

Dar cancels his US visit
ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar cancelled his visit to the US where he was to attend the annual meetings of IMF and WB. The finance minister called off his visit keeping in view the prevailing situation in the country. Ishaq Dar was scheduled to visit the US from April 10 to 16. Now, the Pakistan team led by federal finance secretary and governor SBP will go to Washington to attend the IMF and WB meetings.

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Terrorists to be dealt with iron hands: NSC

— National Security Committe approves multi-pronged comprehensive operation against terrorism

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Security Committee (NSC) on Friday approved a multi-pronged comprehensive operation with the support of the government and the nation to eradicate the menace of terrorism from the country with a new resolve, determination and valour.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired the 41st meeting of the National Security Committee held at the Prime Minister House. The federal ministers, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, services chiefs and high-ranking officers of the departments concerned attended the meeting, which was a continuation of the meeting held after the terrorist attack on the Peshawar Police Lines on January 2, 2023.

At the start of the meeting, the participants paid tribute to those who were martyred in the Gayari sector tragedy on April 7, 2012. Emphasizing comprehensive national security, it was declared that relief to the people was of central importance. The forum was told that the government was taking measures in this connection.

The meeting acknowledged the

sacrifices and efforts of the security forces for ensuring permanent peace for the nation. The forum reiterated the resolve to continue operation till eradication of terrorism from Pakistan.

The committee proclaimed that the recent wave of terrorism was the result of the soft corner and the absence of a well thought-out policy against the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which was declared a terrorist organization but against the public expectations and wishes, under the previous policy terrorists were allowed to return without any hindrance. In the name of confidence building, dangerous terrorists of the TTP were released from jails, it added.

It was noted that due to return of the dangerous terrorists and support of different terrorist organisations to them from Afghanistan, peace and stability, which was the result of innumerable sacrifices and continuous efforts, was affected. It was agreed that in the new multi-pronged and comprehensive operation, combined efforts at diplomatic, security, economic and social levels would be undertaken for the elimi-

nation of the menace of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. A high level committee was formed which within two weeks would present its recommendations for the implementation of the policy and to draw its parameters.

The leadership appreciated the successful operation of the leading intelligence agency during which a highly wanted terrorist Gulzar Imam aka Shambay was arrested. The terrorist was the founding leader of Baloch National Army and was involved in different terrorist activities for a long time.

The committee strongly condemned the increasing hatred and division in society and attempts to spread foreign-sponsored poisonous propaganda on social media against the state institutions and their leadership to achieve hidden targets and stated that those attempts were affecting national security. While expressing resolve to fail the heinous designs of the enemies of the country, the committee said every effort would be made to maintain peace which was achieved with the supreme sacrifices and constant endeavours of the martyrs.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairing the 41st meeting of National Security Council.

Security forces arrest most wanted militant Gulzar

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: In a high profile and a successful Intelligence Operation, Lead Intelligence Agency successfully apprehended a High Value Target (HVT) Gulzar Imam alias Shambay. He has been a hardcore militant as well as founder and leader of the banned outfit Baloch National Army (BNA) which came into being after amalgamation of Baloch Republican Army (BRA) and United Baloch Army (UBA). BNA had been responsible for dozens of violent terrorist attacks in Pakistan including attacks on Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) Installations in Panjgur and Noshki. Gulzar Imam also remained as deputy to Brahmadagh Bugti in Baloch Republican Army (BRA) till 2018. Gulzar Imam was also instrumental in formation of Baloch Raji Aajoi Sangar (BRAS) and remained its Operational Head.

His visits to Afghanistan and India are also on record; his linkages with Hostile Intelligence Agencies (HIAs) are being investigated. Reportedly, HIAs also tried to exploit him to work against the state of Pakistan & its national interests. He was apprehended after an innovatively conceived, carefully planned and meticulously executed operation, spanned over months over various geographical locations.

The arrest of Gulzar Imam Shambay is a serious blow to BNA as well as other militant groups, which have been attempting to destabilize the hard-earned peace in Balochistan. Apprehension of a militant leader of this stature demonstrates the capability and resolve of LEAs to uproot the menace of terrorism as well as speaks volumes about the successes garnered through supreme sacrifices of unsung heroes.

COAS calls on PM

ISLAMABAD (INP): Army Chief General Asim Munir met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hours before the start of the most important meeting of National Security Committee (NSC) on Friday.

As per the official sources, both the prime minister and the army chief held a discussion on the situation of the country at PM House in Islamabad.

Mockery of Constitution, law must come to an end

— Marriyum says Justice Minallah’s note raises eyebrow on SC’s proceedings

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Friday said there should be an end to the mockery of Constitution and law for charting the country on path of progress and development.

Addressing a news conference, the minister said Justice Athar Minallah's decision had left "no doubt over the credibility of the verdict of the three-member bench of Supreme Court in a case related to delay in the Punjab elections". "Today Justice Athar Minallah of the Supreme Court gives a major decision which not only raises a question over the proceedings of the court in the suo motu case for delay in Punjab elections, but also categorically states that he had not distanced, recused and dissociated from the bench," she said while citing various parts of his dissenting note. She said Justice Athar Minallah had not only expressed disagreement with his brother judges but also dismissed the petition by declaring it inadmissible. Marriyum said the three-member bench was constituted on a petition which was dismissed by the majority of judges. "Why the bench was formed on the petition which was dismissed and how can a decision be given on a petition which does not exist?" she asked. The minister said not only the major political parties called for a full court bench on the Punjab polls' issue, but it was also the opinion of four SC judges, who stated that the case had become "controversial" and it was imperative to form the full court bench in order to maintain people's trust in the courts.

She said political parties did not run away from the election but "the decisions which are imposed to solidify a political ideology and usher in a constitutional crisis cannot be accepted". "How can the chief justice form another bench to hear a petition which was dismissed by majority of the judges of earlier bench?" she questioned.

PPP calls for implementation of majority verdict

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the core committee of the PPP was held Friday evening in Zardari House Islamabad presided over by President PPP Mr. Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman PPP Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and attend by the following.

Yousuf Raza Gillani, Nayyer Bukhari, Naveed Qamar, Raza Rabbani, Qamar Zaman Kaira, Sherry Rehman, CM Sindh Murad Ali Shah, Shazia Marri, Nisar Khuro, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha, Humayun Khan, Faisal Karim Kundi, Akhunnazda Chhattan and Farhatullah Babar.

In a statement secretary general of the Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians Farhatullah Babar said that the meeting stressed that shutting the door dialogue is not the solution. For this purpose, the Party decided to approach all the parties in the coalition government for taking a joint position on

‘PPP never to boycott polls’

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan People's Party Chairman's spokesperson Zulfikar Ali Badar has said that the PPP will never leave the electoral field empty for the opponents. In a statement issued here on Friday, he said that PPP Chairman and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari had played a vital role in constitution of the current unity government in the country. He said that the PPP had a big vote bank on ground, so it would contest elections with full force. The spokesperson said that a full bench of the Supreme Court should have been formed to hear the Punjab election case for maintaining dignity of law and neutrality of the courts. He stressed all heads of institutions to keep their houses in order so that the political temperatures in the country could be brought down.

the issue of dialogue among the political parties. The Party said that the crisis was the result of numerous reasons not the least of which is the insistence that minority verdict should take precedence over the majority court verdict. This position is untenable legally, morally and politically and needs to be reviewed.

He said that the meeting also of the view that it was

imperative that the honor and prestige of the judiciary was not allowed to be impaired in any way. To achieve this, it is essential that numerous apparently conflicting verdicts of the Honorable Court are resolved expeditiously. The Party believes that in the interest of fair and free elections general elections to all assemblies be held on the same day on a date provided for in the Constitution.

An hour of reasoning

Kirby could not justify the manner of Afghan withdrawal

Jalil Afridi

WASHINGTON DC: President Joe Biden's administration on Thursday released a summary of classified reports on the Afghan withdrawal, on the other hand White House National Security Spokesperson, John Kirby gave an hour of reasoning at the White House Press Briefing room to the bombardment of questions by the journalists, but he was unable to justify the manner in which the US withdrawal took place from Afghanistan.

John Kirby, being a former Admiral even became a little emotional while talking about the thirteen US servicemen who lost their lives on August 26 2021 in a suicide attack which took place at Hamid Karzai Airport in Kabul. John Kirby acknowledged that it was the right decision of President Biden to withdrawal from Afghanistan because the mission to avenge those responsible for the 911 attacks was accomplished a long time ago. Kirby did refer to "over the horizon" operation which recently claimed the life of Al Qaeda leader Al Zawahri in Kabul, Afghanistan.

Several journalists pointed out why four pages in the report blamed

Former President Donal Trump for the manner in which the US withdrew from Afghanistan. John Kirby pointed out that the former president had decreased the US forces from ten thousand to twenty five hundred, he was the one who had signed the Doha Agreement and he was the one who had agreed to the withdrawal in



August.

John Kirby also pointed out that under President Biden administration the largest evacuation took place in the history of the world and while evacuating the US troops and the US citizens, the US also brought more than one hundred thousand Afghans

to the United States.

John Kirby was asked that the Biden administration had eight months to evacuate and the world saw kids hanging to planes while the US was evacuating. He was also asked about those who provided the poor quality of intelligence and whether those responsible will get fired. Mr Kirby regretted the fact such huge number of Afghan military surrendered to the Taliban and the way former Afghan president Ashraf Ghan ran away from the country.

Kirby dispelled the impression that over six billion dollars worth of military equipment was left for Taliban to use and said that most of the military equipment was disabled from being used. John Kirby was also asked whether Bagram Airbase is now being used by China and China's growing relations with the Taliban regime. Regarding US recognition of Taliban regime, John Kirby stated that Taliban must honor the commitments they have made in Doha Agreement and that includes providing equal education and work opportunities to the women of Afghanistan.

Court sends PTI leader Ali Amin to jail on judicial remand

D I KHAN (INP): A local court on Friday sent Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Ali Amin Gandapur to Central Jail on six-day judicial remand, ensuring his presence in separate cases filed by Islamabad and Punjab police.

The former federal minister and PTI central leader was produced before the judicial magistrate after he was arrested in Dera on Thursday. However, accepting his plea, the judicial magistrate Mazhar Ali rejected the two cases registered by Dera police against him.

He also rejected the plea of Islamabad and Punjab police seeking physical custody of the PTI

leader in separate cases registered against him. The judicial magistrate directed the representatives of both Islamabad and Punjab police to fulfill and complete the required documentation for further hearing proceedings.

Strict security measures were made at the court premises where Ali Amin's brother, former provincial minister Faisal Amin, Tehsil Mayor Umar Amin and a large number of PTI workers were present. Ali Amin was arrested after hours-long drama outside the Peshawar High Court Dera Bench building where Mr Gandapur remained for several hours along with his supporting lawyers and

associates.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner Mansoor Arshad has imposed Section 144 Cr. PC in the district with immediate effect to ensure a peaceful environment in the district.

According to a notification issued here by the DC office, a ban has been imposed on unlawful assembly of five or more than five persons in public places, pillion-riding and use of tinted glasses in vehicles for 11 days. The order aimed at ensuring public safety by preventing breach of peace would come into force immediately and remain enforced from April 6 to 16, it added.

Justice Minallah says case was dismissed 4-3

ISLAMABAD (APP): Supreme Court Judge Justice Athar Minallah on Friday issued a 25-page detailed dissenting note in the suo motu notice case on Punjab elections.

Justice Minallah in the note stated that the country was on the brink of a political and constitutional crisis and it was high time that all those responsible should take a step back and resort to some introspection. "All the institutions, including this court, need to set aside their egos and strive towards fulfilling their constitutional obligations.

"Speaking for my institution, it is obvious that we may not have learnt any lessons from our past bleak history. We cannot erase the judgments from the law reports but at least endeavour to restore public trust and confidence so that the past is forgotten to some extent. When politicians do not approach the appropriate forums and bring their disputes to the courts, the former may win or lose the

case, but inevitably the court is the loser."

Justice Athar Minallah further said, "I feel it necessary to record my observations regarding the hearings. It is ironic and unimaginable for the political stakeholders to involve the court in resolving political disputes which ought to have been settled in the forums created for this purpose under the Constitution. "It is also alarming that the conduct of the political stakeholders and their political strategies would create unprecedented political turmoil and instability in the country. Political stability is a precondition for economic progress and prosperity of the people. The power struggle between the political stakeholders is undermining the welfare and economic conditions of the people of this country. The people of Pakistan have been made to suffer for a long time by depriving them of their fundamental rights. The long spells of undemocratic regimes validated by

this court have caused irretrievable loss to the country and its people. The institutions which represent the will of the people were not allowed to take roots. Even today, seventy-five years after the creation of Pakistan the institutions remain weak."

He stated that the manner and mode in which "these proceedings were initiated have unnecessarily exposed the court to political controversies. It has invited objections from political stakeholders in an already polarised political environment. The objections have also been submitted in writing. This obviously has consequences for the trust the people ought to repose in the impartiality of the court. The court, by proceeding in a premature matter, will be stepping into already murky waters of the domain of politics. It is likely to erode public confidence. The assumption of suo motu jurisdiction in itself may raise concerns in the mind of an informed outside observer. In the cir-

cumstances, the rights of litigants whose cases are pending before us would be prejudiced, besides eroding public trust in the independence and impartiality of the court.

"This could have been avoided if a Full Court was to take up these cases. It would have ensured the legitimacy of the proceedings. The legitimacy of the judgment rendered in the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians case was solely based on the invocation of the suo motu jurisdiction on the recommendation of twelve judges of this court. Every judge has sworn an oath to defend, protect and preserve the Constitution. The constitution of

a Full Court, as was suggested in my note dated 23.02.2023, was imperative to preserve public trust in this court. "There is another crucial aspect which cannot be ignored; the conduct of the political stakeholders. The political climate in the country is so toxic that it is inconceivable that political parties will even agree to having a dialogue, let

alone arriving at a consensus. As a political strategy, resignations en masse were tendered from the National Assembly, rather than discharging their constitutional obligations as members of the opposition. The constitutional courts were first approached to compel the Speaker to accept the resignations and when they were accepted the courts were again approached to have the decision reversed. The dissolution of the provincial legislature as part of the political strategy of the stakeholders raises questions. Is such conduct in consonance with the scheme of constitutional democracy? Is it not in itself a violation of the Constitution? Should this court allow its forum to be exploited for advancing political strategies or appear to be encouraging undemocratic conduct? Should this court not take notice of forum shopping by political stakeholders by invoking the jurisdictions of high courts and this court simultaneously?

"This court cannot and must not

appear or be seen as advancing the political strategies of political stakeholders. The public trust will be eroded in the independence and impartiality of the court if it appears or is seen to encourage undemocratic norms and values. The court would be unwittingly weakening the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) and the forums created under the Constitution by encouraging political stakeholders to add their disputes to our dockets. The political stakeholders must establish their bona fides before their petitions could be entertained. The conduct of the stakeholders has created an unprecedented political instability by resorting to conduct that is devoid of the democratic values of tolerance, dialogue and debate. The conduct of the stakeholders does not entitle them to invoke the jurisdiction of this court under Article 184(3) of the Constitution lest it is seen or appears to facilitate or promote undemocratic values and strategies."

Earthquake jolts Quetta

QUETTA (PPI): Tremors were felt in Quetta and its adjoining areas on Friday after a magnitude 4.0 earthquake jolted the area. According to Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), tremors were felt in Quetta and surrounding areas. According to the National Seismic Monitoring Centre (NSMC), the epicenter of the earthquake was 57km away from Quetta in North-West.



10 booked for K-IV pipelines theft

KARACHI (APP): The district Malir Police claimed to have arrested 10 accused including a policeman involved in stealing water pipelines of the K-IV project in the jurisdiction of Bin Qasim police station on Friday. According to a police spokesman, the accused arrested were identified as Habibullah (policeman), Muhammad Usman, Rahim, Muhammad Iqbal, Aurangzeb, Anwaar, Zubair, Shan Hussain, Ali Akbar, and Hussain Ahmed.

Accused Habibullah was a police constable posted at Police Headquarters Garden South.

The police also recovered a vehicle loaded with pipes from their possession. Police have registered a case against the culprits, further probe is in process.

Corruption in Sindh Auqaf department

KARACHI (APP): The Chief Minister's inspection team has unearthed massive irregularities and corruption in the Sindh Auqaf department in the name of repairing famous shrines.

As per details, the Chief Minister's inspection team has revealed that the Auqaf department of Sindh had embezzled Rs 10 crores in funds for repairing the buildings of shrines.

The Sindh Auqaf department made advance payments to the contractors. The Chief Minister's inspection team revealed the Auqaf department's corruption in Sufi Sachal Sarmast, Noor Wali Shah and other shrines.

The CM inspection team has sought the details of this corruption scandal from secretary Auqaf department.

IGP visits under treatment policemen

KARACHI (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh Ghulam Nabi Memon on Friday visited Aga Khan Hospital and met under treatment police officer and personnel.

The Sindh Police chief met DSP Qalandar Bakhsh Soomro, Constable Muhammad Ishaq Mirani and Head Constable Ali Muhammad under treatment at the Hospital and inquired about their health from the doctors, according to the spokesman for Sindh Police.

Both DSP Qalandar Soomro and Constable Ishaq Mirani stationed at Durrani Police Station in Kashmore/Kandhot district were injured while fighting valiantly against the dacoits in the Katcha area, while Head Constable Ali Muhammad was injured in Mangali Police Station, Sanghar district in an encounter.

IGP Sindh Ghulam Nabi Memon expressed solidarity with the injured policemen and their families and assured them of all possible cooperation from the Sindh Police.

He directed the AIGP Welfare, Sindh on the spot to ensure that the injured are provided with all standard medical facilities and brought back to a healthy life as soon as possible.

CM chairs meeting to review health dept performance

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi presided over a meeting at his office to review performance of the health department and progress on special measures.

During the meeting, the CM prioritized the completion of construction, repair, and maintenance projects in hospitals, while expressing his satisfaction with the timely treatment of heart patients through the drop-and-shift system.

Additionally, it was announced that CCTV cameras will be installed in emergencies in government hospitals, with a dedicated monitoring room established for video and audio recording. The proposal to increase health professional allowance was also discussed, and progress was noted in the health screening of prisoners and differently-abled children, with the CM instructing for regular screenings every three months.

The meeting further discussed plans to provide 200 ambulances for expecting women to facilitate hospital transfer, and to complete repairs and rehabilitation of the emergency ward at Children's Hospital Lahore. The launch of the 'safe blood for Punjab' project was also announced, with a focus on providing healthy blood to patients. The private collaboration will be sought to initiate the angiography facility at Allama Iqbal Memorial Teaching Hospital, and the ultrasound facility and staff evening shift has already commenced at Mian Munshi Hospital Lahore.

During the meeting, briefings were given by the secretaries of specialized healthcare & medical education and primary & secondary healthcare departments, and Provincial Minister for Specialized Healthcare & Medical Education, Dr Javed Akram and the Minister for Primary & Secondary Health Dr Jamal Nasir, were among those in attendance.

CM for sustainable steps to prevent roads: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi chaired a meeting on axle load management at his office where he directed to take sustainable steps to prevent roads from deteriorating.

Attended by officials, including the chief secretary, IG police, ACS (home), chairman P&D and representatives from various departments including law, industries, local government, C&W, information and transport, the meeting discussed introducing amendments to the Industry Rules of 1996 and Provincial Motor Vehicles Ordinance of 1965.

The meeting reviewed a proposal to install digital weigh stations on selected major roads in Punjab. The C&W department will develop a digital weighing policy to restrict overloaded vehicles and enhance safety. Punjab Highway Police will verify the approved weight in freight vehicles, and digital weigh scales will be linked to the PITB app. The weight data of each freight vehicle will be accessible through the respective district's dashboard.

Governor Punjab hails WHO role in eradicating disease

LAHORE (APP): Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has said that health is of fundamental importance in human lives and the World Health Organization (WHO) is playing an important role in creating awareness on health issues. Addressing a seminar in connection with the World Health Day at the Governor's House here on Friday, he urged all the stakeholders and policy makers to come together to formulate policies to solve health problems on World Health Day.

The seminar was held under the auspices of General Cadre Doctors Association and Young Nurses Association and it was attended by Punjab Health Minister Jamal Nasir, Principal Ameerud Din Medical College Dr. Saeed Elahi, Vice Chancellor (VC) King Edward Medical University (KEMU) Prof. Farid Zafar, Ayaz Mehmood, and a large number of people associated with the medical field. Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said every few years the world faces a new epidemic, adding that this can be overcome only by working together. The Governor Punjab said, "World Health Day helps us to solve serious health problems and thus plays an important role in spreading awareness and strategies to prevent diseases as well as epidemics."

He said the Covid-19 pandemic badly affected the economy over the past few years, adding, "The way our doctors and

medical staff performed their services day and night during Covid are commendable.

He said that he pays tributes to the doctors, nurses and paramedics who sacrificed their lives during the Covid pandemic.

The ceremony was attended by doctors and health professionals from various teaching hospitals including World Health Organization, University of Health Sciences, King Edward Medical University, General Cadre Doctors Association, PMA, Family Physicians, Nursing Association and Health Professional Staff.

Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman gave shields to Prof. Dr. Mahmood Ayaz, Prof. Farid Zafar, Punjab Health Minister Jamal Nasir and Dr. Masood Sheikh President General Cadre Doctors Association in recognition of their services in the health sector.

Governor eulogizes welfare work of charitable organizations Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has said that the charitable organizations of Pakistan have rendered meritorious services in fighting epidemics and eradicating poverty in the country. Addressing a charity event at the Governor's House here on Friday, he said Pakistan has a prominent position in the world in welfare work, adding that Edhi Ambulance Service is the largest voluntary ambulance network in the world.

'Physical verification of KMC pensioners to be done'

KARACHI (APP): Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saif-ur-Rahman has said that all departments should complete their revenue targets before the end of this financial year and physical verification of all former employees who are getting pensions from KMC will be done. He said this while chairing a meeting with the officers of the Finance Department here on Friday.

An amount of Rs 18 crores is added every month to the pension head. The increase is due to the fact that a large number of employees are retiring from the KMC and District Municipal Corporations, while Rs 10 billion are owed in gratuity and arrears of these employees.

Municipal Commissioner Syed Shujaat Hussain, Financial Advisor Ghulam Murtaza Bhutto, Senior Director Finance Riaz

Khatir, Director Budget Nasir Mahmood Ishaqi, Director Finance Mahmood Baig, Rashid Nizam, Director Welfare Waseem Bagri and other officers were also present in the meeting. The Administrator Karachi said that the list of retired employees of all DMCs for the next financial year should be obtained which is verified by the concerned authority there.

He said a complete record of pension being paid to the employees through 550 branches of the local bank in different cities of Pakistan should also be compiled and the in-charges of the branches should be mandated to pay the pension after proper verification of the person concerned. The Administrator Karachi directed departmental heads to collect revenue according to the budget targets so that the development works of the city can be com-

pleted. The target given to the Estate, MUCT, Katchi Abadies, Land, parks and other departments must be achieved before June 30.

Dr. Syed Saif said that the grant given to KMC by the Sindh government covers the salaries and other expenses and if KMC departments will make efforts to get revenue while improving their performance the situation will improve and along with solving the problems of the employees, the ongoing development works in the city will also be completed.

He said that KMC funds 14 major hospitals along with a medical college and 30 million rupees are paid monthly for the salaries of the employees of the Karachi Medical and Dental College while 60 million rupees are required for the payment of fire risk allowance to the staff of the fire brigade department.

Sharjeel Memon host Iftar to honor PPP Digital workers

E.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, who is also head of Pakistan People's Party Digital Media on Friday hosted an iftar-dinner in honor of the workers of PPP Digital at a local hotel here.

Sindh Minister of Labor and President of Pakistan Peoples Party Karachi Division Saeed Ghani, Provincial Minister Shehla Raza, Adviser to Chief Minister of Sindh Barrister Murtaza Wahab, Special Assistant to Chief Minister Sindh Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar, Ajiz Dhamra and youth of PPP Digital belonging to various provinces and cities of Pakistan graced the ceremony.

On this occasion, the speakers including provincial ministers of the Sindh government and the leaders of the PPP, in their speeches, praised the services, activities and efforts of the head of PPP Digital, Sharjeel Inam Memon, for starting the work on PPP Digital and taking it forward actively.

They said that the active workers of PPP Digital



under the leadership of Sharjeel Inam Memon are working in a very organized manner to highlight the manifesto of Pakistan Peoples Party and the vision of the party leadership on digital media.

