

Six die in Kohistan mishap

KOHISTAN (INP): At least six people died and four others were injured as a passenger van plunged into River Indus at Thoi Upper Kohistan. A passenger van was going towards Kundayan Pashwani from Kumaila Bazar fell into River Indus when the driver lost control of the vehicle. In resulting the six passengers died on the spot while four others who have jumped from the vehicle sustained critical injuries and were shifted to the hospital.

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In NA session, COAS says talks helped terrorists regroup

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir said Friday that negotiations with militants in the past helped terrorists regroup in the country. His remarks come as the nation faces a rise in terrorist activities, leading to the loss of precious lives. The army chief's comments were reflective of the National Security Committee's (NSC) meeting — which took place last week — in which the top military and civil brass decided that the recent spate of terrorism was a result of a soft corner for and reckless policy with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). In the same meeting, the committee also decided to kickstart an all-out comprehensive operation against militant outfits to root out the menace of

terrorism from the country. During his briefing today in an in-camera meeting of the lower house's National Security Committee, the COAS said the campaign will include representation not only from the security agencies but also from all departments of the government. "This is not a new operation but a whole national approach." "Alhamdulillah, there is no no-go area in Pakistan at this time. A large number of martyrs laid down their lives for this success. They shed their blood for the country," he said. The COAS added that terrorists have no other option but to accept the state's writ and noted that they regrouped due to the state's willingness to negotiate with them. "Security forces are ready for perma-

nent peace in the country. In this regard, intelligence-based operations are conducted on a daily basis," the army chief added. "We should leave the discussion of new and old Pakistan and talk about our Pakistan from now on. Pakistan has no shortage of resources and manpower," the army chief said. "Elected representatives of the people should decide the nation's destination. Pakistan Army will fully support Pakistan in its journey of development and success," he said. Members of the National Assembly welcomed the ideas of the army chief by banging the desk and clapping. Apart from the army chief, according to sources, senior members of the military also gave a detailed overview of the current situation to the members.

NA passes SC Review of Judgments, Orders Bill

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Friday passed the Supreme Court Review of Judgments and Orders Bill 2023 which aims at facilitating and strengthening the Supreme Court in the exercise of its powers to review its judgments and orders.

Article 188 of the Constitution empowers the Supreme Court, subject to the provision of any Act of Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) and any rules made by the Supreme Court, to review any judgment pronounced or any order made by it. The bill moved by MNA Shaza Fatima Khawja of PML-N proposes to enlarge the jurisdiction of the supreme court as expressly provided under Article 188 of the Constitution and strengthen the exercise of this power by the apex court.

According to the statement of the objects and reasons of the bill, it is necessary to ensure that fundamental rights to justice by providing for meaningful review of judgments and orders passed by the Supreme Court in exercise of its original jurisdiction under Article 184. The bill states that in case of judgment and orders of the supreme court in exercise of its original jurisdiction under Article 184 of the Constitution, the scope of review on both facts and law, shall be the same as an appeal under Article 185 of the Constitution. It proposes that a review petition shall be heard by a bench larger than the bench which passed the original judgment in order. It suggests that the review petitioner shall have the right to appoint any advocate of the supreme court of his choice for the review petition.

The bill states that the right to file a review petition shall also be available to an aggrieved person against whom an order has been made under clause (3) of the Article 184 of the Constitution, prior to the recommendation of this legislation. It suggests the petition shall be filed within sixty days of the commencement of this legislative piece. It asks that a review petition may be filed within sixty days of the passing of the original orders. It states that this legislation shall have effect notwithstanding anything contained in any other law, rules or regulations for the time being in force of the judgment of any court including the supreme court and a high

court. Speaking on the occasion, Law Minister Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar said that legislation is the prerogative of the parliament which has never interfered in the affairs of other institutions. He said this bill will facilitate the litigants and also strengthen the judiciary. Minister for Power Khurram Dastagir said this piece of legislation does not infringe upon the independence of the judiciary. He said through this legislation, the House wants to ensure that there is greater transparency in the procedures of the apex court.

Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said we want to strengthen the hands of the judiciary so that the people get speedy justice. He said parliament is the mother of democracy. He said that the remarks made by the Army Chief during an in-camera briefing on the security situation regarding this house as well as the office of the Prime Minister are propitious. He stressed that the parliament has never trespassed in the territory of other institutions and neither wants intrusion in its institution. Khawaja Asif said that the legislation carried out earlier and now was aimed at strengthening the judiciary to ensure speedy justice to the masses awaiting their hearings in 51,000 pending cases of the Apex Court.

The National Assembly also unanimously passed a resolution to utilize the amount deposited in the Supreme Court of Pakistan Diamer-Bhasha and Mohmand Dams Fund for the rehabilitation of flood affectees. The resolution was moved by Kesoo Mal Kheal Das who said that the then chief justice Saqib Nisar against the tradition of the judiciary illegally established a dam fund on July 10, 2018, for the construction of water reservoirs and dams.

The resolution said as per the news a five members bench headed by the present chief justice was informed that Rs16.53 billion had been deposited in the dam fund so far. It said that the deposited fund would reach Rs16.98 billion during the next quarter. However, the resolution demanded that the deposited fund should be placed in the national exchequer and the said amount should be utilized for the rehabilitation of people affected by the floods of 2022.

Bilawal lauds UN development system's role in helping flood-hit

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has praised the United Nations development system, especially its Resident Coordinator's office in Islamabad, for their crucial role in supporting Pakistan's national efforts to respond and recover from the "dire situation" left behind by last August's devastating floods.

"The Resident Coordinator's Office was our go-to place for coordinating UN response to catastrophic floods," he said in a video message to a roundtable discussion held at UN Headquarters in New York on the case study regarding the "co-ordinated and comprehensive response to Pakistan's floods in 2022". The foreign minister said the Resident Coordinator's role "significantly streamlined" coordination effort for the Government, and ensured smooth exchange of infor-

mation among all partners on the country's emergency situation.

He expressed his appreciation to the Resident Coordinator, Julien Harneis, and his able team for helping Pakistan to launch the flash appeal in a timely manner, and UN Secretary-General Guterres for his extraordinary support and his solidarity visit to Pakistan, in the wake of the floods. "The Resident Coordinator played a central role in closely coordinating the organization of the international relief and recovery assistance, especially through timely communications with the federal and provincial departments, multilateral agencies, and bilateral donors," FM Bilawal said.

That ensured timely identification of relief needs and the sources and modalities to meet these needs, and the coordination helped save precious lives and respond to

humanitarian needs of the affectees, he told the meeting. The Resident Coordinator, FM Bilawal said, also played a critical role in the formulation of Pakistan's comprehensive recovery plan with the help of a team including the World Bank, Asian Bank, European Union and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) that worked with the relevant Pakistan ministries.

Later, he said, Pakistan, in coordination with its partners from the UN system, formulated the Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Framework (4RF). "The 4RF provides an overarching framework for planning, financing, implementing and monitoring Pakistan's recovery efforts," the foreign minister said. "The Government's current focus is to transform these plans into concrete and viable projects for timely and effective implementation."

UAE confirms bilateral support of \$1b: Dar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Friday said that UAE authorities have confirmed to International Monetary Fund (IMF) for their bilateral support of US\$ one billion to Pakistan.

In a tweet on his official Twitter handle, he said, "UAE authorities have confirmed to IMF for their bilateral support of US \$ One billion to Pakistan." "State Bank of Pakistan is now engaged for needful documentation for taking the said deposit from UAE authorities," he tweeted.

SBP to receive \$300m from ICBC today: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) will receive back third and last disbursement today in its account amounting to \$ 300 million from Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), which will strengthen local foreign exchange reserves.

In a Tweet on Friday, Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhamme Ishaq Dar said that out of Chinese Bank's ICBC approved facility of \$1.3 billion (which was earlier repaid by Pakistan), State Bank of Pakistan would receive back third and last disbursement today in its account amounting to \$ 300 million. It will shore up forex reserves of Pakistan, he added.

Talks with PTI: PPP names panel

LAHORE (Agencies): After Asif Zardari's proposal that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif should initiate 'unconditional' talks with the opposition party Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI), PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Thursday formed a three-member body to persuade allies in the government to start the process with the Imran-led party.

According to a PPP statement, Senator Yousuf Raza Gillani, Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar and PM's Adviser on Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira will "engage with allies in the coalition government to reach consensus on dialogue with all political parties". The main task of the three PPP leaders is to persuade the PML-N and JUI-F to hold talks with PTI on all issues, including elections, to end the ongoing crises.

Kaira said PPP is primarily concerned about "deadlock" among the political players. "First, we will speak to our allies and try to convince them on holding talks with the opposition. Once we succeed in it then we will talk to the PTI to respond to the government's offer of dialogue," Kaira said.

When asked if PML-N was reluctant to sit with PTI, Kaira said: "PM Shehbaz had earlier offered PTI chief Imran Khan to sign the charter of economy. It was because of Khan's response to that offer which made the PML-N leadership bitter." Asked if the establishment is playing any role to bring the government and opposition on the table, Kaira said: "I would say that we don't have the blessings of the establishment but every sane element would like to see dialogue between the government and the opposition so that the ongoing crises come to an end."

However, the Sharifs do not want elections in Punjab on the Supreme Court's order and therefore see no point in holding talks with PTI. PPP's senior leader from south Punjab Haider Zaman Qureshi said his party believes that if mandated it can play a positive role in convincing all players to sit together and sort out all thorny issues relating to elections and economy. In a recent development, ousted prime minister Imran Khan has shunned his 'hard stance' of not sitting with what he calls "thieves", saying he is willing to hold talks, including with the establishment, on the issue of elections.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif attending a session of the National Assembly.

SC directs SBP to release funds for polls in Punjab

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court on Friday directed the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to release funds of Rs 21 billion funds to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for holding elections for the Punjab Assembly.

A three-member SC bench comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar conducted an in-chamber hearing of the case.

During the proceedings, Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan, Acting SBP Governor Ms Sima Kamil, Deputy Governor Inayat Hussain Chaudhary and Director Qader Bakhsh, Special Secretary Finance Awaiz Manzoor Sumra, Additional Secretary Amer Mehmood and Additional Secretary Tanveer Butt, and ECP Secretary Omer Hamid Khan, Director General Law Muhammad Arshad, Special Secretary ECP Zafar Iqbal and Additional Director General (Budget) Tafakkur Ali Asdi appeared before the bench. The SC in its written order said, "The court also examined the relevant provisions of the Constitution relating to the allocation of these funds.

"It was confirmed by the officials of the Finance Ministry that in terms of Article 84 of the Constitution, the Federal Government was fully authorized to make expenditures from the Federal Consolidated Fund for, inter alia, "expenditure upon some new service not included in the Annual Budget Statement" for the relevant financial year here being the year ending on 30.06.2023. For such expenditure the Federal Government obtains ex post facto approval and authorization from the National Assembly in terms of the procedure laid down in the Articles of the Constitution immediately preceding Article 84.

"On a consideration of all of the foregoing it is our view that there is absolutely no difficulty or hitch, either financially or procedurally or in terms of the relevant authorization by and under the Constitution, for the immediate release of Rs 21 billion to the Election Commission

for fulfilling its constitutional mandate for the holding of general elections to the Punjab and KP assemblies."

The court directed the SBP to allocate and release Rs 21 billion for purposes of the general elections to the Punjab and KP assemblies. The court order stated that "the State Bank should immediately send an appropriate communication to the Finance Ministry/Division and the said Ministry/ Division should forthwith and immediately issue a proper direction to the AGPR (Accountant General Pakistan Revenues) to increase the limit of the ceiling with respect to the Election Commission's ID No.2826 by the said sum of Rs 21 billion. This position shall also immediately be confirmed to the Election Commission by the said Ministry/ Division which shall also ensure that AGPR also forthwith gives proper intimation and confirmation to the Election Commission. All this must be done at the earliest and at the absolute latest not later than the close of business on Monday i.e. 17.04.2023.

"In this manner, the sum of Rs 21 Billion shall be and become available to and with the Election Commission in immediately releasable and utilizable funds for the purposes of holding the general elections to the Punjab and KP assemblies. "All the entities mentioned above i.e. the State Bank, Finance Ministry/ Division, AGPR and the Election Commission must act together and coordinate fully so that the order and direction of the court is implemented within the stipulated timeframe." The SC order further said, "The State Bank and the Finance Ministry/ Division shall by 18.04.2023 file compliance reports with this court to the effect that order of the court has been complied with, and the report of the Finance Ministry/ Division shall also include a confirmation in relation to AGPR. Likewise, the Election Commission shall on 18.04.2023 file a report with this court confirming that Rs 21 billion have become available to it in terms as stated above.

(Continued on Back Page)

Samarkand moot endorses Islamabad's stance on Kabul

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Fourth Ministerial Conference of Afghanistan's Neighboring Countries held in Samarkand on pointed out that the presence of terrorist groups in Afghanistan continued to pose threats to regional peace — a stance Pakistan has long been advocating.

"The Parties pointed out that all terrorist groups, namely the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al-Qaeda, the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Jundallah, Jaish al-Adl, Jamaat Ansarullah, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and other terrorist organizations based in Afghanistan continue to pose a serious threat to regional and global security," according to the declaration of the neighboring countries' meeting.

Recently, in its report, Radio Free Europe also said that after the United States pulled out its troops from Afghanistan, it left behind military equipment and weapons worth \$7 billion which later boosted the military capabilities of the banned Tahreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Baloch separatist groups.

According to the report, the US left behind weapons and equipment including firearms, communications gear, and even armored vehicles which gave the militants a "vast war chest."

Attended by the foreign ministers and senior officials of China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, the neighboring countries' meeting noted that the terrorism-related security situation in Afghanistan was still severe and reaffirmed their commitment to enhance cooperation on counter-terrorism and security among neighboring countries and to develop a united front against terrorism. Pakistan always maintained that the success of any regional or international effort to mitigate the current situation of Afghanistan will remain subject to IAG's seriousness for ensuring that Afghan soil is not used against any country.

Since the Taliban takeover, Pakistan also called for the establishment of an inclusive political structure, the adoption of moderate domestic and foreign policies, and safeguarding basic rights of all Afghans, including ethnic groups, women and children. The Afghan authori-

ties would also have to take visible steps to ensure that Afghanistan would never again serve as a breeding ground, safe haven or source of proliferation for terrorism.

"Terrorism is a common enemy and peace and stability is a collective responsibility. Any action by IAG to rein in anti-Pakistan elements and not to let Afghan soil against Pakistan would strengthen brotherly relations between the two countries," a security analyst said. Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar, who also addressed the meeting said, "We also believe that more needs to be done to eradicate the foothold of terrorist organizations from Afghanistan, without distinction and in a concerted and uniform manner. Greater cooperation and coordination with the interim Afghan Government remains critical. We look forward to working closely with the neighbouring states and the international community to this end." She said the menace of terrorism continued to blight the lives of Afghan people on a daily basis and the threat posed by terrorist organizations to the neighbouring states and the region, had accentuated.

PM, Asad discuss political issues F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communication Maulana Asad Mehmood called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Friday and discussed the overall political situation in the country.

The matters related to the Communication ministry also came under discussion, the PM Office said.

PM terms telephonic conversation with Iranian President as productive: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has termed his recent telephonic conversation with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi as productive.

In a tweet on Friday, he said they discussed various facets of bilateral relations and Israel's human rights violations. The Prime Minister said he congratulated the Iranian President on historic Iran-KSA deal that augurs well for regional stability. He also invited the Iranian President to visit Pakistan.

Al-Quds Day observed in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Rallies were taken out to show solidarity with innocent people of Palestine and condemn Zionists' atrocities against them in different cities of the country on Friday. The protesters were holding placards inscribed with slogans against Israel which has been committing atrocities against the innocent people of Palestine.

On the occasions, speakers urged the international community to take notice of the Israeli atrocities. They underlined for Muslim Ummah to forge unity and make joint efforts for liberalization of the Qibla-e-Awwal. Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf and Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durrani have reiterated Pakistan's commitment to provide diplomatic and moral support to the Palestinian people.

In a statement issued here in Islamabad on Friday on the Day of Al-Quds, observed on April 14, they stressed the importance of unity and solidarity among the Muslim Ummah to address the challenges faced by the people of Palestine. The Speaker said the last Friday of Ramazan is a day of solidarity with the Palestinian people, who have long been victims of Israeli aggression and oppression.

He urged upon the International Community to play an active role in stopping the atrocities by Israeli troops on innocent Palestine. The recent attacks on worshippers at Masjid Al-Aqsa were strongly condemned by the speaker. He called it a violation of human rights and an act of barbarism. Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durrani echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the need for the Muslim Ummah to unite in the face of present challenges.

93% flour distribution of set target achieved

LAHORE (APP): Deputy Commissioner Kasur Muhammad Irshad Bhatti on Friday said that the district administration under the Prime Minister Ramadan Package disbursed 1,349,104 free flour bags so far across the Kasur district. Presiding over a meeting to review the flour distribution process here at DC room, he said that the government was making efforts to provide relief to the deserving people. "93% of set target was achieved after distributing 1,349,104 flour bags among 487,190 BISF registered families", he highlighted. The free of charge flour bags would be given till 25 Ramadan(April 16),he concluded.

Two street criminals nabbed

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Police in a joint intelligence-based operation in the Surjani Town area, arrested two alleged involved in street crimes. Arrested accused namely Abdul Hameed and Ali Muhammad were involved in snatching cash and motorcycles from citizens at gunpoint, according to a news release issued here on Friday. The accused belonged to a three-member gang headed by Abdul Hameed alias Doda. Raids were being conducted to arrest their other accomplice. The arrested had been handed over to the police for further legal proceedings.

Qaddafi Stadium declared zero waste zone

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) is all up and alert to provide exceptional cleanliness facilities to citizens for Pak vs NZ international series. In this regard, LWMC teams are mobilized and all arrangements have been completed before match which includes the Janitorial services inside and outside the Gaddafi Stadium and audience seating areas. Washing and sweeping of all the enclosures of Qaddafi Stadium has also been completed before match followed by declaring Qaddafi Stadium as zero waste zone, where citizen will be charged Rs 100 over littering. In order to ensure the best cleanliness arrangements, CEO LWMC Babar Sahib Din paid visit to Qaddafi Stadium. For provision of the best cleanliness services during the international series the department has deployed 190 sanitary workers, 22 supervisors and 20 officers for the cleanliness of the stadium from inner side whereas, collectively more than 250 sanitary workers are deputed for cleanliness at inside, outside and at adjoin routes of the stadium. Furthermore, four water bowsters, three mechanical sweepers, five mini dumpers and a compactor shall also be used for washing and sweeping of the stadium. CEO LWMC Babar Sahib Din stated in this regard that Gaddafi Stadium operations managers will be present at the stadium for the Pakistan and New Zealand T20 series.

PSHS appreciates CDA Chairman's initiative

ISLAMABAD (APP): Private Sector Housing Schemes (PSHS) welcomed and appreciated the Chairman Capital Development Authority's initiative of clean and green Islamabad. Housing Societies have pledged to contribute about Rs 310 million to Environment Wing and Housing Societies Directorate for the purchase of special vehicles. Margalla View Housing Scheme D-17, CBR Housing Scheme Zone V, Zaraf Housing Scheme Zone V, and Services Cooperative Housing Scheme (Capital Enclave) Zone V have provided the equipment and made payments to the chairman CDA initiative. Bahria Town, IBECHS, FECHS E-11 Multi-professional Aiwane Sadar, New Islamabad Enclave Park View, Cabinet Division and T&T Housing Schemes have also promised to contribute to Chairman CDA's initiative

CM approves establishment of Plasma Fractionation industry in Sindh

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Friday allowed the health department to invite investors and bring in technology to introduce the Plasma Fractionation industry in the province. He was presiding over a meeting to discuss Plasma Fractionation Plan. The meeting was attended by Minister of Health Dr Azar Fazal Pechuho, Parliamentary Secretary for Health Qasim Soomro, Secretary of Health Zulfiqar Shah, Secretary to Chief Minister (CM) Raheem Shaikh, and other relevant officials. Minister Health while briefing the CM said that Plasma was a liquid component of whole blood and made up 50 to 55 percent of total blood volume. She added that Fractionation was a process by which plasma was separated into individual protein fractions that were further purified for medical use. Dr Azra said that the active process of Plasma Fractionation was conducted at blood banks such as donor management, blood collection, screening, component making, storage, shelf life, quality control, waste disposal, data management, awareness, and voluntary blood donation drives. The health minister disclosed that currently large-scale manufacturers mostly focus on Albumin used to treat severe trauma and terminally ill patients, Immunoglobulins for the treatment of immune deficiencies, autoimmune diseases, and severe bacterial and viral infections. Coagulation factor for Hemophilia and Fibrinogen for treatment of liver cirrhosis, postpartum hemorrhage, and disseminated intravascular coagulation. Dr Azra also about the benefits of having a prescription drug monitoring program (PDMPs). She said that for patients it would be an effective, locally available, and affordable prescription. For Doctors, it would be authentic screening methods and utilization of recovered plasma. "For Sindh, it would bring in the latest technology, improve skills, create job opportunities, generate resources, develop cold chain, introduce screen support equipment, and establish a fractionation industry within the next two to three years," she added. The chief minister in principle approved the plan and directed the health department to bring in investors and technology and suggest changes, if necessary, in the existing laws to support the plan.

Karachi Admin imposes fines of Rs.0.372 million

KARACHI (APP): During its ongoing campaign to check illegal profiteering, the Karachi administration, on Friday, imposed fines of more than Rs.0.372 million on 72 vendors for overcharging the customers. The administration on the 23rd of Ramadan ul Mubarak imposed a fine of Rs.42000 on four flour sellers, fine of Rs.42500 on six bakeries, fine of Rs.75000 on 18 poultry shops, Rs.89000 on 17 grocery stores, Rs.15000 on two vegetable sellers, Rs.16000 on 11 fruit sellers and fine of Rs.105000 was imposed on 14 milk sellers. According to a statement issued here, the Commissioner Karachi, Muhammad Iqbal Memon, vowed to keep the campaign against illegal profiteers continue and instructed all the magistrates to carry out field visits and take action against the shopkeepers found guilty of profiteering so that relief could be provided to the citizens. Ensure sell of items of daily use at prescribed prices by holding on the spot auction of confiscated goods in presence of the concerned vendors, he further directed. Karachi administration has also made arrangements to set up bachat bazaars under the supervision of all Deputy Commissioners to ensure the availability of items of daily use to citizens at official rates, the commissioner said. He also appealed to the citizens to register their complaints against the illegal profiteering at Commissioner Karachi's control room by calling to telephone numbers 02199203443 or 02199205645.

