

Zartaj Gul summoned
LAHORE (INP) The Anti-Corruption Establishment, Punjab has again summoned PTI leader and former state minister Zartaj Gul over corruption charges. Zartaj Gul was summoned on April 10, but she did not show up before the anti-corruption team and now ACE Punjab has again summoned her on April 19 at 10 in the morning. Zartaj Gul is accused of giving contracts for various developmental projects to her frontmen.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing the National Assembly at Parliament House.

NA rejects supplementary grant demand for Punjab elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Assembly on Monday disapproved a supplementary demand for a grant for elections in Punjab, with the observation that only the Lower House of Parliament had the authority to give any amount from the Federal Consolidated Fund.

Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar moved the supplementary demand of Rs 21 billion in the House to meet the expenditures for elections in Punjab. He said the Federal Cabinet had referred the matter to the National Assembly which had the authority to approve or disapprove additional expenses under Articles 82 (2) and 84 of the Constitution.

He said the amounts in the Federal Consolidated Fund except charged expenditure could be only given after approval of the august House as no other institution had any authority in that regard. He said the Supreme Court in its order directed to get ex-post facto approval of it but the Standing Committee on Finance had directed the Finance Division to take up the issue in Federal Cabinet and deliberate it in the form of a demand or bill.

He said the appropriate forum was the National Assembly, "which accords approval of expenses from the Federal Consolidated Fund" and that was why the cabinet had referred the matter to the House. It may be mentioned that the NA's Standing Committee on Finance earlier decided to forward the matter of releasing Rs 21 billion funds for Punjab elections to the National Assembly as a three-member bench in the case of delay in the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa elections had ordered the State Bank of Pakistan on April 14, 2023, to directly issue Rs 21 billion for the elections and submit its report on April 18.

The committee, after a briefing,

Federal Cabinet refers election funds' summary to Lower House

ISLAMABAD (APP): The federal cabinet on Monday referred a summary of the provision of funds to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to the National Assembly for further consideration. The elections funds' summary was forwarded by the finance ministry which was prepared as per the recommendation of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance for the provision of required funds to the ECP.

The cabinet also paid tribute to the late minister Mufti Abdul Shakoor who died in a traffic mishap in Islamabad, a few days back. Addressing the cabinet meeting here, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the late minister was a renowned religious scholar and an honest, hardworking member of his cabinet. The prime minister said that the late minister ran his election campaign in his constituency on a motorcycle.

During the cabinet meetings, he found the late minister as a straightforward and clear-minded speaker. The prime minister said the late minister made excellent arrangements with his hard work and honesty. "Today, not only this house and parliament, but the whole country lost a great scholar, mufti and thinker," he lamented. Former member of the cabinet had no other sources of income except his salary, he added. Meanwhile, the meeting also congratulated Federal Minister Sherry Rehman on her inclusion in the list of 100 most influential personalities issued by Time Magazine for raising her voice on issues of climate change.

decided to take the matter to the Parliament after approval from the Federal Cabinet. The law minister said the Supreme Court had ordered provision of funds for the Punjab elections, but no funds in that regard were kept in the Federal Consolidated Fund. For the release of funds as a supplementary grant, the National Assembly's nod was necessary, he said and moved the supplementary demand 64-A which was rejected by the House.

Highlighting the background of the matter, the minister said the National Assembly adopted separate resolutions for holding general elections throughout the country simultaneously. The Supreme Court, he said, took suo motu notice on the matter and constituted a nine-member bench to hear the case. He said Article 218 read along with Article 224, sections 57, 58 and 59 of the Elections Act and the verdict of the Supreme Court

itself in the Workers Party case allowed to hold the elections simultaneously in the country. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), he said, had postponed the elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa keeping in view the security, political and economic challenges faced by Pakistan at the current juncture.

Tarar said Article 224 asked for the general elections at the same time across the country, while as per Article 254 polls could be postponed due to the extraordinary situation as the ECP had the mandate to adjust the schedule of the elections keeping in view ground realities. He regretted that the suo motu proceedings were initiated by the nine-member SC bench, which had been relegated to three members. Firstly it had to be interpreted that if the judgment dated March 1, was issued with the majority of 4-3 member bench, he added.

LHC seeks 1947-2001 Toshakhana record

LHC bench recommended to hear Imran's plea challenging cases

LAHORE (INP): The Lahore High Court has recommended to form a larger bench to hear petition filed by former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan challenging similar cases registered against him across the country. A two-judge LHC bench headed by Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh on Monday heard the petition. Imran appeared before the court.

While recommending to form a larger bench to hear Imran's petition, the court sent the file to the Chief Justice of Lahore High Court. Justice Sheikh remarked that he had already sent a similar petition to the larger bench and he is sending this petition, too, to the larger bench. He said that the petitioner requested the court to fix the hearing of the case today.

Imran's lawyer contended that police is complainant in all cases registered against the PTI chief, adding that police is being used for political point scoring. He said as per the law, reasons must be explained before arresting someone but every day a new case has been registered against his client. The lawyer said that 140 cases have been registered against Imran and it is feared that he could be arrested. He said that police should tell the court whether his client's arrest is necessary. He said that Imran has to go to Islamabad tomorrow to get interim bails in 9 cases 'it's not possible to face so many cases'. The Punjab government lawyer, however, objected to the application submitted by Imran Khan. He said that the petitioner wanted that neither should he be arrested nor investigated. He argued that police investigation powers could not be obstructed.

Toshakhana gifts received by public office holders from 1990 to 2001 public. Established in 1974, the Toshakhana is a department under the administrative control of the Cabinet

Division and stores precious gifts given to rulers, parliamentarians, bureaucrats, and officials by heads of other governments and states and foreign dignitaries.

Iran's Raisi invites Saudi king to visit Tehran

TEHRAN (Agencies): Signalling a thaw in years of hostility with Saudi Arabia, Iran has sent an official invite to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanaani said Monday. "Iranian President (Ebrahim Raisi) has sent an invitation to the Saudi king in return for an invitation by Riyadh for him," Nasser Kanaani said during a televised news conference, according to Arab News.

The development comes soon after Saudi officials visited Iran earlier this month to discuss the reopening of Riyadh's embassy in Tehran and consulate in Mashhad, following a deal — brokered by China — that aims to restore diplomatic relations between the two countries in March. Iran's semi-official Tasnim News Agency reported that delegations from both countries are preparing to officially reopen their missions, which would restart their activities by May 9.

The deal in March to end the conflict was brokered by Chinese President Xi Jinping and surprised all sides, effectively sidelining the United States. The move aimed to ease tensions in the Middle East. Sour relations between Tehran and Riyadh have fuelled several conflicts — both direct and indirect — across the Middle East. The diplomatic rift between the two countries goes back seven years.

The two states have been on bad terms since 2016, when Saudi Arabia cut ties with Iran after its embassy in Tehran was stormed during a dispute between the two countries following Riyadh's execution of a Shi'ite cleric Nimr al-Nimr. Iran and Saudi Arabia support rival sides in several conflict zones across the Middle East, including in Yemen where the Houthi rebels are backed by Tehran, and Riyadh leads a military coalition supporting the government. "Following talks, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have agreed to resume diplomatic relations and reopen embassies and missions within two months," Iran's state news agency IRNA said, citing the joint statement.

Pak hails bridging of rifts by SA, Iran: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said bridging of differences between Saudi Arabia and Iran was a remarkable achievement and the positive development was seen by Pakistan with happiness and hope.

Speaking at an Iftar dinner hosted by him in honour of ambassadors of Islamic countries here, he said, "Because of the blessings of Ramadan, Saudi Arabia and Iran have bridged their differences and this is a remarkable achievement. "We are all happy about this positive development and the follow up has been extremely speedy. It is a great pleasure to witness meetings of foreign ministers, and delegations visiting Riyadh and Tehran.

"This development is seen by Pakistan as a message of great happiness and hope. I am sure this progress will multiply in many ways in the future," he added. Talking about the Palestine issue, he said hundreds of people were killed in Palestine in the last many months in naked aggression. The Prime Minister of Palestine and some of his cabinet members had made statements saying the violence against the Palestinians was increasing, he continued. PM Shehbaz Sharif said the world had witnessed a rough period and one could see what happened in global markets.

Smuggling of sugar, wheat, urea PM reviews steps to curb this practice

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Monday reviewed measures for the stoppage of smuggling of sugar, wheat, flour, and urea from the country and sought a comprehensive strategy to overcome the problem for the long term.

Chairing a high-level meeting, he said the smuggling of essential items outside the country, was not acceptable in any way. He directed that an immediate operation should be launched against the persons involved in the heinous activity of smuggling. Smuggling was a menace for any society and in the present economic situation, Pakistan could not bear smuggling in any way, he added.

He expressed displeasure at the slow pace of work regarding the end of smuggling and asked for an increase in check posts in the border districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. He ordered immediate action against warehouses involved in hoarding and smuggling and said honest reputable officers should be posted at the international border.

He stressed that no pressure should be entertained while removing corrupt officers involved in smuggling and draft legislation for stoppage of smuggling should be presented as soon as possible. He said anti-smuggling courts should be immediately made effective and functional and number of these courts should be increased.

He said the number of highly reputable judges and prosecutors should be increased in the anti-smuggling courts. The prime minister said exemplary punishment should be given to those who were causing loss of billions of dollars to the country.

He directed that the chief secretary should provide figures of demand for these items in the border districts of provinces so that supply in these districts should not exceed more than a set limit. He said the sugar and urea confiscated during the operation against smuggling should be sold in the bazaar according to the price fixed by the government.

During the meeting, Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Interior Ministry and law enforcement institutions briefed the prime minister about the measures taken to stop intra-provincial and out-of-country smuggling. The meeting was informed that a countrywide operation was continuing against the smuggling of urea fertilizer and sugar. FBR and the law enforcement insti-

tutions on Sunday seized 49 trucks while Frontier Corps also foiled attempts to smuggle thousands of tonnes of urea and sugar and confiscated the commodities.

It was informed that joint patrolling teams were being set up to stop cross-border smuggling and on the reports of intelligence agencies four joint patrolling checkpoints were established in Balochistan where law enforcement institutions and FBR would work together. It was told that the government had declared wheat, flour, sugar and urea as "items".

The prime minister directed that SUPARCO should provide real-time satellite imagery of the country's borders and data of movement in order to put a stop to smuggling. It was further informed that warehouses in the border districts were being identified and dealers and their facilitators were being located with the help of a track and trace system after the seizure of goods during failed attempts of smuggling. The meeting was also apprised of a list comprising names of officers involved in the facilitation of smuggling. The representatives of intelligence agencies told that not only smuggled goods and smuggling routes were identified but the persons involved in such activities were also pinpointed and action was being taken against them.

It was told that 740 warehouses used for hoarding, were being identified in the border districts across the country. In the last four days the law enforcement agencies confiscated 2800 metric tonnes of sugar and 1400 metric tonnes of urea during numerous raids. The PM instructed Chief Secretary Punjab to supply the sugar seized during the recent failed attempts of smuggling, to the shopkeepers. It should be ensured that sugar should be sold at the government's fixed rate of Rs 95 per kilo.

He directed Federal Minister for Food Security to call a meeting of the Sugar Advisory Board to determine the support price of sugarcane crop. He said all these measures should be strictly implemented and a report along a long-term strategy should be presented in the next two days. Federal Ministers Rana Sanaullah Khan, Makhdoom Murtaza Mehmood, Tariq Bashir Cheema, Special Assistant to Prime Minister Ahad Cheema, senior officers of relevant institutions and law enforcement agencies, attended the meeting. Chief Secretaries of four provinces participated in the meeting through video link.

Fighting rages in Sudan as death toll climbs to 97

KHARTOUM (Agencies): Explosions rocked the Sudanese capital Khartoum Monday as fighting between the regular army and paramilitaries raged for a third day with the death toll rising to nearly 100.

The violence erupted on Saturday after weeks of power struggles between Sudan's army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The raging battles triggered a wide international outcry with appeals for an immediate ceasefire and dialogue. "The death toll among civilians in clashes since it began on Saturday has reached 97," the doctors' union said in a statement early Monday, noting the figure does not include all casualties as many could not reach hospitals due to difficulties in movement. It said hundreds of civilians were wounded in the clashes. Loud gunfire and deafening explosions echoed across the streets of Khartoum Monday morning as clashes continued. A stench of gunpowder lingered as plumes of thick black smoke emanated from damaged buildings, according to witnesses. The fighting broke out after bitter disagreements between Burhan and Daglo over the planned integration of the RSF into the regular army - a key condition for a final deal aimed at ending a crisis since the 2021 military coup they orchestrated together. The coup has already derailed a transition to civilian rule following the 2019 ouster of president Omar al-Bashir and piled on a spiralling economic crisis in Sudan.

The clashes forced Sudanese to hunker down in their homes with fears of a prolonged conflict that could plunge the country into deeper chaos, dashing hopes for return to civilian rule. Since Saturday, the two sides have traded blame over who started the fighting. Each has claimed the upper hand by declaring control of key sites, including the airport and the presidential palace but none of their claims could be independently verified. Fighting also raged in other parts of Sudan including the western Darfur region and in the eastern border state of Kassala.

UN food agency puts hold on Sudan aid operations, following death of 3 staff in unrest: The World Food Programme (WFP), a Rome-based UN agency, Sunday temporarily halted all operations, as a result of the fighting between rival military groups in Sudan, which led to the deaths of three WFP employees on

Saturday. According to a statement attributable to WFP's Executive Director, Cindy McCain, the workers were carrying out life-saving duties in Kakabiya, North Darfur.

In a separate incident on Saturday, a WFP-managed UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) aircraft was significantly damaged at Khartoum International Airport during an exchange of gunfire, seriously impacting WFP's ability to move humanitarian workers and aid within the country. In the statement, Ms. McCain explained that all operations in Sudan have been suspended, pending a review of the evolving security situation.

"WFP is committed to assisting the Sudanese people facing dire food insecurity," said Ms. McCain, "but we cannot do our lifesaving work if the safety and security of our teams and partners are not guaranteed. All parties must come to an agreement that ensures the safety of humanitarian workers on the ground and enables the continued delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance to the people of Sudan. They remain our top priority." Ms. McCain emphasized that threats to WFP teams make it impossible for them to operate safely and effectively in the country and carry out the UN agency's critical work. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan and Head of the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission (UNITAMS) Volker Perthes strongly condemned the attacks on Sunday, and insisted that civilians and humanitarian aid workers are "not a target." Perthes referred to reports of projectiles hitting UN and other humanitarian premises, and of looting at these premises, in several locations in Darfur.

The UNITAMS chief said that these acts of violence disrupt the delivery of life-saving assistance, and must end. "When incidents like this occur, it is women, men, and children in desperate need of assistance who suffer the most." Perthes announced on Sunday that he had convinced the two warring parties to the current fighting to briefly pause hostilities, on humanitarian grounds, between four and seven PM, local time. The members of the Security Council added their voices to the calls for an end to hostilities on Sunday, in a statement expressing their regret for the loss of lives and injuries.

Ali Zaidi remanded in police custody

KARACHI (INP): Approving three-day physical remand, the court of judicial magistrate at Malir on Monday handed PTI Sindh President Ali Haider Zaidi to police in a fraud case.

Earlier, the court had reserved its verdict on PTI leader's plea for acquittal and physical remand. Judicial magistrate Malir conducted hearing of the fraud case against PTI leader Ali Zaidi. Mr Zaidi was brought to court under tight security from the Gadap police station. At the outset of the hearing, Ali Zaidi's lawyer advanced arguments and said that it was not a criminal case and related to a civil court. He said there was nothing in the FIR about how the transaction took place.

The counsel said that no bank cheque had been produced by the plaintiff. He said no proof of transaction between the plaintiff and Ali Zaidi had been provided. Ali Zaidi's lawyer said that no documentary proof related to the property of the plaintiff had been submitted. He added that plaintiff had not filed any application since 2013. "Have the police any authority to book someone in such a case?" he questioned. He said that plaintiff Fazal Elahi had given such a huge amount and there was no witness to this act.

Two martyrs laid to rest F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: The security personnel who were martyred during the operation in Waziristan were laid to rest on Monday. The funeral prayers of Lance Naik Shoaib Ali and Sepoy Rafiullah Shaheed were held in Wana and their native areas. Both martyrs were laid to rest with full military honours, said ISPR on Monday. Military and civil officers, general public participated in the funeral prayer.

Sindh police constable found involved in snatching

KARACHI (INP): A Sindh police constable was found involved in a snatching incident in Karachi, on Monday. As per details, the airport police station police arrested two suspects in a raid. Three suspects snatched a bike in the jurisdiction of the airport police station on April 16.

The police recovered the bike and pistols from the two arrested suspects Abdullah and Zeeshan Shafiq. The police officials said that Zeeshan Shafiq is a police constable and he is deployed in the SSP investigation east.

Earlier, Senior Superintendent Police (SSP) Malir Hassan Sardar revealed that two policemen and private persons were found involved in the abduction for ransom case.

The arrested SI Shahid belongs to the South Zone police, whereas, SI Mushtaq belongs to the Reserve police. SSP Sardar said the former station house officer (SHO) at Shah Latif Town police station has been suspended and an investigation was launched. The Additional Inspector General (AIG) Karachi Javed Alam Odho's detailed report of crimes revealed that the metropolis has witnessed 140 street crime incidents within 24 hours including 36 incidents of mobile phones and cash snatching.

Two vehicles and eight motorcycles were snatched, whereas, 9 vehicles including 85 motorcycles were stolen. Six shootouts took place between the criminals and police officials.

Rs 1.5mln fine on citizens over littering

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) enforcement team conducted special operation against people responsible for littering of their localities, issued challans to 466 shopkeepers and common citizens and imposed Rs 1.5 million fine on them during the past 15 days.

Under the supervision of LWMC Chief Executive Officer Babar Sahib Din, the enforcement wing is strictly monitoring illegal dumping of waste across city. The CEO said that the management was following zero tolerance policy against illegal dumping of garbage on roads and he had given standing instructions for strict action against those responsible for illegal dumping.

The LWMC enforcement team conducted special operation against litterers, issued challans to shopkeepers and imposed Rs 1,000 fine on each person over littering.

During the last 15 days, the enforcement teams completed inspection of more than 5,500 places and 595 challans were issued.