Addressing the event, Information Minister Sindh and head of PPP Digital Sharjeel Inam Memon said that usually people host Iftar in honor of famous and known celebrities but our party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari asked him to organize Iftar in honor of the youth of PPP Digital and invite PPP digital workers to attend as special guests. Therefore, the spe-

cial guests of today's ceremony are hundreds of our young workers present in this hall.

He said that the workers of PPP Digital will present their position in an organized, civilized, polite and dignified manner to discourage the forces that are spreading chaos and hatred in the country and the workers of PPP Digital will express their viewpoint. They will also take care of the gender and age of the opponent and will present their views and comments in decent words with reasoning and distinction and civility in response to rudeness, he added.

He said that the People's Party Digital is being organized on merit.

He said that higher training opportunities will also be provided to the workers of PPP Digital, after which these workers will be able to get respectable digital employment. He said that very soon the conventions of PPP Digital workers will be held in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Islamabad in which Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will also join us. At the end of the event, the video of the song produced by PPP Digital workers was also presented.

Two Lyari gangsters arrested

KARACHI (APP): Two alleged Lyari gangsters were arrested in injured condition after an encounter with Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Police at Risala Moeen Chowk on Friday. One of the accomplice of the arrested accused managed to escape from the scene, according to a news release.

The Rangers recovered arms, ammunition, two mobile phones and cash Rs. 125000 from the possession of the arrested accused who were identified as Subhan and Mazhar were involved in extortion, robberies and street crimes.

According to detail, the accused sent a threatening letter to a trader for extortion in Jodia Bazar. The Rangers and Police formed a joint team to arrest the accused. During the raid, they resorted to firing on Rangers and Police.

CCPO listens to 1,715 policemen in orderly rooms

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Lahore Additional IG Bilal Siddique Kamyana has listened to the appeals of 1,715 police officers and officials personally in his orderly room (ORs) during last two and a half months this year.

Apart from operations, investigation and security wings, police officers and officials posted in various units of Lahore police including City Traffic Police, Dolphin Squad, Police Response Unit, Anti-Rite Force appeared before CCPO for appeals to consider and redress their departmental issues.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is declare that Mr. Liaqat Ali s/o Muhammad Zareef is the owner of Plot No. 521 Sector F-5, 7 Maries Hayatabad Peshawar. PDA have appointed and constituted Jamal Ahmad s/o Ahmad Jan Afridi throw this general power of attorney vide deed no. 1000, Bahi No. 4, Volume No. 669 on dated 6-11-15. Now Mr. Jamal Ahmad transfer the property through the same general power of attorney. Therefore if any Bank, Firm, Institution person having objection regarding the transfer of the aforementioned property should contact housing officer/transfer Hayatabad PDA, Peshawar with written proof 15 days, otherwise the property shall be transferred and will not be accepted any claim excuse after word Housing Officer / Transfer Hayatabad PDA, Phase-V Pesh.

Khyber Medical University

Committed to Excellence in Academics & Research

PROJECT POSITIONS

Services of the following positions are required under our donated project at Khyber Medical University, Peshawar from the Pakistani & Afghan citizens (Male/Female) on a temporary/contract basis as per the given details;

S.No	Position	S.No	Position
1.	Lead CBT therapist / Master trainer	2.	Post-doc fellow
3.	Clinical reaserch fellow	4.	Administrator
5.	Data input administrator	6.	Data transcriber

- Detailed TORS, eligibility and personal requirements can be downloaded from www.oric.kmu.edu.pk (in the "what's new" tab)
- Eligible candidates are required to send their CV, mentioning the position applying for (in the SUBJECT area of the email) at kmu.control2023@gmail.com not later than 19th April, 2023.
- Only shortlisted candidates will be called for interview.
- No TA/DA shall be admissible for appearing in interview.

DIRECTOR ORIC

KHYBER MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

Phase-V, Hayatabad Peshawar, www.oric.kmu.edu.pk

Phone: 091-9217258



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Health Abdul Qadir Patel addressing the launching ceremony of PM Strategic reforms initiative for citizens mental wellbeing web based application (Humraz) and Integrated helpline 1166 on world Health day 2023.



DISTRICT JUDICIARY KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA
OFFICE OF THE SENIOR CIVIL JUDGE,
NORTH WAZIRISTAN AT BANNU
Ph: 0928-920006, Fax: 0928-662201 Email: scjnwj@gmail.com

Short Tender Notice

Office of the Senior Civil Judge, North Waziristan at Bannu intends to purchase the under mentioned IT Equipment, stationery items and plant & Machinery as per **single stage, Two envelope procedure**. Sealed tenders are invited from well reputed firms or bidders reflected on Active Tax Payer List of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR)

S.No	Description of Items	Specifications	Quantity
01	Desktop computer Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processor: Core i5, 11th Generation Ram: 16 Gb Primary Storage SSD: 256 Gb Secondary Storage HDD: 1TB Built-in: Wi-Fi DVD-Writer Operation System: Windows 11 Home (or) Professional 	03
02	LED Monitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 21 Inches Display 	03
03	5.2 KW Solar System (Turnkey Solution)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tier1, A grade Maximum Power (Pmax): 540Wp Maximum Power Voltage (Vmp): 40.70V Maximum Power Current (Imp): 13.27A Open-circuit Voltage (Voc): 49.42V Short-circuit Current (Isc): 13.85A Module Efficiency STC(%): 20.94% Mechanical Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cell Type: P type Mono-crystalline No. of cells: 144 (6x24) Dimensions: 2274x1134x35mm (89.53x44.65x1.38 inch) Weight: 28.9 kg (63.7 lbs) Front Glass: 3.2mm, Anti-Reflection Coating, High Transmission, Low Iron, Tempered Glass Frame: Anodized Aluminium Alloy Junction Box: IP68 Rated Output Cables: TUV 1x4.0mm2: (+): 400mm, (-): 200mm or Customized Length Protection Box <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overload protection Short circuit protection Controlling Used in residential building, non-residential building, energy source industry and infrastructure Batteries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Battery Type: VRLA Dry Battery Volts: 12 volts Plates Per Cell: N/A Ampere: 200 Ah Polarity: N/A Application: Solar & UPS or Inverter Or equivalent Installation	01
04	Stationery items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Computer printing paper AA 80 gm legal size Copying paper City plus 70 gm legal size Uni-ball gel pen (weight 12.963 g, nib size 0.7 mm, pen features capped, ink type liquid, rubberized grip. 	50 (rim) 50 (rim) 10 (packs)

❖ Quantity required may be increased or decreased keeping in view the rates quoted by the bidders before award of contract.

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

- Any information about the tender or standard bidding documents can be obtained from Office of the Senior Civil Judge, North Waziristan at Bannu or can be downloaded from official website: www.districtcourtorthwaziristan.gov.pk.com or www.kppra.gov.pk
- Interested parties may send their bids in sealed cover latest by **29-04-2023** up till 10:00 am which will be opened on the same day at 11.00 am. The bidders or their authorized representatives may attend the meeting, if they wish to be present.
- 2% of total bid amount as Earnest Money / security deposit should be attached with the tenders, in the shape of the Call Deposit, in favor of Senior Civil Judge, North Waziristan@ Rs. 49,700/- Tenders with Cross Cheque/ Banker's Cheque, demand draft and without call deposit shall not be entertained. The Earnest Money of the unsuccessful bidders, however, shall be returned after approval / finalization of the tender.
- The bid security / earnest money may be forfeited:**
 - If a bidder withdraws his bid during the period of bid validity specified by the bidder on the bid.
 - In the case of a successful bidder, if the bidder fails to sign the contract or fails to supply the equipment within the specified delivery time period.
 - If the bidder fails to supply the equipment within the delivery time period.
- The procuring entity shall disqualify a supplier or contractor if it finds, at any time;**
 - That the information submitted by him concerning his qualification as supplier or contractor was false and materially inaccurate or incomplete.
 - That old register firm fails to submit the last 03 years and newly register firm fails to submit last one year Sales & Income Tax returns along with audit report.
 - That if he fails to provide KPRA registration.
- Price quoted must be in Pak Rupees and must include all applicable taxes. If not specifically mentioned in the tender / quotation, it will be presumed that the price include all the Government Taxes.
- Supplier shall be entirely responsible for all taxes, duties, license fees etc incurred until delivery of the contracted goods to the Procuring Agency.
- Firms shall give 01 year warranty with parts and After Sale Services for the equipment they offer.
- Installation of equipment shall be the responsibility of successful bidder.
- Contract shall be awarded to that supplier who fulfills the above mentioned specifications as per the satisfaction of procuring entity.
- Successful bidders shall be required to supply the said items within 15 days after the issuance of supply order by the competent authority. Failure in supply of items within stipulated period shall entail forfeiture of Earnest money.
- In case, even if after delivery/ installation within three month, the technical committee found the items / equipment defective, low quality, not working properly, or any other fault, the competent authority has the right to return the defective items / equipment for replacement or may award the bid to the next lower bidder after cancellation of this supply order.
- The procuring entity reserves the right to reject any or all tenders with cogent reasons.
- Incomplete, ambiguous, and conditional bids will not be entertained.
- Bids can be submitted by post or delivered directly in the office of Undersigned.
- The purchase will be made in accordance with KPRA Rules 2014.
- Successful bidder shall deposit a performance guarantee 8% of the total supply cost.
- Bid should be valid till 30th June 2023. The firm/bidder would be bound to supply the tendered equipment on the rates mentioned in the bid. Any fluctuation in rate would not be entertained by the procuring entity.

(Zahid Ali Khan CJ/JM-II)
Chairman Purchase Committee, Civil Courts
District Judiciary, North Waziristan at Bannu

2600 health centers established in KP: Riaz

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to caretaker chief minister for sports and youth affairs Dr. Riaz Anwar has said that more than 2600 health centers have been established for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It is the first priority of the government to bring the best health facilities to the people at their doorsteps. He expressed these views while delivering his speech as chief guest at the event organized in connection with the 75th annual World Health Day in collaboration with the World Health Organization at the School of Health Sciences, Peshawar.

The theme of this year's World Health Day is "Health for All" means that health facilities should be provided at their doorstep for all individuals and families of the world without any discrimination so that a healthy society can be

formed. Prof. Dr. Riaz Anwar Special Assistant to caretaker chief minister for sports and World Health Organization Sub-Office KP Head Dr. Babar Alam were among the special guests of the event.

Professor Dr Riaz Anwar gave a detailed discussion on importance of paramedics and nursing education in health. He said that access to health facilities is the basic right of every member of the society. Whether one lives in urban areas or in rural areas, more than 2600 health centers have been established to provide the best health facilities to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Dr. Babar Alam also appreciated the models of health facilities created by the students. He further said that this year the slogan of World Health Organization on World Health Day is "Health for all". The World Health Organization is actively

involved in the provision of health facilities and rehabilitation in all flood-affected areas. On this occasion, the students of the college had also prepared various models in which the theme of World Health Day was highlighted. The guests appreciated the efforts of the students. The guests also distributed shields and cash prizes to the first, second and third position holders models.

The MD and Principal of the college Dr Shams also presented souvenirs (shields) of the college to the guests. While Nursing Principal Mrs. Samira Jabeen thanked all the participants and organizers. At the end of the event, an awareness walk was also organized by the guests and students. The purpose of which was to create awareness among the public regarding World Health Day. On this occasion, students also raised slogans of "Health for All".

ECP to be contacted for distribution of Rs1740m Zakat funds

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to contact the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for constitution of Zakat Council for disbursement of Rs 1740 million zakat funds among the deserving persons on Eid-ul-Fitr.

An official document available with APP revealed that Zakat funds amounting to Rs 1390 million for settled districts and Rs 350 million for the merged districts were received on March 08, 2023, however due to non-existence of KP Zakat and Ushr Council the amount could not be distributed.

It said that the three-year term of Zakat and Usher Council in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has expired and the available funds could not be distributed until the constitution of the new council, which has added to the plight of the deserving people of the province.

According to the secretary Zakat department, Chief Minister appoints the chairman and members of the councils and the government establishes the KP Zakat and Ushr Council (KPZC). District Zakat Committees (DZCs) and Local Zakat Committees (LZCs) for a period of three-year, adding that KPZC being the apex body prepares zakat budget for each financial year.

Special Assistant to KP CM for Zakat Salama Begum has said that since the ECP has banned all sorts of new appointments and constitution of the new council therefore the commission would be contacted to empower the KP government to constitute KPZC for release and disbursement of zakat funds among deserving people on the eve of Eid.

4 VCs given additional universities' charge

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Higher Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with the approval of Governor Haji Ghulam Ali, has appointed vice chancellors (VCs) of four universities by giving additional charge to the VCs of different universities.

In a notification, the KP Higher Education Department said on Friday that Vice Chancellor Swabi University has been given the additional charge of VC Women University Swabi. Likewise, VC University of Lakki Marwat has been accorded additional charge of Vice Chancellor University of Science and Technology Kohat. The Vice Chancellor Gomal University Dera Ismail Khan has been given the additional charge of Vice Chancellor University of Agriculture D I Khan. The notification said the appointments have been made for a period of three months or till appointment of regular VCs on these posts.



PESHAWAR: Activists of Tehreek Awaz-e-Haq holding a protest against Israeli forces attack on Al-Aqsa mosque. — F.P. photo

ATP announces to launch mass contact campaign

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Amun Taraqqi Party (ATP) has chalked out a comprehensive strategy to launch a mass contact campaign ahead of elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The party has invited applications from aspirants and eligible people for awarding tickets to contest the elections.

In order to review the arrangements for participation in the elections, the party chairman Muhammad Faiq Shah on Friday presided over the ATP executive committee meeting, in which various proposals and opinions were discussed. The party central and provincial leaders, especially Awais Khan, Arsalan Shah, Mansoor Chouhan, Ishtiaq Elahi and others were present during the meeting.

The meeting decided public awareness and public campaign will

continue along with electioneering to woo the voters for the upcoming polls in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It told the meeting that the central secretariat will take vigorous steps for guidance of provincial organisations and workers. All arrangements have been finalized in this regard, the forum was informed.

Shah while speaking on the occasion instructed the party's responsible, office bearers and workers to intensify the campaign and reach out the people to convey vision and agenda of the Amun Taraqqi Party. He asked the people, particularly workers and competent youth all over the country who want to participate in elections to approach the party executive committee.

Furthermore, he directed the party's central and provincial organizations that they should actively participate in the ongoing campaign for public authority and justice to ensure

representation in all districts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Faiq urged political parties to launch a mass contact campaign to prevent the derailment of democracy.

He vowed that if the party gets a chance to form a government, it will ensure economic and social justice and provision of all fundamental rights and facilities at people's doorstep. The ATP chairman also reiterated his firm resolve that delegating unprecedented authorities and powers is part of the party manifesto, which will be ensured at every level.

Shah emphasized that confrontation and atmosphere of fight between institutions should be eliminated. He said there will be 'zero-tolerance' against pressure, rigging and exploitation. He urged the Election Commission of Pakistan to announce a comprehensive code of conduct to ensure polls in a fair, transparent, organized and a peaceful manner.

Dry weather to prevail in most KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Friday predicted that mainly hot and dry weather is expected over most districts of the province. However, light rain-thunderstorm with gusty winds are likely to occur over isolated places in Khyber and Kurram districts in the afternoon.

During the last 24 hours mainly dry weather occurred over most districts of the province. However, rain-thunderstorm occurred in Bajaur and Khyber districts. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 27/14, Chitral 19/06, Timergara

23/13, Dir 20/06, Mirkhani 22/04, Kalam 13/-02, Drosh 18/03, Saidu Sharif 24/08, Pattan 24/15, Malam Jabba 09/03, Takht Bhai 27/12, Kakul 20/06, Balakot 23/09, Parachinar 15/02, Bannu 27/12, Cherat 20/07, D.I. Khan 31/17. The highest temperature recorded in the province was 31°C in Dera Ismail Khan.

Arrangements for polio vaccination drive reviewed

PESHAWAR (APP): Deputy Commissioner Abdul Nasir Khan on Friday chaired a meeting of all stakeholders here at his office and reviewed arrangements and plan for polio vaccination drive in the district.

On the occasion he was briefed about a comprehensive vaccination plan, security arrangements, challenges and other problems related to the vaccination drive. The DC directed all the stakeholders to focus on refusal cases by involving local elders, Ulemas and political leaders to convince parents for the vaccination of their children.

He asked the police department to provide fool-proof security to polio teams to avert any untoward incident, while the health department was asked to visit each and every house during the campaign and administer polio drops to every child under the age of five. He said it is high time to make the district polio free and protect the coming generation from permanent disabilities, adding the government was very serious about eliminating the crippling polio disease from the country.



PESHAWAR: Provincial president of Pakistan Milli Labour Federation Abdul Sattar Khan Hoti addressing a press conference. — F.P. photo

Israeli forces attack on Palestinians condemned

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Jamaat-e-Islami workers on the call of their party chief Sirajul Haq on Friday staged a protest at Timergara against the attack on Palestinian worshippers inside the Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli forces. The rally was addressed by the JI district chief Izazul Mulk Afkari, provincial chief of the Jamiat Tulba Arabia Maulana Attullah, Shuiab Ahmad and others. The protesters, while carrying banners and placards, also chanted slogans against the Israeli forces and the USA.

The speakers condemned the attack on the innocent Palestinians and termed it a brutal and inhumane act. They said that 'jihad' (Holy War) was the only solution against such barbaric acts. The speakers also criticized the OIC leadership for doing nothing to stop atrocities against Palestinians and Kashmiris. They said the OIC leadership should pres-

surize the UNO to take up the Palestine issue seriously and stop the Israeli forces' barbarism. The speakers said that about 50 thousand innocent Palestinians had been martyred so far while more than 700,000 had left their homes and migrated from the area. The JI leaders said that their party stood behind the innocent Palestinians and Kashmiris and would never leave them alone.

Polio drive: About 26750 children would be vaccinated against the crippling Polio disease in five union councils of Lower dir from April 14 to 18. A meeting in this regard was held at Balambat with deputy commissioner Iftikhar Ahmad in the chair. The meeting was briefed on the preparations made for the five-day anti polio drive commencing from April 14.

The participants were informed that a total of 104 teams had been formed to vaccinate 26750 children in

five union councils; Miskini, Darangal, Toor Camp, Mian Kalay, Timergara and Chakdara. The DC directed the district administrator Afghan refugees to hold a meeting with the Afghan elders a day before the drive to ensure 100 per cent vaccination target at their camp. The additional deputy commissioner Abdul Wali Khan, WHO representative Dr Amjad Khan, district education officer female Shaheen Begum, DA Afghan Refugees Humayun Khan, Dr Nor Hameed and others attended the meeting.

Administration warning: The additional assistant commissioner revenue Tariq Khan has said the administration would not let anyone run business after 10 PM at Timergara city to save energy. Talking to local journalists during his visit to the markets the AAC said that 241 points had been set up for the distribution of free flour in the district.

Price-hike may cause malnutrition in children, lactating mothers

PESHAWAR (APP): Breaking the 49 years highest inflation record since 1974, Pakistan where around 22 percent of people were already living below the poverty line, may witness a significant increase in malnutrition and stunting among pregnant and lactating mothers and children due to substantial increase in prices of daily use commodities in the wake of last year's devastated floods that has caused about USD 40 billion losses to the government kitty.

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) report 2023 has revealed that in February last, inflation in the country surged to a record 31.5 percent, which is the highest in the last 49 years since 1974, resulting in record increase in prices of daily use agriculture and non-agriculture commodities including vegetables, fruits, milk and meat prices in open markets in all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The economic, agriculture and health experts feared that such scenario might aggravate problems of stunting, underweight and overweight in children and anemia, Zinc and vitamin A deficiencies in pregnant and lactating mothers could lead to premature births and underweight and weaker neonatal.

Professor Dr Muhammad Naeem of Swabi University told APP that the country where the lower middle-income poverty rate was about USD 3.2 per day and upper middle income poverty rate was around USD 5.5 per

day, is likely to push additional 1.9 million household including 12.1 million people into poverty in the wake of the last year floods devastations that played havoc to all socioeconomic sectors including agriculture, livestock and food services.

Resultantly, he said the national poverty ratio was likely to increase by 2.4 to four percent, thus around 26 percent of the country's population may face great problems to get balanced food, quality health, water and natal care services. "Normally, 15 to 20pc increase in prices of daily used items including meat, chicken, vegetables, pulses, dairy products and fruits were being witnessed during Ramadan and activation of price-control committees were inevitable to control soaring prices of the food items in the open market," he said.

In Peshawar, one KG meat of large animal was being sold at Rs800, a dozen eggs on Rs300, one KG milk and yogurt on Rs200, potato on Rs800, tomato on Rs110, onion on Rs150, apple on Rs300, strawberry on Rs300 and lemon on Rs200 per KG which was beyond of purchasing powers of the poor and local income groups.

The National Nutrition Survey has revealed that four out of 10 children under five years of age ie 40.2 percent were stunted, 28.9pc underweight, 9.5pc overweight and 17.7pc suffer from wasting (under height). In rural areas, unnourished children

were recorded more compared to urban areas of Pakistan.

In urban areas, 34.8pc children stunted, 16.2pcer wasting, 24pc underweight and 9.6 percent overweight while in rural areas 43.2percent suffered from stunting, 18.6 pc wasting, 31.6pc underweight and 9.4 pc overweight. As many as around 12 million children were underheight ie 40pc in KP, 48.3pc in newly merged districts (NMD), 46.6pc in Gilgit Baltistan, 46.6pc in Balochistan, 45.5pc in Sindh, 36.4pc in Punjab, 32.6 in ICT and 39.3percent in Azad Kashmir.

Similarly, 15 pc unnourished children were suffering from wasting, 15.3pc in Punjab, 23.3pc in Sindh, 18.9pc in Balochistan, 16.1 in AJK, 23pc in NMD and 12.1pc in ICT. Similarly, 12.9pc children were overweight in KP, 9.9pc in Punjab, 5.2pc in Sindh, 16.7 pc in Balochistan, 13.4pc in AJK, 18.6pc in NMD and 5.8pc in ICT.

"Anemia, deficiencies of Vitamin A, hemoglobin and zinc were major causes of stunting in children and underweight birth," said Dr Riaz Khan, children specialist at Govt hospital Pabbi Nowsheera while talking to APP. He termed inadequate nutrition among mothers during pregnancy as one of the main reasons for malnutrition among children leading to stunting and underweight.

The unnourished children and mothers suffer from depression and anxiety, cardiorespiratory disorders

and low immunity and poor wound healing and concentration in studies and jobs. Dr Riaz said nearly 45.8pc neonatal start breastfeeding in the first hour of birth out of which 44.6pc in rural areas and 47 percent in urban regions in the country against 50pc target set by the WHO, adding the proportion of children breastfed for first six months in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was estimated as 60.7pc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 59pc in NMD, 42.1pc in Azad Kashmir, 43.9pc in Balochistan, 57.6 percent in ICT and 54.9pc in Gilgit-Baltistan.

"One out of three children received complementary food between 6 to eight months i.e. 35.9pc at the national level while 14.2pc children have an access to minimum dietary diversity, 18.2pc minimum meal frequency and 3.6pc in the minimum acceptable diet." The KP health department report 2022 has revealed that approximately 42 neonatal out of 1,000 live births die per year in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where 64 out of 1000 kids under five years of age expire while the infant mortality rate was about 53 out of 1000 live births.

"KP health department report prepared by the PTI government itself spoke of the poor performance of the PTI rulers, who failed to strengthen mother-children nutrition programs despite 10 years long rule," said Ikhtair Wali, PML-N KP spokesman. He added the challenges of stunting, malnutrition and pregnancy-related

deaths could have been averted if proper attention was paid by the PTI rulers. He accused the former PTI government of its failure in the construction of mothers-children hospitals in the province.

Dr Riaz said women of reproductive age of 15-49 years were bearing double burden of malnutrition and as per the national nutrition survey one in seven women i.e. 14.4 percent undernourished and 36.9pc food insecure. He said malnutrition and stunting in women and children could prove fatal and underscored the need for arresting inflation and price hike to provide a balanced diet to all.

Javeera Qazi, spokesman, Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) KP told APP that anti stunting and malnutrition program was launched in the country under which Rs1,500 per boy and Rs2000 per girl was being given to all registered pregnant and lactating mothers and those with children under two years of age for specialized nutritious food and immunizations services.