KU awards 38 PhD, 73 MPhil, 16 MS degrees

KARACHI (APP):The Advanced Studies and Research Board of the University of Karachi has awarded 38 PhD, 73 MPhil, and 16 M.S (30 Hours Course Work) degrees in various disciplines during the recently held ASRB meeting. The ASRB meeting was chaired by KU Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi, said a statement on Friday. The MPhil degrees were awarded to Yamna Khatoun (Agriculture), Dr. Tanveer Fatima (Anatomy [BMSII]), Sarah Nizmani (Applied Economics [AERC]), Khuzaima (Arabic), Syeda Rabab Zehra, Sarah Shakeel, Sana, Nimra Maqsood, and Tooba Hussain (Biochemistry), Khalid Hussain (Biotechnology [KIBGE]), Urooj Fatima (Botany), Faryal (Chemistry), Sidra Nisar, and Safia Khan (Chemistry), Madiha Sardar, Rabia Anees, Raza Ullah, Abdul Jabbar, and Khurshid Jalal (Chemistry [HEJ]), Amber Hasan (Economics), Zubia Naz (Education), Maaziya Aijaz (Environmental Studies), Sumbul Yousuf (European Studies [ASCE]), Syed Salman Haider Masood Naqvi (Food Science and Technology), Naureen (Genetics), Bisma, and Faiza Tariq (Geography), Sharin Iqbal, Adeel Ahmed Khan, Aisha Tahir, and Fawad Hafeez Qazi (Health, Physical and Sports Sciences), Tayyaba Ahmed (Islamic Learning), Ammarah Siddiqui, Syeda Shireen Zahra Naqvi, and Salman Abid (Library and Information Sciences), Rabia, Afifa Sarwar, Javeria Asif (Marine Biology), Urooj Fatima (Marine Science), Shehzeen Khalid Maskar (Mathematics), Muhammad Jaaees Imdad (Microbiology), Narjis Fatima, Taj Wali Khan, Hina Nawaz, and Farheen Mansoor (Molecular Medicine), Samia Waseem, Hassana Ahmed, and Quratul Aen Ismail (Pharmaceutical Chemistry), Uzma Urooj, and Farkhanda Kokab (Pharmacognosy), Aimun Shakir, Marium Tariq, and Mahwish Fatima (Pharmacology), Muhammad Yasin (Physics), Beenish, and Amber Ayaz Memon (Physiology), Eraj Atiq (Political Science), Rida Bashir, Ahmer Abdullah, and Awaisha Inayat (Psychology), Najia Zahid (Public Administration), Zakia Begum (Sindhi), Farva Abbas Bhutto (Sociology), Farzana Faiz (Teacher Education), Zakia, and Hameed Hussain (Urdu), Nosheen Bano, Muhammad Haris, Muhammad Anas, Muhammad Hasham, and Muhammad Shakeel Shahzad (Usooluddin), and M. Irfan Shah, and Bilawal Manzoor (Zoology). The PhD degrees were awarded to Abdul Wahab Soomro (Agriculture and Agribusiness), Syeda Bushra (Applied Economics [AERC]), Zara Sami, Uroosa Tariq, Ammara Rafique, and Sania Ishfaq (Biochemistry), Samreen Ali (Botany), Shahbaz Manzoor, Saira Yasmeen, and Nida Masroor (Commerce), Junaid Furrukh Siddiqui (Education), Fehmida (International Relations), Salma Begum, Muhammad Khalid Khan, Muhammad Attaulah.

GOVERNMENT OF KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA

OFFICE OF THE TEHSIL MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION NOWSHERA

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Royal Homes Phase 1 Nowshera

The public is hereby informed through this notice that M/s Royal Homes Phase 1 Azakhel Nowshera has applied to tehsil Municipal Administration Nowshera for sanction of the scheme named "Royal Homes Phase 1" located in Azakhel Payan Tehsil Nowshera, District Nowshera having a total area of 280 kanals. Upon Scrutiny by District Scrutiny Committee (DSC) and issuance of Validation Certificate by DSC, TMA Nowshera has sanctioned this scheme. Detail of various categories of plots provided in the scheme is as follows:

Residential	Size of Plots	No. of Plots
	50x90	64
	35x70	109
	30x60	64
	30x50	40
	25x50	73
	Total Plots=	352
Commercial	12.19 Kanal	01
	2.39 Kanal	01
Others	1.6K, 1.8K, 1.5K, 2.3K, 1.0K.	05

The public is hereby informed through this notice that the following plots in the scheme have been mortgaged with the Tehsil Municipal Administration Nowshera as security towards provision of development works (provision of roads, water supply sewerage and drainage system, street light and electricity network, gas facilities and horticulture works). It is the responsibility of the developer of the scheme to provide and complete the development work. The developer cannot sell or transfer these plots until these are redeemed after due completion of the development works. List of mortgaged is as follows;

Plot Number	Block	Dimension	Area Kanal	Marla	Total Sq.ft.
14-15	A	50x90	1	13	8984.25
32 to 37	B	50x90	4	09	24230.25
47 to 55	B	50x90	7	08	40293.25
79 & 80	A	35x70	0	18	4900.50
120 to 134	B	35x70	6	15	36753.75
169 to 173	C	35x70	2	05	12251.25
175	A	30x60	0	6.61	1799.57
280 to 299	A	25x50	4	11	24774.25
	Total Area		28	5.61	153987.32

Public is informed through this notice not to enter into any transaction, sale or purchase of the mortgaged plots till they are redeemed.

Tehsil Municipal Officer

Tehsil Municipal Administration Nowshera

INF(P) 911/23

LAHORE: A large number of faithful offering Namaz-e-Jumma prayers during Holy Fasting Month of Ramzanul Mubarak at Badshahi Mosque.

Sindh Govt launches 2nd route electric bus service in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh government on Friday launched the second route of the electric bus service in Karachi under its Peoples Bus Service programme. The new route No 2 of the EV bus service will start from Baharia Town and end at Malir Halt via M9 Toll Plaza, Baqai University, Jinnah Avenue, Malir Cantt, Tank Chowk, Model Colony. Initially, 13 electric buses will run on this route. Earlier, in a tweet, the PPP leader said, "Sindh government under the direction of party's leadership and CM Sindh is going to start new routes of buses for the people of Karachi. Three new routes will start in current month of Ramadan. The public can use now new fleet of EV buses." It is pertinent to mention here that, this year in January the government launched the first route of electric bus service. The buses on route 1 run between Karachi Airport and Seaview. The first route of the electric bus service starts from Tank Chowk near Jinnah Avenue to pass through Airport, Sharea Faisal, FTC, Korangi Road, Khayaban-i Ittehad to reach Clock Tower at Seaview. Last week Sindh Information and Transport Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon disclosed that on the directives of Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, the proposal to increase the fares of the Peoples Bus Service, which is operational in Karachi and other urban parts of the province, has been deferred twice for the benefit of the people. The transport minister told the media persons that the proposal to increase the fares of the Peoples

Bus Service was presented twice in the meeting of the provincial cabinet but it was deferred on the directives of the CM. Memon said the CM has given directions to this effect to ensure the welfare of the people of the province to the maximum possible extent amid the phenomenal hike in the prices of essential products. He said that a passenger commuting through a carrier of the Peoples Bus Service can travel up to 40 kilometres on a fare of just Rs50. This sum is way less than what someone spends to cover such a distance on a motorbike, he added. He informed the journalists that three new routes of electric buses are being launched in Karachi on the special directives of the leadership of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the CM.

Health of Noor Jahan, elephant improving

KARACHI (APP): Administrator Karachi Dr Syed Saif-ur-Rahman has said that the health of Noor Jahan the elephant in Karachi Zoo is gradually improving, for the first time since January 2023, Noor Jahan the elephant has rested in the pond and all his organs are functioning well. He said this on the occasion of his visit to Karachi along with the Director of Zoo, medical team of Four Paws and other officers on Friday. The Administrator said that the Four paws team from abroad is in constant contact through video link and their instructions are followed in relation to treatment. Elephant Noor Jahan has been given 20 drips since yesterday to remove her weakness. The medical team told administrator Karachi that Noor Jahan is eating her food well and there is nothing alarming in this regard. The medical team of KMC and Four Paws is examining the elephant regularly and the prescribed medicines are being administered regularly. The administrator expressed the hope that very soon the elephant Noor Jahan will fully recover and after recovery, steps will be taken to transfer the elephant to the Safari Park.

Delegation of ASPs visits PSCA

LAHORE (APP): A delegation of ASPs trained by the National Police Academy visited the Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) here on Friday. The 14 officers of the 50th Specialized Training Programme delegation were briefed by Managing Director M u h a m m a d Kamran Khan. Trainee Officers asked questions about Safe Cities working, challenges, and security improvements. The delegation was taken to various sections of IC3 namely, the operations monitoring centre, emergency call center, dispatch control center, and media center. The delegation was also briefed on Advanced Traffic Management System and Electronic Challan System. MD PSCA Muhammad Kamran Khan said : " We are transforming police into a fully equipped, motivated and modern law enforcement cum response unit. Addressing the under training officer, the MD PSCA said, young officers

should learn the law and have a comprehensive understanding of the various stages of the investigation. He added police officer had the power to treat the oppressed with respect, and officers should consider services as honesty and worship. On this occasion, under training officer said, Safe City would be helpful in modern methods of investigation and suppression of crimes. The visit concluded with the presentation of a souvenir shield from both sides.

‘Financial support to hospital by philanthropists good amen’

LAHORE (APP):The financial support to hospitals by philanthropists is a good omen which ultimately helps increase treatment facilities for patients. These views were expressed by Post-graduate Medical Institute Principal Professor Dr M Al-Fareed Zafar while speaking at a ceremony, held for donating high quality cloth worth millions of rupees to Professor of Urology Dr Khizar Hayat Gondal by the Anjuman-e-Tajran Beadon Road for the Operation Theater of Department of Urology, LGH, here on Friday. He said that there was nothing greater than serving people, especially the ailing humanity. He added that traders

always cooperated with the hospitals to facilitate patients, for which the hospital administration was grateful to them. Prof Khizar Hayat Gondal said that out of the donation, 500 sheets for Operation Theaters and 250 gowns for doctors/ nurses could be made which would not only benefit surgery patients but also doctors and staff to save them from all kinds of infections. Malik Munir, leader of Anjuman-e-Tajran termed the LGH Urology Department as a model and demanded the government build such wards with modern facilities in all hospitals of the province with which both patients and doctors are satisfied.

MILITARY ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER NOTICE

1. The office of CMES (A) Psc invites sealed tenders for the following works in light of PPRA Rules 13 (1) of 2004.

Ser	Name of Work
1.	Const of resdl / non resdl bldgs under AOR of CMES (Army) Peshawar
2.	Repair / Maint of resdl / non resdl bldgs under AOR of CMES (Army) Peshawar
3.	Provn of Ext Svcs works under AOR of CMES (Army) Peshawar
4.	Repair / Maint of Ext Svcs Works Under AOR of CMES (Army) Peshawar

2. The contractors are required to submit their applications for issuance of tender documents alongwith their complete credentials as shown at (Serial No.8). The applications shall be scrutinized and the tender documents will only be issued to the firms who have sufficient experience in the relevant field and satisfy other special conditions required for the job and area. Tender will only be issued to the scrutinized contractors. The tender must be received in the accepting officer by 1130 Hrs on 03 May 2023 and will be opened at 1200 Hrs on the same date.

Note: Contractors shall provide certificate that they are not involved in any type of litigation with Government department in the Court of Law and that no special report of Directorate of inspection and Evaluation (E-in-Cs Branch GHQ) is outstanding against them.

3. All Contractors will certify in writing that they are registered with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), and will submit a copy of their registration. Contractors not registered with PEC are ineligible to apply.

4. Contractor born on approved list of MES in Categories 'A', 'B', 'C' or 'D' and also having experience of this type should only apply.

5. Contractors who desire may be present at the time of opening of tenders.

6. The accepting officer reserves the right to accept or reject the tender. Rejected tenders will be dealt with as per Para 33 (i) of PPRA Rules.

7. The interested parties can contact to concern CMES / authorized representative for further details from 0800 hrs to 1500 hrs on all working days.

Ser	Name of Works executed during last two years and in hand	Agency	Amount of Works (Rs)	Time allowed in months	Date of Commencement	Date of Completion	%age Prog of Works in hand	Departmental performance report on each work by the Engineer in charge
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KP Universities in financial crisis

Fatima Safyan Khan

It was June 2021, when the University of Peshawar, after going through a financial crisis for several years, had finally been able to pay salaries and pensions to its employees without borrowing a single penny. But the happy memory of days gone by.

One of the great alma mater of Pakistan, the University of Peshawar is now facing a financial deficit of more than 400 million and is unable to pay salaries and pensions. The situation further deteriorated because of the pandemic, online classes and a low number of students.

Likewise, other public universities i.e Islamia College University Peshawar, University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar and

Agriculture University are also facing a deficit. The establishment of new universities across the province facilitates the students to get admission to the nearby universities. The professors and university staff are deprived while not having salaries and they went on strike. The precious educational year of students is passing in vain. On the other hand, students are also reluctant to submit semester fees as they are assessing the situation of the teacher's unavailability and they are demanding regularly paid teachers.

Moreover, the situation is exacerbated due to the political turmoil in the country. The federal government had conducted the wicked treatment with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government back in January this year by taking

over Rs.50 billion to bypass the then PTI-led provincial government and instead spend the funds on recommendations from politicians belonging to the coalition government. That heinous act of the federal government put pressure on the provincial government and cause serious fiscal trouble. The lack of funds from the federal government paralyzed the provincial government and its aftershocks are experiencing more after the interim set-up.

Therefore to counter the crisis in public universities at KP, both the federal and provincial governments should consider the matter seriously and should allocate funds to this sector instead of spending on new development projects and parliamentarians' schemes.

Dy chairman senate condoles with bereaved family

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Deputy Chairman Senate of Pakistan Mirza Khan Afridi and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Excise and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi visited Hayatabad Phase 2 and condoled on the death of Haji Fazal Mabood, elder brother of Caretaker Provincial Irrigation Minister Haji Fazal Elahi who breathed his last the other day.

They remained there for some time and expressed deep sympathies with the sons of the deceased, Ahmad Faheem, Sultan Room, Fazal Wahid and Ahmad Nadeem, and offered Fateha for the deceased. They prayed that Allah grant the late Haji Fazl Mubood a place in Jannah and give all the members of the bereaved family the courage to endure this irreparable trauma with patience and perseverance.

UNHCR reps commended Panagah services

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The representatives of UNHCR from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Priscilla and madam Lubna on Friday paid a detailed visit to the Panagah of Social Welfare Department at Pajagi Road here.

District Social Welfare Officer Peshawar, Noor Muhammad Mehsood on the occasion took the UNHCR representatives for a detailed visit of Panagah and apprised them regarding facilities being provided at the centre to the deserving people.

He told the UNHCR representatives that the Panagah of Social Welfare Department, not only provides food but also other amenities of life to the destitute. The UNHCR representatives praised the facilities being provided at Panagah and also commended the special attention given to the Afghan refugees in education, food packages and rehabilitation from drug addiction. They said the UNHCR and Social Welfare always had closed bonds and cooperation and hoped that this relation would remain intact in future.

KP fulfills pre-condition IMF deal: Pir

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant for Revenue to the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pir Haroon Shah has confirmed the fulfillment of all conditions and requirements of the expected agreement with the IMF by the KPGovernment.

In a statement issued from his office on Friday, the Special Assistant for Revenue, Pir Haroon Shah, said that the financial crisis has affected the entire Pakistan, especially Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but the provincial government is making efforts to control all unnecessary expenditures, with visible results. He stated that a condition related to General Sales Tax (GST) was imposed by the IMF, which was approved by the provincial cabinet yesterday, and now it is hoped that an agreement with the IMF will be reached at the federal level.

Pakistan highly values its relations with Indonesia: Muqam

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Adviser to the Prime Minister for Political and Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture, Engr Amir Muqam on Friday said that Pakistan attached great values to its relations with Indonesia, which were governed by mutual respect and cooperation.

Engr Amir Muqam expressed these views during his meeting with Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia, Adam Mulawarman Tugio that called on him at his office in Islamabad, says a press release issued here today.

Adviser to Prime Minister Engr Amir Muqam conveyed that Pakistan attached great value to its relations with Indonesia which were governed by mutual respect and cooperation and expressed that Pakistan and Indonesia had maintained decades old close and cordial relations which had historical roots.

He said Pakistan was looking forward to further strengthen bilateral relations with Indonesian cultural heritage vis-à-vis regular exchange. Ambassador Adam Mulawarman Tugio acknowledged the existing scope and scale of cooperation in the field of cultural heritage between the two countries and



desired to undertake joint ventures in respective fields on progressive basis. He invited Engr Amir Muqam to visit Indonesia, which was accepted by the adviser to the Prime Minister.

The Indonesian Ambassador also requested for providing a space at Pakistan National Library for establishing an international corner, which was approved by the Adviser to Prime Minister. The Ambassador thanked the Adviser to the PM and also accepted the invitation to visit Swat valley.

Amir Muqam appreciated the

efforts of the Indonesian Ambassador and assured that a lot is yet to be explored in culture between the two countries and we are hoping to start a cultural exchange program. They also agreed to work together to promote people-to-people contacts, enhance trade and investment and strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries. Senior Joint Secretary for National Heritage and Culture Muhammad Bilal and Cultural Coordinator Indonesian Embassy Miss Hira Khan was also present on the occasion.

Swarm of beggars rise in Peshawar

Najibullah Khan

The increasing number of beggars in the provincial capital Peshawar has become a challenge for the authorities. The beggars adopting irritating techniques at shopping centers food outlets, restaurants till late night in a bid to collect maximum alms and charity depriving the deserving people of their due share in charities.

The city is flooded with the beggars these day, including male, female, children and persons with disabilities were being witnessed in traffic crossing points, mosques gates public places in the city. Every day, we find a large number of beggars when we come out of any restaurant, shopping mall, and mosque or anywhere in the city. When you pay some amount to one of them, many others appear instantly and create a scene," said a Peshawarite, Khalil Khan.

He added that these beggars are so irritating that they would never let anyone enjoy their dinner or shopping. "The worst thing is that they deprive those who are in real need and can't do any job to earn livelihood. Majority of

them begging on the streets are those young men and women who are physically fit and can better do other jobs instead of asking for alms, however children who have been forced by parents to go to the streets and earn money to run the kitchen as well as to arrange for the luxuries and drugs of their parents.

Young girls and boys beggars carrying wipers in hands often start cleaning cars windows on traffic signals without permission in order to get money. It is risky to down the window panes of vehicles especially at the traffic signals as beggars of all ages start knocking them consistently to enforce resident to give something in charity. "I was studying in Class-II till a couple of years ago but my father is ill and we have no one to feed our family, so my mother bought me this wiper to clean the windshield of the car. I don't ask for alms but people give me money of their own free will," said Shahid. Many of them are professional beggars holding and carrying false medical prescriptions and disability certificates sit outside mosques to gain sympathy so they will get their alms. Some of them crying, weeping and chasing people in public places

while wearing miserable cloths.

Among them large number of beggars of are drug addicted which is very serious issue that need to be address. They are not only stealing from home but their behavior is having negative impact on the society. Beggary has been declared illegal. But unfortunately, The authorities concerned appeared to have turned a blind eye in this regard, campaigns against beggars in Peshawar were launched several time in the past years but the drive proved a complete failure as no preparations were made for rehabilitation of the beggars and breaking the network of professionals through proper investigation. The law has not been fully implemented on ground, which resulted in an increase of beggars day by day in Peshawar. Resident of Peshawar of demand the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa KP government to take a strict action against them and take long-term measures to restrict child beggars and pick child beggars from markets, roads, traffic signals, street for their rehabilitation and give financial support in term of jobs and skill so they don't return to the street for begging.

Role of civil servants vital for country's uplift

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Director General, National Institute of Management (NIM), Captain (Retd) Usman Gul here Friday said the role of civil servants in development and prosperity of the country carried paramount importance and it was their duty to help people legally, morally and religiously besides ensuring prompt service delivery.

He was addressing the farewell function of 36th mid career management course as chief guest at

NIM Peshawar. All the officers and trainers of the institute attended. "NIM is feeling proud that this time a large number of officers from federal, four provinces, AJK and Gilgit Baltistan has completed their professional training from here," he said.

He said the country was facing tough challenges and bureaucracy could take it out from existing challenges through ensuring good governance and prompt service delivery to people. Chief Instructor of Mid Career Management

Course (MCMC), Muhammad Tayab presented the course report and highlighted objectives, efforts and achievements of the NIM Peshawar in detail.

Director General, Captain Retd Usman Gul expressed the hope that all the 54 civil officers of the completed course would help utilize their learnt skills and training to address all the shortcomings in their respective departments quickly and ensure prompt service delivery to facilitate people.

Partly cloudy weather with isolated rain predicted in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Friday predicted that mainly hot and partly cloudy weather is expected over most dis-

tricts of the province.

However, it said isolated rain-thunderstorm with gusty winds is likely to occur over Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Malakand, Buner, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram,

Torghar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Hangu, Kurram, Karak and Kohat districts during evening/ night.

PM youth development program provides excellent opportunities

PESHAWAR (APP): The Prime Minister's youth development program, an umbrella project covering 15 programs, has provided an excellent opportunity to the young generation to excel in studies viz a viz choice professions and equip themselves with all necessary skills and expertise to compete at local and international markets.

Launched with an estimated cost of Rs150 billion in all provinces of Pakistan, the Prime Minister's youth development program started empowering the youth of Pakistan including girls' students with modern and technical education besides providing them paid internship. Besides other goal-oriented and pro-people's projects and initiatives launched by the prime minister in the last one-year of his government, PM's youth development program was among one of the major

achievements of the present coalition government aimed at educational, economic and financial empowerment of youth irrespective of their political affiliation, caste and family background.

Ikhtair Wali Khan, PML-N KP spokesman and former member provincial assembly told APP that despite the inherited tough economic and political challenges left by the PTI incompetent rulers, disruption in global fuel and food supply line due to Russian-Ukrain war, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has successfully launched the landmark youth development and economic empowerment program under which scores of services including 'Teleschool Pakistan App, Google for Education and Digital Continuous Professional Development' were started.

The landmark package includes 60,000 paid internships, technical and vocational training to 100,000 youth, distribution of 100,000 laptops, provision of 5,000 scholarships for the students of Balochistan and erstwhile tribal areas. Besides around 1,000 PhD scholarships at top 100 universities in the United States and 75 scholarships at top 25 universities of the world, he said establishment of 21 university campuses in remote districts and 250 sports complexes were also part of the package.

It envisaged youth peace and development student councils in 80 universities, 75 leadership awards, 500 innovation grants worth Rs5-20 million each, Rasta grants for research, 12 Seerat chairs, seven centres of excellence and uplift of 20 poorest districts. He said that the present coalition gov-

ernment has successfully handled the challenge of last year's devastating floods by providing relief to millions flood affectees in terms of Rs25,000 per individual cash, agriculture and crops packages to help the flood victims.

Climate diplomacy to present Pakistan's case on the international stage was employed and as chair of G77 plus China, "we were instrumental in the establishment of loss & damage climate change's fund to help the vulnerable countries at Geneva moot where donors countries and friends of Pakistan had pledged of USD 9 billion for Pakistan." He said the decisiveness with which the coalition government undertook rescue, relief and rehabilitation efforts in all provinces including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, had provided social protection to millions of

marooned people and mobilization of international community and government resources to help the flood victims was globally praised.

The Prime Minister had launched free of charge flour atta for millions of poor households in all provinces including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and personally monitored its distribution process by visiting different districts at Ramadan. He said the government has succeeded in establishing Pakistan's credibility as a partner and friend and keeping the national economy to stay afloat despite the PTT's economic landmines. He said the confidence of old friends of Pakistan was restored and bilateral relationships with China, KSA and UAE were significantly improved after the PTT's poor foreign policies.

