on Tuesday, Finnish President Sauli Niinistö declared, "The era of nonalignment in our history has come to an end - a new era begins."

It's worth emphasizing the point: this was a major defeat for Russia and for Putin. So much, that Secretary of State Antony Blinken declared, "this is the one thing we can thank Mr. Putin for." Without Putin and his war, Finland would not be a NATO member. The war didn't just produce what Putin explicitly said he wanted to prevent; it also triggered the opposite of what he had implicitly sought. He apparently expected NATO would be divided on the question of helping a non-member. But as President Joe Biden noted, the Alliance has never been more united. In addition, its importance, its purpose, has become clearer than it has been in decades. Russia's aggression has transformed the strategic calculation for every country in Europe. As Niinistö told CNN last year, the divisions have become sharper, there's lit-

tle room left for neutrality. "The invasion," he said, "showed that Moscow does not respect officially non-aligned countries."

And if European Union nations are suddenly finding it necessary to take sides, it's striking that no one is exactly running into Moscow's arms. As soon as Russia sent its tanks into Ukraine (after repeatedly denying it would invade) the polls in Finland started showing a sharp change of sentiment. In November, despite - or maybe because of - warnings from Russia and threatening movements militarily near the Finnish border, four-in-five Finns supported joining NATO. Sweden, too, a country that for hundreds of years has followed a policy of neutrality, has applied for NATO membership. For now, Turkey and Hungary are blocking its accession, focused on their domestic politics. But Sweden, I have no doubt, will eventually join.

Finland's accession is not only symbolic. The country is no military slouch. All men are obligated to serve in the army.

Their winter-weather skills are unmatched and their arsenal is impressive. Even Moscow was forced to acknowledge something important had shifted. Russia's foreign ministry said Finland's entry into NATO created "a fundamental change in the situation in Northern Europe." In reality, this strategic realignment goes beyond Northern Europe. It tilts the geopolitical balance further away from Russia. Russia warned it might be forced to take "retaliatory measures." But with Putin's forces bogged down in Ukraine and stretched so thin that he has resorted to using mercenaries and convicts, these threats are less intimidating than they might have been before he invaded Ukraine 14 months ago in a campaign that was supposed to succeed in a matter of days. If he thought the war would make Russia look stronger to the rest of the world, he achieved the opposite of his goal there as well. Then, adding annoyance to the Russian President's unpleasant day - on the same Tuesday that they brought Finland into the

fold, NATO leaders indicated they'd invited Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to attend NATO's July summit in Lithuania.

And, as if Putin needed more reasons to worry, two European leaders this week arrived in Beijing to meet with his closest ally, China's leader Xi Jinping, where trade and Ukraine will be the top of their agenda. Preparing for her trip with French President Emmanuel Macron, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen phoned Zelenskyy to discuss the plans. China has become a diplomatic and economic lifeline for Putin. But Beijing needs strong relations with Europe, and Von der Leyen warned that, "How China continues to interact with Putin's war will be a determining factor for EU-China relations going forward." She made the statement on a day that NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said would be "a good day for Finland's security, for Nordic security, and for NATO as a whole." He might have added, and a very bad day for Putin.

CNN

If we want Putin brought to justice, Nuremberg has much to teach us

John Kampfner

DICTATORS like Vladimir Putin and populists such as Donald Trump have had a good last couple of weeks. A leak of intelligence documents has exposed highly classified US military secrets, damaging relations with key allies and revealing weaknesses in Ukraine's defences. And the arraignment of the former US president on hush-money charges may well have boosted his re-election chances. So there are more reasons than usual to be fearful about the resilience of liberal democracy.

Just as confidence may be ebbing, it is salutary to visit Nuremberg to remember what the fight is all about. This city was Hitler's true home. It was where the Nazis held their annual rallies and promulgated their race laws, differentiating the purity of Aryan blood from that of the Jews, setting in train the Holocaust. Nuremberg also embodies something good. It was in its Palace of Justice that the elite of the Third Reich were prosecuted and sentenced after a court case lasting nearly a year, setting a benchmark for rigour and fairness in dealing with the vanquished of war.

Four victorious allies - the US, UK, France and the Soviet Union - chose this Bavarian city for several reasons. Some were pragmatic: the courthouse was large; it had not been badly bombed, and the facilities included cells from which the accused could be escorted via a sealed walkway directly into the court. But mostly because of the symbolism. Of all places, it had to be Nuremberg. The wood-panelled Courtroom 600 stands as a monu-

ment not just to shame but to a remarkable moment when the world came together to prosecute evil - not bombastically, but methodically, day after day, with banks of stenographers recording every word, and interpreters translating between four languages. All the while, Hermann Göring and other Nazis sat in the dock, smirking or staring menacingly straight ahead, as petrified and traumatised witnesses gave evidence against them. To sit in what was the public gallery and look at the room sends shivers down the spine.

Translate all of this to the present day: imagine, for just one moment, Putin in the dock, but at the modern-day location, the international criminal court (ICC) in The Hague. On 17 March, a few days before I visited Nuremberg, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for the Russian president. The Kremlin responded by declaring that any attempt to comply with the ICC would be considered an act of war. Germany's foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, retorted that her country would hand him over.

That is, of course, far easier to say than to do. Nevertheless, only a small number of countries have been as explicit as the Germans in making their (theoretical) intentions clear. The ICC indictment limits which destinations Putin can visit in the future. Would he, for example, risk a trip to Johannesburg in August for a Brics summit (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa)? He might well, as the South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa, is being ostentatiously sympathetic to the Kremlin. Putin might even venture to

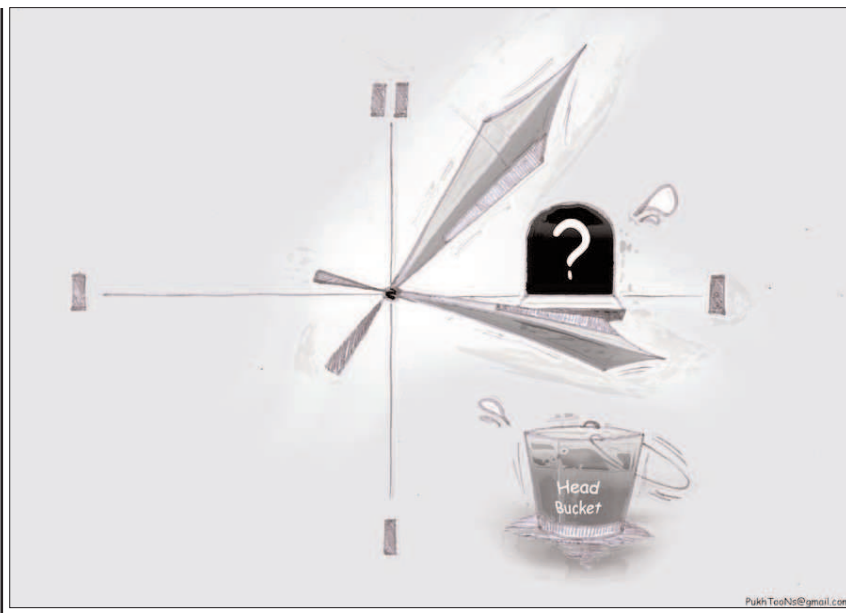
Hungary, whose authoritarian prime minister, Viktor Orbán, is defiantly friendly. Other countries are equivocating. The ICC is pushing ahead with tenacity, yet its credibility is hardly enhanced by the position of the US. The Americans helped set up the organisation in 1998, only to decline to join it, objecting to the notion of their own politicians or military personnel being tried - shock horror - by judges from other countries. That hostility, inevitably, reached a peak during the Trump era. In September 2020, the state department issued an executive order imposing sanctions on two senior ICC officials after the court announced it was investigating the US and Israel for potential war crimes in Afghanistan and the West Bank respectively. Those sanctions were lifted seven months later by the Biden administration, although it continues to argue that foreign courts have no jurisdiction.

It is salutary to recall the role the Americans and Russians played at Nuremberg. An exhibition attached to the courtroom quotes the opening submission by the lead US judge Robert H Jackson: "We must never forget that the record on which we judge these defendants today is the record on which history will judge us tomorrow." The "detachment and intellectual integrity" of the court, Jackson added, "will commend itself to posterity as fulfilling humanity's aspirations to do justice". It is painful to juxtapose the words uttered then with now, with the blithe indifference of so many countries, including the US and UK, to the flouting, or

threatened flouting, of international law. As for the Russian government, it continued to work closely with the Nuremberg Memorial Centre up to and shortly beyond the trials' 75th anniversary commemorations in November 2020. Contact was then severed by both sides, officials tell me, with Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

With its cobbled streets, winding waterways and gabled houses, Nuremberg is an ancient, beautiful and terrible city. Its history haunts you at every turn. It has rebuilt physically and psychologically since the war, learning how to process its past, rebranding itself a city of human rights, and holding regular forums on war and criminality. While avoiding moral equivalence, it seeks to draw a straight line between the Nazis and the crimes of subsequent decades, taking in Rwanda, Srebrenica and other places that have seen horror. The city authorities have developed close links with officials in The Hague. They call this the Nuremberg idea. As I wander past the city's pretty pavement cafes, I ask myself whether this makes people feel better without making a discernible difference. The Americans are, after all, going to continue equivocating and evading. Meanwhile, Putin is unlikely to have his Nuremberg moment. Dictators around the world are sitting pretty. Perhaps the argument should be framed the other way round. The Nuremberg trials were by no means perfect. The prosecution of war crimes since has been inconsistently applied, to put it mildly. Yet the Nuremberg idea is still there, a flame flickering, if weakly, even as others seek to extinguish it.

The Guardian



Myanmar's mily can't call shots on Rohingya repatriation

THE Rohingya refugee crisis is not over. Rohingyas fled Myanmar in 2017 and afterwards, attempting to escape the genocidal advance of the country's military. It razed their villages. And it killed whomever it could find. More than 700,000 people were forced from the country. It was an exodus not seen in more than 50 years of refugee movement by the Rohingya out of Myanmar. They had been persecuted openly since the 1970s, but never so viciously as in the stage of the genocide from 2017 on.

Rohingya refugees fled by boat to Bangladesh, to Cox's Bazar. That is where many of them now live; confined to a refugee camp for more than five years, they languish in poverty and squalor. But the refugee crisis is not over. With Myanmar in a state of cruel civil war, and the Rohingya still exiled from their home, the refugee movement continues.

The Washington Post reports that Rohingyas women, especially, are attempting to pay smugglers to take them and their children away from the camps in Cox's Bazar. Using UN statistics, the Post estimates that more than 3,500 Rohingyas have attempted to flee their confinement in 2022, which represents a fivefold increase from the year before: Tellingly, this is the largest number of Rohingyas attempting to leave Bangladesh or any country since the mass movement under threat of violence in 2017.

They wish to move on because the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar are not just inadequate: They are horrific. The adults cannot work - at least

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

legally, so they must resort to the illicit economy. The children are malnourished and risk famine. Bangladeshi authorities are prone to turn blind eyes to gang activity in the camp, and the illegal use of trafficked Rohingya labor in India and Bangladesh itself. This is not a place the Rohingyas mothers wish their children to grow up - a camp out of place and out of time, where safe return home is a distant and unlikely dream.

And there is another thing. All the while, the military junta that controls the government of Myanmar is determined to get the Rohingyas back under its control. Ever since the coup in 2021, the junta has attempted to govern Myanmar through force. It has fought ever since a brutal civil war against the supporters of the ousted civilian government, and various ethnic parties and militias. In a war of all against all, the military has proven itself savage and violent. This is the government that attempts to recover the Rohingyas refugees; it is made up of the very people, and the very military structures, which committed genocide against the Rohingyas in 2017. The Rohingyas know what they most fear - being repatriated to an unsafe country under the firm control of the military that wishes not just to do them harm, but to finish the job of exterminating them.