Besides Khyber and Upper Dir of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, she said the program was also launched at Bagh, Ghizer, Hunza, Kharmang, Kharan, Badin, and Rajanpur where BISP nutrition experts were facilitating the beneficiaries women. Mustaqeem Khan, senior planning officer KP health department told APP that 56 sites in NMD were identified for the construction of mothers-children hos-

pitals, basic health units and rural health centres.

The feasibility study of the project costing Rs12,440 million was completed besides allocation of Rs3,900 million for 2022-23, he said, adding extra allocation was made to mothers and children nutrition program in budget while a modern paraplegic centre was being constructed at Bakakhel Bannu with an estimated cost of Rs900 million. To protect mothers-children and the general public from chronic diseases, he said the KP Govt was spending Rs1.1 billion on purchase of medicines.

To boost balanced nutrition for mothers-children and prevent non-communicable diseases in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he said a foreign bank would provide USD 90 million for the project to be completed in the next five years. The district headquarters hospitals were being strengthened in terms of equipment, medicines and gynecology services, he said adding the Asian Development Bank has provided USD 25 million out of USD 100 million committed amount for the project to be completed by 2026.

The KP government would spend Rs2 billion on strengthening and running of BHUs and primary healthcare centres by establishing mothers-children wards initially in 15 districts besides spending Rs1.5 billion on maternal and newborn's health and allied services in the province.



In brief

RPO visits injured cop F.P. Report

D I KHAN: According to details, Regional Police Officer Dera Ismail Khan Abdul Ghafoor Afridi visited Police Constable Sabir, who was injured by terrorists in Daraban police station last month, at Mufti Mahmood Hospital Dera. He reviewed the medical facilities provided to the police constable and issued instructions after obtaining information from the doctors. That no effort should be spared for the treatment of the injured young man and encouragingly, he said that I am proud of the Dera police men who, without caring for their lives, resisted the successive attacks of anti-national elements and crushed their evil ambitions.

Two persons shot dead

GUJRAT (INP): Two persons were shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Gujrat district of Punjab on Friday, according to police official. Police said the incident took place in Bhagwal area of Gujrat, where the bodies of the two persons were found inside a tent room. The reason for the double murder has not been determined yet. Officials added that the deceased had been identified as 45-year-old Basir Majeed and 18-year-old Arsalan. A heavy contingent of police including the Gujrat DPO reached the scene after receiving information. He said forensic teams were collecting evidence from the spot.

CTD arrests terror financier

HYBDERABAD (PPI): Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Friday claimed to have arrested an active member of a banned organisation from Hyderabad, who was involved in collecting funds for the terrorists. According to the CTD spokesperson, the accused identified as Irshad Lakhir alias Hajan had been involved in terrorism, extortion, and attacks on the security institutions. "The accused is an active worker of Sindh Revolutionary Army, and 20 cases are already registered against him. He used to collect money through extortion and charity and send it to the terrorists," the CTD spokesperson said.

DC imposes section 144 F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Deputy Commissioner Mansoor Arshad has imposed section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) in the district with immediate effect to ensure a peaceful environment in the district. According to a notification issued here by the DC office on Friday, a ban has been imposed on unlawful assembly of five or more than five persons, display of arms, pillion-riding and use of tinted glasses in vehicles for 11 days. The order aimed at ensuring public safety by preventing breach of peace would come into force immediately and remain enforced till April 16.

One-wheeling kills youth

GUJRANWALA (PPI): A 26-year-old youth killed after his motorcycle skidded off the road and crashed into a police barrier while performing one-wheeling near Nawab Chowk on GT Road Gujranwala on Friday. Resultantly, head constable Imtiaz Chattha and wheelie Muzaffar died on the spot while another constable was injured.

Youths come on road for arresting cop's killer



F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Hundreds of youth on the call of Talash Youth Jirga took to the street in Talash area of Lower Dir where a traffic police constable Bakht Zamin was shot dead by an unknown armed man during his duties three days ago. The protesters led by the Jirga president Muhammad Raziq blocked the main road at Talash bazaar and chanted slogans in favour of peace and order in society.

The rally was addressed by Muhammad Raziq, Dr Fazal Wahab, Haji Muhammad Ali and others. They condemned the killing of a uniformed police official and termed it a failure of the state. They said that despite the passage of two days the killer was neither identified nor arrested, which spoke loudly of the inefficiency of the state institutions. The speakers said that the people of Talash were peace-loving and they could not tolerate such brutal acts on their soil. They demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to take notice of the police failure and ensure security of the general public in the district.

Meanwhile the law enforcement agencies took several youth into custody for interrogation but later they were released as they had nothing to do with the incident. The station house officer Tauhid Khan while talking to Dawn said that police were trying their level best to reach the killer of Bakht Zamin. The SHO complained that the people were not cooperating well with police in tracing the accused in the area. He said the government had announced Rs 500,000 for the informer the name of which would be kept secret. He said that anyone know-

ing about the killer should cooperate with the police department.

Postmasters demand release of salaries: The employees of the Pakistan post Zafar Hayat, Nafees Ahmad, Rehmatullah and others complained that dozens of the post masters had not been paid their salaries for the last ten months.

In a joint written statement they said the post masters of the branch post offices and other employees carrying posts from the general post office to the branch post offices were not getting their salaries for the last ten months due to unknown reasons. They complained that the stoppage of salaries had forced the post offices' employees to get loans and run their house expenses. They demanded the postmaster general of Pakistan to take notice of the issue and release the salaries of the concerned employees.

YTA demands appointment of DEO otherwise to observe pen down strike: The Young Teachers' Association Lower Dir chapter warned to boycott their classes and lock schools if the post of district education officer male was not filled within a week. A meeting of the association in this regard was held in the DEO office with its provincial president Attaur Rehman in the chair.

Dozens of teachers including the YTA district president Fazal Hameed, general secretary Muhammad Tufail, tehsil presidents and general secretaries attended the meeting. The participants expressed concerns and anger that the government did nothing despite repeated demands from the teachers' organizations to fill the vacant post of the DEO male in Lower Dir.

Speaking on the occasion Attaur Rehman said that several important cases of schools' teachers, clerks and class IV employees were pending in the DEO office for more than two months. He said that transfer and posting of teachers, release of their salaries, GP Fund advance cases, payment of arrears, SST adjustment and issuance of NOCs could not be dealt in the district as the key post of the DEO was vacant and the high ups had not handed over the charge to other officer. He said the provincial Governor, caretaker chief minister and secretary education should take notice of the matter. Otherwise he said the teachers would observe class boycott and pen down strike if the DEO post was not filled within a week.

JI delegation meets UOM VC: A high level delegation of Jamaat-i-Islami led by former MNA Sahibzada Yaqub Khan met with the vice chancellor, University of Malakand (UoM) Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad at his office.

The JI nominated candidates for provincial assembly including Azizullah Khan, Shad Nawaz Khan, Saeed Gul and Sahibzada Yaqub Khan along with the JI's district general secretary Hafiz Yaqubur Rehman, former tehsil nazim Syed Sultanat Yar, Adenzai tehsil emir Dr Bashir Ahmad, JI Youth Wing district president Ateequr Rehman, Syed Liaquatul Mulik, Syed Muhammad Shah and others were part of the delegation.

The delegation raised the matters related to students' issues at the varsity with the vice chancellor. The JI leaders said that they wanted the varsity to become a hub of standard education. The VC welcomed the JI suggestions.



BALAKOT: People getting bread from Sasta Roti Tandoor.

Grand dialogue on election suggested

QUETTA (INP): Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that as far as new elections are concerned in the country, for the sake of the integrity and the interest of the country, all the stakeholders should hold a grand dialogue.

In a statement issued here on Friday, she said that the country's stability was lying in the supremacy of the Constitution, Pakistan cannot afford any political chaos and unrest. She said that the national and provincial assemblies'

elections should be held at the same time. The government and the Opposition should sit together and make better decisions for the country, she said.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that the solution to the current problems was only in dialogue. All problems can be resolved by sitting on the negotiation table. The elected members of the government and the Opposition should sit at a table and solve the coun-

try's problems through dialogue, she added.

She further said that the elections of national and provincial assemblies should be held at the same time, as the country's economic situation cannot afford repeated elections. The recent crisis is not political, economic, security, but unfortunately, it is becoming a state crisis, which is a very dangerous situation for the country and the country cannot afford this situation in any way.



DARGAI: Members of Education Department and NCHD holding a rally on education awareness.

Sardar assumes charge of VC KKKU



F.P. Report

KARAK: Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan took over the charge as Vice Chancellor of Khushhal Khan Khattak University, Karak. Prof Dr Sardar Khan is currently the Vice Chancellor of Kohat University of Science and Technology, and the provincial government has given him this additional responsibility due to his extraordinary services and excellent administrative skills. It is worth mentioning here that Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan has achieved many achievements in his career.

Operation of Narcotics control inspected

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister Excise and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi paid surprise visit to the Excise and Narcotics Control Police Station as well as offices of the Director Excise and ETO in Mardan. He besides reviewing its performance, also got acquainted with the problems faced by its staff.

Secretary Excise Ehsanullah, Additional Secretary Excise Syed Mazhar Ali Shah and Director Narcotics Control Engr Eid Badshah were also present on the occasion.

During his visit to the Excise Police Station, the Provincial Minister inspected various sections of the Excise Police Station, including Hawalat, Warehouse, Moharrar and SHO Offices and Investigation Wing.

Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi directed to equip all the sections of the police station with modern requirements and also develop intelligence and investigation system on modern scientific lines for effective Narcotics and drugs prevention.

During the inspection of Excise and Taxation offices, Director Excise Mardan Fawad Iqbal and ETO Imtiaz Ahmed gave detailed briefing to the provincial minister on the performance of these regional and district offices of Excise Department. They revealed that the recovery of all the five districts of Mardan region is 66% which is far better as compared to other parts of the province including the merged districts.

These officers claimed that they could ensure 100% recovery if the problems faced by the staff of Excise Mardan Region including the shortage of staff are resolved. Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi later inspected various parts of excise offices and issued orders on the spot to improve its staff working conditions.

Supremacy of Constitution vital: Zahri

F.P. Report

QUETTA: In the crisis that Pakistan is currently going through, there is a need for national unity and unison, not riots. Pakistan needs peace and security, not chaos and unrest. In the current situation, Pakistan cannot afford any political chaos and unrest. These views were expressed by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri, in a newspaper statement. She said that the administrative, political and economic situation in the country is worse. The eyes of the whole world are on the current situation of Pakistan and the political adventures and the game of adventure is going on, it should be stopped immediately and as far as new elections are concerned in the country, for the sake of the integrity and interest of the country, all the stakeholders should hold a grand dialogue.

She said that the national and provincial assembly's elections should be held at the same time. The government and the opposition should sit together and make better decisions for the country. Leave aside your personal and party interests and follow the constitution because the rule and supremacy of the consti-

tution is the guarantee of the country's stability. It is very dangerous for the country to reach the state institutions along with the politics of polarization. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that the politics of difference should be done for the sake of reform rather than making anything a problem of one's ego. The country should be staked. All institutions, including the government and the opposition, should also step back from their extreme positions. The solution to the current problems is only in dialogue. All problems can be resolved by sitting on the negotiation table. The elected members of the government and the opposition should sit at a table and solve the country's problems through dialogue.

Senator Samina further said that the elections of national and provincial assemblies should be held at the same time. The country's economic situation cannot afford repeated elections. She said that it is very sad to say that unfortunately prosperous Pakistan is getting out of our hands. Things have gotten tough and are getting tougher. People are hesitant and the problems of poor and middle class are increasing day by day. Living life has become the most difficult for peo-

ple in white. Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that for the sake of national security, all stakeholders, including the government, opposition and all institutions, need to play their positive role and for the achievement of this goal, the most important thing is the rule and observance of the constitution, which everyone needs to follow.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri said that the constitution should not be considered as a joke and a wax nose that anyone can bend according to their own calculations. All political parties should also follow their manifesto and follow it in the true sense. In the current situation of the country, it is felt that the political fight is taking the form of political enmity. The policy of confrontation and conflict is not at all in the national interest. If the political parties and institutions are sincere with the country, then everyone has to play a positive role while living within their limits and realizing the responsibility. The recent crisis is not political, economic, security, but unfortunately it is becoming a state crisis, which is a very dangerous situation for the country and the country cannot afford this situation in any way.

GIKI, Chinese varsity sign MoU to develop partnership

F.P. Report

SWABI: Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology and Northwestern Polytechnical University (NPU), a leading Chinese research varsity signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Friday to develop partnership in various mutually agreed fields of science and technology.

The MoU was inked by Prof Dr Fazal Ahmad Khalid, Rector GIKI Institute and Dr Li Ziwei, Vice Dean (Deputy Director) of Office of International Cooperation, NPU. The agreement came into force soon after the signatures and will remain in effect for a period of five years.

The MoU is aimed to set out the general terms of cooperation between the two universities to promote science and technology and to foster collaboration in relevant fields of education, research and technology

on the basis of reciprocity and mutual benefit. With the purpose of capacity building in advanced technology acquisition, both universities have agreed to cooperate through short term training; student cultivation programs, postdoctoral fellowships; establishment of joint research laboratories; joint workshops, symposia and lectures of matter of mutual interest; strengthening institutional collaboration; faculty and students exchange and any other areas of collaboration may be added from time to time with mutual consensus.

Under the working mechanism, they agreed that research institutions affiliated with the two parties are encouraged to formulate and sign cooperative documents on specific cooperative programs while encouraging joint working groups to work out detailed cooperative plans. The MoU says that publications and intellectual property shall

be determined on a case to case basis by the two parties in conformity with their respective policies.

Officials said that in case of dispute or controversy relating to any aspect of the agreement, the two parties would use their best efforts to settle it amicably through negotiation and the MoU shall be governed by and interpreted in accordance with the laws of Pakistan and the laws of People's Republic of China.

Talking on the occasion, Rector GIKI Institute, Prof Khalid said that they are very happy to work on internships, research projects and student exchange programs and said that the MoU provides them a golden opportunity to work together. Vice Dean of the Chinese university, Dr Li Ziwei said that their University is a prominent seat of higher education in the field of aeronautics, astronautics and marine science and technology, material science and engineering.

JI hold protest against Israeli aggression

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Jamaat-e-Islami Lower Dir took out a rally in Timergara and held a protest against the attack of Israel on worshippers in Al-Aqsa Mosque on the call of Amir Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Siraj-ul-Haq, Amir Jamat Islami Dir lower Aizaz ul Mulk Afkari, Provincial administrator Maulana Atta ullah, Information Secretary Shoaib Ahmad and while speaking expressed deep grief and strong condemnation of Israel's attack and torture of innocent wor-

shippers by entering Al-Aqsa Mosque.

He said that fighting Israel and world infidels is possible only through Jihad. He severely criticized the OIC and said that it has failed and the OIC is infamous. The United Nations and the Security Council can be forced to stop it. They said that Israel has killed more than 50,000 Palestinians and more than 700,000 Palestinians have moved from the area and under a conspiracy, Israel has settled here. He said that the blood of innocent Muslims

is being shed all over the world and especially in Palestine, Afghanistan and Kashmir.

The Palestinians are fighting the invading forces of Israel armed with stones and bare hands. He said that Jamaat-e-Islami is with the oppressed Palestinians. He said that Al-Aqsa Mosque and First Qibla are not the problem of Palestinians only, but the problem of all Muslims and the world of Islam. He said that a lobby is forcing Pakistan to recognize Israel, but Pakistan will never recognize Israel.



UN Palestinian refugee chief warns over lack of donors

AMMAN (AP): The UN agency for Palestinian refugees warned that it faced growing challenges in running its operations as donors were set to contribute less money this year. Agency chief Philippe Lazzarini told The Associated Press in an interview that he plans to make a new appeal for donors after the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. He said that if "we are constantly struggling financially, we will become an unreliable partner for the host countries, the communities, for the refugees, but also for our 30,000 staff."

UNRWA was founded in the wake of the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 to serve hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who fled or were forced from their homes. Today, their numbers have grown to some 5.9 million people, most in the Gaza Strip and Israeli-occupied West Bank, as well as neighboring countries in the Middle East.

The agency provides social services, education and jobs to many. Lazzarini said the massive earthquake that devastated the region in early February, as well as an economic meltdown in Lebanon, have added to the plight of many Palestinian refugees. Although its epicenter was in neighboring Turkey, the earthquake caused damage to Palestinian refugee camps in northern Syria in the provinces of Aleppo and Latakia. According to

UNRWA, at least 20 Palestinian refugees were killed in the quake.

"I have to say that the population I met has been deeply, deeply traumatized and terrorized by the earthquake," Lazzarini said about refugee camps in north Syria that he visited in late March during a trip to the war-torn country. Earlier this year, UNRWA launched an appeal for \$1.6 billion, of which about \$850 million is for the core budget of the organization and about \$750 million for an emergency appeal. Lazzarini said that the emergency appeal has recently been complemented by an appeal for \$16 million for the February earthquake that hit Syria and Turkey killing more than 50,000 people including over 6,000 in Syria alone.

Lazzarini said the situation in Lebanon, which is witnessing a historic economic crisis, "is extremely, extremely worrying." Nearly 75% of Lebanon's population now live in poverty as the Lebanese currency has lost more than 95% of its value, affecting living conditions of the country's 6 million people, including 1 million Syrian refugees and tens of thousands of Palestinians.

"What you encounter in the camp is a lot of desperation, a lot of distress," Lazzarini said of Lebanon's 12 camps, adding that most of the youth that he met have only one dream which is to leave Lebanon. Lazzarini said he does not

have statistics on how many Palestinians have left Lebanon since the economic crisis began in late 2019 "but we have seen the tragedies over the last year, which also involve Palestinian refugees"

A crowded boat capsized on Sept. 21 off the coast of Tartus, Syria, just over a day after departing Lebanon. At least 94 people were killed, including Palestinians who were seeking better life in Europe. "Anyone below the age of 30 talks about leaving the country," Lazzarini said. UNRWA aims to achieve youth empowerment and wants to give a sense of future prospects to hundreds of thousand of young Palestinians, many of whom are impacted by unemployment and other economic obstacles, Lazzarini said.

Speaking about the strike by UNRWA employees in the occupied West Bank demanding higher salaries that started on March 4, Lazzarini said the move has impacted the work of the agency, with some 40,000 boys and girls being out of school and also "all our health centers are closed." He said that sanitation workers also are on strike and the trash and garbage is stockpiling in camps. "Lazzarini expressed hopes that the strike will end, saying that going on strike is a legitimate right of the UNRWA staff but that many staff members do not necessarily agree with the strike and are willing to work.

Japan's army says helicopter carrying 10 crashed

TOKYO (AP): A missing Japanese army helicopter carrying 10 crew members is believed to have crashed into the sea off a southern island after objects appearing to be aircraft parts were spotted in the area, an official said. The UH-60JA Black Hawk helicopter disappeared from radar while on a reconnaissance mission north of Miyako island, the head of the Ground Self Defense Force, Yasunori Morishita, said at a news conference.

Debris believed to be aircraft parts was spotted in the area, about 1,800 kilometers (1,120 miles) southwest of Tokyo, he said. The government is aggressively building up its defense capability in southwestern Japan in response to China's increasingly assertive military activity in the region, including Taiwan. Kyodo News said Japanese coast guard ships also found traces of oil that may be related to the missing helicopter, but officials declined to confirm the report. Morishita said the helicopter was stationed at a key regional army base in Kumamoto prefecture on the southern main island of Kyushu, and one of its 10 crew members is the division commander, Yuichi Sakamoto.

Morishita said the helicopter disappeared from radar earlier than previously thought. NHK public television earlier said the helicopter disappeared from radar about an hour after it departed from Miyako island and about half an hour before its scheduled return. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said the Defense Ministry is investigating.

France to put 3 Syrians on trial

PARIS (AP): France has issued arrest warrants for three high-ranking Syrian intelligence officers accused of complicity in crimes against humanity in the deaths of a father and son who disappeared a decade ago, the French anti-terrorism prosecutor's office said. In an acknowledgment that there was little likelihood the Syrian men would be extradited to France, the prosecutor's office said a trial in the case could proceed without them in a Paris criminal court. A trial date has not been set. France's anti-terrorism prosecutors also handle cases involving potential crimes against humanity. The French justice system can take on cases when French nationality is involved. Two non-governmental organizations that filed an October 2016 complaint with a relative identified the victims as Mazzen Dabbagh and his son Patrick, who have both Syrian and French nationality.

The formal accusations came after a years-long investigation into the deaths. The three Syrians were charged with provoking crimes against humanity, giving instructions to commit them and allowing subordinates to commit them through the alleged arrest, torture and killing of the father and son, the French prosecutor's office said in a statement. The intelligence officers also were accused of confiscating the house of the victims and their family for the benefit of Syria and putting Syria's air force intelligence services at the disposal of the people who carried out the killings.

The NGOs identified the Syrian defendants in the case as Ali Mamlouk, head of the Syrian secret services, Jamil Hassen, director of Syrian air force intelligence and Abdel Salam Mahmoud, an investigations official at Damascus' Mezzah military airport, where a detention center is thought to be located. "This is a great victory for my family and for all Syrian victims that after all these years of combat truth surfaces," Obeida Dabbagh, the brother and uncle of the victims, was quoted as saying in a joint statement issued by three NGOs: the International Federation for Human Rights, the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression, and the League of Human Rights. Dabbagh asked for the trial to start quickly.

Pro-democracy protesters rally in Sudan as army deal stalls

KHARTOUM (AP): Hundreds of protesters took to the streets of Sudan's capital, as talks with the country's army rulers to bring in a civilian government hit a roadblock. Security forces met the demonstrations in Khartoum with tear gas and stun grenades, protester Waleed Adam told The Associated Press. No injuries were immediately reported. Protesters have rejected any settlement involving Sudan's military leaders following the 2021 coup.

The demonstrations were led by a pro-democracy network, the Resistance Committees, and set off from southern Khartoum toward its government district. The renewal of street protests comes a day after the scheduled inking of a final settlement between the military and pro-democracy forces was postponed for the second time. No new date for the signing was given. The African country has been in turmoil since a coup led by the country's top general, Abdel Fattah Burhan, overthrew a Western-backed government in 2021 following three decades of Islamist rule. However, under immense international pressure, the military and a number of pro-democracy groups pledged last December to usher back in a transitional civilian government.

According to the Forces for the Declaration of Freedom and Change - the largest civilian signatory to December's pledge - the Sudanese Army and the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Force are at odds over the issue of military reform and the incorporation of the RSF into the armed forces. During a speech marking the anniversary of a 1970 uprising against former President Jaafar Al Nimeiri, Burhan said he was still committed to the deal. "The parties are now working hard to complete the discussion on the remaining topics," he said.



The point of contention between the two forces concerns the "command and control" of the committee tasked with overseeing the reorganization, Yassir Arman, a member of an umbrella group of pro-democracy factions wrote on Twitter. Neither the army nor the RSF responded to The Associated Press' request for comment. Two senior military officials told the AP that both armed factions had agreed to form a six-member joint command to oversee the integration process, but they disagreed over who would have oversight over it. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media. A growing rivalry in recent months between the military and the RSF has fueled tensions. In recent weeks, both forces have amassed troops and weapons in and around Sudan's capital, Khartoum. The army has greatly ramped up its presence in the city center, parking armored vehicles at nearly all junctions leading to the country's presi-

dential palace. Despite the strained relationship, Cameron Hudson, a senior associate with the Center for Strategic and International Studies think-tank and a former US diplomat, believes the military and the RSF still retain the same core interests. "Neither side is particularly interested in giving up power," he said. "Both sides are looking to escape responsibility and accountability." Beyond the generals, other challenges remain. Major political players, including former rebel leaders in the country's south and west, remain opposed to the deal.

The coup has also plunged the nation into an economic crisis as Western governments stalled their financial assistance. A new deal would likely see a new surge of cash flood the country. And protests look likely to continue. "I will only settle down if the military immediately hands over power to a fully civilian-led government," said Adam, the protester.

'Drills push tension to brink of nuclear war'

SEOUL (Reuters): North Korea accused the US and South Korea of escalating tensions to the brink of nuclear war through their joint military drills, vowing to respond with "offensive action", state media KCNA reported. KCNA released a commentary by Choe Ju Hyon, whom it called an international security analyst, criticising the exercises as "a trigger for driving the situation on the Korean peninsula to the point of explosion".

"The reckless military confrontational hysteria of the US and its followers against the DPRK is driving the situation on the Korean peninsula to an irreversible catastrophe ... to the brink of a nuclear war," the article said. It was using the acronym of North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. US and South Korean forces have been conducting a series of annual springtime exercises since March, including air and sea drills involving a US aircraft carrier and B-1B and B-52 bombers, and their first large-scale amphibious landing drills in five years.