Fine was imposed over violation of the Local Government Act, while more than 752 warning notices were issued over minor violations.

During this period, 11 illegal dumping vehicles were seized on-the-spot while 12 FIRs were registered.

‘31 mln families benefited free wheat flour distribution’

LAHORE (NNI): Caretaker Chief Minister of Punjab has said that 31 million families benefited from the free wheat flour distribution in the province.

“Over 41.1 mln flour bags were distributed free of cost in the province,” Caretaker CM Mohsin Naqvi said.

“It has been the biggest free flour distribution package in the history of the country,” Naqvi said.

He congratulated the team involved in the ‘Free Atta’ package adding that the best coordination between the administration and police ensured success of the package, as prompt action taken, and anomalies addressed over complaints of citizens.

According to the figures released by the Punjab government over conclusion of the free flour distribution scheme, over 31 million families benefited from the free wheat flour distribution in the province.

“Over 41.1 mln flour bags were dis-

tributed free of cost in the province,” a government spokesperson said.

“Fifty-three billion rupees wheat flour distributed in the government scheme,” spokesperson said. “Total 4,39,36,648 flour bags of 10 KG were distributed.”

“Maximum wheat flour bags of 10KG, i.e., 69,82,168, were distributed in Lahore, while 57,52,833 bags distributed in Bahawalpur and 55,68,117 10KG bags were distributed in Multan division,” spokesperson said.

“Free flour bags were also distributed in Dera Ghazi Khan, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Sargodha, Sahiwal and Rawalpindi,” government spokesperson added. It is pertinent to mention here that scores of persons lost their lives several dozens injured in stampades and other incidents in Punjab due to administrative mismanagement and other reasons during the free wheat flour distribution.

Arrests and negotiations cannot go hand in hand: Elahi

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) president Chaudhry Parvez Elahi on Monday said arrests and negotiations could not go hand in hand.

Addressing a meeting, attended by ex-federal minister Ch Wajahat Hussain, former MPAs Ch Shujat Nawaz Ajnala, and Ch Khalid Asghar Gharal, he said the PDM-led government was not interested in the Jamat-e-Islami's (JI) call for an all parties conference (APC) on the election date. “[Rather], the government only wants to escape Supreme Court's (SC) verdict,” he added.

Former Punjab CM claimed that JI's attempts to call the APC on elections held no grounds yet.

Mr Elahi went on to say that no one knew PM Shehbaz and PML-N supremo

Nawaz Sharif better than the JI. “PM Shehbaz had got JI founder Qazi Hussain Ahmad attacked to please Indian PM Atal Bihari Vajpai,” he added. The PML-N had JI's aged activists tortured, he said, by the police. He alluded that PM Shehbaz's rebellious attitude was akin to a threat against national security adding that if it was not met, it would harm the country. “Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah is threatening the judiciary on the whims of PM Shehbaz and Nawaz Sharif,” he claimed. PTI president said that the government's stand against the judiciary made a mockery of the country in the world. “PM Shehbaz and Mr Sana want to turn the country into a constitution-free land,” he added.

PFA stops production of hospital canteen

E.P. Report

LAHORE: An enforcement team of the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) stopped the production of a famous cardiac hospital's canteen over the worst condition of hygiene and violation of the PFA act on Monday. A spokesperson for PFA said that FBO was also using rotten fruits to prepare juices and failing to meet the hygienic working environment. He said the raiding team also witnessed the presence of open dustbins, dirty kitchen and an abundance of flies

in the production area. Apart from that, the workers of the unit did not have medical certificates.

He said that provision of harmful or unhealthy food items in hospitals cannot be tolerated under any circumstances because the use of substandard food causes health problems for consumers. The process of checking the canteens is continued to ensure the safe food supply in public and private hospitals.

Our mission is to eliminate foodborne diseases by ensuring the supply of safe food, he added.

Administration imposes fines of Rs.0.270 million on 63 profiteers

KARACHI (APP): During its ongoing campaign to check illegal profiteering, the Karachi administration, on Monday, imposed fines of more than Rs.0.270 million on 63 vendors for overcharging the customers.

The administration on the 26th of Ramazan imposed a fine of Rs.17000 on 3 flour sellers, a fine of Rs.8000 on 2 bakeries, a fine of Rs.52000 on 15 poultry shops, Rs.74000 on 11 grocery stores, Rs.13000 on 3 meat sellers, Rs 21000 on 5 vegetable sellers, Rs 24000 on 15 fruit sellers and fines of Rs 59000 were imposed on 9 milk sellers.

According to a statement issued here, Commissioner Karachi, Muhammad Iqbal Memon, asked deputy commissioners to keep campaign against illegal profiteers continue for providing relief

to the citizens.

He instructed all the magistrates to carry out field visits and take action against the shopkeepers found guilty of profiteering. Ensure sell of items of daily use on prescribed prices by holding care on the spot auction of confiscated goods in presence of the concerned vendors, he added.

Karachi administration has also made arrangements to set up bachat bazaars under the supervision of all Deputy Commissioners to ensure availability of items of daily use to citizens at official rates, the commissioner said and 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.



KARACHI: Provincial Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon addressing a press conference at the Sindh Archives Complex along with Provincial Labor Minister Saeed Ghani and PPP leader Salman Abdullah Murad.

Sindh govt launches Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Human Rights Awards

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Human Rights Department on Monday announced the launch of the Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Human Rights Awards each year in December for human rights activists and others recognizing their contribution and unresolved achievements made in the area of promotion and protection of human rights of citizens including marginalized and underprivileged groups and segments in the province of Sindh.

The award is named after Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the first woman elected Prime Minister in the Muslim world who served two terms as a PM of Pakistan and who was honoured with the UN Prize in the Field of Human Rights in 2008.

Special Assistant to Chief Minister Sindh on Human Rights, Surendar

Valasai said that the award is a tribute to Shaheed Bibi for her valiant struggle who remained a passionate supporter of human rights throughout her life and left behind a legacy of continuously inspiring actions for the protection and promotion of democracy and human rights in Pakistan.

Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Human Rights Awards have been approved by Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah who ordered the Awards to be made part of the calendar activities of the Human Rights Department.

Surendar Valasai said that under the guidelines of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, the Human Rights Department was making all efforts to protect and promote human rights as provided by the Constitution and the

law. The awards will be given in various categories including human rights, women's rights, child rights, minority rights, labour rights and transgender person rights etc. Each winner will be awarded Rs. 500,000.

A panel of five persons will be formed each year to decide about the award winners from amongst the nominations. The panel will include the Chairperson Sindh Human Rights Commission, a representative from the National Commission for Human Rights, a president/ representative of the Karachi Bar Association, a representative from the Sindh High Court Bar Association, a President of the representative of the Karachi Press Club and a representative from Sindh Human Rights Department. The First Award distribution ceremony will be held in December 2023.

Caretaker provincial Health Minister Dr Jamal visits RIU to inspect facilities

RAWALPINDI (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Health Punjab Dr Jamal Nasir on Monday visited the Rawalpindi Institute of Urology (RIU) to inspect facilities.

Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chatha and Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Hasan Waqar Cheema also accompanied him during the visit.

Dr Jamal visited the laboratory, dialysis centre and OPD and issued instructions for early completion of the remaining work at the hospital while inspecting the.

Speaking on the occasion,

Provincial Health Minister Dr Jamal Nasir said that not only the citizens of the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, but also the people of Gilgit-Baltistan, KP, and Azad Kashmir are benefiting from modern health facilities available at the Rawalpindi Institute of Urology.

He said that RIU is a state-of-the-art treatment facility equipped with all modern facilities, which provides world-class medical facilities to patients suffering from kidney and bladder diseases.

The minister added that RIU's pathology lab has modern equip-

ment. The OPD is fully functional and provides modern facilities to dozens of patients daily with highly qualified doctors and paramedical staff.

He said the dialysis centre is also fully functional, providing dialysis facilities to patients in two shifts.

“RIU will also provide specialized facilities for specific diseases of kidney and bladder on the pattern of RIC,” adding all possible steps are being taken to provide modern medical facilities to the people by improving the performance in the available budget and resources.

Committee formed for taking care of ailing Elephant

KARACHI (APP): Administrator Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman on Monday formed a 9-member committee for taking care of the ailing elephant Noor Jahan of Karachi Zoo.

The committee comprises Dr. Amir Khalil, Director of Reveal and Response from Four Paws International Dr. Marina Ivanova, Senior Veterinarian Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research Germany Dr. Frank Gontitz, Head of the Institute of Wildlife and Zoo Research from Germany Dr. Thomas Hilderbrandt and former Senior Director Karachi Zoo Dr. Mansoor Qazi, Dr. Imran Rasheed, Associate Professor, Department of Parasitology, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore, Dr. Isma Gheewala of Animal Care Center Karachi.

IGP Sindh orders extraordinary security for holy places

KARACHI (PPI) Inspector General of Police (IGP) Sindh Ghulam Nabi Memon directed officials on Monday that on the occasion of Shab-e-Qadr, steps should be taken to ensure extraordinary security in central mosques, imambargahs and other open places. The IGP said that all safety measures should be ensured at the time of Taraweeh prayer, Qur'aan completion and Shabinah gatherings while SHOs should make the process of patrolling, snap checking, picketing more strict in their respective areas. The posted officials should be

briefed on the importance of security duties as well as policy of not leaving the duty points empty at all, Mr Memon advised. He said that sweeping and clearance of all important places should be made possible by bomb disposal squads.

Advance intelligence collection and sharing process should be made stronger and extraordinary at the police station level while timely sharing of information obtained in any context should be ensured and followed accordingly, the IGP added.

Mr Memon said that security of citizens and traders returning late night from shopping centers and markets on the occasion of Eid should be ensured at police station level, adding that any negligence regarding the implementation of security measures would not be tolerated.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is declare that Sayeed Fakhrulam S/o Sayeed Ali Shah is the owner of Plot No. 822 Sector F/9 measuring 7 Marla at Phase-6 Hayatabad Peshawar. He has given its Power of Attorney to Muhammad Sulaiman S/o Muhammad Rahmat Ullah Jan through vide Deed No. 233, Bahi No. 4, Volume No. 161, Dated: 31-01-2022. Now, Mr. Muhammad Sulaiman wants to transfer the property through the both plot through given attorney. Therefore if any Bank, department, Firm or individual have any objection on this transfer, he should contact undersigned with the written proof with 15 days, otherwise the plot shall be transferred and later on no claim shall be entertained. Housing Officer / Transfer Hayatabad PDA, Phase-V Pesh.



LAHORE: An illuminated view of a Badshahi Masjid decorated with colorful lights in connection with Shab-e-Qadr (Laila Tal Qadr).

PROJECT MANAGEMENT UNIT-PRODUCTION MAXIMIZATION PROJECT INL-P SUSTAIAANABLE DEVELOPEMENT UNIT PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT, GATE NO 5, KHYBER ROAD, PESHAWAR PH: 091-9210765 FAX: 091-9210308

TENDER NOTICE

Project Management Unit (PMU) established under PIL: 2022-CN-001 housed at SDU P&D
Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa intends to invite sealed tenders from Authorized dealers / General order supplier, registered firms (Sale tax/ income tax) for supply of olive plants with Fencing with approximate cost of PK Rs.38.88 million for the financial year 2022-23.
The tender should be sent with a security call deposit (Refundable) of 5% of the total cost of tender in the name of Director General/Project Director PMU-INL, SDU, P&D Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa along with bidding documents.
NOTE: Bank Cheque and Cash Payment will not be accepted.
Closing date and time for submission of sealed tender documents is 28/04/2023 at 12:00 PM and will be opened on same date at 02:00 PM in the office of the Director General / Project Director PMU-INL, SDU, P&D Department Peshawar. In case tender could not be opened on above date for any reason, the same tender opening will be held on the next working day at the same time and place.
Bid Documents (Terms & Conditions) can be obtained free of cost during office hours from the of the Assistant Director/ Focal Person PMU-INL, SDU, P&D Department Peshawar, and is also available on KPPIRA website.

Focal Person, INL, SDU
SDU Building Gate No.5 Khyber road Peshawar
Phone: 091-0210765

INF(P) 890/23, The Frontier Post Peshawar, Date:18-04-2023

ٹینڈر نوٹس

ایر جی ٹی کو اگلیس، پیکر ٹیکس اور جی بی بی ٹی کو ایف ڈی کے ساتھ رجسٹرڈ فرمز سے single stage one envelop کے تحت سال 2023-24 کیلئے مندرجہ ذیل اثاثہ کے لئے سرکاری ٹینڈر طلب ہیں۔ جو 29 اپریل 2023 کو 10:30 بجے ایر جی ٹی ہائی پلا ہے۔ جو کہ 12:30 بجے ایر جی ٹی اور ڈی کے ساتھ ٹیکس میں کوئی بھی نہیں ہے۔

نمبر	نام	کال یا پلا کی رقم
1	صحت کیلئے پروگرام اور دیات و غیرہ	50000 روپے
2	ویکیشنل انکری کے پیکس مختلف سائز	35000 روپے

شرائط و ضوابط

- صحت کیلئے پروگرام اور دیات کے لئے زیادہ سے زیادہ رعایت دینے والوں کے لئے کوئی بھی ایف ڈی کے ساتھ کسی شاپ کوئی بھی نہیں ہے۔
- پروگرام مندرجہ KPPIRA نوٹ 2014 کے مطابق ہوگا۔
- ایف ڈی کے ساتھ اس کے ساتھ رجسٹرڈ فرمز کے لئے کوئی بھی ایف ڈی کے ساتھ کسی شاپ کوئی بھی نہیں ہے۔
- فرمز کے لئے ضروری ہے کہ ان کے پاس کوئی بھی ٹیکس کیلئے کوئی بھی نہیں ہے۔
- ٹینڈر نوٹس کے ساتھ رجسٹرڈ فرمز کے لئے ضروری ہے کہ ان کے پاس کوئی بھی ٹیکس کیلئے کوئی بھی نہیں ہے۔
- ٹینڈر نوٹس کے ساتھ رجسٹرڈ فرمز کے لئے ضروری ہے کہ ان کے پاس کوئی بھی ٹیکس کیلئے کوئی بھی نہیں ہے۔
- ایر جی ٹی کو ایف ڈی کے ساتھ رجسٹرڈ فرمز کے لئے ضروری ہے کہ ان کے پاس کوئی بھی ٹیکس کیلئے کوئی بھی نہیں ہے۔
- ایر جی ٹی کو ایف ڈی کے ساتھ رجسٹرڈ فرمز کے لئے ضروری ہے کہ ان کے پاس کوئی بھی ٹیکس کیلئے کوئی بھی نہیں ہے۔
- ایر جی ٹی کو ایف ڈی کے ساتھ رجسٹرڈ فرمز کے لئے ضروری ہے کہ ان کے پاس کوئی بھی ٹیکس کیلئے کوئی بھی نہیں ہے۔
- ایر جی ٹی کو ایف ڈی کے ساتھ رجسٹرڈ فرمز کے لئے ضروری ہے کہ ان کے پاس کوئی بھی ٹیکس کیلئے کوئی بھی نہیں ہے۔

میدیکل سپر سنٹر ڈی ایچ کیو ہسپتال چارسدہ

INF(P) 899/23, The Frontier Post Peshawar, Date: 18-04-23

Minister stresses for reviving sick industry

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education, Muhammad Adnan Jalil on Monday directed the relevant authorities for taking effective measures to revive the sick industries and also resolve the problems being faced by the industrialists in the industrial estates established at the province.

The Minister said to revive the sick industry it was necessary to resolve the problems of industrialists of the Economic Zones Development Company and Small Industries Development Board as well.

He issued these instructions during a detailed briefing given by all the attached entities of Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Department here at Civil Secretariat Peshawar.

The minister was given a detailed briefing by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade, Directorate of Industries, Small Industries Development Board, and other relevant departments while implementation of the decisions taken in the previous meeting was also reviewed at the meeting. High-ups of all relevant departments, coordinator of Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FCCI), Sartaj Khan and others were present.

On this occasion, the provincial minister was informed about the steps taken so far for resolving the problems of Industries established across the province. During the meeting, the minister directed that the attached entities of the department should present their proposed development plans for the improvement of industrialization in the province, while he will make pragmatic efforts to approve it from the relevant forums.

On this occasion, the minister also directed the officers to carry out rationalization in order to improve the efficiency of the concerned departments, and ordered the officers to fulfill the performance targets given to them in a timely manner.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali, Caretaker Provincial Ministers and Mayor Haji Zubair Ali with Mufti Mahmood offering dua for soul of Mufti Abdul Shakoor.

Politicians hails JIP efforts for political reconciliation

PESHAWAR (APP): The politicians, academicians, and civil society here Monday welcomed the efforts of Chief Jamaat-e-Islami, Sirajul Haq for evolving a broad-based reconciliation among political parties for general elections.

They also welcomed the formation of a three-member committee of the PTI comprising Pervaz Khattak, Ejaz Chaudhry and Mian Mehmoodur Rasheed to hold dialogue with JIP on the current political and elections related issues.

Dr. A.H Hilali, former Chairman Political Science Department, University of Peshawar while welcoming the JI efforts regarding evolving of a grand political reconciliation said that dialogue was a viable option to unite all the political and religious parties including PDM and PTI for election in the country.

He said the democratic system cannot strengthen its roots in the country unless all the stakeholders including religious and political parties sit together for result-oriented grand political dialogue to seek solutions to the prevailing socio-economic and political challenges. In democracies, he said political dialogue was an effective tool to resolve all political and election issues and removed misunderstanding among political parties.

He said political dialogue between the government and opposition would help develop the much-needed consensus for general elections on the same day inevitable for political and economic stability in the country. JI leader and former provincial minister Inayatullah Khan also welcomed the reconciliation efforts of Sirajul Haq and the formation of a three members committee of PTI to hold talks with his party on political and election issues. He said JI strongly believed in political dialogue and its doors are always open for all parties. Inayatullah said the separate elections in KP and Punjab and other provinces would further aggravate the political and economic situation in the country.

Ikhtair Wali said that PTI had never positively reciprocated to the dialogue offer of the government and made a big political blunder by dissolving the KP and Punjab assemblies.

He said PTI's demand for early elections in these provinces in the wake of the poor economic situation of the country was irrational and beyond logic.