And yet this is what is at risk of happening. The military authorities have repeatedly attempted to negotiate repatriations with the Bangladesh government. In the most recent version of this deal, the first list submitted by the junta to Bangladeshi authorities includes more than 1,100 names. Bangladeshi authori-

ties say that they are close to clearing everyone on this list for repatriation. They make no mention of the fact that in doing so, the Bangladeshi state is placing these people once more in the lions' den. So this is why Rohingyas mothers once again consider the dangerous prospect of attempting to transport their children over unsafe waters in unsound craft. They cannot stay where they are; they cannot go back in peace.

The international community may feel impotent when confronted with this challenge. The junta appears to be going nowhere: Myanmar's civil war is complex, and it is also largely hidden from global view. The world cannot affect its outcome. But it can ensure justice for the Rohingyas by other means. The legal challenge mounted in the International Criminal Court by Gambia is slowly moving on. It accuses the previous and current Myanmar authorities of genocide against the Rohingyas. It has profound implications. If the Myanmar military were to be found guilty and liable, persecution of the Rohingyas would be made more difficult. International agencies and the international community has the means and the incentive - the obligation - to protect the Rohingyas with more energy and certainty.

But that effort needs to be sustained. It cannot happen by itself. If ever a new reason to support justice for all in Myanmar has emerged in the long years since the exodus in 2017, a new refugee crisis is it. The world did its best in 2017 to avert a worse genocide and to solve a pressing refugee crisis. Now is the time to do what it can to ensure the same, and to pursue justice wherever it can be found.

King Charles is becoming so woke he is in danger of abolishing himself

KING Charles, it has been reported, has a "10-year plan". Apart from making him sound like Stalin, the plan apparently involves being King for 10 years, before handing over to William. As if he would. As Melvyn Douglas says to Soviet Commissar Greta Garbo in the 1939 film *Ninotchka*, "I've been admiring your five-year plan for the last 15 years."

I hope the King makes it as far as 10 years, as his plan also involves the Royal family dispensing with what historian Vernon Bogdanor calls the "magic" side of their role, and "taking the lead on the major issues of the day". They haven't been doing this with much distinction so far. The Duke of York tried to take the lead on obscure medical conditions that prevent people from sweating, and on whether or not you should hand over a small fortune to a woman you don't know.

Prince Harry, meanwhile, has taken the lead on issues like keeping families together and how to get streaming giants to give you millions of dollars, as well as other pressing global matters. Now Charles has commissioned a study into the monarchy's historic links to slavery and has not ruled out reparations. This "study", the focus of which is to be the three King Georges, is not to be conducted by an established British expert, but by an eager PhD student called Camilla de Koning. According to academic historians, there is little or no evidence linking the Georges to the slave trade, but doubtless Ms de Koning will find some. It's a dangerous door to open. What of the monarchy's links with other unpleasant things? One could mention the burning of

Petronella Wyatt

heretics, both Protestant and Catholic, the torture and murder of hundreds of thousands both here and abroad (some Muslim friends are still miffed about the Crusades), and cutting the heads off women; not to mention stealing land and the throne from people who had a better claim. My brother, Pericles, has a better claim to the throne than Charles does. He is one of two senior surviving male Plantagenets (the other being the Earl of Loudoun) and is a collateral descendant of Richard III, who we call "Uncle Dickie". Uncle Dickie was murdered by Henry VII at the Battle of Bosworth and it remains an upsetting subject. In fact, we want our throne back, and at least three of the Royal Palaces that were nicked. But there is a cautionary tale in this. Charles is becoming so woke he may end up abolishing himself. The Coronation hasn't even begun yet, but it is already alienating his natural supporters. We do not want a monarchy that looks and acts like a branch of the civil service.

The late Queen knew very well that it is possible to combine public duty with the most seductive magic. If we are to have a taxpayer-funded Coronation, we want our money's worth. Instead, MPs and peers, who vote through the Sovereign Grant, have been incensed by the cavalier way in which they have been treated. Aside from the King's personal friends, only 20 peers have been invited; one Duke, one Marquess, one Earl, one Baron etc, as if it was Noah's ark, not the Coronation. Labour peers, who are always the greatest snobs of all, are angry that they will not be allowed to

wear their Coronation Robes, and that those not invited to the Abbey will be put in an iron corral outside. Senior Tories are equally annoyed. In a future Conservative Party led by a Kemi Badenoch, I doubt there will be much defence of the hereditary principle. I know, from friends of the King, that Charles is fearful of the future and alarmed by the prospect of a Labour government. Keir Starmer, who is a borderline republican, plans to make swingeing cuts to the Sovereign Grant.

But pandying to republicans is as futile as a Christian in Ancient Rome trying to make friends with the lions. Charles would do better to please monarchists and the nation as a whole, not bend to every prevailing fad and foible. His mother would not have done so. There is only one honest impulse behind republicanism and that is envy. A wealthy and privileged king with an itch to "take the lead" on divisive issues like climate change won't find the Red Wall behind him the next time Extinction Rebellion uses the M1 as its personal carpet. Nobody believes in any idea absolutely, but the King will never win over such people. In the presence of monarchy, instinctive republicans will always be palpably uneasy, like non-believers at a religious service. But there are still a majority of instinctive monarchists in this country, and where our flambeaux smokes, the King should set his bait. Yesterday I read that the Coronation Procession has been cut so short that most bystanders who brave the weather to camp overnight won't even get a glimpse. May I suggest a rethink on this as a start.

The Telegraph

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'Religious war' vs spiritual struggle: Why Israel redefining its mily occupation of Palestine

Ramzy Baroud

BY ordering a brutal attack against Palestinian worshippers inside Al-Aqsa Mosque on the 14th day of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu knew very well that the Palestinians would retaliate. Netanyahu's motive should be clear. He wanted to generate a distraction from the mass protests that have rocked Israel, starting in January, and divided Israeli society around ideological and political lines, in ways never witnessed before.

Unwilling to relinquish his hard-earned achievement of finally winning a decisive election and forming an entirely rightwing coalition, while fearing that major concessions to his political rivals could eventually dissolve his government, Netanyahu set his sights on the Al-Aqsa Mosque. History has proven that Israeli attacks on Palestinian holy places are a guarantor of a Palestinian response. For Netanyahu, and also his National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, the price of Palestinian retaliation was worth the political gains of unifying Israelis of all political backgrounds behind them. For Ben-Gvir, in particular, the attack against Al-Aqsa would reassure his far-right religious constituency of his commitment to securing full Israeli Jewish sovereignty over Palestinian Muslim and Christian holy places in the occupied city.

What Netanyahu and his allies may have not anticipated, however, is the intensity of the Palestinian response as hundreds of rockets were fired, not only from besieged Gaza but, even more strategically important, from South Lebanon, toward the northern and southern parts of the country. Though some damage was reported, the attacks were a political game-changer, as it was the first time in years that fighters in two Arab

countries coordinated their retaliatory action against Israel and hit back simultaneously.

It will be difficult for Netanyahu to claim any kind of victory after this, unless he takes his country to a major war on two fronts - three, if we are to consider the rise of armed resistance in the West Bank. However, even a major war could backfire. During the Israeli attack on Gaza in 2014, Israel struggled to sustain a single military front as the war lasted 51 days, leading to an Israeli munition crisis. Were it not for the decision of the Barack Obama administration to ship massive supplies of munition to Israel to fill its depleted arsenal, Israel could have found itself in an unprecedentedly difficult situation.

The US, however, is no longer able to play the role of the emergency weapons supplier, at least for now, due to its own ammunition shortage resulting from the Ukraine war. Hence, Israel was careful not to exaggerate in its response to Palestinian and Lebanese rockets. This episode, however, shall prove decisive, as it will empower Israel's regional enemies and, instead of boosting, it could potentially undermine Netanyahu's credibility among his own right-wing camp. But how could Israel's most experienced leader in history commit such an obvious strategic error? Aside from desperately making the decision to attack Al-Aqsa - and likely under pressures from Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich - Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders often miscalculate the significance of the spiritual component of the Palestinian struggle, and how it ties to Arab and Muslim solidarity with Palestine.

What is currently taking place in Palestine is not a religious war, but some Israeli officials and political

parties are keen on turning it into one. Though warnings against "religious wars" in Palestine - in fact, the entire region - have been mostly linked to Israel's current "most rightwing government in history," religious discourses have been the most dominant since the establishment of Israel's founding ideology, Zionism, in the late-19th century. Despite the historical fact that Zionism has been situated within a religious context, the founders of the movement were mostly atheists. They merely used religion as a political tool to unify Jews globally around their new ideology and to romanticize in the minds of their followers what is essentially a violent settler colonial movement.

Yet, over the years, the center of power within the Zionist movement has shifted, from liberal Zionism to Zionist Revisionism to, in the past 20 years or so, religious Zionism. For Israel's current generation of Zionist leaders, religion is not a political tool but an objective. This is precisely why, as Palestinian men and women were being attacked with ferocity inside the holiest of all mosques, Israeli Jews were attempting to enter the Muslim shrine to sacrifice animals as part of the Passover tradition. Although not many of them have succeeded in doing so, the event suggests that a new kind of conflict is taking shape. Historically, Israel targeted Muslim and Christian sites to acquire political capital. Late Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon did just that when he conducted a provocative "visit" inside Al-Haram Al-Sharif with hundreds of soldiers in September 2000, and when the Israeli military completely destroyed or seriously damaged 203 mosques during its so-called "Operation Protective Edge" against Gaza in 2014. Christian sites have also been

attacked and oftentimes confiscated. The targeting of Palestinian Christians led many community leaders, the likes of Archbishop Atallah Hanna, to warn against "an unprecedented conspiracy against the Christian existence."

The attack on Palestinian religious symbols goes further than the Occupied Territories into historic Palestine, today's Israel. The 13th-century architectural marvel, Al-Ahmar Mosque in Safad, for example, was turned by Israeli authorities into a nightclub. A study published by the High Follow-up Committee for Arab Citizens in Israel revealed, in July 2020, that scores of mosques were turned into synagogues, barns, bars or restaurants, Israel's targeting of the Arab and Muslim identity of Palestine is now being accelerated under Netanyahu's leadership. But this strategy is a double-edged sword as witnessed in recent days. In the video that went viral of Israeli soldiers beating up Muslim worshippers, the distressed pleas of a Palestinian woman groaning in pain were heard. "Oh Allah, Oh Allah," she repeated. Many in Palestinian media and social media have commented that the response by Palestinian Resistance was specifically to answer the call of the unidentified woman. This is the power of spirituality - the kind of logic that Netanyahu and his allies cannot possibly understand.

On April 3, the Jordanian King rightfully stressed that "it is the duty of every Muslim to deter Israeli escalations against Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem." When this happens, instead of isolating and browbeating Palestinians, it is Israel that will find itself even more isolated. Though Palestinians do not see themselves fighting a religious war, protecting their religious symbols stands at the core of their larger fight for freedom, justice and equality.

Saudi Arabia's nod to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami

AS the Kingdom steadily treads its path in line with Vision 2030, it won't stop startling those less vigilant watchers who trumpet stereotypes instead of more nuanced analyses. The Cabinet's approval of Saudi Arabia's partnership with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization did not happen out of the blue. A meticulous process coupled with multiple bilateral and multilateral contacts has been afoot for the past four years.