The commentary singled out the aircraft carrier's participation as aimed at stoking confrontation, saying Pyongyang will respond to the drills by exercising its war deterrence through

"offensive action". "The drills have turned the Korean peninsula into a huge powder magazine which can be detonated any moment," it added. North Korea has reacted furiously to the exercises, calling them a rehearsal for invasion. It has been ramping up its military activity in recent weeks, unveiling new, smaller nuclear warheads, firing an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of striking anywhere in the US and testing what it called a nuclear-capable underwater attack drone.

South Korea's nuclear envoy held talks with his US and Japanese counterparts and condemned those tests, saying the North will pay the price for its provocations, Seoul's foreign ministry said following their meetings in Seoul. The envoys agreed to step up efforts to stem the North's illegal cyber activities including theft of virtual currencies and hacking, it added. Japan's nuclear envoy also "strongly condemned" North Korea's "unprecedented frequency and manner" of ballistic missile launches as a serious and imminent threat to regional security, Japan's foreign ministry said.

In a separate KCNA dispatch, Han Tae Song, permanent representative at North Korea's diplomatic

mission in Geneva, strongly denounced an annual resolution adopted this week by the UN Human Rights Council on the country's rights situation. Pyongyang has long rejected international criticism of its human rights as a US-led plot to overthrow its regime. Han called the resolution an "intolerable act of political provocation and hostility" and "the most heavily politicised document of fraud".

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol has called for raising awareness over Pyongyang's rights abuses. In its first publicly released report on the situation last week, Seoul's Unification Ministry said North Korea executes its citizens for drugs, sharing South Korean media and religious activities. The ministry which handles inter-Korea affairs criticised North Korea for using South Korean assets at a now-closed joint factory park in the North. North Korean state media photos published showed a South Korean bus, used to transport workers before the North unilaterally shut the park in 2016, running in Pyongyang.

The ministry said it tried to warn against using the factory equipment without approval via a border hotline, but the North refused to take its message.

Doctors reveal Italy's Berlusconi diagnosed with leukaemia

ROME (Agencies): Former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has been suffering from chronic blood cancer for some time and is currently in intensive care for a lung infection, according to his doctors. The 86-year-old, whose media empire has made him a billionaire, was rushed to the intensive care unit of Milan's San Raffaele Hospital, heightening concerns over his increasingly fragile health.

In their first statement on his condition, Drs Alberto Zangrillo and Fabio Ciceri revealed that Berlusconi had been diagnosed in the past with chronic myelomonocytic leukaemia (CML). They did not say when the cancer was first diagnosed, only that it was not acute. "Silvio Berlusconi is currently in intensive care for the treatment of a lung infection," they said, adding that the illness was related to the cancer.

CML affects white blood cells, and in most cases cannot be cured, doctors say. About 70 percent of men will live for at least five years after their diagnosis while younger adults tend to have a better outlook, according to advice provided to patients by Britain's

National Health Service. Three of Berlusconi's five children, daughter Marina and sons Luigi and Pier Silvio, were seen arriving at the hospital. His close friend and business partner Fedele Confalonieri also visited. "We're more optimistic," Confalonieri told reporters. "Today [he looks] much better than yesterday." Berlusconi's Forza Italia party is part of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's right-wing coalition, but the former prime minister does not have a role in her government. "We all want to be optimistic, and we hope that the lion will return soon to take charge of the party," Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Antonio Tajani told RAI state television. "He's our political leader, and of course, he never gives up."

Berlusconi, who made his fortune from commercial television, has suffered repeated bouts of poor health in recent years and came out of the same hospital just last week after several days of unspecified treatment. "I must say that I am very saddened," Tourism Minister Daniela Santanchè told Radio 24. "I feel a kind of melancholy, awe and fear

because he was a man who was great in so many ways." Berlusconi has served as prime minister four times. He stepped down for the last time in 2011, weighed down by sleaze and scandal, including his notorious "bunga bunga" parties, as Italy came close to a Greek-style debt crisis.

But he returned to the Italian Senate after a national election in September. There is no obvious successor as leader of his party. As well as his enduring influence on Italian politics, Berlusconi's Fininvest family holding group retains control of the MediaForEurope broadcast business. His son Pier Silvio Berlusconi is chief executive of the company. Berlusconi built Italy's biggest commercial TV network and gained an international profile as owner of European football giants AC Milan before entering politics in 1994 when the previous political class was brought down by a corruption scandal. His health has deteriorated in recent years. He had heart surgery in 2016, has also had prostate cancer and has been repeatedly admitted to hospital since contracting COVID-19 in 2020.

Vietnam to probe TikTok over 'toxic' content

HANOI (Agencies): Vietnam will probe TikTok for "toxic content" hosted by the hugely popular video-sharing app founded by Chinese entrepreneurs. The communist state has strict curbs on freedom of expression, often cracking down on government critics who find an audience on social media apps.

TikTok has an estimated 50 million users in Vietnam, according to data from research firm DataReporter cited by the government. It removed 1.7 million videos at the Vietnamese government's request in the fourth quarter of last year, as they were deemed to be in violation of government policies, according to company data. The app already faces growing pressure from Western governments over fears that user data could be used or abused by Chinese officials.

It was fined in the United Kingdom this week and banned from official devices in Australia. Head of Vietnam's Radio, TV and Electronic Information Le Quang Tu Do said the information department would organise an "inter-ministerial" inspection of the company in May. "TikTok has no effective control measures over content which violates politics, against party and state, fake news, toxic content," Do told reporters. The lack of control was "facilitating the dissemination of fake news, causing losses in economics and social instability", he said. Moderating content on the popular Chinese-owned application that carries bite-sized videos was "far more difficult" than on other platforms, Do added.

"We will need tougher measures to combat that content, removal only is not enough," Do said, adding that the ministry asked "cross-border platforms to strictly follow Vietnamese laws". TikTok was told by the Authority of Broadcasting and Electronic Information in February that a government delegation would visit its Vietnam offices in the second quarter, it told Channel News Asia. Its Chinese owners, Bytedance, did not immediately return the AFP news agency's request for comment. The UK's data regulator said it had fined TikTok 12.7 million pounds (\$15.9m) for allowing up to 1.4 million children under 13 to use the platform in violation of its own rules. Australia banned the app from government devices following similar moves by France, the Netherlands and the European Commission.

Canada repatriating citizens from camps in Syria

TORONTO (Agencies): The Canadian government has said that it is in the process of repatriating more than a dozen citizens from detention camps in northeast Syria. In a statement, the foreign affairs department said 10 children and four women would be returned to the country, after being held in a Syrian camp for foreigners accused of being affiliated with ISIL (ISIS). "Amidst reports of deteriorating conditions in the camps in northeastern Syria, we have been particularly concerned about the health and wellbeing of Canadian children," Global Affairs Canada said.

"Canada remains steadfast in its commitment in the fight against Daesh [ISIL] and global terrorism while vigorously defending human rights both domestically and abroad." Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has previously faced criticism for moving slowly to repatriate Canadians held in the Syrian camps, known for poor conditions. Canadian media outlet CTV News reported that the 14 citizens had been released from Al-Roj detention camp, flown to Germany on a United

States military plane, and put onto flights bound for Canada.

However, CTV reported that the number was lower than anticipated. In January, the Canadian government agreed to work on securing the release of 19 citizens - six women and 13 children - at the request of their families. It then increased that number to 23, after a federal court ruled that four men must also be returned to Canada. The 14 people repatriated were among those identified in the initial agreement. But more Canadians remain stuck in Syrian camps. CTV reported that a 38-year-old woman from Quebec is still in detention with her six children. She was not part of the January case.

A Canadian immigration lawyer told the news outlet that children in the camps face risks such as malnutrition. According to Human Rights Watch, more than 42,400 foreign adults and children accused of being affiliated with ISIL have been held in camps in Syria since the group was territorially defeated in 2019. The US State Department said it supported and "appreciates" Canada's repatriation of 14 citizens.

In a statement, it said "resolving the humanitarian and security challenges that followed the dismantlement of ISIS's so-called 'caliphate' is a key priority" of the United States and its allies. Repatriation, the State Department added, is the "only durable solution" for people who remain in Syrian detention camps such as Al-Hol and Al-Roj, "most of whom are vulnerable children under the age of 12". Countries around the world have debated how to deal with citizens who joined ISIL but now wish to return to their home countries.

It remains unclear whether any of those being repatriated to Canada could face prosecution for alleged involvement with the group. "Where there is sufficient evidence, law enforcement and public safety agencies will independently take the necessary steps to keep our communities safe," Global Affairs Canada said in statement. "We reiterate that it is a serious criminal offence for anyone to leave Canada to knowingly support a terrorist group and those who engage in these activities will face the full force of Canadian law."

UN court to hear border issue of Guyana-Venezuela

THE HAGUE (AP): The United Nations' highest court ruled that it can hear a case between South American neighbors Guyana and Venezuela about a border dispute that dates back to 1899. The decision to reject Venezuela's challenge to the case's admissibility means it will go ahead at the International Court of Justice, though will likely take years to resolve.

The ruling was a second defeat for Venezuela's attempts to have the case tossed out. It came more than two years after judges rejected a challenge by Caracas to the world court's jurisdiction.

In the admissibility challenge rejected, Venezuela had argued that the court could not hear the case without the involvement of the United Kingdom, which was Guyana's colonial master at the time of the original

border decision. The Guyanese side had argued that Britain ceased to have any involvement in the case once Guyana gained its independence in 1966 and that Venezuela was using its argument as a delay tactic. Guyana President Irfan Ali welcomed ruling and underlined his country's commitment to resolving the dispute peacefully.

"Guyana remains confident that its longstanding international boundary with Venezuela will be confirmed by the court," Ali said in a statement. Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodríguez said in a statement that his government rejects the ruling, and continues insist on a resolution outside of the court. Venezuela maintains the negotiations must involve London because Britain had

allegedly forged fraudulent maps that were used to decide the border in the 1800s, the statement said. The territorial dispute dates back to an arbitration award by an international tribunal in 1899 that drew the border between the two South American nations largely to the favor of Guyana, which was then a British colony. The Tunisia-sized swath of jungle west of the Essequibo river in the dispute is rich in gold, diamonds, timber and other natural resources.

Guyana took the case to the world court in 2018 after years of fruitless mediation failed to resolve the dispute. In its case, Guyana asks the court to rule that the 1899 border decision is valid and binding on both countries. Decisions by the International Court of Justice are final and legally binding.

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US withdrawal from Afghanistan, diplomatic failure, or a military setback?

RECENTLY, the US government released a summary of classified reports on the US troop's withdrawal from Afghanistan. The US officials as well as so-called reports hailed Biden's decision regarding the troops' evacuation because the mission to avenge perpetrators of the 911 attacks was accomplished a long time ago. Meanwhile, the horizon operation of the US military also widely triumphed which successfully haunted the top Al Qaeda leader Al Zawahri in Kabul in recent months.

About 20 months after US chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Biden administration has come up with a summary of classified documents that mostly portrays the politicization of the historic events and blatant coverup of American failure in Afghanistan despite an investment of trillions of dollars, human casualties, and economic losses during the decades-long occupation of Afghanistan. Although, Americans have had a bulk of successes they achieved over the years following the 9/11 attacks but what they gained through withdrawal from Afghanistan is nothing. In fact, all US gains vanished in the air as the last American soldier left Afghan soil, the Taliban took over the country, American allies were on the run, and Afghans witnessed the repeat of the scenes of the Soviet's withdrawal from Afghanistan dating back in the 90s.

Realistically, the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan was highly ill-organized, messy, and an isolated move that did not coincide with the diplomacy of the Biden administration, whereas the US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation (SRAR) Zalmey Khalil Zad, despite his Afghan origin and long diplomatic experience, failed to conceive a consensus between rival Afghan Republicans and Taliban regarding an inclusive political setup in post-US Afghanistan. Thus, a unilateral US withdrawal not only overturned all American successes in Afghanistan but also pushed the Afghan nation into chaos and political instability again. According to a recent report by the US Department of Defense, the US military has left behind worth \$ 7.2 billion of modern weapons and specialized equipment that directly fell into the hands of the ruling Taliban, and other terrorist groups including the Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). While Pakistani-banned outfits are blatantly using those American weapons against Security Forces in Pakistan. Interestingly, Pakistan the long-standing US ally in the war on terrorism was a vocal opponent of US withdrawal from Afghanistan in absence of any political settlement between Afghan warring groups but the Biden administration totally ignored Pakistan's concerns and unilaterally pulled out its troops while plunging the country into a fresh wave of civil insurgency and causing instability in the region and beyond.

Surprisingly, Biden aides are jubilating about US withdrawal from Afghanistan which was not only a stigma for US military top brass that failed to assess the Taliban threat or could not judge the weakness of their Afghan allies. At the same time, it was a severe setback for US diplomacy which could not forge an inclusive setup ahead of US withdrawal and Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. The global community even US intelligentsia categorically criticized the US withdrawal strategy, handling, and appreciation of the situation by the US strategists that clearly contradict the current claims of the Biden administration.

Apparently, the Biden administration could not get anything out of the famous Doha agreement except a safe withdrawal from Afghanistan as the Taliban regime not only diluted the effects of the American legacy including the promotion of human and women rights, freedom of media, and civil liberties while the United States failed to get assurance from the Taliban that the Afghan soil would not harbor transnational terrorist groups and will not pose a threat to the United States any time in future.

Historically, no nation accepts its failures and defeats and jubilates triumph over its successes. Although Americans ruled Afghanistan with dignity, but could not fully grasp their manifesto during their stay in the country. However, the world must appreciate the resilience of the American nation that courageously stood against all odds and never gave in throughout history.

ON Monday a friend breathlessly and sheepishly emailed: "Yes, I admit it: I'm watching the motorcade from La Guardia to Trump Tower. It's like O.J.'s Bronco ride! And I swear, the lead car in the motorcade looks like a white Bronco! Could this be an inside joke by the N.Y.P.D.?"

As delicious - indeed, bewitching - a possibility as this might be, I found myself shrugging. I didn't watch the motorcade, nor could I watch the arraignment, though long have I fantasized about seeing Donald Trump per-walked, mug-shot, finger-printed, shackled, summarily convicted and motorcaded directly from court to the South Street Seaport and put aboard a ship for St. Helena. Why am I not jubilating, wallowing in a deep, warm bubble bath of schaden-

freude? Why, instead of humming "Ding, dong, the witch is dead!" am I pressing buttons on the remote control to see what else is on - some politically themed movie, say, in which the president more or less gracefully accepts proof of his villainy, resigns and helicopters off to exile in, say, California? Those were the days. Instead, what's currently on more resembles "Groundhog Day," a replay of a movie about replay.

Much as I hope to see justice served - if not, at this late point, piping hot - it feels as though we're the ones who are already in jail. Mr. Trump came down that escalator into the lobby in 2015, making this the eighth year of our sentence in Trump Prison. Is there hope of parole? Remains to be seen. Despair is a mortal sin, and yet ... who knows?

Christopher Buckley

We are relentlessly, remorselessly told by some constitutional poo-bah that even if convicted, a person can 1) run for president and 2) be president. Who knew?

Mr. Trump's fame came largely from a reality TV show, every episode of which concluded with his snarling at people and telling them they were fired. His genius was to make us participants in this garish melodrama. Though many of us - but, alas, apparently not enough of us - yearn fervently to fire him, he has proved unfireable. Teflon, Kevlar, whatever your metaphor for "unassailable" - he endures. The show is renewed for another season. The concept of becoming ridiculous and tiresome by jumping the shark does not apply. The bigger the

shark, the higher the jump. On to the Capitol! Hang Mike Pence! (Who was last heard bemoaning the "weaponization" of justice.) Oh, the humanity! I didn't tune in live, but I did see a photo of Mr. Trump on Monday, entering the lobby of his namesake tower, where eight years ago he sentenced us to imprisonment. He didn't look happy. Who would? Yet one wondered if, deep down inside, he was. Despite the circumstances - WITCH HUNT! - he was exactly where he craves to be: the orange omphalos of our world.

Years ago, a now disgraced network television C.E.O. observed without shame that Donald Trump's first run for office might not be good for the country but he was sure good for his network. These ratings are through

the roof! Whom the gods would destroy, first they bestow upon them monster ratings. When Tucker Carlson lays his head upon his pillow after another day of bread and circuses, does he reconcile defending a man about whom he confided to colleagues, "I hate him passionately," with suggesting to viewers that now might not be a good time to hand in their AR-15s? If he succeeds at this contradictory jujitsu, he deserves a black belt in cognitive dissonance.

Democrats, it's said, never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. It may be time to revise this hoary axiom, for it's the Republicans who've blown one opportunity after another. Not just two impeachments. As the historian Jon Meacham points out in The New Yorker, Republicans in Congress could have invoked the clause in the

14th Amendment that bars from public office anyone who attempts to overthrow the government. This was the lowest hanging fruit of all, but the party of Lincoln and Reagan didn't raise a hand. In the same interview Mr. Meacham, the author of an admiring biography of George H.W. Bush, also expressed utter bafflement that Mr. Bush's lifelong close friend and consigliere James Baker admitted to voting for Mr. Trump - whom Mr. Baker despises almost as much as Mr. Carlson does - not once but twice. Much as I miss Mr. Bush, I'm grateful he's not around to hear this. The show will go on, endlessly renewed for another season. There will be more indications - sorry, indictments. The dogs will bark, but at least the old proverb, the caravan will not move on. *The New York Times*

The British monarchy's ties to slavery are writ large in the historical archives

Brooke Newman

slave had felt and suffered".

It's rare for Britons, both then and now, to hear the voices of enslaved people. The transatlantic slave system that commodified its captives, transforming Africans and their descendants into human chattel, was not designed to preserve their experiences or perspectives. Its sole purpose was to generate profit for its operators. As the Kittitian-British novelist Caryl Phillips put it in The Atlantic Sound: "You were transported in a wooden vessel across a broad expanse of water to a place which rendered your tongue silent." That compulsory silence extends to the archive of slavery. Although archives are full of stories, the voices they preserve are limited, fragmentary and far from neutral. They are, in most cases, the voices of enslavers, who continue to impart their outlook and version of events to future readers. "In history," the Haitian scholar Michel-Rolph Trouillot observed, "power begins at the source."

It begins in the surviving ledgers, ship manifests and stock books of slave-trading companies, in plantation account books cataloging births and deaths, and in the bound volumes of state correspondence between British officials and colonial administrators that line the shelves of archives. Through these

manuscript materials, historians are granted access to the institutional records of the Atlantic slave system. But rarely to the enslaved themselves. The dehumanising horrors of slavery are replicated in the archive. "The objectification of the enslaved allowed authorities to reduce them to valued objects to be bought and sold, used to produce profit and to retain and bequeath wealth," the historian Marisa Fuentes has argued. "This same objectification led to the violence in and of the archive." The reduction of African people to commodities can be seen in the archival document I shared with the Guardian showing the 1689 transfer of £1,000 of shares in the slave-trading Royal African Company to King William III from Edward Colston, the company's deputy governor.

To do justice to their subjects, historians of slavery must grapple with the problematic nature of the archive. However, the limitations of the archive do not explain why, as the coronation of Charles III nears, the British monarchy has not apologised for its historic links to slavery. The paper trail of crown involvement in slavery, though incomplete, is nonetheless extensive. As Saidiya Hartman noted in Lose Your Mother: "Money multiplied if fed human blood." That British monarchs and members of the royal family invested in

and profited from the slave trade and Atlantic slavery is indisputable. Still, if we hear anything about Britain's or the British crown's role in the enslavement and death of millions of Africans, the focus is almost always on abolition, not slavery. This deliberate rewriting of history, this purposeful forgetting, echoes a triumphalist narrative of national progress initiated more than 200 years ago by the famed abolitionist Thomas Clarkson. Popular support for abolition, he reflected in 1808, "overpowered me with joy. I rejoiced in it because it was a proof of the general good disposition of my countrymen."

Passing legislation to abolish the slave trade in 1807 and then slavery itself in 1833 (after a period of forced "apprenticeship", decades before the hard-fought victory of emancipation in the US, reshaped Britain's collective memory. Its central role, and that of the monarchy's, in the expansion of the transatlantic slave trade and horrors of Atlantic slavery was overwritten, replaced by a celebratory national history focused on the Christian conviction of Britain's white abolitionist campaigners. Since 1807, Britain has told itself and the world that it is an abolitionist nation. An abolitionist nation that rejected human bondage, championing the rights of formerly enslaved people and their descendants as equal sub-

jects of the crown. According to this national narrative, though slavery, in the words of Prince Albert in 1840, represented "the blackest stain on civilised Europe", it was Britain that led the way toward its eradication.

But this version of British history is nothing but a muddled, self-congratulatory national myth, one no less misleading and historically dubious than the myth of American exceptionalism. The history of Atlantic slavery is equally a British story and an American story. They are separate yet interdependent strands of the same sordid tale; we cannot fully understand one without the other. "Those of us living in the rich societies of the west have all, albeit profoundly unequally, enjoyed the fruits of racial capitalism," stressed historian Catherine Hall, head of UCL's Legacies of British Slavery project; "we are all survivors of slavery, not just those who can directly trace their lineages."

Evidence of royal involvement in what the UN has labelled "the greatest crime against humanity" committed in the modern era saturates the archive of slavery. King Charles has for the first time signalled his support for research into the monarchy's historical links with transatlantic slavery. But more should be done to listen and respond to the descendants of the enslaved.

The Guardian

Defying China, US House leader and Taiwan president present a united front

Eric Cheung & Nectar Gan

DEFYING Beijing's repeated threats, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen and US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy presented a carefully choreographed united front in California on Wednesday against an increasingly powerful and aggressive China. For Taiwan, the rare high-level, bipartisan meeting is a timely show of US support, as China ramps up diplomatic and military pressure on the self-ruling island it claims as part of its territory.

But the encounter also carries great risks: the last time Tsai met with a US House Speaker - during Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taipei last August, Beijing retaliated by holding days of large-scale military drills and firing missiles over the island, pushing tensions to their highest in decades. This time around, Beijing's initial reaction appears more restrained. Its Foreign Ministry has condemned the meeting and pledged to take "strong and resolute measures," though so far that has not translated into any specific military response.

To avoid provoking Beijing and triggering another military crisis, American and Taiwan officials have portrayed Tsai's visit as nothing out of the ordinary, citing an abundance of precedents for a Taiwan leader to transit through the US. But the political significance of Tsai's meeting with McCarthy is unavoidable.

It is the highest-level audience a sitting Taiwan president has received on American soil, with an official second in line to the presidency after the vice president.

Their meeting at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library highlighted the strengthening ties between Taipei and Washington, even though they remain unofficial in nature. "I believe our bond is stronger now than at any time or point in my lifetime," McCarthy said at a press conference after the meeting. "America's support for the people of Taiwan will remain resolute, unwavering and bipartisan."

Tsai reciprocated his pledge of solidarity, noting "we're stronger when we are together." "In our efforts to protect our way of life, Taiwan is grateful to have the United States by our side," she said, standing alongside McCarthy with Reagan's Air Force One as a backdrop. "The constant and unwavering support reassured the people of Taiwan that we are not isolated and we are not alone."

Under Washington's longstanding "One China" policy, the US acknowledges China's position that Taiwan is part of China, but has never officially recognized Beijing's claim to the island of 23 million. Under the Taiwan Relations Act, it is also bound by law to provide the democratic island with the means to defend itself. Austin Wang, an assistant

professor in political science at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, said the meeting illustrated the importance of the Taiwan issue in US politics.

"Whether it's worth the risk depends on what will happen next," he said. "If the meeting is a cornerstone to speed up further economic and military cooperation...(then it) is worth the risk." Following the meeting Wednesday, McCarthy tweeted the United States should continue to boost its support for Taiwan. "We must continue arms sales to Taiwan and make sure such sales reach Taiwan on time. We must also strengthen our economic cooperation, particularly with trade and technology," he tweeted. Beijing's ruling Communist Party sees Taiwan as an inseparable part of its territory, despite having never controlled it - and has vowed to "reunite" the island with mainland China, by force if necessary.

To undermine its legitimacy, Beijing has spent decades chipping away at Taipei's dwindling diplomatic allies and blocking its participation in international organizations - including the World Health Organization. The US maintains an unofficial relationship with Taiwan after switching its diplomatic relations to Beijing decades ago. Last month, Honduras also switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing,

leaving the island democracy with only 13 remaining allies.