The PML-N leader said that

Pakistan had managed to exit the FATF grey list, which was a great achievement on the diplomatic front of the Shehbaz Sharif government. To provide quality communication and transport services, he said that transport infrastructure projects were launched at Islamabad that brought significant improvement in people's lives there. Scores of alternative energy resources projects including hydel, coal and solar energy were launched in different areas of the country by the government in its last one year aimed to make Pakistan self-sufficient in energy sectors. He said that people of KP and Punjab were fed up with hollow slogans of PTI and pinned high hopes of PML-N as it was the only party that can address the economic and political challenges and make the country an Asian economic tiger.



In brief

11-year-old boy shot dead F.P. Report

DIR LOWER: A teenage boy was shot dead by unknown accused in Chamkot area of Hayaserai in Lal Qilla tehsil here on Friday. Police said, 11-year-old Kamal, son of Badshah Azeem was shot dead by unknown accused near his home on Friday morning. The accused managed to flee the scene after killing the young boy. The police of Hayaserai said investigation into the incident was underway however so far no clue of the assailants was ascertained.

Bid to smuggle hashish foiled F.P. Report

KOHAT: Police Station Doaba on Friday foiled a bid to smuggle huge quantity of hashish and arrested a member of inter-provincial gang of drug peddler with 40.26kg hashish. Acting on tip-off, DSP Tal and Mamu Khawar check post incharge Daud Khan along with police team intercepted a motorcar bearing registration No AQW-738 and on checking found 40.26kg hashish concealed in secret cavities of the car. The police arrested the drug peddler identified as Amana Ghulam resident of district Tank from the spot and shifted him to Doaba police station and after registering an FIR started investigation from him. The accused disclosed during the initial investigation that he was trying to smuggle narcotics from Hangu district to DI Khan.

PASCO foils wheat smuggling F.P. Report

HAFAZABAD: Officers of district administration and PASCO foiled attempt to smuggle heavy quantity of wheat to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and different areas of the Punjab from Hafizabad and taken 10 trucks loaded with more than six thousand sacks of 1000 kg each to government custody. According to details, Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Umer Farooq Warriach was imposed ban on carrying wheat out of the district Hafizabad and special check posts were setup all entry and exist points of the district. Zonal Manager PASSCO Mukarram Javed said that government was imposed restriction to take wheat out of the district but some people were trying to smuggle wheat to KPK and other areas. On Wednesday, 10 trucks reached at Qadirabad, Chak Chathah, Iqbal Nagar and other check posts and officers appointed at check posts checked suspected trucks and taken into custody 10 trucks loaded with more than six thousand sacks of 1000 kg wheat each. Mukarram Javed said that trucks shifted to Iqbal Nagar PASSCO purchase centres while legal action was being taken against smugglers.

Enrollment drive kicks off in Dir schools



F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The district administration and the elementary and secondary education department launched an enrolment campaign in public sector schools for the session 2023-24 in the Lower Dir district here the other day.

The teachers' community during a function was asked to achieve the target of enrolment in their respective schools as the department had set the target of 15,000 new enrolments for the year. The campaign for the enrolment of new students in the government primary schools in Lower Dir

was launched during a ceremony held here at the district education office Balambhat, where additional deputy commissioner (Relief) Tariq Hussain was the chief guest.

The Assistant District Education Officers (ADEOs) Tausif Khan, Saeed ur Rahman, Wajeeh Uddin, SDEOs, principals, teachers and NCHD Coordinator were present. Speaking on the occasion, the ADC urged the community to enroll their children between 4 and 7 years of age in their nearby government schools, saying it was the children's fundamental right. He also directed the

staff of the education department to make all-out efforts to achieve the enrolment target.

On this occasion, Tariq Hussain enrolled some students at the GPS Balambhat and GPS Timer and gave them books and school bags. He also encouraged the parents to give priority to the education of their children. SDEO Raza Shah said that the education department was trying to improve the quality of education as qualified teachers had been appointed in most schools. He said the education department had set a target of 15,000 new enrolments for the district.

Eid package among orphan students distributed

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Tanzim Asatza Pakistan (TAP) distributed Eid package along with bags among 170 orphans and destitute students.

According to details, Sahibzada Sadiq Jan, the President of Tanzim Asatza Pakistan, Principal Abbas Khan, and Muslim Khan, the President of Tehsil Balambhat were also present on this occasion. Copies and clothes were distributed. On this occasion, the leaders of the organization called upon the peoples to provide financial support to the poor students.

Free flour distribution facilitated marginalized segment: The former MPA of People's Party Lower Dir Muhammad Zamin Khan Advocate has said that the central government has distributed Ramzan free flour package to the poor people worth 53 billion rupees. It is a good move. He directed the people who are deprived of free flour in Ramadan to contact the district administration or them in order to benefit from free flour.

PDM is a good initiative of the government for the poor people and lakhs of poor and needy people have benefited from the free Ramadan flour packages of Rs 53 billion of the central government. Deprived people should immediately contact the district administration or them so that they can also benefit from this free flour package. There is a lot of free flour Ramadan package. The deprived people should register themselves immediately.

Anti-polio drive kicks off: Anti-polio has started in Lower Dir, 600 police personnel have been deployed on polio security

duty. In this regard, Inspector General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Gandapur and Regional Police Officer Malakand Nasir Mehmood Sati on special instructions from Friday in specific union councils of Lower Dir for five days.

The anti-polio campaign has started, the polio campaign is going on in the five Union Councils of Lower Dir, Chakdara, Durangal, Timergarq, Mian Kale, Maskini Union Council for which the Lower Dir Police has made strict arrangements for its security. And 600 police personnel have been posted on duty, according to the polio security plan issued by the DPO office, a five-day anti-polio campaign has been started across the district under the supervision of District Police Officer Lower Dir Tariq Iqbal.

Polio drops are being given to young children to protect them from infectious diseases like polio. More than 600 police personnel have been deployed for the smooth completion of the polio campaign, while SDPOs and SHO are in charge of their respective areas. The officials on duty in the anti-polio campaign will also review the security of the polio teams from time to time. Thus, before going on polio duty in the respective police stations today, all the SHO and teachers issued instructions to the security personnel and asked them to be alert during the campaign, use bulletproof jackets and helmets and protect their team.

Rescue 1122 to deploy special teams on Eid: District Emergency Officer Dir Lower Abrar Ali has said that all the offices of Rescue 1122 in Dir Lower will remain open 24 hours a

day for the service of the people in Eid-ul-Fitr and in Ramadan. He said that we will provide relief to the people.

On this occasion, District Emergency Officer Dir Lower Abrar Ali gave a detailed briefing to the public about the relief given to the citizens during various emergencies in Ramadan. He said it is our top priority and no negligence will be tolerated in providing timely relief to the citizens. He said that all offices of Rescue 1122 will remain open during Eid-ul-Fitr. Contact 1122 immediately so that steps can be taken for timely relief.

Bags, stationary distributed F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Tanzeeme Asateza Landi Kotal chapter gave away free school bags and stationary to the 100 poor and deserving students here on last day. The package was separately granted to the learners in various government-run educational institutions (boys and girls) of the subdivision.

Speaking on occasion the President Tanzeeme Asateza.Landi Kotal Sharifullah Afridi said that from day one, the organization engaged in efforts to safeguard interests of both the teachers and students and would continue their hard work in that regard.

The purpose of the well-being activity was to support the have not parents who could not afford to provide books and other necessities to their children. Afridi added.

Flood victims observe strike twice in a week in Chitral

F.P. Report

UPPER CHITRAL: Hundreds of people of District Upper Chitral of Brep valley held a protest rally for the second time this week in favor of their demands. The meeting was presided over by the former councillor Shelly Sultan, while Nazim Ahmed Khan of Village Council Kozh was the guest of honor on this occasion. During the protest there was a complete shutter down strike in Brep Bazaar, while the main road of Yarkhun Valley and Brughal was also blocked for several hours.

Addressing the meeting, the speakers said that on August 19, 2022, GLOF event occurred as a glacier located in the hill above Brep Valley burst, as a result of which a disastrous flood started. Some 60 houses were completely damaged while hundreds of acres of apple and other fruit orchards, standing crops, cultivated land were also destroyed and many people were homeless. As a result of the flood, the only utility store, a mosque and three congregation halls (Jamat Khana) were also washed away. While many people's shops, women's shopping center and girls' high school and other government and non-government buildings were damaged.

Speakers said that after flood, former Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mehmood Khan visited the area and announced Rs 500 Million for the affected areas, including Rs 250 Million for Upper Chitral and Rs 25 M for Lower Chitral. They said that we kept waiting for this announcement, but they followed their leader and once again took the U-turn and that money has not arrived yet. They said that Regional Program Manager of Aga Khan Agency for Habitat i.e. AKAH Ameer Muhammad and his team also visited this area. Amir Muhammad said that these icebergs, i.e. glaciers, have a special type of fruiting plant that prevents the glacier from melting, but when the goats eat grass during grazing there, they eat the same species (plant) as a result the glaciers melts which causing for devastated flash flood. They said that Amir Muhammad assured the people that if he decides to sell their goats and livestock, his organization (AKAH) will build a protective wall for them in Chikan Gol Nala, which will keep the area safe. We sold our goats and other animals on half price and faced huge losses. But very sorry to say that after nine months Amir Muhammad came and said that in the year 2023, the protection wall of the Chikan Gol canal is not included in our scheme.

Speakers said that the second time AKAH Regional Program Manager Ameer Muhammad visited the flooded area with Canadian embassy delegates and officials, the Canadian diplomat sat on the ground instead of a sofa in solidarity with the affected people, and he also announced 250 million rupees as aid. When after a



long time that grant money did not released, we once again contacted Amir Muhammad and asked about it, but his answer was that the amount was not only for Brep but for the whole Chitral, hence we have not received our share yet. In this regard, our representative repeatedly contacted RPM of AKAH. Ameer Muhammad, and also sent him a message by phone to give his version in this regard, but he has not yet given any feedback or statement on this matter, nor he replied.

A unanimous resolution was also passed in the meeting. Through the resolution, they demanded channelization of chicken goal, restoring of utility store, supply of wheat in green warehouse, maintenance of irrigation canals, shortage of staff in Government Girls High School and shortage of medicines in primary health center should be fulfilled immediately. They said that due to repeated floods in the Chikangol canal, the lives of the people here are always in danger and the people here have become mentally ill. Through the resolution, the food department was demanded to send wheat to this warehouse as soon as possible. They said that due to flood, the irrigation canal have flowed due to which there is a risk of crop loss, they should be restored immediately.

Through the resolution, high ups of the Education Department also demanded that there is severe shortage of staff in the Government Girls High School Prep, and the vacant posts of teachers should be fulfilled immediately. There are 500 households adjacent to Chikan Gol Nala. In case of floods, water enters people's houses. Since 2017, we are sending resolutions to government institutions and AKAH, which is an institution of Aga Khan Development Network, through these resolutions we demand that This canal should be properly cleaned i.e. channelized, but no action has been taken so far. If there is a flood in this canal again and someone's life and property are damaged, then all the responsibility will be on the relevant institutions.

They also demanded that the lack of medicines in the primary health unit should be met immediately and the utility store should also be restored. Farman Nazaar, former postmaster, Dr. Muhammad Hazar Khan, Qawat Ali Khan, former president of the local council. Mir Rahim President of Brip Cluster, Allah Dad Khan, Ameer Haji, Mrs. Siraj Nisa and Anbreen Bibi expressed their views. Later Additional Assistant Commissioner Mastuj came and assured these people that within three days some of their problems would be resolved.

The affected people took our correspondent to visit the flood-affected area where the public health engineering water tank was also destroyed due to the flood and people are forced to drink dirty water. The victims alleged that no engineer or officer of the department has even inspected the tank. Our correspondent contacted Executive Engineer of Public Health Engineering Department of Public Arshad Iqbal he said its PC 1 is ready and approval has also been given to rebuild this tank but due to lack of funds the work on it could not start as soon as the funds will come. They will start the work on its restoration.

On the assurance of Additional Assistant Commissioner Mastuj, the protestors decided to postpone their strike for three days and opened the road and opened the shops and dispersed peacefully besides men of ten villages, women and children, old age people also participated in large numbers in the meeting.

It is worth to mention here that Brep's apples are very famous and the former President of Pakistan, General Zia-ul-Haq, used to send helicopters from GHQ specifically to pick these apples, who was sending it as a gifts to his domestic and foreign friends and also to Lady Diana.. But since 2005, there has been continuous flooding due to melting of hundreds of years old avalanches on the mountains. Surprisingly, this affected area is not included in the Golf Project. Where there so many times GLOF event occurred.

World Quantum Day celebrated at KKKU

F.P. Report

KARAK: Department of Physics, Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak is celebrating the World Quantum Day today and next Monday to highlight the significance and recent developments in Quantum Physics throughout the world.

According to a press release of the University, different activities are scheduled till next Monday in the department of Physics that include poster presentation, an awareness walk and a lecture titled as "Quantum Physics, Near Future Scenario of Technological Magics" which will be delivered by Dr Abdul Hakim Shah, the Head of the Physics Department.

Speaking on this occasion, Dr Shah informed that World Quantum Day is being celebrated on 14th April each year, a reference to 4.14, the rounded first digits of Planck's constant: electron volt second, a product of energy and time which is the fundamental constant governing quantum physics.

Answering questions like why is Planck's constant is so important, he told that the World Quantum Day activities in the Department will address how does Planck's constant will affect human lives and our future inventions in this regard.

Dr Shah highlighted that the World

Quantum Day aims at engaging the general public in understanding and discussion of Quantum Science and Technology and how it helps us to know about nature at its most fundamental level. It also provides answers as how to develop technologies that are essential for our present-day life and how it can lead to future scientific and technological revolutions as well as its impact on our society.

He further explained that the quantum physics is at the origin of transformational technological developments that helped in shaping the present-day society, such as the transistor, the laser, medical imaging etc. He went on saying that over the last decades, quantum science expanded beyond physics, and has been transforming our understanding about Information and opening a prospect for new and revolutionary information technologies, such as quantum computers and a quantum internet.

Dr. Shah said that World Quantum Day is an initiative from quantum scientists around the World, started on 14th April 2021 as countdown towards the first global celebration on 14th April 2022. He said that it is a decentralized and bottom-up initiative, inviting all scientists, engineers, educators, communicators, entrepreneurs, technologists, historians, philosophers, artists, producers, etc.,

and their organizations, to develop their own activities, such as outreach talks, exhibitions, lab tours, panel discussions, interviews, artistic creations, etc., to celebrate this important day.

Vice Chancellor of the Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan has appreciated the efforts of Physics Department for celebrating such important day which has brought revolution in the human life.

86,550 kids to be vaccinated in Tank F.P. Report

TANK: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa health department has constituted 663 teams to vaccinate 86,550 kids under five years of age against polio in Tank district. Dr Sher Khan Afridi, district health officer Tank told media that that campaign has been started on Thursday and would continue till April 18 in the district. He advised people to bring their kids to nearby hospitals and basic health units in case anti polio team did not arrive at their homes. Later, the Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Shoaib and Dr Sher Khan later administered vaccine to kids.

Watermelon's demand soars in Ramazan after increase in temperature

FOLLOWING an increase in the temperature in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the demand of watermelon- a unique nutritious fruit featuring sweet watery pink and red pulp, has enhanced manifolds during Iftar parties in the holy month of Ramazan.

Known as a unique fruit of the summer season having 92 percent delightful water juice, watermelons are being preferred by most of fasting people over others foods these days due to its great water features useful to beat the heat during fasting. In Peshawar, most of the fasting people make it part of their diets to keep themselves hydrated for a longer period of time during last Ashra of Ramazan after an increase in temperature in KP.

People of all aged groups were taking keen interest in watermelon due to its 92pc water and juicy flavour besides its affordable prices compared to apple, orange and others

fruits. The fruit is very popular in Pakhtoons, Afghans and become their favorite item during Iftar and dinner, lunch and food parties in normal days.

The main fruits markets of Peshawar including Chamkani, Gulbahar, Hashnagri, Firdus, Nothia, Board bazaars and Tehkal are flooded with varieties of watermelons, attracting Peshawarites. An eight kilogram watermelon is being sold at Rs 600 these days compare to Rs500 before Ramzan at Peshawar.

Zakir Khan, an inter provincial watermelon dealer told APP at Chamkani fruits markets that Punjab watermelon is available at Rs 150,000 to Rs140,000 per loaded truck and KP are priced at Rs120,000 to Rs130,000 per truck this year against Rs130,000 to Rs140,000 of Punjab and Rs110, 000 to Rs1,20,000 per truck of KP last year. Associated with the profitable business for the last 10 years, he said that

most of his colleagues linked with watermelon business were earning double these days due to increase of its sale in Peshawar.

He urged the KP Government to announce a special relief package for watermelon affected farmers after the last year foods devastation. Professor Dr Muhammad Naeem of the Swabi University told APP that the cultivation of watermelon was first started in Africa some 5,000 years ago and later it made inroads to Egypt and Europe. By 7th century, it impressed people of Indo-Pak sub-continent.

Following creation of Pakistan, he said the watermelons' cultivation was launched in Sindh and Punjab provinces and later in KP and Balochistan mostly for domestic consumption. In Pakistan, over 55.87% watermelon was produced in Punjab, 21.29% in Balochistan, 10.29% in Sindh and 11.84% in KP.

He said over 1,200 variants of

watermelon are grown in more than 96 countries including Pakistan, adding its production starts in March and continued till September across Pakistan due to its fertile land suitable for cultivation. "Watermelons prefer sandy loam soils with good drainage and a soil pH of 7.5 to 8. It required moderate temperature to grow.

The cold temperature affects its growth while very hot temperatures make an adverse effects on pollination process resulting in reduced yields," he said. "The seedless watermelons has a great demands in international markets but it require high levels of inputs, capital and managerial skills of the farmers than seeded varieties."

Larkana, Qambar, Shehdadkot in Sindh, DG Khan, Bahawalpur, Bhakar, Mandi Bhaudhin in Punjab and DI Khan, Lakki Marwat, Mardan and Charsadda in KP were ideal for cultivation of seedless watermelons

for commercial purposes, he said adding upto 200pc extra premium could be earned from seedless varieties. Watermelon is a profitable cost-efficient fruit and a farmer can easily obtain upto 12 tons production from one acre by using just two kilograms seeds to earn Rs10,000 per 200 KG.

Pakistani watermelon is very popular in Middle East due to its mouth-watering sweet taste, high energy, water and nutrition level and a substantial revenue could be earned through commercial production of seedless varieties. Dr Riaz Khan, senior medical specialist of Govt Hospital Pabbi told APP that watermelon was very useful for people especially during Ramazan because it keeps people hydrated for long hours due to about 92pc water in it.

He said it was also useful in managing diabetes, support heart, avoid kidney disorders, hypertension, reduces asthma attack, weight gain,

balance pH level and prevent exhaustion besides minimizing the risks of prostate cancers. "Watermelons can help reduces risk of heat strokes especially in big cities like Karachi and I advise labourers, traffic policemen and fruits vendors to use it regularly and make part of their diet to avoid heat strokes in upcoming hot summer," he said.

He said watermelon is full of vitamins and minerals include vitamins A, C, magnesium and potassium, which is extremely beneficial for people's health. He advised Rozadars (fast keeper) to consume it after 7pm following Iftar to avoid vomiting, gas and indigestion complications. The senior doctor advised people especially senior citizens not to use it in large quantities soon after iftar meal to avoid nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, gas and indigestion complication. He warned patients with high sugar levels to take this delicious fruit after consultation with their physicians. — APP



UN, others cite new displacement from Ethiopia’s Tigray

ADDIS ABABA (AP): Forces from Ethiopia’s Amhara region have displaced tens of thousands of ethnic Tigrayans from disputed territory in the north of the country in recent weeks despite a peace deal agreed late last year, according to aid workers and internal agency documents seen by the AP. The Mai Tsebri area in north-western Tigray is close to the regional border with Amhara. It changed hands several times during the war, which erupted in 2020 and ended with a ceasefire in November. The Amhara people claim the area as their own.

Since early March, some 47,000 people uprooted from Mai Tsebri have gone to Endabaguna, a town roughly 55 kilometers (34 miles) further north, according to United Nations figures seen by the AP on Thursday. Another report, prepared by a humanitarian agency, says residents fled Mai Tsebri because of “harassment, ethnic profiling and direct threats” from irregular Amhara forces that also carried out “evictions.”

That report adds that there have been no aid deliveries to Endabaguna since the displaced people started arriving. As a result, it says, they are “on the

brink of starvation.” The displaced people at Endabaguna are sheltering in a reception center originally built by the UN and Ethiopia’s government for refugees from Eritrea, which borders Tigray. The site was badly damaged during the war. An aid worker who recently visited the center said conditions there were “very bad” and the number of people was “increasing day by day.”

“The roofing and pipelines are damaged, there is no toilet and latrine, the doors and windows of the rooms are looted (or) damaged, and there is no proper water supply,” said the aid worker, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter. It was not immediately possible to get a comment from Amhara authorities. A second aid worker, who also requested anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to a reporter, said many of the people recently uprooted from Mai Tsebri were displaced for a second time, having already been forced from their homes in the western part of Tigray.

Amhara forces annexed western Tigray in the early stages of the war. They stand accused of “ethnic cleansing” by the US State Department after they

forcibly deported hundreds of thousands of Tigrayans from the area. Under the recent ceasefire, aid deliveries to Tigray resumed after two years of restrictions. However, aid workers say Amhara forces have continued to block food distribution around Mai Tsebri, and residents have reported killings.

One Mai Tsebri resident, Teferi Muley, said he fled the area in November after he was threatened by Amhara troops, who accused him of helping the Tigray rebels. He said he returned in March to the nearby village of Haida, where he witnessed the shooting of several artisanal gold miners by Amhara troops. Last week Ethiopia’s government said it planned to fold the security forces of the 11 federal regions into the national army or police. This prompted a wave of protest across Amhara, as well as gun battles between the federal military and regional Amhara units who refused to disarm. Humanitarian officials believe the upheaval will likely lead to an increase in displacements from Mai Tsebri, which already stand at an average of 150 households every day, according to an assessment by another aid agency.

PA blocks registration of legal aid group

JERUSALEM (AP): The Palestinian Authority has blocked the registration of a legal advocacy group representing critics and opponents detained in Palestinian prisons, the group said Friday, a move condemned as the authority’s latest effort to stifle civil society in the occupied West Bank.

Without proper registration, the group, Lawyers for Justice, could lose access to its funds and be forced to close. The organization was told it had violated the law by engaging in non-profit work and accepting foreign aid despite being registered as a “civil corporation,” said director Mohannad Karaje, Palestinian security forces refused to renew the registration even though Lawyers for Justice has operated as a civil corporation without issue for years, he added. The New York-based watchdog Human Rights Watch on Thursday

described the authority’s bureaucratic explanation as a thinly veiled attack on a group that has represented torture victims and helped document the self-rule government’s arbitrary arrests of critics to crush dissent.

“So long as the Palestinian Authority blocks groups from carrying out work focused on their abuses, their calls to safeguard Palestinian civil society and protect Palestinian rights will continue to ring hollow,” Human Rights Watch said. A spokesperson for the Palestinian security services did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Karaje denounced the move as a sign of the authority’s increasingly autocratic rule and a warning for groups fighting abuses in the West Bank. He said Lawyers for Justice would appeal the decision. “This is a very dangerous

step, an attempt to control civil society and human rights groups trying to work in Palestine,” Karaje told The Associated Press. “We have no doubt this is because of our work.” With peace talks frozen for over a decade, experts say the Palestinian Authority, which was set up nearly three decades ago as an interim administration to lead the Palestinians toward statehood, faces a crisis of legitimacy.