Riyadh applied for SCO dialogue partner status in 2019, which was formally approved in September 2021 and officially granted exactly a year later. Turkiye, Egypt and Qatar are other current dialogue partners while Iran is set to be granted full member status in April. The process of becoming a full member involves a few steps besides the consensus of all existing members. There appears to be no hurdles to the Kingdom's inclusion by the member-states and secretariat. From the Saudi perspective, the process of initiating engagement with the China-led SCO is based on the drive to diversify multilateral engagements globally as well as regionally. For decades, the Kingdom has been pursuing an interest-based foreign policy, which on occasions shook the world significantly - for example, the 1973-74 oil embargo. As Beijing is Riyadh's topmost trading partner, it is only natural for the country to cement ties with the

world's second superpower. The Kingdom is keen to engage deeply with the Central Asian republics alongside Pakistan, Russia and India through one platform where heads of state or governments meet every second year. The embrace also fills the void in Saudi foreign policy outreach when it comes to Central Asia and Eurasian states.

The SCO, which already brings archrivals India and Pakistan to the table, will now see Saudi Arabia and Iran share the same forum, after the UN and OIC. After the recent breakthrough talks in Beijing, the two Gulf neighbors have committed to improving their bilateral relations. As the first step, their severed diplomatic ties will resume. Then, the Iranian president is likely to visit Saudi Arabia. For now, a lot depends on atmospherics and confidence-building measures agreed to by both sides. Given the age of polarization and anarchy in global affairs, the Kingdom is betting on improving ties, especially with its antagonist neighbors. That is in sync with the spirit of the SCO, which urges its members to set aside differences and work on commonalities. Some observers speculate that Saudi Arabia's entry into the SCO is a byproduct of the Beijing breakthrough. They are outright wrong. Riyadh initiated the process of affiliation about half a decade ago when rapprochement with Iran was far from expected.

Iran, on the other hand, has

sought the bloc's membership since July 2005 but its own policies and actions resulting in sanctions obstructed its entry. The pressure eased with the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in July 2015, but the Trump administration's policies led some members to object to Tehran's membership. The SCO's main goals include: Strengthening mutual trust and neighborliness among member states; promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, economy, research, technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; moving toward the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order; and establishing an internal policy based on the principles of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, mutual consultations, respect for cultural diversity, and a desire for common development, while conducting an external policy in accordance with the principles of non-alignment, non-targeting any third country, and openness. The Council of Heads of State, the SCO's supreme decision-making body, meets once a year and adopts decisions and guidelines on all important matters for the bloc. The council also convenes once a year to discuss the bloc's multilateral

cooperation strategy and priority areas, to resolve current important economic and other cooperation issues, and to approve the bloc's annual budget.

The bloc is not just expanding but its identity is evolving too. With the rise of China as a superpower, not all member-states have similar expectations from the bloc. Certainly, the SCO is not merely emerging as some kind of security alliance, which enhances its acceptability. It is a geopolitical and geo-economic forum with a wealth of natural resources, manpower, and interconnectivity. Nonetheless, the SCO holds anti-terrorism drills every other year, bringing together militaries that usually don't engage in war games at bilateral or multilateral forums. Except for this tactical interaction, security issues are off the table. With some bitter rivals sharing the platform, the bloc is beset with many stress tests ahead. For the SCO, the Kingdom brings bigger financial muscle and greater ideological diversity, undercutting the existing seclusion and current snail-paced progress. Saudi Arabia can help the bloc in strengthening its Inter-Bank Consortium. Despite Beijing and Moscow's desire, there is still internal opposition to linking the SCO's financial infrastructure to the BRICS Bank. Joining the SCO also opens Saudi Arabia's economy and companies' opportunities to invest in diverse markets with better rates of return in accordance with Vision 2030.



Number of Raast users reaches 25.8m, transaction volume grows 488%: SBP

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The users of SBP's instant digital payment system, Raast, reached 25.8 million during the second quarter of the fiscal year 2023 while transaction value has reached Rs.578.6 billion depicting a significant growth of 488 percent.

It was stated in the State Bank of Pakistan's first and second quarterly report of Payment Systems for the Fiscal Year 2022-23, released here on Tuesday. The report, covering the period July to December 2022, presented major highlights of the payments ecosystem in the country and a comprehensive analysis of transactions processed through the payments infrastructure.

As per the report, Raast - SBP's initiative for provid-

ing an instant cost efficient person to person digital payment system- has witnessed promising growth as the number of Raast users increased from 15.0 million as of end Q4-FY22 to 21.1 million by Q1-FY23 and 25.8 million by Q2-FY23 showing a growth of 72.1% since Jun-22.

The number of transactions processed through Raast increased from 7.1 million to 21.5 million depicting a growth of 202.1% while transactions' value increased from Rs.98.4 billion to Rs578.6 billion showing a remarkable growth of 488.1% since Q4-FY22.

During the quarter Q1-FY23, total e-banking transactions witnessed a growth of 4.1% in volume while value declined by 5.0%, the report said adding that however, in

quarter Q2-FY23, e-banking showed 12.6% growth in volume and 6.5% increase in value of transactions reaching to 515 million and Rs.42.5 trillion respectively.

Since Q4-FY22, internet and mobile phone banking users have increased by 21% to 10.1 million users and 22% to 15.0 million users respectively. Transactions through internet and mobile phone banking channel also showed continued growth in both quarters with combined quarterly growth of both channels of 11% by volume and 11% by value in Q1-FY23 while in Q2- FY23, volume grew by 18% and value by 15%, the report said.

Number of e-commerce transactions in both quarters declined but the value increased by 11.6% during Q1-FY23 and 2.2% in Q2-

FY23, it added.

Point-of-Sale (POS) deployed across the country grew by 3.8% since the previous fiscal year FY22 reaching to 108,899 by the end of Q2-FY23. During July to December 2022, a total of 94.8 million transactions amounting to Rs.493.2 billion were processed at POS terminals.

Meanwhile, the number of ATMs also increased from 17,133 in Q4-FY22 to 17,547 by Q2-FY23.

Payment cards in circulation issued by Banks/MFBs and EMI at the quarter end of Q4-FY22 was 43.0 million which increased to 46.5 million by the end of Q2-FY23. The majority of the issued cards were Debit cards (73.8%) followed by Social Welfare cards (21.8%), Credit cards (4.1%) and Prepaid cards (0.2%).



SARGODHA: Vendor weighing vermicelli on scale and packing in plastic bags on his shop.

OGDCL distribute Ramadan ration bags

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, has partnered with Saylani Welfare International Trust (SWIT) to distribute Ramadan ration bags worth Rs.100 million.

The campaign aims to support underprivileged families in OGDCL operational districts, providing them with basic food necessities during the holy month of Ramadan. The initiative is expected to continue till April 20, 2023. OGDCL management has reiterated its commitment to empowering local communities and transforming their lives.

As a responsible corporate entity, OGDCL has undertaken various CSR activities to contribute towards the sustainable development of the communities. Recently the company has donated 100 ambulances to health facilities across the country under its health sector development program.

OGDCL-CSR's efforts in empowering various communities and improving their quality of life have been widely recognized and appreciated. The company remains committed to contributing to the sustainable development and well-being of the communities it operates in.

Sugar mafia pushes country into crisis: PEW

ISLAMABAD (INP): Senior Vice President of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) Dr. Hanif Mughal, on Tuesday said the influential sugar mafia has started an artificial sugar crisis across the country to increase its profit during the holy month of Ramadan.

The price of sugar has been increased by Rs30 to Rs40 rupees per kg in different parts of the country which is unjustified, he said. He said "large quantity of sugar is being smuggled to Afghanistan where the smugglers get paid in US Dollars". Mughal said that inflation has broken the back of the people, the prices of electricity, gas and petrol are also continuously increasing, and the rupee continues to weaken.

A flour crisis was already taking a toll on the masses and now the sugar crisis after the flour crisis is an atrocity in which the most influential people of the country are involved, he informed. He said that there is no shortage of sugar in the country but the prices are increasing on a daily basis which is a cause of concern.

So far, one hundred and fifty billion rupees have been taken out of the pocket of the poor to fill the coffers of the mafia and the process continues unabated.

He warned that if the crackdown is delayed, the price of sugar will soon double and the price of bakery items, sweets and beverages which have already become twice as expensive as compared to last year will become further dearer.

The government should take practical steps instead of issuing warnings to save the people from this new problem.

PAJCCI welcomes allowing of cross stuffing of Afghan, Uzbek cargo

PESHAWAR (APP): Director Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi has welcomed permission from the customs department for cross stuffing of Afghan and Uzbek cargo at Karachi Port.

In a press statement issued here on Tuesday, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi said it was a welcome step that the demand of businessmen dealing in Pak-Afghan trade had been met.

A notification regarding allowing of cross stuffing was issued by the Directorate General of Transit Trade a couple of days earlier. Zia Sarhadi said due to the restriction placed on cross stuffing, the businessmen were facing extra charges due to delays

in the return of containers to the shipping company.

The containers carrying goods took several days in reaching to Afghanistan and returning back to Karachi port, inflicting huge fines on importers under the head of detention charges.

With allowing of cross stuffing, the containers will be offloaded at Karachi and goods be transferred to trucks for onward transportation to Afghanistan.

Director PAJCCI also urged that GD (Goods Documentation) filing at Aza Khel dry Port in Nowshera district.

This decision will not only reduce the burden on Karachi port, but would help in making Aza Khel dry port operational,

besides creating employment opportunities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by providing livelihood to more than 270 custom clearing agents.

Zia said Aza Khel dry port was constructed at a cost of Rs. 50 million by Pakistan Railways a few years earlier but has never been operational due to lack of activities in regard with Afghan transit goods.

He said the cross-stuffing facility should also be allowed at Aza Khel Dry Port in Nowshera and cargoes in bulk quantities like sugar, wheat, and urea be transported in railway wagons which would help in reducing transportation costs for businessmen, besides generating revenue for Railways.

Asian stock markets close higher

ANKARA (APP): Asia's major stock markets closed Tuesday with gains, with the exception of China's Shanghai Stock Exchange.

The Asia Dow, which includes blue-chip companies in the region, gained 0.72% to reach 3,392 points.

The Hang Seng, the benchmark for blue-chip stocks trading on the Hong Kong stock exchange, increased 0.76% to 20,485, returning from a long holiday weekend.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 stock exchange rose 1.05% to 27,923 points.

China's Shanghai Stock Exchange, on the other hand, lost 0.05% to 3,313 points.

Inflation in China unexpectedly eased to an 18-month low in March, thanks to a slowdown in both food and non-food costs led by the country's reopening after a relax in coronavirus measures, according to data released on Tuesday.

Consumer prices climbed 0.7% year-on-year last month, down from February's reading of 1%, the National Bureau of Statistics said.

PSX's 100-Index loses 31.19 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) declined by 31.19 points on Tuesday, showing a negative change of 0.08 per cent, closing at 39,804.71 points against 39,835.90 points the previous day.

A total of 59,669,253 shares were traded during the day as compared to 105,892,904 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 1.370 billion against Rs 1.835 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 345 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 146 of them recorded gains and 175 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 24 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric with 9,274,670 shares at Rs 2.00 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 7,144,954 shares at Rs 1.16 per share, and Maple Leaf with 3,103,848 shares at Rs 26.50 per share.

Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 400.00 per share price, closing at Rs

18,400.00, whereas the runner-up was Nestle Pakistan XD with a Rs 76.42 rise in its per share price to Rs 5100.10.

Bata (Pak) witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 104.99 per share closing at Rs 1730.01, followed by Sapphire Fiber with a Rs 42.23 decline to close at Rs 900.10.

Rupee sheds Rs1.37 against dollar

Pakistan rupee weakened by Rs1.37 against the Dollar in the interbank trading on Tuesday and closed at Rs 288.42 against the previous day's closing of Rs 287.08.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 290 and Rs 293 respectively.

The price of the Euro appreciated by Rs 1.14 to close at Rs 314.29 against the last day's closing of Rs313.15, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen went down by 01 paisa to close at Rs 2.16; whereas an increase of Rs1.92 was wit-

nessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 358.39 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs356.47.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal rose by 36 paisas each to close at Rs 78.53 and Rs 76.88 respectively.