But instead of becoming increasingly isolated from the global community, Taiwan has steadily built its international influence by expanding unofficial relationships with friendly Western nations - while also emphasizing shared values in maintaining its ties with official allies. Tsai's high-profile meeting in California followed a trip to Central America, where she met with allies in Guatemala and Belize to promote "democracy and prosperity." Tsai addressed parliaments in both countries and signed agreements to deepen their partnerships. While transiting in New York earlier in the trip, she also received a global leadership award from the Hudson Institute, a US think tank based in Washington DC.

Analysts say since Tsai became president in 2016, her government has increasingly shifted the focus of Taiwanese diplomacy on developing unofficial ties with Western democracies to compensate for the loss of official recognition. Last month, Taiwan welcomed a 150-person Czech delegation, led by the speaker of the lower chamber of the Czech parliament, as a growing number of European countries raised concerns over the future of Taiwan following

Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While President Tsai makes a high-profile trip to the Americas, her predecessor Ma Ying-jeou is also making a historic visit to mainland China - the first such trip by a current or former Taiwanese president since the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949. At a time of mounting pressure from Beijing, their parallel visits have come to present different visions for the future of the self-governing democracy. Taiwan is set to elect a new president next year, when questions about the island's political future are bound to arise. Having served two terms, Tsai is not eligible for re-election, but her vice president William Lai is expected to run. Having lost to Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party in two presidential elections, the Kuomintang, or KMT, is doing all it can to avoid another defeat.

"We know that in Taiwan, that at every presidential election, China is the fundamental issue that matters most," said Lev Nachman, an assistant professor in politics at National Chengchi University in Taipei. The 2024 elections will be no different, and it's just a matter of how the China issue is framed, he said. "We already see, for example, the KMT trying to frame this as a case between war and peace, in which the KMT brings peace and the DPP brings war."

The KMT is widely

seen as more Beijing-friendly than the DPP. When he was president between 2008 and 2016, Ma focused on establishing greater economic cooperation between Beijing and Taipei. The proposal sparked large-scale protests that saw demonstrators occupying Taiwan's legislature for weeks. In 2015, Ma held an historic meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Singapore - the first such meeting between political leaders of both sides of the Taiwan Strait in decades.

During his trip to China, Ma met with the director of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, noting the importance of maintaining exchanges across the Taiwan Strait and "doing everything possible" to avoid conflict. "People on both sides of the strait belong to the same Chinese nation and are descendants of the Chinese people," he said last week. In contrast to Ma, Tsai does not acknowledge that Taiwan and China belong to the same nation. Instead, she has repeatedly emphasized that the island's future can only be decided by its own people. "We will continue to bolster our national defense and demonstrate our determination to defend ourselves in order to ensure that nobody can force Taiwan to take the path China has laid out for us," she said at national day celebrations in 2021.

CNN

Labour should hang their heads in shame over the grooming scandals

Allison Pearson

HOW does Yvette Cooper sleep at night? Reacting to the Government's new crackdown on abominable grooming gangs, the shadow home secretary said, as if butter wouldn't melt, "You can never allow any kind of sensitivities around race and ethnicity to prevent action on child sexual exploitation and abuse." The Government, she huffed, should have done something eight years ago.

Well, I think Yvette and I can agree that you certainly shouldn't allow ethnic sensitivities to get in the way, because the priority must always be protecting vulnerable youngsters, obviously. Where we disagree is in that it seems to have slipped Yvette's mind that thousands of attempts by victims, social workers and other concerned adults to report predatory behaviour by British Pakistani grooming gangs have repeatedly been stymied by - oh, look! - Labour politicians, Labour councillors and police forces in Labour-controlled towns. Nazir Afzal, when he was chief crown prosecutor for North West England, told the BBC that, in 2008, the Home Office under Gordon Brown's administration sent a circular email to all police forces calling on them not to investigate the sexual exploitation of young girls. In 2011, the then home secretary Jack Straw let the cat out of the bag when he said that white girls were "seen as easy meat" by Pakistani rapists. Straw was swiftly shut down.

And look what happened to Sarah Champion, Labour MP for Rotherham. In 2017, Champion was forced to resign from her position as shadow women and equalities minister over what she called her "extremely poor choice of words" in an article she wrote for The Sun. The piece came after 17 men and one woman were found guilty of committing nearly 100 offences, including rape, against vulnerable women and girls in Newcastle. Champion's arti-

cle began: "Britain has a problem with British Pakistani men raping and exploiting white girls. There. I said it. Does that make me a racist? Or am I just prepared to call out this horrifying problem for what it is?" Dear, oh, dear, can't have her going around spreading truths, can we?

The Labour Party is mired in shame over "cultural sensitivity", which always means sensitivity to one culture and one culture alone, and it sure as hell isn't the culture of white working-class girls. One thing we can say with total confidence is that there has never been a white girl so distraught, so despicably abused, so trafficked or so tortured that Labour has not been prepared to sacrifice her on the altar of preserving their Muslim block vote. That is the depth of collusion and depravity we are talking about here. It is a monstrous stain on our nation. No wonder Suella Braverman came under attack from the Left this week. Promoting the Tories' new policy of mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse (a sensible idea), the Home Secretary was brutally honest about the cancer of grooming gangs and their composition. "There is a predominance of certain ethnic groups - and I say British Pakistani males - who hold cultural values totally at odds with British values," she said, "Some of these councillors in Labour-run areas over a period of years have absolutely failed to take action because of cultural sensitivities."

Normally, such heresy would provoke shrieks of, "Racist!" Slightly tricky to do that with a home secretary who has Indian-African heritage. The next best term for shutting down debate is "dog-whistle". Former Labour MP and Mayor of West Yorkshire Tracy Brabin did the honours. Speaking on the Laura Kuenssberg show, Mayor Brabin said, "It does feel like it's very headline, it's very dog whistle - if I may

say - and it doesn't actually deal with what's on the ground." Sorry, that's exactly what it does. Tracy, love, why don't you pop down to your nearest kebab shop or minicab office and ask the girls hanging around there if they're having consensual sex or if they're in fear of their lives?

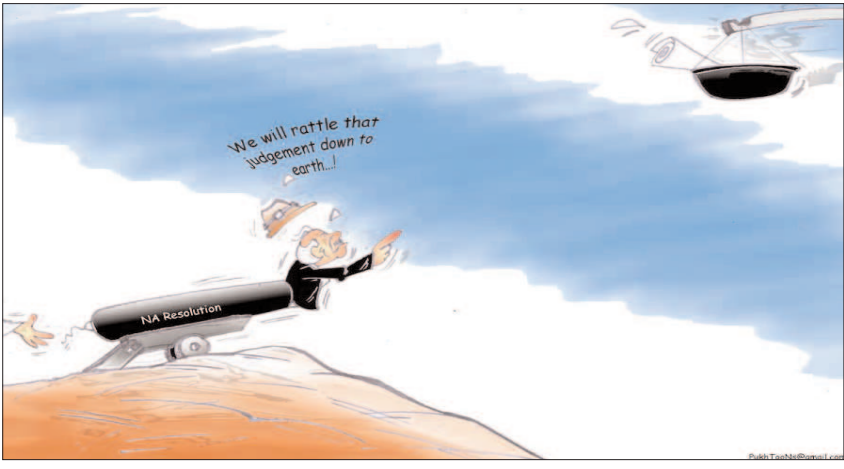
Denis MacShane, MP for Rotherham from 1994 to 2012, gave the game away when he admitted to the BBC's World At One that "there was a culture of not wanting to rock the multicultural community boat, if I may put it like that. Perhaps, yes, as a true Guardian reader and liberal Leftie, I suppose I didn't want to raise that too hard." Much better to hang on to your impeccable liberal credentials than save a few girls from being raped or having petrol poured over them, eh? In an effort to hide their true agenda, Labour always claims research proves the majority of child abusers are white. Our favourite mathematician, Diane Abbott, tweeted this week: "Disgraceful Tories are going on about 'Pakistani grooming gangs'. Home Office research shows majority of child abusers are white. Nothing else to say, Tories are playing the race card."

Keir Starmer echoed the same disingenuous sentiment, telling LBC that the "vast majority of sexual abuse cases do not involve those of ethnic minorities". Well, it very much depends on the type of "child abuse". In 2013, Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command published a study looking at "contact sexual offending against children by non-related adults". They found that there are two types of group-based abuse. Type 1 is group abuse which involves targeting a teenage victim, or victims, based on their vulnerability, rather than as a result of a specific preferential sexual interest in children. Type 1 offenders are unlikely to be paedophiles. They molest young girls because they are easy prey.

Type 2 group abusers are defined as having "a longstanding sexual interest in children". They operate in a way that's often characterised as a paedophile "ring". In other words, these offenders are not simply targeting children because they are vulnerable, but because they are children. The CEOP study reported 57 cases of Type 1 group abuse in 2012, and police provided ethnicity data on 52 of those. Half of those Type 1 cases involved all-Asian groups. 21 per cent were all-white groups, and 17 per cent were groups containing multiple ethnicities. Some 75 per cent of recorded Type 1 group abusers, who target victims based on their vulnerability, were Asian. You can set that against figures from the Office for National Statistics which estimates that 7.5 per cent of the UK's population are Asian. Just 17 per cent of Type 1 offenders were white, compared with 86 per cent of the UK population.

Apologies for citing a rather dry study, but I think it makes the point rather well. Labour continues to claim that the "vast majority of sexual abuse cases do not involve ethnic minorities". That is true of paedophilia. It's certainly not true of grooming gangs. It seems brutally clear, to anyone who has eyes to see, that certain men from a sexually repressed "honour" culture are happy to slake their lust on young white girls whom they regard as sub-human. When their community fails to integrate, or to at least expose its boys to values that are acceptable in an equal, 21st-century society, then you have a recipe for disaster. Congratulations to Suella Braverman for having the courage to point this out, and say we will no longer tolerate it. No one has a right to shut down this debate. No one. "You can never allow any kind of sensitivities around race and ethnicity to prevent action on child sexual exploitation and abuse," says Yvette Cooper. But that's exactly what her party has done for years, and, shamefully, it's what Labour continues to do.

The Telegraph



Europe engages China in a diplomatic dance

Andrew Hammond

THREE senior European leaders have traveled thousands of miles to Beijing in recent days to see Chinese President Xi Jinping, yet the center of their discussions lie much closer to home in Ukraine. The backdrop to Xi's meetings with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and French President Emmanuel Macron is the continuing conflict. Russia's invasion has left Europe, and the wider West, including the US and Canada, more united than in years.

So, as China's relations with the US remain at rock bottom, Beijing is keen to avoid a long-lasting public spat with the EU 27, too, which are collectively one of the country's biggest trading partners. Indeed, one driver of Xi's 12-point "peace plan" released last month is softening European and broader international opinion about China's stance on the conflict, rather than being a realistic blueprint for quickly resolving the situation. China's deteriorating relationship with the US has given Europe more leverage. Xi particularly wants to revive discussions over the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, an accord inked in 2021, but which has yet to be ratified by the European Parliament.

This potential "window of opportunity" will be seized on by Macron, in particular, given his desire for Europe to bolster what he calls its "strategic autonomy" with regards to other global powers. And it is no coincidence that Macron will be accompanied on his trip by Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire and

Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna, plus business leaders from about 50 firms, including Veolia, EDF and Airbus. What Macron and von der Leyen stressed to Xi is that Europe wants to maintain engagement with China, but that this will be much harder if he continues to support Russia in Ukraine, and potentially intensifies this later. That is why von der Leyen previously said the bloc is looking to "de-risk" diplomatically and economically, without "decoupling" completely from Beijing.

So, just as Xi engages in a charm offensive with Europe, Sanchez, von der Leyen and Macron have had their own agenda with China, including on Ukraine - that is, seeking to chip away at Beijing's support for Moscow. Macron has already privately flagged to Xi, who was hosted at the Kremlin last month, that Europe regards it as unacceptable for China to provide any arms to Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent announcement that he will locate nuclear weapons in Belarus could provide an opportunity for the French president to push China to distance itself from Russia on this point, Beijing having previously criticized nuclear proliferation.

However, it is unlikely Europe will succeed in significantly disrupting the Russia-China relationship in the near term. That is unless Putin oversteps the mark, such as the use of nuclear weapons. Xi is unlikely to break decisively with Putin, assuming the latter remains in office and avoids badly miscalculating further, not only because of their political warmth now over several years, but also their growing

bilateral economic ties. The latter is the key driver behind the Chinese leader's plans to "continue prioritising its strategic partnership" with Moscow, especially given the current frayed ties with the US.

In 2021, Xi asserted that bilateral relations are at "the highest level, most profound and strategically most significant relationship between major countries in the world." However, outside of the political and security domain, China and Russia also enjoy an extensive economic dialogue. This has deepened, significantly, since Moscow's annexation of Crimea almost a decade ago.

For instance, there are bilateral plans for numerous cooperation projects with China, including a new method of interbank transfers, and a joint credit agency that seeks to create a shared financial and economic infrastructure that will allow them to function independently of Western-dominated financial institutions. The boost to the bilateral economic cooperation agenda has helped enable work toward stronger, common positions on key regional and global issues, too. Outside of Ukraine, this includes North Korea, with which both Russia and China have land borders and have been long-standing allies.

Taken together, with China and Russia's relations with the US looking increasingly unpredictable, Putin and Xi may place greater emphasis on their partnership, despite any disagreements over Ukraine. While this is underpinned by a growing economic and political dialogue, their personal closeness also appears to be a factor, one that may strengthen further if both remain in office.

Finally, there's something to unite Britain - disgust at what is happening to our waterways and seas

Gaby Hinsliff

AFTER the third lockdown ended, in that summer when everyone felt faintly broken, we ran away to the sea. At first it rained torrentially. But then the sun began tentatively to come out, and my son went snorkelling in a hidden rocky cove near the Cornish cottage we had rented. When the next day he started being violently sick, my first thought was food poisoning. But the whole family had eaten the same food, and the only one to fall ill was the lone swimmer.

And that's how I learned, after all these years of happily swimming in British rivers and seas, just how filthy they have become. That's why, as a family, we no longer go near the water after heavy rain (the most likely time for sewers to be overwhelmed, and for emergency storm overflows to respond by dumping sewage into waterways). It's why we have a faintly depressing new holiday routine of waking up and checking the Surfers Against Sewage app - which logs all the latest discharges around the coast - before heading to the beach, and why for paddleboarding at home I follow a Twitter account that sends alerts whenever Thames Water dumps something unmentionable in Oxfordshire's rivers. Swimming in the cool green under the willows on a hot summer's day, overlooked by nothing but passing swans, is one of those small free joys that everyone should try once in life. But nothing ruins the romance of the water's edge like the feeling you may be playing bacterial Russian roulette, which helps explain why of all the issues at play in the current local election campaign, sewage seems rather unexpectedly to be bubbling to the top.

Tory MPs are still getting angry letters, and in some cases vitriolic

abuse on social media, a year and a half after being whipped to vote against an opposition amendment that would have imposed a legal duty on water companies to stop sewage entering rivers. (In vain have they insisted that they aren't against cleaner water in principle, and that the amendment was simply badly drafted.) But what's unusual is that the outrage cuts across traditional political divides, uniting everyone from laidback surfers to retired pillars of the community living in seaside towns who worry that the beaches aren't safe for their visiting grandchildren.

Born-again wild swimmers, evangelical about the mental health benefits of cold water, are naturally up in arms. But so are lifelong environmentalists, anglers, owners of tourist businesses dependent on the sea, and people who are none of those things but see in these murky waters another sign of national decline. Like waiting a week and a half for a GP appointment or getting stuck in a tailback at Dover, worrying about your children swimming in effluent this summer engenders a very strong sense of a country sliding backwards, unable to manage even the basic functions we once took for granted. Why does everything about Britain suddenly feel so threadbare, so shoddy, so crumbling at the edges?

Ministers are clearly well aware of the deeper emotions water pollution stirs up, with polling suggesting that 68% of voters think the government is handling it badly and the Liberal Democrats staging an indignant series of local election photo opportunities on chilly beaches. The environment secretary, Thérèse Coffey, this week launched the sec-

ond government initiative in a year to tackle water pollution. In fairness to her, this problem didn't begin on her watch. But it evidently isn't going to end there, either, judging by the contents of the package: regulators will have new powers to impose unlimited fines on water companies for polluting waterways, but there's scepticism about whether they will be used. And while threatening higher fines implies it's something the water companies could stop tomorrow if they really wanted to, the truth is more complicated. Galling as it is to watch highly paid water company executives rewarding themselves for failure, this mess is the collective responsibility of industry, regulators and governments over decades - and won't be solved by one of them alone. Floating filth may be the symptom, but the root cause of polluted waterways is underinvestment in Britain's elderly sewerage system, built for Victorian times and increasingly unable to cope with the demands of a vastly bigger population. (Although the number of recorded sewage spills fell last year, according to the Environment Agency that's largely due to the hot dry weather meaning fewer storms, rather than some kind of concerted action.) A defensive Coffey argued that the problem couldn't be solved overnight because upgrading sewers would add hundreds of pounds to customers' bills in the middle of a painful cost of living crisis. But why does the government seemingly think the only answer to a failure of vital national infrastructure is to load the cost on to people who are already struggling? Whatever happened to funding public goods from a mixture of progressive taxation

and private sector investment, as ministers seemingly have no hesitation in doing with projects such as high-speed rail or superfast broadband?

Water hasn't really been a political issue in my lifetime, but that's changing. Rising global temperatures spell an increasingly water-stressed future, in which Britain will need - as Coffey rightly suggested - to build more reservoirs, fix more leaks, use less water and generally stop thinking of ourselves as a soggy island where, if anything, it rains too much. But we'll also need to take more care of our precious waterways, and recognise that critical infrastructure consists not just of the shiny toys beloved of legacy-seeking prime ministers, but also the unglamorous stuff hidden beneath our feet. The Victorian brick-lined tunnels through which much of London's sewage still runs were originally built in response to what became known as the Great Stink. In the hot summer of 1858, the stench of rotting human effluent in the Thames grew so bad that curtains in the Houses of Parliament were soaked in chloride of lime in an effort to block the smell - believed at the time to cause disease. The Times recorded that MPs had been "forced by sheer stench" to tackle a problem they'd avoided until it washed up on their very doorstep. Thankfully, we no longer live in an era of open sewers running down East End streets, and the Thames is not yet reduced to what the then Conservative chancellor Benjamin Disraeli called a "Stygian pool reeking with ineffable and intolerable horrors". One thing, however, does hold true down the centuries: clean water is a basic human right. But as with all rights, sometimes it can only be secured by kicking up a great big stink.

Three possible outcomes of Saudi-Iran deal

Faisal J. Abbas

THURSDAY'S meeting in Beijing between the Saudi and Iranian foreign ministers was a significant step on an unexpected path that may potentially lead to a level of regional stability not seen in over 40 years. That it took place less than a month after the Beijing accord on March 10 is further testimony to Chinese efficiency, and to both parties' determination to take matters forward.

The two countries were represented on Thursday by their foreign ministers, which suggests that both leaderships are confident about the deal and have now delegated the particulars to the relevant government bodies. This is why it was important that the signing of the initial agreement was attended by Ali Shamkhani, a two-star general and secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, and Mosaed Al-Aiban, an extremely high-ranking Saudi royal court adviser and one of the crown prince's most trusted right-hand men. As I understand it this was at the Kingdom's insistence, and disarmed cynics who said the deal might have been agreed by the Iranian Foreign Ministry but not by Iran's deep state or its security apparatus; it leaves Tehran no way out by claiming that the deal was not endorsed by everyone in the regime (not that anyone believes there is a genuine separation of powers, but it is an argument that has been used before). I have been

asked many times over the past month how likely it is that the Tehran regime will stick to the deal. Only senior officials in Tehran can answer that. What I do know, as any negotiator will tell you, is that it is true that it doesn't take much for such a deal to collapse.

Iran's negotiators are often described as having the patience of Persian carpet weavers. Whether talking with Saudi Arabia or with Western countries, they have always played for time. In the Saudi case, they exploited the fact that all our kings have been of advanced age upon acceding to the throne, so the Iranians knew it was only a matter of time before they had to deal with a new leadership for whom they would not be a priority until they got their house in order. When dealing with Western democracies, Iran understood that elected leaders changed every few years. Even as recently as the Trump-Biden transition in the White House, all Tehran had to do was survive the former's maximum pressure campaign until the latter arrived determined to revive the Iran nuclear deal, which meant they could demand concessions. The good news is that none of this is relevant to the Beijing-sponsored deal that was signed on March 10. What makes that agreement different is that it benefits from the presence of "two-factor

authentication" - Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on the one hand, and China on the other.

The crown prince - young, dynamic and empowered - brings internal stability and foreign policy continuity for decades to come, enabling the relevant officials to focus on every detail of the deal until they see it through. On the other hand, that the agreement was brokered by China and not the US means Tehran cannot wriggle out of it thanks to a Washington administration that may not have bipartisan support in Congress, and in any case will leave after serving its term. This is also China's inaugural appearance on the world stage as a peacemaker, and a test of the respect it commands as a global superpower. China has pledged \$300 billion of investment in Iran over 25 years and is its biggest trade partner, so there is no doubt that the Chinese dragon will be breathing down Tehran's neck to ensure that the deal is adhered to - in my view, the only way.

So does this mean that success is guaranteed? Well, in politics it never is. However, there are three possible scenarios. The most pessimistic is that Iran doesn't stick to the deal. That would be a huge lost opportunity for regional peace, but it also means Tehran would have upset a country with the size and weight of China, one of only two friends that Iran has on the global

stage (the other, Russia, has its hands full at the moment). For Saudi Arabia it would simply mean a return to the status quo, and we have had over 40 years' experience in countering Iran's destabilizing activities and standing up to its militias.

The most likely and realistic scenario is that the deal progresses slowly but surely. It already includes a mutual commitment to non-aggression or supporting aggression against each other, and as recently as Thursday the Iran-backed Houthi militia in Yemen offered to extend the truce there for six months, which is a positive sign. With diplomatic missions reinstated, the two regional powers can talk directly and use diplomatic means to help relevant governments achieve stability and the best possible outcomes in flash-points such as Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria. The most optimistic scenario is that we all wake up one day and find that every regional conflict that has Iran's fingerprints on it has been resolved, including Tehran's withdrawal from Iraq, Lebanon and Syria - but that is unlikely given the sheer amount of entrenched Iranian investment and interests in these countries. But in all cases, at least from a Saudi perspective, this seems like a clear win so far - not only for the Kingdom, but for the region, global markets, and energy security too.

Arab News

ARE old recipes the only way forward for Lebanon? This is what French President Emmanuel Macron and his Middle East team at the Palais de l'Elysee believe. It is mainly why they chose to endorse and support Sleiman Frangieh as the next president of Lebanon. Frangieh is also the candidate chosen by Hezbollah. The presidency vacancy is now entering its sixth month. And so has the paralysis of the country's institutional processes, whatever that really means in Lebanon.

The objective for Macron is to be able to bring about a solution that would also be interpreted as a diplomatic win for French foreign policy. Indeed, Paris has put its promise and weight behind finding a solution to Lebanon's problems and to supporting its people. Unfortunately, Lebanese or Levant politics have a habit of humbling global leaders. When foreigners ask me about the involvement of foreigners in local Lebanese politics, I answer that he or she can come in as a global leader but become straight away a simple mukhtar getting lost in meaningless, often artificial details.

The fact is that the current solution, even if Frangieh is voted in by the parliament, will only be a band-aid. There is nothing that will change in the country's affairs; only more debt and digging the hole deeper. They usually say that if you are digging a hole the first thing is to stop digging, and if your enemy is digging a hole do not stop him. The Frangieh presidency is, in the long-term, Lebanon continuing to dig its own hole. France is pushing for this solution as it is the only possible fix and to give back representation to the presidency. From the French point of view, this vacancy is also creating a worry within the Lebanese Christian community of los-

Khaled Abou Zahr

ing its political voice. And so, by allowing this election, these worries are being addressed. The choice of Frangieh is also about his friendship with the Syrian President Bashar Assad, as a way of rebalancing the political order. And so, it is to move from Aoun, who was fully under the control of Hezbollah, to Frangieh, who is a balance between Syria and Iran. Talk about a political win for Christians and the Lebanese people.

