

Nawaz reaches Jeddah
JEDDAH (Agencies): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo and former three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif has reached Jeddah from London on Wednesday. Maryam Nawaz, Hassan Nawaz, Junaid Safdar and other members of the Sharif family welcomed him at Jeddah International Airport. Nawaz Sharif along with his family will go to perform Umrah after taking some rest.

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Earthquake shakes AJK
MUZAFFARABAD (INP): An earthquake of mild intensity shook many cities of Azad Jammu and Kashmir including its capital Muzaffarabad on Wednesday. The earthquake which was measured at 4.0 on the Richter scale with its epicentre 14 kms northeast of Muzaffarabad and having a depth of 10 kms struck the region at 9:40 am. According to the National Centre for Seismology, the tremors were felt in AJK cities.

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PM reviews free flour distribution at centres

F.P. Report

D G KHAN: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday visited the free flour distribution centre here as well as in Muzaffargarh and reviewed the overall arrangements for the facilitation of the beneficiaries.

The prime minister inquired about the problems faced by the beneficiaries of the scheme gathered there to receive free flour bags under the PM's Special Ramadan Package and directed the authorities concerned to immediately resolve all their issues. Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb also accompanied him.

During his visit, the prime minister was informed that so far, some 4.9 million flour bags had been distributed among the deserving families in the Dera Ghazi Khan Division. On the occasion, the prime minister said the distribution process of free flour was going on smoothly under the supervision of the Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister.

He also directed giving priority to women, the elderly and the handicapped during the distribution process. He also personally distributed free flour bags among the elderly as well as differently-abled people. PM Shehbaz said the country was facing challenges but with the blessings of the Almighty, the coalition government was on track to steer it out of the crisis.

He said for the first time in history,

the government was providing free flour to the needy. After Ramadan, he said the government would continue subsidies on wheat flour for the deserving. He also expressed his resolve to build Pakistan as per the vision of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Allama Muhammad Iqbal.

Meanwhile, representatives of the Girls Guide Association also met with the prime minister at the distribution point. The prime minister was informed that the Association - a representative forum of girls' colleges of the district - was actively supporting the distribution process by guiding the people. Shabbaz Sharif announced to provide a bus to the girls' guide training centre and promised the development of the training centre. The prime minister was informed that 5,000 girls were registered under the girls' guide campaign in the DG Khan division.

Commissioner DG Khan Dr Nasir Mahmood Bashir gave a detailed briefing to the PM stating that over 4.8 million free wheat flour bags have so far been distributed among the poor people through 44 centres set up in all the four districts including DG Khan, Layyah, Rajanpur and Muzaffargarh. In Muzaffargarh, the prime minister was briefed by Deputy Commissioner Salman Khan Lodhi about the flour distribution process.

During an interaction with the beneficiaries, the prime minister sought

their feedback about the facilities available at the distribution center established at Faisal Stadium. He also directed for immediate redressal of the issues faced by the people in availing government's welfare scheme. The prime minister personally monitored the distribution process and also gave away flour bags to the elderly people and women who highly appreciated the government particularly PM Shehbaz Sharif for launching the free flour scheme.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, directed the officials concerned to launch cardiac surgery services at Recep Tayyip Erdogan Hospital soon. He said that health facility was one of the mega health projects during his last tenure as Punjab Chief Minister.

He expressed these views during his visit to the Hospital here. The Prime Minister ordered the Hospital administration to make other departments operational to extend more facilities to the masses. Flanked by Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Marriyum Aurangzeb, the prime minister inspected emergency, surgical wards, operation theatres, ICU and CSSD and inquired from the patients hailing from Layyah, Bahawalnagar and Multan about the healthcare facilities being extended to them at the health facility. They expressed satisfaction over the facilities. The Prime Minister instructed the administration to further improve it.



D G KHAN: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif interacting with an elder person during his visit to free flour distribution centre.

3 terrorist killed during IBO in Bajaur

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Security Forces conducted an Intelligence Based Operation in general area Loesum, District Bajaur. During conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and terrorists. Resultantly, 3 x terrorists were sent to hell.

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in multiple terrorist activities against security forces as well as extortion and target killings of innocent citizens. Locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to security forces, determined to eliminate menace of terrorism from the area.

Pak likely to get UAE 'assurance'

ISLAMABAD (INP): Good news for cash-strapped Pakistan, as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is likely to give written assurance to Islamabad for external financing of \$1 billion this week, sources said.

Islamabad has been negotiating with the IMF since the end of January for the release of \$1.1 billion from a \$6.5 billion bailout package agreed upon in 2019. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had demanded of the Pakistani government to get a written guarantee from the friendly countries for the deposit to unlock the stalled loan programme.

The development follows after Finance Minister Ishaq Dar specially requested UAE authorities for assurance, the source said. They further say the finance secretary will brief the IMF officials during a meeting with them in Washington. On April 6, it was reported that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) confirmed that it has received confirmation from Saudi Arabia on \$2 billion in additional deposits to Pakistan. They further said that the Saudi authorities are all set to make a public announcement, probably during the upcoming visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to the kingdom.

Supreme Court Practice, Procedure Bill

SC forms larger bench to hear plea

a judicial note, later said that the bench did not "constitute a constitutional court".

The cause list issued today showed that three petitions have been filed under Article 184(3) of the Constitution by Advocate Muhammad Shafay Mu-nir, Raja Amer Khan, Chaudhry Ghulam Hussain and others.

Article 184(3) of the Constitution sets out the SC's original jurisdiction, and enables it to assume jurisdiction in matters involving a question of "public importance" with reference to the "enforcement of any of the fundamental rights" of Pakistan's citizens. The petition filed by Advocate Mu-nir insisted that the plea had been filed to safeguard and secure the Constitution and independence of the judiciary.

He contended that the petitioner believed in the supremacy of the Constitution, the rule of

law, and independence of the judiciary and had always strived and struggled to protect the Constitution, independence of the judiciary and fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution. The respondents named in the petition included the federal government through the secretaries of law, Senate and National Assembly.

After the pleas were fixed for hearing, PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry tweeted: "Now that the chief justice of Pakistan has formed a bench comprising a majority of judges of the Supreme Court, people who considered a larger bench a solution to problems will hopefully be satisfied."

Meanwhile, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Interior and PML-N leader Attaullah Tarar said, "Fixing a law that has not been enforced yet for hearing before a like-minded bench at a lightning speed is an insult to parliament."

Non-provision of funds: SC summons finance secy, AGP

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday issued notices to the finance secretary, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Jameel Ahmad, Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Awan and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) over the government's failure to disburse Rs21 billion in funds for polls in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a notice issued by the SC registrar today, the apex court noted that the report submitted by the ECP yesterday stated "no funds have at all been released and provided to it as required by the order of the court". "The failure of the federal government to comply with the order of the court as aforesaid is prima facie disobedience," it observed. "The consequences that can flow from such prima facie defiance of the court are well settled and known.

"Every person who

embarks upon, encourages or instigates disobedience or defiance of the court can be held liable and accountable," the notice pointed out. It highlighted that the "disobedience" by the federal government would put the conduct of timely elections as mandated by the Constitution in "jeopardy".

"The question of the provision of funds for such a vital constitutional purpose is something that requires immediate attention which takes priority over proceeding against those who may have committed contempt of the court," the SC said. Subsequently, the court issued a notice to the SBP governor and the next senior most official of the bank and directed them to appear before the chamber of the judges on Friday, April 14, at 11am. It directed them to bring the record and details of money owned by the federal government lying with or under the control, custody or management of the central bank.

The court also issued notices to the AGP, the finance secretary and the "next most senior official" in the Finance Ministry for an in-person appearance the same day. "The said officials shall bring with them all the relevant record and shall place before the court a detailed report as to why the order of the court made in para 5 of Const. P. 5/2023 has not been complied with, as stated by the commission," it said. Issuing similar notices to the ECP secretary and director general law, the court directed them to prepare and submit the full record pertaining to the general elections to the Punjab and KP assemblies.

Though the contents of the report submitted by the ECP in court yesterday are not known, a source privy to the information told media that the one-page report informed the apex court about the government's reluctance to issue the Rs21 billion needed for the purpose.

IMF 'expresses trust' in reaching pact with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Wednesday expressed confidence in reaching a staff-level agreement (SLA) soon with Pakistan as the nation faces one of its worst economic turmoils.

IMF Director Middle East and Central Asia Department Jihad Azour's made the comments during a meeting with the Pakistani delegation, which is present in the United States to attend the IMF/World Bank Spring meetings. Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar attended the meeting through Zoom from Islamabad, a statement from the Finance Division said.

"Jihad Azour [...] expressed his confidence that Staff Level Agreement (SLA) will be signed soon followed by the IMF Board's approval," the statement mentioned, which comes as a ray of hope for the struggling country. Azour hoped that Pakistan would continue towards its progress on the reforms in various sectors and complete the programme.

Govt always upheld right to free speech as sacred cause

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday said that enforcement of ethics, especially during the coverage of acts of terrorism, was a global code as well as part of the national law.

Using her twitter handle, she said some concerns had been expressed regarding a recent order issued by Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) about coverage ethics of violent scenes

involving acts of terrorism and their aftermath.

"The order prohibits broadcasting gory scenes, dead bodies, wreckage, and live images from the spot only to avoid spreading fear and panic among the masses, which is always the real aim and design of the terrorists," she maintained. The minister said that this boundary was set all over the world and every responsible media body and organization adheres to them across the board, without exception. "Live coverage of terrorism inci-

dents, and spots amplifies terrorism impact and divulges sensitive post-operation information to the miscreants", she remarked.

"We have always upheld the right to free speech as a sacred cause and fought against attempts to curtail this right. We are committed to this principle," she said. However, she stressed that responsible journalism seeks to follow ethics during the coverage of terrorism. This she said "we owe (as a responsibility) to the victims of terrorism.

Sherman writes to Blinken about 'HRs violations' in Pakistan

WASHINGTON (Agencies): United States Congressman Brad Sherman has written to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, voicing concerns over "democracy, human rights, and rule of law" violations in Pakistan, it emerged on Wednesday.

In a letter dated April 11, Sherman asked Blinken to "guide the United States' Pakistan policy toward a greater commitment to human rights and to use all US diplomatic channels to urge Pakistani authorities to investigate the alleged abuses and to hold accountable anybody who may be responsible". "I urge the authorities to make sure that going forward political figures or citizens who simply want to demonstrate are not subjected to anti-democratic conse-

quences," he added. He highlighted several alleged cases of human rights violations in Pakistan, including cases against PTI Chairman Imran Khan and media ban on his speeches, detention of protesters, the alleged torture of PTI leader Shahbaz Gill and journalist Jameel Farooqi, and the recent arrest of PTI leader Ali Amin Gandapur.

The letter also mentioned the delay in Punjab and KP elections — terming it "another sign of skirting democratic processes" — as well as Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah's statement that "either he (Imran) will be eliminated from the political arena or us (PML-N)". It said: "The United States does not involve itself in Pakistan's internal governmental matters — I

respect its Constitution and its democratic process — but we must not shy away from raising our voice when the human rights of the Pakistani people are at stake. It recalled Human Rights Watch's statement asking for "urgent investigations into Mr Gill's complaints" and questioning sedition charges against him. Regarding the ban on broadcasting Imran's speeches, Sherman also recalled Amnesty International's statement that called it a "disturbing demonstration of targeting critical voices".

On the matter of election delay, Sherman mentioned the government's demand for a full-court bench and said "scholars argue that such an en banc review is not called for by Pakistani law". He added it "would

be helpful if the foreign law experts at the State Department could confirm this conclusion". The letter also listed various other "concerns about conduct by the government or its agents" such as extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, political prisoners, serious restrictions on internet freedom, substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly, severe restrictions of religious freedom, threats of violence targeting LGBT+ persons among others.

PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry hailed Sherman's letter in a tweet, saying, "Letter by a senior member of USA Congress Foreign Affairs committee to Secretary Blinken shows the growing concerns of international community on the HR abus-

es in Pakistan by a fascist government." He called on the European Union and United Kingdom parliamentarians to "raise [the] issue of human rights abuses in their jurisdictions as well".

Recently, Congresswoman Elissa Slotkin said she was working towards getting the support of 100 Congress members to write to Blinken asking him to "push for democratic values" in Pakistan. Following the PTI's efforts to improve its image in the US and inform the international community of the crackdown against the party at the hands of the PDM government, a number of US representatives and leaders have been voicing their concerns, echoing the PTI's grievances.

PTI leaders in the United Kingdom and Europe have also sprung into action by staging protests, writing to MPs and speaking with human rights organisations to inform them about the government's actions against the PTI. In August 2022, the PTI US chapter hired a public relations firm to improve its image in the US after Imran's ouster-related allegations portrayed the PTI as anti-American. The agreement revealed that the party was to pay the firm \$25,000-\$30,000 per month. Similarly, it was revealed last month that the PTI in March 2023 had hired a second lobbying firm in the US to make Americans aware of the threat to Imran's life.



Civil servants should be symbol of honesty, dedication: governor

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman has said that the civil servants should be a symbol of honesty, rightfulness, dedication and nobility.

Addressing the passing out of 50th Common Training Programme as the chief guest held at the Civil Services Academy (CSA) here on Wednesday, he said the officers had chosen their profession as the civil service so they should act like a public servants not masters. He said that serving the nation was a sacred responsibility so officers should remain humble.

“Your hardwork has brought you here where you are an honour and asset for the nation,” he said.

“You are hope for the nation as well and I hope you will play your role in development of the country by putting all of your energy and knowledge,” the governor added.

He said that recipe of the success in life was character and perseverance, adding that determination

and perseverance were reflection of patience.

“Continuity is very important and continuous improvement plays a vital role in the lives,” he said and stressed the participants to remain firm and preserving. The governor said that collaboration in work improved quality of work so the managers of the country should work in collaboration.

Talking about modern technology and artificial intelligence, he said that it was period of social media which used technology and artificial intelligence and several fake information was also shared through this so it was responsibility of the civil servants differentiate between truth and fake. The officers should also tackle the situations with innovative ideas to resolve issues, he said.

He said that poverty was a global problem and the international community had set the target to eliminate poverty from society so it was a joint responsibility to join hands to eradicate

poverty from lives of the common man.

The governor said that short of funds was a permanent issue for the government as the government had less resources, but, a good manager always worked with the given resources in a better way. He said that founder of Akhuwat Foundation Amjad Saqib was an example who contributed a lot despite the limited resources.

He said that education and health sectors were two important and prominent sectors of the society and the United Nation had set a standard of 6 per cent of the GDP should be spent on health while 4 per cent of the GDP should be spent on education but Pakistan was unable to meet this standard currently due to financial situation. “So we should adopt non-formal education method in remote areas of the country to extend education to every citizen,” he added. The governor said that national economy was improving speedily in 2018, and Pakistan was about to

join G-20 countries according to the international surveys but, now unfortunately, the country had been put on the 47th number in financial development. “The debt burden has increased two times which has financially weaken the country,” he said and added that now once again the managers of the country could change the situation positively with the support of the government.

He congratulated the all 200 candidates of the 50th Common and their parents for their success. Earlier, Director General CSA Kamran Ali Afzal in his welcoming address thanked the governor. The governor gave away awards to the top achievers in different categories while the DG presented a souvenir to the chief guest. Akhuwat Chairman Amjad Saqib, former DGs of the CSA Arifa Sabuhi, Sajid Yusuf and Khalid Mehmood were also presents besides number of ex-servicemen, bureaucrats and parents of the participants of the course.

Radio Pakistan organizes cricket fiesta to mark Golden Jubilee celebrations of Constitution

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Scorpion Nights have won Radio Pakistan Ramzan Cricket Fiesta beating FM94 by nine wickets in the final of the tournament in Islamabad. The tournament was organized by Radio Pakistan to mark the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan.

A total of 12 teams participated in the five-day cricket tournament. In the final, FM 94, batting first, scored 72 runs for the loss of just one wicket in the stipulated six overs. In the nail-biting contest, the Scorpion Nights managed to achieve the target on last ball of the last over.

At the prize distribution ceremony, the chief guest Controller General Accounts Maqbool Ahmad Gondal along with Director General Radio Pakistan Tahir Hassan and Director News and Current Affairs Radio Pakistan Aman Ullah Sipra distributed prizes among the



winners and the runners up.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Guest lauded Director General Radio Pakistan Tahir Hassan's efforts for the revival of the National Broadcaster and organizing such a healthy activity on the occasion Golden Jubilee celebrations of the constitution. He said this tournament is the manifestation of enjoying civil rights, which have been guaranteed in the constitution.

On the occasion, Director General Radio Pakistan Tahir Hassan while appreciating the government's initiative to hold month-long celebrations of Golden Jubilee of the constitution, thanked sponsors, listeners and spectators of the tournament for making it a success. He said this tournament is part of Radio Pakistan's series of events that have been planned to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the constitution. The Director

General said such activities remind us of the liberty of life that has been protected under the constitution. He also vowed to continue such healthy activities to promote sports and culture.

A large number of spectators including men, women and the youth enjoyed the matches while many others watched the live-streaming and live commentary at Radio Pakistan's social media platforms and channels.

Shazia Marri chaired high level meeting

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme Shazia Marri was informed that during the last one year, the government has increased the budgetary allocation of Benazir Income Support Programme from Rs. 250 billion to Rs 400 Billion which is 60% increase in this budget. Ms. Shazia Marri was presiding over a meeting to review the

progress of BISP initiatives at its Hq, today. The Secretary BISP Mr. Yusuf Khan and DGs of the Programme briefed the Minister on the progress on various initiatives. The Meeting was briefed that Rs 70 billion were disbursed among 2.8 million flood-affected families at the rate of Rs 25,000 per family. Moreover, Rs 16.7 billion were also given as fuel subsidy among 81 lakh families at the rate of Rs. 2000 per family. The Chairperson Benazir Income Support

Programme was further briefed that the Government has also increased Benazir

Kafaalat funds by 25 per cent to the deserving people of the country.

SUIT NOTICE

In the court of Mr. Jehangir Khan judge banking court-II Peshawar Federal Judicial Complex, Phase-7 Hayatabad Peshawar Case No. 16/1 Institution 10/4/23 Date of hearing 22/5/23 suit for the recovery of Rs.504200/= ZTBL Takhtbai Branch Mardan VS Jehangir Khan S/o Fazal Mehmood R/o Malik Abdul Majeed corona P/c Fazal Abad Takhtbai District Mardan. Where as the plaintiff bank has instituted a suit for the recovery of Rs. 504200/= Against you under section 10(2) of the Financial Institution (Recovery of Finance) Ordinance 2001, you are hereby summoned to obtain leave of the court to appear and defend the suit within 30 days after receipt/ publication of the notice in the newspapers. Failing which an ex-parte decree shall be passed in favour of the plaintiff Bank with costs. Issued today on 12/4/23 under my signature and seal of the court.

Judge Banking Court-II Peshawar

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN PAKISTAN SCIENCE FOUNDATION Ministry of Science and Technology Islamabad

SITUATION VACANT

Applications are invited from nationals of Pakistan for the following post on regular basis in **Pakistan Museum of Natural History, Islamabad** (a subsidiary organization of **Pakistan Science Foundation, Ministry of Science & Technology, Islamabad**):

Sr. No.	Post & BPS	No. of Post	Provincial Quota	Qualification & Experience	Age Limit
		Location			
1.	Director General (BPS-21)	1 Islamabad	Merit	Ph.D. in Natural / Applied Sciences. 18-years experience in the field of Science/ Research Handling / Management with minimum experience of 05-years in BS-19 including 02-years in BS-20. Experience of administrative and financial management as Head / Deputy Head of the organization or Project Director.	45-57 years

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

- All applications must be submitted **ONLINE** through PSF website <http://careers.psf.gov.pk> Information claimed in “online application form” will be treated as final in all respects. Hard copy of the online application along with attested copies of required documents: Educational Certificates, Experience Certificates, CNIC, Photograph(1), NOC, Domicile, etc, must also be dispatched to the **Secretary PSF, 1-Constitution Avenue, G-5/2, Islamabad** within 30 days of publication of the advertisement. Incomplete applications or those received after the due date, shall not be entertained.
- PSF reserves the right to call shortlisted candidates for the interview.
- Candidates already in service should apply through proper channel.
- The candidate **should not have more than 57 years of age** on closing date **12.05.2023** of the application.
- No. TA/DA will be paid for appearing in interview.
- PSF reserves the right to postpone / stop the recruitment process at any stage.

HAIDER ZAMAN KHATTAK, Secretary PSF, Tel: 0519201887

PID(I) 6299/22

‘G20 meeting in Occupied Kashmir not acceptable’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative on Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Wednesday said that the India's decision to convene the G20 meeting in Occupied Kashmir was not acceptable.

In a talk with APP, he urged the G20 countries not to join the meeting called by India in the Occupied Kashmir as it was continuously violating the international laws and United Nations resolutions.

According to the reports, the third meeting of G20 Tourism Working Group under India's G20 Presidency would be held from May 22 to 24 in Srinagar.

Ashrafi who is also the chairman

of Pakistan Ulema Council, informed that Ulema and religious leaders of other faith were planning to hold a world conference here in November in which Pope Francis, Sheikh Al-Azhar, Imam of the Holy Kaaba and important leaders of the Islamic world would be invited.

Prime Minister's Special Representative on Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafisaid the Council had an important role against extremism, terrorism and sectarianism and urged the leaders of all religions to pay attention on the situation in Palestine and Kashmir as practical steps were needed to stop the atrocities being committed by India and

Israel in the Occupied Kashmir and Palestine respectively.

He said that India wanted to create unrest in the region as its atrocities were increasing in the Occupied Kashmir with every passing day.

He expressed the hope that India would not be able to take religious scholars included in G20 in the Occupied Kashmir. The Pakistan Ulema Council in consultation with government official and institution concerned would announce a future strategy soon in this regard, he maintained. Ashrafi said Ulema and Mashaykh would observe as an ‘Ashra of reverence of Haramain Sharifain and Al-Aqsa’ from Ramadan 21, to 29 across the country.