Ikhtair Wali asked Imran Khan to leave egoism and stubbornness and sit with the government for initiation of a result-oriented and meaningful dialogue for election.

Fatimid, Hazma Foundations observed Hemophilia Day F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Fatimid Foundation and Hamza Foundation Welfare hospital and Blood Transfusion Services celebrated World Hemophilia Day with hemophilia patients and parents, on Monday.

World Hemophilia Day is a global healthcare event celebrated on 17th April every year to create awareness about the disease among community and show solidarity with Hemophilia patients and parents.

The main purpose to celebrate World Hemophilia day is to raise a call worldwide for a better treatment, care and prevention with Hemophilia. Hemophilia is a disease due to which patient don't have the clotting ability, and they need Fresh Frozen Plasma FFP as a treatment.

Both foundations had arrange awareness walk in which Medical Director HF, patients, parents Doctors, nurses and people from different walk of life participated in the walk.



PESHAWAR: Provincial Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Muhammad Adnan Jalil presiding over a meeting.

PHC orders CS/CSC to submit document Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) ordered Chief Secretary and Chief Settlement Commissioner to submit documents regard fraudulent allotment of evacuee properties while adjourned further hearing 4th May 2023.

The counsel Haroon Inayat Advocate appeared before court and submitted additional documents in the fraudulent allotment of evacuee properties.

Additional Advocate General Umar Farooq appear on behalf of state while requested for time to consult the concerned department with regard to additional documents submitted by petitioner.

In the meantime, PHC divisional bench comprising of Justice Rooh-ul-Amin and Justice Muhammad Ibrahim Khan ordered the respondents shall also produce the documents already annexed with the CM while adjourned 4th May.

Governor lauds role of Mufti Shakoor

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Monday lauded the political and religious services besides for merged areas of the religious affairs minister Shaheed Abdul Shakoor and it would always be remembered.

The governor along with the provincial ministers visited Mufti Mehmood Markaz here and offered Fateha for the departed soul of Mufti Abdul Shakoor.

The Governor said the vaccine created after the death of Mufti Shakoor would never be fulfilled.

Jamiat Ulema Islam General Secretary, Maulana Ataulah Darwaish thanked the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor and members of the Provincial Cabinet for coming for Fateha.

He condemned the remarks of some elements against Mufti Shakoor on social media and demanded strict action against them.

6,500 bags of sugar seized

PESHAWAR (APP): The district administration and food department have seized 6,500 bags of sugar from a godown in the outskirts of the city and arrested two accused red handed.

On a tip-off that huge quantity of sugar has been hoarded in a godown on Ring Road, AC Rao Hashim, Ration controller Jamasheed Afridi along with officials of the Food Department and Police conducted a raid and seized 6,500 bags of sugar weighing 50KG each bag stored in containers.

Charsadda, Peshawari chappals attract people as Eid shopping reaches to peak in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Eid shopping fever has reached its peak in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the centuries-old traditional Peshawari and Charsadda Chappals (shoes) attracted a large number of Eid shoppers on Monday.

With only few days left in Eidul Fitr's celebrations, the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and nearby districts of Punjab provinces thronged to Charsadda and Peshawari Chappal outlets at historic Namak Mandai, Qissa Khwani and Jahangi Mohalla bazaars in Peshawar to select an appropriate colour matching with suits in order to look different on Eid.

The outlets of these leather-made shoes were making roaring business in Peshawar where many shopkeepers hired extra labour to fulfill the placed orders.

"I came from Nowshera to buy my favorite leather-made Charsadda chappal due to its durability, excellent shine and affordable price," said Professor Ehtisham Qaiser, a resident of Wapda Town Nowshera while talking to APP at Qissa Khwani, a hub of Charsadda and Peshawari chappals.

"Personally, I prefer shiny black chappal as it can be used with Shalwar-Qameez and paint-shirts during Eid and normal days," he said. These days, Qissa Khwani's Jahangirpura bazaar, a hub of skilled cobblers and shoemakers were working against the clock to meet the pressing demands of the Eid shoppers of KP, Punjab and Karachi.

In the local market, Charsadda chappal is available on Rs3,000 to Rs3,500 depending on its quality and durability, which is cost-efficient than foreign brands footwear and within the reach of common people," said famous-shoemaker Muhammad Israr Khan while talking to APP.

"On this Eid, people's response to Charsadda and Peshawari chappals is overwhelming due to significant reduction of coronavirus cases and its affordable prices. We are working till Sehri to complete the pressing orders of our customers for this Eid," said Ustad Israrullah Khan, a shoe-maker of Charsadda and Peshawari Chappals at Qissa Khwani while talking to APP.

"We have stopped new booking keeping in view of the heavy load of the placed orders, load shedding and fasting," Israrullah said, adding he has received orders from Punjab, Karachi and Islamabad from customers to buy these leather made decent, shiny and cost efficient chappals for themselves, friends and their family members as special Eid gifts.

Inheriting the hard-earned business from his forefathers, Israr said a single pair of Charsadda and Peshawari chappal passes through six stages of skilled hands to become a finished product. "In the first step, its sole is flattened with a rubber piece whereas in the second stage, a piece of leather is sewn and then fitting of the piece with the sole is done in the third and fourth stage respectively."

In fifth stage, the pair was stuffed with a wooden piece to stretch and fix all the nails, leather and thread placed together to get the shoe adjusted and make it durable.

Finishing touches are given to a piece including polishing and varnishing to improve its look while artisans also paint its border with a selected chemical for a better shine in the sixth stage.

Later on, finishing touches were given to a piece in sixth stage, which includes polishing and varnishing to improve its look while artisans also paint its border with a selected chemical for a better shine.

Israrullah said black and gray colour designs with different prints embellished with stones were being proffered by a large number of customers on the occasion of Eid. "The unique footwear is also being exported to Gulf, Saudia Arabia, UAE, South Africa, United Kingdom, Europe and Afghanistan for Eid."

Israr said these chappals' business was affected by the coronavirus lockdowns during the past and shoemakers suffered great economic and financial losses. He urged the government to announce a special financial package for shoemakers and granting soft loans to them.

Tasawwar Khan, a businessman while busy in Eid shopping at Qissa Khwani told APP that he purchased 15 pairs of Charsadda and Peshawari chappals for his family, brothers and relatives as an Eid gift.

"Two of my brothers and nephew are settled in UAE, who requested for Charsadda and Peshawari Chappals on Eid and a dispatch was sent to them today," he said. The shoemakers expected to earn maximum profits on this Eid on Chand Raat.



PESHAWAR: Shopkeeper arranging and displaying traditional men's footwear Peshawari Chappal at his shop to attract customers ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan offering fateha for soul of Chief Secretary Zubair Asghar Qureshi's mother.

Commissioner visits Hayatabad flour distribution center

PESHAWAR (APP): Commissioner Peshawar Division Muhammad Zubair along with Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Shah Fahad on Monday visited the free flour distribution center established for the poor and deserving beneficiaries in Hayatabad.

The Commissioner was given a detailed briefing about desk arrangements for the distribution of wheat flour at the center. The Commissioner also visited all counters as well as waiting, seating and exit and entry points. He also obtained information from the beneficiaries who had come to the center for free flour and gave necessary instructions to the district administration for ensuring the flour distribution in the best possible manner.

He also directed the police to provide complete security inside and on the exit and entry points of the flour distribution centers. He also directed the traffic police to ensure smooth flow of traffic on the main road.

The Commissioner directed the district administration to provide sufficient phone numbers with the app and take strict disciplinary action against negligent flour dealers.

PSC cancels ability test held in March F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Service Commission has, due to certain valid reasons, cancelled the ability test that was held on 7th March 2023 for the posts of Lecturer in Forestry, Forest Manager, Forest Ranger, Instructor and Junior Instructor Forestry, Sub-Divisional Forest Officer.

The same test will be re-conducted and the candidates concerned informed accordingly. It was informed by the Director Examinations KP PSC on Monday.

Cloudy weather with scattered rain, winds thunderstorms predicted

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

However, scattered rain-wind and thunderstorm with isolated hailstorm is likely to occur over Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Malakand, Buner, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torghar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Hangu, Kurram, Karak and Kohat districts.

Dust and wind storms with isolated rain-thunderstorms and hailstorms are likely to occur over Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, North & South Waziristan and Dera Ismail Khan districts.

During the last 24 hours, mainly partly cloudy and cloudy weather occurred over most districts of the province. However, rain-thunderstorms with gusty winds occurred at isolated places in Peshawar, Malakand, Hazara, Kohat and D.I. Khan divisions.

Rain recorded (in mm): Bajaur (Pashat 11, Khaar Trace), Dir 10, Parachinar 06, Kalam 05, Timergara & Mirkhani (each) 04, Kakul, Pattan & Drosh (each) 02, Peshawar, Chitral, D.I. Khan, Tirah & Landi Kotal Trace.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 31/19, Chitral 24/12, Timergara 30/15, Dir 26/11, Mirkhani 24/08, Kalam 14/03, Drosh 24/12, Saidu Sharif 27/14, Pattan 21/16, Malam Jabba 12/07, Takht Bhai 30/18, Kakul 21/14, Balakot 22/14, Parachinar 24/09, Bannu 35/19, Cherat 28/15, D.I. Khan 37/22.

The highest temperature recorded in the province was 37°C in Dera Ismail Khan.



In brief

Eight criminals arrested

RAHIM YAR KHAN (PPI): Police on Monday arrested eight dacoits of a gang during the Katcha area's operation in Rahim Yar Khan. The operation against dacoits in the Katcha rea continues for the ninth consecutive day. Police said the law forcers continued to lay siege to the secret hide-out of a ringleader Kabil Sikhani and there was a fierce exchange of fire between the police and the operatives of the gang. The law enforcement agencies have intensified operation going on in the Katcha area of Punjab province. The police have claimed to achieve substantial progress in the operation. Sources said latest armoured cars and 15 snipers from the army have been stationed in the area to achieve a strategic advantage over the enemy. According to the strategy, the snipers will attack the enemy from a distance and the police forces will be advancing after that.

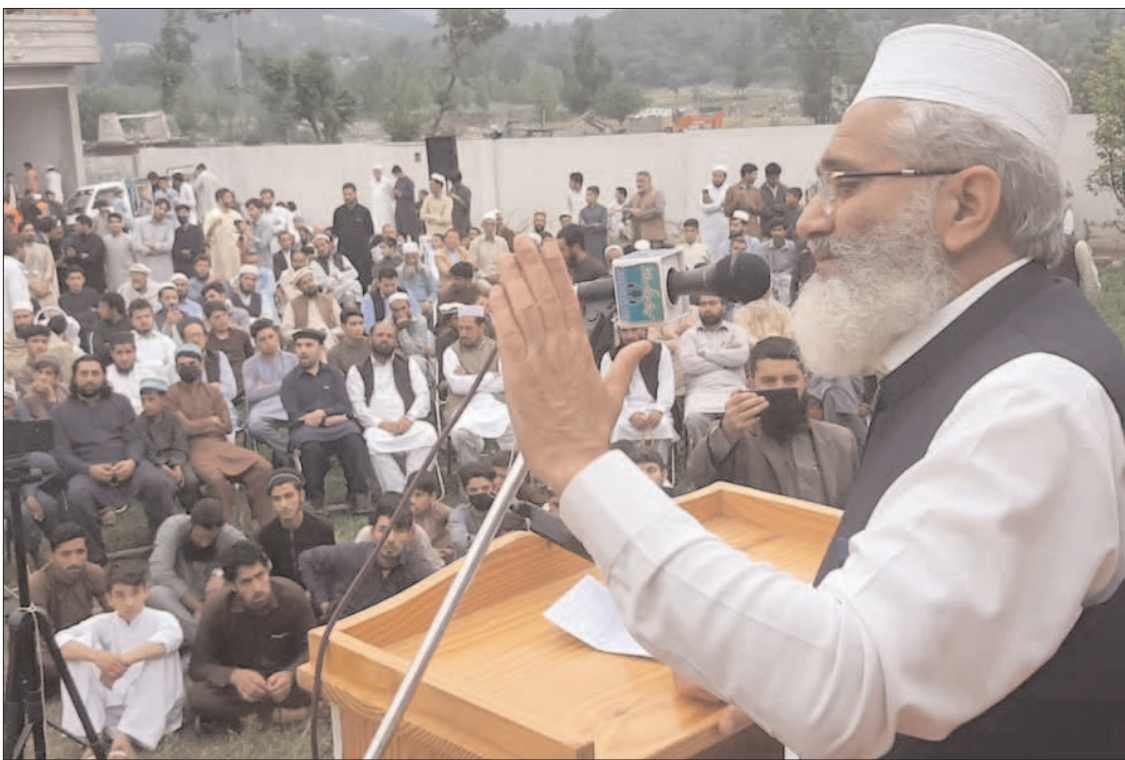
stampede crushes woman

FAISALABAD (PPI): An elderly woman died while two other ladies sustained injuries in a stampede broke out during a free ration distribution on Bodewal in Faisalabad on Monday. As per details, free ration was distributed in Chak 6, Faisalabad. A large number of women gathered there to collect the handout. Meanwhile, a stampede broke out among the ration seekers. As a result, a 55-year-old woman, Rashida Bibi, fell down and crushed to death. Besides her, two other women, Balgees and Ayesha, also got hurt during the stampede. Rescue officials shifted the dead woman and injured ladies to a local hospital.

Rain, hailstorms expected

QUETTA (PPI): Pakistan Meteorological Department, Regional Center, Quetta on Monday forecast that rain, wind, thunderstorm and hailstorms are expected in Zhob, Sherani, Barkhan, Kohlu, Musakhail, Loralai, Harnai, Ziarat, Killa Saifullah and Quetta districts while partly cloudy to light rain is expected in some parts of Mastung, Kalat, Kech, Awaran, Coastal areas and surrounding during the next 24 hours. Weather forecast for next 48 hours: partly lousy weather is expected in most parts of the province with chances of rain in Lasbella, Khuzdar, Awaran, Kech, Panjgur, Gwadar, Killa Saifullah, Barkhan, Sherani, Kohlu and surroundings during the next 48 hours. Weather prevailed during the last 24 hours: rain occurred in Khuzdar, Loralai, Ziarat and Quetta during the last 24 hours. Maximum temperature recorded on Monday, Barkhan 31.5, Dalbandin 36.5, Gwadar 34.5, Jiwani 34.5, Kalat 26, Khuzdar 30, Lasbela 38.5, Nokundi 37.5, Panjgur 35, Pasni 33, Quetta 30, Samungli 29.5, Sibi 42, Turbat 39.5, Ormara 33, Zhob 29.5, Uthal 39.3 and Usta Muhammad 42.5.

Meanwhile, Collectorate of Customs Balochistan claimed to have seized 2550 parcels of sugar and 200 tyres of vehicles worth millions of rupees in different raids conducted at Hazargangi area of Quetta. According to a statement issued by the spokesperson for Collectorate of Customs Balochistan on Monday, staff of Customs Quetta under the supervision of Inspector Hameed raided warehouses at Hazarganji area in a crackdown launched by the Collectorate of Customs Balochistan against hoarders of sugar.



LOWER DIR: Jamaat-e-Islami chief Siraj-ul-Haq addressing an Iftar dinner arranged by JI Youth Wing.

Ban imposed on wheat threshing on roadside

F.P. Report

LAKKI MARWAT: The district administration has banned threshing of the wheat crop in urban localities and along roadsides for a period of one month in Lakki Marwat. An official said that deputy commissioner Abdul Hadi had issued a notification to the effect following public complaints that farmers were threshing their harvested wheat crops in urban areas and along roadsides.

The official said that the use of thresher machines in congested localities caused environmental problems besides proving harmful for human lives. As preventive measures the local administration has no option other than to restrict operating thresher machines in the urban areas and congested rural localities and along roadsides", official maintained, adding that the restrictions will remain enforced up to May 11 until modified or withdrawn.

He said that the violators would face stern legal action. "Through a separate notification, the deputy commissioner also banned display of weapons, aerial firing and use of crackers", official said. He said that one-wheeling and holding of Eid fair and circus had also been restricted for one

month in the district.

Flour dealer arrested: A flour dealer was arrested for selling free flour meant for distribution among eligible families under the government scheme in the local market in Lakki Marwat. Local deputy commissioner Abdul Hadi had tasked additional AC Sultan Nooruddin Ahmer to take action against the dealer when someone shared a video clip with him, showing a dealer selling the commodity in the market.

AC Ahmer told journalists that he with the help of food and police officials first identified the dealer and then raided his warehouse where he had stored flour bags. He said that the dealer had collected flour bags from a local flour mill for free distribution among the beneficiaries of Benazir Income Support Programme but instead he stored the commodity in his warehouse and started selling it in the market.

The dealer and his assistant were arrested and along with imposing heavy fines on them they were also imprisoned for one month. "In case of failing to deposit a fine, they will undergo six months additional imprisonment", he maintained. AC asked the flour dealers to ensure transparent distribution of free flour among deserving

families otherwise they would face stern legal action.

Meanwhile, Lakki Marwat DPO Muhammad Ashfaq Khan also visited health facilities to check security arrangements there. He checked deployment of cops at fixed centres and with mobile teams and directed the subordinate police officials to ensure provision of fool proof security to polio teams.

In Lakki Marwat, more than two thousand policemen have been deployed for the security of polio teams. "Under the polio security plan the cops in civvies and district special branch personnel have been deployed at the health facilities and in parts of the district as part of preventive measures to avert the happening of any untoward incident", officials told the district police officer.

They said that snap checking and patrolling had been increased on busy roads and in urban and rural areas to maintain law and order and peaceful conduct of the polio eradication campaign. During the visit, Ashfaq administered several kids with anti-polio drops and asked the citizens to cooperate with polio teams and police in order to make the drive a success.

Buner varsity first Academic Council meeting held

F.P. Report

BUNER: University of Buner (UOB) first Academic Council meeting was held chaired by Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Amin Badshah in the varsity conference room on Monday.

The academic council members including deans, chairmen and registrar attended. The chair shared efforts were underway to enhance status of the university up to international standard. He claimed to enhance standard of education training knowledge and research and there would be no compromise.