Gold prices increase by Rs 600 to 218,300 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 600 and was sold at Rs 218,300 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs 217,700 the previous day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also increased by Rs 514 to Rs 187,157 from Rs 186,643, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold went up to Rs 171,561 from Rs 171,089.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs 40 to close at Rs 25,200 while that of ten-gram silver also surged by Rs 34.30 to close at Rs 2,160.50.

The price of gold in the international market dipped by US\$ 01 to \$2001 against its sale at \$2002, the association reported.

UBG chairman dissolves group for revamping it

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman United Business Group in the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Shahzad Ali Malik on Tuesday dissolved the group for revamping it with the induction of fresh blood to address the issues confronting the traders.

In a press statement, he said a resolution was unanimously adopted at the last core committee meeting calling for the dissolution of the group except for the patron-in-Chief, SM Tanveer, Chairman and Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari while all other office bearers of the UBG across the country cease to hold office with immediate effect paving the way to invigorate and overhauling

the group to make it vibrant.

Shahzad Ali Malik said dedicated and loyal trader leaders enjoining good repute in the business community will be considered on merit for giving them new responsibilities in the group to achieve desired results.

He said to serve the industrialists and traders is the top priority of the group and hoped that under the dynamic leadership of newly elected group patron-in-Chief SM Tanveer, a new group will strive hard to help solve the problems confronting the traders besides acting as a bridge between government and business community to put the country on the track of development, progress and prosperity.

Foreigners sell South Korean stocks in 6 months in March

SEOUL (APP): Foreign investors became net sellers of South Korean stocks in six months last month on rising uncertainty over the global financial market, financial watchdog data showed Tuesday. Foreigners dumped a net 2.14 trillion won worth of stocks in March, turning into net sellers in six months since September last year, according to the Financial Supervisory Service (FSS).

Offshore investors were net sellers both in the benchmark KOSPI and the tech-savvy KOSDAQ markets. European investors bought domestic shares, but Asian and Middle East investors offloaded stocks last month. Foreign holdings of local listed stocks totaled 649.7 trillion won (491.9 billion dollars) at the end of March, taking up 26.4 percent of the total market capitalization.

Overseas investors bought a net 11.68 trillion won worth of domestic listed bonds in March. Given the maturing debts worth 8.62 trillion won (6.5 billion dollars), the foreign net investment in the local bond market stood at 3.06 trillion won (2.3 billion dollars) last month.

Child labor - impacts on intellect& creativity

Najibullah Khan

Child labor does not only impact educational, intellectual, psychological and emotional developments of a child but it deprives a child from opportunities and creativities and put an everlasting burden on them. It is a social error which has been the product of various factors like poverty, antiquated social customs, unemployment, lack of education and various other social factors.

In Pakistan specially in the Provincial capital Peshawar many prefer to employ children because they are easier to manage than adult less skilled, they are less aware of their rights, they can be controlled and more easily threatened, consume fewer resources more active and require less space. People

who hire child domestic help look upon themselves as the saviours of these hapless children.

A 12 year-old Amina from tribal area forced to work by her parents as caretaker of the children of a rich family in Peshawar. She said we are 3 sisters and 1 brother, all my sisters work in homes in Peshawar. The people where my sisters and I work give my father wages every month. I don't remember when I met my sisters because we hardly get a holiday.

11 years old Saima from rural areas of Peshawar is selling flowers in Peshawar, says that I want to go to school, but I can't afford it, because we are very poor, my father is selling Potato chips, he has no money for my school. After selling flowers, I give money to my father, which

is used for the kitchen expenses of our family.

Another boy, Roohullah was working in a workshop in Peshawar, lying under a car, hoping to earn some money to support his family by the evening. Roohullah said that my annual exams are going on and today I came to the workshop with a social study paper. Tomorrow is my Urdu paper but it is not possible for me to give time to study during the day. He added that my father is addicted to heroin, while there are two younger sisters in the house, and mother is suffering from tuberculosis diseases (TB). He said that in the morning he goes to school and in the afternoon comes to work here in the workshop, from where he gets two hundred to three hundred rupees a day for his family's liveli-

hood.

For poor families, sending children off to work is considered to be the best use of their time as they earn money for the whole family. Instead of educating these parents, privileged families hire their children, exploiting their situation, while the government ignoring this practice.

Our governments consistently failing to have shown little interest in raising the living standard of our extremely poor classes. It is the government's responsibility to provide food, shelter and other essentials of life so that parents can send their children to school instead of work. Every child has the right to live with dignity and in such a way that childhood becomes a period of growth, learning and development.

China's CPI up 0.7%

BEIJING (APP): China's consumer price index (CPI), a main gauge of inflation, rose 0.7 percent year on year in March, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said Tuesday.

The figure was lowered than the 1-percent increase in February. On a monthly basis, the consumer prices edged down 0.3 percent, narrowing 0.2 percentage points from the month-on-month decline in the previous month, stated the NBS.

Dong Lijuan, a statistician with the NBS, attrib-

uted the mild inflation largely to the ample supply in the consumer market as the social production and living order continued to recover in March.

Food prices went down 1.4 percent month on month, easing the monthly consumer inflation by about 0.27 percentage points, according to the data. Specifically, the sufficient supply of vegetables and pork, a staple meat, played a major role in dragging down the overall price level.

Non-food prices

remained flat in March, up from the 0.2-percent decline in February, buoyed by the growing demand for travel and increased clothing expenses.

The country's core CPI, deducting food and energy prices, climbed 0.7 percent from a year ago last month, up from 0.6 percent seen in February, Dong said. Tuesday's data also showed that China's producer price index, which measures costs for goods at the factory gate, went down 2.5 percent year on year in March.

**In brief****DG, SBP chairs meeting**

LAHORE (APP): Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail presided over an important meeting of all Divisional Sports Officers of the province at National Hockey Stadium here on Tuesday. All the Divisional Sports Officers of the province briefed the Director General Sports Punjab about their respective sports projects and other sports activities during the meeting. Addressing the meeting Dr Asif Tufail said that Sports board Punjab will continue to take all necessary measures for the development of sports across the province. "We will continue to organize several other sports events on the pattern of First Ramazan Sports Series. Many talented athletes have emerged from the Ramazan Sports Series," he added. Director General Sports Punjab announced that SBP will soon organise a big event at the tehsil level to trace fresh talented players of different games. "Promotion of sports culture in all parts of the province is our first priority. All divisional sports officers of the province should utilize their energies and work together for the development of sports", DG Sports Punjab said. All the Divisional Sports Officers of province including Divisional Sports Officer Lahore Tariq Khanzada, Rana Nadeem Anjum (Multan), Rana Hamad (Faisalabad), Tariq Nazir (Sargodha), Manzar Farid Shah (Gujranwala), Aamir Hameed (Bahawalpur) and Attaur Rehman (Dera Ghazi Khan) participated in the meeting.

Shahid Afridi clears the air

KARACHI (Web Desk): Former Pakistan skipper Shahid Afridi has issued clarification regarding comments made by Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Najam Sethi about captaincy of Babar Azam. The clarification comes after Mr Sethi on Sunday revealed that the interim selection committee, led by Shahid Afridi, had proposed replacing Babar as Pakistan captain. However, the legendary cricketer took to Twitter to clarify that he had not laid forth such proposal. "I spoke with Mr Najam Sethi who was kind enough to confirm he was not referring to me while commenting about Babar Azam's captaincy. He has further clarified this in his social media posts. This has put the matter to bed. All the best to Babar and his side for the series vs NZ," Afridi wrote. Taking to Twitter, Mr Sethi said, "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," he maintained. Urging the people to not make matter controversial in line with the captaincy of Babar Azam, Mr Sethi said, "I will also be guided by what the Selectors and Director Cricket Ops and Head Coach have to say going forward."

New Zealand squad reaches Pakistan for white-ball series

LAHORE (INP): New Zealand cricket team on Tuesday, landed in Pakistan for the upcoming five-match each T20I and ODI series against the home side, scheduled to take place from April 14 to May 7.

According to the details, the touring side set foot in the country in the wee hours of Tuesday and were given a warm welcome by the Pakistan

Cricket Board (PCB) officials before travelling to the team hotel in tight security. Tom Latham-led T20I squad will enjoy two-day rest before finally starting their training camp on April 13, a day earlier the first T20I of the five-match series is scheduled.

Upon New Zealand's arrival for the white-ball series, their all-rounder Daryl Mitchell asserted

that the contingent is upbeat for the assignment.

"There are young players in the team who have not played in these conditions before," he said.

"Conditions are quite different here from New Zealand and young players will gain experience," he said. "The series is quite long. We will try to play good cricket."

Lahore edge out Faisalabad by 4-3 in penalty shootouts to win Ramzan Sports Series hockey title

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Division edged out Faisalabad by 4-3 on penalty shootouts in the nerve-wrecking title clash of First Ramzan sports Series 2023 Hockey Championship here on Tuesday.

Both the teams played a goal-less match in the stipulated time but in penalty shootouts, Lahore's strikers and goalkeeper exhibited better performance and eventually emerged triumphant in the thrilling title clash.

The winning team of Lahore was awarded a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh while the runners up Faisalabad got Rs 15 lakh.

The competitions of the First Ramzan Sports

Series 2023 are being organised at different venues of Nishtar Park Sports Complex on the instructions of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi.

Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz, Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Shahid Zaman, Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail, Director Youth Affairs Syed Umair Hassan, Director Sports Nadeem Qaiser were also present on this occasion.

In Ramzan Sports Series Table Tennis Women's Singles final match, Lahore's Kalsoom Khan defeated Lahore's Pernia Khan by 3-1. Kalsoom won the title

with the scores of 7-11, 11-9, 11-9 and 11-9.

The title of Table Tennis Men's Singles went to Lahore Asim Qureshi who defeated Faisalabad's Hafeezur Rehman by 3-2. The score of the final match was 11-9, 11-4, 6-11, 8-11 and 11-9.

In Ramzan Sports Series Badminton Women's Singles final match, Lahore's Ghazala Siddique toppled Faisalabad's Zubaira 2-0 with the score of 21-18, 21-6.

Gujranwala defeated Multan by 2-1 in Ramzan Sports Series Men's Singles Badminton Final. Azeem Sarwar of Gujranwala thrashed Multan's Jalees in the title clash.

Islamabad to get international standard Football stadium

ISLAMABAD (Monitoring Desk): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) Board has approved the construction of an international standard football stadium in Islamabad.

According to the report, the decision was taken during the board's sixth meeting of the year, which 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.

"Establishment of Building control wing will help prevent illegal constructions and enforce building by-laws," it stated. 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.

Additionally, approval was also given to rent plots for the establishment of schools in Islamabad. The board decided that plots will be leased for 33 years at concessional rents to build schools for the middle class.

It was also decided that all approved housing societies, community centers, dispensaries and school plots will be under the estate wing inventory. The CDA Board also approved the AGOSH-II

Housing Society.

During the meeting, the CDA chairman issued instructions that the concept plan of Islamabad Bus Terminal I-II should be presented in two weeks and work on Islamabad Bus Terminal should be started within the same period.

Similarly, CDA board also decided to resume the work on the cultural complex which had been stalled since 2010 and also approved the renaming of the cultural complex Shakarparian to Al-Hamra Islamabad.

Likewise, the decision to change the name of Ladies Club located in Sector G-10 to Citizen Center G-10 was also taken in the meeting.

The CDA board also approved the establishment of Green Fund, announcing that 2% of the total cost of all major projects to be started in Islamabad will be deposited to this fund and all the important projects will contribute to this fund under CSR. The senior officer of the environment and finance wing will be signatories for the use of these funds.

Moreover, the board gave the nod to establish CDA Pension Fund and Endowment Fund, recommending that 5% of the income should be kept in these funds.