MQM-P delegation calls on Sindh Governor

KARACHI (APP): Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan – MQM-P's delegation on Wednesday met the Governor of Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori at Governor House here.

Convenor MQM-P Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, senior leader Dr. Farooq Sattar, Mustafa Kamal and Member of Provincial Assembly Javed Hanif were present on the occasion, said a spokesperson of the Governor.

The overall political situation of Sindh, census, infrastructure development projects, federal government cooperation in various projects and other matters of mutual interest came under discussion. Governor Sindh said that the construction and development of Karachi, the economic hub of the country, is the collective responsibility of all of us, adding that the purpose of the meeting with all stakeholders is to provide better facilities to the residents of the city.

PSCA deploys 100 cameras

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) deployed more than 100 camera to monitor the main majalis and processions from all angles to ensure safety on the occasion of Youm-e-Shahadat Ali (RA). Moreover, technical teams from PSCA were present at the headquarters and in the field to support law enforcement agencies in case of any emergency.

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INVITATION TO E-BID THROUGH SAP ARIBA DISCOVERY

Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), the largest Exploration & Production listed Company of Pakistan, invites Sealed E-Bids through **SAP-Ariba Discovery** for the service/material given below under competitive bidding procedure as per Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules:

SR #	TENDER NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME	BID OPENING DATE & TIME
1	OGDCL-SCM-LD-PT-RM-205686402-2023	SUPPLY OF BUTTERFLY VALVES	03-05-2023 AT 11:30 HRS	03-05-2023 AT 12:00 HRS
2	OGDCL-SCM-LB-CSR-DOC207479505-2023	CONSTRUCTION OF 2.66 KM ROAD FROM PIND SULTANI ADDA TO GARI VILLAGE DISTRICT ATTOCK PUNJAB PROVINCE	03-05-2023 AT 11:30 HRS	03-05-2023 AT 12:00 HRS
3	OGDCL-SCM-LF-PT-EXPWL-19-207147234-2023	TOOL CARRIER TRUCK, 4X2 RIGID, RHD	04-05-2023 AT 11:30 HRS	04-05-2023 AT 12:00 HRS
4	OGDCL-SCM-LB-CESS-DOC207011188-2023	CONSTRUCTION OF FC CAMP AT TOGH GAS FIELD DISTRICT KOHAT, KPK PROVINCE	04-05-2023 AT 11:30 HRS	04-05-2023 AT 12:00 HRS
5	OGDCL-SCM-LH-PT-PNP-QADIRPUR PLANT-DOC207148591-2023	PROCUREMENT OF SPARES FOR MAJOR OVERHAULING OF POWER HOUSE GENERATOR	08-05-2023 AT 11:30 HRS	08-05-2023 AT 12:00 HRS

- Vendors not having Ariba Network ID are requested to register themselves on SAP Ariba Portal by clicking on the link <https://supplier.ariba.com> to access and participate in OGDCL tenders.
- Complete Tender document(s) along with Scope of Work / TOR/ Clarifications can be viewed and downloaded from SAP-Ariba RFP by clicking on the link discovery.ariba.com/profile/AN01562899621
- Original Bid Bonds as per RFP/Tender Document shall be submitted at the reception of OGDCL House, Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area, Islamabad, Pakistan on or before bid submission date and time mentioned above.
- OGDCL reserves the right to accept or reject any bid and to annul the bidding process and reject all the bids as per Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Rule-33".
- This Tender Notice is also available on PPRA website www.ppra.org.pk and OGDCL website www.ogdcl.com.

EXTENSION

Reference to our "Invitation to Bid" Notice published in the National Newspapers on 03.04.2023, it is notified that the "Bid Submission/ Opening" of S.No.01 may be read as follows:

SR. #	TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION	PUBLISHED BID SUBMISSION/ OPENING DATE	REVISED BID SUBMISSION/ OPENING DATE
1	OGDCL-SCM-LH-PNP-UCH-DOC205346188-2023	PROCUREMENT OF AIR INTAKE FILTERS	19.04.2023	10.05.2023

- Bid submission/ opening time and all other terms & conditions shall remain unchanged.
- Bidders are requested to contact **Manager Supply Chain Management (SCM) Local** at Phone # +92-51-92002-3983/2623127 for any further queries/ information. This Tender Notice is also available on PPRA website www.ppra.org.pk and OGDCL website www.ogdcl.com.

**GENERAL MANAGER
(SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT)
OIL & GAS DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LIMITED**
OGDCL HOUSE, JINNAH AVENUE, ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN.
Phone No. 92-51-920023540/3795

No.396/57

LARGEST TAX PAYER COMPANY OF THE NATION "SAY NO TO CORRUPTION" WE EXPLORE PROSPERITY

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

PAKISTAN PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders on percentage rate basis (not on individual items) are hereby invited for the works mentioned below from the approved PEC registered Contractors duly renewed for the current financial year 2022-23. Tender documents can be purchased from the office of the undersigned during office hours on any working day on payment of tender cost (**Non-Refundable**) up to 02/05/2023 with written request on letter pad accompanied with copy of PEC, attested copy of CNIC, Income Tax Registration Certificate as active taxpayer (filer) & CDR as mentioned below. Tenders will be issued to the proprietor of the Firm / Company or their legally authorized representatives having registered power of attorney (duly attested). The tenders in sealed cover should be received in the tender box kept in the office of the undersigned on 03/05/2023 upto 1:30 pm and the respective tenders will be opened on the same day at 02:00 PM in the presence of contractors or their authorized representatives, having registered power of attorney.

The following instructions may be read and understood carefully in true letter and spirit, as in case of non fulfillment any of these instructions, tender forms will not be issued. The documents under mentioned must be accompanied with the application, falling which no tender forms will be issued.

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- No tender will be sold / issued on the date of opening of tenders.
- No tender will be issued / received thorough post, telegraph or E-Mail.
- According to PPRA Rule-25, Bid Security as mentioned below in the shape of CD/Call deposit from any scheduled Bank in the name of the Executive Engineer, Central Civil Division-II, Pak PWD, Peshawar
- No tender will be entertained without bid security as mention below of bid price or less amount.
- Tenders can be purchased on the prescribed cost (Non-refundable) in Cash mentioned against the below noted work from the office of the undersigned during office hours upto **02/05/2023** before the date of opening of tenders.
- All CDRs once received will be credited into the Government Account and will be refunded through Government Cheque
- The CDR must be attached with the application.
- The documents provided by the bidders if found ambiguous will be verified and in case of fake one, the firm will face immediate / appropriate penal action as per rules and law.
- Tender Notice is also available at PPRA Website (www.ppra.org.pk)
- Under Rule 33(1) of public Procurement Rules, 2004, the competent authority reserves the right to reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to the acceptance of bid or proposal.
- The submission of tenders by the contractor implies that he is fully conversant with the site of work, scope of work and terms and conditions as laid down in the tender documents.

Note:- In case 03/05/2023 is declared public holiday or surprise engagement of the undersigned the same will be opened on next working day i.e 05/05/2023.

S#	Name of Work	NIT Amount	E/ Money	Tender Cost
1	Construction of PCC street at UC Utmanzai & VC Utmanzai District Charsadda	Rs. 2,717,194/-	4% of bid amount	Rs.2000/-
2	Construction of PCC street at U/C Mandan & UC Dhakki District Charsadda	Rs. 3,271,992/-	4% of bid amount	Rs.2000/-
3	Construction of PCC street at U/C Bahlola & UC Chindro District Charsadda	Rs. 2,986,971/-	4% of bid amount	Rs.2000/-
4	Construction of PCC street at UC Mira Umarzai & UC Hisara Nehri Phase-I District Charsadda	Rs. 3495957/-	4% of bid amount	Rs.2000/-
5	Construction of PCC Street at UC Mira Umarzai & UC Hisara Nahri Phase-II District Charsadda	Rs. 3,146,858/-	4% of bid amount	Rs.2000/-

PID(P) 120/2023

**Nazir Ahmad Executive Engineer
Central Civil Division-II, Pak. PWD Peshawar**



MEC students meet Governor KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali on Wednesday said that Pakistani youth have a lot of potential and they are the future of the country so they should utilize their capabilities for the development of the country.

It is imperative to provide better health and education facilities to our young generation with confidence and guidance.

He said this while addressing the students of Mercy Educational Complex (MEC) Nasirpur GT road Peshawar during their visit to Governor House, Peshawar.

It is worth mentioning that MEC is a dedicated boarding institution for orphans providing formal and informal education to around 700 students at school and vocational levels on a free of charge basis.

Haji Ghulam Ali said that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) who was too an orphan is a torch bearer and blessing for the entire universe. It was the strength of the Holy Prophet's character and preaching through self-example and charms of personality that molded the hearts and minds of the people and compelled the enemies to embrace Islam, he added.

He said that provision of education facilities and moral building of the youth is necessary to make them best human and good citizens.

Peace, tolerance, kindness and cleanliness are the basics of our religion and we can meet any challenge by adopting the Islamic way of life.

The Governor urged the philanthropist to visit and support such institutions. He said that this act will

increase the confidence in the children who are residing in these institutions.

The Governor said that fostering and supporting orphans is a noble deed and the people involved in such deeds are pious.

He appreciated the establishment of MEC as an ideal boarding institution for the orphans and said that it is our national and moral duty to help the destitute children.

He expressed the hope that students of MEC will prove their abilities and competence to make Pakistan prosperous and a developed country.

On this occasion, the Governor awarded certificates and medals of appreciation among the students who secured A+ grade in the matric exam. The students also visited the different sections of the Governor House.

ATC grants bail to accused in Latif Afridi murder case

PESHAWAR (INP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Wednesday granted bail to the accused in Latif Afridi murder case.

Seasoned lawyer and former president of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Latif Afridi was murdered at the Peshawar High Court bar room on Monday, January 16.

ATC granted bail to Fawad who was charged of facilitation in murder of Abdul Latif Afridi. The court ordered the accused to submit rupees one lac surety bond for his release on bail.

Three suspects Zakir, Fawad and Adil were accused of facilitating the murder.

Addl Chief Secretary reviews plan

PESHAWAR (APP): Additional Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Zubair Asghar Qureshi here on Wednesday chaired a meeting to discuss the Merged Areas Governance Programme (MAGP) in detail. The meeting reviewed various interventions of the MAGP, including accelerated development through the Accelerated Implementation Programme (AIP) and Special Emphasis Programmes, border governance and connectivity and the support to local governance.

During the meeting, the Additional Chief Secretary was briefed on the progress of these interventions and their impact on the merged areas. The participants of the meeting also discussed the challenges faced in implementing these interventions and explored ways to overcome them.

The MAGP is an important initiative aimed at promoting good governance and socio-economic development in the merged areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The government is committed to ensuring the successful implementation of this programme and to providing the necessary support to the local communities.

Overall, the meeting was a step forward towards achieving the goals of the MAGP and promoting sustainable development in the merged areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Mayor meets children with special abilities

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali on Wednesday met the children with special abilities at his hujra here and discussed issues faced by them in routine.

The meeting was held on the request of the children with special abilities who were warmly welcomed by the Mayor on arrival at the hujra. The Mayor mingled with the children and thanked them for visiting his house.

The special children apprised the Mayor about their problems through a representative of the Social Welfare Department. The Mayor promptly responded to their demands and directed the District Social Welfare Officer, Noor Muhammad to fulfill the same at the earliest.

Haji Zubair Ali also shared his mobile phone number with the children and asked them to directly contact him in case of any difficulty. The children thanked the Mayor for sparing his time for them and listening to their issues. The Children also thanked Haji Zubair Ali for providing an electricity transformer to their school.

Feroze condoles Elahi

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Information Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel on Wednesday expressed grief and sorrow over the demise of the brother of Caretaker Minister Agriculture Fazle Elahi.

The provincial minister prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to bereaved family members to bear this irreparable loss with fortitude.



PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary KP Nadeem Aslam Choudhry and Caretaker Provincial Minister Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel offering feteiha for departed soul of nephew of Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan.

Advertisement of gambling companies at PSL PHC orders FIA, SB, PTA to submit reply

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprised of Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan and Justice Waqar Ahmad ordered Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to submit reply in case regarding advertisement of gambling companies.

The counsel Saifullah Mohib Kakakhel Advocate informed that Gambling PSL despite ban on gambling while mobile-apps and websites are running in the country.

The counsel argued during PSL season one player has wear a ribbon displaying gambling company logo despite the fact that advertisement of betting firms is illegal in Pakistan.

He argued to stop PSL franchises from obtaining sponsorship of gambling companies.

The divisional bench of PHC has ordered FIA, PTA and SBP along with government to submit reply on

PHC reserve decision on dissolution of BoGs

PESHAWAR (APP): A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Abdul Shakoor and Justice Syed Arshad Ali on Wednesday reserved its decision on dissolution and de-notification of Board of Governors (BoGs) of 10 Medical Teaching Institution (MTI) hospitals of the province by the caretaker provincial government.

The bench heard the arguments of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Advocate Ali Gohar Durrani in the case who said that the caretaker government illegally approved the dissolution of all BoGs in a cabinet meeting on March 16, adding that the government has no power to take such decision.

He said that the move to dissolve BoGs was a violation of Section 230 of the Election Act 2017 as the caretaker government was mainly responsible to run the day-to-day affairs and assist the Election Commission in conducting fair and transparent elections.

The Counsel for the petitioner said that unfortunately, the caretaker government was taking more



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali welcoming children with special abilities at his hujra.

600 mobile phones recovered from inmates

PESHAWAR (APP): Following a clash between inmates of Peshawar Jail, the number of security personnel has been enhanced who recovered 600 mobile phones during a search operation inside the prison.

According to jail sources on Wednesday, inmates from both the rival groups have been shifted to other districts' jails. The sources informed that during the clash 11 prisoners and 4 jail officials were injured. A detailed report of the incident has also been sent to the Home Department KP.

Sources informed that seven prisoners have been shifted to prisons in Charsadda and Nowshera. During the search operation conducted the other day the security forces recovered 600 mobile phones from the inmates. The sources said even the jail administration was kept unaware of the search operation in the jail.

IG Prisons, Irfan Mehsud in his press briefing the other day had informed that some issue between two dangerous inmates' groups

Release of funds for LSD discussed

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretary Livestock, Ambar Ali Khan, the director generals of the various wings of the department were also present on the occasion.

The release of funds for control and prevention of lumpy skin diseases in cattle came also under discussion during the meeting. Abdul Haleem Qasuria told the Advisor on Finance that the provision of funds is necessary to continue the programme.

The Advisor on Finance assured that the availability of funds will become possible during the first week of May and requested him to demand a minimum fund to continue the programme and other departments should also get some funds.

The possible release of funds for Dairy Farm Development Project also came under discussion.

The Advisor to KP Caretaker CM told the minister to also make efforts for bringing improvement in Seed Development Board, Food Security, bringing barren land under cultivation and discovery of treatment for the diseases of plants and crops to make the province self-sufficient in food.

Muqam condoles with KP CM

PESHAWAR (APP): Advisor to Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs, Engr. Amir Muqam Wednesday condoled with Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan over demise of his nephew Umer Shehzad at his office on Wednesday.

Engr. Amir Muqam expressed grief and sorrow over the demise of Umer Shehzad and prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to bereaved family members to bear this irreparable loss with fortitude.

Provincial Caretaker Minister Barrister Feroze Jamal Kakakhel, Justice (R) Qaiser Rashid, Shafiullah and Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry were present on this occasion.

Rs.450m released to police dept

PESHAWAR (APP): The provincial government has released a fund to the tune of Rs.450 million on Wednesday under head feeding charges to the police department which will be distributed among all regions/districts through cross cheques to each police personnel deployed on census duty.

It may be recalled that the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Akhtar Hayat Gandapur had taken up the census charges case with the government for release of these funds.

The IGP has directed police high ups of the province to pay it to the police personnel deployed for census duty through cross cheques and ensure that duty charges shall reach the bank accounts of concerned police personnel.

The IGP has also directed all RPOs and DPOs that welfare of troops must be accorded top priority.

Aimal Wali for holding intra-party polls

PESHAWAR (APP): The provincial president of Awami National Party (ANP) has written a letter to Central President Amir Haider Khan Hoti for the constitution of an organising committee for holding intra-party elections.

Aimal Wali maintained in the letter that the provincial cabinet has completed its constitutional term on April 05 and therefore the party elections should be announced.

He further said that as provincial party president he discharged his responsibilities with best of his capabilities and fully implemented the agenda and narrative of his party despite several challenges including corona crises and security issues.

He said that ANP never compromised on its principles set by its predecessors, adding that the present cabinet would continue working till holding of new intra-party elections.

Providing relief to people govt top priority: Muqam



F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Adviser to the Prime Minister for Political and Public Affairs and National Heritage, Engr. Amir Muqam here Wednesday said that providing relief to people was the top priority of the government.

During his visit to SNGPL, Wapda and NADRA headquarters here, the PM adviser directed the authorities to expedite work on all ongoing SNGPLs and Wapda projects.

He also approved double shift in NADRA in some constituencies and reserved offices for women. He underscored the need for ensuring

Minister, PM aide visit flour distribution centres

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Murtaza Javed Abbasi and Prime Minister's Adviser, Sardar Shahjehan Yousuf here Wednesday visited free flour distribution centres and points where they reviewed its distribution process.

They were briefed by the Chief Secretary KP about the PM's package for people of the province and its distribution process in the province.

They were informed that over 5.7 million deserving families were being provided free of charge atta by providing Rs19.77 billion subsidy to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where three flour bags were being given to each family through BISP.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, over 91% population would be benefited from the landmark PM package. Similarly, over 7,000 distribution points were also setup in the province. The federal minister and PM aide said the package was a landmark initiative of the government and directed the authorities to complete it in a successful and organized way in the remaining days of Ramadan so that all people could be benefited.

Secretary Food, Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner besides relevant authorities were present.

Rs7m cash, motorcyclists, cars, mobiles recovered — 14 gangs arrested: SSP Operations

PESHAWAR (APP): SSP Operations Haroon Rashid Wednesday said that 14 gangs involved in various crimes including extortion and robbery were arrested with Rs. 7 million in cash, motorcycles, cars and mobile phones have been recovered.

Talking to media men in a press briefing, SSP Operations Haroon Rashid said that besides this more than a thousand absconders accused have been arrested. He said action has been taken against 4 ice factories.

SSP Haroon Rashid disclosed that more than 2000 pistols have been seized while in another operation, 18 hand grenades have been recovered.

SSP Haroon Rashid said that during 3 months, 50 gangs involved in street crimes and other crimes were arrested and Rs. 20 stolen money from gangs has been recovered with 52 tolas stolen gold as well.

He said it is difficult to make the area completely crime-free, but efforts are being made to create a better environment.

In a question, about the increase of street crimes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, SSP



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Provincial Minister Salma Begum presiding over a monthly review meeting of District Social Officers.



In brief

2 youths killed in Swabi firing
F.P. Report

SWABI: At least two youths were shot dead in Sheikh Jana village of Swabi district on Wednesday during firing between two groups. According to police, an exchange of fire occurred between two rival groups following an altercation that resulted in deaths of two youths from the area. The deceased were identified as Nauman Aziz and Abdul Manan and their bodies were shifted to Kalu Khan Hospital for medico legal procedure, police said.

Foolproof security in Kohat
Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: The district police on Wednesday put in place foolproof security arrangements for peaceful observance of majalis and processions on martyrdom day of Hazran Ali (AS). The District Police Officer (DPO) Shazad Umar Abbas Babar, chairing a meeting of police officers, chalked out an effective security plan and directed the SDPOs to monitor the gatherings on the occasion of Hazrat Ali's martyrdom day. He also directed SHO's to remain vigilant during the processions and Majalis and thoroughly check each and every individual on entry and exist points of Imambargahs and processions. Under the security plan, the district police installed CCTV cameras for monitoring of the Majalis and processions, installed walk through gates and deployed trained elite commandos, police officials in plainclothes and officials of Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) at strategic locations to keep eye on suspicious persons. The police have also installed barbed wires around Imambargahs and allocated separate places for parking.

RPO reviews law & order in region
F.P. Report

MULTAN: Regional Police Officer Muhammad Sohail Choudhary held a crime meeting with SPs Investigation and DSP/SDPOs of Multan Region, Vehari, Khanewal and Lodhran, in which he reviewed the overall crime situation in Multan Region. On this occasion, the RPO said that all cases of abduction of children and women in the region should be traced as soon as possible and the abductees should be recovered. He issued instructions to DSP/SDPOs to ensure arrest of all promoters of terrorism. In the end, he said that foreign countries should mobilize red notices for the arrest of absconders and make the arrest possible with the help of Interpol. Prepare head money cases of advertisers for serious crimes. SP Legal Regional Police Office Shaban Mahmood was also present on this occasion.

Minor killed, six injured

ATTOCK (INP): A minor was shot dead and six others persons were injured in a firing incident at Hazro Tehsil in Attock on Wednesday. According to Police, unidentified gunmen in Retla Mandi a densely populated area of Hazro opened fire on citizens which resulted in killing of a child and seriously injuries to six persons. The unknown attackers run away as police reach on the spot. The police have shifted the child dead body and the injured person to a nearby hospital for medico-legal procedure. Police after collecting possible evidence from crime scene have started raids to arrest the runaway suspects.

WSSCM kicks off recovery drive against defaulters

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Recovery drive against Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM) defaulters has been accelerated on the directives of Deputy Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer WSSCM Captain retired



Abdur Rahman.

Assistant Commissioner Mardan Ayesha Tahir along with wsscm citizen liaison and revenue teams took action against defaulters and directed them to pay dues within three days. She gave a final notice to those who throw rubbish on undesignated place and said to hand over the waste to the WSSCM staff in time and do not litter otherwise the business entity will be sealed along with fine. No efforts will be spared in pro-

viding the best municipal services to the citizens of Mardan at their doorstep.