The chair assured to attain the standard every possible steps would be taken and all of the available resources to be utilized. The chair appreciated the academic members for their unmatched dedication hard efforts and devotion so far but they would have to further improve their efficiency. On the occasion, academic council members welcomed the chairperson directions and assured all out humanly possible services in this regard adding standard of education training knowledge and research would be further improved under the wise supervision of the chair.

PTI flays increase in PoL prices

F.P. Report

MULTAN: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders Khan Ibrahim Khan and Chaudhry Khaliqur Rehman, Advocate, former Chairman Chief Minister Complaint Cell, while talking to the media, said that at the moment, the price of petrol is continuously decreasing in the global market, while the PDM led federal government has increased the price of petrol by ten rupees.

The federal government has already increased the inflation to the sky. The increase in the price of petrol will cause further inflation. Khan Ibrahim Khan and Chaudhry Khaliqur Rehman Advocate said that Imran Khan had fixed the price of petrol at 150 rupees. While at that time the price of petrol in the world market was 120 dollars per barrel.

But Awami leader Imran Khan was concerned about his poor people. Understanding the need of the common man, Imran Khan, the prices of petroleum products were kept under control. Khan Ibrahim Khan and Chaudhry Khaliqur Rehman Advocate said that the PDM government has failed completely. They should also think of the people like Imran Khan and make the price of petrol 150 rupees per litre. Think of the poor people like Tehreek-e-Insaf and Imran Khan. Reduce prices of food items including petroleum products.

Wheat bags were recovered

AISALABAD (PPI): On the direction of Commissioner Bahawalpur Division Dr Ehtesham Anwar, the district administrations, food Department and police have launched joint action in the three districts to stop the illegal movement of wheat.

Siraj hopeful of talks between PDM and PTI leadership

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Jamaat-e-Islami chief Siraj-ul-Haq has said that the solution to all the problems is holding general elections on the same day. He was addressing an Iftar dinner arranged by the JI Youth wing in Maidan as chief guest and later talking to local journalists here. The JI chief said that instead of being neutral, the judiciary, the election commission and the parliament had become parties.

The gathering was also addressed by the JI district chief and former MPA Izazul Mulk Afkari, district president of JI Youth Ateequr Rehman and others. "Whenever the politicians clashed with each other, it has resulted in martial law", Siraj said, adding the national leadership did not adopt a clear plan of action regarding the elections. He said that without election reforms and proper planning the result would not be different from the past. The JI chief said that his party had decided to start efforts to bring both the PDM and PTI leadership to the negotiating table to sort out a joint strategy to overcome

the current political and economic crises.

"The Supreme Court and the Election Commission have decided to become a party instead of remaining neutral, which is not a good omen in any case", Siraj said. About the country situation he said that about 11 million Pakistanis were currently living below the poverty line while 85% were forced to drink contaminated water. Every fifth Pakistani suffers from depression while every eleventh person suffers from physical disability, he said.

"Despite being citizens of an agricultural country, the people are running behind the flour truck during this Holy month of Ramadan to get it free", he said adding that twenty people had lost their lives while getting free flour. The JI chief said that the task of the caretaker government was to monitor and hold fresh elections but instead of fulfilling its responsibilities, it was dreaming of staying in the government for the next three years. He said the JI was the last ray of hope for the nation and it would come to power and provide

interest-free loans to the youth which constituted 62% of the country's population.

JI former lawmaker demands filling of vacant DEO posts in Dir: The JI nominated candidate for PK 13 and former MNA Sahibzada Yaqub Khan on Monday demanded of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker government to fill both the vacant posts of district education officer male and female in the Lower Dir district without any further delay. In his written statement the JI leader complained that the posts of DEO male and female were lying vacant in the district for more than two months but the concerned authorities were doing nothing to fill them despite repeated demands from the teachers' organizations and local political activists. The former lawmaker said that several cases related to pension, transfers, postings and leaves were pending at the offices of DEOs in the district. He said the DEO male was transferred while the DEO female was retired from services and their posts remained vacant. He said the JI would raise the issue in the national assembly and senate if the demand was not met soon.

Anti-polio campaign to conclude tomorrow

F.P. Report

BANNU: Amidst tight security the five days anti-polio drive began in Lakki Marwat and Bannu as more than 4500 policemen have been deployed to guard polio workers in both southern districts.

In Bannu, a foolproof security plan has been formulated to provide protection to the health workers engaged in polio eradication activity. He said that more than 2400 policemen were performing duties

with vaccinators to enable them to immunize children against the crippling disease without any fear.

DPO Ziauddin Ahmed paid visits to different basic health units and rural health facilities where he checked security arrangements at fixed polio centres. He also met members of mobile teams and appreciated them for their commitment to the noble national cause.

The sub divisional police officers and SHOs briefed the district police chief about security arrange-

ments for polio teams. They said that temporary checking points had been established in parts of the district to keep an eye on movements of suspects and miscreants.

DPO asked the policemen to be vigilant and accompany polio teams till the end of day long activity every day. He directed his subordinate officials and cops to implement the security plan in letter and spirit and bring suspects and law breakers into clutches of law.



LANDI KOTAL: People holding banners during a school enrollment walk.

Security plan finalized

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Police has formed a security plan for Eid-ul-Fitr, 1,000 police officers have been assigned Eid security duty, while 49 traffic officers will be on duty to guide tourists and ensure traffic flow.

In this regard, District Police Officer Tariq Iqbal formed a security plan for Eid-ul-Fitr According to the security plan, more than 1,000 policemen and officers will be deployed on security duty for the security of 158 mosques and 40 Eidgah of the district. It has been directed to tighten the security at the entrance and exit, during the Eid prayer, the QRF of the elite force and mobile patrols of all the police stations, while special blockades of the Lower Dir police will be set up at different places, thus the district police Officer Tariq Iqbal has instructed all the SHOs.

The traffic staff has been instructed to take strict action against one-wheeling and underage drivers on motorcycles, while orders have been issued to take strict legal action against those who fire in the air on the night of the moon. In this way, 49 traffic officials have been appointed for the purpose of facilitating, guiding and keeping the traffic flow-

ing during the days of Eid.

Eid packages among orphans distributed: Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF) distributed Eid gifts including cash, suits, watches, shoes etc., among 120 orphans during a function held at Timergara.

The function which was attended by mothers of the orphan children and workers of the Jamaat-i-Islami was addressed by the AKF acting district president Haji Majeedullah, Sultan Zeb, Malik Sher Bahadar and others. They said that Eid was celebrated to share joys and pleasures among different segments of society. They lauded the AKF services for the oppressed and vulnerable communities. Haji Majeedullah said the AKF also distributed food packages during the Holy month of Ramadan worth of Rs 5 million and established sasti tandoor to provide cheap breads to people of the area.

Meanwhile the Shakeel Shaheed (SSDO) Development Organization (SSDO) also distributed Eid gifts and cash money among the orphans during a simple function held in Sarai Talash here the other day. The SSDO chief Pir Imtiaz Ahmed and other volunteers distributed clothes, cash money from Rs 3000 to 5500 among the deserving

children on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion Pir Imtiaz Ahmed said that since 2010 different food packages had been distributed among orphans and needy people under the SSDO Bait ul Mal scheme. He appealed to the youth to stand up and help the poor people and the needy in the streets and form welfare organizations so that the burden on the government and big welfare institutions can be reduced. The SSDO chief expressed the expectation that philanthropists would provide financial support to welfare organizations so that they could serve humanity wholeheartedly.

JUI-F condones departure of Mufti Abdul Shakoor: The Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl expressed its deep concerns over the sudden demise of one of the party's senior leader Mufti Abdul Shakoor who breathed his last after a road accident in Islamabad the other day.

A meeting of the JUI-F executive council was held at Timergara with its district chief Sirajud Din in the chair. The participants offered fataha for the late Mufti Abdul Shakoor and termed his demise a great loss for the party. The meeting demanded the federal government to probe into the matter from all aspects.

Ababeel squad encounters dacoit, arrests another

F.P. Report

MARDAN: One robber killed while another was arrested injured by Ababeel squad while thwarting a dacoity on gunpoint at Bank Road in the premises of City Police station, on Monday.

According to the details, the armed robbers who forcibly took 13 lakh 99 thousand rupees from Waqar Ali Shah, who was withdrawing money from the private bank of Mardan, started firing on the warning of plainclothes police officials. From which the police personnel narrowly escaped, however, more police personnel came to the spot and fired back.

The armed dacoit identified as Abdullah resident of Akora Khattak was killed on the spot by the bullets, while his partner, the other dacoit Syed Gul

resident of Ambar Swabi, was arrested in an injured condition. Further investigation is going on with the arrested robber.

MCCI argues national consultation for economy: Mardan Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Zahir Shah said that while appreciating Army Chief General Asim Munir's speech and slogan "Hamara Pakistan" in the Parliament, he has said that the entire Pakistani nation belongs to the Pakistan Army.

Mardan Chamber of Commerce President Zahir Shah said in a press release that an ordinary shopkeeper, a poor porter, ordinary citizens are not separated from Pakistan's forces in any way, but even today Pakistan's army is inside everyone. The spirit of fighting for the safety of the country is more than ever. People's hearts beat

with those young men who spend day and night at the borders of the country, away from their wives, children and dear relatives, regardless of the harshness of the weather, food and rest.

They are protecting and do not hesitate to sacrifice their precious lives for it. Some politicians tried to divide and hate Pakistani people by raising slogans of old and new Pakistan and continued to achieve nefarious goals. However, last day Army Chief General Asim Munir addressed the joint session of the Parliament and praised the slogan of our Pakistan in two words. In such a situation, the slogan of "Hamara Pakistan" by the Army Chief and DG ISI has created a new dimension and energy among the Pakistanis. And called it the need of the hour.

Illegal hoarding: 2800 sack fertilizer recovered

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Assistant Commissioner Pindi Bhattian Rashad Iqbal unearthed illegal stock of 21000 sacks of sugar and 2800 sacks of fertilizer. According to details, AC Pindi Bhattian raided at warehouse of Nasir Bashir in Jalalpur Bhattian and recovered illegal stock of 21000 bags of sugar and 2800 bags of fertilizer.

AC got registered a case against trader Nasir Bashir with local police station. He warned that strict action against hoarders and profiteers would continue without any discrimination to control artificial inflation and shortage of essential items.

Teacher's training key for revolutionization of education: Regional

Programme Manager Quaid-e-Azam Academy for Educational Development (QAED) Lahore Sohail Ahmad Bakhtiar said that training of teachers is vital for enabling them to deliver fresh knowledge to their students so that students can able to combat international challenges and get awareness about latest methodology for teaching of students.

He expressed these views while visiting QAED Hafizabad to review process of imparting training to Assistant Education Officers, on Friday. The Head QAED Hafizabad Syed Muhammad Zaheer Shah, Headmaster Amjad Ali Bhatti was also accompanied by him. Sahail Ahmad Bukhtiar witnessed training session and other activities to take beedback of

training of AEOs.

He urged AEOs to transfer modern methodologies to teachers of schools under their control for upgrading educational skill of teachers after completing this ongoing training. He expressed his satisfaction over arrangements made for training in QAED Hafizabad and appreciated performance of Syed Muhammad Zaheer and Amjad Ali Bhatti.

One killed in road mishap: A motorcycle rider killed while another was injured in road accident near Vanike Tarar. According to details, Peer Muhammad and Khalid Bhone were on their way to his village thathi Anok Sing on a motorcycle. When they reached near Vanike Tarar, a car hit the motorcycle allegedly.



Russia’s UN council presidency is most contentious in memory

UNITED NATIONS (AP): First the Russians gave the UN spotlight to the commissioner of children's rights accused with President Vladimir Putin of war crimes for deporting Ukrainian children to Russia, sparking a walkout by the US and several others. Then Russia went after the West by claiming it is violating international laws in arming Ukraine, drawing blistering retorts that Ukraine has every right to defend itself against Putin's invading army.

So far, the Russian presidency of the UN Security Council has been the most contentious in the memory of longtime UN diplomats and officials. And it's just at the midway point. More fireworks are to come later in the month when Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov presides over the premier event of the presidency - an open council meeting on defending the principles of the UN Charter. Russia is widely accused of violating the charter by invading Ukraine and flouting its underpinning principles of respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The presidency of the Security Council rotates monthly in alphabetical order of its 15 members. As Russia's turn approached, US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield and European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell both called it an April Fool's joke. The US envoy promised to "use every opportunity to push back on their using their perch in the chair to spread disinformation, and to use their chair to push support of their efforts." At the incoming president's traditional first-day news conference, Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia pushed back against the April Fool's



comments, asking Borrell, "Who's talking?" He said Russia had been "an honest broker" when chairing the council in the past and would try to maintain that approach. As for US claims Russia would spread disinformation about Ukraine, Nebenzia dismissed it as part of "the Western narrative."

"We think just the opposite," he said. The Security Council president presides over meetings and gets to decide the topics of signature sessions, often chaired by foreign ministers and sometimes presidents. Lavrov on April 24 will preside over a session on "effective multilateralism through the defense of the principles of the UN Charter," where UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

will brief members. Nebenzia told reporters Russia is seeking a forward-looking discussion on the formation of "a new multipolar world order based on sovereign equality, equal rights and self-determination, justice and security, friendly relations and cooperation between nations, with full respect for the purposes and principles of the UN Charter." Ukraine's allies are already preparing their rebuttals.

There are also required monthly meetings, including on the Middle East, which Lavrov will also preside over. Others focus on global hotspots, including Syria, Mali, Libya, Yemen, Haiti, Africa's Great Lakes region and Colombia. At last week's Mali meeting, Russia's Wagner Group, a private

military contractor, which has close ties to the West African nation and is fighting in Ukraine, was raised by several of Kyiv's supporters. To start their presidency, the Russians chose one of the hottest issues of the Ukraine war - the fate of Ukrainian children taken to Russia. For the informal Security Council meeting, they chose as its briefer Maria Lvova-Belova, the Russian children's rights commissioner, who along with Putin is being sought by the International Criminal Court on war crimes charges. In an initial protest, ambassadors from Western countries boycotted the meeting, sending low-level diplomats instead. And when Lvova-Belova started to address the council by video link from Russia, the diplomats from the United States, Britain, Malta and Albania walked out.

US political adviser Ngoyi Ngoyi called it "outrageous" that she was allowed to speak and said children aged between 4 months and 17 years had been moved to 40 facilities in Russia or Russian-occupied Ukraine. He said at least two of those centers coordinate adoptions by Russians, which Russia denies. "If Russia is not trying to hide a systematic program to force Russian citizenship upon Ukraine's children, then it should give humanitarian organizations full access," Ngoyi said. "It's as simple as that." Lvova-Belova said the children were taken to Russia for their safety and Moscow was coordinating with international organizations to return them to their families. The International Committee of the Red Cross said later it has been in contact with her about returning Ukrainian children, and UNICEF also said it has been in communication with Russian

officials "but has not received feedback on our offer to facilitate reunification processes." There is a huge discrepancy over how many children have been removed from Ukraine.

Ukraine's UN ambassador, Sergiy Kyslytsya, tweeted that more than 19,500 children had been seized from their families or orphanages and forcibly deported. Lvova-Belova said that since Feb. 24, 2022, when Russia invaded Ukraine, Russia has taken in more than 5 million Ukrainians, including 700,000 children - all with parents, relatives or legal guardians, except for 2,000 from orphanages in the eastern Donbas. France's deputy human rights adviser, Thibault Samson, called the meeting a "new cynical exercise in disinformation," accusing Lvova-Belova of spreading "propaganda" and "a false version of the situation." "A lie repeated ad nauseam remains a lie," Samson said.

Before Russia's second signature event, on the export of weapons and military equipment, its ambassador said the discussion would be "from an arms control perspective," rather than focusing on a specific country. But at the April 10 official council meeting, Nebenzia accused the West of encouraging countries to violate agreements not to export arms from Russia without its written consent, with the aim of increasing supplies to Ukraine. He said the West also is urging the resumption of production of Soviet weapons by East European countries that were once part of the Soviet block and are now Western allies.

Nebenzia then denied what he called "baseless accusations" from the West that Iran and North Korea are providing weapons to Moscow in violation of Security Council sanc-

tions. Again, Western ambassadors boycotted the meeting, leaving seats in the council chamber filled by deputies and low-level diplomats. When Albania's political coordinator, Arian Spasse, took the floor, he said the Security Council found itself in "unchartered waters" this month: "A country that has brutally violated the Charter of the United Nations and the very basic rules that govern relations among states is presiding over the body responsible for peace and security."

Without naming Russia, he said the permanent council member "has done everything to undermine peace and security and has endangered the world." France's deputy political coordinator, Alexandre Olmedo, told the council it is well documented that Russia uses combat drones from Iran and has purchased missiles and ammunition from North Korea. "France and the European Union will continue to provide Ukraine all the support needed, for as long as it is necessary," he said.

The US deputy ambassador, Robert Wood, said Russia began its presidency "by trying to justify kidnapping Ukrainian children" and had moved on to making "a thinly veiled effort to portray Russia as a responsible actor on arms control, attempting to obfuscate the reality that it launched an unjustified armed invasion of its neighbor." "The most effective and obvious path towards peace and reducing risk of illicit diversion of arms would be for Russia to end the war that it started and withdraw its forces from all of Ukraine's sovereign territory," Wood said. "We once again urge Russia to do so, and to do it now."

No rolling back clean energy transition: Kerry

SAPPORO, Japan (AP): So much has been invested in clean energy that there can be no rolling back of moves to end carbon emissions, US climate envoy John Kerry said. Kerry noted that if countries deliver on promises to phase out polluting fossil fuels, the world can limit average global warming to 1.7 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit), better than the worst case scenarios but still above the current limit of 1.5 C global warming above pre-industrial levels.

"We're in a very different place than where we were a year ago, let alone two and three years ago," Kerry said in an interview with The Associated Press. "But we're not doing everything we said we'd do," he said, after attending a meeting of energy and environment ministers of the Group of Seven wealthy nations. "A lot of countries need to step up including ours to reduce emissions faster, deploy renewables faster, bring new technologies online faster all of that has to happen." Kerry said the G-7 talks in northeastern Japan's Sapporo were "really constructive" in yielding a show of unity for phasing out use of unabated fossil fuels that emit greenhouse gases.