MONTE-CARLO: Alexander Zverev of Germany plays a backhand volley against Alexander Bublik of Kazakhstan in their first round match during day three of the Rolex Monte-Carlo Masters.

Shinwari volleyball club defeated Karwan Afridi volleyball team

E.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL:

Shinwari volleyball club defeated Karwan Afridi volleyball team with visible margin of 3:1 sets in best of five final match of Ramazan night volleyball tournament played at Nazero sports ground, Sultan Khel, tehsil Landi Kotal on Monday night.

The tournament was organized under the auspices of a local sports organization and eight best volleyball teams from across the subdivision participated in the combat.

The two finalist teams, Shinwari team and Karwan Afridi club, qualified for the final match while defeating their opponents in the semi-finals. Beside former Member Provincial Assembly Shafiq Sher Afridi as chief guest, councilors and notables attended the game event. Before the beginning of the final game, players of both finalist teams were introduced to the chief guest.

Large numbers of sport lovers watched the final match of the tournament and applauded the players on exhibiting their best talent in the games.

The game started in a thrilling way and players of both teams attempted to take the lead however, the players of Shinwari club exhibited their best game and won the final match of five best by 3:1 sets.

Muhammad Qadri was declared best player of the tournament whereas Wasim Shinwari was named as best player of the match. At the end the chief guest awarded trophies and prizes to the winning teams and shining players. Shafiq Sher Afridi appreciated the talent of the local volleyball players and assured them of every kind of support to promote sports.

The event was organized by the local sports union by self assistance and no sports body on tehsil or district level extended any help to them, the organizers regretted.

Pakistan's preparations for Asian Men's U-16 Volleyball C'ship underway

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan team will participate in the first edition of the Asian Men's U-16 Volleyball C'ship, scheduled to be held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan from July 22 to 29.

The event serves as the Asian qualification tournament and the top three sides will make a cut to the next year's FIVB Volleyball Men's U-17 World C'ship. "Our training camp for preparation for the c'ship is underway at Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) coaching centre Peshawar," Secretary Pakistan Volleyball Federation (PVF) Shah Naeem Zafar told APP on Tuesday.

According to Naeem, the PVF wanted the players to keep on getting training at the camp till the commencement of the championship

but it depends on the provision of funds by the PSB. "Scarcity of funds is a big issue. We've highly talented youngsters, who are capable to win the title. But they need continuous coaching and training," he added.

"We have a very strong senior team but recently they were handed a 3-0 defeat by these young guns [U16 team] at POF Wah. This shows that in the next few years, they'll form a really formidable national side."

"They all are above 6 feet and four-inch height. We've selected them from all over the country through a talent hunt programme. There are our two years of hard work to form such a strong outfit," he added.

Kazakhstan, Hong Kong and hosts Uzbekistan are in Pool A in the championship, while Pool B comprises Bahrain, India, Thailand and Australia. Pool C features Saudi Arabia, Iran, Japan and China, whereas Pakistan, Kuwait Mongolia and Chinese Taipei from Pool D.

McIlroy withdraws from PGA Tour's RBC Heritage event

COLUMBIA (Agencies): Rory McIlroy has withdrawn from this week's PGA Tour event, the RBC Heritage at Hilton Head in South Carolina.

No reason was given for the withdrawal of the world number three as it was announced by the PGA Tour. The Northern Irishman, 33, shot rounds of 72 and 77 to miss the cut at last week's Masters by two shots - his ninth attempt to complete the career Grand Slam at Augusta National.

The RBC Heritage is among the PGA Tour's designated events. Players ranked in the top 20 of the circuit's Player Impact Program (PIP) - created to reward players for boosting engagement and publicity in the PGA Tour - are allowed to skip only one designated event per season.

McIlroy has already sat out the season-opening Sentry Tournament of Champions in January.

I hope to play with Messi next season at Barca: Lewandowski



BARCELONA (Agencies): Barcelona striker Robert Lewandowski would love Lionel Messi to return to the Catalan club from Paris Saint-Germain this summer, he said on Tuesday.

The 35-year-old Argentine World Cup winner left Barca in 2021 when the club could not afford to renew his contract and his PSG deal expires in June.

Amid whistles from PSG supporters who see Messi as a symbol of the club's mistakes in chasing star signings instead of building a competitive team, Barcelona are openly courting the forward.

"Messi belongs to Barca and if he returns it would be something incredible," said Lewandowski.

"We know that his place is here, in Barcelona. I don't know what will happen, but I hope that next season we

can play together."

Messi is the club's all-time top goalscorer and many consider him the best player in the history of football.

The playmaker scored a record 672 goals in 778 matches for Barcelona, winning 35 trophies, after joining the club at 13-years-old and developing at their fated La Masia youth academy.

Barcelona fans have chanted Messi's name in the 10th minute -- representing his former Barca

shirt number -- in their last two matches, including a 0-0 draw against Girona on Monday in La Liga.

"Leo generates excitement, they have chanted his name in two games now, we'll see what happens," said Barca coach Xavi Hernandez after the derby clash.

Lewandowski, top scorer in Spain, could not find the net for the league leaders against Girona and, speaking at a charity event, said he had been carrying an injury.

"I took a blow from (Real Madrid defender Eder) Militao in the game against Madrid and I could not walk," added Lewandowski, referring to Barcelona's 4-0 thrashing by Los Blancos in the Copa del Rey last week.

"On the pitch I have to play better but that knock from Militao left my body in a bad way."



SHEFFIELD: Ricky Walden of England plays a shot in the fourth round match against Thepchaiya Un-Nooh of Thailand on day 9 of the Cazoo World Championship 2023 Qualifiers at English Institute of Sport.

Zverev, Dimitrov advance at Monte Carlo Masters

MONACO (AP): Alexander Zverev started his clay-court season with a 3-6, 6-2, 6-4 win over Alexander Bublik to reach the second round at the Monte Carlo Masters on Tuesday.

The 13th-seeded German was playing on clay for the first time since a right ankle injury forced him to retire in the French Open semifinals against Rafael Nadal last year.

Zverev said he needed to "get the injury out of my head" and get used to sliding again. "It felt awful at times to be honest, but he made me feel awful," Zverev said. "Tactically he played well, he didn't let me play my game at all. He didn't let me have my rhythm and he almost won

the match, just a few points here and there."

Still, Zverev limited his unforced errors to nine and hit 21 winners on Court Rainier III to set up a match against Spaniard Roberto Bautista Agut in the next round. Two-time semifinalist Grigor Dimitrov also advanced by beating American Ben Shelton 6-1, 3-6, 6-3. The 20-year-old Shelton made his debut at Monte Carlo and did not disappoint, testing Dimitrov in a tense contest that lasted more than two hours.

"It is one of those matches that I just needed to go through," Dimitrov said. "I played a lot of good tennis. There were a lot of positives to take out of that."

Dimitrov will next play Jiri Lehecka of Czech Republic. Top-ranked Novak Djokovic will start his clay-court season against qualifier Ivan Gakhov later Tuesday. The 35-year-old Djokovic has not played since losing to Daniil Medvedev in the semifinals of the Dubai Championships five weeks ago, which ended the Australian Open champion's 20-match winning streak.

Stefanos Tsitsipas, aiming for a third consecutive title at the Country Club, takes on Frenchman Benjamin Bonzi. Rafael Nadal, second-ranked Carlos Alcaraz, and seventh-ranked Felix Auger-Aliassime pulled out of the tournament.



In brief

IRSA releases 58,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 58,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 67,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1435.79 feet and was 37.79 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 18,700 cusecs while outflow as 15,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1113.00 feet, which was 63.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 20,100 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 24,500, 26,400, 32,300 and 6,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 15,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 5,900 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Bike lifter arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested a bike lifter and recovered six stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Taxila police managed to net a bike lifter namely Bashir and recovered six stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is underway. Superintendent of Police, Potohar Muhammad Waqas Khan said the accomplices and facilitators of the accused would also be sent behind the bars. He said that the operations against the lawbreakers would be accelerated further.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Tuesday issued a power suspension programme for Wednesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 7 am to 11 am, Islamabad Circle, Charah, Kirpa, Alipur Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Madina Colony, Masryal Road, Multabad Feeders, Cantt Circle Rawalpindi, Chauhan, Chontra, Rajar, Chakri, SPD, SPF Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Daultala Feeder, Attock Circle, Mainawala, Khanabad, Lalazar, Lalrukh, Small Industrial, Pormiana, Garhi, Afghana, Shakurdra, Bolnewal, Shadi Khan, Shamsabad Feeders and suburbs.

10 gamblers held during raid

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 10 gamblers and recovered mobile phones worth more than Rs six million from their possession during a crackdown here on Tuesday. According to the police spokesperson, Rata Amral police carried out the raid and held gamblers identified as Fida, Adnan, Asad, Balaj, Ehtsham, Shajaat, Adnan, Muhammad Salim and Asad. Police then registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. Meanwhile, SP Rawal appreciated the performance of the police team and said that gambling was the root cause of other social evils. The accused involved in such crimes could not escape from the grip of the law as actions against gamblers would be continued without any discrimination, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education, Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain launching the ceremony of Ph.D Country Directory (PCD) online System at HEC Auditorium.

Rana inaugurates PhD Country Directory Online System at HEC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Mr. Rana Tanveer Hussain on Tuesday inaugurated the PhD Country Directory Online System at the Higher Education Commission (HEC). Pakistan Secretariat Islamabad. Through the launch of the online system that can be accessed through <https://eservices.hec.gov.pk/#/pcd>, the HEC's conventional Ph.D. Country Directory (PCD) setup has been automated to improve efficiency in the PCD registration process of Ph.D. scholars in Pakistan.

A ceremony, held in this connection, at HEC Secretariat was attended by Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Executive Director HEC Dr. Shaista Sohail, Vice Chancellors of different universities, and a large number of Ph.D. scholars.

The PCD Online System, developed by the HEC Higher Education Data Repository with the help of Information Technology (IT) and other Divisions, will enable the inclusion of Pakistani PhDs in the HEC data, through university focal persons, within a few days without submission of documents or applications in the hard form.

Earlier, the PCD processes involving five stages took a Ph.D. scholar several months to be part of the regis-

tered Ph.D. community of Pakistan.

Addressing the ceremony, Rana Tanveer Hussain termed the launch of the PCD Online System commendable and hoped that the development will benefit the Ph.D. scholars in a hassle-free manner. He highlighted the importance of employing technology in institutional operations to make processes easier for the public. He emphasised the need for investment in human capital and underlined the role of HEC in developing human resources for the country.

The Minister stated that the development of higher education and marketable, need-based research is the key to progress and prosperity of a nation. He advised the universities to establish special on-campus setups for promotion of skill-based education. He urged the universities to enhance financial discipline, engage with industry, encourage entrepreneurship, and turn Offices of Research, Innovation and Commercialisation (ORICs) into earning entities.

Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed said that HEC will soon automate all of its functions and processes to facilitate students, faculty and general public, adding that the HEC degree verification system will be synchronised with NADRA database to

make attestation easier.

The objective of this concept is to improve efficiency, improve quality, and better facilitate people, he underscored. He urged the Vice Chancellors to help HEC expedite delivery of services to the academic community and students. He said that HEC is committed to ensuring delivery of services to the nation in the best possible way.

In her opening remarks, Dr. Shaista Sohail asserted that the inauguration of PCD Online System, within a short period of only three months, will accelerate the registration of PhDs as currently 29,300 PhDs are part of the PCD data.

Earlier, Director General HEDR Mr. Ghulam Nabi shared a detailed presentation on a comparison between the conventional PCD launched in 2009 and the flagship PCD Online System.

He informed the audience that HEC trained over 300 focal persons of universities on the new PCD System and received feedback from universities for incorporation.