She warned the defaulters to pay their dues to avoid actions. Deputy Manager Customer Relations Rahatullah, Social Mobilizer Sajjad Ahmad and others were

also present on the occasion. PWB provides Eid package for orphan: Chairperson Panahga Welfare Board (PWB) Neelam Toru provided Eid clothes and shoes to the orphan girls of "Zamong Kor", on Wednesday. Mardan Endeavor Lions Club, Bardasht Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chairperson Neelam Toru provided Eid clothes and shoes to the orphan girls of Zamong Kor with the support of IFFCO.

Chairperson Panahga Welfare Board Neelam Toru was the chief guest on the occasion of the annual day of "Zamong Kor" Girls Campus today. In the event, the girls made the event more interesting by presenting various demos.

On this occasion Chairperson Neelam Toru said that I am very happy to come here today that the government is doing a lot of work for street children. She said that we are trying our best to facilitate these orphans according to their needs. Neelam Toru praised the entire staff for setting up this girls campus in a few months. She said that we will continue our efforts to get involved these children in our every moment of happiness.

Toru expressed in her talks that today we have provided Eid clothes and shoes for 105 girls here with the support of IFFCO. She said that all girls were brought here systematically and these girls are provided technical education along with schooling which is a very welcoming. Director Najam Al-Sahar, Deputy Director Mian Ziaullah and Assistant Director Naheed Bilal were also present on this occasion.



UPPER DIR: Officials busy in removing of illegal tented glasses from a vehicle during crackdown. — F.P. photo

Traders hold protest against dacoities
F.P. Report

MARDAN: Masked robbers are active in Mardan, the efficiency of the district police and Ababail squad is questionable, 2 unknown robbers stole 3 lakh rupees at gunpoint in the busiest commercial center of Pakistan Chowk Mardan. A case has been registered in City Police station while investigation is continued but to no veil.

According to the details, Ejaz and his brother Waqar Ali returned to their nearby shop after taking 3 lakh rupees from the money changers. A few minutes later masked robbers entered our shop and took 3 lakh rupees from me at gunpoint and escaped. They succeeded.

Meanwhile, the traders of Pakistan Chowk staged a protest and the main road was closed, which suspended the traffic system. On this occasion, the provincial general secretary of the central organization Tajran, Zahir Shah, DSP City Inam Jan Khan reached the spot and assured the protestors. They gave a deadline of 2 days to arrest the robbers, after which the protestors dispersed.

Lady torches friend to death

GUJRAT (INP): A young girl died of burns after being setting on fire by her friend in Jalalpur Jattan, police said.

According to the FIR, girl named Eisha along with her unidentified partner torched her friend Nazish Saeed to death by dousing her with petrol. The police said Nazish suffered severe burns and succumbed to her injuries while being shifted to the hospital.

Unknown culprit kidnaps trader's son

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Unidentified accused kidnapped son of prominent businessman and religious scholar Qari Khalil-ur-Rehman. According to details, Walid son of Qari Khalil-ul-Rehman was on its way on his vehicle when unknown accused allegedly kidnapped him. Qari Khalil-ur-Rehman submitted application for registration of case and recovery of his son but the local police is clueless till filling of this story.

Meanwhile, district administration and police have made all arrangements to provide foolproof security to processions and Majalis of 'Yuum-e-Ali' being observed, today (on Wednesday) and three processions are being taken out in the city.

This was stated by the Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Umer Farooq Warriach while addressing the meeting of District Emergency Board held to review security and other arrangements at district

complex. He said that CCTV Cameras and walk-through gates were erected on the routes of processions and Imambargahs and more than three hundred Cops were deployed to ensure protection of processions and Imambargahs. He said that health department and Rescue 1122 were setup medical camps on the routs of processions and places of Mijalis to give first aid to participants.

ADCG Malik Abbas Zulqarnain Awan was appointed focal person for monitoring processions and Majlis as well as to check services delivery of different departments while staff of Municipal Committee, GEPCO, Sui gas and PTCL for removing any hurdle in the way of the processions routs, he added.

Crackdown against hoarders: Special crackdown on hoarders is underway in the district Hafizabad for ensuring provision of edibles and fertilizers in abundance in the district. In this connection, Assistant Commissioner

Pindi Bhattian Rashid Iqbal raided in village Mehoopur at the godown of Muhammad Khan and recovered 300 bags of sugar stocked illegally while in another raid at warehouse of Sheikh Arif and recovered 300 bags of Urea fertilizer stored unlawfully. AC said that legal action was started against hoarders.

Protection of street child sought: Information Secretary Sangat

Development Foundation/Member CIP Lahore Region Syed Ghulam Abbas Sherazi and member children advocacy network Sajida Faryad demanded the government to formulate strategy for protection of street children as soon as possible. They expressed their concerned over delay in preparation of street children protection policy and its implementation. They called upon the Chief Minister Punjab to take measures for protecting children from misbehave, violence and exploitation at the earliest.

Robbers' gang arrested; girl commit suicide in Swat

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: A nine-member gang of robbers were arrested and a 15-year-old girl committed suicide in Swat district on Wednesday, police said.

Police spokesman told journalists in Mingora that clothes, two vehicles and a rickshaw used by the nine-member robbers' gang including Afghan refugees

were seized during a search and strike operation conducted by the Swat police last night.

Two members of the gang, who were allegedly involved in robbing people, were backed by the six-members group of supporters and a local facilitator. Police claimed to have recovered over 1.7 million looted money from their possession. The outlaw

belonged to Afghanistan, Peshawar, Swat and Abbottabad districts.

In another incident, a 15-year-old girl committed suicide at tehsil Kabal in Swat district due to her poor mental condition. The gory incident occurred at Sorbat tehsil Bahrain where the ill-fated Shalo Bibi shot herself dead with a pistol. Police have registered a case and started an investigation.

ANF seizes 820kg opium from Mashkel

QUETTA (INP): The Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) claimed to have recovered heavy amount of opium from the mountains area of Balochistan, according to ANF officials.

According to ANF spokesperson, a joint operation of the Balochistan's Frontier Constabulary and the ANF intelligence successfully recovered 820kg of opium from the far flung area of Mashkel, situated 530km away from Quetta. The stockpiled drugs were recovered from a hidden spot in the area known as Gorinder Nala. ANF said that the

authorities discarded 370kg of seized drugs up in the mountains due to lack of resources to bring those down to the station. The suspects managed to flee.

Cloudy weather predicted in most parts of Balochistan: Pakistan Meteorological Department, Regional Center, Quetta has forecast that pretty cloudy weather is expected in most districts with hot conditions in southern parts of the province during the next 24 hours.

Weather forecast for next 48 hours; pretty cloudy weather is expected

in most districts with hot conditions in southern parts of the province during the next 48 hours. Weather prevailed during the last 24 hours; mostly dry weather prevailed in the province during the last 24 hours.

Maximum temperature recorded on Wednesday, Barkhan 29, Dalbandin 34.5, Gwadar 34, Jiwani 32.5, Kalat 22, Khuzdar 32.5, Lasbela 38, Nokundi 36, Panjgur 33, Pasni 32.5, Quetta 27.5, Samungli 26, Sibi 36, Turbat 39, Ormara 31.5, Zhob 28.5, Uthal 27 and Usta Muhammad 36.

Demotion of cops — Rule of Law or deprivation from rights

M. Bilal Baseer Abbasi

SAMINA Bukhari, a lady cadet police officer is among the 3200 cadets who were demoted to the lower ranks hails from a lower middle class family of Haripur district. She joined the police service in 1996 and has been with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa police force for 27 years. Samina rose through police ranks from a constable to deputy superintendent of police where she served at several key positions as a crime preventor, an investigator, an administrator and by overseeing security in a women's protection cell. She like her other counterparts has been demoted to the ranks of her batchmates and made head constable as she was promoted under fast track promotion available in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa police rules.

Though the Peshawar High Court has suspended the orders of Inspector general of police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa about the reversion of the cadets from their position but 3200 cadet police personnel still denied of their rightful jobs. The cadet police officers have claimed that their promotion is fully based on rules but under the deliberate conspiracy by their coequal recruited in police department through public service commission (PSIs) they are being enforced in out of turn promotion category.

On the one hand, the PSIs believe that the cadet police officers are violating their fundamental rights as solely they are entitled of taking promotions

and owing to addition of cadet police officials their promotions are being halted and delayed. While on the contrary, cadet officers are of view that ever since the police department has formed there is a proper scheme of laws available in police rules for promotion of cadet police officials as they could not be considered as an outsiders.

A cadet officer serving as Superintendent of Police in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa who wished not to be named told his woes that when in 1990s they were appearing in cadetship courses who was the toughest competitive examinations of his time as all cadets having more than 70 marks in recruit training course were allowed to participate in it and among them only one cadet who could perform well in examination was entitled for cadetship. At that time these PSIs were doing matriculation.

The background of the case is that the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2013 had declared the out-of-turn promotions against the constitution, and a sheer violation of the injunctions of Islam. It also ruled that no police officer or civil servant was entitled to any such promotion on account of a gallantry award.

In 2018, a petition was filed by the affected police officials in the apex court but the larger bench of the Supreme Court maintained an earlier decision and declared all out-of-turn promotions in the police department void. They directed the relevant quarters to determine the seniority of all police officers and

maintained that those who jumped ahead will have to go back as the officials would be promoted only on their turn.

The recent developments in the case came when on the Supreme Court judgement about out of the turn promotion the inspector general of police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa issued orders of demotions of police officials on March 12, 2023 and directed them to join their ranks. The cadets approached the Peshawar High Court against IGP orders which was declared null and void by Peshawar high court.

Earlier the larger bench of Peshawar High Court announced the verdict on March 24, 2022 on the petition filed by the cadet police personnel against police department for restraining the authorities for taking any action against their demotion without interpretation of the Supreme Court order as they believe that the decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan was regarding the gallantry promotions awarded to officers in Punjab and Sindh in which SC considered specific sections 8A and 9A of civil service act of Sindh and Punjab regarding gallantry promotion which have no parameter and rules while the cadet promotion in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa has legal cover and scheme of laws which are not affecting any fundamental right of recruits.

For understanding this we need to know who are the cadet police personnel? Cadet police personnel refers to police officials who are recruited as

rankers in police department. When ranker is hired as Constable he has to undergo a recruit training course and required to complete it successfully. Those recruits who pass the course with more than 70 percent marks are allowed to participate in cadetship examination. This opportunity is available for all recruits so the fundamental right of any recruit may not be affected.

The source in the legal section of central police office on the condition of anonymity says, it is crystal clear that selection of cadet in police is according to the Police Standing Order Act 2005, not the unconstitutional, because the law and rule available for promotion of cadets were not against the fundamental rights as cadetship opportunity is equally available to all trainees. The Peshawar High Court in its detailed judgment issued on March 27, 2022 clarified that it seems the scheme of law in case of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is available and thus set aside all previous decisions of police department with the direction not to take any action against the cadet police officers until the interpretation of scheme of law is done by the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government.

Source opined that as the cadet officials are experienced and perform well in their official obligations so there is a factor of jealousy as well as the PSIs were given false hope if the cadets are reverted to lower ranks than they may get chance of promotion in their place so that's why the decision of the Supreme Court

was used by some probationary officers as a shield to deprive the cadets of their basic rights.

"In the light of standing order number 11 of 1987, which had subsequently been validated through validation of standing order Act 2005, 13.06 police rules, 89.A Manual of police training college Hangu and amended police rules 13.7 B of Police Act 2017, all KP police cadets have the rights of these promotions". The source revealed.

The source further maintained that the larger bench of Peshawar High Court has considered all the aforementioned rules pertinent and that's why reiterated the case to Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to clear their position whether they want to continue with the above mentioned scheme of laws or not with the directions to the authorities concerned not to take any adverse action until it is interpreted by the government. The both judgements of apex court pertains only to those gallantry promotions which were given to police officers in Sindh and Punjab under sections 8.A and 9.A of civil servants Act of Punjab and Sindh which was declared as null and void while the promotions given to cadets police officers in KP are supported by the orders/judgments of Apex Court. Keeping in mind the above narrated facts, the position of cadets of Police in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is different from such cases, as their selection is totally based on competitive examinations like fast track promotion in which every trainee has an opportunity

to take part in it.

Now what is an issue of out of turn promotion and who are beneficiaries if cadets are demoted? The case is that officers who are inducted in police force through public service commission don't want cadet personnel to compete with them. In the view of them, due to the cadetship their process of promotion is slow and if it is termed unconstitutional then they would get more relief in promotion that's why after the announcement of detailed verdict of the larger bench of Peshawar High Court unfortunately the conspiracy has not ended though the larger bench by set aside all previous decisions of police hierarchy made it clear that cadets serving in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Police are not affected by the decision of Supreme Court. The probationary officers with the help of PSP officers of police service wanted to demote them in lower ranks and are creating unnecessary troubles for their personal gains by wrongfully misinterpreting the decisions of Supreme Court and misguiding the higher ups so to deprived the cadets of their fundamental rights though the larger bench of PHC has already announced a detailed verdict by accepting the demands of cadet officials.

It is the right time for the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the police authorities to look into the matter prudently on merit basis and this controversy between the cadet police officers and probationary officers must come to an end once and for all. I hope better sense continues to prevail.



Thursday, April 13, 2023

Myanmar confirms deadly air strike as int'l outcry mounts

YANGON (AFP): Myanmar's ruling junta has confirmed that it carried out an air strike on a village in which dozens of people were reported killed, drawing condemnation from the United Nations and Western powers. UN rights chief Volker Turk said he was "horrified" by the deadly air strike, whose victims he said included schoolchildren performing dances, with the global body calling for those responsible to be brought to justice.

The death toll from the strike on the remote Kanbalu township in the central Sagaing region remains unclear. At least 50 fatalities and dozens of injuries were reported by BBC Burmese. The Irrawaddy and Radio Free Asia, as well as a witness contacted by AFP. The junta confirmed that the strike had taken place, but did not say how many were killed. "There was (a People's Defence Force) office opening ceremony... about 8 am at Pazi Gyi village," said spokesman Zaw Min Tun, referring to the armed anti-junta groups that have sprung up across the country since its elected government was toppled in a 2021 military coup. "We attacked that place." Some of the dead, he added, were anti-coup fighters in uniform, though "there could be some people with civilian clothes".

The spokesman went on to blame mines planted by the People's Defence Force for some of the deaths. The United Nations, while not confirming a toll, said several civilians were killed, with Turk accusing Myanmar's military of once

again disregarding "clear legal obligations... to protect civilians in the conduct of hostilities". The military's crackdown on dissent in the wake of the coup has left more than 3,100 people dead, according to a local monitoring group.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "strongly condemns the attack by the Myanmar Armed Forces today", according to a statement by his spokesman, Stephane Dujarric. Guterres "reiterates his call for the military to end the campaign of violence against the Myanmar population throughout the country", the spokesman added. Washington said it was "deeply concerned" about the air strikes. "These violent attacks further underscore the regime's disregard for human life and its responsibility for the dire political and humanitarian crisis in Burma following the February 2021 coup," State Department spokesman Vedant Patel said in a statement, using the country's former name.

"The United States calls on the Burma regime to cease the horrific violence, allow unhindered humanitarian access, and to respect the genuine and inclusive democratic aspirations of the people of Burma." Sagaing region -- near the country's second-largest city Mandalay -- has put up some of the fiercest resistance to the military's rule, with intense fighting raging there for months. Graphic video clips circulating on social media -- footage AFP has been unable to verify -- show bodies scattered among ruined homes.

"We are going to rescue you if we hear you scream-

ing," one person could be heard saying in the video. "Please scream!" A rescuer connected to a People's Defence Force group told AFP that women and children were among the dead. After recovering bodies and transporting victims for medical treatment, he estimated the death toll could be as high as 100. Germany's Foreign Office in a tweet said it "strongly" condemned the strike, adding it expected "the regime to end the violence against its people immediately". Myanmar's National Unity Government, a shadow body dominated by former lawmakers from ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi's party, called the strike a "heinous act".

"We... share the great pain felt by the families affected by this tragedy," it said in a statement. The military, which accuses anti-coup fighters of being terrorists, has faced international condemnation for razing villages, mass killings and air strikes on civilians. More than 30 people sheltering in a monastery were killed in Shan state in March. Last year, a military air strike on a concert put on by the Kachin Independence Army in northern Kachin state killed about 50 people and wounded more than 70, the rebels said. At a military parade last month, junta leader Min Aung Hlaing vowed to continue cracking down on opponents. The military last month announced a six-month extension of a state of emergency and postponed elections it had promised to hold by August because it did not control enough of the country for a vote.

Iran president replacing two cabinet members

DUBAI (AP): Iran President Ebrahim Raisi announced a Cabinet reshuffle, replacing the minister of agriculture and the head of planning and budget, Iranian media reported. The moves come amid widespread dissatisfaction with the government. State TV said Raisi replaced agriculture minister Javad Sadatinejad with a deputy who will serve as interim minister. He replaced the vice president and head of the planning and budget department, Masoud Mirkazemi, with Davoud Manzoor, a former department deputy.

The country's dire economic conditions, including inflation of nearly 50%, have contributed to widespread anger at the government. Retirees and teachers have held scattered protests in recent months. Iran's currency the rial is at a low of 510,000 to the dollar as the effects of nationwide anti-government protests and the breakdown of the 2015

nuclear deal shake the economy. The rial was trading at 32,000 to the dollar when the country signed the nuclear accord with world powers. The agreement lifted international sanctions in return for strict limits on and surveillance of its nuclear activities. The most recent Cabinet reshuffling was the fifth in less than two years since Raisi came to power.

Earlier this month, Raisi dismissed the education minister after a delay in payments to teachers. In December, Raisi replaced the minister of roads after he became terminally ill. Last year, Raisi replaced the labor minister after protests by workers and retirees over payments. Then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from the nuclear deal and restored crippling sanctions. Iran responded by ramping up its enrichment of uranium, and now has enough for "several" atomic weapons if it chooses to

develop them, according to the UN's nuclear watchdog. Iran insists its nuclear program is entirely peaceful, but experts say it had a nuclear weapons program until 2003 and is developing a breakout capacity that could allow it to quickly build an atomic weapon should it decide to do so. Meanwhile, Iran has seen waves of anti-government protests since the September death of a 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman who was detained by the morality police for allegedly violating Iran's strict Islamic dress code.

The protests rapidly escalated into calls for the overthrow of Iran's ruling Shiite clerics, marking a major challenge to their four-decade rule. Iran has blamed the unrest on foreign powers, casting it as an extension of the sanctions, without providing evidence. Critics say more protests are expected if the economic problems remain unsolved.

14 dead in 3 days of tribal violence in Darfur

CAIRO (AP): Bloodshed in Sudan's long-troubled Darfur region has left at least 14 people dead over the last three days, two activists said. Adam Haroun, a local activist, said clashes erupted in West Darfur province after Arab gunmen on motorcycles shot and killed a trader in the remote town of Fur Baranga. The killing sparked a series of reprisal attacks between Arabic and African tribal groups and looting, said Adam Regal, spokesman for a local organization that helps run refugee camps in Darfur.

The violence continued and the death toll was likely to rise, Haroun said. The governor of West Darfur declared a two-week state of emergency and introduced a night-time curfew across the state. Analysts see an uptick in violence in recent months between different tribal groups across Sudan's far-flung regions as a product of a power vacuum and tensions caused by political turmoil. In late March, at least five people were killed in clashes in West Darfur. Last October, over 170 people

were killed in clashes in Blue Nile province, situated in the remote southeast corner of the African country. Sudan has been steeped in chaos since a military coup, led by the country's leading Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, removed a Western-backed government in October 2021, upending its short-lived transition to democracy. Also, the United Nations said it was "deeply concerned" after a video surfaced on social media showing a man calling for the UN special representative in Sudan to be assassinated.

"I request a fatwa," said the man, who identified himself in the video as Abdelmoneim. "I volunteer myself to assassinate Volker (Perthes)." The remarks were made during what appeared to be a small conference held by an umbrella group consisting of Islamist factions affiliated with Sudan's ousted president, Omar al-Bashir. "The language of the incitement and the violence will only deepen divisions on the ground," Stephane

Dujarric, the UN spokesman, said during briefing. Under intense international pressure, Sudan's ruling military and various pro-democracy forces signed a preliminary agreement in December pledging to reinstate the transition to democracy. But after months of wrangling, cross-party talks brokered by the UN and other international actors, Sudan's political factions have yet to agree to a final deal.

Sudan's Islamists have remained staunchly opposed to the deal. The conflict in Darfur first broke out in 2003 when rebels - mostly from the region's ethnic central and sub-Saharan African community - launched an insurgency, complaining of oppression by the Arab-dominated government in Khartoum. The then-government, headed by al-Bashir, responded with a campaign of aerial bombings and scorched earth raids by janjaweed militias. Up to 300,000 people were killed and 2.7 million were driven from their homes in Darfur over the years.

Volcano eruption in Russia spews vast ash clouds

MOSCOW (AP): A volcano erupted on Russia's far eastern Kamchatka Peninsula, spewing clouds of dust 20 kilometers (65,600 feet) into the sky and covering broad areas with ash. The ash cloud from the eruption of Shiveluch, one of Kamchatka's most active volcanoes, extended over 500 kilometers (more than 300 miles) northwest and engulfed several villages in grey volcanic dust.

Officials closed the skies over the area to aircraft. Local authorities advised residents to stay indoors and shut schools in several affected communities. Two villages had their power supplies cut for a few hours until emergency crews restored them. Ash fell on 108,000 square kilometers (41,699 square miles) of territory, according to the regional branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Geophysical Survey. Scientists described the fallout as the biggest in nearly 60 years. The village of Klyuchi, which is located about 50 kilometers (some 30 miles) from the volcano, was covered by an 8-centimeter (3-inch) layer of dust. Residents posted videos showing the ash cloud plunging the area into darkness. Kamchatka Gov. Vladimir Solodov said there was no need for mass evacuation, but added that some residents who have health issues could be temporarily evacuated.