Hezbollah is also keen to see this rebalancing act, as despite its military control of the country it still needs a certain level of order, and it is no longer capable of achieving this. It is a new fuse to support its continued objectives. Yet is there an alternative who could be voted for? France knows that Hezbollah is the ultimate decision maker and would never accept a candidate it cannot control from any political block. And Gebran Basil until recently was a no-go for all. Some now mention the army chief, a reminiscence of the Syrian occupation days with the same background as Emile Lahoud and Michel Suleiman. This rhymes with the return of Assad on the regional scene. And so perhaps the best palliative solution is Frangieh. Yet, one thing that should be known and understood is that all the promises made by Hezbollah and its allies for this to happen are completely worthless. And they will reverse everything if they feel the need or it serves their interest. Therefore, shouldn't we discuss a new political system instead of making old recipes?

Indeed, the current system is broken. Why continue? Why not build something new now? Why not create a new Lebanon? There is no doubt that the discussion on federalism brings shivers to many but what is the protection they

are getting today? With all due respect, do Christians feel safe? Do Sunnis? Or even Shiites under the oppression of Hezbollah? The answer is no and no again. This is why France should not focus on finding an easy fix for the Lebanese presidency. Instead, it should support the birth of a new Lebanon. Even if Macron fails in such a mission, he will at least bring forward new hope. Unfortunately, a Frangieh presidency will not. Lebanon does not need to fill a position; it needs to be reinvented through federalism.

If the critics fear secession, then work to make federalism work. I look at it simply; today the political system is built on the fear of the other and this allows for militias to trade with a protection currency. It is nothing short of an institutionalized racketeering political system. Also, it allows them to trade between each other for gains. It is dirty transactional politics. The only way to change this is to make all the communities feel safe and shift toward local representation and decision-making.

Then, trades between militias disappear. And this is what federalism delivers. Even Hezbollah will find it suitable. Others will argue that the consequence of this transformation would be a new civil war. They preach the "better the devil you know" mentality. My conviction is that in fact the palliative solution is the path to civil war. A profound change is the only way to avoid it. It is highly likely Lebanon will apply an old palliative recipe - one that just treats symptoms but not the true disease. Whether or not Frangieh makes it to the Baabda Palace, it will make no difference. Lebanon will continue to die slowly and we will soon have to worry not just about a presidential vacancy but about much worse.

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Weekly inflation increases by 0.92 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.92 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on April 06, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 252.06 points as compared to 249.75 points during the past week, according to PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 44.49 percent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 is covering 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups.

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs17,732 witnessed a 0.92 percent increase and went up to 258.88 points from last week's 256.53 points.

Meanwhile, the SPI for the consumption group from Rs 17,732-22-888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 witnessed an increase of 01 percent, 01 percent, 1.03 percent, and 0.84 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 27 (52.94%) items increased, 07 (13.73%) items

decreased and 17 (33.33%) items remained stable.

The items which recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW) included Chicken (15.87%), Sugar (13.48%), Potatoes (5.11%), Bananas (4.95%), Wheat Flour (3.10%), Gur (2.12%), Eggs (1.26%), Milk Fresh (1.24%) and non-food item, Long Cloth (1.95%).

The items that recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis included Tomatoes (14.96%), Onions (12.66%), LPG (3.73%), Pulse Gram (1.20%), Vegetable Ghee 2.5 Kg (0.71%), Garlic (0.16%) and Mustard Oil

(0.03%). On a year-on-year (YoY) basis, the commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices included Cigarettes (165.88%), Wheat Flour (131.72%), Gas Charges for Q1 (108.38%), Diesel (102.84%), Eggs (98.34%), Tea Lipton (97.63%), Rice Basmati Broken (84.92%), Bananas (82.23%), Petrol (81.17%), Rice Irri-6/9 (80.61%), Pulse Moong (68.14%), Potatoes (65.95%), Pulse Mash (56.70%) and Onions (55.75%). The commodities that witnessed a decrease in prices on a YOY included f Tomatoes (50.39%) and Chillies Powdered (6.48%).



ISLAMABAD: A vendor arranging and displaying tasbeeh (prayer beads) to attract the customers outside masjid at Aabpara during holy month of Ramzan.

PSX loses 301.24 points, closing at 40,049.65 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) declined by 301.24 points on Friday, showing a negative change of 0.75 percent, closing at 40,049.65 points against 40,350.89 points the previous day.

A total of 135,135,452 shares were traded during the day as compared to 171,360,309 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 3.201 billion against Rs 5.130 billion on the last

trading day.

As many as 335 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 113 of them recorded gains and 197 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 25 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were JS Bank Ltd. with 26,211,000 shares at Rs 4.09 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 13,117,542 shares at Rs 1.18 per share, and Silk Bank Ltd. with 10,156,000

shares at Rs 1.03 per share.

Sapphire Fiber witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 27.88 per share price, closing at Rs 1017.88, whereas the runner-up was Pak Services with a Rs 10.47 rise in its per share price to Rs 897.61.

Nestle Pakistan XD witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 126.87 per share closing at Rs 5071.33, followed by Siemens Pak with a Rs 40.00 decline to close at Rs 560.00.

Rupee sheds 22 paisas against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan rupee weakened by 22 paisas against the Dollar in the interbank trading on Friday and closed at Rs 284.64 against the previous day's closing of Rs 284.42.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 289.1 and Rs 291.9 respectively.

The price of the Euro appreciated by 47 paisas to close at Rs 310.78 against the last day's closing of Rs310.31, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen dipped by 01 paisas to close at Rs 2.15; whereas a decrease of 58 paisas was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 354.16 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs354.74.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal rose by 06 paisas each to close at Rs 77.50 and Rs 75.87 respectively.

Gold prices increase

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 100 and was sold at Rs 214,600 on Friday against its sale at Rs 214,500 the previous day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also increased by Rs 85 to Rs 183,985 from Rs 183,900, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up to Rs 168,653 from Rs 168,574. The price of per tola and that of ten-gram silver remained unchanged to close at Rs 2450 and Rs 2100.48 respectively.

SECP registers 2,596 companies in March

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) registered 2,595 new companies in March 2023, raising the total number of registered companies to 190,16, said a news release issued here on Friday. Total capitalization (paid-up capital) with regard to newly incorporated companies for the current month stood at Rs 1.8 billion. About 58 percent of companies were registered as private limited companies, while 39 percent were registered as single-member companies.

Around three percent of companies were registered as public unlisted companies, not-for-profit associations, and limited liability partnerships (LLP).

Almost 99.69 percent of

companies were registered online and 159 foreign users were registered from overseas. The information technology sector took the lead with the incorporation of with 397 Companies, real estate development & construction 385 each, trading with 339, services with 282, education with 121, tourism with 106, food & beverages with 96, e-commerce 74, marketing & advertisement with 72, textile with 62, corporate agricultural farming 51, engineering with 49, mining & quarrying with 48, healthcare with 44, pharmaceutical 39, power generation with 37, cosmetics and toiletries and chemical with 34 each, transport with 33, cables and electrical goods and broadcasting & tele-

casting with 26 each, com-

munications with 25, fuel & energy with 24, paper & board with 20, auto & allied with 19, lodging with 18, arts and culture with 13 and 122 companies were registered in other sectors. As a result of the integration of SECP with FBR and various provincial departments, 2,496 companies were registered with FBR for the generation of NTN, 71 companies with EOBI, 62 companies with PESSI/SESSI and 51 companies with the excise and taxation department.

Foreign investment had been reported in 89 new companies. These companies had foreign investors from Afghanistan, China, Denmark, Egypt, Germany, Indonesia, Korea South, Malaysia, Maldives, Netherlands, Nigeria,

Philippines, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tajikistan, Turkey, UAE, UK, and USA. A major chunk of investment was received from China with 47 companies, Nigeria with 05 companies, Germany and Philippines with four each, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, the UK, and the USA with three each, Afghanistan, Egypt, and South Korea with two each and from other countries in 11 companies.

It is pertinent to mention here that the SECP also has a dedicated WhatsApp facility for instant resolution of queries pertaining to name availability and incorporation process and during this month, around 1,254 queries were responded to with a 95% satisfaction rate.

China's growth to steer global economy back on track

BEIJING (APP): China's growth will steer the global economy back on track, pinpointed Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary, Minister of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, while commenting on the global inflation, which has become one of the leading concerns of the year for many.

High inflation remains geographically broad-based. "If you look at Europe, the United States, or everywhere, the inflation rate is rising. Central banks resort to increasing the policy rates, but that slows down the economy," the minister told China Economic Net during his recent visit to China.

Also, the minister noted that Pakistan was currently facing an economic crisis for a number of reasons, and the government was trying to stabilize and revive the economy.

However, China's opening up offers a great opportunity for the whole world, because "China has so much consumer demand in its market," he noted.

The minister cited China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as examples. 2023 marks the tenth anniversary of BRI and also the tenth year of CPEC.

As he sees it, BRI and CPEC are platforms to promote inter-regional and international trade, to bring sharing of experiences among different countries, as well as to promote joint responses to many global issues.

"There has been tremendous and remarkable progress on CPEC in Pakistan.

It has made a valuable contribution in helping Pakistan overcome its energy crisis, in helping it modernize the infrastructure, and also it has laid down a fiber optic cable that provides backbone to its digital infrastructure..." Ahsan Iqbal enumerated the advantages of CPEC.

"Although CPEC is a bilateral project, its scope is regional. It not only provides a chance for Pakistan to improve its standards in various fields yet it also provides an oppor-

tunity for other countries.

Likewise, now Southeast Asia, Middle East, Africa are expressing interest to integrate with CPEC," Ahsan Iqbal pointed out, adding that China has very successfully brokered peace deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which is "one of the most remarkable developments of our times that will converge more opportunities for collaboration in the region."

Ahsan Iqbal hoped that in the coming years, Pakistan will see more relocation of Chinese industries to the country to take advantage of its low cost of production, logistics and so on, as Pakistan is a textile powerhouse with many other sectors - namely agriculture, meat, and technology - where it can offer services to China.

"Now, under BRI and other regional cooperation that we are developing, there will be tremendous opportunities for countries like Pakistan to trade more with China and other BRI countries," Ahsan Iqbal concluded confidently.

Oil prices decline with recession fears triggered by weak US economic data

ANKARA (AA/APP): Oil prices decreased on Friday after weak economic data in the US sparked recession fears. International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$84.61 per barrel at 10.08 a.m. local time (0708 GMT), a 0.45% drop from the closing price of \$84.99 a barrel in the previous trading session.

At the same time, American benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$80.22 per barrel, a 0.48% fall after the previous session closed at \$80.61 a barrel.

Disappointing private jobs figures in the US hinted at a possible recession that would lower oil demand in the world's largest oil-consuming country. The American private sector added 145,000 jobs in March, coming in much lower than expectations of an increase of 200,000.

Economic activity in the US services sector expanded in March for a third consecutive month, but the rate of growth slowed. The non-manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) came

in at 51.2%, 3.9 percentage points lower than February's reading of 55.1%.

Meanwhile, a drop in US crude stocks prevented further price falls.

US commercial crude oil inventories decreased by 3.7 million barrels to 470 million barrels during the week ending March 31, according to data released by the Energy Information Administration (EIA) late Wednesday. Inventories fell against the market expectation of a decrease of 1.8 million barrels.

Increase in interest rates to 21pc a wrong decision: Butt

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former President of the IICCI Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt on Friday criticizing SBP said the increase in interest rates to 21 percent by the central bank is a wrong decision. According to the issued press release, he said that this move will not reduce inflation or bring economic stability, nor will it pave the way for the loan from the IMF. Butt said that the current inflation in Pakistan is not related to current account deficit or excess capital in the market, but to government policies, including increased taxes and amplified prices of oil, electricity, and gas.



HYDERABAD: Women busy in selecting and purchasing dresses for preparation of upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr at Resham Bazaar.

Asian markets edge up in thin trade ahead of US jobs data

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets ticked higher in holiday-thinned trade Friday with all eyes on the release of US jobs data later in the day.

The closely watched report comes after a series of releases this week pointed to a softening of the labour market, suggesting Federal Reserve rate hikes over the past year are kicking in. Analysts said a strong reading could deal a

blow to markets as it would put further pressure on the US central bank to lift borrowing costs more.

However, a lower-than-expected figure would allow officials to take their foot off the pedal, though it could also add to worries that the world's top economy was heading for a recession. After a positive lead from Wall Street in muted trade, Asia's few open markets advanced.

Seoul led gains, piling on more than one percent as heavyweight Samsung rallied after it said it would cut chip production owing to weak demand, lifting hopes for a spike in prices.

Tokyo, Shanghai, Bangkok and Taipei were also up. European and US markets are also closed, while there was no oil trading. Fresh US government unemployment data on

Thursday showed there were 228,000 new applications for unemployment aid last week, above analyst expectations.

That followed Wednesday's news that services sector activity grew less than forecast last month, while a separate report pointed to private employers slowing their hiring pace in March.

"All the employment data leading up to the non-

farm payroll report has confirmed a clear trend that a labour market slowdown has begun," said OANDA's Edward Moya.

Expectations for Fed rates have lowered over the past month after banking sector turmoil -- largely blamed on the sharp hikes -- sparked fears of another financial crisis.

While the upheaval has calmed for now, traders remain on edge for any

more stresses.

However, a number of Fed officials have said the bank could resume lifting as it battles to bring inflation down.

Among them is St Louis Fed boss James Bullard, who said Thursday: "Financial stress seems to be abated, at least for now."

"And so it's a good moment to continue to fight inflation and try to get on that disinflationary path."

- Key figures around 0710 GMT -

Tokyo - Nikkei 225: UP 0.2 percent at 27,518.31 (close)

Shanghai - Composite: UP 0.5 percent at 3,327.65 (close)

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: Closed for a holiday

Euro/dollar: DOWN at \$1.0918 from \$1.0923 on Thursday

Pound/dollar: UP at \$1.2443 from \$1.2441

Euro/pound: DOWN at 87.75 pence at 87.77 pence

Dollar/yen: UP at 131.86 yen from 131.80 yen

West Texas Intermediate: UP 0.1 percent at \$80.70 per barrel (Thursday)

Brent North Sea crude: UP 0.2 percent at \$85.12 per barrel (Thursday)

New York - Dow: Closed for a holiday

London - FTSE 100: Closed for a holiday



In brief

Commentary panel announced

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has unveiled the seven-member commentary panel for the five T20 Internationals and as many One-Day Internationals, to be played between Pakistan and New Zealand from 14 April till 7 May. Bazid Khan, Grant Elliot, Kyle Mills (T20Is), Lisa Sthalekar (ODIs), Sikander Bakht and Urooj Mumtaz will call action across the 10 limited overs matches in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Karachi. Renowned presenter Zainab Abbas will host pre- and post-match shows, including Pitch Side that will continue to bring in-depth analysis for cricket fans. Twenty-seven full High-Definition cameras will beam live action around the globe through PCB's broadcast partners. The production set-up includes complete HawkEye review system, buggy cam and SpiderCam, which is available for three T20Is in Lahore and three ODIs in Karachi. New Zealand will arrive in Pakistan in the wee hours of 11 April. The two teams will play first three of the five T20Is in Lahore. Rawalpindi will host the last two T20Is and the first two ODIs, before the action moves to the port-city of Karachi, which hosts last three ODIs. The broadcast of the white-ball series will be available through PTV Sports on Linear TV. The matches will be live-stream on ARY Zap, Vidly.tv, Tamasha and Tapmad within Pakistan and on PCB YouTube Channel outside Pakistan. Etisalat (Middle-East and North Africa) Flow Sports (Caribbean), Sky NZ (New Zealand), Fox Sports (Australia), Sky Sports (United Kingdom), Sony (South Asia outside Pakistan), Super Sports (Sub-Saharan Africa) and Willow TV (North America) will broadcast matches internationally. FM 106.2 (Pakistan) will be radio partner for the series.

Topley suffers shoulder injury

LONDON (INP): England bowler Reece Topley has suffered an injury setback ahead of this year's Cricket World Cup after being ruled out of the Indian Premier League due to a dislocated shoulder. Topley suffered the injury while playing for Royal Challengers Bangalore in their opening match against Mumbai Indians on Sunday when he dived while fielding. The 29-year-old, who missed last year's Twenty20 World Cup after suffering ankle ligament damage, has returned to England for treatment. "We tried our best to keep him here, but the treatment and the experts suggest that he is going to be out of action for some time," Bangalore head coach Sanjay Bangar said on Thursday.

Warner at 'mercy of selection' for Ashes

MELBOURNE (INP): Australia opener David Warner is in the frame for the World Test Championship final against India but selectors' boss George Bailey declined to back him as an automatic inclusion for the Ashes squad. Selectors will pick a wider squad in about two weeks for the WTC decider at The Oval from June 7-11 and for the first two Tests of the Ashes series, which starts on June 16 in Birmingham. Apart from a defiant 200 against South Africa in December, left-hander Warner has struggled for runs in recent Tests, making a total of 26 in three innings in the recent tour of India before returning home injured.



MIRPUR: Bangladesh and Ireland line up in a guard of honour for umpire Aleem Dar, Bangladesh vs Ireland Only Test, 4th day.

Babar sends 'get well soon' message to Kane Williamson

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan skipper Babar Azam has sent a "get well soon" message to his New Zealand counterpart Kane Williamson who is nursing a knee injury suffered while playing an Indian Premier League (IPL) match.

"Bounce back stronger. Get well soon Kane Williamson," Babar tweeted, sharing an image of him and the NZ skipper hugging.

According to the NZ cricket board, Williamson will require surgery after scans confirmed he'd ruptured his anterior cruciate ligament while fielding for the Gujarat Titans in the IPL.

"The standard rehabilita-

tion timelines mean that Williamson is now unlikely to be fit and available for selection at this year's ICC ODI Cricket World Cup in India," it said.

In a statement, Williamson acknowledged the support he'd received since sustaining the injury and thanked both the Gujarat Titans and New Zealand Cricket for that. "Naturally it's disappointing to get such an injury, but my focus now is on having the surgery and starting rehab," he said.

"It's going to take some time, but I'll be doing everything I can to get back on the field as soon

as possible." While the World Cup now looked unlikely, Williamson vowed to support the team in any way he could.

The NZ skipper is likely to have surgery on his knee within three weeks. Williamson jarred his knee attempting a catch in the opening game of the IPL last Friday, hobbling off the field with the help of two physios.

The New Zealander is one of cricket's premier batsmen. He played a crucial role as they clawed their way into the final of the 2019 World Cup, where Williamson was judged player of the tournament.

Peshawar Pathans outwit Punjab Lions in Markhor Ramazan Cup opener

RAWALPINDI (APP): Peshawar Pathans pulled off a 37-run win against Punjab Lions in the inaugural T20 match of the 2nd Markhor Ramadan Cup at National Stadium Ayub Park Rawalpindi on Thursday night.

Punjab Lions won the toss and decided to field first. Peshawar Pathans posted 155 runs on board for the loss of nine scalps in 20 overs. Sohail Akhtar was the top scorer with 37 runs off 20 balls. Faizan Ali (29 runs, 14 balls), Bilawal Virk (25 runs, 26 balls) and Musa Khan (20 runs, 22 balls) were other main contributors for them. Sharukh Chun (3 for 10), Kasam Shah (3 for 33) and Ali Hasan (1 for 20) were the wicket-takers.

Replying to that Punjab Lions could score 118 runs in 17 overs, losing all their wickets. All-rounder Shahrkh Chun, who grabbed three wickets in the match, scored brisk 44 runs off 33 balls.

Shawaiz Irfan was the other main contributor as he made 41 runs off 22 balls. Mohammad Ali was the pick of the bowlers as he destroyed Punjab Lions batting, claiming four wickets. He was awarded the man-of-the-match award for his stunning performance as he conceded just 14 runs in his four overs. Ali Amjad (3 for 21) and Musa Khan (2 for 32) were the successful bowlers for the winning side.

Brief scores: Toss: Punjab Lions won the toss and decided to field first Man of the Match: Mohammad Ali Peshawar Pathans (Batting): 155 for 9 in 20 overs Sohail Akhtar (37 runs, 20 balls), Faizan Ali (29 runs, 14 balls), Bilawal Virk (25 runs, 26 balls), Musa Khan (20 runs, 22 balls) Punjab Lions (Bowling): 118 runs all out in 17 overs Sharukh Chun (3 for 10), Kasam Shah (3 for 33), Ali Hasan (1 for 20) Punjab Lions (Batting): Shahrkh (44 runs, 33 balls), Shawaiz Irfan (41 runs, 22 balls) Peshawar P a t h a n s

(Bowling): Mohammad Ali (4 for 14), Ali Amjad (3 for 21), Musa Khan (2 for 32),

Bangladesh complete seven-wicket win over Ireland

MIRPUR (Agencies): Ireland's hopes of claiming a first Test victory were ended by Bangladesh as the hosts sealed a seven-wicket win on day four of the one-off Test.

Ireland resumed on 286-8 after a fightback on day three but only added another six runs to their lead of 131 before being bowled out in Mirpur.

The Tigers slipped to 43-2 in pursuit of 138 but Mushfiqur Rahim led his side to victory with a quick-fire 51 not out. It is Ireland's fourth defeat from four Tests since 2018.

"We showed a lot of grit, especially yesterday. I think we all just enjoyed playing Test cricket again - the ebbs and flows of the game," said Ireland captain Andrew Balbirnie.

"One minute you're up, one minute you're down

and you have to show a lot of fight, which we did. "But in the end we didn't show enough and unfortunately were on the wrong side."

After hitting the nation's second Test century on day three, batter Lorcan Tucker said his side were hoping to set a target of 180, having recovered brilliantly from 27-4 at one stage in their second innings.

But any hopes of reaching that mark were effectively ended when Andy McBrine was bowled for 72 by Ebadot Hossain having only added one to his overnight score. Seamer Hossain then had Graham Hume caught behind by wicketkeeper Litton Das off a thick edge as Ireland were all out for 292.

Opener Das made an aggressive start to Bangladesh's chase, hitting McBrine for six over mid-

wicket in the second over before being bowled by Mark Adair for 23 from 19 balls. Najmul Hossain Shanto edged McBride to slip three overs later but Ireland were unable to stop a steady flow of runs.

First-innings centurion Mushfiqur hit his first ball for four and scored at faster than a run a ball, despite the loss of Tamim Iqbal for 31 after he skied a catch off leg-spinner Ben White with 33 still needed. With the hosts' target 23 runs away, Tucker missed the chance to stump Mominul Haque and the left-hander ended unbeaten on 20 alongside Mushfiqur.

The win ends a run of eight defeats and one draw in Tests for Bangladesh since victory over New Zealand in January last year. Ireland play two Tests against Sri Lanka later this month.

Haaland 'ready' for Man City return at Southampton

M A N C H E S T E R (Agencies): Erling Haaland is fit to return for Saturday's Premier League trip to Southampton, Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola confirmed on Friday.

Haaland, who has scored 42 goals this season, missed City's 4-1 hammering of Liverpool last weekend after pulling out of international duty with Norway due to a groin injury.

His return is a timely boost for City's quest to win a treble of trophies in the final two months of the season. "He trained the last two days really good," said Guardiola.

"He will be ready." City welcome Bayern Munich to the Etihad for the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final just three days after their trip to St Mary's.

But Guardiola said he



was fully focused on chasing down Arsenal at the top of the Premier League. The Gunners have an eight-point lead, but City have a game in hand on Mikel Arteta's men and host Arsenal at the Etihad later this month.

"Bayern is our last thought," said the City boss. "It's Southampton -- the Premier League is every day, every week." Southampton are bottom of the table but shocked City when the sides last met,

dumping the English champions out of the League Cup.

City have only won twice in their past five visits to St Mary's and Guardiola is expecting another tough test. "Now every team is playing for something," he said.

"Every game has its own characteristics and you have to be ready, Southampton have always been so tough. "Always it's been a tough, tough game. Tomorrow won't be an exception."

Shakeel to join Yorkshire on short-term deal



LONDON (Agencies): Yorkshire have signed Pakistan batter Saud Shakeel for an initial four-game spell as overseas player.

With Shan Masood currently on international duty with Pakistan's white-ball sides and Neil Wagner unable to join the club as planned due to injury, Yorkshire have moved to sign Shakeel, who will be available for next week's LV= Insurance C'ship fixture against Gloucestershire at Bristol.

The club had previously announced Shah Hope as a short-term overseas signing as cover for Masood. The West Indies international

made his debut in the ongoing game against Leicestershire and will be involved for the first three rounds of the season.

Shakeel, 27, made his Pakistan Test debut on England's tour in December, and recorded his maiden century against New Zealand in January.