He said HEC HEDR, while heading towards paperless environment, will announce the launch of Online Data Collection System; Online Ranking System; Datawarehousing and Analytics; and Statistical Booklet in the next few months.

Air quality in Capital reported healthy

ISLAMABAD (APP): The federal capital's air quality on Tuesday was reported healthy despite dry weather and development projects on two major roads of the metropolis. Air pollution in the metropolis remained low since the onset of the Spring season as prolonged rainy weather helped in containing air pollutants in the atmosphere.

The Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) daily air quality report indicated a reduced ratio of air pollutants, recorded below permissible limits, and the air quality was healthy. The Agency is responsible to ensure the protection of the environment under the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act 1997.

The hazardous air pollutant particulate matter of 2.5 microns (PM2.5), which was a hazardous atmospheric contaminant, remained 14.46 microgrammes per cubic meter on average which was higher than the NEQS of 35 mic-programmes per cubic meter and denoted the air quality unhealthy.

Sherry refuses shifting IWMB to Interior Ministry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Tuesday refused to put the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) under the administrative control of the Ministry of Interior. The Board at present is a subsidiary department of the Climate Change Ministry.

She was expressing her views during the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change meeting chaired by Senator Seemee Ezdi.

Senator Rehman said the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board was not going under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior. Under the Islamabad Wildlife Management Ordinance of 1979, the Board was mandated to manage and protect the Margalla Hills National Park.

"As long as I am the Minister, I will not allow the Islamabad Wildlife Management

Board to be placed under the supervision of another Ministry," Sherry Rehman said.

She added that the Margalla Hills National Park was declared a protected area some 42 years ago and was considered a preserved zone.

She said Margalla Hills National Park needed to be demarcated to protect its habitat, wildlife and environment, adding, "We have to demarcate the national park to prevent illegal encroachment."

The Minister informed the Committee that on her request the nomenclature of the Ministry of Climate Change has been changed as the ministry played a liaison and coordination role in environmental projects and agreements with international countries and forums.

She added that now the Ministry of Environmental Change has been renamed as Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination.

Elaborate security arrangements planned for last Ashra of Ramazan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Police have made elaborate security arrangements for the last Ashra of Ramazan and decided to maintain high vigilance besides enhancing patrolling measures in the city.

According to the police source, it had been decided to ensure foolproof security arrangements during the last Ashra of Ramazan and maintain close coordination with the mosque committees and also furnish the list of faithful sitting in Aitikaif during the last Ashra.

It had been decided to

put in place special security arrangements to avert any untoward incidents at the sensitive worship places. Central Police Office had directed to intensify the campaign against professional beggars and not to allow gathering of beggars outside the worship places.

All Station House Officers (SHOs) have been directed to remain in contact with the mosque committees of their areas around the clock and extend full cooperation to them with regard to beefing up the security of worship

places. It had been also directed to deploy additional police contingents at the sensitive places and maintain strict vigilance at entry and exit points of the Capital. Moreover, SHOs had been asked to enhance coordination with members of committees of shopping centres, commercial areas and mosques. It had been asked to maintain coordination with security guards performing duties at markets and other places so that they might share any important information with them related to security.

Youm-e-Ali observed with religious fervor

RAWALPINDI (APP): Like the other parts of the country, Youm-e-Ali was observed with great zeal and fervour in Rawalpindi.

A total of 36 Majlis and 11 processions were held across the Rawalpindi region. The processions culminated peacefully after passing through traditional routes. The speakers shed over the teachings of Hazrat Ali (A.S.).

The life of Hazrat Ali exists as a practical example and enlightening commentary on the teachings of the Quran and the biography of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). The reason for this training is

that the reign of Amir al-momineen was a successful reign despite many crises. The scholars also highlighted his bravery, integrity, beliefs, morals, honesty and devotion to the religion of Islam and Humanity.

Strict security arrangements were in place for the mourners. Besides, policemen, women police and volunteers were deployed on the routes apart from sharpshooters who were keeping watch on the processions from the roofs of important buildings. The markets and buildings on procession routes were barricaded with barbed wires.

Rawalpindi district Police had chalked out a comprehensive security plan for Youm-e-Ali (A.S.) processions. CCTV cameras were also installed on procession routes. A special control room had also been set up for timely notification of all information throughout the region which was working round the clock, he added.

Over 600 police personnel were deployed to ensure the security of the Youm-e-Ali (A.S.) processions.

As per directives of the district administration all vehicles were parked 100 meters away from the routes of processions.

No one to be allowed to smuggle wheat, flour out of district: DC

RAWALPINDI (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema on Tuesday said that no one would be allowed to smuggle wheat and flour out of Rawalpindi District. He informed that the administration and the Food Department Rawalpindi today conducted a raid near Motorway and foiled a bid to smuggle 37 tonnes of wheat.

The administration, Food Department and district police were strictly monitoring all the exit points of the district to foil wheat and flour smuggling bids, he

added. The DC further informed that the administration had distributed over one million free flour bags among the poor and deserving citizens in the district.

He said that 11 mega centres were set up in Rawalpindi district to provide free flour to the citizens, adding over 316,000 families had been provided relief under the scheme.

Cheema said that the target was set for the distribution of free flour among more than 483,000 families, adding, more than 1.4 million bags of flour would be distributed in the district. The

DC said that all-out efforts were being made to ensure the smooth distribution of free flour bags and added that no untoward incident was reported in Rawalpindi. The distribution of free flour would continue till the 25th of Ramazan, he said, and informed that the administration was also taking strict action in accordance with the law against profiteers and hoarders. The administration had imposed fines amounting to over Rs 4 million on 1,325 profiteers while 318 shopkeepers were sent behind the bars for profiteering and not displaying the rate lists.



ISLAMABAD: Lawyers of Nankana Bar Association called on Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar.

Ancient gold, coins recovered

BADGHIS (Agencies): The intelligence forces have discovered 36 gold and silver historical coins in Sang Atash district of this Badghis says local officials at the Department of Information and Culture of that province. The provincial head of Information and Culture of Badghis, Akhundzada Mutiullah Mut-taqi, said that the coins recovered by the intelligence forces in the Kalori area of Sang Atash district, according to him 8 of the recovered coins are gold and rest are silver.

Tax facilities discussed

KABUL (Agencies): Deputy finance minister Mawlawi Ahmadullah Zahed met on Tuesday with Ghulam Reza Najari, Deputy Ambassador of Iran in Kabul. An agreement between Afghanistan and Iran regarding the non-receipt of additional taxes, tax facilities and the establishment of facilities in the customs ports of the two countries was discussed at the meeting. Najari pledged to reduce taxes, cooperate and to create facilities for Afghan businessmen in Iran.

Women banned from outdoor restaurants

HERAT (Khaama Press): In a recent move, the Taliban authorities banned the entry of families and women in restaurants with gardens and green spaces in the Herat Province of Afghanistan.

The Taliban barred entry of families and women into restaurants with gardens or green spaces in Herat province, Afghanistan.

The de facto government decided after receiving a complaint from the religious clerics. The Religious clerics complained that a crowd of men and women had been at such places.

While according to Afghan authorities, the curbs were imposed due to not wearing a headscarf (Hijab) and gender mixing. So far, the ban only

applies to restaurants with green spaces in Herat province.

Meanwhile, officials in Herat denied imposing restrictions for families and women in all restaurants, but saying that it only applies to those restaurants with green areas, such as parks, and eateries with green and garden spaces.

According to a deputy official, Baz Mohammad Nazir from the Ministry of Vice and Virtue's directorate in Herat denied media allegations that all eateries were off-limits to families and women, characterizing them as misinformation, reported Fox News.

Since the return of the Taliban in August 2021, several restrictions have

been imposed on women, including education, working with domestic and international institutions, gyms and open spaces.

Recently, the Taliban authorities banned Afghan female aid workers from working with the UN in the Nangarhar province of Afghanistan.

The ban on women's education and employment was confronted with massive criticism by regional and international organizations, and the suppressive policies of the Taliban were condemned.

However, the restrictions for female aid workers working with the UN continue, including the ban on girls' education beyond the sixth grade and university.

Ban on female education, Afghan girls turn to art



KABUL (TOLONews): Several female students have been taking painting classes since universities for girls and schools above the sixth grade were closed to them.

The girls said that they take painting classes at a center to ease stress.

"We were not very happy when our schools were closed, our mental state was bad, but when we take painting class we feel a little bit better," said Hangama, a student.

"They should motivate students, so they improve in any field they want," said Gina, another student.

When universities were

closed to women, Maryam was a second-year law and political science student. She said that she started painting as a way to relieve anxiety and despair.

"After the closure of the universities, I decided to do something because I had faced many mental and emotional problems. I came to this center and started painting," Maryam told TOLONews.

The owner of the painting art center said that this facility is only for women.

"When the schools were shut down for a year, they were unable to attend classes. We did not want their

skills to go to waste. We wanted to help them through art," said Muzhgan, owner of the center.

"Our purpose in setting up this center was that the girls who are around us and are interested in painting, learn this art," said Parwana, another owner of the center.

According to the owners of this center, so far students have painted fifty pieces.

This comes as more than 560 days have passed since the closure of girls' schools in the country, and there is no word on their reopening.

Earthquake rocks Hindu Kush, Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): An earthquake of 4.6 magnitudes jolted the Hindu Kush region, 30 km Jurm district of Badakhshan, Afghanistan, on Tuesday.

According to the US Geological Survey, the tremor of 4.6 magnitudes occurred at 8:07 am local time on Tuesday with the epicentre of the Hindu Kush region of Afghanistan, 30 km Jurm district of Badakhshan.

This is the fifth earthquake within the past seven days in Badakhshan province of Afghanistan.

No casualties have been reported so far.

The frequency of natural disasters, notably earthquakes, has increased the worry of local people and the need to be cautious.

The region is seismologically active and prone to natural disasters since it is approximate to the Chaman fault.

Last month, a strong earthquake hit Afghanistan and Pakistan with a magnitude of 6.5, killing at least 19 people and more than 200 injured.

The earthquake had financial damages, destroyed more than 656 residential buildings, and triggered landslides.

Natural disasters leave massive damage in the country due to poor infrastructure, response systems and transportation networks.

Survey for trans-Afghan railroad completed

KABUL (Pajhwok): Practical work on the trans-Afghan railway project connecting Central Asian countries with Afghanistan will get under way in the near future, officials say.

The project involving Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan is expected open up international trade routes and boost regional connectivity efforts.

The railroad agreement was signed in February 2021 to connect the former Soviet republics with South Asia via Kabul. The 573-km track is estimated to cost \$5.96 billion.

On Monday, the Afghanistan Railway Authority (ARA) announced the completion of a preliminary field survey for the portion of the track passing through the country.

The study was conducted in coordination with technical experts from Uzbekistan and Pakistan, ARA officials told a news conference in Kabul.

ARA head Bakht-ur-Rehman Sharafat told reporters the authority had collected 3.1 billion afghanis in revenue last year, when four million metric tonnes of cargo was transported through the country's railways.

The railway line will link Termez in Uzbekistan with Mazar-i-Sharif, Kabul and Peshawar.

Drug addicts reunited

BAGHLAN (Agencies): The counter-narcotics police of Baghlan said that 109 drug addicts reunited with their families after treatment in that province.

109 drug addicts were being under treatment for at least 45 days, said Mullah Muhammad Nabi Kamran, an official of counter-narcotics of Baghlan, adding that there is more addicts who soon will be return to their families after treatment.

Abdul Salam, a drug addicts, who after 45 days of treatment reunited with his families, said in an interview that his live, were ruined due to drug addiction.

He said that he has lost something and he wants other people to avoid drugs which a bad habit for human being.

The counter-narcotics officials of Baghlan say that they have provided medical treatment to over 1,800 addicts in the past year, and still striving to provide medical treatment to other drug addicts.