Shiveluch has two parts, the 3,283-meter (10,771-foot) Old Shiveluch, and the smaller, highly active Young Shiveluch. The Kamchatka Peninsula, which extends into the Pacific Ocean about 6,600 kilometers (4,000 miles) east of Moscow, is one of the world's most concentrated areas of geothermal activity, with about 30 active volcanoes.

Ukraine wants India to play bigger role in ending war

NEW DELHI (AP): Ukraine wants India to play a bigger role in helping end Russia's war, its deputy foreign minister said during the first visit by a senior Ukrainian official to India since the war began last year. India "can play a bigger and greater role" and Ukraine would "welcome any effort that is directed at resolving the war," Emine Dzhaparova said.

She made the comments in a speech at the Indian Council of World Affairs, a think tank in New Delhi, after meeting with her Indian counterpart, Sanjay Verma, and other officials. Dzhaparova has sought to use her visit to deepen ties with India, which has refrained from condemning Russia's role in the war and has abstained several times from voting on UN resolutions against Moscow. Instead, New Delhi has stressed the need for diplomacy and dialogue on ending the war and has expressed its willingness to contribute to peace efforts. Dzhaparova said she hopes Indian officials including National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, who visited Moscow in February and held talks with President Vladimir Putin, will also visit Kyiv.

"We would be happy to welcome Indian officials to Kyiv," she said. Russian officials are expected to visit India in coming weeks for meetings of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which the country is chairing this year. India depends on Russia for nearly 60% of its defense equipment and has ramped up its purchases of low-priced Russian oil since the war in Ukraine began. Dzhaparova warned India against an over reliance on Russia.

"India should be pragmatic in diversifying its energy resources, military contracts and political interactions. Because what we see in my country when you are dependent on Russia, they will always use this blackmail instrument," she told reporters. India also holds the rotating presidency of the Group of 20 leading rich and developing nations this year. As host, India has cast itself as a rising superpower while leveraging its position on the global stage to bridge the gap between the West and Russia.

Tunisia police use tear gas to disperse homeless migrants

TUNIS (AFP): Tunisian police used tear gas to disperse homeless black migrants who have been protesting outside a United Nations office to demand evacuation following incendiary comments by President Kais Saied. AFP journalists saw police breaking up the encampment outside the Tunis office of the global body's refugee agency UNHCR. The migrants from sub-Saharan Africa have been protesting there, saying they are "not safe" in Tunisia.

The UNHCR announced earlier this month that it was suspending asylum activities worldwide as it moved to a new registration system. Migrants in Tunisia have held repeated protests outside the agency's office in the Lac district of the capital, when they erected barricades in front of the UNHCR office there. Famoussa Koita, a Malian who is recognised by the UN as a legitimate asylum claimant, said many people had been waiting two or three years for the agency to settle their cases.

Migrants also argued with residents of the plush lakeside neighborhood before being dispersed by police. Interior ministry spokesman Faker Bouzghaya said the police intervened at the request of the UNHCR and 80 migrants had been detained. Hundreds of migrants have been living outside the nearby office of the International Organization for Migration, without access to toilets or running water, since Saied claimed without evidence in February that



migrants from sub-Saharan Africa were causing crime and represented a "plot" to change Tunisia's demographic makeup. Shortly after his speech, black Africans faced a wave of violence and many including pregnant women and children were expelled from their homes and workplaces by landlords fearing fines or prison.

Hundreds of fearful West Africans were flown home on repatriation flights. A group of migrants told journalists in a text message that they had been "unjustly kicked out of our homes and got sacked from work" after Saied's speech. "We want to be evacuated immediately to any other

safe country that will accept and respect us as human, not a country like Tunisia that don't value us as human," they said. "We came to Tunisia... for refuge but Tunisia is not safe for us and we can't stay in Tunisia anymore."

Elyes Ben Zakour, a Tunisian who lives nearby, said migrants were "blocking the street" and complained that residents had been unable to leave their houses for 25 days. After the police dispersed the migrants, an AFP journalist saw UNHCR windows and surveillance cameras broken. Municipal workers removed migrants' tents and cleared away their belongings.

UN agency investigating humanitarian food theft

ADDIS ABABA (AP): The United Nations food relief agency is investigating the theft of food aid from life-saving humanitarian operations in Ethiopia, according to a letter obtained by The Associated Press. The World Food Program's Ethiopia director, Claude Jibidar, says in the letter that "WFP is very concerned about the large-scale sale of food in some markets" which "poses not only a reputational risk but also threatens our capacity to mobilize more resources for the needy people."

He adds that it "is therefore imperative that immediate actions be taken to curb ... the misappropriation and diversion of humanitarian food" in the country. The letter is dated April 5 and addressed to humanitarian partners of WFP in Ethiopia, where drought and internal conflict have left 20 million of the country's 120 million people reliant on aid. Jibidar asks the partner organizations to share "any information or cases of food misuse, misappropriation or diversion that you are aware of or that are brought to your attention by

your staff, beneficiaries or local authorities."

The letter does not mention any specific cases. However, two aid workers told AP the stolen aid included enough food for 100,000 people and was recently discovered missing from a warehouse in Sheraro, a town badly affected by the conflict in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region. The aid workers spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter.

It was not clear who was responsible for stealing the aid from the Sheraro warehouse, which was previously looted by Eritrean soldiers allied to Ethiopia's federal government in a separate incident. One of the aid workers said it was supplied by USAID and due to be distributed by partners. In an emailed statement, USAID said it "has proactively identified recent diversion of some of our assistance in Northern Ethiopia." "We are in regular communication with our implementing partners regarding incidents of reported diversion and continue to monitor developments closely and take all

necessary steps to stop the diversion," the agency added. A peace deal signed by the federal government and its Tigray rivals in November has seen restrictions eased and aid deliveries have resumed to the region, where 5.2 million people need humanitarian help.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced \$331 million in funding for aid agencies working in Ethiopia during a trip to the country last month. Meanwhile, fighting between Ethiopia's federal military and units of a regional force continued in several parts of the country's Amhara state, amid tensions sparked by the government's decision to fold Ethiopia's regional security service into the national army. Gunbattles between rival units were ongoing in Debre Birhan and Bahir Dar, the regional capita, according to residents and aid workers. The towns of Sekota and Dessie saw shooting.

Roads, shops and banks remain closed in several areas as the regional government placed restrictions on movement and protests continued.

UN urges probe after call for killing of mission head

NEW YORK (AFP): The United Nations urged Sudanese authorities to investigate after a man publicly asked for a religious edict allowing the murder of the UN's mission chief. A video has circulated on social media in the north-east African country showing an elderly man verbally attacking UN Special Representative Volker Perthes.

The outburst came at a conference of Islamist parties and others linked to the regime of ousted president Omar al-Bashir.

The man, who identified himself as "Abdelmoneim", accused Perthes of committing "violations", "breaches", and excluding some factions in talks aiming at ending a crisis that began with the country's October 2021 military coup. "I am personally asking for a fatwa... to spill his (Volker's) blood," the man said. "I am volunteering to

carry it out." UNITAMS said it was "deeply concerned" by the video. "The language of incitement and violence will only deepen divisions on the ground, but it will not deter the mission from carrying out its duties," it said in a statement. "We call on the Sudanese authorities to initiate legal measures and ensure a proper investigation." Later on, conference organisers said the event was open for the public and the content of the man's speech "does not represent" it. However, in a statement, the organisers reiterated criticism of the UN mission saying it played a "negative role" and was "similar to a foreign political party... imposing a foreign vision on the Sudanese people."

Late last year thousands of Islamists held demonstrations to reject UN mediation efforts between civilian and military leaders. They denounced "foreign interfer-

ence" and called for Perthes to "get out." The coup by army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan derailed a transition to civilian rule established following the 2019 ouster of longtime strongman Bashir. It prompted cuts to crucial international aid in one of the world's poorest countries, and triggered regular pro-democracy demonstrations which have been met by a crackdown that has led to the deaths of 125 people. UNITAMS has pushed to resolve the political crisis, and in December hailed a tentative agreement between Sudan's military leaders and civilian factions, the first component of a two-phase political process aimed at restoring the democratic transition. The followup phase, slated to be signed this month, has been delayed twice over disagreements between military and paramilitary elements on security sector reform, according to analysts.

Biden calls family of reporter detained as spy in Russia

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE (AP): President Joe Biden spoke to the parents of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, nearly two weeks after the Moscow-based journalist was detained in Russia and charged with espionage. Biden made the call as he flew to Belfast to start a four-day trip to Northern Ireland and Ireland. The call happened one day after the Biden administration formally declared the reporter had been "wrong-

fully detained."

The designation elevates Gershkovich's case for the US government and means that a particular State Department office will take the lead on seeking his release. Before departing Washington, Biden again condemned the journalist's detention. Both the US government and Wall Street Journal have vehemently denied the Russian accusation that Gershkovich is a spy. "We're making it real clear

that it's totally illegal what's happening, and we declared it so," Biden said. "It changes the dynamic."

White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters after the call that Biden "felt it was really important to connect with Evan's family, his parents," She said that Gershkovich, 31, has been "top of mind" for the president. White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said that the Russian govern-

China reports first human death due to H3N8 bird flu

BEIJING (Agencies): A 56-year-old woman in southern China has died after testing positive for H3N8 avian influenza, marking the first human death from that strain of bird flu, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). While H3N8 is "one of the most frequently found" subtypes of flu in birds, it had not been detected in humans before two cases emerged in April and May last year, both in China. In a statement, the WHO said the woman, who had pre-existing medical conditions including cancer, had been admitted to hospital with severe pneumonia after falling ill in February. She died last month.

"The case was detected through the severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) surveillance system. No close contacts of the case developed an infection or symptoms of illness at the time of reporting," WHO said in its statement. All three people who contracted H3N8 in China are thought to have been exposed to the virus at live poultry markets. The United Nations health agency said the Chinese government had stepped up monitoring for the strain and that the risk of more infections was low. "However, due to the constantly evolving nature of influenza viruses, WHO continues to stress the importance of global surveillance to detect virologic, epidemiologic and clinical changes associated with circulating influenza viruses which may affect human (or animal) health," it said.

The H3N8 infection is unrelated to the H5N1 bird flu pandemic, which has devastated poultry and wild birds around the world in the last 18 months and has spread to mammals including foxes, bears and domestic cats. To infect humans, the H5N1 virus has to attach itself to receptors in the lungs, which the virus lacks the ability to readily bond with, William Schaffner, a professor of medicine at Vanderbilt University's Division of Infectious Diseases, told Al Jazeera in February. Forced adaptation to replicating in the lungs is why only poultry workers, who breathe in contaminated faecal dust, are typically infected, Schaffner added.

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Pakistan’s role in US’s withdrawal from Afghanistan

NATIONAL Security Spokesperson for the White House has recently told the media that Pakistan did help in moving some US helicopters from Afghanistan during troops' withdrawal from the formerly occupied nation in South Asia. According to John F. Kirby, the withdrawal would have not been possible without the help of US allies and partners in the region. Kirby also mentioned that Pakistan was one of those nations that continued to stand by the United States and suffer from terrorist activities from the spine between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The recent release of classified documents by the US government regarding the US troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan has prompted a fresh debate regarding the events that happened during the messy departure of the US Military from the country. The US officials hailed Biden's decision regarding the troops' evacuation and craved fascination and triumph out of nothing, whereas there had been no mention of several US allies including Pakistan, Turkey, Qatar, UAE, and others played an important role before, during, and after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. Interestingly, the American commentators praised the Biden administration for a peaceful and smooth withdrawal and the ongoing US over-the-horizon counter-terrorism and surveillance operation that led to the killing of top Al-Qaeda leaders in the aftermath of the US exit from the country. But they do not ready to accept the reality that a premature and hasty pull of the American troops practically pushed the South Asian nation into a pre-9/11 situation which was neither a matter of triumph for the United States nor it had any positive outcome for other US allies including Pakistan.

Fortunately, Pakistan not only played a fascinating role in the finalization of the Doha agreement but also made utmost efforts for the constitution of a consensus political setup in the country that never happened due to the US's haste and no-cooperation from the Afghan Republicans during the last days of Ghani regime. Meanwhile, Pakistan's assistance during the evacuation of foreign citizens, diplomats, and humanitarian workers from Afghanistan after the Taliban's takeover had been widely praised by the global community in the past. Surprisingly, the PTI-led government kept complete silence regarding Pakistan's role in US military withdrawal from neighboring Afghanistan, and former Prime Minister Imran Khan did not take the nation into confidence over the issue. At the same time, the PTI's Ministers had been taking credit for not allowing US military basing in the country and refusing American drone operations from Pakistani soil across the Pak-Afghan border inside Afghanistan.

Historically, besides the biased anti-Pakistan commentary of certain US lawmakers and anti-US rhetoric of a few Pakistani politicians, the state-to-state relations between the United States and Pakistan had always remained promising, constructed, and mutually beneficial for both countries. Both nations had always rescued each other during difficult times and had enjoyed tremendous dividends of their bilateral cooperation throughout history. Although the PTI government did not accept it publicly, however, Pakistan offered all possible help and fulfilled all American needs during US troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan, while some US military contingents, equipment, and helicopters transited through Pakistani routes. Meanwhile, Pakistan used its influence to ensure a peaceful and smooth withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan.

Apparently, the Pakistan-US partnership and cooperation had remained in place throughout history, while the need for enhanced Pak-US cooperation in counterterrorism, defense, and security has reemerged in the post-US Afghanistan as the transnational terrorist outfits including the IS-K, the TTP, and others are again regrouping in the region and merits a coordinated and concerted response against the rising threats of terrorism in the AfPak region and beyond. Therefore, Pakistani leaders must not shy in highlighting Pakistan's adorable role in global affairs and should work to consolidate foreign partnerships and alliances that play an important role in the achievement of the national goals in the current complex geostrategic environment in the world.

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

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

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

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

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.

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 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.

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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 reelection 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 monument 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 ostensibly 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.

US House votes to annul China’s developing country status

John Queripel

THE US House of Representatives unanimously passed a motion to strip China of its "developing nation" status on March 27. The measure, titled "The People's Republic of China is not a Developing Country Act" (H.R. 1107) was passed 415-0 with 19 abstaining. The legislation directs the Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, to pursue altering the status of the PRC from developing country to upper middle income country, high income country or developed country for international organizations which include both, the US and China, while also proposing a mechanism to achieve such.

The Secretary of State, by the legislation is directed, "to ensure that the PRC does not receive preferential treatment or assistance within the organization as a result of it having the status of a devel-

oping country". The motion had bi-partisan support being sponsored by Representative Young Kim (a Republican from California) and Gerry Connolly (a Democrat from Virginia).

In moving the motion, Kim said of the PRC, "their economy size is second only to that of the United States, accounting for 18.6 percent of the global economy...[The] United States is treated as a developed country, so should the PRC," before charging, "however the PRC is classified as a developing country, and they're using this status to game the system and hurt countries that are in need." The reference to "hurting" other countries referenced the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, with an alleged "debt trap diplomacy". The legislation places the US at odds with most international organizations, including the IMF and the World Bank, along with the

United Nations, who confer that status on China.

Such status allows special privileges and flexibilities in certain treaties and organizations. If revoked it would also strip the right of China to receive aid from international organizations. This is not the first time that the US has opposed China's designation as a developing country. It has repeatedly asked the WHO to revoke the PRC being so classified.

This resolution follows the House in January overwhelmingly voting to establish a bipartisan select committee focused on US competition with China. In February the House also unanimously resolved to condemn China over an alleged use of a "spy balloon" over the continental US. If stripped of "developing country" status China would be subject to changes in lending policies

by organizations such as the World Bank. Low interest loans would no longer be available, while some tariff preferences for developing countries would be eliminated on Chinese products.

There are also differences in the time frame and scale of carbon emissions between developing and developed nations, meaning that the PRC would be faced with complying with increased targets. "Developing country" status is something deferred, however, not by a single nation but is rather something deferred by multilateral bodies and organizations. While it is true that China's economy has rapidly grown in recent decades with some 800 million people being raised out of poverty, its per capita income still stands only at \$12,700, clearly in the range of developing

nations. That figure is only one-fifth of that in the US and in many other developed nations.

On the UN Human Development Index China reached 0.768 in 2021, ranking 79th in the world. Its development is similar to many other nations classified "developing". These include, as ranked by the IMF, such nations as Argentina, Brazil, Croatia, Hungary, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. Nations classified as "developing" by the World Bank, but having higher per capita incomes than China, include Brazil, Mexico, Chile and Russia. Developed countries classified are limited to North America, Western Europe, Japan, South Korea, and Australasia. Of course, a concern for fairness does not lie behind this move. There is no move to have other nations stripped on their status, or a call for an overall review of how

nations receive such status. Rather, it represents another example of US policy aimed at containment of China, a policy ranging from encircling China with military bases, sanctioning China in trade, especially in high tech, the formation of alliances with nations on an anti-China basis, to making provocative moves on Taiwan.

Faced with a rising China and the collapse of a unipolar world, centered on the US, to one which is multipolar, with China playing a major role, the United States is using every play in its book to prevent such occurring. One can expect that the US will now attempt to browbeat the UN, IMF and World Bank among others, to revoke the status given to the PRC of being a "developing" nation. If successful this will represent another brake the US will apply to any who attempt to challenge its hegemony.

Biden is turning the heat on Netanyahu

Yossi Mekelberg

OFFICIALS in Washington are running out of euphemisms to express their dismay with the current Israeli government and the person who leads it. It is quite a novelty, and a welcome one too, that criticism of the reckless anti-democratic moves by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his allies is no longer coming from so-called anonymous sources, but straight from the horse's mouth - that of US President Joe Biden or Secretary of State Antony Blinken, for instance.

Disagreements between Washington and Israel are not without precedent, and there have been previous moments of crisis, including President Dwight D. Eisenhower's demand that Israel withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula after the Suez crisis of 1956, or President Jimmy Carter's less than subtle pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin to make the necessary concessions to reach a peace agreement with Egypt in 1978, and the threat to take action with financial implications should Israel not stop building new settlements when the US was focusing its efforts on convening the 1991 Madrid Peace conference. In all these cases, as in others, Israel adjusted its behavior in line with the senior member in this close alliance. However, in all previous crises no American administration has questioned the bond between the countries, and all have made it clear that the disagreements were between friends. Nevertheless, there is presently a clear denunciation by President Biden himself and very senior people in his administration of the attempts to weaken Israel's judiciary, to the extent that their critique questions the very nature of the relations between the two countries should this policy become a reality, and

this is a fundamental change in approach. It is also as much the frequency and the source of the disapproval, as it is the actual words that are used to express it that typifies the rift opening between these two allies over the efforts to compromise the liberal-democratic nature of Israel. Moreover, it seems that American denunciations of Netanyahu and his government are becoming bolder as the protests across Israel against the so-called judicial reforms gather momentum, which is bound to give the protesters a tailwind to continue their just struggle to preserve their country's democracy.

Prime Minister Netanyahu keeps mentioning his more than 40 years of acquaintance with Biden, and that the current occupant of the White House is a long-standing friend of Israel. Two genuine facts, not to be taken for granted when it comes to anything Netanyahu says these days, but this also explains why Biden is extremely concerned for the future of Israel as a democracy. Biden trusts neither Netanyahu personally, nor his motivation behind the legislation his government is pursuing. Last month in a phone conversation between the two leaders, Biden urged Netanyahu to seek a compromise over his planned judicial reforms, but instead of heeding this advice Netanyahu carelessly announced the sacking of his defense minister for suggesting he halt the proposed legislation for a few weeks, prompting tens of thousands to spontaneously take to the streets in protest. This was another a clear indication that Netanyahu is ready to risk the security of the country in an attempt to cling on to power, and by that not only to put Israel's interests at risk but also America's interests in the region.

Netanyahu is continuing with this irresponsible behavior while appearing to ignore the fact that no country is able to use its influence on Israel in the same way that America can, as a result of the web of close relations between the two countries.

Moreover, it has become apparent that the Biden administration is ready to do just that and pressurize Israel for the sake of preserving its democratic system. When asked recently whether Netanyahu would be invited to the White House, Biden expressed his frustration with the Israeli government by plainly and succinctly stating "not in the near term." Not only was this a clear, painful and public diplomatic slap to Netanyahu, but it also established clear blue water between the US approach to the unfolding events in Israel and that of some of Europe's leaders, who are "happy" to welcome Netanyahu and pay mere lip service to disapproving the anti-democratic path his government is taking. The very fact that they greet him in their official residencies reduces the impact of their expressed reservations about his behavior, and plays into the Israeli right's narrative that regardless of what they do to rip apart Israeli democracy or entrench the occupation, the country will remain part of the Western-democratic world and continue to enjoy the advantages that come with that but not the obligations.

In diplomacy, appearances can sometimes be as powerful, if not more so, than rhetoric. Moreover, as was put to me by a former senior official in Israel, whatever the world says or thinks about his country, is at best received politely, but is hardly taken much notice of. However, this is not the case with Washington, on which Israel relies for its security and

prosperity. Despite some flippant remarks from certain right-wing quarters in Israel calling on Washington to refrain from commenting on internal Israeli affairs and "mind its own business," as one Israeli politician put it, conveniently ignoring the massive military, economic and political support Israel enjoys from the US, Israel ignores Washington at its peril. Moreover, the US is home to Israel's largest and most supportive Jewish community, the vast majority of whom vote Democrat. One of the main reasons for this unwavering support through the years has been the liberal-democratic nature of Israel, including its acceptance of different strands of Judaism. But all of this is being severely jeopardized in the hands of a far-right-messianic government, and with it also the state's bond with America's Jews. In preparation for last's month's second annual Democracy Summit, an initiative of the current US administration, President Biden reiterated that the "struggle to bolster democratic governance at home and abroad is the defining challenge of our time. That is because democracy - transparent and accountable government of, for, and by the people - remains the best way to realize lasting peace, prosperity, and human dignity."