"Saud is a very talented young player, he will be a wonderful addition to our current squad," Darren Gough, Yorkshire's managing director of cricket, said. "He did well against England and New Zealand.

"Here at Yorkshire we want to get the balance

right between youth and experience and we now feel we have got a squad where we have plenty of opportunities for everyone.

"We don't want to be in a position like last year where we had to rely purely on youth at times - you need that balance in the line-up."

Masood, signed to take over as captain after a successful summer at Derbyshire, is set to miss Yorkshire's first four matches due to his involvement in T20I and ODI series against New Zealand. With Wagner's fitness uncertain, the club have said Shakeel's deal could be extended.

"We see this as a great signing," Gough said. "Saud is coming over here looking to put his name in lights. He has already played for Pakistan - he'll be in their Test squad in July most likely. He is coming here to develop his game and it's great for us to have someone else of international experience coming into the Yorkshire dressing room."

Balochistan to host 34th National Games from May 5: Syed Aqil Shah

PESHAWAR (APP): After a lapse of almost 19-year, Balochistan is going to host the most awaiting 34th National Games for the first time in two phases under a new format from May 5 to 23 with more 7000 athletes and officials would compete in 34 different disciplines.

Talking to APP Senior Vice President Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) Syed Aqil Shah while talking exclusively to APP here on Friday. Aqil Shah also visited Quetta to see the overall preparation regarding the hosting of the Games, and said that the 34th National Games is scheduled from May 5-23, with 34 different sporting events including four exhibition sports. He said the most thrill-packed game Futsal was also part of the overall disciplines.

Aqil Shah also appreciated the government of Balochistan which has allocated 100 million rupees for the preparation of

venues and 400 million rupees for organizing games.

He said it would be historical evidence that Quetta, the beautiful city is hosting the Games after 19-years as the last Games held in Balochistan in 2004. He appreciated the efforts of the Sports Department Balochistan. The officials of the Olympic Association, office-bearers of the associations and federations, Shaukat Javed, Vice President POA also visited Balochistan to decide ways and means for a successful hosting of the Games.

He said due to Corona in 2019, now the 34th National Games will be held from May 5, 2023. It will be held in Quetta till May 23, in which there will be 34 different sports competitions along with four exhibition sports competitions including cricket, futsal, throw ball and canoeing and kayak competitions.

Syed Aqil Shah, who is also

President KP Olympic Association, disclosed that more than 6,000 male and female athletes and more than 1,000 officials will participate in martial arts, boxing, athletics, football, hockey, body building and other competitions at twelve different places including Ayub Sports Complex, Quetta Cantt, BUT-MANS University in Quetta.

He said some events including swimming, rowing, rifle shooting and canoeing would be organized outside Quetta. Syed Aqil Shah said that swimming competitions will be held in Lahore, rifle shooting in Jhelum, rowing and canoeing would be organized in Rawal Lake in Islamabad.

Competition of Team Sports/Individual Sport at Quetta 1.

Baseball BUITEMS Cricket Ground Quetta May 7-13 2. Basketball (5x5) PSB Hall Ayub Sports Complex, Quetta May 7-14 3. Football Ayub Football

Stadium, Quetta & Qayyum Papa Football Stadium, Quetta May 5-14 4. Handball Handball Court Ayub Sports Complex, Quetta May 5-14 5. Hockey Nawab Ghous Bakhsh Hockey Stadium, Quetta May 4-14 6. Kabaddi Women Hall, Ayub Sports Complex, Quetta May 7-14 7. Rugby 7's BUITEMS, Quetta May 8-14 8. Softball BUITEMS Football Ground Quetta May 7-14 9. Tug of War Ayub Football Stadium, Quetta May 10-14 10. Boxing PSB Hall, Ayub Sports Complex, Quetta May 5-15 11. Fencing BUITEMS, Quetta May 8-14 12. Archery BUITEMS / Tameer-i-Nau College, Quetta May 15-23 13. Athletics Ayub Football Stadium, Quetta May 15-23 14. Badminton Saifullah Magsoo Badminton Court, Ayub Sports Complex, Quetta May 14-23 15. Bodybuilding Noori Naseer Khan Complex Hall, Quetta

May 14-18 16. Cycling Quetta-Pishin Road, Quetta May 15-23 17. Golf Quetta Golf Club, Quetta May 15-22 18. Gymnastics BUITEMS, Quetta May 16-21 19. Judo BUITEMS, Quetta May 14-20 20. Karate SBK Hall Quetta May 14-21 21. Squash Squash Complex Ayub Sports Complex Quetta May 14-23 22. Table Tennis Table Tennis Hall Ayub Sports Complex, Quetta May 16-23 23. Taekwondo BUITEMS, Quetta May 14-23 24. Tennis Tennis Court Ayub Stadium Complex, Polo Ground, and Brown Gymkhana Tennis Court, Quetta May 15-23 25. Volleyball PSB Hall Ayub Stadium Complex, Quetta May 14-21 26. Weightlifting Noori Naseer Khan Complex Hall, Quetta May 17-23 27. Wrestling Boys Scout Hall, Quetta May 17-22 28. Wushu Ibrar Hall Ayub Sports Complex, Quetta May

15-22 Competition of Individual Sport at Islamabad 29. Rowing Islamabad May 7-14 30. Competition of Individual Sport at Ormara, Gwadar 30. Sailing Ormara, Gwadar (TBD) - schedule /Event yet not finalized by the Sailing Federation.

Competition of Individual Sport at Jhelum 31. Shooting Jhelum (TBD) May 11-20 32. Competition of Individual Sport at Lahore 32. Swimming Lahore May 17-22 Exhibition Sports /Matches The competitions of these sports shall not be recognized as a part of 34th National Games Quetta as well as National Championship 1 Canoe & Kayak Quetta May 16 2 Futsal Futsal Ground Ayub Sports Complex, Quetta May 16 3 Throwball at Throwball Ground Ayub Sports Complex, Quetta May 18 4 Women Cricket Nawab Akbar Bugti & Bolan Cricket Stadium, Quetta May 18.



In brief

10 drug peddlers, bootleggers netted

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers and illegal weapon holders on Friday arrested 10, besides recovering over four kg charras, 10 liters liquor, four 30-bore pistols, a Kalashnikov and ammunition from them. A police spokesperson said that Waris Khan police held Arif for having 1,250 grams of charras while Taxila police rounded up Alam Zaib with 1,250 grams of charras, Mubarik Zaib for having 1,620 grams of charras and Pervaiz for carrying 10 liters of liquor. Whereas, Chontra police arrested Behroze with 160 grams of charras. He informed that Sadiqabad, Race Course, Taxila and Chontra police, in their operations against illegal weapon holders, managed to net Mubeen, Anjum, Haider, Bashir, and Rafiq and recovered four 30-bore pistols, a Kalashnikov and a m u n i t i o n . Rawalpindi district police also held 52 professional beggars from different roads. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations were underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other law-breakers, he added.

IRSA releases 81,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 81,100 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 55,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1433.36 feet and was 35.36 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 19,100 cusecs while outflow as 5,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1108.80 feet, 58.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 20,800 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 25,500, 30,200, 37,100 and 10,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 26,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 7,200 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

CEO RWMC directs to lift garbage daily

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief Executive Officer(CEO)of the Rawalpindi Waste Management Company(RWMC)Rana Sajid Safdar on Friday directed the department officials to ensure cleanliness during the holy month of Ramadan. Chairing a meeting to review the cleanliness arrangements during Ramadan, he directed the officials to keep the cleanliness of Masajid's, surrounding areas' mainly during Taravah timings. The CEO directed the officials to lift the collected garbage daily from the city areas and shift to the landfill site. He said that no negligence would be tolerated in this regard and strict action would be taken. Meanwhile, the social mobilization and communication team of RWMC today carried out its campaign in Mosques located in the jurisdiction of UC 16 – Eidgah to create awareness about the importance of cleanliness. He said this activity aimed to educate the public about the fundamental standards of cleanliness so that the citizens could apply these standards to make their surroundings neat and clean.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Qaumi Watan Party Aftab Ahmed Khan calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Regularization of Social Security Institution's employees on agenda of Governing Body: Senate told

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Interior Abdul Rehman Khan Kanju on Friday informed the Senate that the employees of the Social Security Institution, Islamabad have been on the contract since its establishment in 2013 adding that their regularization was the agenda of Governing Body.

Replying to various questions during Question Hour, the minister said efforts were being made to regularize the services of employees of Social Security Institutions.

The manpower was engaged on a short-term basis to meet with the emergency to start with its

function, he added.

He said some of the staff members filed a writ petition against the service regulations in Islamabad High Court which was still pending in the honorable court. Therefore the recruitment process could not be finalized/completed, he added.

To another question, the minister said there were total 48 plot files in street No. 99 Sector I-10/1. Out of which only one plot file of house No. 622 St No. 99, Sector I-10/4 which was allotted to Mst Shamim Akhter W/o Abdul Aziz being Affected of Village Ropper, and further transferred trice in the names of Mr. Masood ul Rauf S/o

Malik Fazal dad Khan, Mr. Safdar Zaman Kiani S/o Raja Lehasab Khan and in the name of Rashida Begum and 04 others through legal heirship.

Only one application complaint dated May, 5, 2021 received in this Office from Zahid Safdar Kiyani and others regarding issuance of a No Demand Certificate and case file was found missing. The subject File has been Re-Constructed an inquiry against officials/officers concerned has been initiated/forwarded to the Security Directorate accordingly, he said. Action would be taken against the concerned officials, he added.

ANF recovers over 58 kg drugs; arrests seven

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in five operations managed to recover over 58 kg drugs and arrested seven accused including two women, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that ANF in an operation near Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza recovered 21.6 kg charras and 7.2 kg opium from the possession of two accused residents of Faisalabad. In another raid on Islamabad Motorway, ANF also recovered 4.8 kg charras and 3.6 kg opium from the possession of two female drug smugglers, residents of Charsada.

In third operation near Ring Road Peshawar, three kg charras and 350 grams Ice drug were recovered from two parcels booked at a private courier office for Lahore and Mansehra.

The spokesman informed that in fourth operation on Quetta Sona Chowk, Karachi Road, ANF recovered 9.6 kg charras and three kg Ice drug from the possession of two smugglers.

In the fifth operation on Quetta Airport Road, ANF seized five kg charras and netted an accused resident of Quetta. He said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

Police arrest five POs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Police arrested five Proclaimed Offenders (POs) wanted in different cases, said a police spokesman here on Friday.

He said Taxila and Wah Cantt police managed to arrest two accused namely Ali Haider and Usman, wanted in different cases.

Police rounded up Karwaan, Shah Zaib and a female accused namely Khairunnisa wanted in different cases registered in Naseerabad, Gungmandi and woman police stations. He said that Rawalpindi district police were taking stern action in accordance with the law against the lawbreakers, adding, the operations would continue and all the POs would be sent behind the bars.

SSP Operations, Rawalpindi Muhammad Amir Khan Niazi directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against POs and most wanted criminals, he added.

Marri condemns anti-Muslim violence in India and Israel

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety PA&AS, and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme Shazia Marri while addressing the National Assembly of Pakistan condemned recent atrocities committed by Israeli forces at one of the holiest places of Islam.

She also spoke out against the rising tide of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim violence in India and urged parliamentarians to convey their sentiments to Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Modi, to protect the Muslim community there, said a press release.

Marri also stressed the need for stability in all sectors, including the social, economic, and political spheres of the country. She expressed her concerns over the frequent derailment of democracy in Pakistan which has been endorsed by the judiciary. She urged all pillars of the state including the judiciary to work to bring about harmony and avoid further divisions among themselves. This could lead to irreversible consequences, she added.

She highlighted the leading role of the Pakistan People's Party in spearheading the passage of the unanimous constitution of 1973 and for the promotion and protection of democracy in Pakistan. She reiterated that the parliament is the supreme body representing the aspirations of the people of Pakistan and underscored that the supremacy of the parliament should be respected by all institutions including the higher

courts. She noted that disrespect for the trichotomy of power and privileges leads to disharmony and a state of anarchy in the country. She urged every institution to play a positive role in order to bring Pakistan out of the current chaos.

Shazia Marri also declared that they are ready for transparent, free, and fair elections on a level playing field across the country. She, however, stressed that no candidate should be the favorite of the state institutions which are meant to provide justice and a level playing field to all political parties. There should be no threats to the lives of any Pakistani including the candidates for polls during the election campaign, she added.

She said that Imran Khan's politics was nurtured in the drawing rooms and historic pre and post-poll rigging was committed to bringing this person to power. She urged that Imran Khan should not be given such extraordinary favor in the coming election as he has been receiving previously.

While pointing out the divide among the judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, she observed that it was not a good omen for the country and the people of Pakistan.

She said that court verdicts should be based on the democratic principle of a majority vote of the honorable judges of the court, as Supreme Court by definition comprised the Chief Justice of Pakistan as well as all the other Honourable judges of the Court.

AIOU to develop a framework for education of Afghan refugee children

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees, KPK agreed in a meeting that AIOU should develop a framework for the education and training of children of Afghan refugees.

The meeting was held in the office of the Commissioner for Afghan Refugees (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Muhammad Abbas Khan. Director of Academic Planning and

International Collaboration, AIOU, Dr. Zahid Majeed with AIOU delegation, representatives of JICA, foreigners, and different delegates also participated in the meeting.

Dr. Zahid Majeed apprised the forum of the scope of various programs being offered at AIOU and the facilities that it may extend for the provision of quality education to Afghan refugee children through its distance learning programs.

He also highlighted the importance of ICT, blended, and online learning.

Commissioner for Afghan refugees appreciated the educational services and nationwide network of AIOU and requested arrangements for the education and training of the children of Afghan refugees, which the university accepted and assured to formulate the framework. Before the meeting, the Delegation of AIOU, JICA and Representatives of the Commissionerate visited various refugee-run schools and interacted with the children to identify the educational requirements of the students.

Railways all set to resume upgradation work of Shadadpur Station platform

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways is all set to resume the renovation and construction of a platform of Shadadpur Railway Station to facilitate passengers. "The renovation and construction work was stopped due to non-availability of funds but now the ministry has allocated around two million rupees more for completing the renovation and construction, an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP on Friday.

"Shadadpur Railway Station, operating with three platforms, is one of the important stations situated on the mainline where most of the mail and express trains have their stoppages."

The official said the contractor had stopped the construction work due to non-payment of bills and funds, adding 50 percent of the renovation work had been already completed.

However, he said the requisite funds were being arranged for the remaining work. He said the platform condition on the downside was dilapidated and, therefore it was decided to carry out its repair under the head of improvement and welfare expenditure.

To a question, the official said Pakistan Railways was a big organization comprising of around 63,000 employees and its network stretched across the country. "The employees have well-cared under the welfare activities like health facilities through a wide network of hospitals, dispensaries, and child healthcare units."

Elaborating, the official said the provision of government accommodation according to entitlement and priority list, staff benevolent funds, benefits, and incentives were provided through the Prime Minister's Family

Assistance Package policy for families of deceased employees.

"Other welfare activities included benefits and incentives provided through policy for disabled employees' families, monthly grants to widows scale-wise, the establishment of primary and high schools, industrial schools to teach handicrafts, sports activities through the constitution of Pakistan and pick and drop facility for schools/offices, the installation of water filtration plants, a special provision of five medical seats in Riphah Islamic University campuses with a reduction of 50 percent in admission and tuition fees, loans on easy installments, availability of all recreational facilities, payment for burial and ambulance charges, marriage grant, farewell grant, free passes and concession in railways fares."

High achievers award ceremony held

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Smart Schools Regional Office North has arranged High Achievers Award Ceremony at Islamabad to acknowledge the efforts and hard work of students on their outstanding results in Matric, on Friday.

Chief Guest motivated the young citizens with his motivational words. Mr. Mansoor Ali Shah - Founder & CEO The Counselor, Mr. Khurram Mehta - Group Director Marketing TCS, Mr. Zeehan Iqbal - Chief Financial Officer TCS, Mr. Shenail - Curriculum Lead The City School, Ms. Seema Kaukab - Assistant Regional Director and all our

respected Network Associates, School Heads and students were among the worthy guests.

Regional Director North-Ms. Itrat Rubab Haider addressed the audience and encouraged the students of Class 9th and 10th on their excellent performance in board examination.

Students were awarded with the shields and certificates. Network Associates and School Heads of the campuses with outstanding results were also awarded with the shields and certificates. Parents, students, teachers and Network Associates were very happy and they were praising the academic support provided by The Smart School Academic Team.



ISLAMABAD: Governor of Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori offering dua for the prosperity and progress of country at the shrine of Bari Imam during his visit.

Cash assistance in Logar

PUL-I-ALAM (Pajhwok): About 2000 poor families were given away cash assistance in Pul-i-Alam, the provincial capital, and Mohammad Agha and Kharwar districts of central Logar province. Sibghatullah Naibkhel, the Rural Rehabilitation and Development department spokesman, told Pajhwok the needy families were identified as eligible as a result of a survey. He added that the cash assistance was distributed by the World Food Program (WFP) yesterday, with each family receiving 7400 afghanis.

Seven of a family killed

MEHTARLAM (Pajhwok): Seven members of a family were killed and an eight-year-old girl injured when the roof of their house collapsed following heavy rains in the Alishang district of eastern Laghman province. Provincial natural disasters management head Qari Khair Mohammad Ghazi told Pajhwok the incident took place the Qala Taki area at about 2am. He said a man, his wife and five sons were killed and an eight-year-old daughter injured in the roof cave-in.

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

UN officials urge world not to abandon Afghan people at this precarious moment

UNITED NATIONS (APP): The United Nations' top humanitarian official in Afghanistan on Thursday warned that Taliban's decision to ban women from working for the UN will have devastating consequences for aid delivery.

Dr. Ramiz Alakbarov, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Afghanistan, said that amid severe underfunding, the move would "further undermine humanitarian partners' ability to support the population, especially the most vulnerable such as women and girls".

"The world cannot abandon the people of Afghanistan at this precarious moment," Dr. Alakbarov said, before urging the international community "not to punish the Afghan people further by withholding critical funding".

Multiple top UN officials, starting with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, have condemned the latest Taliban decision. On Wednesday, the deputy UN chief, Amina Mohammed, pledged continued engagement

by UN leadership with Taliban representatives to resolve the situation for the sake of Afghan people. In a statement on Wednesday, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said Special Representative Roza Otunbayeva, was engaging authorities at the highest level possible, as well as other Member States, the donor community and humanitarian partners, to reverse the latest Taliban decree.

"In the history of the United Nations, no other regime has ever tried to ban women from working for the Organization just because they are women. This decision represents an assault against women, the fundamental principles of the UN, and on international law," Ms. Otunbayeva said.

With a record 28.3 million people in need of assistance in 2023 and a humanitarian appeal of \$4.6 billion, Afghanistan is the world's largest aid operation. It is also the UN's lowest-funded operation globally, at



less than five per cent.

"While we continue to engage with the Taliban de-facto authorities to find a solution to these decrees, we urge the international community not to punish the Afghan people

further by withholding critical funding", said the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Kabul. "Aid agencies remain on the ground delivering life-saving assistance to millions of people, and national and inter-

national NGOs have continued to implement programmes over the past three months, despite the very challenging circumstances. "The population has already endured so much, it would be unconscionable to

impose further harm on them by depriving them of an essential humanitarian lifeline," Dr. Alakbarov said.

Over the past twenty months, Taliban leaders have issued a series of increasingly restrictive measures targeting women and girls which have sought to limit their participation in all aspects of social, economic and political life. A large group of UN-appointed independent human rights experts on Thursday demanded the immediate reversal of the Taliban's ban on Afghan women working for the UN. They described it as unlawful discrimination, and a direct attack on women, "and wholly against the core values and principles" of the UN Charter, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

The latest ban will further hamper the delivery of critical assistance to millions of Afghans in need of urgent support, with many of the worst impacted being women and girls, they warned.

"In continuing to target,

exclude and isolate women and girls in Afghan society and denying women from working in many professions in Afghanistan, the Taliban is putting at risk the lives of all Afghans and jeopardising the country's future", the Human Rights Council-appointed experts said.

"The Taliban is once again demonstrating its brazen disregard for women's rights and their well-being, and the extent to which they will go to remove women from all areas of public life and strip them of their rights and dignity".

"The targeting of women and girls in Afghanistan and denying their fundamental rights because they are women increases concern about gender persecution, a crime against humanity, and those responsible must be held accountable," they said. "We call on the de facto authorities to immediately lift the bans on women working with national and international NGOs and the United Nations", their joint statement concluded.

Around 500,000 acres of land reclaimed by interim govt: Commission

KABUL (TOLONews): The commission to prevent land grabbing and acquisition said that nearly 500,000 acres of land which were grabbed illegally have been returned to the Islamic Emirate. The commission said that the investigation is underway in some residential towns.

A spokesman for the commission, Abdul Hameed Jahadyar, said that more than 1,600 acres of lands have been reclaimed.

"Around 500,000 acres of land were grabbed in total, of which 1,649 acres have been retaken from the land grabbers in Kabul," he

said.

An owner of one of the residential towns in Kabul, Habibullah Zazai, welcomed the investigation.

"We welcome the investigation of land in our town. We have licenses for 522 acres of land and the commission should investigate this land. We are committed to the procedures of the commission," he said.

The residents of Kabul also urged the Islamic Emirate to recapture the governmental lands that were grabbed.

"Any land that has been seized—if it is private land, should be returned back to

its owners and if that is governmental land it should be returned to the government," said Asadullah, a resident of Kabul.

"The commission should retake all lands which were grabbed (illegally) because this is the property of Baitulmal (government) and people that has been grabbed by the power individuals," said Shafiqullah Ahmadi, a resident of Kabul.

The commission was established last year based on a decree of the Islamic Emirate's supreme leader, Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada.

Authorities begin sampaign to round up beggars in Balkh



MAZAR-E-SHARIF (Agenices): Officials in Balkh said that they have begun a campaign to round up beggars in Mazar-e-Sharif city and other parts of the northern province. The officials said that the beggars will be provided with 2,000 Af\$ per month after the completion of the process.

"If they are really poor and vulnerable, we will provide them with 2,000 Af\$ per month," said Noorul-Huda Abu Idris, the deputy governor of Balkh.

"There could be some fake beggars and there could be real beggars. This will be distinguished in the future because this commission is formed for this purpose," said Faizullah Faizi, head of the commission to round up beggars.

Some beggars in Mazar-e-Sharif City expressed happiness over the campaign and said they need

assistance. "It has been 15 years that I am begging for a loaf of bread. If the government and international organizations provide me something, I would not do it anymore," said Ghafar, a beggar. "I cannot purchase even one kilogram of oil. If they help me, I would be happy," said Shah Gul, a beggar. Mazar-e-Sharif residents meanwhile said that collecting beggars can help with the security and discipline in the city.

"This is a good step to round up the beggars. They should be provided with a salary. If this happens, they will live in prosperity and the city will also be disciplined," said Mohammad Haroon, a resident of Mazar-e-Sharif. The process to round up beggars across Afghanistan has been conducted in many provinces of the country, including the capital city, Kabul.

Afghanistan faces severe humanitarian crisis: OCHA

KABUL (TOLONews): The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that Afghanistan is rapidly moving towards a cliff edge due to severe under-funding and bans on female aid workers which are disabling aid delivery at a time when 28.3 million people need life-saving assistance to survive.

OCHA said in a report that even with 20 million people facing severe hunger and six million of them one step away from famine, the appeal is less than 5 per cent funded having received only \$213 million so far. OCHA appealed for US \$4.6 billion.

"The world cannot abandon the people of Afghanistan at this precarious moment," said the head of OCHA in Afghanistan, Ramiz Alakbarov, in the report. "While we continue

to engage with the Taliban de-facto authorities to find a solution to these decrees, we urge the international community not to punish the Afghan people further by withholding critical funding. Aid agencies remain on the ground delivering lifesaving assistance to millions of people, and national and international NGOs have continued to implement programmes over the past three months despite the very challenging circumstances. The population has already endured so much, it would be unconscionable to impose further harm on them by depriving them of an essential humanitarian lifeline."

A spokesman for the World Food Organization in Afghanistan, Wahidullah Amani, said that the number of vulnerable people will increase if aid is not provided.

"If we don't receive the

new aid, the number of people relying on humanitarian aid may increase," he said. The Ministry of Economy said that the humanitarian aid to Afghanistan is effective.