A meeting of President Joe Biden's Major Economies Forum, which

includes leaders of 20 nations that account for more than three-quarters of global carbon emissions, offers another opportunity for committing resources to the goal of reaching zero emissions by 2050, Kerry said. "The United States and all the developed world has the responsibility to help the developing world through this crisis," he said. "Those countries will really determine what happens. If they will reduce, if they will take the lead, if they will start deploying the new technologies, if they will stop using unabated fossil fuels, we'll up the chance of winning this battle." Kerry held out hope for cooperation with China on climate despite friction over Taiwan, human rights, technology and other issues, saying he had a "very good conversation" with his Chinese counterpart, Xie Zhenhua, just days earlier. "We agreed that we need to get back together personally, visit and try to see what we can find to work on together to accelerate the process. Is that doable? I hope so," Kerry said.

The Biden administration has moved aggressively to entice companies to invest in electric vehicles and other cleaner energy technologies. While the US still lags some other countries in use of EVs, the mar-

ket is changing as consumer preferences evolve and manufacturers invest billions. No one person can roll back what's happening in the climate sector, Kerry said, "because private companies have made major bets on the future and they're not going to reverse them." One area where much more needs to be done is in climate financing, Kerry said, even though developed countries were close to their \$100 billion goal in annual support for developing nations. In 2020, \$83 billion was committed. The annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund last week in Washington were a start, "but they're not enough. They didn't produce enough of a change, in our judgement, to really unleash the kind of finance support that's necessary."

"Our hope ... is that over the course over the next weeks and months more will be put on the table, more will be agreed upon and we can move faster," he said. The hope is to reform the structure of finance to get such multilateral development banks to lend more and at better rates.

"Anyone is going to look pretty critically at what's going to happen with their money," Kerry said, noting that "there's a lot of money and it's looking for these deals right now." The

Inflation Reduction Act is a major step toward incentivizing climate-friendly investments, "sending a signal to the market place that there's money to be made by transitioning and moving in the direction of clean energy technologies," he said. In the US, money will not be invested in new coal-fired power plants, because "there's no such thing as clean coal," Kerry said. "The marketplace is not supporting that. Investors are not supporting that."

Some countries, including Japan, have balked at setting a clear timeline for phasing out coal-fired plants, citing energy security. And for some countries, it's a valid concern, Kerry said, though he added, "I think energy security is being exaggerated in some cases." The greater imperative is to do whatever is possible to draw down carbon emissions, given the millions of people who die each year due to unclear air, extreme heat and other dire consequences of climate change. "If we're going to be responsible, we have to turn around and figure out how we are going to more rapidly terminate the emissions. We have to cut the emissions that are warming the planet and heading us inexorably toward several tipping points beyond which there is no reverse," Kerry said.

Inflation squeezing retirees in Argentina

BUENOS AIRES (AP): With trembling hands, the bingo players at a Buenos Aires retirement center put the buttons they use as markers on their cards. Small containers hold their betting money, coins and crumpled low-denomination bills that every day seem able to buy less.

The twice-weekly game brings some enthusiasm to the eyes of the retirees playing it in the recreational center serving Caballito and Villa Crespo, middle-class neighborhoods of Argentina's capital. The men and women participating are all over 80 years old and find themselves in a situation they would have considered unthinkable before they retired. "This center has middle-class people in it. We are deprived of many of the things we used to do," said Betty Santucci, 85, who runs the place. She added quietly: "I did something I'd never done in my life: I asked for free medicine ... nothing else can be done."

Monthly inflation was 7.7% in March, up from 6.5% in the same month in 2022, Argentina's National Institute of Statistics and Censuses announced. Analysts project annual inflation - the measure used commonly internationally - will come in at 110% in 2023, one of the highest rates in the world. "The numbers we see today represent the worst moment of the impact of the war (in Ukraine) on international prices and the worst drought in history in the country," tweeted government spokesperson, Gabriela Cerrutti. "We know, it hurts us, it occupies us, how it affects daily life and each family."

The impact has been particularly devastating on Argentina's retirees, 85% of whom receive a state pension averaging \$8,500 pesos a month, the equivalent of \$265. That barely covers a third of their expenses for food, medicine and rent. "I can't even pay the rent, my daily expenses, services, and I have to eat. I have two children who bring me a 'little package' (of money)," Paulina Najnudel, 85, said as she played bingo. "But it makes me, not ashamed, but sad because we have worked so many years."

Argentina had one of the most advanced pension systems in South America, with retirement pensions increasing according to a mobility formula calculated by wages and taxes collected. Between January 2022 and March 2023, pensions rose 72.5%. But in the same period prices rose more than 100%.

Now, after years of high inflation, Argentina's minimum pension measured in US dollars is one of the lowest in the region, just above Venezuela, according to a study by the Argentine consulting firm Focus Market.

Son of Iran’s last Shah set to make first visit to Israel

JERUSALEM (AP): Iran's exiled crown prince is scheduled to come to Israel this week on a visit that reflects the warm ties his father once had with Israel and the current state of hostility between Israel and the Islamic Republic. Reza Pahlavi, the son of the last shah to rule Iran before the 1979 Islamic Revolution, said that he will be delivering "a message of friendship from the Iranian people."

He is set to participate in Israel's annual Holocaust memorial ceremony on Monday night, said Israeli Intelligence Minister Gila Gamliel, who will host him. He is also set to visit a desalination plant, see the Western Wall and meet representatives of the local Bahai community and Israeli Jews of Iranian descent, she said. Gamliel praised the "brave decision" by Pahlavi to make what she said would be his

first visit to Israel. "The crown prince symbolizes a leadership different from that of the ayatollah regime, and leads values of peace and tolerance, in contrast to the extremists who rule Iran," she said. Pahlavi left Iran at age 17 for military flight school in the US, just before his cancer-stricken father Mohammad Reza Pahlavi abandoned the throne for exile. The revolution followed, with the creation of the Islamic Republic, the takeover of the US Embassy in Tehran and the sweeping away of the last vestiges of the American-backed monarchy.

Pahlavi, who still resides in the US, has called for a peaceful revolution that would replace clerical rule with a parliamentary monarchy, enshrine human rights and modernize its state-run economy. Whether he can galvanize support for a return to

power is unknown. His father ruled lavishly and repressively and benefitted from a CIA-supported coup in 1953. The late shah also had close diplomatic and military ties with Israel. That ended in 1979, when the Iranian revolution's leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, declared Israel an "enemy of Islam" and cut all ties. Today, the countries are arch-enemies. Israel considers Iran to be its greatest threat, citing the country's calls for Israel's destruction, its support of hostile militant groups on Israel's borders and its nuclear program. Iran denies accusations by Israel and its western allies that it is pursuing a nuclear bomb. "I want the people of Israel to know that the Islamic Republic does not represent the Iranian people. The ancient bond between our people can be rekindled for the benefit of both nations," Pahlavi said on Twitter.

Yemen’s warring sides wrap up major prisoner swap

SANAA (AP): Yemen's warring sides wrapped up a major exchange of prisoners linked to the country's long-running conflict, according to the International Committee for the Red Cross. The three-day operation, was the most significant prisoner exchange in Yemen since the Saudi-led coalition and their rivals, the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels, released more than 1,000 detainees in October 2020.

The UN-brokered deal involved the release of over 700 detained Houthis, and more than 180 other prisoners, including Saudi and Sudanese troops fighting with the Saudi-led coalition. The Red Cross said it "worked tirelessly to reunite about 900 former detainees with their families," describing the prisoner exchange as a "positive step toward peace and reconciliation in Yemen."

Yemen was plunged into devastating conflict when the Iranian-backed Houthis descended from their northern stronghold in 2014, seizing the capital of Sanaa and much of northern Yemen and forcing the government into exile. A Saudi-led coalition including the United Arab Emirates intervened in 2015 to try to restore the internationally recognized government. The conflict has turned in recent years into a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The war has killed more than 150,000 people, including fighters and civilians, and created one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters. The prisoner exchange deal involved the release of top military officials held by the Houthis since the start of the war. Those released included Maj. Gen. Mahmoud al-Subaihi, who was the defense minister when the war erupted; Nasser Mansour Hadi, the brother of former Yemeni

President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi; and relatives of Yemen's former ruler Ali Abdullah Saleh. The Houthis freed Saudi and Sudanese troops while the rebels detained while fighting on the side of the Saudi-led coalition.

The rebels also freed four Yemeni journalists who were detained and sentenced to death in recent years by a Houthi-controlled court in a trial described by Amnesty International as "grossly unfair." The prisoner exchange came as the Houthis and Saudi Arabia said they have made progress in their negotiations to revive an expired cease-fire and embark on talks to settle the conflict. The Houthis said both sides would continue their talks after the approaching holiday of Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of the Islamic holy month Ramadan, later in April.

Jail terms for those behind downing of Ukraine flight: Iran

DUBAI (AP): An Iranian court has sentenced an air defense commander allegedly responsible for the deadly downing of a passenger plane amid Iran-US tensions several years ago, a state news agency reported. Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard mistakenly shot down the Ukraine International Airlines flight in January 2020. The missile strike killed all 176 people on board and came as Tehran and Washington teetered on the brink of war.

The Guards commander who officials purport ordered the strike was sentenced to 13 years in prison, the official judiciary news outlet said. Mizan said the commander did not follow protocols in the moments leading up to the shooting down of the plane. The commander was ordered to pay fines to families of victims, the report added. Mizan said the court also sentenced two personnel allegedly involved in running the surface-to-air missile system Tor M-1 to one year in prison each.

After a lengthy series of hearings, the court sentenced at least seven other personnel and air defense officers to up to three years in prison. According to Mizan, the verdicts are appealable within 20 days. The report did not identify any of the defendants by name or further details. The judiciary news agency also said Iran's government plans to pay \$150,000 for each victim to their families. It did not elaborate on how this money will be delivered to the families.

The hearing sessions have faced international criticism since starting in 2021. At that time, an association of the victims' families also criticized the hearing and cast doubts on the court's legitimacy. The group also alleged that none of the defendants were present at hearings. Just hours before the shootdown in January 2020, Iran had fired ballistic missiles at American bases in Iraq in retaliation for the US drone strike that killed top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad.

Lack of security for Japanese prime minister surprised many

WAKAYAMA, Japan (AP): The fishermen who tackled the man suspected of the second attack on a Japanese political leader in less than a year were surprised by the lack of security for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. Fisherman Tsutomu Konishi was watching Kishida at a campaign event at this fishing port when an object flew overhead and landed near the prime minister, Konishi said. A security officer covered the object with a bulletproof briefcase, Konishi said. The fishermen swarmed the attacker.

"I never thought a crime like this would happen in my hometown, which is a rather small fishing area," Konishi, 41, said as he sipped a can of coffee at the port of Saikazaki. "I'm still shocked and stunned." The prime minister was unhurt but like many others in Japan, Konishi was mulling what the country should do to better protect public figures. "At a time when Japan's serving prime minister was visiting, perhaps we may have needed a metal detector," Konishi said.

Masaki Nishide, a 55-year-old fisherman from Saikazaki, said most of the people at the event were residents and supporters of the local candidate. He said the young man carrying the

silver-gray backpack stood out. "People here all dress like me, and nobody carries a backpack; it was only him," Nishide said, wearing a sweatshirt and red rubber boots. "If I were in charge of security, I would have asked for a bag check." After the failed attack on the prime minister, one of the fishermen grabbed the suspect's neck from behind, another pushed his head down, and Konishi latched onto his leg. They were holding the man as police officers pulled him to the ground. The chaotic scene was reminiscent of the assassination nine months ago of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, which prompted police to tighten their protective measures after an investigation found holes in Abe's security. Abe, one of Japan's most influential and divisive politicians, was killed with a homemade gun during a campaign speech.

Suspect Tetsuya Yamagami has been charged with murder and several other crimes, including violating gun-control laws. Authorities have said Yamagami told investigators he killed Abe because of the former prime minister's apparent links to a religious group that Yamagami hated. In statements and in social

media postings attributed to him, Yamagami said his mother's donations to the Unification Church bankruled his family and ruined his life. Violent crimes are rare in Japan, and with its strict gun control laws, the country has only a handful of gun-related crimes annually. Most of the cases are gang-related, though in recent years there has been growing concern about homemade guns and explosives. There also have been some high-profile cases of random knifing on subways and arson attacks. Groups of several officers have guarded serving prime ministers. Fewer officers have been watching Cabinet ministers and former leaders.

Compared with the US elections, audience at political campaigns in Japan are often allowed to be quite close to dignitaries. At the campaign event for Kishida the front-row audience was within touching distance. Only one person, a police official, was hurt, his arm cut by fragments of the device, which didn't fully explode. Police arrested 24-year-old Ryuji Kimura on suspicion of throwing an explosive in a metal tube at Kishida. Police sent a special counter-explosives team to the suspect's home in Hyogo prefecture to search for evidence of

bomb-making. There are nationwide local elections this month, and Japan is hosting a series of Group of Seven meetings leading up to the May 19-21 leaders' summit in Hiroshima. Diplomats arrived for the G-7 foreign ministers' meeting in Karuizawa. Isao Itabashi, a public safety expert, said on NHK TV that the attack raised questions about how election campaigns are being handled. Guarding top politicians in campaigns is logistically hard, and balancing tight security with a free election is also difficult, he said.

Kiyotaka Hamada, 70, a senior member of the local fishing association, said he felt something hit his shoulder just as he heard the bang and was running from the scene. Police took his jacket to see if he'd been hit by a fragment of the explosive. "I just want to ask the suspect why he had to come here to make trouble," he said. For Hamada and other fishermen, there's worry also about the expected loss of income from the days they cannot work while the port facilities are closed for the investigation. "We put so much effort throughout the village to welcome the prime minister here on his first ever visit," Hamada said. "Now we cannot even go out to sea."

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Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

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

New Delhi's war hysteria and Pakistan's response

PAKISTAN Foreign Office has observed that the latest revelations made by the BJP leader and former Governor of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), have once again vindicated Pakistan's stance on the Pulwama Attack of February 2019. According to Foreign Office Spokesperson, the recent disclosures of Satya Pal Malik demonstrate how the Indian leadership has habitually used the bogey of terrorism from Pakistan to advance its sham victimhood narrative and the Hindutva agenda aims at domestic political gains. The Pakistani Spokesman expressed hope that the international community would take cognizance of the latest revelations and see through India's propaganda campaign based on lies and deceit against Pakistan driven by selfish political considerations of the Indian government. Pakistan called on the international community to hold India accountable for the actions that imperiled regional peace in the aftermath of the Pulwama attack in early 2019.

The peace and the pace of development and growth in the broader South Asian region have been mainly mired by the decades-long disputes between India and Pakistan. At the same time, the ruling political elite in New Delhi often incited Islamophobia and anti-Pakistan sentiments in Indian masses to increase their public rating and to grab electoral gains. It is not a hidden secret that the politics of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had always flourished on the Hindutva extremist ideology and Hindu nationalism aimed at violence and the prosecution of Indian religious minorities for solely political motives. Historically, the ruling BJP and its Patron Inchief Narendra Modi had well-established Hindu Nationalist credentials, while the ruling BJP and then Chief Minister Gujrat played a pivotal role in the ethnic cleansing of Muslims during the 2001 anti-Muslim riots in Gujrat. Later, the fanatic BJP leader drove the world to the brink of nuclear war with his myopic philosophy of surgical strike after the implementation of the self-hatched conspiracy of the Pulwama attack. Meanwhile, the scrapping of Article 370 and Section 35 of the Indian constitution regarding Kashmir was another manifestation of Modi's fanaticism and fascism that exposed India's hypocrisy and violation of the UN resolutions regarding the Kashmir dispute to the rest of the world.

The recent revelations of a former governor of the Indian-held territory have re-validated Pakistan's claim that the Indian Intelligence agencies hatched the plot of the Pulwama attack to support the Modi government election campaign ahead of the parliamentary election in India. Indian leaders are well-versed in the tact to divert peoples' attention/ criticism of their poor governance and public issues into Indian animosity toward Pakistan through escalation of tension on the Pakistan-India border. Historically, Indian leaders had persistently used hate speech and Islamophobia to flourish their politics in an environment of Hindu fanaticism and zealotry in Hindu majority India. It has been a recurrent and time-tested attitude of Indian rulers over the past decades, while the people of the region particularly Pakistan have paid a heavy price for the reckless behavior and war-mongering of Indian rulers. Although, Pakistan has always stood fast against India's false narrative and acted firmly and responsibly in the face of New Delhi's unilateral provocations and belligerence throughout history, yet the country has suffered a tremendous political, economic, and monetary loss due to India's malicious propaganda and military escalations on its borders in the past. It is high time that Islamabad must raise this issue at global forums including the United Nations and its executive arm of the UN Security Council which owes the sacred responsibility for the maintenance of worldwide peace and stability. Islamabad must take New Delhi to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for recurrently escalating tension, disrupting the pace of regional development, and endangering global peace just for domestic political reasons. Otherwise, Indian warmongers will spare no effort and would not hesitate to endanger regional peace and stability for the accomplishment of their nefarious objectives at any time in the future.

Is Daesh facing defeat, or starting a deadly new phase?

Baria Alamuddin

AFTER repeated misleading boasts since 2017 that Daesh had been eradicated in Iraq and Syria, there are indications that this happy scenario may finally be coming to pass. Daesh activity in these two countries has been relentlessly falling, confined to an ever-narrowing list of localities. According to Daesh's own claims, numbers of victims from most attacks in its heartlands are vanishingly small. Around 2021, Daesh in Iraq was averaging 50 attacks a month. Now, in a state of apparently terminal decline, the branch considers itself lucky if it scrapes together a dozen low-level attacks each month.

During past Ramazans, Daesh has escalated its activity. Its failure to stage a major terrorism campaign in Ramazan 2023 highlights its current crippled capabilities, despite jihadists celebrating it as a "month of conquests." Two of Daesh's leaders were killed last year, and good luck finding any militant who could tell you anything about its current secrecy-shrouded leader - Abu Hussein Al-Husseini AL-Qurashi - if he exists at all. Operations in recent weeks have culled a further crop of Daesh leadership figures. Iraqi authorities claim

that Daesh now has only about 400 fighters across four Iraqi provinces, with its geographic isolation making recruitment increasingly impossible. Rival jihadists note the absence of veteran Daesh personnel remaining alive to make strategic decisions, manage worldwide operations, or confer legitimacy on leadership choices. Jihadists stress the impact of the apparent February killing of a top commander, Abu Sarah Al-Iraqi, on Daesh's most recent disaster.