To emphasize the earnestness that the administration sees adhering to these principles, Hungary and Turkiye were not invited to this summit, although Israel and India were. It begs the question: For how long can the US afford on the one hand, as President Biden did, to express grave concern with the anti-democratic policies of an Israeli government that ignores the will of the people, and continues to deprive Palestinians living under it occupation of almost all their rights, yet on the other still give it preferential treatment?



Israel's tampering with Al-Aqsa status is a recipe for disaster

THE third holiest Muslim site, Al-Aqsa Mosque, or Al-Haram Al-Sharif, has become a dangerous flash-point that could ignite the entire region. The shocking events of last week, when Israeli soldiers stormed the holy site, beating worshippers and causing serious damage to the main building, is an assault on a Muslim place of worship that is under the custody of Jordan. Nothing can justify the barbaric Israeli action, which was repeated over a number of days during the month of Ramadan.

For years now successive Israeli governments have been caving in to the demands of Jewish extremists to alter the historic status of Al-Aqsa Mosque - allowing Jews to pray and perform Talmudic rituals at the compound. But what is even more dangerous is that prominent Israeli politicians are now talking openly about dividing the Muslim mosque so that Jews can pray inside the Haram at set times - thus turning the place into a synagogue. Some scholars have called the incremental extension of Israeli sovereignty over Al-Aqsa compound - what Jews call the Temple Mount - as the "Hebronization" of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, in reference to what took place at the Ibrahim Mosque in Hebron in 1972. So far Israel has succeeded in what is called the temporal division of Al-Aqsa, where Jewish pilgrims are allowed to enter the compound under police protection almost every day at set hours. Despite Arab, Muslim and international denunciations such provocative visits have been increasing with Jewish extremists performing Talmudic rituals while carrying posters of the third temple replacing Al-Aqsa Mosque. Now the likes of Jewish extremist and minister in the current Israeli government,

Osama Al-Sharif

Itamar Ben-Gvir, want to have access to the mosque itself to enforce a de facto spatial division. It is no secret that some ultra-religious groups openly call for the destruction of the mosque. The mosque came under Israeli attack soon after the fall of East Jerusalem in 1967. In August, 1969 an Australian zealot set fire to the historic pulpit at the main prayer hall of the mosque. Attempts to do harm to the mosque and to worshippers continued over the following years. Israel has frequently blocked Jordanian plans to do essential renovation work at the site. The waqf personnel, including officials, guards and ushers, have been harassed by Israeli police on a regular basis. But the most serious attempt to impose a new reality at the compound took place in September 2000 when Ariel Sharon, as leader of the Likud party, broke with protocol and visited the site under heavy police protection. That provocative tour of the site triggered riots across the West Bank, leading to the eruption of the second Palestinian Intifada. Under Benjamin Netanyahu, breaches of Al-Aqsa compound became more regular and on a number of occasions, tensions with Jordan mounted over unilateral steps that successive Likud governments, all under Netanyahu, tried to impose at the compound.

In 2014 and under US pressure, Netanyahu recommitted to the historical status quo arrangement on Al-Aqsa with Jordan. The status quo, which goes back to the mid-19th century, has been respected by successive administrators of Palestine since. The arrangement recognizes the compound and all that it entails as an exclusive Muslim site. Accordingly, Al-Aqsa's

administration belongs to a Muslim institution, the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf, which is under the custodianship of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. In 1878, Jerusalem's Status Quo arrangement was internationally recognized in the Treaty of Berlin, which was signed between European powers and the Ottoman Empire. Interestingly, an ad hoc commission established under the British mandate in 1929 determined that the Buraq wall, what Jews call the Wailing Wall, forms an integral part of Al-Aqsa Mosque, and is therefore a Muslim property.

Even as recently as this Monday, Netanyahu continued to argue that Israel will not change the historical status quo, but his government's actions say otherwise. There is no legal or historical claim to the 1440-dunum compound by Israel. Every country in the world recognizes the Hashemite custodianship of Al-Aqsa. It is important to note that Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem, including the Old City, are illegal under international law.

Still Israel is mixing politics with religion - a lethal cocktail that is undermining freedom of worship in Jerusalem, not only for Muslims but for Christians as well. So far Israel has broken all pledges to keep the peace and allow Muslims to worship peacefully at Al-Aqsa. Unless it receives a serious warning from the US, which is the only country that may still have some influence over Israel, the current path will certainly lead to a bloodbath. Allowing a dangerous far-right government to tamper with the religious beliefs of millions of people in such a reckless manner is a crime. Allowing Jewish ultra-religious zealots to escalate the situation is a recipe for disaster.

Arab News

Lessons from N Ireland's peace

TWENTY-FIVE years ago, I, along with Irish Prime Minister Bertie Aherne, US President Bill Clinton and the leaders of Northern Ireland's four main political parties, presented what became known as the Good Friday Agreement. That accord resolved a conflict that had caused thousands of deaths and untold grief and destruction for decades, arguably for centuries. The peace, like the political institutions to which the GFA gave rise, was imperfect and fragile, and it remains so. But compare Northern Ireland today with how it was a quarter-century ago, and you can legitimately call what has been achieved a transformation. The peace has held, the economy has doubled in size, and Belfast, a city which used to be dressed in barbed wire and covered with military patrols, is now a thriving European city with a burgeoning technology sector and a bustling night life.

So, we have grounds for cautious celebration on this anniversary. It is hard to think of another truly successful peace process in recent history. I am often asked whether there are lessons from the GFA for conflict resolution elsewhere in the world. The reality is that every conflict is unique, differentiated by cause, duration, outside support and many other factors. Nonetheless, some lessons are discernible and worth discerning.

Tony Blair

First, peace cannot take root without an agreed framework seen by both sides as conceptually fair. In the case of Northern Ireland, the core part of the GFA was the so-called principle of consent: Those who want a united Ireland must accept that the North should remain part of the UK for as long as a majority there wish it. This was a big concession to Northern Ireland's Unionists. In return, Unionists accepted the principle of equal and fair treatment for the nationalist, predominantly Roman Catholic community, underpinned by new institutions in areas such as policing and justice, and by the recognition, through cooperation with the Irish Republic, of the nationalist aspiration for unity of Ireland.

But the moribund Israeli-Palestinian peace process, based on the so-called two-state solution, shows that a framework alone is insufficient. Second, therefore, a peace process needs constant attention by those involved. An agreed framework is just a beginning. It is the roadmap, not the destination. Achieving peace requires time, patience, creativity and dogged, never-ceasing determination. Peace processes are exactly that: A process, not an event. So, we spent long years - nine in total - on implementation, with many crises, setbacks and stumbling blocks along the way. Any one of them

could have shut down the process had we not kept at it.

Third, negotiators must be unafraid to seek outside help. "No one really understands our dispute like we do," they say. That is correct, but sometimes not understanding the dispute like they do holds the key to resolving it. The interventions by Clinton and US Senator George Mitchell, and the subsequent visit to Northern Ireland and support for the process by President George W. Bush, came at points that were instrumental for ensuring structures of financial and political support. The EU, too, was always looking for ways to help, and the EU's flexibility in the face of the recent Brexit-related turmoil in Northern Ireland is another classic example of external assistance helping to overcome internal tension.

So, don't fear outsiders; use them. That of course requires a fourth component: Exemplary leadership. The peace in Northern Ireland would never have happened without it. Leaders had to be prepared to tell their supporters uncomfortable truths, take the criticism and bear the shrieks of betrayal. Time and again during the process, there were moments when the easiest thing to do contradicted the right thing to do. Fortunately, we had leaders willing - often at great personal cost - to take the right path, not the easiest one.

Fifth, a successful process is more likely if those who are engaged in it have confidence in one another. I always tell students that politics is personal; it's a people business. Because there are so many tricky issues to resolve, because the politics of each person may point in different, if not opposite, directions, you must be able to have conversations that are open, frank and strategic. Your partner in the process has a problem? See it from their angle.

Discuss it. Find a solution together. Friendship may be too hard to achieve, but partnership isn't. Sixth, all parties must recognize that the conflict will have given rise to the deepest mistrust. Striking an agreement is not the same thing as developing trust. The first is formal. The latter is emotional. So, acknowledge it. Seeking ways to build confidence is an investment that will pay the richest dividends.

Finally, never give up. People are so cynical about politics, usually because they see little change in their daily lives. But step back a moment. The broad sweep of history is like an impressionist painting: What looks like a blur up close reveals itself at a distance. With the distance of 25 years, we can see that the GFA brought real, far-reaching change. Many living today are the beneficiaries of it. Whether they know it or think about it doesn't matter. What matters is that it was done.

Trump, Murdoch, the Dalai Lama: Living proof that no one is too big for retirement

Marina Hyde

'His holiness often teases people he meets in an innocent and playful way,' announces an apology from the office of the Dalai Lama, sounding for all the world like one of those statements issued in the first wave of #MeToo, as various older men made pained and absurd reference to "unwanted hugs" (Pixar's John Lasseter) or a belief that they had been "pursuing shared feelings" (talkshow host Charlie Rose). Students of these mea-not-really-culpas were left with the impression that the victims' misunderstanding was the real tragedy here, unless you counted the very belated losses of various glittering careers, which were obviously also desperately sad.

The specific "people" to which this current Dalai Lama apology refers are, in fact, one person - more accurately one young boy, who was invited to "suck my tongue" by the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, on stage at a temple in India. The event took place in February, but has only just gone viral, meaning an apology has only now been deemed necessary by his holiness, or rather by his holiness's office. It is fair to say that the interaction with this distinctly unsettled child has not been taken by many people in the spirit in which the Dalai Lama's office retrospectively insists it was meant, despite that insistence being accompanied by the classic non-apology apology gesture towards any hurt "his words may have caused". In the interests of clarify-

ing things for those pen-pushers/chime-tinklers in his holiness's office, it's not the words quite so much as the spectacle of an 87-year-old man sitting expectantly with his tongue out as a child squirms in front of him.

When is a seemingly retirement age for a Dalai Lama, other than what we might broadly categorise as "before this sort of thing starts happening in public"? The Dalai Lama retired as leader of Tibet's government in exile in 2011 - one year after he did the iPhone advert which promised that Apple's latest model was "the most trusted phone ever" - but he retains his position as the foremost spiritual leader of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. The process of identifying his successor has been inching forward for some time, though the Dalai Lama has mentioned dreams in which he sees himself living to 113. A few years ago, he twice stated that any female successor of his would have been attractive or she would be "not much use". You don't see that particular quote of his banded around as Instagram #inspo, though it did at least provide another occasion for his office to issue an apology.

The search for a successor continues, though an alternative Dalai Lama may also be chosen by the Chinese government. Speaking of whom, the Dalai Lama's most committed foe, 69-year-old Chinese leader Xi Jinping, has rewritten the state rulebook to

allow his own premiership to go on and on. It seems to be the fashion these days. Even Leonid Brezhnev was public-spirited enough to die at 76. Vladimir Putin is 70 but regards visibly dreadful health as absolutely no bar to office. Over in that other superpower, the United States now appears fully committed to late-stage gerontocracy on both sides of the political divide. The next US presidential election may well be fought by a 76-year-old currently up on criminal charges and an 80-year-old president whose occasionally rambling public utterances have the effect of making one imagine his aides with their hearts in the mouths, somewhere just off stage, willing him to get to the end of them without further incident. Perhaps a lengthy and gruelling election campaign will flatter this quality. More likely not.

Meanwhile, some of the most powerful companies in the world are run by men who in lesser occupations - such as mine and yours - may have been put out to pasture some time ago. It was Rupert Murdoch who once described the Dalai Lama as a "very political old monk shuffling around in Gucci shoes". Quite rude - the Dalai Lama is actually five years younger than the News Corp chairman, who is gearing up for a landmark lawsuit later this month over 2020 "election fraud", a lie knowingly pushed by his outlets in a scandal in which he some-

how felt powerless to intervene. Murdoch's most recent engagement was celebrated in this column mere weeks ago. The distressing subsequent news that said engagement had been called off was buried on the day of the arraignment of Donald Trump, the aforementioned 76-year-old, a blockbuster event that also nudged headlines about the 74-year-old supreme court justice Clarence Thomas down the pecking order. Mr Thomas has accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of luxury hospitality from a major Republican donor, the 74-year-old Harlan Crow, whose hobbies reportedly include collecting communist dictator statuary and Nazi memorabilia. A thunderous leader column in Murdoch's Wall Street Journal obliquely referred to this as the "smearing of Clarence Thomas".

Mandatory retirement might be a thing at some places of work in the US and beyond, but for a certain stature of man, it is evidently not something that needs to be worried about. The idea of giving way to someone a few years younger, to say nothing of a few decades, does not appear to loom large in their minds, degenerated or otherwise. On they go, really putting the ancient into ancient wisdom. We can all celebrate a good innings, of course - but a remarkable number of today's biggest hitters do seem to have long passed the point at which a dignified walk back to the pavilion is in order.

The Guardian

Harald Brüning

TAIWAN leader Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with US House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy, a Republican, at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in California's Simi Valley last week was a gross violation of the three Sino-US joint communiques by Washington. I wonder what former US president Reagan would have said about the meeting. When Reagan paid a state visit to China in April 1984 (former president Richard Nixon was the first to pay a state visit in 1972 while his successor Gerald Ford made an official visit in 1975), he underlined at a banquet hosted by his Chinese counterpart Li Xiannian the need for "mutual respect and mutual benefit" between the two sides, and even tried out a few phrases in Mandarin.

Reagan also said that the people of China and the United States share a sincere desire for peace and prosperity, and that by working together, emphasizing the areas of agreement, everyone will benefit. Alas, his words of wisdom are out of fashion on Capitol Hill. Instead, China bashing is one of the very few issues the Democrats and Republicans in Congress can agree on.

Incidentally, McCarthy's tricky game reached its climax on the eve of the constructive meetings of President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang with

French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Beijing. Unlike many other top politicians in the 27-nation EU who continue to defend

unipolar "Atlanticism", Macron is the most prominent proponent of the European vision of strategic autonomy, which necessarily entails a multipolar system. More heads of state and government as well as foreign ministers from the EU should adhere to Macron's vision so that Europe could, for instance, play the badly-needed role of a balancing force in the conflict-ridden geopolitics.

Tsai's "stay" in the US was officially dubbed "transit" by Washington. That's a misnomer. In the travel industry, "transit" means just changing planes at an airport, while "stopover" customarily means staying at least overnight and leaving the airport the next day. Well, the latter is what obviously happened during Tsai's trip to and from Central America via the US. Tsai's tour coincided with former Taiwan leader Ma Ying-jeou's visit to the Chinese mainland, accompanied by a group of Taiwan students. And as he had said earlier, Ma, along with the students, visited Fudan University in Shanghai. Ma was right when he said that advancing exchanges between young people across the Straits is

"the most urgent task of our generation".

Ma is the first former leader of the island to visit the mainland. He also met Mr Xi Jinping in Singapore on Nov 7, 2015. A spokesperson for the Foreign Ministry described Tsai's "transit" through the US as a serious violation of the one-China principle and the provisions of the three China-US joint communiques, adding that it seriously infringes upon China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and sends an egregiously wrong signal to the "Taiwan independence" separatist forces. Moreover, a spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in the US reaffirmed that the Taiwan question is the bedrock of the political foundation of China-US relations and the first red line that should never be crossed in this bilateral relationship.

I hope more Taiwan people follow in Ma's footsteps by adopting, once again, a realistic cross-Straits approach, based on the 1992 Consensus that there is only one China and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. Let's be realistic. "Taiwan independence" is a dead-end policy and dangerous to boot. Let's also be optimistic. Where there is a will there will also be a way to achieve national reunification peacefully. It won't be easy. It may need time. But it can be done - as long as the international community regards the matter as an internal affair of China.

China Daily

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FPCCI presents charter of economy for uplift of potential sectors

PESHAWAR (APP): The business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa presented a charter of economy to the provincial government to prepare a roadmap for the development of the potential sectors including industries, energy and mining in the annual budget for next financial year.

Under the charter all concerned departments have been directed to submit recommendations and proposals for inclusion in the provincial budget to strengthen the economy of the province.

In this connection, a meeting of the stakeholders was held in the Energy Department here with Special Secretary Energy Tasfeen Haider in the chair,

said an official handout issued here on Wednesday.

Besides, Coordinator of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) KP Region, Sartaj Ahmad Khan, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development & Management Company (KP-EZDMC), Javed Iqbal Khattak, Additional Secretary Energy & Power Department, Asif Khan, Dr Qasim Jadoon and Abdul Haseeb, the representative delegations of the business community and Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Department (PEDO) especially attended the meeting.

In his presentation, the Coordinator FPCCI Sartaj Ahmad Khan highlighted

proposals for various energy sector development projects including supply of inexpensive electricity to industries on wheeling basis. He said that timely completion of energy sector projects would prove a milestone for uplift of the industrial sector of the province.

He commended the precious services of the Advisor for Energy & Finance, Himayatullah Khan for the development of energy sector while CEO KP-EZDMC, Javed Iqbal Khattak termed the development of economic zones and energy projects as highly crucial for the uplift of the industrial sector. He also presented various proposals for the development of the industrial sector.

The Managing Director (MD) Mine & Mineral also agreed with the proposal to prepare a draft of recommendations for the development of his sector and their inclusion in the budget of the next financial year.

Speaking on the occasion, the Special Secretary Energy Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Tashfeen Haider agreed with the proposed charter of economy of the business community for the development of hydel, industrial and mining sectors, exploration of oil and gas and promotion of solar energy sought proposals and recommendations from the concerned departments and evolving of strategy for their inclusion in the next annual budget.



ISLAMABAD: Acting British High Commissioner Andrew Dagleish meeting with Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at Finance Division.

Andrew commends measures of economic stability

ISLAMABAD (APP): Acting British High Commissioner to Pakistan Andrew Dagleish Wednesday commended the measures being undertaken by the incumbent government for economic stability and offered all possible help from the 'British Government' for the people of Pakistan in mitigating the socio-economic crisis.

The Acting British High Commissioner called on Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and discussed the current macro-economic situation of the world as well as Pakistan.

The Finance Minister also briefed the envoy on the progress in talks with the International Monetary Fund and apprised the overall economic outlook of the country.

The Finance Minister briefed the envoy on pragmatic policies and programs of the government being taken in terms of revenue generation and bringing economic stability and growth.

The High Commissioner commended the practical measures being undertaken by the present government and offered all possible help from the British Government for the people of Pakistan in mitigating the socio-economic crisis. The Finance Minister appreciated the British Acting High Commissioner for his cooperation and support.

The Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Finance Tariq Bajwa, Special Secretary Finance, and other senior officers from Finance Division also attended in the meeting.

Türkiye's retail sales down in February

ANKARA (APP): Türkiye's retail sales volume, a marker of growing consumer spending, fell 6.5% month-on-month in February after powerful twin earthquakes hit numerous provinces and affected 13 million people in the country, according to official data released on Wednesday.

Automotive fuel sales posted the largest decline of 8.8%, while non-food (except automotive fuel) dove 8.7% from a month ago in February.

Food, drinks, and tobacco sales inched down 0.3% during the same period.

Electronic goods and furniture sales slipped the most among non-food items, down 11.1% on a monthly basis this February.

As force majeure was declared and VAT declarations – on which retail sales indices calculation is based – were postponed in quake-hit provinces, TurkStat said that alternative data sources such as e-invoice and e-archive invoice data and statistical methods were used to fill in missing observations in the February calculations.

The share of these estimated observations in the total is 3.76%, TurkStat added. More than 50,000 people were killed on Feb. 6 when magnitude 7.7 and 7.6 earthquakes struck southern and southeastern Turkish provinces.

Prices of vegetables, fruits on increase

PESHAWAR (APP): Prices of vegetables and fruits could not be reduced during Ramadan and more increases in rates were witnessed during a visit to the markets in the morning.

One vendor while talking to APP said that the rates could not be reduced because of the main sellers of vegetables and fruits and instead of taking action against small vendors, the officials of the district administration let the main wholesalers without any check.

"How can we sell vegetables and fruits if we purchased such items at

high rates," he questioned. He said despite the rates of the various items including fruits and vegetables issued by the district administration, the whole sellers sell food items at high rates.

He said a slight reduction was witnessed in Adrak Rs 680, however, the rates of Garlic Rs 360 and Lemon Rs 280 per kg are still at high rates. Various items including Peas 180, Arvi 170, Okra 180, Karela 80, Beans 190 and Onion 90 per kg are being sold.

The price of green pepper is 100, tomato is 60

and eggplant is 70 rupees per kilogram while Malta 440, Cano 350 and Banana 280 per dozen are sold without any reduction in the rates.

The rates of fruits also witnessed increases including pomegranate 440, Iranian apple 400, guava 250 and grapes jumped to 440 rupees per kg and strawberries 230 melons 90 and watermelons 50 rupees per kg slightly down.

The price of live chicken decreased by Rs.10 per kg, and the price of live chicken in the market came to Rs.365 per kg.

Tokyo stocks close higher with eyes on US inflation

TOKYO (APP): Tokyo shares closed higher Wednesday following gains on Wall Street, while investors awaited the release of US inflation data later in the day.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index rose 0.57 percent, or 159.33 points, to 28,082.70, while the broader Topix index added 0.76 percent, or 15.07 points, to end at 2,006.92.

The dollar fetched 133.83 yen in Tokyo, up slightly from 133.69 yen in New York overnight.

Investors cheered gains of blue-chip shares in New York, but gradually adopted "a wait-and-see attitude" ahead of the US consumer price data, Mizuho Securities said. Comments

from US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen also "contributed to easing worries over prospects of the US economy", IwaiCosmo Securities added.