Many Palestinians deride the authority, headed by 88-year-old Mahmoud Abbas, as a vehicle for collaboration with Israel. Abbas is now in his 19th year of what was meant to be a four-year term.

Last month, prominent Palestinian pollster Khalil Shikaki found that for the first time, a majority — 52% of Palestinians — believe that the collapse of the authority is in their best interest.

China’s Xi to meet Brazil’s Lula in Beijing

BEIJING (AP): Chinese leader Xi Jinping was due to meet visiting Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva on Friday in Beijing as the leaders seek to boost ties between two of the world’s largest developing nations. The meeting comes on the second day of Lula’s visit to his country’s most important trading partner and ally in his bid to challenge Western-dominated economic institutions.

The visit included the swearing in on Thursday of former Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff as head of the Chinese-backed New Development Bank, which is funding infrastructure projects in Brazil and elsewhere in the developing world. That NDB portrays itself as an alternative to the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, which often impose loan conditions that developing nations criticize as punitive.

The Brazilian government says the sides are

expected to sign at least 20 bilateral agreements, underscoring the improvement in relations since Lula took over from predecessor Jair Bolsonaro in January. China is Brazil’s biggest export market, each year buying tens of billions of dollars worth of soybeans, beef, iron ore, poultry, pulp, sugar cane, cotton and crude oil. Brazil is the biggest recipient of Chinese investment in Latin America, according to Chinese state media, although Lula has spoken against outright Chinese ownership of Brazilian companies.

Lula’s China visit follows trips to Argentina and Uruguay in January and to the US in February, signaling the importance he places on international affairs in contrast to Bolsonaro. A key piece of Lula’s outreach abroad is his proposal that Brazil and other developing countries, including China, mediate

peace over Ukraine. However, his suggestion that Ukraine cede Crimea as a means to forge peace has angered Kyiv and its closest backers.

China has also sought to play a role in ending the conflict, though in a manner highly supportive of Moscow. It has refused to condemn the invasion, criticized economic sanctions on Russia and accused the US and NATO of provoking the conflict. Russia and China declared a “no limits” relationship in a 2022 joint statement and Xi reaffirmed the closeness of ties in March by meeting with President Vladimir Putin in Moscow.

A Chinese peace proposal presented in February contains aspects in common with Lula’s, such as ceasing hostilities and starting negotiations, but says nothing about the return of Ukrainian territory seized by Russia and its separatist allies.

7.0 magnitude earthquake shakes Indonesia's main island

JAKARTA (AP):A strong earthquake shook parts of Indonesia’s main island of Java and tourist island of Bali on Friday, causing panic but there were no immediate reports of serious damage or casualties. The US Geological Survey said the magnitude 7.0 quake was centered 96.5 kilometers (59.8 miles) north of Tuban, a coastal

city in East Java province, at a depth of 594 kilometers (369 miles).

Indonesia’s Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysical Agency said there was no danger of a tsunami but warned of possible aftershocks. The agency put a preliminary magnitude at 6.6. Variations in early measurements are common. Videos circulating

on social media showed local residents and tourists in the neighboring provinces of Central Java, Yogyakarta and Bali panicking as houses and buildings swayed for several seconds. Some places ordered evacuations, sending streams of people into the streets.

The country of more than 270 million people is frequently struck by earth-

400,000 migrants may cross Darien Gap in 2023: UN

PANAMA CITY (AP): Two UN groups said Thursday that the number of migrants crossing the dangerous Darien Gap between Colombia and Panama could soar to as many as 400,000 this year. That would represent a huge increase from the 250,000 migrants estimated to have crossed the roadless, jungle-clad route in 2022.

The UN agencies for refugees and migration said in a report that nearly 100,000 people may have already made the crossing so far this year, six times more than in the similar period of last year. If that trend keeps up, it could mean many more migrants seeking to reach the United States through Central America and Mexico. The groups called it “an unprecedented movement (of people) through the Americas.”

The United States pledged its forces will assist their Colombian and Panamanian counterparts with intelligence gathering to dismantle smuggling rings operating in the Darien Gap, which is a key route for migrants heading to the US from South America, a senior Biden administration official said Wednesday. The area is among the most dangerous portions of the long route to the US borders. Migrants and international human rights groups have denounced sexual assaults, robberies and killings in the remote jungle. That’s in addition to the natural dangers posed by venomous snakes and rushing rivers.

US forces could assist in targeting smugglers for arrest and locating “stash houses” where smugglers hold migrants, the official said, without specifying whether the US forces involved would be military or civilian law enforcement. The United States, Panama and Colombia had announced Tuesday an ambitious 60-day campaign to shut down the Darien Gap route.

The official said the 60-day period had not started yet and was still under consideration, but the effort is part of a broader campaign to prepare for the end of pandemic-era restrictions on applying for asylum at the US border set to expire May 11. The same obstacles that make it a treacherous crossing for migrants will make it impossible for authorities to completely cut off. It is about 60 miles of roadless dense jungle used by organized criminal groups for smuggling drugs and people.

Powerful Cyclone Ilsa lashes Australia

CANBERRA (AP): Australia’s most powerful tropical cyclone in eight years lashed its northwest coast with winds gusting to an apparent record of 289 kilometers (180 miles) per hour Friday but skirted larger population centers and resulted in no immediate reports of injuries. Cyclone Ilsa crossed the Pilbara coast of Western Australia state as a Category 5 storm, the most severe, but weakened to Category 2 as it moved inland, Australia’s Bureau of Meteorology said.

Damage was still being assessed in the path of Ilsa, which made landfall in the early hours 150 kilometers (93 miles) northeast of the iron ore export town of Port Hedland in the rural area of Pardoo. Pardoo had a population of 47 in the latest census and the Pardoo Roadhouse and Tavern was destroyed. The two owners stayed throughout the storm and were unharmed, emergency officials said.

Iranians mark Jerusalem Day to support Palestinians

TEHRAN (AP): Tens of Thousands of Iranians, some chanting “death to America” and “death to Israel,” marched in the capital of Tehran on Friday to mark Jerusalem Day, an annual show of support for the Palestinians. Senior Iranian officials attended the rally, including President Ebrahim Raisi.

Since Iran’s Islamic Revolution in 1979, the rallies marking what is also known as al-Quds Day have typically been held typically held on the last Friday of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Al-Quds is the Arabic name for the contested city at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel captured east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war and annexed it to its capital. The Palestinians seek the eastern part of Jerusalem as a future capital. Jerusalem is the home of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest shrine in Islam. The compound, revered by Jews as the Temple Mount, is also the most sacred site in Judaism.

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Qalibaf told demonstrators that Israel is the “root” of problems in the region and that Palestinian militants are hindering Israel’s plans. The rally was the first al-Quds Day demonstration after the country was shaken by months of anti-government protests.

Waves of protests erupted after the September death of a 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman who was detained by the morality police for allegedly violating Iran’s strict Islamic dress code. The protests rapidly escalated into calls for the over-



throw of Iran’s ruling Shiite clerics, marking a major challenge to their four-decade rule. Iran’s has blamed the unrest on foreign powers. Demonstrators on Friday rallied from 10 different directions to Tehran University’s campus, where the ceremony ended at Friday’s noon prayers.

State TV showed footage of similar rallies in other Iranian cities and towns. Many carried Palestinian flags and the banner of Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon. Demonstrators in some places set fire to American and Israeli flags, as well as effigies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Reza Masoumi, 63, a retired teacher, said

he participated the rallies to remind Israel that “They cannot suppress Palestinians. We Iranians stand by Palestine.”

Fatemeh Yasrebi, 20-year-old student, said she supports Palestinians “until Israel withdraws from (the) occupied lands of Palestinians. Peace between Muslim nations and Israel is impossible.” State TV in recent days has shown footage of Israeli police storming Palestinian worshippers inside the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Iran does not recognize Israel and supports the anti-Israeli militant groups like Hamas and the Lebanese Hezbollah. Israel and Iran view each other as archenemies in the Middle East.

Arab nations to discuss ending Syria’s isolation

DAMASCUS (AFP): Arab countries gathered in Jeddah on Friday to discuss ending Syria’s long spell in the diplomatic wilderness, as regional relations shift following Saudi Arabia and Iran’s decision to resume ties.

Ministers and top officials from the six Gulf Cooperation Council countries -- Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates -- plus Egypt, Iraq and Jordan were to meet at Saudi Arabia’s request. Up for discussion in the Red Sea city is Syria’s suspension from the Arab League, imposed when President Bashar al-Assad’s government launched a bloody crackdown on pro-democracy protests in 2011.

Backed by Iran and Russia, Assad has been shunned by many Middle Eastern countries and is a Western pariah over the 12-year war, which has killed more than half-a-million people and forced about half of Syria’s pre-war population from their homes. But on Wednesday, in the latest sign of an easing in tensions with Damascus, Syria’s Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad arrived in Jeddah, the first such visit since the war began.

Mekdad and his Saudi counterpart discussed “the necessary steps” to end Damascus’s isolation, according to a Saudi state-

ment on Wednesday. Any recommendation to reinstate Syria in the 22-member Arab League, whose next meeting is due to be held in Saudi Arabia in May, is likely to draw protests from Western capitals.

Syria’s rehabilitation sends “a message to the opposition that Assad will triumph in the end and that their foreign backers will betray them”, Aron Lund of the Century International think tank told AFP. “These bilateral engagements with Saudi Arabia and others are exactly what Damascus has been looking for,” said Syria expert Sam Heller.

But late Thursday, the prime minister of Qatar -- an opponent of Assad’s government -- poured cold water on talk of Syria’s possible return to the Arab League. “There is nothing proposed, it is all speculation,” Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani said in a television interview. The Jeddah meeting is one in a flurry of initiatives following Saudi Arabia and Iran’s landmark, Chinese-brokered announcement on March 10 that they would resume ties, seven years after an acrimonious split.

Earlier on Friday, an exchange of nearly 900 prisoners from Yemen’s civil war between the Iran-backed Huthi rebels and a Saudi-led coalition got underway when the first

Snowmelt spurs flooding, two rescues

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP): A rapid spring snowmelt after an unusually wet winter is unleashing flooding from the Southwest to the Rockies, causing residents there and in the Upper Midwest to evacuate or stock up on sandbags amid surging creeks and rivers.

In New Mexico, emergency crews rescued people from at least two vehicles from high water Thursday night in Jemez Pueblo north of Albuquerque, the National Weather Service said. But there were no immediate reports of any deaths of serious injuries. A flood warning was in effect for communities along the Jemez River into next week.

In Flagstaff, Arizona, neighbors on one street have been working side by side since Tuesday with shovels to stave off floodwaters from their homes. Three creek-retention basins installed last year helped better navigate water that rushed down from burned mountains above the city, officials said. Still, water engulfed the shoulder of a local highway, and several roads and sidewalks were closed this week as the weather warmed and snow melted, making its way into neighborhoods. Sections of urban trails also were submerged.

Officials said it was a scenario that came without a playbook. “It would be nice to have an exact model of what we need to do, but we don’t,” Flagstaff Vice Mayor Austin Aslan told the Arizona Daily Sun. “We don’t know what the next fire will look like, or where that scar will be. There’s small differences that will direct water to one neighborhood or another.”

Sandoval County in north-central New Mexico issued an emergency disaster declaration in the wake of severe flooding in communities near the Jemez River. No evacuations had been ordered, but residents in an area between Jemez Pueblo and Jemez Springs that regularly floods in the summer rainy season were collecting sandbags as a precaution. A local police chief estimated a dozen homes and other structures along the river could be at risk of being inundated with water.

“Warm temperatures continue to cause rapid melting of snowpack, causing increased river flows,” the National Weather Service in Albuquerque said Thursday night. The deluge also led to spillover from a wastewater treatment plant, which was contributing recycled water into the Jemez River. The US Forest Service advised people not to fish in the river or drink water south of the plant. In Salt Lake City, Mayor Erin Mendenhall signed an emergency order late Wednesday aimed at helping residents whose homes were threatened by flooding in the southeastern part of the city. Rapidly melting snow in the nearby mountains sent water coursing through a creek in the neighborhood, prompting the voluntary evacuation of about 100 homes.

Yemen prisoner swap starts as truce talks set for second round

SANAA (AFP): Hundreds of captives from Yemen’s brutal civil war were set to be reunited with friends and family as a major prisoner swap started on Friday, hours after truce talks broke up with an agreement to meet again.

As hopes rise of an end to Yemen’s devastating eight-year war, which pits Iran-backed rebels against a Saudi-led coalition, the first planeload of 35 prisoners flew from the rebel-held capital Sanaa to government-controlled Aden, the International Committee of the Red Cross said. Another 125 prisoners took off in the opposite direction, the ICRC said. Two more flights are scheduled for the first day of the exchange, involving 322 captives. Nearly 900 will be released during the three-day operation.

Large crowds gathered at both airports. In Sanaa, Mohammed Al-Qubati said: “I have been waiting for this day for five years. I’m waiting for my father and my cousin.” And in Aden, there were celebrations when Yemen’s former defence minister Mahmud al-Subaihi, and the brother of the ex-president, Major General Nasser Mansur Hadi, emerged from the first plane as it landed.

The exchange and the truce negotiations in Sanaa come a month after Gulf

heavyweights Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed to re-establish diplomatic ties, triggering a wave of rapprochement across the troubled region. A Saudi delegation led by ambassador Mohammed al-Jaber left Sanaa late on Thursday without a finalised truce but with plans for another round of talks, according to Huthi and Yemeni government sources.

“There is an initial agreement on a truce that should be announced later on, if finalised,” a Huthi official said on condition of anonymity, in information that was confirmed by a government source. “There is an agreement to hold another round of talks to further discuss points of difference.”

The Huthis’ chief negotiator, Mohammed Abdulalam, called the talks “serious and positive” and said he was “hoping to complete the discussion of outstanding issues at a later time”. The rebels seized control of Sanaa in 2014, forcing the internationally recognised government to flee and triggering the Saudi-led military intervention the following March. Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed by direct and indirect causes in a war that has triggered one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises, according to the United Nations.

However, a six-month, UN-brokered truce that officially lapsed in October is still largely holding as diplomatic efforts increase for a renewed ceasefire. Hans Grundberg, the UN special envoy for Yemen, hailed the prisoner release ahead of next week’s Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr. “Today, hundreds of Yemeni families get to celebrate Eid with their loved ones because the parties negotiated and reached an agreement,” he said in a statement.

“I hope this spirit is reflected in ongoing efforts to advance a comprehensive political solution. Thousands more families are still waiting to be reunited with their loved ones.” During the exchange, the Huthis will release 181 prisoners, including Saudis and Sudanese, in return for 706 held by government forces. “It’s a much awaited moment of relief for hundreds of families, many of whom were left wondering for years if they will ever see their loved ones again,” Yemeni conflict analyst Hisham Al-Omeisy told AFP. “It is also a significant step forward and a confidence-building measure in the hyper-polarised and protracted conflict. But we need to continue these exchanges, there are still a lot more prisoners on both sides.”

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Regional diplomacy for a peaceful Afghanistan

THE top diplomats from Russia, China, Iran, and Pakistan attended a conference in Samarkand, Uzbekistan to discuss regional security and the situation in Afghanistan. During the huddle of the Quad nations, the foreign ministers of Afghanistan's neighboring countries stressed that cooperation with Afghan authorities is essential to preserve political stability, avert a humanitarian crisis, to counter menaces of terrorism and drug trafficking emanating out of Afghanistan. The forum called on the international community to firmly support Afghanistan to combat terrorism and urged the United States to live up to its commitment to the country. The forum reaffirmed its pledge to respect the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, along with the choices made by Afghans.

The people of Afghanistan had experienced unimaginable miseries and vicissitudes because of persistent conflict and violence in their country over the past decades, while the international community and neighboring states including Pakistan, Iran, China, Russia, and Central Asian Republics wanted to preserve peace and stability in the war-hit nation through continued engagement, and cooperation with the interim Afghan government because conflict and violence will not only affect the Afghan nation but likely to undermine regional development and cause serious security issues in the region and beyond. Therefore, the global community and regional stakeholders support the idea of a broad base and consensus political system that ends violence and ensures peace and stability in war-hit Afghanistan. The global community hopes that Afghanistan's interim authority will actively work to meet the needs of its people and the expectations of the international community for an open and inclusive political setup that guarantees lasting peace in Afghanistan. Similarly, the regional nations persistently urge the Afghan interim authorities to protect the basic rights and interests of all Afghan people, including women, children, ethnic groups, and religious minorities in the country.

Apparently, the recipe for a peaceful, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan is not much complex and every loyal individual, government, and entity has explicitly told the Afghan interim government and other combatant groups about it. Still, the warring Afghan factions are unable to work for the more considerable benefit of the Afghan nation by surpassing their political, ethnic, and communal interests for the time being. Over the past one and a half years, the Taliban regime made no attempt to conceive political inclusiveness and economic stability, rather it imposed a ban on girls' education beyond sixth grade, women's employment, females' tourism, and travel in the country. Similarly, unrestricted movement and regrouping of terrorist outfits in the country have caused serious security risks for other nations in the region.

In the current scenario, Afghanistan is facing extreme economic, social, and security challenges to its survival, while an all-time humanitarian crisis continuously persists in the country. Pakistan an all-weather supporter of the Afghan nation is strongly advocating for the well-being of the people of Afghanistan at all available forums. Pakistan is actively engaged with Afghan authorities at the government, parliamentary, and business levels while people-to-people contacts are being encouraged to explore maximum avenues of bilateral cooperation between both nations. Pakistan has been continuously urging the global community to delink its humanitarian assistance from political issues and remain engaged with the Afghan interim government as no peaceful and equally acceptable solution could be achieved without engagement, talks, and dialogue with Afghan rulers. At the same time, the Taliban must understand that no nation can survive in isolation and that no government could exist without support from its people. Therefore, Afghan interim authorities must respond to global calls by upholding the public interest and addressing the grievances of its close neighbors, promoting peace, trade, and tourism, that is the only way forward toward a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

ON April 5, shocking footage emerged from occupied East Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque of Israeli security forces mercilessly beating Palestinian worshippers. The brutal violence left at least 12 Palestinians injured at Islam's third holiest site and fuelled public anger. Rockets were fired from Gaza and Lebanon as a warning against further escalation, but Israel did not listen. The following day it repeated the violent attack on al-Haram al-Sharif, where Al-Aqsa Mosque is located, and carried out air raids on Gaza and Lebanon.

By now it is quite clear that American efforts to prevent another escalation in Palestine are failing. And once again, it is not the Palestinian side that is responsible. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's desperate bid to cling to power is not conducive to any de-escalation. Washington may desire and is bound to accelerate processes that could ultimately trigger violence and instability well beyond occupied East Jerusalem. For more than a year now, tensions in the occupied Palestinian territories have been high. Armed Palestinian resistance has been active, especially in Jenin and Nablus, while the Israeli security forces have carried out incessant violent raids of Palestinian towns and villages.

The United Nations called 2022 the deadliest year for the occupied West Bank in the past 16 years, as the Israeli army killed at

least 170 Palestinians, including 30 children, and injured at least 9,000. The first two months of this year have been the most violent since 2000, with 65 Palestinians killed, including 13 children. This year, the Muslim holy month of Ramadan coincides with the Jewish holiday of Passover. So it was apparent that this time of year would be another potential flashpoint for violence.

On March 19, another meeting was held in Sharm el-Sheikh, where the Palestinian and Israeli officials committed to uphold the status quo of the holy sites in Jerusalem "both in words and in practice" and emphasised the "necessity of both Israelis and Palestinians to actively prevent any actions that would disrupt the sanctity of these sites, inter alia during the upcoming Holy Month of Ramadan". But Netanyahu's government has been upholding the status quo neither in words nor in practice.

Hoping to preclude a major escalation, which would distract attention from the war in Ukraine, two regional meetings were held under United States tutelage to negotiate measures to calm the situation. On February 26, Palestinian, Israeli, Jordanian, Egyptian and American officials met in the Jordanian port city of Aqaba. The joint communiqué issued after the summit emphasised a commitment to "de-escalation on the ground ... to prevent further violence" and an Israeli pledge to stop authorising new illegal settlements in Palestinian territories for six months.

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Adnan Abu Amer

all means possible the violence Jewish settlers have unleashed onto Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and to continue eroding the status quo at the holy sites with the aim to establish new facts on the ground - ie, full Israeli control. Netanyahu does not necessarily mind. For him, the violence is a useful distraction from the anti-govern-

ment protests which have plagued his sixth term in office. It is quite apparent that war is not in Israel's interest. It is currently preoccupied with the Palestinian resistance in the West Bank. It is worried about Iran's military presence and diplomatic successes in the region. It has been striking Syria regularly, seeking to curb Iranian influence and is concerned about Hezbollah's role in a recent roadside bomb explosion near the border with Lebanon.

Whether Netanyahu would listen to the Israeli security establishment is another question. On the other side, Hamas in Gaza has tried to take a measured response. It has warned Israel against further raids on Al-Aqsa. It is reluctant to escalate as this could take attention away from

the Palestinian resistance in the West Bank, which Hamas sees as the main arena of conflict with Israel. Armed attacks in the occupied territories cause much more anxiety to the Israeli authorities than a confrontation with Gaza.

Hamas's strategy now is to encourage a popular Palestinian mobilisation in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Israel in order to serve as a barrier to further encroachment on Al-Aqsa Mosque. That said, Hamas may also find itself under pressure to act decisively, especially if Israel's brutal violence against worshippers continues. The Palestinian people have already reacted angrily at the weak condemnations issued by the Palestinian Authority and its inaction.

The Hamas leadership would not want to be perceived as passive and may feel compelled to abide by popular demand to take a tougher stance and intensify rocket fire towards Israel. Thus a repeat of the 2021 war on Gaza, which was also triggered by Israel's raids on Al-Aqsa Mosque, may take place. But an escalation beyond that is also on the horizon.

There have been repeated warnings that Israel's

actions in the holy sites could trigger a "religious war". In January, Jordanian Ambassador Mahmoud Daifallah Hmoud told the UN Security Council that Israeli attacks on al-Haram al-Sharif are provoking "the feelings of nearly two billion Muslims" and could spark a "religious conflict". There is growing concern that with its aggressive actions in Al-Aqsa, Netanyahu's government is seeking to impose restrictions on Palestinians' access to the holy site, the way it was done with the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron. The latter was divided by the Israeli authorities into sections that Muslims and Jews can visit to supposedly prevent further violence after a Jewish settler opened fire on Muslim worshippers, killing 29 in 1994. Imposing these measures in the Al-Aqsa compound would be a clear violation of the status quo, under which non-Muslims are allowed to visit only at certain hours and are not allowed to pray inside.

So far there have been only condemnations issued by Arab states, the European Union and the US. What Arab and Western capitals do not understand is that unless there is a harsh response to Israeli actions now, Netanyahu's far-right allies will only be emboldened to go even further in their efforts to take over Muslim (and Christian) holy sites and settle. Their aggression in al-Haram al-Sharif is turning it into a detonator that sooner or later will blow up the whole region.

Bill Clinton: Why has peace endured in Northern Ireland? Hope and history rhymed

25 years ago, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern signed the Good Friday Agreement, which brought peace to Northern Ireland after three decades of sectarian violence known as the Troubles, which claimed more than 3,500 lives.