Influential militant media such as Sawt Al-Zarqawi have been rebuking disciples on the Telegram platform for "abandoning their posts" and failing to produce and disseminate propaganda. Daesh statements voice frustration at the reluctance of European Muslims to blow themselves up, or plow cars into crowds of passers-by, for the group's perverted version of the greater good. However, Daesh's implosion in Iraq and Syria has counterpointed a cataclysmic transformation of the group's fortunes throughout sub-Saharan Africa. In 2018, 80 percent of its activity was in Iraq and Syria; today over half the group's attacks are in Africa. Across West Africa, Daesh and its Al-Qaeda rivals have carved

out vast areas of control throughout Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Reports signal that the major north-eastern Malian conurbation of Menaka is now fully encircled by Daesh fighters. Jihadists are the de facto power throughout around 40 percent of Burkina Faso. Propaganda videos show their ability to mobilize hundreds of well-armed fighters, who can swarm across vast areas of lightly populated territories on motorcycles and armored vehicles.

Chronic weaknesses in security and governance across the Sahel region mean that the main check on jihadist expansion is rivalry with each other, with both Daesh and Al-Qaeda killing of hundreds of each other's fighters. Tribal leaderships have little choice but to pay taxes, do deals, and allow their youth to be recruited by militants after regular military forces and local self-defense militias have melted away, particularly given the strategic vacuum left by the departure of French and regional forces. The Russian Wagner mercenary group's attempts to muscle in have made a bad situation worse, with indiscriminate massacres further driving citizens into the arms of jihadists. Much of Somalia

lies under jihadist control.

In the Lake Chad region, Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province forces had been busy fighting each other in recent months, but since March the latter has once again been escalating assaults against the military, and attacking in new areas such as Jigawa state. In other parts of Nigeria, bandits and militant groups - some with links to jihadists - have boasted about lucrative deals with Chinese companies for allowing them to prospect for minerals and do business. Kidnapping of foreigners and wealthy individuals is an easy means for militant groups to reap millions in ransom money. Islamic State West Africa Province is mostly financially independent from Daesh's central organization, reaping an estimated \$36 million a year from its control of fishing and agricultural production.

Daesh's branches in the Congo and Mozambique continue killing hundreds of local people. Daesh propaganda is littered with grizzly beheadings, mutilations, and gratuitous mass-slaughter. Why are Daesh and Al-Qaeda fighting each other? Obviously, the principal reason dates back to bitter splits within these

jihadist movements in Syria around 2012. However, a vicious ideological war continues to be fought. For example, in Afghanistan, the Taliban and its Al-Qaeda allies denounce Daesh as brutal "Khawarij" extremists, while Daesh propaganda denounces the Taliban as deviant sell-outs who collaborate with the West to crackdown against Daesh militants. With Al-Qaeda still publicly failing to name a leader after last year's killing of Ayman Al-Zawahiri, both these global jihadist organizations lack clear leadership, but show scant prospects of mending fences with each other any time soon.

Terrorists are like weeds. If I don't tend my garden constantly and conscientiously, soon everywhere will be infested with vigorous growth of unwanted plants that rapidly spread into my neighbors' gardens too. In Iraq, Nigeria, Yemen and Egypt, terrorist groups know that all they have to do is survive and subsist until an inevitable political crisis erupts, allowing them to surge out and re-establish themselves as the dominant force throughout all undergoverned spaces. Malicious entities such as Bashar Assad, Iran's ayatollahs and Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi in Iraq have exploited jihadists for their

own ends as a bogeyman to terrorize their enemies - meaning Daesh may not be allowed to disappear altogether. So instead of celebrating Daesh's woes, the world should be adjusting counter-terrorism strategies to confront a grinding new phase of the conflict; slowing down relentless jihadist expansion across Africa and Central Asia, working to stabilize post-conflict states such as Libya, Yemen and Syria, preventing state sponsors of terrorism from bankrolling paramilitaries and jihadists, and ensuring that frustrated young people aren't seduced by Daesh's ideology of death. The Western world is meanwhile menaced by far-right extremism.

Daesh in Iraq was fought to a state of virtual defeat around 2010, yet I hardly need recount the manner in which the group surged back to dominance three years later, as a result of political incompetence and Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki's fueling of sectarian hatred in Iraq, along with the conflict in Syria. Jihadists don't believe they are facing defeat; they assert that they are biding their time ahead of future victories. Short-sighted policies and intelligence failures must not give them the opportunity to prove themselves right.

Arab News

Macron fallout highlights importance of communication

Dr. Amal Mudallahi

IT was only a few months ago, in December last year, that French President Emmanuel Macron was seen as the new leader of Europe in Washington, standing "shoulder to shoulder" with President Joe Biden, as a Washington Post headline put it. The newspaper added: "With Angela Merkel gone, and the UK running through prime ministers like Kleenex, Macron looks like the de facto leader of Europe." That was before his latest trip to China.

The French president was accused of "betrayal" by Republican leaders and the media talked about the "outrage" that Macron faces from allies over his comments in an interview to two newspapers - one American, Politico, and the French Les Echos - during his flight home from China. President Macron "shocked" Washington when he told the journalists, after meeting with President Xi Jinping of China, that Europe must reduce its dependency on the US and not become America's followers. He said: "If the tensions between the two superpowers heat up ... we won't have the time nor the resources to finance our

strategic autonomy and we will become vassals."

But the comments that Washington considered "worrisome" were those related to Taiwan, with Macron suggesting that the security of Taiwan was not the problem of a Europe that must resist becoming America's "vassals." He said: "The worst thing would be to think that we Europeans must become followers on this topic and take our cue from the US agenda and a Chinese over-reaction." Macron added: "Europeans cannot resolve the crisis in Ukraine; how can we credibly say on Taiwan, 'watch out, if you do something wrong, we will be there?' If you really want to increase tensions, that's the way to do it." The comparison with the Ukraine conflict irked the Americans and Europeans the most and some saw them as lowering deterrence against China, although he was realistic in his assessment of the situation, according to European experts.

The US political reaction to Macron's comments seemed to straddle party lines, with the Republicans leading the charge against him and the Democrats trying to play them down. The first reaction came from Republican Sen. Marco

Rubio, who asked in a tweet if the French president speaks for Europe, noting that the US "is spending a lot of taxpayer money on a European war." He warned: "If Macron speaks for all of Europe, and their position now is they're not going to pick sides between the US and China over Taiwan ... maybe we should basically say we're going to focus on Taiwan and the threats that China poses, and you guys handle Ukraine and Europe."

Some lawmakers even called on the US to "reassess its posture toward France," as Rep. Chris Smith described Macron's statement as a "seeming betrayal of democratic Taiwan." Other Republican lawmakers saw Macron's statements as "geopolitically naive," as Rep. Mike Gallagher, chair of the House Select Committee on China, said on Fox News. The White House, in contrast, expressed confidence in the relationship with France and hailed "a terrific bilateral cooperation." National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said: "We're focused on making sure that together we're meeting the national security requirements of

both countries."

The statements of the French president came at a time of high tension between the US and China, made worse when House Speaker Kevin McCarthy this month met Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen in California, angering Beijing. The meeting coincided with Macron's visit, while China launched military exercises around Taiwan soon after the French president left. This raised questions about the wisdom of the timing and location of his statements. Had he waited until he had got back to Paris, their impact may have been less concerning for Washington. The French presidency "clarified" Macron's statements by saying he "has often said that France is not in a position of equidistance between the United States and China. The United States are our allies, we share common values." The statement added that China is "a partner, a competitor and a systemic rival." It stressed that the position on Taiwan was "constant," adding: "We support the status quo and maintain exchanges and cooperation with Taiwan, which is a recognized democratic system." It is also

important to note that the French president's talk of European "strategic autonomy" is not new. He has been saying it since he came to power.

President Macron is also blunt. In 2019, he spoke about the "brain death" of NATO and accused the US of "turning its back on us," which was received with similar shock. In 2021, the French president was upset with Washington and Australia and he implied that Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison had lied to him, according to media reports, when Canberra canceled a deal to buy conventional submarines from France and opted for an American-British deal - dubbed AUKUS - to provide nuclear-powered ones. But this month, despite Macron's rhetoric, his actions revealed a different approach. Experts point to French naval activity in the Taiwan Strait as proof that France still supports US policy in the area.

Many in Europe distanced themselves from Macron's statements and described him as being out of step with the feeling across the continent. But it seems this is not the whole picture. The New York Times wrote that "sharp divisions persist on the con-

tinental, particularly between the frontline states bordering Russia, that are fiercely attached to NATO, and Mr. Macron's Gaullist vision of a France that is 'allied but not aligned' with Washington." Moreover, The Washington Post reported that Joseph de Weck, the author of a book on Macron, believes that some European countries share Macron's belief that Taiwan, unlike Ukraine, is a distant problem, but generally avoid saying so publicly.

European sources agree that Europe is not monolithic in the way it views the China issue and the prolonged war in its backyard. They point out that European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who accompanied Macron to China, was tough in her statement and addressed the issues of dependencies that raise the risk to Europe. But when addressing the calls by some to decouple from China, she expressed doubts that this is a viable or desirable strategy. She instead called for engaging in "de-risking" through diplomacy and dialogue. On Ukraine, although the majority of Europeans still support Kyiv, some are frustrated with the lack of a path to end the war.

The long shadow of Saddam's dictatorship in Iraq

Hayder Al-Shakeri & Alfadhel Ahmad

TWENTY years have passed since the US-led invasion of Iraq toppled Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. The political class that assumed power in Iraq on a promise to do away with the Baathist regime's authoritarianism and uphold democratic values has failed to deliver.

In fact, it has used the same oppressive tactics deployed by Saddam to protect the ethno-sectarian power-sharing system, known as "muhasasa ta'fiya", which was established after 2003 and protects its narrow political and economic interests. The biggest challenge to this system came in 2019 when Iraqis took to the streets en masse to demand political and economic change reflecting the promises they were given in the 2000s. The response from the political class was merciless. It has unleashed a deadly wave of violence and, under the current government, has sought to use all legal and legislative means to further entrench its repressive grip on power and quash dissent.

The US-led invasion of Iraq was premised on the idea that deposing Saddam would allow democracy to flourish and human and civil rights to be upheld. Yet even the 2005 constitution, written by exiled Iraqi politicians and foreign allies who made these promises, contains vague wording, which allows for the easy abuse of civil rights. For

example, it says freedom of expression is guaranteed but only if it does not infringe on "morality" or "public order". This, of course, has allowed the arbitrary and indiscriminate use of this provision to muzzle the Iraqi media and government critics.

The silencing of critical voices along with the deployment of political violence has allowed the Iraqi political elite to rule as it pleases and enrich itself on the backs of the Iraqi people. But changing one oppressor for another is not something the Iraqi people have been willing to accept. As early as 2011 when the whole of the Middle East was in upheaval, trying to do away with dictatorships and oppression, Iraqis took to the streets against their new rulers' failure to provide basic services and a reasonable standard of living.

In the following years, protests continued as the political and economic situation in the country worsened. In October 2019, years of built-up anger erupted into mass protests across central and southern Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated for weeks on end, demanding not just a dignified life but also an overhaul of the country's failed political system. The protests also brought to the fore the issues of freedom of speech and human rights, raising awareness of their critical importance. Despite deadly violence unleashed against the

protests by state and non-state actors, demonstrations persisted. The nationwide solidarity they received delivered a major blow to the political elite, which thrives on sowing division and maintaining a culture of fear. It also led in 2021 to an electoral defeat of the parties that incited the violence against the protesters.

The political forces that were punished by Iraqi voters in the last parliamentary elections for their corruption and participation in the crackdown on the 2019 protests came back with a vengeance last year. They formed a coalition known as the Shia Coordination Framework, (SCF) and after the withdrawal of Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr's bloc from parliament, which had won the largest number of votes, they were able to exploit certain constitutional provisions to gain power. The SCF allied with Sunni parties and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) to form the State Administration Coalition and control the parliament. Since then, the group has launched what can only be described as a "counterrevolution" against important gains made after the October 2019 protests.

The SCF-led government has restricted the space for free speech and criticism. Articles 225-227 of the Penal Code, which were frequently

used by the Baathist regime, have been used to target civil rights activists simply for expressing their opinions on social or in traditional media. They contain vague and broad language that allows Iraqi authorities to prosecute anyone who "insults the government", "military forces" or "semi-official agencies" and sentence them to up to seven years in prison.

One notable example of how these articles have recently been misused is the case of activist Haider al-Zaidi. He was sentenced in December to three years in prison for a tweet criticising Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the late head of the Popular Mobilization Forces, who was assassinated in a US drone strike in January 2020 along with Qassem Soleimani, head of the Quds Force in Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp. In March, political analyst Mohammed Na'naa was arrested for criticising Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, while journalist Qudus al-Samaraie was sentenced to one year in prison for defamation after a senior military officer filed a lawsuit against her. These are just a few examples of a growing number of silenced public figures who dare criticise the political elite and the status quo.

In addition, the Ministry of the Interior has also established a

committee to punish anyone who posts "indecent content" online under Article 403 of the Penal Code, which relates to another vague term - "public morals". As a result of this article, individuals may be sentenced to up to two years in prison for violating a standard that is determined solely by the ministry's subjective view of morality. In February, more than 10 people were arrested based on Article 403, including social media influencers such as Aboud Skaiiba, who was later released after a public outcry, and Assal Hossam, who was handed a two-year prison sentence. The Supreme Judicial Council, a supposedly independent legal body, has recently come out in support of the interior ministry's recent push to prosecute individuals for "insulting state institutions".

One of the most significant gains the 2019 protests managed to achieve was the adoption of a new electoral law. It enabled the new political forces to organise and challenge the status quo, and as a result, about 30 candidates representing these groups entered parliament. The political elite saw this as a threat to its monopoly on power. After forming a new government, the SCF pushed for amendments to the electoral law, bringing back a method of calculating electoral votes that favours the parties of the established political class.

There was so much opposition to this reform that the parliament had to vote on it overnight and security forces removed law-makers who were protesting against it. In empowering the dominant ethno-sectarian parties, the amended law solidifies the current failed political system and undermines Iraq's democratic path. It also goes against the shared national identity, which the 2019 protests rallied behind.

Although it has been 20 years since the end of Saddam's regime, the path to democracy in Iraq remains elusive. Yet it is very much worth fighting for. Although they have suffered many setbacks and face a formidable enemy - a political class that clings to power by any means - Iraqis must keep up their struggle. The 2019 protests and the gains that were achieved - albeit short-lived - have shown the way.

The Iraqi people must continue to push for civil rights, such as freedom of speech, fair elections and accountability and must keep these issues in the public eye to serve as a deterrent to those who seek to establish a new dictatorship. Even if progress is slow or meets with resistance, Iraqis should not lose hope. Change is possible and inevitable. And this time, it will not be exiled Iraqi politicians and their foreign allies leading it, but young Iraqis and civil society activists.

US forces facing unprecedented challenges in Syria

Ghassan Ibrahim

MILITIAS in northeastern Syria have declared their readiness to confront the US military there. Saraya Al-Khorasani, a terrorist militia, has announced a campaign against the "American occupation" in areas where it is also present in northeastern Syria. Saraya Al-Khorasani has opened the door to volunteers and attracted hundreds of young men from the region into their ranks by luring them with money and taking advantage of the poverty and deprivation experienced by most Syrians. This militia group specializes in drones, having used them in Iraq to attack US bases and the Green Zone in central Baghdad, demonstrating the extent of its combat experience and its potential to threaten US forces in Syria.

The number of contracted Saraya Al-Khorasani fighters in Syria is estimated to be about 3,500. It works extensively with pro-Iranian militias, including Lebanon's Hezbollah, making its call for escalation against US forces even more severe and dangerous. Local Syrian activists have confirmed that the Iraqi-led Saraya Al-Khorasani militia, backed by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, has set up several new headquarters at Al-Hasakah security

square in northeastern Syria.

Before this militia's calls to resist the American presence, there were several military confrontations between Iranian militias and US forces. Pro-Iranian militants recently attacked US military bases in Syria using drones. The Pentagon has confirmed that US intelligence considers the drones to be of "Iranian origin." Since US President Joe Biden took office in 2021, Iranian-linked armed groups have carried out 83 missile and drone attacks against US forces in the region. The US military has responded several times, launching several airstrikes in Syria against Iran-allied groups. Following one of the American counterattacks, the militias pledged: "The resistance groups reserve the right to respond to the American attack and will respond in kind." The Iranian Foreign Ministry also condemned the US attacks, accusing American forces of targeting "civilian sites."

It seems evident that attacks by extremist militias on American bases will not stop and perhaps the American response will be limited to self-defense and nothing else. Statements made by Biden, who warned Iran that the US would take decisive steps to protect Americans, seem to confirm this approach.

However, the challenges facing US forces are not limited to the Iranian side. Turkiye and its militias express dissatisfaction with US forces for other reasons, such as their military support for the Kurdish-majority Syrian Democratic Forces. In addition to Iran and Turkiye, opposition-affiliated Syrians are dissatisfied with the failure of US forces and the Washington administration to play a fundamental mediating role that could lead to a political solution in Syria.

In this environment, which for many reasons is hostile to the American role, will the administration of President Biden wake up and activate its political function and build its forces in Syria? Or will it continue to act in the same way until it reaches a stage of despair and finally withdraws, as happened in Iraq and Afghanistan? The calls made by the Saraya Al-Khorasani militia, despite its relatively small size, cannot be ignored. It is an indicator that conveys powerful messages of hostile rhetoric that spreads extremism and uses it against US forces. Currently, the US Army only has about 900 soldiers in Syria, mainly in the east of the country, alongside US contractors, who number no more than

1,000. The US military presence in Syria was aimed at preventing the emergence of extremist factions, whether from Daesh or the Iranian militias, but what is happening is that these militias have begun to expand and even threaten the US military without a necessary response.