"We want the humanitarian aid to continue so that it can be helpful with rooting out poverty in the country," said Abdul Latif Nazari, deputy Minister of Economy.

This comes as the residents of Kabul stressed that they need humanitarian aid now more than ever.

"We want them to include us in providing aid. I have no one... I pay 3,500 Af\$ rent for the house," a resident of Kabul said.

This comes as the UN Assistant Mission ordered all its local Afghan employees to stay home until further notice after it received verbal orders to not allow female staff to work.



Biden review of chaotic Afghan withdrawal blames Trump

President Joe Biden's administration on Thursday laid the blame on his predecessor, President Donald Trump, for the deadly and chaotic 2021 withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan that brought about some of the darkest moments of Biden's presidency.

The White House publicly released a 12-page summary of the results of the so-called "hotwash" of U.S. policies around the ending of the nation's longest war, taking little responsibility for its own actions and asserting that Biden was "severely constrained" by Trump's decisions.

It does acknowledge that the evacuation of Americans and allies from Afghanistan should have started sooner, but blames the delays on the Afghan government and military, and on U.S. military and intelligence community assessments.

The brief document was drafted by the National Security Council, rather than by an independent entity, with input from Biden himself. The administration said detailed reviews conducted by the State Department and the Pentagon, which the White House said would be transmitted privately to Congress on Thursday, were highly classified and would not be released publicly.

"President Biden's choices for how to execute a withdrawal from Afghanistan were severely constrained by conditions created by his predecessor," the White House summary states, noting that when Biden entered office, "the Taliban were in the strongest military

position that they had been in since 2001, controlling or contesting nearly half of the country." Trump responded by accusing the Biden administration of playing "a new disinformation game" to distract from "their grossly incompetent SURRENDER in Afghanistan."

On his social media site, he said, "Biden is responsible, no one else!" The report does fault overly optimistic intelligence community assessments about the Afghan army's willingness to fight, and says Biden followed military commanders' recommendations for the pacing of the drawdown of U.S. forces.

"Clearly we didn't get it right," National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said Thursday, but sidestepped questions about whether Biden has any regrets for his decisions and actions leading up to the withdrawal.

Kirby said of the report that "the purpose of it is not accountability," but rather "understanding" what happened to inform future decisions.

The White House asserts the mistakes of Afghanistan informed its handling of Ukraine, where the Biden administration has been credited for supporting Kyiv's defense against Russia's invasion. The White House says it simulated worst-case scenarios prior to the February 2022 invasion and moved to release intelligence about Moscow's intentions months beforehand.

"We now prioritize earlier evacuations when faced with a degrading security situation,"



the White House said.

In an apparent attempt to defend its national security decision-making, the Biden administration also notes that it released pre-war warnings over "strong objections from senior officials in the Ukrainian government." Republicans in Congress have sharply criticized the Afghanistan withdrawal, focusing on the deaths of 13 service members in a suicide bombing at Kabul's airport, which also killed more than 100 Afghans.

Shawn Vandiver, a Navy veteran and founder of #AfghanEvac, an effort to resettle Afghans fleeing the country, called the NSC report an "important next step."

"We are glad to see acknowledgement of lessons learned and are laser focused on contin-

uing relocation and resettlement operations," Vandiver said in a statement. But Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., tweeted Thursday that the withdrawal was "an unmitigated fiasco," adding, "Passing the buck in a blame-shifting report won't change that." The administration's report appears to shift any blame in the Aug. 26, 2021, suicide bombing at Hamid Karzai International Airport, saying it was the U.S. military that made one possibly key decision.

"To manage the potential threat of a terrorist attack, the President repeatedly asked whether the military required additional support to carry out their mission at HKIA," the report said, adding, "Senior military officials confirmed that they had sufficient resources and authorities to mitigate

threats." Kirby credited U.S. forces for their actions in running the largest airborne evacuation of noncombatants in history during the chaos of Kabul's fall. "They ended our nation's longest war," he told reporters. "That was never going to be an easy thing to do. And as the president himself has said, it was never going to be low grade or low risk or low cost."

Since the U.S. withdrawal, Biden has blamed the February 2020 agreement Trump reached with the Taliban in Doha, Qatar, saying it boxed the U.S. into leaving the country. The agreement has been blamed by analysts for undercutting the U.S.-backed government, which collapsed the following year.

Under the U.S.-Taliban Doha agreement, roughly 5,000 Taliban prisoners were

released as a condition for what were supposed to be separate future peace talks between the Kabul government and the Taliban. Kirby noted that release and other examples of what he said was a "general sense of degradation and neglect" inherited by Biden. But the agreement also left an opening for the U.S. to call off its withdrawal deal with the Taliban if the promised Taliban-Afghan peace talks failed — which they did under Biden, as the U.S. military was pulling out and Taliban fighters advancing. The U.S. was to remove all forces by May 1, 2021. Biden pushed a full withdrawal to September but declined to delay further, saying it would prolong a war that had long needed to end. Since the withdrawal, the U.S. carried out a successful operation to kill al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri — the group's No. 2 leader during the Sept. 11 attacks — which the White House has argued is proof it can still deter terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

But the images of disorder and violence during the fall of Kabul still reverberate, including scenes of Afghans fleeing from the undercarriages of American planes, Afghan families handing infants over airport gates to save them from the crush and violence of the crowd, and the devastation after the suicide bombing at the Abbey Gate.

A February report by the U.S. government's special inspector general for

Afghanistan placed the most immediate blame for the Afghan military's collapse on both the Trump and Biden administrations: "Due to the (Afghan security force's) dependency on U.S. military forces, the decision to withdraw all U.S. military personnel and dramatically reduce U.S. support to the (Afghan security forces) destroyed the morale of Afghan soldiers and police."

Pressed by reporters Thursday afternoon, Kirby repeatedly defended the U.S. response and effort to evacuate American citizens and argued with reporters who referred to the withdrawal as chaotic. At one point, he paused in what appeared to be an effort to gather his emotions.

"For all this talk of chaos, I just didn't see it, not from my perch," said Kirby, who was the Pentagon spokesman during the withdrawal. "At one point during the evacuation, there was an aircraft taking off full of people, Americans and Afghans alike, every 48 minutes, and not one single mission was missed. So I'm sorry, I just won't buy the whole argument of chaos."

The release of the NSC review comes as the State Department and House Republicans battle over documents for classified cables related to the Afghanistan withdrawal. Rep. Michael McCaul, the Texas Republican who chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee, called Kirby's comments "disgraceful and insulting."

No country can modify Indus Water Treaty unilaterally

Senate unanimously passes four various bills

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman on Friday appraised the Senate that the incumbent government was cognizant of its responsibility adding that no country could modify Indus Water Treaty unilaterally.

Responding to a Calling Attention Notice raised by Leader of Opposition Dr Shahzad Waseem, Kamran Murtaza, Mushahid Hussain Sayed and others about India's notice to Pakistan through the Indus Water Commission on January 25, 2023 for revision of the Indus Water Treaty, she said that no one should be panic as the treaty could not be revised unless both parties, Pakistan and India, agreed on it.

She said Pakistan received a vague letter from India on January 25 for revision of the treaty and deliberately was done by Modi regime apparently for domestic consumption and gain in Indian elections. Soon after receiving the letter, the relevant departments have started their deliberation and the Prime Minister has been given a briefing, she added. She said that there was no need to be worried as Pakistan was fully capable to defend

its rights bilaterally and at the international level.

Sherry said that Pakistan had also raised objections over the construction of the controversial Kishenganga and Baglihar dams and Ratle Hydropower Project by India. However, she said that there was water storage issue in the country, adding that work was being carried out to enhance water storage capacity in the country. Land has also been acquired for Diamer Bhasha dam and work was also in progress on Mohmand and Diamer Bhasha dams in this to enhance country's storage capacity. As many as 16 small and medium dams have also been planned in Sindh while planning was also being made to build such dams in Balochistan.

Meanwhile, the Senate passed four various bills as reported by the committees concerned unanimously. According to the legislative business, The National University of Pakistan Bill, 2023, The Publication of the Holy Quran (Elimination of Printing and Recording Errors) (Amendment) Bill, 2022, The Federal Employees Benevolent Fund and Group Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2022 and The Pir

Roshaan Institute of Progressive Sciences and Technologies, Miranshah Bill, 2023 were passed by the Upper House. On behalf of Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Minister for Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain presented the Bill in the House to establish the National University of Pakistan.

He also presented a Bill pertaining to his Ministry to provide for the establishment of Pir Roshaan Institute of Progressive Sciences and Technologies, Miranshah, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. On behalf of Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Mufti Abdul Shakoor, Minister of State for Law and Justice Shahadat Awan presented the Bill to further amend the Publication of the Holy Quran (Elimination of Printing and Recording Errors) Act, 1973 to the extent of Islamabad Capital Territory. He also presented to further amend the Federal Employees Benevolent Fund and Group Insurance Act, 1969 on behalf of Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi.

BRT's routes: PHC seeks reply

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has ordered Secretary Transport, Mass Transit and Managing Director Urban Mobility along with other respondents to submit reply in petition seeking operationalization of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) from Stadium Chowk to Peshtakhara route, on Friday.

PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Ishfaq Ibrahim and Justice Abdul Shakoor heard writ regarding extension of BRT feeder route to Peshtakhara while Rahat Ali Nahqi Advocate appeared before court on behalf of petitioner. The counsel argued that government has announced feeders of BRT to cover maximum areas of the city but Stadium Chowk to Peshtakhara route didn't operationalized despite several other routes were started in the different area of the provincial metropolises.

The counsel argued hundreds of thousand people are living on this route including schools, government's offices and private sectors are facing problems due to non-operationalization of Peshtakhara feeder route. He added that the said route was identified in the master plan of BRT issued in 2018 while on 3rd May 2022 a notification was issued for Saddar to Peshtakhara route.

The counsel argued PHC to order operationalization of Peshtakhara feeder route while divisional bench has issued notices to Secretary Transport, Mass Transport and MD Urban Mobility along with other respondents to submit reply while adjourned further hearing.

Lateef Afridi murder case adjourned

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Peshawar has adjourned hearing of bail petition till today (Saturday) of alleged facilitator in former president Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Lateef Afridi murder case, on Friday.

According to prosecution, alleged culprit Fawad has facilitated murderer of Lateef Afridi Advocate namely Adnan Afridi while the facilitator was charged in the offense during investigation. It is worthy to mention that the case of Fawad has transferred from ATC-II to Court-I while further hearing should be continued in the same court while ATC special court issued notices to complainant for today (Saturday). Former president SCBA Lateef Afridi Advocate was killed in firing opened by Adnan with in the Peshawar High Court Bar Room on 16th January 2023.

'Markets to remain open after midnight'

LAHORE (PPI): The Lahore High Court on Friday allowed markets and shops to remain open till 1 am until Eid.

During the hearing of a petition for controlling smog in the city, Justice Shahid Karim was told that people used to come to markets after Iftar. If markets were not allowed to remain open till late night, the business community would suffer financial loss. The court acknowledged the arguments and allowed markets to remain open till 1 am. Earlier, expressing anger against the felling trees in Lahore, the court ordered to lodge a case against the officers who gave permission in this regard.

The court remarked that a case would be registered against the director general of Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) if proven that he gave permission to private housing schemes. The court observed that cutting a tree is like murdering a human being. It has caused global warming. The state counsel submitted that a committee has been formed by the Planning and Development Department of Punjab for controlling heat-wave.

The court ordered to use machines to remove residue of crops instead of burning them. It also ordered to make a policy in this regard and ensure its implementation and strict monitoring so that no one could burn residue.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi chairing the 4th meeting of the Senate of the Health Services Academy, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Two killed in occupied West Bank

GAZA (Agencies): Israel's military hit sites in Lebanon and Gaza early on Friday, in retaliation for rocket attacks it blamed on Hamas, as tensions following police raids this week on the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem threatened to spiral out of control.

Israeli authorities said two people were killed during a shooting attack in the occupied West Bank on Friday. Israel's military said a shooting attack was carried out on a vehicle near the Hamra settlement. The Magen David Adom ambulance service said two women were killed and a third was seriously wounded. According to the Associated Press, violence again broke out at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound before dawn prayers on Friday as "Israeli police wielding batons descended on crowds of Palestinian worshippers, who chanted slogans praising Hamas as they tried to squeeze into the site".

"An hour later, according to videos, people leaving the prayers staged a vast protest on the limestone courtyard, with Palestinians raising their fists and shouting in support of Hamas rocket fire", the report added. It further said that the Israeli police forced their way into the compound. Al Jazeera also shared a video of people fleeing in panic as Israeli forces broke up a group of Palestinian worshippers who wanted to visit the Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied East Jerusalem, to perform morning prayers on the third Friday of Ramadan. The video also shows meals and drinks placed on tables for the worshippers as they were having their Sehri meal for fasting.

The Associated Press said the Israeli police "did not comment on the earlier beatings but said security forces entered the holy compound after prayers in response to 'masked suspects' who threw rocks toward officers at one of the gates". It further reported that the Israeli military said it "pounded Gaza with more airstrikes on Friday, hitting 10 targets that it described as underground tunnels, along with weapons production and development sites belonging largely to the Hamas militant group".

"There were no immediate reports of casualties in Gaza, but the Palestinian Health Ministry said that one of the strikes caused some damage to a children's hospital in Gaza City", the Associated Press reported. Regarding the situation after the attack earlier today, it reported that "even as calm returned to Al-Aqsa a few hours after the burst of violence, the situation remained tense ahead of midday Friday prayers". Loud blasts rocked different

areas of Gaza, as Israel said its jets hit 10 targets including tunnels and weapons manufacturing and development sites of Hamas, which controls the blockaded southern coastal strip.

At around 4am, the military said it had also struck three Hamas infrastructure targets in southern Lebanon, where residents around the area of the Rashidiyeh refugee camp near the southern city of Tyre reported three loud blasts. "We strongly condemn the blatant Zionist aggression against Lebanon in the vicinity of Tyre at dawn today," Hamas said.

Two Lebanese security sources said the strike hit a small structure on farmland near the area from which the rockets had been launched earlier. The strike appeared to have left a large crater in farmland in the south, according to Reuters witnesses. A member of Lebanon's Civil Defense at the scene on Friday morning said there were no casualties. However, the Associated Press reported that "Israeli missiles struck an open field in the southern Lebanese town of Qalili, near the Palestinian refugee camp of Rashidiyeh, according to an Associated Press photographer and residents, killing several sheep and inflicting minor injuries on residents, including Syrian refugees".

The strikes came in response to rocket attacks from Lebanon towards northern Israeli areas, which Israeli officials blamed on Hamas. The military said 34 rockets were launched from Lebanon, of which 25 were intercepted by air defence systems. It was the biggest such attack since 2006 when Israel fought a war with the heavily armed Hezbollah movement.

"Israel's response, tonight and later, will exact a significant price from our enemies," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said following a security cabinet meeting. As the Israeli jets struck in Gaza, salvos of rockets were fired in response and sirens sounded in Israeli towns and cities in bordering areas. However, there were no reports of serious casualties and only one rocket hit a target, damaging a house in the southern town of Sderot.

The cross-border strikes came amid an escalating confrontation over Israeli police raids at the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which this year coincides with the Jewish Passover holiday. "We hold the Zionist occupation fully responsible for the grave escalation and the flagrant aggression against the Gaza Strip and for the consequences that will bring onto the region," Hamas said in a statement.

NA to hold Constitution's golden jubilee celebrations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Friday unanimously approved the motion to allow the use of the chamber of the National Assembly to hold the golden jubilee celebrations of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973.

Speaker, National Assembly, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf during the 51st session of the lower house after concluding the question hour session apprised the House that 10th April was a historic day as the first Islamic, Federal and Parliamentary Constitution of Pakistan of 1973 was unanimously passed by this August House.

He added that a special parliamentary committee constituted under the chairmanship of Senator Mian Raza Rabbani prepared an elaborate and well-planned programme to mark one-month-long celebrations across the country. The golden jubilee celebrations will commence from April 10 at the Parliament House. Raja Pervaiz said constitutional leaders from all the provinces, vice-chancellors of the universities, political workers and activists, students, members of civil society and other stakeholders would attend the event.

"All the members from the opposition and treasury benches should ensure their presence on this occasion to transfer this legacy and apprise the youth the next generation of our country on the significance of the Constitution," the National Assembly Speaker said. He requested the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs,

Murtaza Javed Abbasi to move the motion intended to allow the National Assembly chamber for holding the event.

The Minister started reading out the motion loud, "Under rule 288 of the Rules of the Procedure and conduct of the business in the National Assembly, 2007 that the requirement of rule 290 of the said rules be dispensed within order to the use of chamber of National Assembly on April 10 to commemorate the golden jubilee of the constitution of Pakistan 1973 after sitting of National Assembly and before the commencement of the joint sitting on that day." The Speaker put the motion to the House for its consent which was adopted unanimously.

Pakistan issues visas to Sikh pilgrims

ISLAMABAD (INP): On the occasion of Baisakhi celebrations, the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi issued 2,856 visas to Sikh pilgrims from India to participate in the annual festival scheduled to be held in Pakistan from April 9 to 18, 2023.

The issuance of visas was covered under the framework of the Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974. Every year, a large number of Sikh Yatraes from India visit Pakistan to observe various religious festivals

and occasions. The visas issued from New Delhi were in addition to the visas granted to Sikh pilgrims participating in these events from other countries.

The issuance of visas to religious pilgrims by the High Commission was in line with the government of Pakistan's commitment to fully implement the Bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines between the two countries.

Expressing his views on the auspicious occasion, Charge d'Affaires

SFD announces to provide \$240m to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) has announced provision of \$240 million to advance the multipurpose Mohmand Dam project in Pakistan. The agreement was signed by the Chief Executive Officer of SFD Sultan Abdulrahman Al-Marshad and the Federal Secretary Ministry of Economic Affairs Dr Kazim Niaz, whereas Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki was also presented on the occasion.

According to the press statement, the dam would significantly contribute in the country's energy security, increase sustainable water supply for agriculture and human consumption as well as improve resilience against floods. This loan represents a strong partnership between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in promoting sustainable development and achieving Sustainable Developments Goals.

The Mohmand Dam project will enhance water and food security besides improving the standard of living of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province as about 80 percent of the population resides in rural areas. The project, which will also help in boosting socioeconomic development by creating employment opportunities and reducing poverty levels in these areas, is aligned with SDG-2 (Food Security), SDG-6 (Clean Water), and SDG-7 (Clean Energy) and embodies SDG-17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

By using renewable energy sources, the project will generate about 800 MW of electricity, contributing to Pakistan's energy security. In addition, the storage of 1.6 million acre-feet of water will support sustainable agricultural practices, enable irrigation of 6,773 hectares of new land, and increase the total cropping area from 1,517 hectares to 9,227 hectares in the province. During the agreement signing ceremony, the CEO of SFD emphasized the strong developmental ties between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan and highlighted the significance of joint cooperation between development funds, as evidenced by this project.

He further emphasized that this initiative is an extension of SFD's continued support for development projects and programs in Pakistan since its inception. To date, the SFD has financed around 41 development projects and programs in Pakistan, amounting to approximately \$1.4 billion. In addition, SFD has financed between 2019 and 2023, oil derivatives worth more than USD 5.4 billion, to support Pakistan's economy, this comes as a continuation of the support provided by the Government of Saudi Arabia to the brotherly country Pakistan to build a sustainable economy.

PM launches mental health App

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday launched a mobile application and helpline to address the issues related to mental health. The App titled "Humraaz" and toll-free helpline 1166 would provide free mental health assistance to the people.

"On this World Health Day, I am pleased to announce the launch of Government's first dedicated mental health App #Humraaz & helpline," he said in a tweet. The prime minister said citizens' well-being and especially mental health was paramount for the society's improvement. "We need to remove taboo around mental health," he added.

Polls 2023: ECP issues code of conduct for media

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued a code of conduct for media for the general polls 2023. The ECP issued a code of conduct for media ahead of general polls 2023 which will be followed by newspapers, digital media and social media platforms.

The media organisations were bound to not publish or broadcast any content against the national sovereignty, independent judiciary and any statements that damage national unity.

According to the code, the media outlets will refrain from airing or publishing such content that targets religion, ethnicity, gender, community or personal attacks. The commission will take legal action in case of any complaint.

Moreover, the media organisations were also advised to avoid such content that affects the law and order situation on polling day. It also directed the media to not become part of political campaigns on the basis of government

expenses. It has been directed to refrain from allegations against the candidates and contact the ECP for confirming the accusations. The media houses will not air the election results one hour after the conclusion of the polling, moreover, media representatives will not create hurdles in the election process. The ECP also ordered the government and law enforcement agencies (LEAs) to ensure freedom of expression and smooth media coverage.

Alvi for greater focus on preventive healthcare

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has called for a greater focus on promoting preventive healthcare in the country which is not only cost-effective but would help reduce the disease burden. He said that most of the diseases could be prevented by taking precautionary measures and Pakistan, being a developing country, could hardly afford to fully meet the healthcare needs of its over 220 million population through curative treatments due to limited resources.

The President gave these remarks while chairing the 4th meeting of the Senate of the Health Services Academy (HSA), at Aiwan-

e-Sadr, today. The meeting was attended by the members of the Senate of HSA.

During the meeting, the President said that Pakistan needed to make goal-oriented and time-bound plans to improve its public health sector, adding that preventive healthcare should be the priority of the country's health policy. He highlighted that some countries had tremendously improved their health sectors by focusing on preventive health and investing in the intellectual development of their human resources.

The meeting was also briefed about the impacts of global warming and climate change which would likely increase the burden of dis-

eases due to rising temperatures. The meeting stressed the need for exploring funding options from international donors for research and development in the public health sector. It was also emphasised to develop a resource mobilization strategy to meet the future financial needs of HSA as well as the healthcare programmes in the country. The meeting also underscored the importance of devising a National Plan for Public Health to effectively address the challenges being faced by the country's health sector. The meeting also endorsed the minutes of the 3rd Senate meeting of the Health Services Academy.

ATC orders PTI leaders to appear before JIT

LAHORE (PPI): Six PTI leaders, including party Secretary General Asad Umar, were ordered by a Lahore Anti-Terrorism Court on Friday to appear before a joint investigation team (JIT) set up to look into the skirmishes between PTI supporters and Punjab police on March 18 in Zaman Park.

On March 18, a large police detachment started a search operation at PTI Chairman Imran Khan's residence, sparking skirmishes between his party's followers and police as he left his Zaman Park property in Lahore to appear before a judge in Islamabad. In a separate incident of PTI leaders Asad Umar and Farruk Habib attacked police parties outside Zaman Park with petrol bombs and stones when they failed to appear, Lahore ATC had revoked their provisional pre-arrest bail on March 29.

The Lahore ATC issued these instructions today after hearing a request for an extension of the interim bail of PTI leaders Asad Umar, Yasmin Rashid, Zubair Niazi, Hassan Niazi, Musarrat Cheema, and Mian Aslam Iqbal in a case involving misbehavior with law enforcement and property damage outside Zaman Park. The ses-

Another sedition case lodged against Imran

ISLAMABAD (INP): Another case of sedition against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan was registered Friday at Ramna police station, Islamabad. The case was registered on the complaint of a magistrate, according to police.

"Imran Khan's interview was aired on a private television channel in which inappropriate words were used about the officer of a sensitive institution," the text of the first information report (FIR) reads. "An attempt was made to defame various officers of sensitive institutions by taking their names. Accused Imran Khan also uses social media for his nefarious designs," it adds. "This act of accused Imran Khan is a threat to the integrity of the country and the state. The accused spread chaos among various groups, sections and the army with his speeches," it states.

sion was presided over by ATC Judge Abher Gul, and the PTI leaders' attorney, Barrister Salman, attended.

The hearing was earlier today postponed to 10am after the court instructed the PTI leaders to record their statements in the JIT. The court extended the leaders' temporary bail in the case till April 27 and ordered them to appear before the JIT at 2:30 PM today [Friday]. The JIT chief SSP Imran Kishwar told the court at the beginning of the session that only Asad Umar had joined the investigative process and "no one other than him" had done so. The

suspects were then told by the court to participate in the inquiry today. "All suspects may come to our office and join the investigation," SSP Kishwar remarked at this point. "All persons can join the investigation in the court as well," Barrister Safdar continued. The hearing was subsequently postponed until 10am after the court instructed SSP Kishwar to record the suspects' statements. SSP Kishwar informed the court that all suspects had recorded their testimonies and that they needed to be questioned in front of witnesses when the hearing resumed.