The 10 April 1998 agreement, approved by 71 percent of voters in the North and 94 percent in the Republic of Ireland, was the result of years of careful negotiations between the parties, long considered bitter enemies, in the wake of bombings, reprisals, discrimination in work and social life, constant anxiety and fear all leave a dark cloud hanging over their children's collective future.

For the first time, the predominantly Protestant unionist and now primarily Catholic nationalist parties would renounce violence, share power and determine their common future. A generation on, the situation in Northern Ireland is far from perfect. Too little progress has been made in actual integration between the two communities. Divided neighborhoods remain and economic inequality persists. The uncertainty surrounding Brexit - which Northern

Ireland voted against - has led to political paralysis and left the country without a permanent government for more than a year.

But despite the odds, peace was maintained and democracy did not lose control. The Windsor Framework, agreed by Britain and the European Union earlier this year, offers an opportunity to keep Northern Ireland's economy growing. And it includes the Good Friday Agreement's promise that peace will be strengthened by a special relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, while the North retains its place in the UK. Why has peace in Northern Ireland endured when other efforts around the world are stubbornly far from a solution? I believe the answer lies in the way the peace was made.

First, the process was driven by people. They are tired of the killings and wanton tragedies of non-lethal political violence, and they are tired of the economic hardship born of partition. It was clear from the faces of the people I met there on my visits, regardless of origin, that they were determined that the conflict must end. As Hillary pointed out, people, especially women, stood up

to politicians because they wanted their children and grandchildren to grow up away from the shadow of violence and hatred.

The Good Friday Agreement negotiations were led and sustained through rough patches by the demand for peace. In Northern Ireland, it created a generation that grew up largely free from the horrors of sectarian violence, free to focus on solving problems and seizing opportunities. Second, political leaders on all sides have shown real courage to sacrifice and compromise with their opponents and commit to inclusiveness, knowing full well that they are risking their own political futures. Confidence has been building slowly but surely through years of confidence-building measures such as prisoner releases and ceasefires.

Real credit goes to leaders including Bertie Ahern and Tony Blair; before them John Major, Albert Reynolds, and John Bruton; and John Hume, David Trimble, Gerry Adams and many others. Soon even Unionist leader Ian Paisley, who had not taken part in the peace talks, joined a working government with Sinn Féin's Martin

Bill Clinton

McGuinness. In many other conflict areas, leaders ultimately failed to take the final leap of faith. Third, the peace process was successful because the United States was deeply involved in a way that both sides saw as positive. I believed that America could and should play a role in the Northern Ireland peace process - not in spite of, but because of our "special relationship" with the United Kingdom and because of the large Irish American community that cared deeply about their ancestral homeland.

When I ran for president in 1992, at the urging of the New York Irish community, I said that if elected I would take an active role in ending the conflict, starting with the appointment of a special envoy. Some advisers warned that it would be difficult to keep the commitment-and it was at first, with deep divisions in Congress and my own administration. Starting with a two-day visa for Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams, which allowed him to address an Irish American group but not to raise funds, the United States carefully established itself as an honest broker that allowed the deeply mistrustful parties to com-

municate.

There is peace at last because the framework of the Good Friday Agreement has proven to be fair to all parties and better than any other agreement in existence. The details, worked out under the brilliant, patient but determined supervision of Special Envoy George Mitchell, reflected the complex views of both communities and allowed them to trust the agreement to protect their myriad interests. The agreement committed the parties to majority rule with minority rights, respect for individual rights, civil rights and the rule of law, the prohibition of violence and the disarmament and demobilization of paramilitary groups. It also created a system of shared decision-making, shared economic benefits and special links with the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Although power sharing has at times produced frustration and even stalemate, it has provided each side with an opportunity to voice their concerns and strive for consensus. Even now, with the Stormont legislature sitting unused, it is a question of "when" not "if" the government will get back up and running. Even the most imperfect democ-

racy is better than a return to violence. In 1995, when I first visited Northern Ireland, I stood before a crowd of thousands in Derry and recited the lines of one of his favorite sons, Seamus Heaney:

"History says, Don't hope / On this side of the grave. / But then, once in a lifetime / the longed-for tidal wave / of justice can rise, / and hope and history rhyme." The events that led to peace in Northern Ireland were a happy occasion for hope and rhyming history, but such achievements are still all too rare. All over the world, in areas of conflict and deep political and social divides, people yearn for better, safer and more inclusive days ahead. The challenge will be to find leaders with the courage to rise to the moment and make the tough decisions necessary for peace within a framework that gives everyone a voice.

On this anniversary, the people of Northern Ireland and all their friends around the world have much to celebrate. I hope that this moment of shared remembrance will allow them to continue the work of peace and inspire others to believe, as Heaney wrote, in "miracles / And heal and heal wells" and find their own way forward.

The Washington Post

Ukraine war: Who leaked top secret US documents - and why?

Paul Adams

WHAT to make of the dozens of classified US Defence Department documents - maps, charts and photographs - now circulating on the internet? Complete with timelines and dozens of impenetrable military acronyms, the documents, some of them marked "top secret", paint a detailed picture of the war in Ukraine. They tell of the casualties suffered on both sides, the military vulnerabilities of each and, crucially, what their relative strengths are likely to be when Ukraine decides to launch its much-anticipated spring offensive.

How real are these printed pages, unfolded and photographed, possibly on someone's dining room table? And what do they tell us, or the Kremlin, that we did not already know? First things first: this is the biggest leak of secret American information on the war in Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion 14 months ago. Some of the documents are as much as

six weeks old, but the implications are huge. Pentagon officials are quoted as saying the documents are real. Information on at least one of them appears to have been crudely altered in a later version, but out of a dump of as many as 100 documents, that seems a relatively minor detail. BBC News has reviewed more than 20 of the documents. They include detailed accounts of the training and equipment being provided to Ukraine as it puts together a dozen new brigades for an offensive that could begin within weeks. It says when the brigades will be ready and lists all the tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery pieces that are being provided by Ukraine's Western allies.

But it notes that "equipment delivery times will impact training and readiness". One map includes a "mud-frozen ground timeline", assessing ground conditions across eastern Ukraine as spring progresses. After a winter that has tested Ukraine's air defences to the limit, there's

also a sobering analysis of Kyiv's diminishing air defence capability, as it seeks to balance its limited resources to protect civilians, critical infrastructure and its frontline troops. Not only do the leaked documents say a lot about the state of Ukraine's military - they also talk about some of Washington's other allies. From Israel to South Korea, the documents reveal internal debates those countries are having about Ukraine and other sensitive issues. Some of the documents are marked top secret, others to be shared only with America's closest intelligence allies.

A lot of the detail here is familiar. There's just a lot more of it, and it's all in one place. Take casualty figures. It comes as little surprise to learn that the US estimates that between 189,500 and 223,000 Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded. The equivalent figure for Ukraine's losses - between 124,500 and 131,000 - is also in line with ballpark figures briefed to

journalists in recent weeks. In both cases, the Pentagon says it has "low confidence" in the figures, due to gaps in information, operational security and deliberate attempts, probably by both sides, to mislead. Tellingly, this is the one place where attempts have been made to alter the documents to make it look as if Ukraine is experiencing the worst casualties.

A version which appeared on a pro-Russian Telegram site took the number of Ukrainians "killed in action" ("16k-17.5k") and put those on the Russian ledger, while flipping the numbers on the Ukrainian side so they read "61k - 71.5k". All of which brings us to the question of who leaked the documents, and why? The story of how the documents found their way from the messaging platform Discord, to 4Chan and Telegram, has already been told by Aric Toler of the investigative open source intelligence group Bellingcat. Mr Toler says it

has not yet been possible to uncover the original source of the leaks, but charts their appearance on a messaging platform popular with gamers in early March.

On 4 March, following an argument about the war in Ukraine on a Discord server frequented by players of the computer game Minecraft, one user wrote "here, have some leaked documents", before posting 10 of them. It is an unusual, but hardly unique form of leak. In 2019, ahead of the UK general election, documents relating to US-UK trade relations appeared on Reddit, 4Chan and other sites. At the time, Reddit said the unredacted documents had originated in Russia.

In another case, last year, players of the online game War Thunder repeatedly posted sensitive military documents, apparently in an effort to win arguments among themselves. The latest leak is more sensitive, and potentially damaging. Ukraine has zealously guarded its "operational

security" and cannot be happy that such sensitive material has appeared at such a critical moment.

Ukraine's spring offensive could represent a make-or-break moment for the Zelensky government to alter dynamics on the battlefield and set conditions for peace talks later. In Kyiv, officials have spoken about a possible disinformation campaign by Russia. Other military bloggers have suggested the opposite: that it is all part of a Western plot to mislead Russian commanders. Crucially, there is nothing in the documents leaked so far that points to the direction or thrust of Ukraine's counter-offensive.

The Kremlin ought to have a pretty good idea already of the scope of Ukraine's preparations (although Moscow's intelligence failures have been much in evidence throughout the war), but Kyiv needs to keep its enemy guessing about how the campaign will unfold, in order to maximise the chances of success.

BBC

Why blockading rather than retaking Crimea might be Kyiv’s best option

William Courtney & Scott Savitz

“Crimea is our land, our territory,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky declared in January, underscoring Ukraine’s determination to reverse Russia’s illegal seizure of the peninsula. At present, Ukraine may lack the military capability to retake Crimea, but Kyiv might still achieve some of its key objectives by blockading it. New technology may ease this task.

Crimea is legally part of Ukraine, despite having been under Russian control since 2014. Russia uses the peninsula as an important base for logistical support to Russian forces in occupied areas of Ukraine, and for air and sea operations. Recovering Crimea by military means could be difficult. The peninsula is connected to the rest of Ukraine by just a narrow isthmus. Russian forces in Crimea can fortify it at will. Furthermore, Ukraine lacks substantial amphibious assault capabilities. Adam Smith, the top Democrat on the US House Armed Services Committee has said “people realize Ukraine is not going to militarily retake Crimea.”

Some of Ukraine’s backers worry that Russia could respond to a Ukrainian assault on Crimea with a nuclear strike. A year after seizing the peninsula, Putin said he had been ready to put Russian nuclear weapons on alert. Earlier this year, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev boasted that an attack on Crimea would lead to “retaliatory strikes.” US President Joe Biden has voiced concerns that nuclear use in Ukraine could lead to “Armageddon.” Fear of nuclear escalation might be part of the reason why the US still refuses to supply Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS), longer-range rocket artillery. It could enable Ukraine to strike military targets across Crimea.

Ukraine does not, however, need to drive occupying forces out of Crimea to render it less hospitable to Russia’s purposes. Combinations of modern technologies could enable Ukraine to block-

ade and barrage Russian operations. Former US Army Commander in Europe Lieutenant General Ben Hodges maintains that with long-range strike capabilities, Ukrainian forces could “make Crimea untenable for Russian forces” by the end of the summer.

The concept is simple: camera-studded, low-profile USVs laden with explosives are directed toward targets. This emerging technology can sink warships and destroy maritime infrastructure. USVs are well-suited for networked swarm attacks, and relatively low-cost. Their nascent designs can be modified to make them stealthier and harder to detect than most crewed vessels. Large-scale attacks using scores of USVs could inflict massive damage. Sinking a warship in a confined channel could create obstacles that would take weeks to clear, or longer if under fire. The geography that makes Crimea hard to invade facilitates a modern-day siege. All Russian movements by land must pass through one of two constricted corridors.

Ukraine could use additional capabilities to neutralize most Russian military power in Crimea. It has demonstrated the use of explosive uncrewed surface vessels (USVs) in attacks against Russian warships based at Sevastopol. The concept is simple: camera-studded, low-profile USVs laden with explosives are directed toward targets. This emerging technology can sink warships and destroy maritime infrastructure.

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designs can be modified to make them stealthier and harder to detect than most crewed vessels. Large-scale attacks using scores of USVs could inflict massive damage. Sinking a warship in a confined channel could create obstacles that would take weeks to

clear, or longer if under fire. The geography that makes Crimea hard to invade facilitates a modern-day siege. All Russian movements by land must pass through one of two constricted corridors. The first entails traversing hundreds of miles of occupied territory, including areas relatively close to the front and crawling with hostile populations, saboteurs, and special forces. The final gauntlet is the isthmus, a target-rich place with minimal room for maneuver and within range of current Ukrainian weapons.

The other land route is via the Crimean Bridge, which Ukrainian forces damaged in October as a “birthday gift” to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Bridges are durable and hard to destroy, which is one reason why Russia’s claim that the damage was due to a truck bomb (and an ensuing fire) may be implausible. Rather, the attack might have been inflicted by a USV. It can carry a larger explosive payload than a truck and strike a bridge from its vulnerable underside. While Russia has repaired much of the damage and will be on guard against follow-on attacks, a concerted swarm of explosive USVs – perhaps complemented by air attacks diverting defenders’ attention – could break the bridge indefinitely.

Maritime shipping could be targeted by explosive USVs, and possibly by clandestine USV minelaying at port entrances. The costs of USVs and mines are small compared to the effects they would generate. Port facilities and ground transportation networks leading from them could be barraged by longer-range fires.

Russia would continue to resupply Crimea via air, but aircraft can deliver only a fraction of the materiel that ground vehicles or ships can. Relying on longer-range fire, Ukraine could attenuate this flow by targeting runways and fuel facilities on the peninsula. While they can be repaired, doing so takes time and resources. Aircraft could be targeted on the ground, although this may require time-sensitive locational intelligence. USVs could enable Ukrainian forces to blockade Crimea. Augmented by other weapons, Ukrainian forces could hinder Russian forces from using it as a safe haven from which to attack the mainland or threaten Black Sea shipping. Rattled by attacks, short of supplies, and somewhat isolated, Russian forces in Crimea could become less capable. Ukrainian forces could pin down and neuter the enemy in Crimea while they work to oust it from other parts of their country.



How little the arrogant Tories know about Scotland

Alan Cochrane

AROW appears to be brewing within the ranks of the Conservative and Unionist Party - to give that outfit its full and normally proudly-stated name - that needs to be nipped in the bud immediately. If it is permitted to fester, it could well do lasting damage to what is generally accepted to be this country's most successful election-fighting entity.

At a minimum, it could well see the breakaway of the party's Scottish branch from the Tory fold - and this observer, for one, wouldn't blame them. What this budding stramash is all about is what appears to be a, frankly, over-the-top reaction from Conservative Campaign Headquarters (CCHQ) in London to a pretty straightforward suggestion from Douglas Ross, the leader of the Scottish Tories, to the dramatically changed political situation north of the border. He is calling for supporters of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties to reach an accommodation - no more - with each other to put party differences aside in favour of smashing support for those who would break up Britain.

"Country before party" is his watchword, but it is a maxim that seems to be falling on stony ground in London. In displaying a touch too much of the arrogance that often alienates Scottish Tories from their London-based colleagues, CCHQ has declared that Ross's appeal is "emphatically not the view of the Conservative Party". And a spokesman added: "We want people to vote for Conservative candidates wherever they are standing."

However, this dismissive

reaction provoked a swift response from senior Scottish Tories, with one front-bench source declaring: "This is typical for those teenage scribblers at Central Office, who know nothing about Scotland."

This view was echoed by a former minister, who added: "Sadly, this is another example of a lack of commitment to the Union. The nationalists aren't over and it's really important that they're routed at the next election." The recent meltdown of the once all-powerful Scottish National Party still has some way to go as more explosive revelations hit the headlines and dominate the news agenda on a daily basis.

Chaos now reigns in "Natland". Nicola Sturgeon resigned last month as SNP leader and first minister, while her husband Peter Murrell was arrested following a police investigation into the party's financial affairs. At the time of writing, that investigation is still ongoing. As such, it is a golden opportunity to bring to an end the nationalists' hegemony in Scotland, where they've ruled the roost since becoming the biggest party and forming a government 16 years ago. However, Ross is not advocating what Central Office clearly believe is akin to treachery. Instead, what he's suggesting is that in central Scotland, where Labour candidates have a better chance of toppling the SNP, Tory voters might get behind Labour. Moreover, that generosity might be reciprocated in, say, the north-east, where Labour voters would back Tory candidates. He added that he believed change might be coming "if parties

maybe look a bit beyond their own narrow party agenda to what's best for the country".

New First Minister Humza Yousaf and his Cabinet are trying to put a brave face on the shambles they've inherited - one which, certainly in policy terms, they had a hand in. But they know in their heart of hearts that the game's up. Mike Russell, the SNP president who was a cabinet minister in several administrations and a "long marcher" for the nationalist cause, said that independence was off the agenda for now. But his realistic assessment suggests that now is certainly the time for the forces of Unionism in Scotland to put aside any petty differences and unite to smash the running sore that is separatism and which has dominated public discourse in Scotland for decades.

What is now required are cool heads in the Unionist camp. Labour has an important part to play in also putting the country first - a tall order, perhaps, for a party that's been out of power since 2010. But it's a battle well worth fighting and winning. On the Tory side, Douglas Ross would be well-advised to tone down his rhetoric. Any arrangements with Labour should be agreed locally and, if possible, discreetly. And Conservative Central Office should cool their responses, stop playing the "heavy" and realise that Scottish voters are ahead of them on this issue, being well-practised in tactical voting. The final defeat of nationalism is still a fair way off. To get there, it would be best if everyone adopted that hugely successful wartime slogan to "keep calm and carry on".

The Telegraph

The danger Putin posed

AHEAD of a verdict expected next week, outspoken Kremlin critic Vladimir Kara-Murza, who has been put on trial for treason in Moscow for his outspoken anti-war comments, gave the following address to the court on Monday. I was sure that after two decades in Russian politics, with all that I have seen and experienced, nothing could still surprise me. I have to admit that I was wrong. I've been surprised by the fact that my trial in 2023 surpassed even the "trials" of Soviet dissidents in the 1960s and 70s in its secrecy and disdain for legal norms, and that's without even mentioning the harshness of the sentence requested by the prosecution or the use of terms such as "enemy of the state." My trial had less in common with the 1970s - it was a return to the 1930s. As a historian, I find this something worthy of reflection.

At one point during my testimony, the presiding judge reminded me that "remorse for the deed committed" could be considered an extenuating circumstance. Though there's little amusing about my present

Vladimir Kara-Murza

predicament, I couldn't help but smile. Criminals are expected to show remorse for their actions, but I'm in prison for my political views. For speaking out against the war in Ukraine. For fighting Putin's dictatorship for years. For enabling the adoption of personal sanctions against human rights violators under the "Magnitsky Act." Not only do I not repent of any of this, I'm proud of it. I'm proud of the fact that Boris Nemtsov brought me into politics and I hope he isn't ashamed of me. I stand by every word I've ever uttered and by every word this court accuses me of saying. I only blame myself for one thing: for failing to convince enough of my compatriots and politicians in democratic countries of the danger that the current Kremlin regime poses to Russia and to the world. Today it is obvious to everyone, but at a terrible price - the price of war.

In their closing statements, defendants usually ask the court to acquit them. For a person who did not commit a crime, the only fair verdict would be an acquittal. But I ask nothing of this court. I know its

verdict. I knew it a year ago when I saw people in black uniforms and black masks running after my car in the rearview mirror. This is the price of not remaining silent in Russia today.

But I also know that the day will come when the darkness over our country will dissipate. When black will be called black and white will be called white. When it will officially be recognized that two times two is four, when the war will be called a war and the usurper a usurper, and when those who began it rather than those who tried to prevent it will be seen as criminals. As inevitably as spring follows even the harshest winter, that day will come. And when it does, our society will open its eyes and be horrified to discover the terrible crimes that have been committed in its name. From this realization, the long, difficult, but vital path toward recovery, Russia's restoration, and its return to the community of civilized nations will begin. Even today, even in the darkness around us, even sitting in this cage, I love my country and I believe in our people. I believe that we can walk this path.

The Moscow Times

Arab American Heritage Month is only start

Ray Hanania

THE ongoing celebration of April as Arab American Heritage Month is a reflection of how far the community has come. However, it is also a reflection of how far Arabs in America still need to go. Celebrating Arab American heritage was an idea that slowly evolved among Arab Americans as the community grew and as a natural response to the increasing anti-Arab discrimination in the US.

The first Arab to arrive in America - according to the official website of the State Department, which in recent years has expanded its acknowledgement of racial diversity to include Arabs - was Moroccan Estebanico Azemmouri in 1527. He was followed by Antonio Bishallany, who arrived from Lebanon. So, it is no surprise that Morocco later became the first Arab nation to recognize America after it declared its independence in 1776 or that the Lebanese American community is today not only the oldest and largest Arab group in the US but also the most engaged in American society. Living in America is not easy for immigrants and it has certainly not been easy for Arabs. Negative stereotypes of Arabs quickly morphed into racist depictions in the American media, including in books and newspapers, on television and radio and in Hollywood movies.

It did not help that the term

"Arab" was inherently challenged by its own people, who had differences emanating from their 22 countries of origin. Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nasser tried to correct that and create an Arab nation in the 1960s, but the idea drifted away after the defeat by Israel in the Six-Day War. Arab diversity is one reason why there is an ongoing debate on how to count the number of people from the Arab world or Middle East in the US Census. Being included in the census triggers laws that strengthen the voting and political rights of minority groups, while also mandating the distribution of federal money to strengthen their empowerment. However, Arabs are not included, leaving them in a state of limbo in which they are easily targeted by haters, marginalized by the government, and denied funding. The word "Arab" has become a so-called four-letter word - a phrase used to reflect disgust rather than a source of pride to be shared with other Americans in a nation that claims to be based on diversity and an empathy for immigrants. Yes, things have gotten better since 1972, when President Richard Nixon launched Operation Boulder, which was intended to monitor the immigration of "subversives" and individuals seen as threats to America. It was later expanded to target Arabs. Most Arabs in America were targeted by

this surveillance.

In the meantime, fear of Arabs was being fanned by the anti-Arab themes that dominated the Hollywood movie industry. Of course, Hollywood has portrayed many ethnic and racial groups in a negative way. But for most of these victims of racism, Hollywood also included positive role models and characters to balance the stereotypes. It is only very recently that Arabs have started to see a few positive Hollywood characters. Even today, as 45 states recognize Arab American Heritage Month, five states do not. And some 26 states have passed laws targeting Arab American activism by making support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction movement illegal. While Joe Biden last year became the first US president to officially recognize Arab American Heritage Month, only one state - Illinois - has passed a law officially designating April as such.

Biden has also appointed more than two dozen Arab Americans to serve in his administration, filling a gap that had put Arabs at a disadvantage for many years. But those appointees have been prevented from making public statements about America's Middle East policy. They have also had to "cleanse" their social media accounts of unpopular opinions and are rarely allowed to speak on

the record. I am not sure if that is really an achievement - to have more Arabs working for the US government while keeping their political views muzzled. Although the mainstream news media celebrates the heritage months of African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans and others, there is very little acknowledgement of Arab heritage during Arab American Heritage Month. Racism against Arabs still exists in America. It is compounded by the multifariousness of the Arab people - 22 different nationalities along with even more diverse subgroups that all celebrate their own individuality.

Although Egyptians, Jordanians, Palestinians and Saudis all see themselves as having distinct identities, Americans do not. America sees us all as the same, even including people from South Asia and others who share our features and our dominant religion of Islam.

The Arab American community needs to recognize this challenge and stress its identity as being Arab, not as being from the Middle East and North Africa. We should not contribute to America's uneducated and uninformed approach to Arab culture and ethnicity. Until we stand up as Arabs, we will always be pushed down by negative stereotypes. Arab American Heritage Month is a moment of pride. But it is only a start.