These unfavorable indicators are no secret to the US military and the White House, nor do they surprise them. The US approach to the Syrian crisis remains unchanged, even though the results are not fruitful. There is no indication that a change in how the US deals with the Syrian crisis is on the horizon. Will the extremist militias push for the withdrawal of the US military from Syria or will their hostile approach force the US to increase its military presence on the ground? If US forces fail to achieve stability and peace in Syria through a political solution consistent with UN resolutions, while confronting and eliminating extremist groups, their presence in Syria could become a magnet for extremist militias hostile to the US. In such circumstances, the presence of US forces may be counterproductive. Will the outcome of the US mission in Syria be more positive than those in Iraq or Afghanistan? Given the current situation, this is not very likely.



Putin's war has exploded into Sudan

Richard Kemp

WITH more than 50 civilians and many more military killed already in the power struggle between rival governing factions that erupted in Sudan over the weekend, there is no good side in this battle. But as with so many other conflicts in Africa and the Middle East in recent years, one thing we do know is that Russian troublemakers are not far from the action.

The fighting in Khartoum and elsewhere in the country was triggered by clashes between General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the Sudanese armed forces, and General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, or "Hemedti" for short. Burhan and Hemedti staged a coup in 2021, seizing power from the transitional council put in place following the ousting of the Islamist dictator Omar al-Bashir. Hemedti is commander of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group formed from the Janjaweed militias that helped conduct, under Bashir, the Darfur genocide, which is estimated to have killed hundreds of thousands of people in western Sudan. Rather unsurprisingly, the RSF has been linked to Yevgeny Prigozhin's Wagner Group, which has reportedly helped train and equip them. Wagner is believed to have been brought into Sudan by Bashir to help shore up his faltering regime in 2017, following a meeting with Putin in which Bashir promised to make the country Russia's "key to Africa". Among his plans was a Red Sea base for the Russian navy at Port

Sudan, a Wagner-supported project.

Ever since, Wagner has supplied large quantities of weapons and equipment to Sudan, including military trucks, amphibious vehicles and two transport helicopters. And after the downfall of Bashir, the Russian mercenary group realigned with Burhan and especially Hemedti. It continues to operate the Meroe Gold company, which reportedly exploits Sudan's mines and smuggles vast quantities of gold out of the country, supposedly lining Prigozhin's pockets and denying much-needed revenue to Sudan. For Putin, this would help efforts to evade Western sanctions, allowing him to fuel his illegal war in Ukraine. Now, the cash-rich and heavily-armed RSF could be about to wreak havoc on the North African region. Egypt's President el-Sisi sees a stable regime in Khartoum as in his country's vital interests. He will be looking askance at the capture on Saturday by the RSF of Egyptian troops in Sudan for joint exercises, even if Hemedti has assured their safe return at some point in the future. There will also be serious alarm in Cairo about the potential impact of this power struggle on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project, for which Khartoum's support is needed to address Egypt's fears over water supply through the Nile.

Ultimately, this is such a major strategic issue that, should the conflict spiral out of control, Egypt may feel the need to assert itself

more forcefully, as might Ethiopia. Moreover, Chad, Eritrea and South Sudan could face a deluge of refugees, adding to their own internal struggles, and a power vacuum will enable extremist groups across the region to take advantage of what is happening. It was, after all, in Sudan that Osama bin Laden lived for five years, between 1991 and 1996. Opening up vast swathes of the desert for the next Bin Laden is something that would obviously undermine British and American security, too.

Thus, Vladimir Putin, either by accident or design, has helped to unleash a wave of violence that could have disastrous consequences not just for Sudan and North Africa, but the world. His failed invasion of Ukraine has empowered the Wagner Group, which uses that clout to plunder African nations and stir up trouble. His desperation for money since the West implemented severe sanctions has made Russian state support for such illicit actions a necessity. All this will come at a heavy price. Indeed, Sudan may be just the first African nation to implode under Russian influence. In the Central African Republic, Mozambique, Libya and Mali, Russian mercenaries have worked to reinforce existing conflicts, prop up despotic regimes, suppress efforts towards democracy, loot natural resources, secure strategic advantage for Moscow and drive out Western influence. The forces unleashed by their efforts will not be easily contained.

The Telegraph

Top secrets come spilling out

Richard Galant

IN 1917, British analysts deciphered a coded message the German foreign minister sent to one of his country's diplomats vowing to begin "unrestricted submarine warfare" and seeking to win over Mexico with a promise to "reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona" if the US entered the world war. When it became public, the Zimmerman Telegram caused a sensation, helping propel the US into the conflict against Germany.

"Never before or since has so much turned upon the solution of a secret message," wrote David Kahn in his classic 1967 history of secret communications, "The Codebreakers." The Germans had taken great pains to keep their intentions confidential, and the codebreakers in London's "Room 40" had to do a lot of work to decipher the telegram. Their efforts stand in stark contrast to the ease with which secrets came tumbling out of a Pentagon intelligence network when 21-year-old Massachusetts Air National Guard cyber specialist Jack Teixeira allegedly posted hundreds of documents on a Discord chatroom known as "Thug Shaker Central." The disclosures likely won't start a war, but they could prove extremely damaging to the US and several of its allies, including Ukraine.

Teixeira is one of more than one million people who have Top Secret clearance. "The Pentagon has already started taking steps to limit the number of people who have access to such sensitive information," wrote Brett Bruen, a former US diplomat and Obama administration official. "But much more can be done. ... Why do so many people, especially those working short stints in government, have access to information that can shape the fate of nations and their leaders?" Writing in the Financial Times, Kori Schake saw "some good news."

"While specific details will be incredibly valuable to Russia and other adversaries, these are not bombshell revelations: journalists had already reported Ukrainian ammunition running low; peace talks between Moscow and Kyiv were never likely; allies have long been aware that the US eavesdrops on them; and the disparaging assessment of Ukraine's forthcoming offensive may prove no more accurate than previous predictions were." These will not prove as damaging as the Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning disclosures. But, she warned, "Technology making data ever more portable, distribution more global and communications more bespoke will make it easier to amass information and distribute it - either privately or publicly."

In less than a week, the two Democrats expelled from the Tennessee House for their participation in a gun control protest were sent back to office by local officials. Writing for CNN Opinion, Rep. Justin Pearson noted, "This should be a chastening moment for revanchist forces in Tennessee's legislature and across the country. Over the long haul, the undemocratic machinations employed to oust us from office are destined to fail. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once famously said that the moral arc of the universe bends toward justice. Events this week demonstrated, more than ever, that this is indeed the case..."

"Over two-thirds of Americans - including four out of 10 Republicans - support the kind of common sense gun safety laws that Rep. Jones, Rep. Johnson and I were protesting in favor of, in the wake of the senseless March 27 Covenant School massacre." "And yet, calls for common sense gun reform measures fall on deaf ears in our legislature where a Republican supermajority is wildly out of step with most people's values."

The politics of gun control have

shifted, argued Democratic strategist Max Burns. The NRA's internal struggles have weakened its influence while Democrats in office, who once feared touching the issue of guns, are increasingly speaking out. And they are making some progress in enacting new state laws, Burns noted. "The American people decisively support Democratic proposals for addressing the scourge of gun violence. Political watchers who criticized Democrats for talking too much about abortion during the 2022 midterm elections later ate crow after that once-dreaded culture war topic topped the list of voter concerns nationally..."

"Biden and the Democrats have the rare opportunity to build yet another winning coalition out of an issue once viewed as political poison." On Friday, the Supreme Court issued an order that temporarily ensured access to a key drug used in many medication abortions. The move gave the justices more time to consider the

around that cell for some time." Gershkovich's family in Philadelphia received a letter, handwritten in Russian, from the reporter Friday. "I want to say that I am not losing hope," he noted. "I read. I exercise. And I am trying to write. Maybe, finally, I am going to write something good."

The Amazon series "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" returns this month for its fifth and final season - and David Perry is here for it. The series brings back memories of visiting his grandparents Irma and Mordy in their "tiny rent-controlled Greenwich Village apartment," an experience that helped shape his Jewish identity. "As a Jewish historian," Perry wrote, "I worry about the tension between preserving the memory of past hardships while not locking our entire history into a tale of oppression. The moments of peace and joy are as vital as the moments of violence. In fact, it's the periods of peace, of success, of interfaith community, that reveal the terrible

On the evening of the jury verdict, Fox News host Tucker Carlson criticized the decision and told viewers he had invited Texas Gov. Greg Abbott on the show to ask if he would consider pardoning Perry. Others on the right called for Abbott to issue a pardon, and the governor soon responded with an announcement that he would do just that, as long as the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles recommended that Perry should be granted one.

issue after a Texas federal judge suspended the US Food and Drug Administration's approval of the abortion pill 23 years ago. "If abortion opponents are successful, access to the pill - reportedly used in more than half of abortions in the United States - will be severely undercut," wrote Michele Goodwin and Mary Ziegler.

"Beyond the dangerous precedent this sets for challenges to other important FDA-approved drugs that some political factions don't like, the case is an alarming expression of the way right-wing activists are using junk science to bypass the will of the American public and restrict abortion..." "There are no grounds for challenging mifepristone's approval, especially 23 years after the fact. The drug received extensive review - more than four years - before FDA approval. Moreover, claims that mifepristone threatens the health of those who take it are unfounded. The drug has a better safety record for use than Viagra and penicillin. Notably, it was available and used for years without incident in Europe." In 1986, Nicholas Daniloff, the Moscow bureau chief for US News & World Report, was seized by Soviet authorities and locked up in Lefortovo prison. He was the last American journalist to be arrested in Russia before last month's detention of Wall Street Journal correspondent Evan Gershkovich, who like Daniloff, speaks Russian fluently. Gershkovich has been charged with espionage but US officials have concluded that he was "wrongfully detained."

As David A.andelman noted, Daniloff's detention in prison lasted for 13 days before he was put under house arrest and then eventually swapped for an accused Soviet spy. In a conversation with Andelman, Daniloff recalled his reaction when he was imprisoned. "I felt claustrophobic, and I felt like I wanted to get out of there immediately. Of course, there was no chance of that. The door slams, and you have all these thoughts and feelings that run through you, and then you settle down and you realize you're going to be hanging

truth about the violence: it wasn't inevitable. People could have made different choices..." "A show like 'The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel' lets me revel in my personal New York Jewish heritage while also getting a little break from all the worry. It's a warm, funny, sexy, extremely Jewish ... comedy that hits me straight in my glossy childhood memories. That isn't to say the show isn't also problematic - it most certainly is."

In the latest installment of CNN Opinion's "Little Kids, Big Questions" series, 10-year-old Ronan wonders if animals are capable of being smarter than humans. With the help of the John Templeton Foundation, which is partnering on the project, the answer came from Jane Goodall, world renowned for her work with chimpanzees. "One of the attributes of intelligence is the ability to think and solve problems. In the early 1960s, I was told that this was unique to humans, and only we could use and make tools, only we had language and culture," Goodall said. "But more and more research has proved that many animals are excellent at solving problems. Many use tools, and many show cultural differences. Some scientists believe that whales and dolphins are communicating with what may be a real language." "Although the difference between humans and other animals is simply one of degree, our intellect really is amazing. ... bees can count and do math, and that just shows how much we still have to learn about animal intelligence. But humans can calculate the distance to the stars."

Earlier this month, a Texas jury convicted Daniel Perry of murder for fatally shooting a Black Lives Matter protester in 2020. The jury deliberated for 17 hours and decided Perry's action couldn't be excused under the state's "stand your ground" law. Prosecutors argued Perry had instigated the incident and they introduced into evidence messages that suggested the shooting was not a spur-of-the-moment act but a premeditated one. On the evening of the jury verdict, Fox News host Tucker Carlson criticized the decision and

told viewers he had invited Texas Gov. Greg Abbott on the show to ask if he would consider pardoning Perry. Others on the right called for Abbott to issue a pardon, and the governor soon responded with an announcement that he would do just that, as long as the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles recommended that Perry should be granted one. "Trial verdicts are determined by judges and juries," wrote Dean Obeidallah. "What Abbott is doing is not just wrong, it's dangerous. His pardon, when it comes, is not what the rule of law looks like."

Two of the likeliest candidates for president in 2024 haven't officially committed yet. President Joe Biden says he intends to run again but has delayed making a formal announcement. And Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis is making all the moves a presidential contender usually makes, including hawking his new book and visiting New Hampshire, but he hasn't joined fellow Republicans including former President Donald Trump, former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley and former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson in declaring. "DeSantis, who was neck and neck with the former president just a few months ago, may have lost a step or two in more recent polling. But his track record of successful governance in Florida should force GOP voters to think long and hard about what version of their party they want to put forward," observed Patrick T. Brown. "A third Trump presidential nomination would indicate that Republican primary voters may prefer style over substance. But if they are serious about not just making liberals mad but advancing actual policy, GOP voters should consider other names, starting with the Florida governor."

Even without an official announcement by the president, wrote Julian Zelizer, the Biden-Harris campaign is very much under way. "By choosing to lie low while Republicans are gearing up for 2024, Biden is employing his version of what has become known as the 'Rose Garden Strategy,' whereby the incumbent campaigns by focusing on the business of being president and showing voters that he is the responsible figure in the race." "The president's understated strategy makes room for Republicans to stoke chaos, tear each other apart and make unforced errors while he remains above the fray for as long as possible. This strategy makes the GOP the focus of the election, allowing Biden to reinforce his message from 2020: do voters want someone who will govern and act in a serious manner or do they want a circus?" Jill Filipovic recently took a domestic flight in South Africa. "Passengers and airport staff alike were friendly and polite. The airplane seat offered enough room for both of my legs and both of my arms. We took off on time and landed early. My shoes stayed on the whole time I was at the airport." It was a vivid reminder of what's possible in air travel - and of what's usually lacking. Take the security system: "More than 20 years after Sept. 11, 2001, only passengers who pay for the privilege can avoid removing their shoes and laptops from their bags by submitting their personal information ahead of time and undergoing background checks."

Filipovic added, "Admittedly, I do pay - I don't want to wait in a long security line, walk my stocking feet through a metal detector and have to un- and re-pack the MacBook I've carefully crammed into my carry-on. But the existence of pay-to-play shorter-line security options like Clear and TSA Pre-Check make clear that it is indeed possible to pre-screen a critical mass of passengers to avoid the morass of cranky people trying to pull on their shoes while re-packing their electronics."

CNN

US-China escalations must be avoided at all costs

Dalia Al-Aqidi

THE rivalry between the US and China has been escalating, raising global concerns about the fate of their already damaged bilateral relations. Both nations are major economic powers competing for dominance in various sectors, including technology, manufacturing and finance. And Beijing has been mobilizing international support in an attempt to change the existing world order.

The US has imposed tariffs on Chinese goods and China has responded with its own tariffs, leading to an escalation in tensions between the two nations. Their competition for technological supremacy has become a significant factor in the ongoing tensions, since both countries have invested heavily in advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence. The US government has cracked down on the likes of Huawei and ZTE. In response, the Chinese government has increased its investment in domestic technology development and reduced its reliance on American technology. This technological race has significant economic and national security implications for both nations. As such, they must establish

clear guidelines and mechanisms to promote fair competition and protect intellectual property rights.

Geopolitical tensions have pushed the situation to a more dangerous level. Consecutive US governments have been critical of China. America's criticisms include China's territorial claims in the South China Sea, which neighboring countries have disputed. The situation surrounding Taiwan remains tense. Any escalation could have significant implications for regional stability and global security. On April 9, the second day of its recent military drills, China simulated precision strikes against Taiwan around the main island. These military exercises came just a day after Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen had returned from a brief visit to the US. The government in Taipei fears war.

US President Joe Biden has repeatedly shown his full support for the sovereignty of Taiwan. However, the idea of a war between the US and China is inconceivable. Such a war would have severe implications for global security and could potentially trigger a worldwide economic recession. In the event of war,

both nations would suffer significant human and material losses. China has the world's largest standing army and has invested heavily in its military, while the US has the world's most advanced military technology and a highly trained and well-equipped military.

The international community would also face significant challenges. Countries would be forced to choose sides, potentially leading to the formation of alliances and a new global power balance. Most importantly, the conflict could lead to the use of nuclear weapons, which would have catastrophic consequences for the entire planet. A nuclear war between China and the US would be a humanitarian disaster. It would result in massive destruction and loss of human life, leading to the potential extinction of entire populations and the destruction of critical infrastructure. Therefore, Washington and Beijing must maintain open communication channels and seek peaceful solutions to resolve any coming conflict. Meanwhile, the international community must work together to promote dialogue and cooperation to prevent any escalation between the two nations.

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PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 41.13 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Monday, gaining 41.13 points, with a positive change of 0.10 per cent, closing at 40,246.67 against 40,205.54 points on the previous day.

A total of 94,781,630 shares were traded during the day as compared to 89,187,909 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs3.056 billion against Rs2.766 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 336 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 160 of them recorded gains and 153 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 23 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 15,634,868

shares at Rs1.16 per share, Pakistan Alumin with 5,051,000 shares at Rs49.45per share, and Telecard Limited with 4,589,287 shares at Rs8.03 per share.

Nestle Pakistan XD witnessed a maximum increase of Rs104.75 per share price, closing at Rs5250.00, whereas the runner-up was Sapphire with a Rs78.50 rise in its per share price to Rs1175.00.

Siemens Pak. witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs29.99 per share closing at Rs570.01, followed by Sapphire Fiber with a Rs23.95 decline to close at Rs968.88.

Rupee sheds 30 paisas against dollar

Pakistan rupee witnessed 30 paisas devaluation against the Dollar in the interbank trading on Monday and closed at Rs284.70 against the previ-

ous day's closing of Rs284.40.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs287.5 and Rs290, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs1.67 to close at Rs313.09 against the last day's closing of Rs314.76, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen declined by 02 paisas and stood at Rs2.12; whereas a drop of Rs2.78 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs353.72 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs356.50.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal dipped by 08 paisas each to close at Rs77.52 and Rs75.90, respectively.

Gold prices increase by Rs1100 to 217,100 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs1100 and was sold at Rs217,100 on Monday against its sale at Rs216,000 the previous day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also increased by Rs943 to Rs186,128 from Rs185,185, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold went up to Rs170,618 from Rs169,753.

The price of per tola silver dipped by Rs40 to close at Rs2530 and that of ten-gram silver also decreased by Rs33.36 to close at Rs2170.

The price of gold in the international market rose by US\$ 05 to \$2008 against its sale at \$2003, the association reported.