Yellen said she had not seen evidence of a contraction in credit, despite fears that households and firms could have a tougher time borrowing after recent banking sector turmoil.

Her comments came as central bankers, finance ministers and other participants gather in Washington for the International Monetary Fund and World Bank's spring meetings this week, with global growth and debt restructuring among

key topics on the agenda. In Tokyo, shares of trading houses advanced after Warren Buffett, on a visit to the Japanese capital, told the Nikkei newspaper he was "very proud" of his investments in them.

Mitsubishi Corp gained 2.23 percent to 4,961 yen, and Marubeni Corp added 2.97 percent to 1,904 yen.

Elsewhere, Nintendo rose 0.98 percent to 5,466 yen and Hitachi grew 0.78 percent to 7,357 yen.

SoftBank Group climbed 1.49 percent to 5,178 yen after a report by the Financial Times said chief executive Masayoshi Son will officially agree with Nasdaq this week to list UK-based chip designer Arm.

Cars' sale decreases 50.30% in 9 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): The sale of cars during the first nine months of the current fiscal year 2022-23, has dropped by 50.30 per cent as compared to the same months of last year, the latest data released by the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA).

According to the data, as many as 85,776 cars were sold during July-March 2022-23 as opposed to 172,612 units during July-March 2021-22.

The breakup figures showed that 12,381 units of Honda Civic and City were

sold during the corresponding period of the year 2022-23 as compared to the sale of 28,830 units last year, thus showing a dip of 57.05 per cent.

Toyota Corolla and Yaris cars sales also decreased by 63.39 per cent as it went down to 15,994 units the current year from 43,695 units in the same period of the previous year.

However, Suzuki Swift's sales went up by 1627.16 per cent as sales increased to 8,584 units from 497 units last year.

Sale of Suzuki Cultus decreased to 6,233 units

during the current year, whereas during the same period last year, the sale was recorded at 17,686 units while the sale of Suzuki WagonR also decreased to 5,022 units from 16,916 units in the same period of last year.

Suzuki Alto's sales also witnessed a sharp decline of 42.25 per cent from 53,241 units to 30,744 units during the months under review, whereas the sale of Suzuki Bolan decreased to 3,865 units as opposed to the sale of 9,562 units in the same period of last year.

China makes solid progress in developing computing power

BEIJING (APP): The scale of China's computing power industry has expanded at an annual rate of nearly 30 percent in recent years, amid the country's push to develop its digital economy, official data showed.

By the end of last year, China's total computing power reached 180 EFLOPS, ranking second in the world, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

The country's total data storage capacity has exceeded 1000 EB, the ministry added.

In recent years, the country has made solid progress in developing computing infrastructure, and the computing power industry is following a smart, green and safe path

of development, the ministry said.

As the country has stepped up efforts to promote the digital economy, a mega project was launched

last year involving the establishment of eight national computing hubs and 10 national data center clusters to improve the overall computing power.

Pork prices in China lower last week

BEIJING (APP): Pork prices in China registered a week-on-week decline in the week from April 3 to 7, official data showed.

During this period, the average pork price tracked by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs stood at 18.33 yuan (about 2.66 US dollars) per kg, down 2.9 percent compared with the previous week.

The price was 9.7 percent higher year on year, but the increase fell by 4.6 percentage points from a week earlier.

Pork supply increased during the period, as some large-scale breeding farms accelerated pig slaughter, but pork demand shrank, leading to falling prices, according to the ministry.

Japan's wholesale prices increased

TOKYO (APP): Japan's wholesale price inflation increased in March from a year earlier, although the pace of increase slowed for a third successive month, Xinhua reported, quoting the Bank of Japan (BOJ) as saying Wednesday.

According to the central bank, wholesale prices in Japan rose 7.2 percent in March from a year earlier, as raw material prices and the yen's weaker tone continue to weigh.

The corporate goods price index (CGPI), a gauge of prices for goods and services charged by companies to each other, came on the heels of an 8.3 percent increase booked in February, the data showed, with the latest reading coming in line with economists' expectations.

Chinese yuan strengthens to 6.8854 against dollar

BEIJING (APP): The central parity rate of the Chinese currency renminbi, or the yuan, strengthened 28 pips to 6.8854 against the US dollar Wednesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System.

In China's spot foreign exchange market, the yuan is allowed to rise or fall by 2 percent from the central parity rate each trading day.

The central parity rate of the yuan against the US dollar is based on a weighted average of prices offered by market makers before the opening of the interbank market each business day.

LOST

My original file No. I-OR-0161-01325, relating to Federal Government Employees Housing Scheme For FG employees, and subsequent allotment of 1 kanal plot to me in F-14, has been lost. If anyone finds it kindly contact on the address given below, Shaheen Masud c/o Reema Masud, House No. 26, street 11, F-6/3, Islamabad.



ISLAMABAD: People purchasing fruits displayed by vendors at fruit and vegetable market.

Insurance agencies to review conduct

HANOI (APP): Insurance companies in Vietnam have been required to tighten the supervision of insurance agencies and sales amid negative feedback from the public over poor transparency of insurance products, local media reported on Wednesday.

The country's Insurance Supervisory Authority demanded insurance agencies immediately take measures to provide clients with complete and accurate information and review the quality of their agents' con-

sultation and sales techniques, the local newspaper Vietnam News reported.

The authority stressed that agents' violations would be dealt with, and their agencies would bear part of the responsibility.

The finance ministry proposed agencies review and improve customer service quality, business operations, internal regulations, and risk management to ensure they are all in compliance with current regulations.

In an earlier develop-

ment, a Vietnamese actress live-streamed her grievances over policies of the insurance she bought for her family with clauses that she had not been aware of.

As of Dec. 12, 2022, the total assets of insurance companies in Vietnam grew by 14.51 percent against the beginning of the year to 811.31 trillion Vietnamese dong (34.4 billion US dollars), while equity reached 162.81 trillion Vietnamese dong (6.9 billion dollars), up 3.83 percent.

Pakistan's copper export to China increased 16.5%

BEIJING (APP): Copper and articles thereof have seen an increase in exports to China from Pakistan in recent years. In the first two months of this year, it increased by about 16.5%.

Sources in Pakistan Embassy Beijing informed China Economic Net that this is due to the growing demand for copper products in China and increasing economic ties between the two countries. The export of copper and articles thereof from Pakistan to China has been on a steady rise since 2015, with the total export value reaching \$176 million in the first two months of

2023 whereas last year it was \$151 million - an increase of about 16.5%.

Muhammad Ahmed, a Pakistani copper exporter said that this has been driven by the increased investment from Chinese companies in Pakistan under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, as well as the growing demand for copper products in China. As such, this trend is likely to continue into the future, with both countries expected to benefit from increased economic cooperation.

He further said that this increased export of copper from Pakistan to China has

a positive impact on both countries economies. It has not only generated revenue for Pakistan but also created employment opportunities and provided access to new markets for Pakistani businesses.

"The top product exported from Pakistan to China was refined copper products, unwrought (community code 74031900) worth \$94.45 million in the first two months of 2023 whereas last year in the same period it was \$77.61 million. Overall, this product exported from Pakistan to China was \$470.94 million in 2022", sources stated.



In brief

Rashford to miss a 'few games'

LONDON (Agencies): Marcus Rashford will miss Manchester United's Europa League quarter-final first-leg clash with Sevilla this week after suffering a muscle injury that is likely to keep him out for "a few games", the club announced on Wednesday. The 25-year-old, who has scored 28 goals for Erik ten Hag's side this season, limped out of the 2-0 Premier League win over Everton on Saturday, holding his groin. United, targeting a trophy treble, said in a statement that assessment of the injury "suggested that Marcus will be unavailable for a few games, but is expected to be back for the season run-in". Speaking to reporters an hour after United's update on their top scorer, Ten Hag said he was unable to give further information. "I can't give more details of it because we don't know," he said. "We have to see how it develops, the injury. Of course it's a setback and he's disappointed about it. "But he's not totally broke because he knows he will return quickly, so he's optimistic and he's started straight on his recovery and his rehab so that helps to get back soon." Rashford will definitely miss Thursday's match against Sevilla, who could come up against a familiar face at Old Trafford as Ten Hag looks for other attacking options. Anthony Martial spent a disappointing loan stint with the La Liga side in the second half of last season and has endured an injury-hit spell since returning to Old Trafford. But Ten Hag has always praised the France international's impact and is ready to start him after he came off the bench in United's past three matches following a hip issue. "I think he is ready, yeah, to start a game," the Dutchman said of Martial, who scored his first Premier League goal of 2023 against Everton. He added: "When he is in the team -- I refer to games against Man City, against Liverpool when he's in the team -- we play our best football and have our best results as a team." Alejandro Garnacho and Luke Shaw remain sidelined for Thursday's match against the Spaniards but Casemiro is available after serving a ban. The Brazil midfielder's return provides a welcome boost -- Sevilla are enduring a tough domestic campaign but have won the Europa League a record six times.

Peaty not included

LONDON (Agencies): Three-time Olympic champion Adam Peaty has not been included in the Great Britain squad for this summer's World Aquatics Championships. Peaty withdrew from the British Championships earlier this month, citing mental health reasons. Six Olympic champions - Freya Anderson, Tom Dean, Anna Hopkin, James Guy, Matt Richards and Duncan Scott - are in the 29-strong squad. The championships take place in Fukuoka, Japan, from 14-30 July. In a statement on social media last month, Peaty said he was "tired" and "not enjoying the sport as I have done for the last decade". However, the 28-year-old added he still intended to compete at the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. World champions Ben Proud and James Wilby are included in the British squad for the competition in Japan. Proud, also a European and Commonwealth gold medallist, won the men's 50m freestyle title at the British Championships at Ponds Forge in Sheffield earlier this month.



MONTE CARLO: Germany's Alexander Zverev in action during his round of 32 match against Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut.

Series against New Zealand offers chance to Rizwan, Babar to get closer to top ranking

ISLAMABAD (APP): The ongoing battle at the top of the MRF Tyres ICC Men's T20I Batter Rankings continues to heat up as Pakistan duo Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam get the chance to close in on India starlet Suryakumar Yadav at the head of proceedings. Babar moved up to third on the rankings that were updated by the ICC on Wednesday and will get further opportunity to make inroads on Suryakumar when Pakistan commence their five-game T20I series against New Zealand on Saturday. Both Babar and Rizwan sat out Pakistan's most recent T20I series against Afghanistan and will be keen to score freely against the Black Caps, who are coming off a narrow 2-1 series triumph over Sri Lanka at home. While Suryakumar currently holds a commanding lead at the top of the T20I rankings for batters with 906 rating points, second-placed Rizwan (811) and third-placed Babar (755) could make gains while the India star is plying his trade in the IPL.

Ironically, it was Devon Conway's absence from New Zealand's series against Sri Lanka that led to Babar improving one place to third on the latest set of rankings, with the Kiwi batter also at the IPL with the Chennai Super Kings. A host of New Zealand and Sri Lanka stars that did feature in the recently completed T20I series were rewarded for their performances with young spinner Maheesh Theekshana the biggest eye-catcher as the 22-year-old rose to a career-high rating and equal fifth-place on the rankings for bowlers. Theekshana was the match-winner for Sri Lanka in the first match of the series for his efforts during the Super Over and the off-spinner backed up that performance with a pair of strong showings while opening the bowling in the final two matches. Teammate Wanindu Hasaranga was expensive during the series and duly dropped two places to fourth on the T20I bowler rankings, with Afghanistan pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi (second) and Australia seamer Josh

Hazlewood (third) both rising a place as a result. It also means Afghanistan hold the top two spots on the T20I bowler rankings, with spinner Rashid Khan leading Farooqi in what is a tight ongoing race for top spot. Sri Lanka dasher Kusal Mendis (up 11 spots to equal 25th) and New Zealand right-hander Tim Seifert (from outside the top 100 to 36th) were the other big winners on the latest set of T20I rankings for batters, while there was some movement on the Test rankings following Bangladesh's victory over Ireland in Mirpur. Experienced right-hander Mushfiqur Rahim moved up five places to 17th on the Test batter rankings after scores of 126 and 51*, while spin duo Taijul Islam and Shakib Al Hasan were rewarded on the list for bowlers. Taijul collected a valuable five-wicket haul during the first innings and moved up three places to 20th as a result, while the Bangladesh skipper improved two spots to equal 26th following his figures of 2/26 when opening the bowling in the second innings.

Lahore division, with 590 points, clinch overall trophy of First Ramzan Sports Series

LAHORE (APP): Lahore division, with 590 points won the First Ramzan Sports Series 2023 overall trophy while Faisalabad division secured second position with 550 points followed by Gujranwala division with 105 points during the 5-day sports extravaganza. The contingents of Bahawalpur, Multan and Rawalpindi divisions scored 45, 30 and 30 points respectively in the grand event. Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz, Commissioner Lahore Muhammad Ali Randhawa and Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail distributed prizes and trophies among all the winners and runners up of hockey, kabaddi, football badminton, table tennis and tape ball cricket events during grand closing ceremony on Tuesday night. Overall, a huge amount of Rs 85,50,000 was distributed among top position holder teams of Ramazan Sports Series held on the directions of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi. Faisalabad Division Kabaddi team defeated Lahore by 50-32 in the final encounter of First Ramzan Sports Series 2023 Kabaddi

Championship. Faisalabad's raiders and stoppers exhibited wonderful kabaddi and dominated the match proceedings most of the time against their strong opponents and took a commanding lead of 27-14 at the interval. Lahore team tried their best but could not break the overwhelming style of Faisalabad's raiders and stoppers. The football title of First Ramzan Sports Series 2023 went to Faisalabad division after their 4-1 victory against Lahore in penalty kicks. Ghazanfer, Asad, Taqeer and Salman Kaka struck one goal each for the winning team while Umaid scored the only goal for Lahore team. Talking to media on this occasion, Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz said that the task of First Ramazan Sports Series 2023 given by the Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has been completed successfully. "All the participating players have shown excellent performance in the First Ramazan Sports Series 2023". Wahab Riaz further said that 20 hockey players are being given a monthly stipend for one year for their excellent performance in First

Ramazan Sports Series 2023. "The talented players of First Ramazan Sports Series 2023 will be further groomed for future competitive events". He said that the private sector has contributed a lot in the successful holding of First Ramazan Sports Series 2023, for which I'm grateful to them. "Park View Housing Society, Smart City, Al-Kabir Town and other sponsors played a key role in the promotion of sports". Commissioner Lahore Muhammad Ali Randhawa congratulated everyone on the successful conduct of the First Ramazan Sports Series 2023. "The Ramazan Sports Series was fully sponsored under the direction of Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi. The Punjab government has not spent even a single rupee on this grand event," he added. Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail on this occasion said that all the employees of Sports board Punjab did an excellent job in organizing the First Ramazan Sports Series 2023. "The best arrangements were made for the First Ramazan Sports Series 2023. Sports Board Punjab will continue to conduct more such events to find fresh talented players".

LeBron James leads Lakers into play-offs in thriller

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): LeBron James led the LA Lakers into the NBA play-offs with a dramatic comeback win over the Minnesota Timberwolves. James scored 30 points as the Lakers overturned a 15-point deficit to win the play-in match 108-102 in overtime. The Lakers made their worst start to a season for 65 years by losing their first five games but will now play the Memphis Grizzlies in the play-offs. "This is what our sport is all about - getting to April and an opportunity to play in the postseason," James said. "We've been battle-tested all year and since the All-Star break we've been playing some good basketball." In a action-packed finale, Dennis Schroder, who scored 21 points for Los Angeles, scored a three-pointer with 1.4 seconds left in regulation time to give the Lakers a 98-95 lead. But Anthony Davis fouled Mike Conley as the Minnesota guard shot with 0.1 seconds to play, allowing Conley to make three free throws to take the game to overtime. However, the Lakers recovered to control much of the extra period and



win a game they trailed 76-61 midway through the third quarter. Minnesota, without the suspended Rudy Gobert, will have another chance to qualify through the play-ins on Friday. They will play the winner of Wednesday's meeting between the ninth and 10th seeds, the New Orleans Pelicans and the Oklahoma City Thunder. In the Eastern

Conference, the Atlanta Hawks set up a play-off series against the Boston Celtics by beating the Miami Heat 116-105. Trae Young scored 25 points and Clint Capela recorded a game-high 21 rebounds for the Hawks. The Heat will have another chance to advance when they play the winner of the play-in between the Chicago Bulls and the Toronto Raptors on Friday.

Zverev beats Bautista Agut, Medvedev powers on in Monte Carlo

MONTE CARLO (Reuters): Alexander Zverev continued to rebuild his confidence on clay with a 6-4 6-4 victory over Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut in the Monte Carlo Masters second round on Wednesday and will next face in-form Daniil Medvedev. German 13th seed Zverev, who suffered a serious ankle injury in the French Open semi-finals last year, won his second match in as many days in his first appearance on the red dirt since the Roland Garros drama. Zverev broke for 3-2 in the first set and held serve to take it before breaking again in the fifth game of the second set. Bautista Agut, however, broke the German's serve to level at 3-3, only for Zverev to make the decisive break in the following game. Russian Medvedev, winner of four hardcourt

titles this year, continued his excellent start to the season with a 6-3 6-2 victory over Italian Lorenzo Sonego on a surface he has not enjoyed much success on in the past. "I always struggle on clay," said third seed Medvedev. "I've had some good matches where I still struggled. There's no rhythm on clay, every bounce is a bad bounce and even when it's good you're expecting a bad bounce. "But I managed to play good against a very strong player." RUUD MARCHES ON Casper Ruud, last year's French Open runner-up, continued his preparations for the claycourt Grand Slam by battling past Botić van de Zandschulp 7-5 7-6(1), avenging a three-set defeat by the Dutchman in Miami last month. "It's never easy to start at a new tournament and against a player I've lost to before," said Ruud, who

claimed the Estoril title in the lead-up to Monte Carlo. "I was a bit sloppy and didn't take my chances. Sometimes it's a little tricky playing someone you recently lost to, like 'not again' but in this case I was a bit happy because I felt there was some unfinished business." Ruud next plays Jan-Lennard Struff who stunned 14th seed Alex de Minaur 6-3 6-2. Karen Khachanov also went through with a 7-6(2) 6-2 win over Ilya Ivashka while eighth seed Taylor Fritz overcame Swiss veteran Stan Wawrinka 7-6(10) 6-2. They were joined by Lorenzo Musetti, who blanked Luca Nardi 6-0 6-0 to set up a clash with world number one Novak Djokovic. Miami runner-up Jannik Sinner advanced after his doubles partner Diego Schwartzman retired with a shoulder injury trailing 6-0 3-1.



USUKI, JAPAN: Riko Inoue of Japan hits out from a bunker on the 17th hole during the second round of FUNDOKIN Ladies at Usuki Country Club.

India's turn to come to Pakistan: Miandad

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Sharing his opinion surrounding the controversy of India's adamant refusal to travel to Pakistan for Asia Cup 2023, former national side skipper Javed Miandad has said that it is India's turn to visit the country. Speaking at a podcast with a Pakistani YouTuber, Miandad said he believed that Pakistan would have no problems going to India "even today". When the interviewer asked Miandad whether India should visit Pakistan, he immediately responded: "They should definitely come." On being asked regarding the issue of "security" raised by the Board for Cricket Control in India (BCCI), he said: "There should be no concern about security. We believe that death will come when it is destined. If they call us today, we will go. But they should

return the move. The thing is the last time we went, they haven't come here since. It's their turn now," the former skipper said. He then shared that the countries should work together and improve bilateral relations since they were very similar. "Even Indians believe this," he said. "We are neighbours, and so we can exchange many things. Such a relationship would benefit both. However, only if the exchange is mutual. "It can not be that it is a one-sided thing." Earlier this year, Miandad had expressed his anger at India's decision while talking to media personnel and said that India could "go to hell" if they don't want to tour Pakistan. The BCCI, in October last year, refused to tour Pakistan, which is set to host the 2023 Asia Cup

later this year. Since then, the controversy has only grown deeper. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has said that if India refuses the tour, Pakistan will refuse to travel to India for the 2023 ICC World Cup. The cricketing body has also shared a hybrid model for conducting the Indian matches in a neutral location. Moreover, recently, Chairman of PCB Management Committee Najam Sethi rejected any possibility of giving away Pakistan's right to host the upcoming Asia Cup, saying that it was "not an option". The last bilateral series between the arch-rivals took place in 2012, when Pakistan toured India for limited-overs matches. Over the past few years, the two countries have only faced each other in ICC and ACC events.

Peshawar Press Club Ramadan Sports Gala enters final stage

PESHAWAR (APP): The Ramadan Sports Gala organized by Peshawar Press Club with the support and collaboration of a Non-Governmental Organization Hope, working for the rehabilitation of drug addicts, has entered the final stage. Chief Minister Aide Pir Haroon Shah and Former Provincial Minister Kamran Bangash were accompanied by President Peshawar Press Club Arshad Aziz Malik, former presidents M Riaz, Shamim Shahid, General Secretary Irfan Musazai and Chairman Sports Committee Zafar Iqbal, and a large number of journalists were present on the occasion. Special guests Pir Haroon Shah and Kamran Bangash said that organizing such healthy activities for the journalist community is commendable

because due to professional responsibilities, journalists get very few opportunities to play sports. It is very important for the mental and physical development of journalists to actively participate in sports activities and unleash their creative abilities to perform their professional responsibilities well. According to this, Anila Shaheen and Asma Gul won in the women's Lodo competition, while Shaista Taslim, Anila Shaheen, Naila and Salma Jahangir won in the Caroms board event. In the match Yasir Ali and Anwar Zeib while in the third match Shah Faisal and Shehzad Mehmood took the lead. Similarly Junaid Alam and Faisal Iqbal, Abed and Zafar Iqbal, Wajid Shehzad and Tanveer Iqbal also won their respective matches, in the name of

Sohail Qalandar. Iftikhar and Zafar Goraya won the snooker event named after Rahimullah Yousafzai, Abid Khan won his match in the Table Tennis Championship named after Rahimullah Yousafzai, Zulfiqar, Bilawal and photographer Iftikhar were declared successful in Gulshan Aziz carrom board competitions. Fayyaz Ahmed, Arshad Khan, Esfandiar, Zahid Mirukhel in Fakhruddin Syed Lodo Championship. Ziaullah and Faizan Ahmed achieved success in Lodo. It should be noted that in the annual sports event Ramadan Sports Gala, more than 150 male and female journalists are participating in five different games including table tennis, badminton, carrom board, snooker and lodo.