Arab News

Where are the meaningful AI guardrails?

Joheph Dana

ITALY has become the first Western country to block the popular artificial intelligence bot ChatGPT. Italian authorities didn't block the AI software because the technology is advancing too quickly and becoming too powerful. Instead, the Italian data protection authority blocked the application over privacy concerns and questions over ChatGPT's compliance with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation. The event made international headlines and tapped into deeper global fears that AI is becoming too powerful.

Many of us can't comprehend how the technology has developed so quickly. One reason is that there have been few guardrails from a regulatory standpoint to keep tabs on the growth of AI. Humanity needs guardrails in place, but that is much easier said than done. The regulation of AI is becoming increasingly vital as the technology is being used more widely in areas such as health care, finance and transportation. According to a study by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and OpenAI, the privately held company behind ChatGPT, most jobs will be changed significantly by AI in the near future. For nearly 20 percent of jobs in the study, ranging from accountant to writer, at least half of their tasks could be completed much faster with ChatGPT and similar tools. While we don't know what this will do to the labor market, it will have an unavoidably large impact that could have

knock-on effects across society.

There has been a slight movement toward better regulation worldwide in the past decade. The EU, in line with its data protection standards, has developed a framework for AI regulation that includes rules for high-risk AI applications, requirements for transparency and accountability, and a ban on specific uses of AI, such as social scoring - the practice of using the technology to rank people for their trustworthiness. The US has also slowly started to regulate AI, with the National Institute of Standards and Technology developing a set of principles for AI governance and the Federal Trade Commission taking enforcement actions against companies that use AI in ways that violate consumer protection laws. Yet, these regulations are inadequate, given the speed at which AI develops. The concern over AI's growing power and the lack of regulations has led some technology leaders to call for a pause on AI development. Last month, according to The Guardian, more than 1,800 signatories, including Elon Musk, the cognitive scientist Gary Marcus and Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, called for a six-month pause on developing systems "more powerful" than that of ChatGPT-4.

Musk was a co-founder of OpenAI and has since expressed misgivings about how the company is run. The open letter states that "AI labs and independent experts

should use this pause to jointly develop and implement a set of shared safety protocols for advanced AI design and development that are rigorously audited and overseen by independent outside experts." Independent experts are vital to sensible AI regulation. This should not overshadow the fact that the sector has developed with little oversight from government authorities. This is one reason why we are having an urgent conversation about its growing power. In short, AI regulation needs to catch up to the rapid pace of technological development.

AI's economic, societal and intellectual risks are not adequately addressed in the halls of power worldwide. The use of facial recognition technology, for example, has been shown to be biased against certain groups but is still largely unregulated in many countries, including the US. Similarly, using AI in automated decision-making systems, such as credit scoring or employment screening, has raised concerns about algorithmic bias and discrimination. AI language models such as ChatGPT can generate harmful or misleading content, such as hate speech, and can perpetuate existing societal biases and inequalities. Then there is the issue of data privacy, which Italy has zeroed in on. Language models require access to large amounts of personal data to function effectively. Should individuals hand over their data? If so, under what terms? These are serious

questions that don't have answers right now because of the absence of sound regulations. Do you know how much of your data is being fed into a large AI language model as you read this piece? I certainly don't, and that's part of the problem.

The ever-present danger with regulation, on the other hand, is that it could stifle innovation. Private companies across Silicon Valley love this line of argument because it changes the parameters of debate. They say that more research is needed to thoroughly understand AI's risks and benefits. Moreover, AI regulation requires input from various stakeholders, including government agencies, industry leaders and civil society organizations. Getting various stakeholders to come together and investigate how AI is changing society is not easy. Giving researchers more time to evaluate AI risk can happen while regulations are being written. These things don't have to be mutually exclusive.

Given the lack of movement in the world's most powerful countries on AI regulation, it is time for small countries to ratify their own regulations. Technology-heavy economies from Estonia to Israel and the UAE have the knowledge base to draft sensible regulations and see how they affect AI development. These countries are also small enough that the regulations can be updated and amended as the technology evolves. However, we look at it, it is time for AI guardrails.

Important Notice

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Weekly inflation decreases by 0.60 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 0.60 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on April 13, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 250.56 points as compared to 252.06 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 44.61 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 0.69 percent decrease and went down to 257.09 points from last week's 258.88 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 a decrease of 0.84 percent, 0.58 percent, 0.44 percent, and 0.67 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 26 (50.98%) items increased, 09 (17.65%) items decreased and 16 (31.37%) items remained stable.

The items which

recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW) included Tomatoes (22.43%), Onions (15.85%), Wheat Flour (2.75%), Garlic (1.29%), Pulse Gram (0.82%), Pulse Moong (0.35%) and Mustard Oil (0.09%), non-food items, Electricity charges for Q1 (4.95%) and Firewood (0.09%). The items that recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis included Potatoes (8.59%), LPG (4.47%), Eggs (2.65%), Shirting (2.39%), Chicken (2.19%), Georgette (2.10%), Washing Soap (1.83%), Bananas (1.64%), Pulse Mash (1.45%), Gur (1.25%) and

Cooked Beef (1.15%).

On a Year-on-Year (YoY) basis, the commodities which recorded an increase in their average prices included Cigarettes (152.11%), Wheat Flour (126.09%), Gas Charges for Q1 (108.38%), Diesel (102.84%), Eggs (99.37%), Tea Lipton (97.63%), Bananas (90.18%), Potatoes (87.18%), Rice Basmati Broken (84.46%), Rice Irri-6/9 (81.31%), Petrol (81.17%), Pulse Moong (67.43%), Pulse Mash (58.54%) and Bread Plain (55.36%).

The commodities that witnessed a decrease in prices on a YOY included Tomatoes (41.56%), Chilies Powdered (6.48%), and Electricity charges for Q1 (1.60%).



HYDERABAD: A family purchasing Sandals during Eid shopping in preparation of upcoming Eid-ul-Fitar at Resham Bazaar.

OGDCL, PARCO join hands to explore new ventures, energy transaction

ISLAMABAD (APP): Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) and Pak-Arab Refinery Company Limited (PARCO) inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for new projects, as part of a business diversification and energy transition strategy.

The MoU was signed for collaboration and joint ven-

ture opportunities in the energy sector including oil and gas infrastructure projects, according to a press release issued on Friday.

According to the MoU, both sides will constitute joint working groups to evaluate opportunities, undertake feasibilities and establish joint ventures for commercially, technically and economically feasible

projects. OGDCL and PARCO will explore opportunities of business growth to ensure term sustainability and for enhancing shareholders' value.

In the 1st phase, world-class consultants would be engaged for the identification and evaluation of new opportunities. Both companies have also identified certain specific

projects and areas of cooperation, which will help in materializing tangible progress on a fast-track basis.

The companies were represented by OGDCL MD/CEO Ahmed Hayat Lak and PARCO MD Shahid Mahmood Khan and witnessed by senior management of both companies.

PSGMEA delegation meets German envoy

SIALKOT (APP): A delegation of the Pakistan Sports Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PSGMEA) met deputy head of mission of the German embassy, Dr Philipp Deichmann, Ministry Counselor of German embassy, Islamabad.

PSGMEA Chairman Arshad Latif Butt repre-

sented his delegation during talks, while other team members were Chairman Departmental Committee PSGMEA and Executive Committee Member Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Zainul-Abideen, President Vocational Technical Institute Dr. Jahangir, former chairman PSGMEA Muhammad Rafi Sony,

Secretary General PSGMEA Mohsin Maqsood and President CBA Samson Iqbal.

Arshad Butt informed the envoy about the issues faced by the Sialkot business community during travel to Germany.

Dr Philipp Deichmann promised the best cooperation in all aspects including resolution of the visas issues.

Shipping Activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Five ships namely, Al-Karama, Cussler, Frankfurt Express, MSC Krittika and LNGC Borno schedule to load/offload Cement, Containers and LNG, berthed at Multipurpose Terminal, Qasim International Container Terminal and Pakistan Gas Port Terminal respectively.

Meanwhile another oil tanker 'Octa Lune' also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the same day. A total of 08 ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them six ships, Frankfurt Express, MSC Krittika, Cussler, Uranus-J, Caribbean-I and Al-Karama left the Port on Friday (today) morning, while another ship, African Sterling is expected to sail on today.

Cargo volume of 135,285 tones, comprising 96,616 tones imports Cargo and 38,669 tones export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 3,240 Containers (1,515 TEUs Imports and 1,725 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 05 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them an oil carrier Al-Salam-II & another ship, APL California carrying Gas oil and Containers are expected to take berths at FOTCO and QICT respectively on Friday.

Turkish private sector's foreign debt at \$158b

ISTANBUL (AA/APP): The Turkish private sector's foreign debt totaled \$158 billion as of February, down \$1.4 billion from the end of 2022, the Central Bank.

Long-term loans amounted to \$149.3 billion, down \$1.7 billion, while short-term loans –excluding trade credits – were \$8.7 billion, up \$271 million, over the same period.

Financial institutions' share of long-term loans was at 34.5%, while non-financial institutions' share was at 65.5%; these figures were 73.9% and 26.1%, respectively, for short-term loans.

Some 61.3% of long-term loans were in the US dollar, followed by the euro (34.7%), Turkish lira (1.9%), and other currencies (2.1%).

Gold prices increase by Rs 1100 to 218,600 per tola

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increase by Rs 1100 and was sold at Rs 218,600 on Friday day against its sale at Rs 217,500 the previous day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also increased by Rs 943 Rs 187,414 from Rs 186,471, whereas the price of 10 grams

of 22-karat gold went up to Rs 171,796 from Rs 170,932.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs 20 to close at Rs 2570 and that of tenger gram silver also rose by Rs 17.15 to close at Rs 2,203.36 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market rose by US\$ 07 to \$2034 against its sale at \$2027, the association reported.

FCCI chief stresses need to produce responsive teachers

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) President Dr Khurram Tariq stressed the need for focussing on producing better, passionate and more responsive teachers who could inculcate thinking in the student's community.

He was talking to Dr Nazia Parveen and Dr Sabahat of Faisalabad Campus of the University of Education who visited FCCI and had detailed discussion with the president

on education related issues.

Dr Nazia Parveen is currently undertaking a six-month training course under a US Public Affairs funded project to enhance the creativity of the students. Dr Khurram Tariq underlined the importance of quality teachers who could equip students with capabilities to resolve the emerging issues by offering out of box solutions. He said that Saudi Arabia is going to be digitalized and it needs 20,000 IT experts. "We must avail this

opportunity and produce high calibre experts within the next ten years", and added that of these sufficient numbers of IT experts could be absorbed within the country while highly talented individuals could launch their own companies. Similarly, the remaining could be exported to Saudi Arabia and other international potential markets. He was optimistic that Pakistan could earn an additional ten billion dollars from the remittances of these experts working abroad.

SCCI delegation meets Industries Minister

SIALKOT (APP): A delegation of Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) led by its President Abdul Ghafoor Malik met with Provincial Minister on Industries, Commerce and Investment SM Tanveer in his office on Friday.

The delegation informed about the problems faced by the industry and industrialists of

Sialkot. The matters related to Sialkot Industrial Zone, Export Processing Zone, Road Infrastructure, Exemption to Export Sector from levy of 5 percent, Excise Tax on Highways and Withholding Sales Tax on Consumption of Services were discussed during the meeting.

The provincial minister assured the delegation of

his full cooperation and resolution of issues on priority. "I am the representative of the industrialists and will protect the industry of the province", he said. If the factories would be built, new employment opportunities would be created, he added. The minister said that every necessary step would be taken to keep the wheel of industries moving.

Non-Muslims enjoy more rights and protection in Pakistan compared to minorities in India: Dr. Mahesh

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) hosted an Interfaith Iftar Dinner in honour of Minister of State for National Health Services Mahesh Kumar Malani which was attended by the representatives of Hindu and Christian communities as well as the members of the business community.

Chaman Lal, Pritam Das, Ashok Kumar, Rajesh Kumar, Om Prakash, Jadesh Kumar, Lal Chand, Lalat Kumar, Dilip Kumar, Raja Javaraj, Besham Kumar, Lajpat, Ramesh Kumar and others were present at the dinner. Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State for National Health Services Mahesh Kumar Malani said that the government is aware of the difficulties being faced by the business community due to import restrictions and LC issues.

He said that matters with the IMF are progressing positively and assured that soon the LCs issue of the business community would be resolved which would help revive business activities.

He said that after Eid, he would arrange a meeting of the representatives of the pharmaceutical sector with the Drug Regulatory Authority to resolve their problems.

He said that compared to India, non-Muslims were enjoying better rights in Pakistan and that he was proud to be a Pakistani.

He said that non-Muslims in Pakistan never felt any deprivation. He thanked ICCI for hosting the interfaith dinner and said that he will continue to play his role in promoting interfaith harmony to strengthen national unity and take Pakistan on the path of sustainable

development.

He assured that he will cooperate with ICCI in resolving the key issues of the business community.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, speaking on the occasion, briefed the Minister of State for National Health Services Mahesh Kumar Malani about the major problems of the business community and requested his cooperation to solve them.

He said that due to the non-opening of LCs, many industries are in danger of closing down and business activities are suffering. He urged the government to focus on resolving these issues as soon as possible. He said that the pharmaceutical sector is also facing some problems with the drug regulatory authority, and urged for cooperating to resolve them.

Stocks rally, dollar dips further on easing rate expectations

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian equities rose and the dollar dipped further Friday after fresh data showing continued slowing of inflation fanned hopes the Federal Reserve is nearing the end of its long-running campaign of interest rate hikes.

The surprise on-month drop in producer prices in March -- and the biggest since April 2020 -- came a day after the consumer price index dropped more than expected, suggesting the central bank's tightening campaign was finally paying off.

A higher-than-forecast reading on jobless claims added to the positive mood, which helped send Wall Street's three main indexes rallying, including a two percent advance for the Nasdaq.

Investors are now bet-

ting the Fed will hike rates 25 basis points at its May gathering but possibly hold after that, with some still clinging to hopes it will even cut by the end of the year. This week's data has reassured investors that inflation is coming down and that the economy could be heading for a soft landing, even though minutes from the Fed's March policy meeting revealed some officials see a mild recession by the year's end.

"Coming fast on the heels of yesterday's better-than-expected (consumer prices) reading, today's (producer price index) print, plus the in-line jobless claims report, reinforces the view that the labour market continues to rebalance and that the post-pandemic inflation scare is ending," said SPI

Asset Management's Stephen Innes.

"And as we move into the seventh-inning stretch, where arguably much could happen between now and the final pitch, the combination of progress on inflation and the softer labour market has been encouraging."

"It reinforces the view that the Fed may be in the 9th inning of the hiking cycle, which markets seem to be endorsing today as yields on 10-year Treasuries declined."

Asian equities rose in early trade Friday, with Tokyo leading the way followed by Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul, Taipei, Manila and Jakarta.

"Inflation is not surprising to the upside," Que Nguyen, at Research Affiliates, said. "At the

same time, the job market seems stable. And so what we're getting today is sort of an optimistic outlook that we're going to have an almost like a Goldilocks situation where inflation's going to slow, but the economy is not crashing."

With Thursday's data lowering expectations for where rates will top out, the dollar has come under pressure, hitting a one-year low against the euro. And it continued to struggle Friday, falling further versus the single currency, while the pound was at its best level since June.

Focus now turns to the corporate earnings season, which kicks off in earnest Friday with results from banking titans including JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo and Citigroup.

Traders are keenly

awaiting their outlook statements in light of the upheaval in the banking sector last month that saw three US lenders go under and Credit Suisse bought by rival UBS.

Oil prices rose in Asian business, extending a rally sparked by major producers' decision this month to slash output by more than a million barrels a day.

The OPEC+ group said Thursday the move had put world markets on course to be in deficit, which will widen as the year goes on, with China's reopening adding extra pressure.

Tokyo - Nikkei 225: UP 1.0 percent at 28,433.11 (break)

Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: UP 0.5 percent at 20,445.97

Shanghai - Composite: UP 0.3 percent at 3,328.75

Euro/dollar: UP at \$1.1059 from \$1.1050 on Thursday

Pound/dollar: UP at \$1.2529 from \$1.2526

Dollar/yen: DOWN at 132.54 yen from 132.65 yen

Euro/pound: UP at 88.27 pence at 88.20 pence

West Texas Intermediate: UP 0.5 percent at \$82.56 per barrel

Brent North Sea crude: UP 0.5 percent at \$86.48 per barrel

New York - Dow: UP 1.1 percent at 34,029.69 (close)

London - FTSE 100: UP 0.2 percent at 7,843.38 (close)

Meanwhile, Tokyo stocks closed higher for the sixth straight day on Friday, helped by US rallies on better-than-expected inflation data that raised

hopes of a shift in Federal Reserve monetary policy.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index climbed 1.20 percent, or 336.50 points, to end at 28,493.47, while the broader Topix index added 0.54 percent, or 10.79 points, to 2,018.72.

"A broad range of stocks were bought, following the trend of a significant rebound in the US stock market, mainly in major high-tech stocks, as the US March wholesale price index fell against expectations, and fears of inflation receded," Iwai Cosmo Securities said in a note.

Iwai Cosmo also said a jump in shares of Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing, which upgraded its annual forecasts on Thursday, helped boost the Tokyo market.

US wholesale prices

declined 0.5 percent in March, according to US data, with the drop largely attributed to a fall in energy prices.

The report came on the heels of US government data released Wednesday that showed a generally improving picture on consumer prices, although inflation remained elevated when food and energy costs were stripped out.

The dollar traded at 132.45 yen in Asian trade against 132.65 yen in New York on Thursday.

Among major shares, Fast Retailing surged 8.49 percent to 32,840 yen after they lifted its forecasts on strong overseas demand as Chinese consumers return to stores. Sony Group jumped 1.76 percent to 12,110 yen while Nintendo gained 1.64 percent to 5,467 yen.



In brief

Liverpool fined for player conduct

L O N D O N (A g e n c i e s) : Liverpool have been fined \$A69,200 by the Football Association after their players surrounded the referee during this month's 4-1 Premier League defeat at Manchester City. Several Liverpool players crowded around referee Simon Hooper as they pleaded for him to show City midfielder Rodri a second yellow card for a challenge on Cody Gakpo. "The club admitted failing to ensure that its players conducted themselves in an orderly fashion and do not behave in a way which is improper," the FA said in a statement on Friday. "An independent regulatory commission imposed Liverpool FC's fine following a subsequent hearing."

Al-Nassr sack coach Garcia

R I Y A D H (I N P) : Cristiano Rona-Ildo's Saudi club Al-Nassr fired coach Rudi Garcia after less than a year in charge following media reports of dressing room tensions and just days before a crucial game against champions Al-Hilal. Garcia, the former AS Roma and Olympique de Marseille coach, criticised the players after they drew 0-0 with lowly Al Feiha last Sunday in another blow to their hopes of a first league title since 2019, saying: "The result is bad. I don't feel satisfied with the players". Local media reported that Garcia's relationship with the players prompted the club to dismiss him, as well as dissatisfaction with his style of play. Al-Nassr have collected seven points from their last four league games, dropping to second place in the table, three points behind leaders Al-Ittihad with seven games left in the season. Al-Nassr lost the Saudi Super Cup final to Al-Ittihad in January and have not beaten any of their closest rivals, Al-Ittihad, Al-Hilal, or Al-Shabab, in the league this season.

McCullum under scrutiny

L O N D O N (A g e n c i e s) : England Test head coach Brendon McCullum's association with a betting company is under scrutiny, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) said on Friday. The former New Zealand captain appears in advertisements for 22Bet India, a Cyprus-registered online bookmaking company. The ECB's anti-corruption codes prohibit players, coaches and officials from participating in or encouraging betting on matches. "We are currently exploring the matter and in discussions with Brendon around his relationship with the Cypriot-based betting company, 22Bet," an ECB spokesperson said in a statement. "We have rules in place around gambling and will always seek to ensure these are followed." McCullum's association with the company began before he took over the England job last year but he has been seen in the betting company's recent YouTube adverts around this year's Indian Premier League. "We are speaking to the ECB about this," McCullum's agent Simon Auteri told the Times newspaper. "I am not going to comment on anything. We are working through it." A rejuvenated England have won nine of their 11 Test matches since McCullum took over.

Pakistan a good team on home ground: Jimmy Neesham

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Experienced all-rounder Jimmy Neesham feels that New Zealand will have to be on top of their game if they want to get an edge over Pakistan in the upcoming white-ball series which comprises five T20Is and as many ODIs.

Speaking to private channel in Lahore ahead of the first T20I, Neesham said that Pakistan is really a good team in their home conditions. "Pakistan are a really good team in their own conditions and we have to be on top of our game to come out on top of the series and hopefully we can use the experiences that a few of us have recently in these conditions," the 32-year-old said.

The Kiwi all-rounder was also a part of the Peshawar Zalmi squad in the recently-concluded Pakistan Super League (PSL) and played in Lahore last month. The Auckland-born cricketer had also shared a dressing room with Pakistan's skipper Babar Azam during the

tournament.

"I played a few games here during the PSL a month or so ago, I think the feel of the atmosphere has changed a little bit, it's obviously a lot warmer than it was at that time. So essentially a little bit more on offer for the bowlers as far as swing and that kind of thing," said Neesham.

"We've had a bit of success in this format over the last six or eight years and we know how we operate, and especially in these conditions, as well, it'll be about sticking to those plans, and we're expecting quite high scoring encounters on what looks like a good wicket.

So, especially for the bowling attack, it's about maintaining composure and trying to you know limit those big overs," said Neesham, who has represented New Zealand in 71 ODIs and 63 T20Is.

Replying to a question, the New Zealand all-rounder said that the nature of cricket is such that there's no perfect plan for any bat-

ter and all plans sort of have positives and negatives.

"We can only come up with theories but at the end of the day, it is up to the execution of the bowlers and sometimes potentially a bit of luck as well. So, we will go out there with good intentions and, and having plans in place," he said. "But, the nature of players of the quality of Babar Azam is that sometimes the best plans don't work. So, we just got to try and put our best foot forward and see what happens."

Talking about the lack of experience in the touring squad, the New Zealander said that the team has got a lot of enthusiastic guys in the group who are keen to get out there and make the mark on international cricket.

"It's great for the culture of the group as well to have that injection of young talent and young passion and hopefully they get a chance to impress and show their wares in the next few days," he concluded.



LAHORE: Adam Milne was rapid in his opening spell and accounted for two early wickets, Pakistan vs New Zealand, 1st T20.

Nadal out of Barcelona in fresh French Open blow

MONTE CARLO (AFP): Rafael Nadal's preparation for a tilt at a record-extending 15th French Open title suffered a further blow when he announced Friday his withdrawal from the ATP Barcelona tournament. The 36-year-old Spaniard said he had still not recovered full fitness from the hip flexor injury he sustained in the Australian Open in January and which saw him miss this week's Monte Carlo Open.

"I am still not ready and so I continue my preparation process for the return to competition," he tweeted.

The Barcelona tournament starts on Saturday and the French Open on May 28.

Nadal said it hurt him to miss Barcelona.

"Barcelona is a special tournament for me because it is my club by adoption and because playing at home is always a unique feeling," he said.

The 22-time Grand Slam singles champion – he shares the record with Novak Djokovic – had originally thought he would be out for up to two months.

He pulled out of hard-court tournaments at Indian Wells and Miami, with his sights set on a return at the start of the clay court season.