IEA supports all kinds of investment in technology sector, says Deputy PM



KABUL (Agencies): Deputy Prime Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, in a meeting with officials of MTN telecommunication company, said that the Islamic Emirate supports all kinds of investment in the telecommunications and technology sector in the country.

A meeting, attended by Mawlawi Najibullah Haqqani, Acting Telecommunications and Information Technology Minister held, said a statement released by Deputy PM Hanafi's office.

In this meeting, the general manager of M1 and MTN Group in the Middle East and North Africa, and Ismail Jarodi, the vice president of the group in the Middle East and North Africa, spoke about the operations of this company for 15 years. They termed Afghanistan as one of the countries where investment opportunities are provided we'll for investors.

For his part, Deputy Hanafi said that the Islamic Emirate supports all kinds

of foreign investment in Afghanistan. He praised the MTN company's investment in the sector of telecommunications, and said that the Islamic Emirate will always support investment in different sectors, mainly in the technology sectors and telecommunication networks.

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Rights activists urge UN to pressure Taliban on women's rights

KABUL (Khaama Press): In a press conference, the Afghanistan Women Protester Movement coalition asked the UN to pressure the de facto government to respect women's rights.

The Press conference by the Women Protester Movement Coalition held in Kabul responded to the Taliban's recent ban on women's aid workers in United Nations agencies.

The Women's Movement Coalition protested the UN's inability to defend women's rights in the face of Taliban's restrictions and asked the organization to suspend its operations in Afghanistan until women are allowed to work.

"Stop political engagement and suspend UNAMA operations in Afghanistan. If you can't defend the rights of your staff, you cannot be effective," the statement said.

Furthermore, the statement also asked the UN and international community to take unified and robust action against the de facto government to hold them accountable concerning women's rights. "Abandon unconditional engagement with the Taliban and use all

means and leverage to hold them accountable for their human rights violations, the statement read. The protest came after the de facto government banned Afghan female aid workers in Nangarhar province.

The ban on women's aid workers faced massive

global condemnation and asked the Taliban to reverse its decision immediately. However, the Taliban authorities have not changed their decisions yet.

On the other hand, the UN asked all its employees to stay home until further notice.



UN Afghan staff to stay home another 26 days: Source

KABUL (TOLONews): The suspension of work of the UN Afghan national staff in Afghanistan has been extended for another 26-days, a source privy to the issue told TOLONews.

Source said the Afghan employees of the UN will continue their work from home. The move to suspend work for 48 hours was made in solidarity with the female Afghan UN staff—which has been extended until May 5 of this year.

According to the source,

very few of the UN employees in Afghanistan come to work to do the essential duties. However, the Islamic Emirate has not yet commented on this.

"All of the decisions that the UN has taken over the past two years did not have any result. This issue will also not have any result. The Taliban knows that the work will proceed anyway whether it is through the office or home. So, the UN should press the Taliban somehow and make them

lift the decision regarding women in Afghanistan," said Ay Noorbik, a women's rights defender. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said on Twitter that female UN staff members are "essential to carry out our work, including the delivery of life-saving aid."

"The voices of women and girls remain underrepresented in humanitarian decision-making. But when they are included, the outcomes are stronger for all,"

he said.

"When the people are losing their jobs either in the private sector or charity committee or government departments, it can have a major impact on the lives of the people," said Seyar Qureshi, an economist.

"It is necessary for the continuation of this aid that facilities should be provided and there should be no excuse to create obstacles against this aid," said Azeraksh Hafizi, an economist.

Turkey deports 365 illegal Afghan migrants



KABUL (Khaama Press): 365 Afghan migrants were reportedly deported in the previous two days from Turkey.

Turkish media reported on Monday that 365 illegal migrants who were recently deported from Turkey, 138 of them on Saturday and 277 of them on Sunday, arrived at Kabul from

Aghra City by an Afghan plane.

Earlier in January, over 68290 Afghan nationals were deported from Turkey, out of 124,441 illegal immigrants during the past year, said the General Directorate of Migration in Turkey.

Most Refugees flee the country due to the fear of

prosecution, security threats, poor economic and unemployment.

Since the return of the Taliban to power, most Afghan refugees have immigrated to neighbouring countries, including Iran, Pakistan and Turkey, due to economic purposed or to flee from prosecution by the de facto regime.

Most Afghan immigrants chose illegal entry, and after they arrived at their destination, after months of uncertainty, they must now live in fear of being forcibly deported and imprisoned.

Similarly, Iran and Pakistan also deport Afghan refugees or put them in jail due to a lack of travel documents. Meanwhile, Pakistan has imprisoned hundreds of Afghan refugees, including women and children, and even the matter was viral on social media.

However, Pakistan and Iran have hosted millions of Afghans in recent decades.

‘We need \$800m in urgent aid to help Afghanistan’

KABUL (Agencies): The World Food Program (WFP) says it urgently needs \$800 million to help Afghanistan in the next six months. This appeal comes on the heels of the Islamic Emirate's ban on women working for the United Nations in the country. WFP says however that female aid workers play a vital role in delivering food aid and it will do "everything possible" to ensure that its female employees continue to work. The United Nations meanwhile said its operations in Afghanistan are severely underfunded. It is reported that the United Nations has received approval for \$249 million for 2023. This figure is almost a third of the amount received in 2022. Afghanistan is grappling with drought for the third year in a row and a crippling economic downturn for the second year. The country is also still suffering from decades of conflict and natural disasters.

Nangarhar farmers hurt by drop in onion prices

J A L A L A B A D (TOLONews): The price of onions has decreased by 50% in Nangarhar markets and farmers in this province said that the decrease in the price of onions has made them face huge financial losses.

"We ask the government to increase foreign onion customs tariffs when it is onion season so the sales of our country's produce will not be damaged," said Khapalwak, a farmer.

"We call on the government and organizations to help provide us with cold storage for our products," said Shams Rahman, an investor.

Some vegetable sellers are happy about the decrease in onion prices and said that previously the price of onions had

increased in th country. "Two months ago, the price of 7 kg of onions reached 650 Afghani, and now it is reduced by 50 percent so 7 Kg of onion is 350 Afghani," said Abdullah.

Meanwhile, the Agriculture and Irrigation Department said that work on building a big cold storage area has begun in this province. "Before when we had cold storage there was

the capacity to keep 5,000 tons of products and now we want to rebuild it," said Nematullah Akbari, head of the agriculture services in the Agriculture and Irrigation Department.





RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir inspecting various projects during his visit to Heavy Industries Taxila.

Retationship between PPP, journalists unbreakable, says Memon

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon on Tuesday hosted an Iftar-dinner in honor of the journalists at the Karachi Press Club here.

Provincial Labor Minister Saeed Ghani, Information Secretary Sindh Nadeer Rehman Memon, office bearers of All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors (CPNE), Karachi Press Club President Saeed Sarbazi, Secretary Shoaib Ahmed and other notables, besides a large number of journalists from various newspapers, television channels, magazines and organizations were also present.

Speaking on the occasion, Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon welcomed all the journalists present at the Iftar-dinner on behalf of the Sindh government and said that the relationship between PPP and journalists is unbreakable. He said that Pakistan People's Party and journalists have joined the struggle for the cause of democracy, rule of law, freedom of expression and public rights in this country and the role of journalists has been very important in the restoration of democracy in Pakistan.

He said that the relationship between Pakistan People's Party and journalists will always remain strong. The leadership of Pakistan People's Party, our chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Sindh Cabinet members and all our workers are with our journalist brothers in their struggle, he added. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Pakistan People's Party established the journalists' housing societies keeping in view the problems of housing issues of journalists.

He said that steps will also be taken to provide plots for the new members of Karachi Press Club and to annual increase the grant of Karachi Press Club. Sharjeel Inam Memon also hinted to introduce another route of the People's Bus Service from different areas of Karachi up to the Karachi Press Club to facilitate the journalists.

He said that yesterday, the April 10, was the most important day for those who consider the Constitution of Pakistan as important and sacred document when Golden Jubilee Celebrations of 1973 Constitution of Pakistan were held at the Parliament House to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Constitution. We all know the Constitution is the most important document that laid the foundation of a democratic system in the country, he said. He said that Parliament is the most sacred institution because the state functions on the laws enacted by the Parliament.

He said that former chief justice Saqib Nisar kept meeting Imran Khan and his cabinet members. The matters of dam fund should be disclosed before the people, he said, added, under which law the dam fund was collected. He said that the president is doing unconstitutional and illegal work and the President seems more like a worker of the Tiger Force than the President of the country.

IMF cuts Pakistan's GDP growth rate

NEW YORK (Agencies): As the economic situation remains gloomy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) slashed Pakistan's real GDP growth rate projection from 2% to 0.5% for the current fiscal year.

In the latest World Economic Outlook (WEO) report released on Tuesday, the IMF forecast that the country's GDP growth rate would be 3.5% in fiscal year 2024. In its last report issued in January, the lender had downgraded the growth projection to 2% from 3.5%. The IMF report forecast that inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), would be recorded around 27.1% in FY23 and fall to 21.9% in FY24.

Meanwhile, the current account deficit (CAD) was forecast to clock in at 2.3% and 2.4% in FY23 and FY24, respectively. The IMF's downgrading comes days after the World Bank and Asian Development Bank lowered Pakistan's growth rate projections to 0.4% and 0.6%, respectively. The country's economy has been struggling to recover, with inflation at a decades-high level and several companies shutting down or reducing operations citing the economic situation. The delay in the release of an economic bailout by the IMF is adding to the uncertain situation.

The international lender lowered its outlook for the global economy as well, while predicting that most countries would avoid a recession this year despite economic and geopolitical concerns. The IMF predicted the global economy would grow by 2.8% this year and 3% in 2024, a decline of 0.1% from its previous forecasts in January.

"The global economy is recovering from the shocks of the last few years, and particularly of course the pandemic, but also the Russian invasion of Ukraine," IMF chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas said in a press briefing ahead of the report's release. The leadership of the World Bank and IMF hope to use this year's spring meetings to promote an ambitious reform and fundraising agenda. But their efforts will likely be overshadowed by concerns among member states over high inflation, rising geopolitical tension, and financial stability.

The overall picture painted by the WEO is a gloomy one, with global growth forecast to slow in both the short and medium terms. Close to 90% of advanced economies will experience slowing growth this year, while Asia's emerging markets are expected to see a substantial rise in economic output — with India and China predicted to account for half of all growth, IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva said last week.

Low-income countries, meanwhile, are expected to suffer a double shock from higher borrowing costs due to high-interest rates, and a decline in demand for their exports, Georgieva said. This could worsen poverty and hunger. The IMF expects global inflation to slow to 7% this year, down from 8.7% last year, according to the WEO forecasts. This figure remains significantly above the 2% target set by the US Federal Reserve and other central banks around the world, suggesting monetary policymakers have a long way to go before inflation is brought back under control.

The IMF's baseline forecasts assume that the financial instability sparked by the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank last month has been broadly contained by the "forceful actions" of regulators on both sides of the Atlantic, Gourinchas told reporters. But he added that central banks and policymakers have an important role to play to buttress financial stability going forward. Looking forward, the IMF forecasts that global growth will fall to 3% in 2028, its lowest medium-term forecast since the 1990s.

Slowing population growth and the end of the era of economic catch-up by several countries including China and South Korea are a large part of the expected slowdown, as are concerns about low productivity in many countries, according to Daniel Leigh, who heads the World Economic Studies division in the IMF's Research Department. "A lot of the low-hanging fruit was picked," he told reporters ahead of the publication of the World Economic Outlook. "On top of that now, with the geopolitical tensions and fragmentation, this is going to also weigh on growth," he said.