In brief

Police to constitute special squads

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police has decided to accelerate efforts to ensure the implementation of traffic laws and take strict action against those involved in violation of red-signal. The police spokesperson said that Islamabad capital police have decided to assign a task to the traffic congestion unit for taking stern action against those violating red signals while additional squads would be constituted for the purpose. A special campaign is already underway to check violations while various squads would perform duties on main roads and boulevards of the city and take action against the violators. A police spokesperson said that efforts are underway to ensure a disciplined traffic system in the city. He also appealed to the citizens to follow the traffic rules to maintain the smooth flow of traffic in the city. The education wing has been directed to give awareness to road users about traffic laws while FM Radio 92.4 would air special programs in this regard.

AIOU awards research grants to faculty

ISLAMABAD (APP): Vice Chancellor (VC) of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood on Wednesday said that national universities needed to focus on research-based solutions to social and economic problems. VC said this while addressing the prize distribution ceremony of Research Publication and Research Project Grants 2022-23. He said, "The purpose of giving research publication grants is to encourage students and faculty members in conducting the best research." "Research-based solutions can bring recognition to the institution and the country at national and international levels." Dr. Nasir said, "Although universities are known for their research to work good teaching should also be encouraged." He congratulated the faculty members and others who received the award and directed them to do better in the field of research. The VC directed the Office of Research, Innovation, and Commercialization (ORIC) to consult the faculty members and start the best teacher award the next year. Principal officers, faculty members, and research grant awardees participated and attended the ceremony which was organized by the Office of Research, Innovation, and Commercialization (ORIC). Two hundred thirty-two awards were given to faculty members, administrative staff, and students under Research and Publication Grants.

Gang busted, Two dacoits arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): In an operation against criminal elements, Rawalpindi Police have busted a gang and arrested two dacoits including a ringleader besides recovering cash Rs 68,000, weapons and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Taxila Police arrested two accused namely Amel Khan, ringleader and Akram, who were allegedly involved in various dacoity cases. He informed that the police team constituted under the supervision of SHO Taxila Police Station on the directives of SP Potohar Muhammad Waqas Khan conducted a raid and managed to net the criminal record holder gang members including the ringleader.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani exchanging views with Chinese Charge D' Affairs, Ms. Pang Chunxue at Parliament House.

Riaz Peerzada call on UN Ambassador to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of the European Union to Pakistan H.E. Dr. Riina Kionka called on Federal Minister for Human Rights Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada. Matters of mutual interest and cooperation particularly the upcoming report on GSP+ progress made in various aspects and challenges were discussed in this meeting.

Federal Minister for Human Rights welcomed the Ambassador and said that Pakistan has been enjoying good relations

with European countries and these relations are based on mutual respect and shared international obligations.

He appreciated the continuing support of the European Union through the GSP+ status for Pakistan.

He said that our commitments under the UN Charter and our obligations towards international conventions and agreements remained a high priority of the government.

Dr. Riina Kionka appreciated the efforts of the

Government of Pakistan in the implementation of its human rights agenda and indicated that European Union would continue to help Pakistan in the implementation of this agenda.

She said that continuous efforts are required to overcome challenges and European Union would continue its support in this regard.

The Minister thanked the Ambassador and expressed the hope that the cooperation between Pakistan and European Union will continue to flourish.

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday 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 07:00 AM to 11:00 AM, Islamabad Circle, CM Pak Zong, Rahara, Tramiree, Chhata Bakhtawar, Lahtrar Road, ISI, Kurry (Old Bahria) Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, F-17 /I, F-17/2, Nogzi, Dhok Chowdhury, Bajniyal Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Miani, Jamal Wall Feeders, Jhelum Circle, Domeli, Bhagwal, Gul Afshan Feeder, Attock Circle, Maskinabad, Ghorghashti, Kamra Rural, Mansar, Gondal, Haji Shah, Hameed, Feeders, From 06:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Cantt: Circle Rawalpindi, Islamabad Feed Mill, Jhata Hatial, Pind Jatla, Lab.II, Lab.I, Reliance Weaving Mill, Bhal, Jarrar Comp. Kahota City-II, Hanif Shaheed, Park View, RBISE, Jail Park-I, Car Chowk, Mehboob Shaheed Chowk and surrounding areas.

However, Government of Pakistan has proactively taken initiatives to address the climatic impacts to turn the Challenges into opportunity. These included investment in climate project and environment friendly initiatives (Ten billion tree tsunami project, recharge Pakistan initiative, protected areas initiative and the target to shift 60% of our energy mix to renewable energy sources. Moreover, the country got recognition at global level as a climate leader.

According to German Watch (Global Climate Risk Index annual report for 2020), Pakistan has been ranked globally in the top ten countries most affected by climate change in the past 20 years owing to its geographical location. Pakistan has lost 0.53 percent per unit GDP, suffered economic losses worth US\$ 3792.52 million and witnessed 152 extreme weather events from 1999 to 2018.

4 held, 36 professional beggars booked

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested four illegal arm holders and recovered arms, ammunition from their possession during an operation here on Wednesday. According to a police spokesman, Sadiqabad police held Ihtesham and recovered one pistol 30 bore from his possession. Similarly, Wah Cantt police nabbed kram, Basit and Arbaz besides recovering 03 pistols and 30 rounds from their custody. Police have registered separate cases against the accused and started investigation. SSP Operations appreciated the performance of police teams adding that strict action would be taken against those possessing illegal arms.

Meanwhile, Rawalpindi police have booked 36 professional beggars during crackdown.

The beggars were held from different areas of the city, said a spokesman.

Sanjrani lauds China for bringing peace in region

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and China have reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing bilateral cooperation in various fields for mutual benefit of the two countries.

The need for collective efforts to promote peace, prosperity and development in the region was emphasized by both sides during a meeting between Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani and a three-member delegation of the Chinese Embassy, including Charge de' Affaires Ms Pang Chunxue, Political Counselor Ms Bao Zhong and Third Secretary Ms Dong Wenli held here Wednesday, said a news release. The meeting also underlined the importance of enhancing cooperation in all fields, including Information Technology.

During the meeting, the Chairman Senate congratulated President Xi Jinping, the Chinese government and the people on

his re-election as President for the third consecutive term. He also praised China's efforts to establish peace in the region, noting that China played a key role in bringing together Saudi Arabia and Iran, which is commendable.

Sanjrani highlighted that both countries had stood by each other in all kinds of situations and supported each other on every platform. He also acknowledged China's investment in Pakistan, which had provided new employment opportunities for youth, and noted that with the completion of CPEC, the entire region would develop and open new avenues for further investment. The chairman reiterated that Pakistan was committed to the timely completion of the CPEC project, which had enormous potential to contribute to the socio-economic development of Pakistan.

Rana asks NAVTTC to set appropriate quality standards

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain Wednesday said that NAVTTC should set appropriate quality standards to ensure that Pakistani graduates from technical training institutes are accepted in foreign markets. He stated this while taking a briefing from Chairman National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) Shahid Khan.

Senior officials of the ministry including Secretary Education Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry also attended the meeting.

Furthermore, provincial DGs of NAVTTC were also present via online link.

Rana Tanveer Hussain said, "There is a dire need for NAVTTC to perform at its full capacity."

He said, "It is imperative that our training is internationally accredited in order to ensure the acceptability of the Pakistani workforce in foreign markets such as Saudi Arabia, Japan, and Europe." He also highlighted the need to give equal importance to imparting technical education to women and trans-genders.

Rana Tanveer said that KSA offered to fully fund a technical institute that will aim at providing students the technical skills needed to succeed in KSA market.

He said that coordination with KSA on this project is on going and that it will

become a platform for modern technical education for the Pakistani youth.

He emphasized the need to work diligently and complete the on going projects at maximum speed.

He urged the management to be pro-active in their approach and enhance the productivity of their institutions so that the youth of Pakistan can be put on the track to success. Rana Tanveer said that it is the utmost duty of all of government departments to work with integrity and perform their duty in the most honest and productive manner. Rana Tanveer said that there needs to be cohesion within departments as well.

'MoCCC issues heatwave guidelines to provinces for effective disaster management'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on Wednesday said the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination has issued heatwave guidelines to the provinces and relevant stakeholders to cope with the imminent threat of extreme temperature rise in the Summers and prevent any serious losses.

In a series of tweets, the federal minister said that the Ministry had issued necessary standard operating procedures (SOPs) to provinces regarding arrangements for possible heat waves in the summer season.

Senator Rehman underlined that every year heat waves cost losses of lives, agriculture and the economy along with other damages. She added that in order to avoid

these losses, along with the administration, the citizens also had to take precautionary measures and preemptive arrangements.

These administrative SOPs regarding heatwaves were formulated by the Ministry of Climate Change Task Force, whereas all provinces and stakeholders were consulted in formulating SOPs.

"All district and provincial authorities and concerned institutions should start preparations regarding heat wave. We have recommended the provinces to set up heatwave response centres at the Union Council level as well as a national level control room for information and coordinated efforts," Sherry Rehman said.

These SOPs included public awareness campaigns along with other recommendations to combat heatwaves, she added.

ANF recovers over 182 kg drugs; arrests seven

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in seven operations managed to recover over 182 kg drugs, 1700,000 intoxicated tablets and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday.

He informed that in an operation in Islamabad, ANF recovered 36 kg charras from the possession of two accused, residents of Peshawar. Charras was concealed in the CNG cylinder of a vehicle.

In another operation at Bacha Khan International Airport, ANF recovered Ice

drug absorbed clothes from the possession of a Jeddah-bound passenger, a resident of Mardan, going on flight no ER-851. The total weight of the clothes was 16 kg, he added.

In third operation conducted in Khyber, ANF and FC managed to recover 15 kg charras and 1.5 kg Ice drug. In fourth operation at Lahore International Airport, 75 Ice drug filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a Qatar-bound passenger, resident of Toba Tek Singh, going on flight no QR-629.

In two different operations conducted in Lahore,

3.6 kg opium and 16.8 kg charras were recovered from the possession of two drug pushers, residents of Okara and Toba Tek Singh.

The spokesman informed that in an operation at Pakistan International Terminal, 1700,000 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a container being sent to Thailand. Tablets were concealed in fabric bundles, he added. In an operation near Quetta Kuchlak Road, ANF recovered 110.8 kg charras from the possession of a drug smuggler, resident of Kuchlak.

MOITT launches 70 projects worth Rs 65bln through USF

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication through the Universal Service Fund (USF) had launched some 70 projects of optical fiber cable (OFC) and broadband infrastructure development in four provinces at a cost of Rs 65 billion.

"In the province of Sindh alone, 20 projects of NGBSD and OFC worth Rs 16.3 billion have been started so far in 20 districts, including Tharparkar, Nawabshah, Khairpur, Larkana, Badin, Jacobabad, Shikarpur, Mirpurkhas, and Dadu," said an official of the Ministry of IT. He said that projects of connectivity of the un-served and under-served communities of Balochistan, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) provinces had also been launched.

The Ministry, he said, through USF aimed to connect all the citizens of the country as digitalization had become a priority for businesses and communities. Under its Next Generation Optic Fiber (NG-OF) Network and Services program, USF had contracted over 16,000 km of Optic Fiber Cable (OFC) to benefit 31.5 million populations across the country.

About the Karachi IT Park, he said, it would be a gateway for an innovative future and a strengthened economy.

"Karachi IT Park is the largest IT project of its kind in Pakistan, which will benefit not only the citizens of Karachi but also the IT professionals and companies of Sindh and the rest of Pakistan," he added.

The IT parks across the country provide a place where innovative businesses could develop and prosper in a favourable environment. Most Software technology/IT parks provide ample space for business development. Governments all over the world often invest in these technology parks to boost their regional and national economies. He said technology parks must comply with basic infrastructure requirements such as clean facilities and ample working space. However, tech parks were also equipped with the latest technology and telecommunication facilities that make it easy to establish and manage a business.

The range of services offered by the parks was closely linked to the functions that they had to fulfil, he said, adding the benefits of the technology parks were not limited to enterprises and tenants of the parks, but also for companies outside the parks. The benefits of technology parks included a boost in the knowledge-based economy, entrepreneurship, and the latest technologies, he said.



ISLAMABAD: Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) beneficiaries outside Benazir One Window Center to draw money.

Farmers harvest strawberries

KABUL (Agencies): The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's ministry of agriculture, irrigation and livestock said Wednesday that farmers had in the past solar year, 1401, harvested a whopping 337 metric tons of strawberries in the country. The ministry said that Balkh had the highest overall volume with 125 metric tons, from 25 hectares of cultivated land. Other strawberry producing provinces included Kabul, Herat, Takhar, Daikundi, Khost, Nangarhar, and Nimroz.

Afghan inmates released

KABUL (Agencies): According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, a number of Afghan citizens who had been imprisoned in Iran have been released on Thursday. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has state that these citizens, who were students of Islamic studies, were freed following diplomatic efforts made by the Afghan embassy in Tehran and the Afghan consulate in Iran's Zahidan province.

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

Cash withdrawal:
Some private
banks violate DAB
announcement

KABUL (Pajhwok): The customers of some private banks in capital Kabul has said that they were still unable to withdraw more than \$200 from their accounts despite the announcement by the Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB).

This comes that earlier, the DAB on April 4, announced that individual accounts holders could withdraw up to \$600 — 50,000 afs — from their accounts in a week.

In addition, the DAB

announced that customers could withdraw \$20,000 — 200,000 afs — once in a month from their accounts.

But some customers of Azizi and Maiwand Bank gathered in front of the DAB to register their protest.

Haji Farhad Baig, one of the protesters, said Maiwand Bank violated the DAB announcement and did not provide cash to its customers accordingly.

He said: "DAB ordered banks to provide up to \$600 to its customers in a month

but we are given only \$100."

Zikrullah, a customer of the Azizi Bank, said he could withdraw 200 afs from his account in a week.

"I went to Azizi Bank the other day unfortunately, they gave me \$200 therefore we gathered here to voice our complaint to the authorities of DAB," he said.

No official in the DAB were available for comment despite Pajhwok Afghan News tried to get their viewpoint on the issue.

Mine contract signed
with private company



KABUL (TOLONews): In the competition for the contract of a nephrite mine, a private company won with a bid of 3 million Afghanis.

The Ministry of Mines and Petroleum said this process was held transparently, and twelve companies competed in it.

"12 companies participated in this competition, and

their proposals have been collected on time and checked very carefully and transparently by the responsible board," said Shahabuddin Delawar, acting minister of Mines and Petroleum.

The head of the winning company said that they will start the extraction of the nephrite mine soon in Nangarhar province.

"We are happy that we won this project, and we will try to work perfectly," said Elamsha Baba, head of the winning company.

"The minister talked with us and asked us. After taking everyone's opinion they announced the winner," said Sher Mohammad Salih, head of a private company.

Goods worth 5 billion afs
exported via Hairatan Port

MAZAR-I-SHARIF (Pajhwok): Commercial goods worth five billion afghanis have been exported via Hairatan port in 1401 solar year which showed 20 percent surge compared to the 1400.

Balkh Custom Director Maulvi Safar Mohammad Sahar told Pajhwok Afghan News that Afghanistan exported commercial goods worth four billion afghanis in 1400 solar year via Hairatan.

But last year, the landlocked country's export worth five billion afghanis, indicating a 20 percent surge, he added.

He said the exported goods, including beverages, carpet, dried fruit,

animal skin, vegetables, and pressure cookers.

Abdul Naseer Reshtia, economic affairs analyst, said domestic products' quality need to be improved and meet all the standards because it played key role in the surge of export.

Local businessman Haji Qalandar said the government should provide facilities to businesspeople so that they could export their goods easily without any irregularity.

The required facilities were documents process, good relations with foreign countries, holding exhibitions for domestic goods in foreign countries to increase the volume of exports.

Ahmad Shakib Akbari, executive head of the chamber of commerce, stressed the need for the safety of commercial goods in order to increase the export volume because Afghani products spoil quickly.

He added both the government and business people should stive to standardise the product exported.

Qari Amir Mohammad Mutaqi, director of chamber of commerce and industry, assured the government was paying special attention to the growth of domestic production and was striving to solve all the problems of the businesspeople in areas of land and electricity.

Three killed,
six injured
in accident

BAMYAN (Khaama Press): At least three people were killed, and six others were injured in a traffic accident in the central province of Afghanistan, Bamyan, Tappa-e-Almas road, local sources said on Wednesday.

According to the sources, the incident occurred while the Taliban police vehicle skidded off the road, killing three Taliban personnel and injuring six others.

Saboor Saighani, the provincial spokesperson, said that the high speed was the main reason for the incident, which deviated the vehicle from the road.

The official also said the injured were taken to the hospital for medical treatment.

Since last Wednesday, Afghanistan has experienced five road accidents. There were already six additional fatalities and fifteen injuries in separate traffic accidents.

According to reports, there are a lot of road accidents in Afghanistan that claimed the lives of numerous people, usually on highways.

Experts have attributed the excessive frequency of traffic incidents to a lack of traffic rules, damaged roadways, and negligent driving.

Afghanistan is one of the few countries where traffic rules are not followed, resulting in many accidents that injure and kill numerous people nationwide.

Work on
2 projects
started

HELMAND (Agencies): Local officials have announced the commencement of work on two projects worth \$14 million in the Nadali district of Helmand province.

The projects involve canal cleaning and construction of a retaining wall, and are funded by Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance.

Mullah Mahmood Sani, the head of the provincial rural rehabilitation and development department, stated that the work would provide job opportunities for 193 people in 133 villages in the district.

Arghestani, the provincial CHA head, added that the organization is working in the irrigation field, with 68 projects approved for implementation in the Nawa and Nadali districts.

Farmers grow
Asafoetida

KUNDUZ (Agencies): Officials of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock say that the cultivation of Asafoetida plant has been increased in the country.

The ministry says that farmers in Kunduz province alone cultivated over 1,000 hectares of land with Asafoetida plant.

Authorities respond to UN's
decision to suspend activities

KABUL (Khaama Press): The de facto government on Wednesday responded to the United Nations' decision to suspend activities in Afghanistan due to the ban on female aid workers, saying they did not want to create obstacles for the UN; instead wanted to "make it clear that this is an internal issue of Afghanistan."

On Wednesday, a statement issued by the Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid on the recent announcement of the UN office said that due to the imposed restrictions on women aid workers, the UN has to suspend its activities and has called the Afghan authorities responsible for all the consequences of the humanitarian situation.

The statement said the Interim regime "does not want to create an obstacle for the United Nations; rather, it wants to clarify that this is an internal issue of Afghanistan, which does not create a problem for anyone and should be respected by all sides."

The Taliban authorities severely restricted the participation of women and girls in most areas of public and daily life in Afghanistan the day before,



according to the United Nations office in Afghanistan.

In addition, the UN declared the prohibition against international law, including the Charter, so that it couldn't be enforced, according to the statement.

The group emphasized that the ban on female assistance workers obliged it, in the face of a terrible humanitarian situation in the nation, to make an "appalling" decision.

Since the return of the Taliban, several restrictions

have been imposed on women, which has been called suppressive for Afghan women; by which females cannot present in public spaces, gyms, universities, schooling beyond the sixth grade and work with the international community, including UN offices.

The Taliban authorities called their ban on religious and cultural interests rather than restrictions on women's rights.

In addition, the de facto government claimed that

the future responsibility due to the humanitarian crisis goes to those that have imposed restrictions on Afghanistan's financial and banking system and travel bans on the "Taliban leaders", the statement said.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan suffers from a dire humanitarian crisis and needs urgent life-saving assistance.

The UN reiterated that most aid workers are female, and without female employees, the organization cannot function.

Thousands of students lack of
suitable place to study in Baghlan

BAGHLAN (Agencies): over 200 school buildings needs rehabilitation in Baghlan and the students of these schools are busy studying under tents said local education officials of the province.

562 schools are active in Baghlan, including 235 of which needs rehabilitation,

and students continue their studies under tents said Mawlawi Amanullah Haqyar an official at the department of education of the province.

The lack of maintenance and the lack of safe drinkable water in most schools among the challenges of education in Baghlan, he said, asking the Ministry of

Education and supporting organizations to address the problems of education in Baghlan.

Haqyar said that about 80 thousand new students are enrolled in the new academic year and the Department of Education in Baghlan will announce 400 vacant teacher positions this year

through open competition, which will address the problem of the lack of professional teachers in the education sector of Baghlan.

About 400,000 students are engaged in education in Baghlan, and 9,500 teachers are busy in teaching duties, according education department of the province.

‘World should be realistic about
positive uplift in Afghanistan’

KABUL (Agencies): Acting foreign minister Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi held a meeting with Japanese envoy to Afghanistan Takashi Okada to discuss bilateral relations and the current political situation.

During the meeting, Takashi Okada expressed Japan's interest in building relations with Afghan authorities.

Muttaqi described the situation in Afghanistan as positive and urged the region and the world to recognize and be realistic about the constructive developments taking place in the country.



Kazakhstan
delivered 81
cargos of
food aid to
Afghanistan

KABUL (Agencies): Kazakhstan delivered 81 cargos of food aid to Afghanistan to assist and deal with the victims of natural disasters.

Officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, while appreciating the humanitarian aid of the government of Kazakhstan, they asked for the continuation of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan in this dire time, said a statement.

For his part, the ambassador of Kazakhstan residing in Kabul, said that his country will continue delivering more aids to Afghanistan.

An official of the ministry of natural disaster management, Mawlawi Abdullah Mohammadi, appreciated the humanitarian aid of Kazakhstan and asked other nations and organizations to deliver such aid to the victims of natural accidents in Afghanistan.

The delivered food aid, includes 35 cargos of flour, cooking oil, milk and beans have arrived at Hairatan port and 46 other cargos will arrive at this port by Thursday.

New admissions in
varsities down by 50%

QALA-I-NAW (Pajhwok): Fresh admissions in the private higher education institution of western Badghis province declined by 50 percent and the universities owners warned against the closure of their institutions if the situation remained the same.

Sayed Mahmood Fahim Intizar, the director of Hanzala Higher Education Institutions, situated in the provincial capital, told Pajhwok Afghan News:

"In comparison to the previous year, the number of the students of the private universities has dropped by 50 percent".

"We enrolled about 100 new students in our university during this year, while the number the enrolled students reached to 200 last year," Sayed Mahmood Fahim Intizar said.

He said in addition to boys enrollment the university enrolled 60 female students last year as well, but due to the ban on girls' education imposed by the caretaker government, no single female student was enrolled during this year while the female students of the previous years are already waiting.

Sharafudin Majidi, the finance assistant of

Hikmat Higher Education Institution, has also expressed concern over the 50 percent decrease of the universities students.

Currently majority of the lecture halls of Hikmat Higher Education Institutions are empty, he said.

"We recruited on 132 new students during this year, while the number of the new students reached to 280 last year," Majidi said.

The Hikmat Higher Education Institution enrolled 50 female students last year, while their number is just zero this year, the source said.

Majidi said, the operation of the private universities is related to the number of the new students' enrollment, such institutions function as there students for them.

If the number of the new students remained low, the universities would be threatened by closure, he said.

Nisar Ahmad Akbari, an education analyst, believed the low enrollment in the universities will affect badly on the governance, economics and politics of the country.

As the number of the students' enrollment degraded in educational

institutions, the level of literacy degrades as well, Akbari added.

He called for the serious attention in this regard and believed if this situation continued, it would have devastating results.

Akbari added: "Naturally, if the number of literate people decreased, the problems in politics, economics and governance would increase as well."

But Matiullah Muttaqi, the provincial head of Information and Culture Department said, the government has provided the youth with jobs opportunities.

Muttaqi said, majority of the positions in the offices were vacant and the government announced the vacancies to be filled on the bases of merit system.

He said: "Currently majority of the positions in the offices are vacant while some of them were announced several times which meant that youth have opportunities for working".

According to the officials figure 1,800 male students in Badghis getting higher education in two private and one public university.

Women hold Eid bazaar in Herat



HERAT (TOLONews): On the eve of Edi al-Fitr, dozens of women held a special market, which they call "Eid Bazar," to sell their handmade crafts.

The sellers said that they are trying to bring the attention of the people to purchasing domestic products.

"They at least come and visit our products. They see that women have the perse-

verance to stand on their own feet," said Ghuncha Gul Karimi, a shopkeeper.

"The exhibition is good for women and it brings opportunities," said Sara Hassanzada, a shopkeeper.

The Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the western zone said that improvement of trade in Herat encourages women's attention to business.

"The products which are used in Eid—that includes dry fruits and clothes, are being displayed here," said Bahnaz Saljoqi, deputy head of the Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the western zone.

Some of these women expressed happiness over their market in the recent

months.

"My business dropped before, but I have not lost hope and I was able to save myself from those problems," said Roya Raufi, a shopkeeper.

The presence of women was significantly high at the first day of "Eid Bazar".

"When we and other women are provided with such an environment there are no restrictions from the Islamic Emirate on us. We hope to have further improvements in the future in the business sector," said Shabitan, a visitor.

"The holding of such an exhibition can be effective for the presence of women in society and for preserving the presence of women in society," said Samira Ahmadi, a visitor.

Two women-dedicated markets have been open over the past 6 months in Herat.

According to the Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the western zone, more than 400 women officially and 1,500 others unofficially are engaged in business activities in Herat.

Imran-Bushra's first Nikah was not as per Shariah: Court told

ISLAMABAD (INP): The first Nikah of former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan with Bushra Bibi was not in accordance with Shariah as the Iddat (waiting period for a divorcee or a widow) had not expired at that time, said main witness Nikah reciter Mufti Muhammad Saeed Khan while testifying before a local court in Islamabad on Wednesday.

Mufti Saeed told the court of Senior Civil Judge Nasr Minallah Baloch hearing a petition filed by citizen Muhammad Hanif complaining that Imran Khan and Bushra solemnized Nikah when Bushra Bibi was still in Iddat, that the first Nikah of Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi was solemnized in January 2018 while the second Nikah was held after one month.

Giving his testimony, Mufti Saeed told the court that Imran called him on January 1, 2018, requesting him to solemnize his Nikah with Bushra Bibi. The Mufti agreed. He said he had cordial relations with Imran as he was the member of PTI core committee.

He said Imran took him to the Defence area of



Lahore where he was to perform his Nikah. He said that a lady was also in attendance with Bushra Bibi on that day. The Mufti said that on his inquiry, the lady told him that she was Bushra Bibi's sister. The Mufti said that he had asked the lady if all the Shariah conditions were met before Bushra Bibi's Nikah. She assured him on it.

Mufti Saeed said that on her assurance, he solemnized Imran's Nikah with Bushra Bibi and after their Nikah, the couple started living together in Islamabad. But, the Mufti told the court, after one month, in February 2018, Imran again contacted him

and requested him to redo his Nikah solemnization. Imran told him that at time of his Nikah with Bushra Bibi, her period of Iddat was not expired as Bushra got divorce from her first husband in November 2017.

Mufti went on to say that Imran had told him that there was a prediction that he (Imran) would become prime minister if he contracted Nikah with Bushra Bibi. The Nikah reciter told the court that Imran's first Nikah was not as per the Shariah law and both Imran and Bushra, despite knowing this, contracted Nikah and arranged a wedding ceremony.

Turkiye, Nepal envoys meet Bilawal

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Nepali ambassador to Pakistan Tapas Adhikari on Wednesday called on Minister for Foreign Affairs Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

The meeting underscored exchange of thoughts on matters of mutual interest and extending cooperation between two states on diversified fronts. Bilawal said Pakistan and Nepal were members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). He also expressed good wishes for the ambassador.

Meanwhile, Pakistan and Türkiye agreed to keep up bilateral cooperation in multiple fields including trade, investment, defence, education and culture. The bilateral ties were discussed in a meeting between Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and the Ambassador of Türkiye in Islamabad Dr Mehmet Paçaci, who called on him here.

The foreign minister said that Pakistan and Türkiye enjoyed fraternal brotherly relations as both countries stood by each other in the hour of distress. The Turkish envoy thanked Pakistan for extending support following an earthquake in his country. Foreign Minister Bilawal also thanked Türkiye for supporting Pakistan following the devastating floods. Both sides also resolved to continue cooperating with each other on bilateral as well as multilateral forums.

4 including three women killed in Swat

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: The son-in-law shot and killed four people including three women in the limits of Saidu Sharif police station. The victims included the accused's mother-in-law, wife, sister-in-law and a year old brother in law. The police has arrested two accused but The main incriminate managed to escape and police searching for him.

According to the details, SHO police station Saidu Sharif received information that three women and one man, Sultana wife of Sahib Zar, Zainab wife of Saif ullah, Ayesha daughter of Sahib Zar and Zubair son of Sahib Zar resident of Sarbab Kandave in the limits of Saidu police station, Police station Saidu Sharif has got information regarding incident that shot and killed by the suspected accused Nazim son of Jaipur resident of Kokadai, Saifullah son of Shakur resident of Dagar Bunir, Shakur son of Shareen resident of Dagar district of Buner.

On receiving the information SHO Police Station Saidu Sharif and SDPO Circle Saidu Sharif have reached the spot along with the police team as the incident site is located in a remote hilly area bordering the district Bunir and till now a formal written report has not been sent to the police and no one has claimed. However, special police teams have been assigned the task of arresting the suspected criminals, in which two suspects, Shakoor son of Sherin resident of Buner district and Nazim son of Jaipur resident of Kokarai Saidu Sharif have been arrested. DPO Shafi ullah Gandapur said that i am directly monitoring the entire operation and police have cordoned off the area and raids are being conducted at various places to arrest the main accused, Saifullah.



ISLAMABAD: Lawyers holding placards and chanting slogans during a protest rally in favour of their demands at Constitution Avenue.

PHC grants status quo against dissolution of MTI's BOG

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has granted status quo against dissolution of Board of Governor Medical Teaching Institution (MTI) Act and ordered provincial government to submit detail report in this regard, on Wednesday.

During hearing Advocate General Amir Javed along with counsel Shumail Butt and Ali Gohar Advocates appeared before court.

A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Abdul Shakoor and Justice Syed Arshad Ali granted status quo on dissolution and de-notification of Board of Governors (BoGs) of 10 Medical Teaching Institution (MTI) hospitals of the province by the caretaker provincial government.

The bench heard the arguments of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Advocate Ali Gohar Durrani in the case who said that the caretaker government illegally approved the dissolution of all BoGs in a cabinet meeting on March 16, adding that the government has no power to take such decision. He said that the move to dissolve BoGs was a violation of Section 230 of the Election Act 2017 as the caretaker government was mainly responsible to run the day-to-day affairs and assist the Election Commission in conducting fair and transparent elections.

The Counsel for the petitioner said that unfortunately, the caretaker government was taking more interest in affairs which were not the mandate of the government, adding that the previous government had introduced the MTI Act in 2015 under which BoGs of ten major hospitals were formed.

PHC suspends by-poll on three NA seats scheduled for April 30

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) ordered suspension of the by-elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa scheduled for April 30 for three National Assembly constituencies, on Wednesday.

A two-member bench of PHC comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice SM Attiq Shah in a detailed judgement issued here said that as interpretation of the provision of Articles 223 and 224 of the constitution requires considerations, therefore the by-polls in the three NA constituencies are suspended till further order. The bench also issued notice to the Attorney General for Pakistan in terms of Order XXVII-A CPC for interpretation of the two articles of the constitution.

Earlier Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, the Counsel for the petitioner told the court that the schedule of by-elections was in violation of the explicit provisions of Articles 224(4) of the constitution. The Deputy Attorney General contended that the impugned notification has been issued strictly in accordance with the spirit of Articles 223 and 224 of the constitution and elections can be held within 120-day before the expiry of life of the national assembly. It is pertinent to mention here that the Election Commission of Pakistan had issued April 30 as the election date for NA-22 Mardan, NA-24 Charsadda and NA-31 Peshawar.

The purpose of BoGs was to run the administrative affairs of MTI Hospitals, and they have produced good results, he maintained the dissolution of MTI-BoGs was against the law. The two-member, after hearing the arguments, reserved its decision on the petition. However, Caretaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has dissolved and de-notified the Board of Governors (BoGs) of all Medical Teaching Institutions (MTI) with immediate effect and handed over administrator affairs of BoGs to alternate bodies till constitution of the new boards.

Separate notifications issued by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Health Department said that the BoGs of

MTI-LRH Peshawar has been dissolved and BoGs Peshawar Institutes of Cardiology (PIC) would take care of the administrator affairs of the hospital till further order.

Similarly, BoGs of MTI MMC/BKMC, Mardan, KMC/ KTH/ KCH, MTI KGMC/HMC Peshawar, MTI QHAMC/NMC, Nowshera, MTI KGN/BMC, Bannu and MTI AMC/ATH, Abbottabad were dissolved and de-notified and the administrative affairs would be looked after by MTI, BKMC/GKMC Swabi, BoGs MTI, PIC, BoGs MTI PIC Peshawar, BoGs MTI, BKMC, Swabi, BoGsMTI MMTH/GMC, DI Khan, BoGs MTI, GKMC/BKMC, Swabi respectively until further order.

Coward person can only become Nawaz: Imran

LAHORE (Agencies): Former premier and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said on Wednesday that an individual should be Sadiq and Ameen first for becoming a leader. While addressing PTI workers at Zaman Park during Iftaar, Imran Khan said, "You should be Sadiq and Ameen [honest and righteous] first for becoming a leader."

"Then you should be courageous as a coward person can only become Nawaz Sharif but not courageous. I don't want to take the name of Nawaz Sharif here but I am just giving an example." He said that he has adopted courage from 'La Ilaha Illallah] and it is a matter of honour for a human being to not bow his head before anyone except Allah Almighty.

Khan said that PTI has ideological workers who

will bring real independence to the country. "Slaves cannot do anything big. Slaves can become good slaves but a person with freedom can fly high and do remarkable things." The PTI chief asked the workers, "If you want to earn honour and respect in the world, then you should have the qualities of speaking truth and justice. Respect and honour cannot be earned via money. I want all of you to become leaders."

He asked the PTI workers to follow the teachings of Prophet Muhammad PBUH, han said that the 'regime change conspiracy' was hatched in Pakistan, not the United States (US) and Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) parties were involved in it, Imran Khan, while addressing PTI workers and supporters after one year of the regime

change, said that PTI came into power during a difficult time and the economy was stabilised in the last year of the PTI government.

"The performance of this government is witnessed by everyone. We [PTI] went from terrorism to tourism and the situation has worsened again." "The current rulers removed their names from the exit control list (ECL) and later destroyed the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). The FIA was tasked to lodge cases against PTI and now, overall 144 cases including 40 terrorism cases were lodged against me." The former premier alleged that the joint investigation team (JIT) was sabotaged after a gun attack and later they attacked the residence. "They wanted to kill me like Murtaza Bhutto."

Iran delegation arrives in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH (Agencies): An Iranian delegation arrived in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday to pave the way for reopening diplomatic missions as the Gulf rivals prepare to normalise relations, seven years after an acrimonious split.

"The Iranian delegation arrived in Riyadh on Wednesday to visit and reopen the Iranian embassy and consulate in accordance with the recent agreement between the two countries," Iran's official IRNA news agency reported. "One team is due to travel to Jeddah to prepare for the reopening of Iran's consulate there and its representation in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, while the other will remain in Riyadh to reopen the embassy," IRNA added.

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi has been invited to Saudi Arabia, according to Tehran, in what would be the first visit of its kind since

Mohammad Khatami went in 1999. The flurry of diplomatic activity follows last month's landmark, Chinese-brokered announcement that Iran and Saudi Arabia, who have backed opposing sides in conflicts around the Middle East, would work towards resuming ties.

Riyadh broke off relations in 2016 after Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions following the execution of Saudi Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr — one in a series of flashpoints between the long-time foes. Since the March 10 announcement, the two countries' foreign ministers have met in China and a Saudi "technical delegation" met Iran's chief of protocol in Syria last week, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

As the contacts grow, Saudi Arabia is also negotiating with Yemen's Iran-backed Huthi rebels, eight years after launching a mili-

tary intervention aimed at dislodging them from power in its impoverished neighbour. Saudi ambassador Mohammed Al-Jaber travelled to Sanaa, Yemen's rebel-held capital, this week hoping to "stabilise" a lapsed truce and work towards a "comprehensive political solution" between the Huthis and the ousted government.

Saudi Arabia gathered a multinational coalition to fight the Houthis in 2015, after the rebels took control of Sanaa and large swathes of the country, forcing the government to flee. It has become a major battleground of Riyadh's proxy wars with Tehran, which also include conflicts in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. Analysts say Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, now wants to exit the eight-year war to focus on domestic projects aimed at diversifying its energy-dependent economy.

Sanaullah for action against smugglers of essential items

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The government on Wednesday vowed to take strict action against those elements involved in smuggling of essential items and to make border control system more active and monitor inter-provincial transportation.

These decision were made in the meeting co-chaired by Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan and Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif which reviewed the measures regarding the prevention of smuggling of wheat, sugar, fertilizer and other essential items.

Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar, Minister for National Food Security Tariq Bashir

Cheema, Minister for Industries Makhdoom Murtaza Mehmood, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Interior Secretary Ali Murtaza, Chairman Federal Board of Revenue Asif Ahmed and representatives of federal and provincial institutions also attended the meeting.

Minister for Interior reiterated the government's resolve to take strict action against elements involved in smuggling and their facilitators. He directed to ensure the implementation of a track and trace system on essential items so that the elements involved in the smuggling of these items can be tracked.

He instructed to prevent the excessive supply of essential commodities in

the border districts and take action against those involved in the excessive stocking.

The minister said strict action will be taken against officers and staff involved in smuggling. For this purpose, he stressed the need of lurching joint operations and intelligence sharing of the institutions. He said that the smuggling of essential commodities out of the country needs an emergent step to control it. He asked representatives of institutions to ensure strict action against those who are involved in this illegal activity as well as their facilitators. The minister said that the implementation of joint check posts and joint patrolling should be ensured as soon as possible.

Elections to be held on time: Javed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister, Mian Javed Latif on Wednesday refuted the notion that the PDM was evading the elections and that election to be held on time, across the country at once.

He said that Coalition government came into power through a Constitutional process, unlike Imran Khan accession through back doors. Referring to 2018 elections, the minister alleged that PML-N leadership was disqualified under a well-thought-out plan just before the elections, while the rest were facilitated in that election. Criticizing Imran he said that the so-called champions of court's supremacy were attacking the courts till yesterday.

Nation united to eradicate menace of terrorism: President

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday said the entire nation is united to eradicate the menace of terrorism. He was talking, on telephone, to the heirs of the Security Forces' personnel martyred in recent acts of terrorism, according to a Radio Pakistan's report.

The President paid tribute to the martyrs for sacrificing their lives in the war against terrorism.

President approves Saeed Sheikh to look after as NPT chairman: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday approved to give a look-after charge of Chairman of the National Press Trust (NPT) to Saeed Ahmed Sheikh, a grade-20 officer of the Information Group.

Saeed Ahmed Sheikh would continue to serve as NPT chairman on a look-after basis till the regular appointment of NPT chairman.

The president also approved to remove ex-chairman of NPT Munir Ahmed Khan from the position over his incompetence and embezzlement

of public funds. He also approved MP-1 scale for the post of NPT chairman. The president gave the above said approvals under the National Press Trust (Appointment of Chairman) Act 1972.

President seeks FBR's report over leaking of whistle-blower's identity: President Arif Alvi has directed the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to submit a report to the Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) explaining how the identity of a whistle-blower, who had reported large scale tax-evasion/fraud by a private limited company, was leaked to his employer and consequently he had to face threats by the tax-evading company. He further directed FBR to explain why it could not fully utilize the information provided by the whistle-blower to recover the maximum Sales Tax amount from the company that caused loss to the national exchequer.

The President gave these remarks while rejecting a representation filed by FBR against the order of FTO directing FBR to revisit its relevant

Assessment Order, provide an opportunity for hearing to the whistle-blower, and fully utilize the information provided by him for the recovery of the evaded Sales Tax.

The President in his decision expressed displeasure that full advantage of the information about the various alleged financial irregularities by the company was not taken by FBR and even the identity of the whistle-blower was disclosed. "This is abhorrent to the whistle-blower concept and legislation. Instead of taking advantage, the FBR has been very lax in its attitude", he said. He further directed that a report must also be submitted to FTO within 60 days as to why this happened.

As per details, Mr Muhammad Ilyas (the complainant) was serving as an Accountant in M/s Northern Toolings (PVT) Ltd and reported to FBR that the company was indulging in various financial irregularities by maintaining bank accounts in the names of its employees, using fake and flying invoices for adjustments of Input Sales Tax, concealing ware-

houses with undeclared stock, less tax payment, and under-invoicing at import stage using similar names and style of another company, thus, resulting in huge loss to the national exchequer. The employee reported large-scale tax evasion/fraud to FBR, after which he was registered as a whistle-blower.

FBR initiated proceedings against the company and recovered Rs 15.251 million, however, the amount recovered was too short due to not properly utilizing all annexures provided by the complainant. FBR ignored and misread all annexures with definite calculations, reflecting the extent of evaded tax on various accounts. Further, the staff of CTO Lahore disclosed the employee's identity to the owner of the tax-evading company, and resultantly, the company threatened him physically and mentally through police and other criminal proceedings. Copy of the Assessment Order was denied to the whistle-blower and was only provided on the intervention of the Lahore High Court.

The employee filed complaints to

the Chairman FBR regarding less assessment but without any result. Feeling aggrieved, he took up the matter with FTO. During the proceedings of the Ombudsman, FBR raised objections over the jurisdiction of FTO on the ground that the issue related to the determination of liability of tax and interpretation of laws, rules and regulations with respect to which legal remedies were available. FBR further contended that the whistle-blower had submitted his written statement regarding tax evasion of Rs 5 million and all the information provided by him was confronted and an appealable Assessment Order was also passed, therefore, the matter had already been finalized so a fresh round of complaint was unwarranted.

FTO rejected the stance of FBR and stated that it was a case of not fully utilizing the information in a matter where duty and taxes were evaded by using various tactics. FTO further held that the complainant's contention regarding tax fraud by the company carried weight and therefore, it was in the interest of justice

that he be given another opportunity to present his viewpoint before FBR. It further directed to revisit the Assessment Order, dated 30.12.2016 under Section 45A(4) of the Sales Tax Act, 1990, and pass a fresh speaking appealable order after affording the opportunity of hearing to the complainant and after fully utilizing the information provided by him and submit a compliance report. Instead of complying with the order, FBR chose to file a representation with the President against the order of the FTO.

In his decision, the President observed that FTO's order was merely a reiteration of the duty of FBR to conduct audit proceedings for the recovery of the alleged huge amount of evaded Sales Tax by fully utilizing the information provided by the complainant and affording him another opportunity to explain his point of view in this regard. He, therefore, rejected the representation with the added direction to FBR to submit a report to FTO on the matter within 60 days.