His fitness problems have become an increasing issue since he won his 14th French Open crown last year.

He eased to victory against Casper Ruud despite having his troublesome left foot anaesthetised to counter the pain – he was diagnosed with Müller-Weiss syndrome aged 18.

He subsequently withdrew from his Wimbledon semi-final due to an abdominal injury.

His long absence from the circuit this time round has seen him drop out of the top 10 for the first time since April 2005 – he is presently ranked 15th.

Monte Carlo Masters Stefanos Tsitsipas & Daniil Medvedev fall to quarter-final defeats

MONACO (Agencies): Defending champion Stefanos Tsitsipas and third seed Daniil Medvedev have been knocked out of the Monte Carlo Masters in the quarter-finals.

Tsitsipas, 24, lost the opening four games on his way to a 6-2 6-4 defeat by the American eighth seed Taylor Fritz.

Russian Medvedev, 27, was beaten in straight sets 6-3 6-4 by Dane Holger Rune, who is seeded sixth.

Italian Lorenzo Musetti takes on compatriot Jannik Sinner in the remaining last-eight tie on Friday.

Greek Tsitsipas, ranked third in the world, battled back in the second set against Fritz but was eliminated in just over an hour.

Fritz, 25, will face Russian Andrey Rublev in the semi-finals on Saturday. Second seed Tsitsipas

had beaten Fritz in three previous hard-court meetings, and had also recorded 12 victories in total on the Monaco clay, dropping only one set.

He levelled the match at 4-4 in the second set but lost out on his serve again to go behind 5-4, before Fritz sealed the win with an ace on his first match point.

"My level was very high, I played very well," said Fritz, who becomes the first American to reach the last four in Monte Carlo since Vince Spadea in 2003.

Miami Open champion Medvedev had played for more than three hours on Thursday to take a thrilling 3-6 7-5 7-6 (9-7) win against German Alexander Zverev in the third round.

However, his serve was broken early in both sets by 19-year-old Rune and despite a tight contest in the

second set, Rune was able to gain a 5-4 advantage and serve for the match.

"I knew it would be a super-difficult match and that I would have to play at my best level," said Rune, whose world ranking of ninth is one place higher than fellow semi-finalist Fritz.

In the earlier quarter-final, Rublev secured a 6-1 7-6 (7-5) victory against German qualifier Jan-Lennard Struff. The 25-year-old lost the first game on his serve before winning six in a row in a quick opening set against the world number 100.

But Struff, who defeated fourth seed Casper Ruud in the last 16, forced a tie-break in the second set, in which Rublev regained his composure after a nervous display to win on his second match point.

Klopp makes Ferrari joke about big-money deals

L O N D O N (A g e n c i e s) : Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp has likened talk of big-money signings to a five-year-old asking for a Ferrari for Christmas, after the Merseyside club pulled out of the race to sign Borussia Dortmund midfielder Jude Bellingham.

Sources told ESPN on Tuesday that Liverpool ended their pursuit for England international Bellingham, instead opting to dedicate funds to a squad overhaul in the summer following a disappointing season which sees Klopp's side languishing in eighth in the Premier League. Sources told ESPN on Wednesday that Manchester City lead the race to sign the midfielder, while Real Madrid are also interested.

At a news conference on Friday, Klopp refused to address the media reports that Liverpool ended their interest in signing the 19-

year-old, while saying that he doesn't understand talk over transfers that may not happen.

"There's nothing to say about it [Bellingham], to be honest," he told reporters. "If we don't speak about players we sign or do not sign, why would I talk about these kinds of speculation?"

"It is not about Jude Bellingham, but I never understand why we talk about things we theoretically cannot have. We cannot have six players in a summer, everyone for £100 million. That is clear.

"We are not children. Ask a five-year-old what they want for Christmas and they say a Ferrari, you wouldn't say that's a good idea, it's too expensive and you cannot drive it.

"Whatever we need and want, we try everything to get it but there are moments where we have to accept

and step aside."

Liverpool travel to Leeds United on Monday, the only team to have beaten them at Anfield in the league this season.

Following the Merseyside club's goalless tie with Chelsea and 2-2 draw with league leaders Arsenal, Klopp said his side is looking to build on the momentum as they prepare for a "big fight" against 16th-placed Leeds at Elland Road.

"We have to build on two games with good moments," said Klopp, whose side is 12 points off the top four. "We have nothing to lose, we have to try new things; everything is on the table. I'm looking forward to the game. Leeds will go with all they have. It will never be an easy game."

Luis Diaz will likely be available for the game following his recovery from a knee injury.

Adviser to CM Punjab on sports. Wahab Riaz presides important meeting

LAHORE (APP): Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz presided over an important meeting about the preparations of Punjab's biggest Talent Hunt Programme here at National Hockey Stadium on Friday.

Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Shahid Zaman, Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail, Director Youth Affairs Syed Umair Hassan and Director Sports Nadeem Qaiser also attended the meeting. Dr Asif Tufail gave a detailed briefing about Punjab's biggest Talent Hunt Programme.

Addressing the meeting, Wahab Riaz said that Punjab Talent Hunt programme will

be conducted in the coming days on the directions of Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi. "Punjab's biggest talent programme will play an important role in the development of sports across the province".

He informed that the Punjab Talent Hunt programme will be conducted under the hash tag of Olympic Dream. "The purpose of this programme is to enhance Pakistan's medal winning chances in the Olympic Games".

Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports said that the prize money and schedule of Punjab Talent Hunt programme will be announced after the approval of Chief Minister

Punjab. "Talent hunt from tehsil level will play a significant role in improving sports in the province".

Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Shahid Zaman on this occasion said that schools sports will highlight the abilities of the players. "The talent emerging from the grass root level will be prepared for national and international titles", Secretary Sports Punjab said.

Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail said that Punjab Talent Hunt Programme will create more passion for sports among the young players of the province. "Best arrangements and preparations will be made for the Punjab Talent Hunt Programme," he added.

PSG coach Christophe Galtier 'shocked' by racism allegations, to take legal action

PARIS (Agencies): Paris Saint-Germain manager Christophe Galtier said he was "extremely shocked" by the racism allegations made against him this week and announced that he was taking legal action against the people who made the claims.

Earlier this week, reports quoted a leaked email from Nice's former director of football Julien Fournier to the club's owners, in which he accused Galtier of saying there were too many Black and Muslim players in the squad. Speaking in his Friday news conference, Galtier defiantly denied the claims and said he will attempt to clear his name.

"I have been extremely

shocked by the allegations that some people have irresponsibly made and relayed," Galtier said while reading a written statement.

"These allegations hurt me in the deepest part of my being.

"I am a child who grew up in a council estate, in a melting pot with values of sharing and respect for others, regardless of their origins or religion. All my life and career has been guided by the wellbeing and sharing with others. "I cannot accept that my name and my family could be tarnished in this way. So I have decided to take legal action against anyone damaging my reputation. I trust our legal system and I also welcome the start

of a legal proceeding this morning with serenity. I will not make anymore comments on this matter."

Before the start of the news conference, PSG, via a statement read by their director of communications, backed their manager and asked for justice to be done. Asked if he felt he was the victim of a vendetta, he said: "I cannot answer this question" before leaving. Galtier, via his lawyer, is suing Fournier as well as two French journalists who leaked the emails written by Fournier to Sir Dave Brailsford, the head of Sport at Ineos, the company who owns Nice.

KYIV (AP): The Ukrainian government has barred its national sports teams from competing at international events which also include athletes from Russia and its ally Belarus.

The decree published by the Ministry of Youth and Sports follows opposition from Ukraine to efforts by the International Olympic Committee to reintegrate Russian and Belarusian competitors into events as neutrals without national symbols.

It could pressure global sports bodies to choose between admitting Russians and Belarusians or risking a Ukrainian boycott. After Ukraine signaled last month it would seek to block its athletes from competing against Russians and Belarusians, the IOC said any such move would "hurt only the Ukrainian athlete community." The IOC did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday.

The decree only refers to



national team delegations and it was not clear if it would affect individual Ukrainian players on the men's and women's tennis tours, where Russian and Belarusian players have continued playing as neutrals.

It was also unclear how the measure might affect men's soccer amid ongoing qualification for next year's European Championship. European soccer body UEFA allows Belarus to compete, but not Russia. Ukraine and Belarus are playing in different qualifying groups and cannot be drawn together in the play-

offs.

The government decision drew criticism from Vladyslav Heraskevych, a skeleton racer who competed at last year's Winter Olympics.

"If the Ukrainian representatives are absent at the competitions, this means we completely abandon international sports platforms and allow Russia/Belarus to promote their narratives and propaganda. This is a 'white flag' from the Ukrainian sports community," he wrote on Twitter.

The IOC initially recommended that sports bodies exclude Russian and

Belarusian athletes on safety grounds last year, but now advocates reintegrating them as neutrals, arguing that a blanket ban is discriminatory. The IOC still recommends blocking Russians and Belarusians with ties to the military, and its recommendation only covers individual, not team, competitions.

International sports federations are not obliged to implement the IOC's recommendations and only some have set a deadline to admit neutral athletes from Russia or Belarus. The IOC is also yet to announce a decision about the Paris Olympics.

Ukraine boycotted an Olympic judo qualifier last year when the sport's governing body allowed Russians, including several from the country's military, to take part as neutral athletes. Ukrainian officials have previously not ruled out boycotting the Paris Olympics rather than competing against Russians.



In brief

Bike lifters arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested two bike lifters and recovered five stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Rattaamral police managed to net two bike lifters namely Umair Khan alias Mardani, ringleader and Tabraiz Ali Khan. Police also recovered five stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. A case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is underway. Superintendent of Police, Rawal Faisal Saleem said the accomplices and facilitators of the accused would also be sent behind the bars. He said that the operations against the law-breakers would be accelerated further.

Four bids to smuggle 4180 flour bags foiled

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police here on Friday foiled four bids to smuggle 4180 wheat flour bags. According to a district administration spokesman, the authorities of the food department along with Naseerabad police conducted raids and rounded up four drivers namely Rasool Khan, Pervaiz, Kamran and Fakhar on recovery of 4180 wheat flour bags. He informed that the accused was trying to smuggle wheat flour bags out of Rawalpindi division. The Food Department Rawalpindi and district police on the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) and City Police Officer, Rawalpindi were strictly monitoring all the exit points of the district to foil wheat and flour smuggling bids, he added.

IRSA releases 90,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 90,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 69,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1435.81 feet and was 37.81 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 21,900 cusecs while outflow as 25,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1111.10 feet, which was 61.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 20,500 cusecs and 38,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 29,900, 27,800, 28,400 and 6,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 14,600 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 4,900 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Rain-dust/thunderstorms predicted

ISLAMABAD (APP): Rain-dust/thunderstorms are predicted in upper/central parts from the weekend as a westerly wave is likely to enter upper parts of the country on April 15 (Saturday) and would spread in western & central parts subsequently. According to Met Office on Friday, under the influence of this weather system, rain-dust/thunderstorm with isolated heavy falls and hailstorm is expected in Kashmir (Neelum valley, Muzaffarabad, Poonch, Hattian, Bagh, Haveli, Sudhanoti, Kotli, Bhimber, Mirpur), Gilgit-Baltistan (Diamir, Astore, Ghizer, Skardu, Hunza, Gilgit, Ghanche, Shigar), Chitral, Dir, Swat, Mansehra, Buner, Kohistan, Shangla, Haripur, Abbottabad, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for PA & SS and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program, Shazia Marri addressing a press conference along with Minister of State Faisal Karim Kundi.

‘Pakistan must develop indigenous Digital Platform’

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Fahd Haroon, Minister of State and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Public Communication and Digital Platforms has called for the development of indigenous digital platforms in Pakistan. Speaking at an Iftar gathering arranged by a telecom company, Mr. Haroon said that most countries rely on their own digital ecosystems, and Pakistan should follow suit.

As this will encourage local application developments and entrepreneurship opportunities, e said that digital platforms are the building block of economic diplomacy and can create job and entrepreneurial opportunities for the youth of Pakistan. Indigenous platforms can develop future markets for

Pakistani talent, products, and services.

Pakistan's population of 232 million consists mostly of youth, Mr. Haroon stressed the need for the public and private sectors to jointly harness this potential. Making Pakistan the leading digital destination in the world. He said, "As per the Online Labour Observatory, Pakistan is the third-largest human resource contributor in the freelancing world". He further said, "Pakistan has a share of 12% of human resources that contribute to the various strata of the freelancing world". He also highlighted the importance of developing and harnessing the creative economies of Pakistan, which are major drivers of economic growth in many countries. Mr. Fahd Haroon stresses the telecom sector's potential to create local indigenous solutions for digital platforms,

which can cultivate the knowledge ecosystem and create livelihood opportunities for the youth. Mr. Fahd Haroon had earlier met with Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party, and the Foreign Minister of Pakistan. He updated the Foreign Minister about his recent meetings with international technology platforms like Google, TikTok, Meta, and others. He also briefed him on the enormous potential of Pakistan's digital economy.

Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had expressed his desire that Pakistani youth should have more opportunities to showcase their skills and talent on international digital platforms, as this can improve the image of Pakistan as a digitally aware country amongst the nations of the world.

ANF recovers over 64 kg drugs; arrests four

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in five operations managed to recover over 64 kg drugs and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday.

He informed that ANF foiled a bid to smuggle drugs from Peshawar to Dera Ismail Khan and recovered 12 kg charras on Kohat Indus Highway. An accused resident of Dera Ismail Khan was sent behind the bars.

In another operation, ANF and FC conducted a raid in Seri Shan Khail area and recovered 30 kg charras and 2.4 kg opium from a nullah.

The spokesman said that ANF also recovered four charras-filled capsules from the possession of a Sharjah-bound passenger, resident of Bannu, arrested at Bacha Khan International Airport.

In an operation at Sialkot Airport, 8.4 kg heroin absorbed in bag of the Spain-bound passenger resident of Mandi Bahaiddin was recovered while 11.7 kg Ice drug was recovered from the possession of an accused resident of Qilla Abdullah rounded up from Chaman Friendship Gate area.

He said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

10 drug peddlers netted with over 8.7 kg charras

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers on Friday arrested 10 accused, besides recovering over 8.7 kg charras from their possession. A police spokesperson said that Gungmandi police held Muhammad Ali for having 1,400 grams of charras while Pirwadhai police rounded up an accused namely Waqar ur Haq for possessing 515 grams of charras. Whereas, Bani police in an operation recovered 1,100 grams of charras and Westridge police seized 1,060 grams of charras, besides netting Yasir, a drug peddler. Similarly, Naseerabad, R.A.Bazar, Taxila, Rawat and Chontra police held Sohail, Mubashir, Rafique, Aslam, Toqeer, and Irfan for having a total of 4,670 grams of charras.

Govt approves release of funds for parliamentarians' schemes

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The federal government has approved the release of funds for parliamentarians' schemes.

As per details, the PDM coalition government have spent Rs 50 billion on parliamentary schemes till March 2023.

The funds for the parliamentary schemes have been approved and Rs 90 billion are allocated for these schemes in the current fiscal year 2022-23.

The government is also providing Rs 500 million to the Members of the National Assembly who voted in the motion of no-confidence.

Furthermore, Rs 70 billion was allocated for parliamentary schemes in the budget but it was increased to Rs 87 bil-

lion and then Rs 90 billion.

The National Assembly earlier rejected the bill to provide funds for Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after the Supreme Court ordered to hold the election in Punjab and KP. Earlier, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that the finance ministry has no funds for elections.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had also said that the commission is ready to hold Punjab elections if funds and security are provided.

The Supreme Court had set April 10 as the deadline for the government to issue funds to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and told the ECP to report back to it on April 11.

Planning Minister forms National Task Force on Artificial Intelligence

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal has formed a 15-member National Task Force (NTF) on Artificial Intelligence (AI) aimed at achieving the required goals of national development.

According to a news release, the key objective of the National Task Force is to develop a 10-year roadmap for accelerated adoption of Artificial Intelligence in the business, development, governance, education, and healthcare sectors.

The force would comprise experts in artificial intelligence as well as representatives from the government and private sectors. The Planning Minister

emphasized the importance of artificial intelligence for progress in the near future, saying it will transform the fields of economy, governance, and education.

He said that the NTF was aimed at harnessing the power of AI for Pakistan's development and growth while ensuring that the benefits were accessible to all segments of society.

Ahsan Iqbal said establishing the NTF was part of the government's commitment to embracing its potential to transform the country's economic landscape positively. He said by investing in AI, Pakistan can unlock new opportunities for growth and development and improve the lives of its citizens.

Indian Sikh yatris start rituals at Gurdwara Punja Sahib

ISLAMABAD (APP): Visiting Sikh yatris from India on Friday started their rituals at Gurdwara Punja Sahib, Hassanabad for Khalsa Janam Din (the righteous Sikh brotherhood) and Vasakhi Mela celebrations.

According to an official source, the pilgrims were brought to Hassanabad under tight security.

The Gurdwara Sahib had been beautifully decorated with electric lamps, the source said, adding other arrangements had

also been ensured for the pilgrims. A team under the supervision of Deputy Secretary of the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) Imran Gondal was working round the clock for the best hospitality of the pilgrims, he informed.

The leader of the group, Sardar Arvinder Singh Khalsa, party leader from Parbandhak Committee at Shiromani Gurdwara, told the media, "Our religious places in Pakistan have been renovated and restored to their original

condition while proper security arrangements have been made."

He also expressed gratitude to the government and Evacuee Trust Property Board Chairman Dr Amir Ahmad on behalf of all the visiting yatris.

The main ceremony of Vasakhi Mela will be held on Saturday wherein pilgrims from the country will also participate.

After the main ceremonies, the pilgrims will reach Janamasthan Nankana Sahib on April 15.

Islamic Calligraphy exhibition opens at PAC

RAWALPINDI (APP): Punjab Arts Council organized an exhibition of Islamic calligraphy in connection with the Holy Month of Ramadan in collaboration with Vescopk.

Naheed Manzoor and Director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmed inaugurated the exhibition on Friday.

The artworks of Quranic verses, Names of Allah and Names of the Prophet (PBUH), were exhibited in the expo, which will continue till April 16.

While speaking on the occasion, chief guest Naheed Manzoor said that calligraphy is an Islamic art that begins with the divine revelation of the Holy Quran.

"Since Ramadan is the

month of revelation of the Holy Quran, the importance of writing the Quran increases even more for Muslims."

She added that artists had expressed their great love for Islam through their works of art.

The Director of the Arts Council said that the calligrapher has written the Quranic verses so beautifully that the viewer wakes up in awe.

"The name of writing the words in the colours of aesthetic taste and passion with a pen on the canvas is calligraphy, and when the calligrapher borrows the same words from the Quran, Hadith and spirituality, this art is woven into the ancient traditions of calligraphy", he added.

In addition to Nastaliq,

Kufi, Diwani, and Thulth, world-class works of art in the exhibition enthralled the participants.

Mian Afzal Javed, CEO of Vescopk, said that the purpose of the exhibition was to enlighten the new generation with this beautiful art of Islamic cultural heritage.

The art pieces of Mubeen Zafar, Musbah Asghar, Manza Razzaq, Adiba Razzaq, Zahra Zubair, Umaima Zahra, Maryam Shahid and Kainat Yusuf were placed in the exhibition.

Certificates of appreciation were also distributed to all the talented artists at the end of the ceremony. A large number of people from twin cities participated in the inaugural ceremony.

Islamabad police chalk out plans to tackle traffic

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police (Traffic) has chalked out a comprehensive plan to ensure a smooth flow of traffic during the last Ashra of Ramadan when markets and shopping centres will be thronged for Eid shopping.

Following the directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Akbar Nasir Khan, Chief Traffic Officer Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer chaired a special meeting at traffic police headquarters to look into parking and traffic-related issues outside main markets and shopping centers during Ramzan. The meeting was also attended by SP (Traffic) Ch. Abid Hussain, all Zonal DSPs and it reviewed all traffic-related arrangements for the convenience of citizens, particularly during last Ashra of Ramadan.

Traffic arrangements were finalised by Chief Traffic Officer Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer after consultation with heads of

various zones and ITP's sections. It was decided to deploy additional police personnel around the main markets and shopping plazas in the federal capital to ensure convenience for the citizens and keep flow of traffic normal during the holy month of Ramadan. The meeting decided to make the traffic congestion unit more effective and functional. It was directed to improve traffic flow and provide all possible travel facilities to the citizens. It was decided that additional police personnel would be deployed around shopping malls, restaurants and business outlets.

It was decided to take strict action against people doing wrong parking and violating the traffic rules. Chief Traffic Officer urged the policemen to perform duties with dedication and said that commitment to facilitate the public would have a great reward for policemen during this holy month.

‘Attempts being made to aggravate judicial crisis’

RAWALPINDI (PPI): Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said on Friday attempts were being made to worsen the judicial crisis, adding that flouting the court orders fell under the ambit of sedition.

In a series of tweets, the former interior minister said the government had made ground for civil disobedience in the country by engaging in confrontation with the judiciary. "The political chess game will

start today," he wrote.

Lashing out at the government for undermining country's economy, politics and judiciary, he said all plans of the ruling coalition would meet defeat and the judiciary would win.

Referring to an order of the apex court's eight-member bench regarding stay on the judicial reforms bill, he warned that disobeying the order would lead to anarchy and fascism in the country. He said the government want-

ed to repeat the 1997 episode when the Supreme Court of Pakistan was attacked.

Sheikh Rashid said the national security was in the survival of the Constitution and law, adding that the recent decisions by the government were tantamount to intervention in judicial affairs. He hoped that the judiciary would not allow such interventions and uphold the supremacy of the Constitution.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers polishing the marble during the maintenance work of Faisal Mosque.

Lady doctor gunned down

TALOQAN (Pajhwok): Unidentified gunmen have shot dead a lady doctor in northern Takhar province, an official said on Friday. Hayatullah Amami, deputy head of the Provincial Hospital, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "Zakira Rahmani served as doctor in the maternity branch of the hospital. She went to Kunduz on Thursday for her personal work and upon her return unknown gunmen killed her in the Chashma Sher area of Taloqan."

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Ramazan 24, 1444 — Saturday, April 15, 2023

Nangarhar child killed in blast

JALALABAD CITY (Pajhwok): A six-year-old boy has been killed and his eight-year-old sister injured in an Explosive Remnant of War (ERW) blast in eastern Nangarhar province, an official said on Friday. Police Spokesperson Abdul Basir Zabuli told Pajhwok Afghan News the incident happened on late on Thursday in the Dwano village of Kot districts. These children found the unexploded shell and when hit it with a stone it exploded, he added.

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

Afghan Trust Fund in Switzerland generated made \$100M in interest



KABUL (TOLONews): The Afghan Trust Fund in Switzerland has generated more than \$100 million in interest that will be utilized for monetary stability, said a member of the trust fund board, Shah Mohammad Mehrabi.

The Afghan Trust Fund was established in September 2022 in Switzerland.

once again called on the US to fully release the Afghan foreign reserves.

"The assets of Afghanistan which have been frozen by the US is an oppression (action). These assets should be returned to Afghanistan as soon as possible and should be handed over to the people of Afghanistan. We are hoping to have good relations with the world countries," said Zabiullah Mujahid, Islamic Emirate's Spokesman.

"The frozen assets of Afghanistan are for the people of Afghanistan. The US should release the assets of the people of Afghanistan so that our people can improve and use these assets for economic development," said Abdul Latif Nazari, deputy Minister of Economy.