Justice Isa responds to objections over attending special NA session

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Justice Qazi Faez Isa, senior puisne judge of the Supreme Court (SC), issued a clarification on Tuesday regarding his presence at a national constitutional special convention held at the National Assembly (NA) hall the previous day to mark the golden jubilee of the Constitution of Pakistan.

Along the same lines, he said in his clarification issued today that before him accepting the invitation to the convention, "enquiries were made as to whether there would be political speeches". The judge said assurances were given to him and his staff that "only the Constitution and its making would be

spoken about" at the event and the programme sent to him also confirmed this.

"Having cleared this point, first by my staff from the deputy director of the National Assembly, and then by me with the speaker, I accepted the invitation as I wanted to show solidarity with the Constitution," he said. Moreover, Justice Isa said, he had been asked if he would like to speak at the event, and he had declined. "However, when political statements were made (in a few speeches), I requested to speak to correct any misconceptions that may arise, and I did so."

He also clarified that he was not the only top court judge invited to the event,

but "all the judges of the Supreme Court were invited to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Constitution". The judge expressed surprise over objections to his presence at a function to commemorate the Constitution and where he sat at the event. "Surprisingly, some have objected to where I sat and/or my presence at the function to commemorate the Constitution.

"I would have preferred to sit in the hall on one side or in the gallery, but respect was shown to a member of the judiciary by seating me at the centre; I did not choose to sit there." Justice Isa also emphasised the significance of the Constitution in his statement.

SC receives ECP's report on non-provision of funds for polls

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) submitted on Tuesday a report to the Supreme Court on the non-provision of election funds as the federal government failed to release the finances to hold polls in Punjab.

A three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial had directed the electoral body to hold elections in Punjab on May 14, and the federal government to provide funds worth Rs21 billion to ECP by April 10. The report was submitted to the SC's Registrar's Office in a sealed envelope, which will be sent to the chambers of CJP Bandial, Justice Ijaz ul

Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar.

It may be noted that the top court had warned of action in case of non-compliance with the orders. Despite the orders, the government failed to meet the deadline set by the apex court as the ECP has not yet been financed. Instead of providing the funds in time, the government on Monday tabled a bill seeking approval of funds for the elections in both Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. As per the decision of the federal cabinet, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar introduced the money bill, saying that the government was laying the bill before the house in the light of the Supreme Court orders to

release Rs21 billion to the ECP to hold a general election in the two provinces.

The finance minister said the federal cabinet, in its recent meeting, pondered over the SC orders and, in view of the house's resolution, sought the will of Parliament to take a final decision regarding the allocation of funds for the Punjab and KP general election. The move came after the SC had declared the ECP's decision on the Punjab and KP elections null and void, while ordering it to hold snap polls — a persistent demand forced by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan after he dissolved the assemblies in both the provinces.

Mediators welcome Zardari's talks offer

F.P. Report

LAHORE: The Mediators welcome new positive indications for initiating a dialogue between the government and the opposition over the next elections.

Appreciating former President Asif Ali Zardari's willingness for a political dialogue with the opposition and former Prime Minister Imran Khan's readiness to participate in such negotiations, The Mediators appeal to the Shehbaz Sharif government to invite PTI Chairman Imran Khan for an open dialogue both in and outside the parliament.

However, we call upon the adversaries to soften the bitter personalized rhetoric and take some confidence-building measures to create a congenial environment for productive talks. We call on the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the National Assembly to find a way to allow the full participation of PTI MNAs in the crucial last phase of this outgoing Parliament to take sovereign charge of the matters related to the general elections.

We hope this gesture will bring the Parliament to the center stage of resolving the constitutional and political crises facing the nation and ease the brewing tension between the legislature and the judiciary. In the meanwhile, civil society and The Mediators will continue to make their efforts to help bridge the gulf between the coalition partners and PTI to come to the negotiation table. Such efforts by any quarter are welcome. We hope Asif Ali Zardari's pro-talks stance may become ice-breaking and help others to shed bitterness and reciprocate with flexibility. This communiqué is signed by Office bearers of Pakistan Bar Council, PFUI, CPNE, Joint Action Committee for People's Rights, woman Action Forum and over 100 civil society organizations, and the leaders of Awami Workers Party, National Party, BNP-M, PKMAP and other parties.

Court remands Gandapur to police

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A district and sessions court in the federal capital on Tuesday remanded Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) firebrand leader Ali Amin Gandapur in police custody for two days in a case filed against him for allegedly threatening government officials and institutions with dire consequences.

Announcing the reserved verdict, Judicial Magistrate Ehtsham Alam Khan handed Gandapur over to the cops of Police Station Golra Sharif. The former federal minister was picked up from outside the Peshawar High Court's Dera Ismail Khan bench on Thursday and sent on a six-day judicial remand. The officials of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) reached the local court to arrest Gandapur, but the PTI leader would be arrested after his discharge from the case at Golra Police Station.

Gandapur is currently under custody in a case registered at Golra Police Station. It must be noted that the investigation officer has requested the court to grant a 10-day physical remand for the PTI stalwart. Earlier, Gandapur was produced before the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) after a one-day physical remand. The hearing started in the court of Raja Jawad Abbas, the ATC judge.

The ATC judge informed the defendant that terrorism provisions had been deleted from the case. The judge also asked Gandapur if he was subjected to any physical harm during police custody. To which, the PTI leader said no he was not. The judge said the accused could be presented before the relevant court after the removal of the terrorism provisions. As soon as the judge said this, a junior lawyer representing Gandapur prayed to the court to wait for Advocate Babar Awan, who was expected shortly, to join the court proceedings.

To this, the judge said: "Do you want the terrorism provisions not to be removed?" "We want to argue why the time of the court was wasted by adding terrorism provisions in the first place," the assistant lawyer said.

Kh Asif: TTP still using Afghan soil for attacks in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said that the proscribed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) is still using Afghan soil for launching attacks on Pakistan — especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

"Islamabad has good relations with the ruling Taliban government in Kabul. However, the Afghan authorities have not succeeded in stopping the use of their territory in attacks on Pakistan," he said in an interview with the US broadcaster, Voice of America. The matter, the federal minister said, had been brought up and discussed last month when a meeting between a high-ranking delegation — including Asif and the ISI DG Lt Gen Nadeem Anjum — and Afghan officials.

"During the meeting", the defence minister said, "The Taliban expressed their determination to deal with this problem." The Afghan authorities said that they would not allow their land to be used for terrorism against any country,

Asif added.

He further said that he believed the Afghan Taliban were "distancing" themselves from the proscribed outfit, however, due to the fact that they fought against Nato together in the past, certain "camaraderie" exists between the two sides. During his interview, Asif also alleged that the resettlement of TTP leaders in Pakistan was done through a "programme".

"[Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman and former prime minister] Imran Khan has been signalling throughout his political career that he is ideologically supportive of the Taliban. At various points, the international media has even referred to him as 'Taliban Khan'," he said.

He added that the TTP was in possession of the advanced equipment left behind by the US after its withdrawal, further alleging that India too is still helping them. Stating that the people of tribal areas and KP were not ready to 'co-exist' with the Taliban,

the defence minister said: "It is noteworthy that people are protesting unarmed against the return of the Taliban."

He also shared that the Taliban were "undermining their gains through restrictions on women". Speaking on the matter of the political scenario in Pakistan, Asif said that Khan's "stance keeps changing". "Imran Khan is blaming the army. I don't know where Imran Khan stands regarding the US and the army at this time. Starting from America, he has now reached the Punjab IG for conspiring against him.

"I don't understand from his recent statements, whether he stands with the establishment or not, and whether he wants negotiations with the government or not. "There is no clear stand for them. Asad Qaiser and others talk about dialogue. It should be a national dialogue in which the establishment, the media, and members of civil society are present. Only then can national dialogue be successful."

Alvi okays appointment of 6 additional judges in SHC

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday approved the appointment of six additional judges in the Sindh High Court.

The appointment of Amjad Ali Bohio, Muhammad Abdul Rehman, Khadim Hussain Soomro, Arbab Ali Hakro, Jawad Akbar Sarwana, and Sana Akram Minhass as additional judges in the Sindh High Court was approved for one year. The president extended approval of the appointments on the advice of the prime minister under Article 175-A of the constitution.

President directs USC to employ deceased employee's son: President Dr Arif Alvi has directed the Utility Stores Corporation (USC) of Pakistan to appoint the son of a deceased employee under the Prime Minister's Assistance Package.

The President gave these directions while accepting a representation filed by Mr Rizwan Ullah (the complainant) whose late father

(Bakhtawar Shah) was employed in the Agency and died during service in 2009. The complainant had applied for appointment against the deceased employees' children quota under Prime Minister's Assistance Package but to no avail.

Feeling aggrieved, he approached Wafaqi Mohtasib who rejected his complaint stating that since his father died on 28-12-2009 before the adoption of the package w.e.f. 01-07-2012, therefore, the policy was not applicable to the complainant. Mr Rizwan Ullah then filed a representation with the President, which was accepted. The President in his decision observed that the Agency had already provided a job to another deceased employee's son under the Prime Minister's Assistance Package whereas his father died on 08-02-2012 before the adoption of the policy by the Agency, adding that the Corporation could not deny similar treatment to the complainant.

He further noted that

PM's Assistance Package was issued vide Establishment Division's OM in 2006 and amendments thereafter were made from time to time. He stated that the Agency adopted the Package w.e.f from 01-07-2012 but it was not clear whether it adopted the package of 2006 or any other thereafter. He also referred to the Establishment Division's O.M. dated 17-04-2018 wherein it had been explained that the widow/widower or a child of a civil servant who died during service may be entitled to apply for contract appointment as per the maximum age limit prescribed for initial Appointment to Civil Posts.

The President concluded that the Mohtasib had overlooked these important aspects of the matter, therefore, its orders were being set aside and Utility Stores Corporation was directed to process the case of the complainant for appointment under the PM's Assistance Package at the earliest.



MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Tanveer Ilyas leaving court after disqualification.

Holding of polls within 90 days in KP: PTI approaches PHC

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Mushtaq Ahmad Ghani approached Peshawar High Court (PHC) for announcement of General Election to the provincial assembly within 90 days, following Supreme Court of Pakistan judgement for holding election into Punjab assembly because both provincial assemblies were prematurely dissolved by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf in January 2023.

Barrister Gohar Khan filed writ petition on behalf of Mushtaq Ghani and Asad Umar along with PTI as a party in which Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), Federation of Pakistan through secretaries, Finance, Interior, Law, Justice& Parliamentary Affairs, President of Pakistan Governor and Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa made respondents.

The petitioners are aggrieved of and dissatisfied with actions and omissions as well as unlawful exercise of power by the Respondents including Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wrote letter to ECP dated 24th March 2023 deciding election date for general election to KP Assembly 8th October 2023, while the election commission immediately consented and notified polls date on 27th March 2023.

The petition argued that aforesaid impugned letters and notification are not tenable in law and liable to be set aside by honorable court and fresh date not later than 90 days of dissolution of Assembly or the barest minimum of that timeframe to be announced for holding general election to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.

The applicants stated that Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has not appointed the date as mandated by the Constitution and as inter alia directed by SCP vide its order dated; 1st

March 2023 and added that impugned letter dated; 24 March 2023 is therefore without lawful authority and of no legal effect.

Likewise, ECP has no jurisdiction or power to amend the Constitution and decide to hold elections to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly or to any other assembly beyond the period of 90 days as mandated by the Constitution. ECP's impugned notification dated; 27th March 2023 notifying Election Date for KP Assembly as 08th October 2023is unlawful, illegal and without lawful authority.

The reason given by ECP or Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa having conceded those reasons that the finances are not available or that law and order situation in the country is not conducive to hold the elections, with respect, legally flawed and a disingenuous excuse to delay the election because such reason is not recognized in the Constitution for delaying the elections.