"These assets support the value of Afghan currency and can help with foreign transaction," said Seyar Qureshi, an economist. More than \$9 billion Afghan assets abroad have been frozen, with \$7 billion of them held by the US.

Muttaqi underlines Afghanistan's efforts for stable region



KABUL (Pajhwok): Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi has renewed Afghanistan's firm commitment not to allow any group or individual to use its territory against any regional state or beyond.

Addressing a joint meeting of Afghanistan's neighbouring countries in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, he said: "This commitment is not only in words, rather we are practically engaged in serious security and stabilization efforts inside Afghanistan, and have discernible achievements to show."

Muttaqi said nearly two years since the establishment of the current government, no significant security incident has transpired where its roots take source from Afghanistan.

"We encapsulate Afghanistan's interests in the framework of regional security, stability and economic connectivity, and this precise discourse can best guarantee the interests of our entire region," he believed.

He asked regional countries must to remain vigilant about not allowing their policy towards Afghanistan to fall prey to the negative propaganda and machinations of opposing powers. Rather, Afghanistan must be viewed from the lens of regional security, stability and economic connectivity, and through close observation of ground realities and positive engagement with its authorities.

Muttaqi said that positive and resolute political, security and economic regional cooperation can prove beneficial in securing both the interests of Afghanistan and the region. The acting foreign minister added instability in Afghanistan is not in the interest of anyone as it could become a source for regional instability, narcotics boom, arms proliferation, illegal migration and other challenges.

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EU Parliament Member: suffering of Afghans forgotten

KABUL (Agencies): A German member of the European Parliament, Cornelia Ernst, at a conference on Afghanistan said that with the war in Europe, the suffering of people from Afghanistan has been forgotten.

She made the remarks at a conference on Afghanistan. "With the war in Europe, the suffering of people from Afghanistan has been forgotten."

from Afghanistan was forgotten. Women and girls have been abandoned by the world," she said.

Political analysts said that human rights have not come into effect as needed in Afghanistan.

"Human rights is an idea and its worth no longer exists as it was used during the republic time because many people of Afghanistan, including

the Islamic Emirate, think of it as a western phenomenon, and that it can influence Afghanistan," said Salim Kakar, a political analyst.

Germany in Afghanistan on Twitter said that "Afghan female staff are essential for the work of the UN. This ban violates human rights and the UN (Charter) and hinders efforts to deliver life-saving

aid in Afghanistan," the mission said.

"The full inclusion and empowerment of Afghan women is crucial for a sustainable future."

"We are hopeful that the current government takes actions to resolve these problems and provide education and work opportunities for girls and women," said Najib Rahman Shalam, political analyst.

Defense forces to get uniforms soon: Spokesman

KABUL (TOLONews): A spokesman for the Ministry of Defense (MoD), Enayatullah Khwarazimi, said that new uniforms will be made for the defense forces in the near future.

Khwarazimi said that the process of uniform distribution to the forces will be kicked off after their production is completed.

"The formation of the troops is a long process. We have in mind to prepare a new uniform for our troops and military personnel," he said. This comes as some military analysts called uniforms a serious need for the forces. "The uniform is in fact the identity of the military personnel. It means it is a trust or an assurance for the civilians to know that these people are in the service of security," said Asadullah Nadim, military veteran. Some residents of Kabul said that the lack of a particular uniform of the defense forces causes insecurity in the city.



tical uniform of the defense forces causes insecurity in the city.

"To rescue people from the fake people (who misuse the title of defense forces), there is a need for a (particular) uniform,"

said Imran Alokozai, Kabul resident. "The uniform of police forces and security forces have not been prepared yet. It is needed that we know which one is the army forces, and which one is

the police forces," said Ghulam Hassan Mohammadi, a Kabul resident. Within the past 18 months, some military personnel of various units have been provided with particular uniforms.

Retired govt workers say pensions not being paid

KABUL (Agencies): Some retired government workers who claimed not to have been paid pensions held protests in Kabul on Thursday.

The retirees said they have not received their pensions this year or last year, and they face economic challenges.

"It is my right, I ask for

my rights, and it's halal for me, I do not want charity, we do not want alms," said Nor Iqbal, a former employee of the Interior Ministry.

Retirees said that despite the government's promises, nothing has been done for them yet.

"We call on the Islamic Emirate to pay our pensions, it is our right," said Mohammad Afzal, a retired woman.

"In 1401, 4 billion afghani were allocated for retirement salaries, but the plan was not approved by Islamic Emirate leadership, and for this reason, they do not pay salaries," said Ahmad Wali Haqmal, a spokesman for the Finance Ministry.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance said that in 1402 they allocated the budget for retirement salaries.

According to the Finance Ministry, more than 149,000 retirees, 10,000 of whom are women, did not receive their salaries.



60,000 acres reclaimed from land-grabbers in Kunduz

KUNDUZ (Agencies): The Agriculture and Irrigation Department in Kunduz said that since the start of the activity of the commission to prevent land-grabbing, the commission has recaptured 60,000 acres of land in Kunduz. The head of the agriculture dept in the province said that more than 100,000 acres were land-grabbed in the province and efforts are being made to recapture all the lands.

"More than 100,000 acres of grabbed land have been recognized, and efforts are underway to recapture it," said Amanullah Hassan, head of the Agriculture and Irrigation Department.

Residents of Kunduz welcomed the retaking of the land and hoped the process would speed up.

"The behavior should be taken seriously, if it is urban land, residential land, agricultural land, or surrounding land, it should be protected from grabbing," said Khir Mohammad Hakimi, a Kunduz resident.

"We call on the Islamic



announced the commencement of the second phase

of the project to distribute food baskets to the most needy families in #Afghanistan." It added: "This phase will witness the distribution of 11,000 food baskets in six Afghan provinces. The project is being implemented with the support of the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief), and in coordination with the #Afghan Red Crescent Society."

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4.4 magnitude earthquake strikes Afghanistan

FAIZABAD CITY (Agencies): On Friday afternoon, an earthquake of 4.4 magnitudes struck the northeastern province of Afghanistan, Badakhshan province, Faizabad city.

According to Indian National Center for Seismology (NCS), the tremor of 4.4 magnitudes occurred at 1:43 pm local time on Friday with the epicentre of 124km South West of Faizabad, Badakhshan province, Afghanistan.

The earthquake had a 150km Depth with a Latitude of 36, 38 and a Longitude of



69, 48. "Earthquake of Magnitude: 4.4, Occurred on 14-04-2023, 14:43:14 IST, Lat: 36.38 & Long: 69.48, Depth: 150 Km, Location: 124km SW of Fayzabad, Afghanistan," NCS reported.

The frequency of natural disasters, including earthquakes, has increased in the past few months in Afghanistan, mainly in

Badakhshan province. Afghanistan is prone to natural disasters, including earthquakes, landslides, avalanches, flooding and heavy rains. The country experienced a heavy earthquake of 6.5 magnitudes last month with the epicentre of Jurm district, Badakhshan province. As a result, more than ten people were killed, and several others were injured. The earthquake destroyed over 656 residential buildings nationwide, including Badakhshan, Kunar, Panjshir and Takhar.

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‘Division’ in SC will be a tragedy for country: Imran

LAHORE (Agencies): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on Friday said that everyone should pray for unity among the judges in the Supreme Court and warned that "division" at the top court would be tragic as rifts emerged concerning the top court's verdict on elections delay case.

Speaking to media persons ahead of hearing at the Lahore High Court (LHC), the former premier said that the division among the Supreme Court would be a tragedy for the country. "Unless we do not save the Constitution, you cannot save the country either," said the PTI chief while berating the government for "running away from elections" and not caring about Constitution or the law.

Meanwhile, the LHC granted Khan bail in a case registered against him for putting the "families of army officers at risk". During the hearing, Justice Najafi asked Khan's lawyer if his client wants to appear before the court concerned to seek bail. At this, PTI

chief's lawyer replied that they want to approach the court concerned.

"We are leaving for Islamabad on April 18 and we want to surrender in the court concerned," he added. The court then approved the bail till April 26. Justice Ali Baqar Najafi directed the PTI chief to refer to the court concerned by the next date.

The case was registered against the former prime minister at Islamabad's Ramna Police Station on April 6. The complaint was lodged by Magistrate Manzoor Ahmed. The first information report (FIR) stated that the PTI chief in one of his speeches used "inappropriate language" against military officers which includes sections 500, 505 and 138 of the Pakistan Penal Code. The PTI chief in his petition said that he "is absolutely innocent and has been falsely implicated with ulterior motives and malafide intentions in the above-mentioned case just to tarnish his reputation, harm his growing mandate

among masses and victimise him politically".

"Being head of the largest political party and aggrieved from such malpractice, the petitioner craves for the kind indulgence of this court for the grant of protective bail," stated the petition. The deposed prime minister said that "a series of false criminal cases have been registered against him, the senior leadership of PTI and active participants since past few months."

He added that the PTI leaders had been severely tortured and humiliated during custody in the past and this is another attempt made by the state functionaries. "That an inordinate and unexplained delay of (18) days in lodging the instant case is concerning and raises questions about the intention behind it. It appears that this time was used for careful planning and seeking instructions to register a malicious case against the petitioner, solely to satisfy their political adversaries," he contended in the petition.

CM KP hands over cheque to heirs of Diyal Singh

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Azam Khan here Friday handed over Rs one million compensation cheque to the heirs of slain Diyal Singh.

The Chief Minister while talking to members of the sikh community led by Goryal Singh and family members of slain Diyal Singh said that targeting citizens of minorities were highly condemnable act and elements involved in killing of Diyal Singh would be brought to justice soon. Police have been directed to improve security measures for minorities while Shamshan Gat problem of the sikh community was also being addressed.

The Sikhs community leader Goryal Singh and members of family of Diyal Singh thanked the Chief Minister for the compensation package. The CM also congratulated the Sikhs community for their religious Basaki festival.

Meanwhile, the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azam Khan assured that the killers of Kashif Masih would be arrested soon and all measures would be taken for the security of the bereaved family.

The caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Azam Khan was talking to the family of Kashif Masih that met him here at Chief Minister house. The Chief Minister said compensation cheque to the bereaved family would be provided soon. He said the family of the victim would not be left alone.

Court discharges Gandapur in weapons case

BHAKKAR (INP): A local court on Friday discharged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Amin Gandapur from the illegal weapons recovery case. A senior civil judge of the Bhakkar court Asif Niaz heard the case of illegal weapons recovery filed against Mr Gandapur, in which he was discharged by the court.

In a media talk after the hearing, Mr Gandapur's attorney said his client was forcibly nominated in the illegal weapons case and he has been discharged by the court. Afterwards, the PTI leader was produced before the court of Muhammad Waseem, a civil judge of Bhakkar, in another case.

Earlier today, Ali Amin Gandapur was transferred from Islamabad to Police Station Sadar Bhakkar, where three cases have been registered against him under the provisions of terrorism and attempted murder. District and Sessions Court Islamabad on Thursday handed over PTI leader Ali Amin Gandapur to Bhakkar police on one-day transitory remand.

Imran moves LHC

LAHORE (INP): PTI Chairman Imran Khan on Friday filed a petition in the Lahore High Court, seeking protective bail in a case registered in Islamabad under sedition charges.

The PTI chief has made complainant Maznoor Ahmed respondent in the petition. He said the FIR was politically motivated and it was lodged in violation of the laws.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister of KP Muhammad Azam Khan giving compensation cheque to family of Diyal Singh member of Sikh community who was shot killed few days earlier.

PHC makes videography must in recovery of narcotics cases

Hamayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) ordered Inspector General of Police/ Provincial Police Officer, Director Anti-narcotics Force, Director General Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control and the Chief Collector Custom Khyber Pakhtunkhwa directed to make videography during narcotics recovery cases after 15th April, on Friday.

The decision was taken following a case reported from Charsadda as Imdad Ullah was booked under KPCNSA at police station Naisata for recovery for 803 grams Ice-drug and 707 grams narcotics substances along with co-accused Zubair, while hearing of bail petition, his counsel leveled serious allegation of Rs35 thousand from petitioner's father by the local police.

Instances came to High Court where in accused were booked in some other offenses and thereafter were shown involved in narcotics cases. Such wrong custodies/ detentions were questioned by them under 491 Cr. PC.

A report was sought from District Police Officer (DPO) Charsadda which was accordingly submitted however, the court found the same unsatisfactory hence, DPO was summoned personally. PHC observed while deciding the petition stated; the police must lay heavy hands on the culprits involved in narcotics cases so that the society in general and youth of the country in particular is protected from drug abuse. But at the same time it is their responsibility to remain candid and unbiased and avoid false implication of innocent people and that it is their responsibility to associate private witnesses in cases of raid on houses.

PHC also directed all the learned District and Session Judges of the Province that from 15th April 2023 the proceedings in recovery of narcotics cases be conducted in line with observation made in the judgement.

PHC suspends transfer of Deputy Secretary Admn

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah has granted status quo against transfer orders as well making Deputy Secretary Administration Local Board Council Naseer Ahmad Khan as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) while directed respondents to submit reply, on Friday. The counsel Babar Khan Yousafzai Advocate argued that on 5th April 2023 petitioner was declared OSD while Yasser Ali was posted as Deputy Secretary Administration. He added that the petitioner was nominated for another posting in the letter written for No Objection Certificate (NOC) among Local Council and Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) but after approval of NOC Naseer Ahmad Khan has been compelled to become OSD.

The counsel further argued that Caretaker government has no jurisdiction to make such transfers like OSD and if ECP provide NOC for particular post then the interim govt is compelled to ensure posting on the approved position but here posting has been made on nepotism and favoritism. PHC has already suspended such orders which has initiated against the law and procedure while argued that recently High Court has suspended caretaker government orders regarding dissolution of Medical Teaching Institution (MTI) policy board and Board of Governors, Yousafzai argued. PHC's divisional comprised of Justice Syed Arshad Ali and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah granted status quo against transfers of Deputy Secretary Administration Naseer Ahmad while ordered caretaker government along with other respondents to submit reply.

KP service tribunal reinstate DD population welfare: A divisional bench of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Services Tribunal comprised by Rozina Rehman and Fareeha Paul suspended demotion orders of Deputy Director (DD) Population Welfare Department erstwhile Fata Dr. Lal Zari for her alleged involvement in purchase of sub-standard medicines, on Friday.

The counsel Noor Muhammad Khattak Advocate argued that in 2014 Population welfare Department erstwhile Fata has procure medicine for department while latterly it was blamed that the sub-standard drugs were purchased while an inquiry was initiated in which the petitioner Dr. Lal Zari was terminated from service. The petitioner has approached Services Tribunal against inquiry committee because Lal Zari was a member of procurement committee. The tribunal reinstated the petitioner ordered another inquiry and declared that sole responsibility is lying on the shoulder of Secretary Social Welfare Secretary as chairman of procurement committee. The counsel argued that Inquiry Officer has convicted Dr. Lal Zari and recommended her demotion while granted clean chat to other members of procurement committee including chairman. The counsel argued that no one can be convicted twice for one offense/ illegality. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Services Tribunal Rozina Rehman and Fareeha Paul reinstated DD Population Welfare Department in BPS-18 after conclusion of arguments.

Marri: Focus on to improve eco-condition of masses

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Shazia Marri on Friday said that the masses are bearing the burden of inflation caused due to poor policies of the previous government during the last four years.

Addressing a press conference along with Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi, she said that inflation cannot be controlled in a day as it needed consistency of economic policies. Marri said that the first year of the government had been challenging which included economic, political and climate change crises.

"Our government was taking several steps to improve the economic condition of the masses. Our preference is public and we are aware of their issues." She said that the legislature and government would have to sustain the supremacy of the Constitution and the sanctity of the parliament. She said the last year's flood severely affected millions of people in the country which created a huge loss of property and crops.

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif had allocated Rs 70 billion for the support of people of flood-hit areas through BISP. This aid covered around 2.8 million families. Under this initiative Rs 25000 were distributed among each affected family, she added. She further informed that the BISP had also distributed a huge number of food nutrition sachets of Rs one billion from its own budget among pregnant women and infants to meet their food deficiency in flood-hit areas.

BISP was also working with the government of Sindh to award subsidies on wheat seeds. Meanwhile, financial support was given to around 186,000 small farmers in flood-affected areas, she added. She said that the BISP budget has been increased from Rs 235 billion to 400 billion with a ratio of 70 per cent increase. The number of needy families under BISP had increased to 09 million.

"Similarly, BISP Nasonuma Coverage Programme was started in 15 districts in 2014 as a pilot programme. Later the initiative extended to 156 districts across the country. Today a total of 472 centres were working across the country under this initiative". The government was

making all possible efforts to support the needy families of the society, she said, adding, "We have started a Dynamic Registry Survey Facility which is free of cost for each and every citizen. Through the Dynamic Registry initiative, the speedy increase in registration process was seen".

Shazia also informed that transgenders were also being included in this programme because they were victims of social, and economic challenges in society. "Deserving she-males can take benefit from BISP now. Those transgenders who have already registered with NADRA are included in the BISP programme. She said there was no condition of PMT for transgenders, and urged them to register themselves from NADRA and their concerned tehsil to get benefit from this scheme".

Federal Minister said that the government had awarded a subsidy on the fuel of Rs 16.7 billion (Rs 2000 for each family) among 8.6 million needy families across the country. Later, Faisal Karim Kundi said that we have to sustain the supremacy of the Constitution. Pakistan People's Party had given a constitution to this country but unfortunately, Zulfiqar Bhutto had been martyred.

ECP fixes contempt hearing against PTI leaders for 18th

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday fixed a contempt case against PTI chief Imran Khan, PTI senior vice president Fawad Choudhry, and PTI general secretary Asad Umar, for hearing on Tuesday (April 18) at 10 AM.

According to the fresh cause list, issued on Friday, a bench of four members of the ECP comprising Nisar Ahmed Durrani, Shah Muhammad Jatoti, Babar Hassan Bharrwana and Justice (r) Ikramullah Khan has been formed to hear contempt pleas against the

PTI leaders.

Notices have been issued to Imran Khan, Fawad Ahmed Choudhry and Asad Umar for using intemperance, un-parliamentary language and contemptuous remarks against the ECP. The electoral watchdog would also hear the prohibited funding case against the PTI on the same day at 11 AM. Akbar S Babar has filed the complaint against PTI where separate notices have been issued to PTI through its Chairman Imran Khan and Fawad Ahmed Choudhry.

It is pertinent to mention that earlier, in March

29,2023, the ECP provided a final opportunity to PTI leaders to appear before it in the contempt case. A three-member ECP bench, led by its Sindh member Nisar Durrani adjudicated the matter but adjourned the hearing until April 18 due to non-appearance of the PTI leaders. Advocate Faisal Choudhry, who represented the PTI chief and Choudhry Fawad filed a plea to postpone the hearing and argued for the revocation of the ECP's order, directing Imran Khan to appear in person, until the Lahore High Court (LHC) announces its verdict.

SC directs SBP to release funds for polls in Punjab

(Continued from Page 1)

"We may also note that this order shall be deemed sufficient authority for all purposes for the authorization of expenditure on the Federal Consolidated Fund and the Federal Government shall thereupon obtain the ex post facto approval and sanction from the National Assembly for authorisation of this expenditure in terms of Article 84 and other applicable provisions of the Constitution."

The order stated that the court would like to record appreciation for the assistance that was provided to the court by each of the officials that appeared today and the respective teams led by them. "This matter stands adjourned but should any need arise it will be taken up again in such terms as deemed appropriate by the court. Insofar as the matters identified in paras 6 and 7 of the order, those matters will be taken up once the report required to be filed by the Federal Government in terms of para 6 thereof has been filed and considered by the Election Commission," it added.

The SC further stated, "In our view, on an assessment of the presentations made by the State Bank and the Finance Ministry/Division, there can be no doubt that the Rs 21 billion required by the Commission and ordered to be made available in terms of para 5 of the order can be done immediately and within a matter of a day. As to the exact mechanism for the transfer, the team from the Commission, ably led by the Secretary Mr. Omar Hamid Khan explained that the funds made available to and utilized by the Commission lay with AGPR. That agency had allocated an ID number (bearing No.2826) for the funds available to the Commission. To this ID number there is associated a ceiling determined by the Finance Division and within that ceiling the funds allocated to the aforesaid ID number are readily and immediately available to and utilizable by the Commission.

"Of course, as expected and confirmed by the Election Commission, any utilization of any funds whatsoever would be for the specific and

properly assigned purpose (here the holding of general elections to the Punjab and KP assemblies) and always in terms of the applicable accounting rules and procedure, and ultimately subject also to proper audit.

"It was further confirmed to the court by all the officials and teams that on its order, the State Bank would send an appropriate communication to the Finance Division to the effect that Rs 21 billion from Account I stood allocated to the Commission for purposes of the general elections as aforesaid and that the Finance Division would then immediately send an appropriate communication (on the same day) to the AGPR directing it to raise the ceiling of the limit associated with ID No.2826 by Rs 21 billion. In this way the Election Commission would immediately have access to, and be able to utilize, the said funds for purposes of the general elections."

The court stated, "The team from the Ministry of Finance/Finance Division ("Finance") was led by the Special Secretary, Mr Awais Manzur

Sumra. The Secretary, with the assistance of the learned Attorney General, also gave a presentation to the court, in broad terms, with regard to the financial position of the Government of Pakistan, with particular reference also to the present and/or pending international obligations to the IMF. From the figures presented to the court, of which even the smallest ran to several hundreds of billions of rupees, it became clear that the disbursement of

Rs 21 billion for fulfilling the constitutional mandate of holding the general elections would, at most, amount to a minuscule increase in the obligations of the Federal Government. Indeed, viewed from certain financial perspectives and contexts, which were stated by the team from Finance, the amount would be so insignificant as to not even amount to a rounding off error. The team from Finance also informed the court that the Federal Government regularly went into the bond markets to borrow and raise funds which in the aggregate in any given financial year ran into trillions

of rupees.

"It was stated that in this regard Treasury bills were issued by the State Bank on behalf of the Federal Government on a regular and ongoing basis and that, even in this perspective, taking the amount now under consideration into account would not have any meaningful impact or effect. "It was also confirmed by Finance that if the court so ordered and directed the process of making the funds to the tune of Rs 21 billion available to the Commission on an immediately utilizable basis would be concluded rapidly, and by the close of business on 17.04.2023."

It stated, "It was explained to the Acting Governor that a sum of Rs 21 billion was required for the purposes of general elections to the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies and it was queried as to whether this sum could be made available from the funds aforementioned of the Federal Government lying with and under the custody, control and management of the State Bank, with particular reference to Account I. The Acting Governor confirmed that this would

be done if the court so directed and ordered. The State Bank further confirmed that the necessary transaction for the transfer of funds to the Commission, so that Rs 21 billion become immediately available and utilizable for the latter, could be done within the shortest possible time, and at the latest by the close of business on Monday i.e. 17.04.2023."

The court stated that the Acting Governor SBP had presented a statement setting out funds and monies of the Federal Government which were under the central bank's custody, control and management. Referring to it, the court observed that the SBP Acting Governor had explained that these amounts constituted the Federal Consolidated Fund. "The amount lying in Account No.I (Non-Food) ("Account I") constitutes by far the largest component of the Fund (being 98.77 per cent thereof as of the date for which the data was provided)," the court order read. It added that the SBP official further explained that the "amount lying in Account I was not designated for any particular or special usage whatsoever.