Pakistani entrepreneur introducing Basmati rice in Haikou, China

BEIJING (APP): At Haikou Fulising Internet Industrial Park in the capital city of China's Hainan Province, a young Pakistani entrepreneur has displayed some products imported from Pakistan for potential local and foreign buyers.

"We are importing Basmati rice, pinenuts and pure honey from Pakistan and sell them to the local as well as foreign buyers," Waheed Yaseen, Operational Director, Hainan Raman Technology told APP on Monday.

Haikou Fulising Internet Industrial Park, one of the 13 key parks in Hainan Free Trade Port, is posi-

tioned to build the Hainan Digital Free Trade Port pilot zone, digital economy headquarters gathering zone and international off-shore innovation demonstration zone, with a digital economy industry.

A number of local and foreign companies in wake of the advantages of incentives and facilities offered by the local government have set up their offices and display centers in the park.

Waheed Yaseen informed that along with other partners, he had established his company in the park to introduce Pakistani products among the local buyers.

He said that the demand for pinenuts and pure honey was very high among Chinese buyers while his company targets foreign customers in Hainan and other areas of China for the sale of Basmati rice.

According to a local government official, Haikou Fulising Internet Industrial Park focuses on the development of digital trade, smart Internet of things, financial technology, international innovation and headquarters economy, and human resources of the 4+2 industrial ecological chain.

The park has been recognized as a national science and technology business

incubator, a national off-shore innovation and entrepreneurship base for overseas talents, and a national cultural export base.

It has also been listed as China Hainan Human Resources Service Industry and China (Haikou) Entrepreneurship Park for returned overseas students.

At present, the park gathers Alibaba, ByteDance, Xiaomi Group, Schneider, Tesla and other Fortune 500 enterprises.

In 2021, the park's revenue was placed among the '100 billion Yuan Club', ranking second in the 2021 Hainan Free Trade Port's 11 key parks assessment.

Tokyo shares close higher for seventh day

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed higher for the seventh straight day on Monday as a cheaper yen against the dollar helped boost exporter shares.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index inched up 0.07 percent, or 21.31 points, to end at 28,514.78, while the broader Topix index added 0.41 percent, or 8.25 points, to 2,026.97.

"Excessive caution has eased following the results from major US banks last week, and the depreciation of the yen has also provided support," Iwai Cosmo Securities said in a note.

But the market was weighed down by profit taking, it added.

The dollar traded at 133.94 yen, up from 133.75 yen in New York and 132.45 yen in late Asian trade on Friday.

A weaker yen inflates profits for Japanese companies selling products and services overseas.

In Tokyo trading, automakers were higher with Nissan rising 1.42 percent to 497.8 yen and Toyota climbing 1.43 percent to 1,834 yen. Honda added 1.18 percent to 3,518 yen.

Banks also gained with Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group jumping 2.50 percent to 5,574 yen and Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group soaring 2.57 percent to 869.8 yen.

SoftBank Group firmed 1.03 percent to 5,173 yen.

3-day Pakistan Shopping Festival concluded

LAHORE (APP): The concluding ceremony of 3-day Pakistan Shopping Festival was held at the Lahore Expo Centre here on Monday.

Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Kashif Anwar, Advisor to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz, Chief Executive Officer Zeshan Hashmi, Khawaja Shahzeb Akram and hundreds of people attended the ceremony. A large number of stalls of various products were set up at Pakistan Shopping Festival.

The LCCI president said the festival was designed to promote trade and econom-

ic activities. He said that at the festival, over 100 stalls of renowned business groups displayed their products. He said that trade fairs and exhibitions should be used as a tool for the growth of Pakistan's exports. The government should support private sector for organising trade fairs and exhibitions in the country.

He said that trade fairs and exhibitions mean introduction of vendors to buyers which pave way for collaborations, jack up exports and bring much-needed foreign exchange to the country. He said that though interest of private sector is growing in holding exhibi-

tions but yet a lot of work has to be done to be at par with the other countries.

Kashif Anwar said that the LCCI, being the pioneer and leading chamber, aims to serve the business community and conduct its practices in a very professional manner. Keeping its tradition alive, the LCCI management, in collaboration with the Brand Hub, took the lead to organise "Pakistan Shopping Festival".

He said that the purpose is to create a soft image of our country, encourage entrepreneurs and strengthen the liaison among the business community by generating various activities.

China's electric car drive leaves global brands behind

SHANGHAI (Reuters): China's auto market, the world's largest, is accelerating toward an electric future – leaving established global brands stuck in the slow lane.

When auto executives convene in Shanghai for the auto show starting Tuesday, they will return to a sharply different market from the one they left in 2021 when the industry gathered for a limited event under strict COVID-19 controls.

The biggest change: China-made brands now lead in key segments and their rise has been powered by new electric-drive mod-

els that are gaining share at home and overseas.

The biggest winner has been BYD (002594.SZ), which will use the Shanghai show to unveil a new hatchback electric vehicle (EV) for value-seeking buyers and a pricier EV styled as an SUV.

BYD's sales in China are up almost 69% this year, giving it an 11% share of the overall car market, more than Volkswagen (VOWG_p.DE) or Toyota (7203.T), according to an analysis of sales data.

"The stratification of this market into clear winners and losers is becoming clear," Bill Russo, founder of consultancy Automobility said in a note issued on Tuesday. "And there are very few winners and a whole lot of losers."

China's passenger car sales were down 13% in the first quarter, data from the China Passenger Car Association show.

But sales of EVs and plug-in hybrids – an area where Chinese automakers led by BYD now dominate – were up 22%. Sales of internal-combustion vehicles were down by an almost equal margin.

The result has been a double whammy for the likes of Volkswagen, General Motors (GM.N), Honda (7267.T) and Nissan (7201.T). Sales are down and so is market share.

More than 40 auto brands have followed Tesla

in cutting prices on EVs since January in a price war that has supported sales of EVs and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs), both of which are classed as "new energy vehicles" in China. It has also cut into industry-wide profitability, analysts say. For years, China's entry-level market for passenger cars was dominated by combustion-engine cars made by global automakers in partnership with Chinese brands.

But for cars priced between \$22,500 and \$30,000, this year has been a wipeout for gasoline-only vehicles. Sales were down 20.5% in the first quarter, compared to a 68% gain for EVs and plug in hybrids.

BYD's Song plug-in hybrid SUV, with a starting price of about \$20,000, outsold the Nissan Sylphy, which had been China's top-selling car for three straight years. BYD's Dolphin EV, which starts at about \$17,000, was ahead of the Volkswagen Passat.

Because of the cost pressure on EVs from battery materials, the entry-level market is likely to be "the final bastion" for gasoline-only vehicles in China, Xu Haidong, deputy chief engineer at the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers said.

In China's premium market, with prices between about \$52,500 and \$60,000, electric-drive cars are already the best sellers.



LAHORE: Labourers carrying basket of vegetables on his head to earn livelihood at Vegetable Market.

Canton Fair provides platform for entrepreneurs

BEIJING (APP): The Canton Fair provides an excellent platform for Pakistani entrepreneurs to showcase their products and services to potential investors, buyers, and partners all around the world, said Muhammad Irfan, Commercial Counsellor in the Consulate of Pakistan in Guangzhou, China.

The 133rd China Import and Export Fair, also known as the Canton Fair, kicked off on April 15. It is one of the world's largest trade fairs held annually in Guangzhou.

This year more than 10 Pakistani enterprises are participating in the fair, and in recent years, the Canton Fair has also extended numerous opportunities to Pakistani entrepreneurs to develop trade ties with the world.

"Pakistan's export to South China region including Guangdong increased a lot in recent years. In 2019 it was around \$550 million, which has jumped to nearly \$1 billion in 2022 because people here have a great likeness towards Pakistan."

When people here see Pakistani products, their reaction is very positive. They want to work with Pakistanis. They want to buy Pakistani products. There is a huge demand and the future is very bright in this market for Pakistani products," he told China Economic Net.

He said that Pakistani business owners have been attending the Canton Fair for decades. Nowadays, the fair play a significant role in promoting trade relations between Pakistan and China. This platform offers ample opportunities for Pakistani entrepreneurs to develop an understanding of the latest trends in international business and trade practices.

Sega to buy Finnish Angry Birds maker Rovio

HELSINKI (APP): Japanese video games group Sega has offered to buy Angry Birds maker Rovio, valuing the Finnish company at over 700 million euros, the companies said Monday.

"Combining the strengths of Rovio and Sega presents an incredibly exciting future," Alexandre Pelletier-Normand, CEO of Rovio, said in a statement, which added that Rovio was recommending shareholders to accept the offer.

The offer, which represents a 19 percent premium over Rovio's closing share price on Friday, is part of the Sonic the Hedgehog maker's "long-term goal" of expanding into the mobile gaming market, Sega CEO Haruki Satomi said.

"Among the rapidly growing global gaming market, the mobile gaming market has especially high potential," he added.

In 2022, Rovio, which employs over 500 people, saw a revenue of 317.7 million euros, and an adjusted net profit of 31.4 million euros. Rovio launched the bird slingshot game in 2009 and it soared rapidly to become one of the most popular games on Apple's App Store.

In 2016, "Angry Birds" movie, produced by Sony Entertainment, was a huge success that grossed \$350 million worldwide.

SBP reminds public to encash withdrawn prize bonds

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), on Monday, reminded the citizens to encash or redeem withdrawn prize bonds by June 30, 2023 to avail the final opportunity that was unlikely to be extended further.

The central bank, in a statement issued here, stated that withdrawn prize bonds of Rs.7500, 15,000, 25,000 and Rs. 40,000 could be redeemed from SBP Banking Services Corporation office and branches of commercial banks across the country.

The SBP has also issued necessary instructions to commercial banks for

accepting requests from general public for encashment or exchange of the prize bonds till the extended date.

It is pertinent to mention that federal government, earlier, had fixed deadline of June 30, 2022, for redemption or encashment of the withdrawn prize bonds, however, considering that some of the prize bond holders could not get their bonds redeemed a final opportunity has been given to the public to get the withdrawn prize bonds of Rs.7500, 15,000, 25,000 and Rs. 40,000 redeemed or encashed by June 30, 2023.

The investors of afore-

said prize bonds had opportunity of encashment at face value, conversion to registered premium Prize Bonds of Rs. 25,000 and/or Rs. 40,000 or replacement with Special Savings Certificates (SSC) or Defense Savings Certificates (DSC), the statement elaborated.

The SBP has encouraged the general public holding the bonds to avail the final opportunity and get their holdings redeemed before the fixed date as those prize bonds shall not be encashable or exchangeable after the expiry of the extended deadline and thereby rendering them worthless.

Waiting for quantum computers to arrive, software engineers get creative

OAKLAND, Calif., (Reuters): Quantum computers promise to be millions of times faster than today's fastest supercomputers, potentially revolutionizing everything from medical research to the way people solve problems of climate change. The wait for these machines, though, has been long, despite the billions poured into them.

But the uncertainty and the dismal stock performance of publicly-listed quantum computer companies including Rigetti Computing Inc (RGTI.O) have not scared investors away. Some are turning to startups who are pivoting to using powerful chips to run quantum-inspired software on regular computers as they bide their time.

Lacking quantum computers that customers can use today to get an advantage over classical computers, these startups are developing a new breed of software inspired by algorithms used in quantum physics, a branch of science that studies the fundamental building blocks of nature.

Once too big for conventional computers, these algorithms are finally being put to work thanks to today's powerful artificial intelligence chips, industry executives told Reuters.

QC Ware, a software startup that has raised more than \$33 million and initial-

ly focused only on software that could run on quantum computers, said it needed to change tack and find a solution for clients today until the future quantum machines arrive.

So QC Ware CEO Matt Johnson said it turned to Nvidia Corp's (NVDA.O) graphic processing units (GPU) to "figure out how can we get them something that is a big step change in performance... and build a bridge to quantum processing in the future."

GPUs are microchips that were made to process video for gaming and became so powerful that they do the bulk of AI computing today. They are now being used in quantum development, as well.

This week, QC Ware is unveiling a quantum-inspired software platform called Promethium that will simulate chemical molecules - to see how they interact with things like protein - on a traditional computer using GPUs.

The software can cut simulation time from hours to minutes for molecules of 100 atoms, and months to hours for molecules of up to 2000 atoms, compared with existing software solutions, said QC Ware's head of quantum chemistry Robert Parrish.

Big-name investors and funds are backing the future, such as Alphabet

Inc's (GOOGL.O) former chairman Eric Schmidt, asset manager T. Rowe Price (TROW.O), Samsung Ventures, and the venture arm of US intelligence agencies In-Q-Tel.

The startups receiving the largesse say they are able to generate revenue as customers are lining up to be ready for when quantum computing's "iPhone" moment arrives. That, in turn, is luring investors.

In the past 18 months, quantum software startups including SandBoxAQ - an Alphabet spinoff - raised about \$1 billion, according to data firm PitchBook. To be sure, development of this technology is nascent and these startups must work hard to convince some prospective clients.

SandBoxAQ CEO Jack Hidyary said it was only 24 months ago that AI chips became powerful enough to simulate hundreds of thousands of chemical interactions simultaneously.

It developed a quantum-inspired algorithm for biopharma simulation on Google's AI chip called a TPU that generates revenue today. SandBoxAQ told Reuters in February it raised \$500 million. Jason Turner, who founded Entanglement Inc in 2017 to be a "quantum only lab," became impatient with the slow pace of quantum hardware development.

Stocks mixed, dollar firms as rate-hike fears resurface

LONDON (AFP/APP): Stock markets traded mixed Monday as last week's optimism gave way to renewed worries that central banks may have to wait longer than expected to end their policy of raising interest rates.

After the Paris CAC 40 reached a fresh record-high at 7,552 points, profit-taking set in and the French index was flat in early afternoon deals.

The dollar firmed on prospects of more US rate-tightening and oil prices slipped.

While cooler inflation is said to have eased the pressure on the European Central Bank and peers such as the Federal Reserve and Bank of England to keep raising borrowing

costs, consumer prices remain elevated.

"I don't think all of the rate hikes have worked their way through the system and it looks as though the Fed is going to continue to tighten," warned Frances Stacy, at Optimal Capital Advisors.

"I don't think we're completely out of the woods yet," Stacy added following data Friday showing a sizeable drop in US retail sales.

Marty Dropkin, of Fidelity International, meanwhile noted that "the banking industry's vulnerabilities are a sign of a tighter monetary policy environment, which will lead to even tighter financial conditions."

"We remain cautious on

global equities and anticipate increasing volatility as top line pressures worsen in the coming months as labour and financing costs rise and other cyclical indicators become weaker."

This comes despite forecast-banking earnings from US banking titans last week that eased concerns about the sector after last month's turmoil that saw three regional lenders go under.

Elsewhere, traders were keenly awaiting the release of Chinese growth data Tuesday that provides the first snapshot of how the economy has fared without painful zero-Covid restrictions.

Analysts polled by AFP expect an average of 3.8 percent year-on-year growth in January-March.

Court Notice

In the Court of Qaisar Khan Afridi Additional District Judge II/Azafi Zila Qazi Buner at Daggar Appeal No. 58/13. Institution 23/5/2022 Date of hearing, 12/5/2023. Mst. Gul Sherena VS Said Rasol etc. Notice to no 1/2. Rehman Rasol so Said Rasol resident of Torwarsak tehseel Daggar district Buner. Whereas in the above mentioned case the mentioned defendant can not be served in the ordinary way, it is, therefore, proclaimed that if the said defendant will/shall not appear personally or through dually authorized agent or pleader in the court at 8.30 am dated 12/5/2023 the proceeding will be taken ex- parte. Given under my hand and seal of this Court.

Court Notice

In the Court of Iram Aisha Civil Judge-XIII Bannu. Suit No.22/1 institution 16.02.2023 Next date of hearing is 13.05.2023. Title: Aftab Khan etc vs Ghulam Qibaz Khan etc To. 3. Faiz ullah, 4.Abdur Rahman sons of Shah Mir, 11. Zabih Ullah Khan son of Shah Mir Khan, 15. Mujeeb ur Rehman Son of Gul Wali Khan R/O Kot Adil Tehsil and District Bannu. The defendants are informed through this notice to appear in this court on 13.05.2023. After this on excuse would be accepted and ex-parte proceedings shall be initiated against you. Given under my hand and seal of this court.

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In brief

Wahab greet Shehroz and Naila

LAHORE (APP): Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz has congratulated young mountaineers Shehroz Kashif and Naila Kayani for scaling the world's 10th highest peak Annapurna in Nepal. In a greeting message on Monday, Wahab Riaz said that young mountaineers have achieved a great feat by climbing the 8091 meter high peak. He said Shahroz Kashif, the world's youngest mountaineer, has climbed 11 peaks higher than 8,000 meters. He said that Naila Kayani has won the honour of being the first Pakistani woman mountaineer to summit Annapurna peak. "Young mountaineers have given great distinction Pakistan by scaling the Annapurna peak quite successfully". He said youngsters like Shehroz Kashif and Naila Kayani are an asset of the country. Meanwhile, Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail has also congratulated Shehroz Kashif and Naila Kayani on their great feat. "Shehroz is a high-spirited and courageous mountaineer". He said that hard work and dedication played a key role in achieving bigger goals. "Shehroz Kashif and Naila Kayani's success is a big honour for the nation". He further said that Shahroz Kashif and Naila Kayani have set great example for the talented youth by scaling Annapurna peak.

Barca investigation a 'ferocious attack'

BARCELONA (Agencies): An investigation into claims that Barcelona paid referees for preferential treatment is part of a smear campaign, says club president Joan Laporta. Prosecutors allege Barcelona paid Jose Maria Enriquez Negreira, former vice-president of Spain's referees' committee, 8.4m euros (£7.4m). Barcelona say the money was for consultancy work. "This is one of the most ferocious attacks in our history," Laporta said. "I am convinced that FC Barcelona has not committed any crime of sports-related corruption. I hope that sooner rather than later it is fully exonerated. I ask FC Barcelona supporters to be as united as ever in defence of our crest, our essence, and our ownership model, which is that of a club owned by all of its members." Last month a court heard that Barca had been indicted on charges of "corruption", "breach of trust" and "false business records". European football's governing body Uefa has said it is also investigating the matter. Laporta said Barcelona have a paper trail of the payments made between 2001 and 2018. "Some services were provided," he said. "They were documented. There were invoices, payments registered in the accounting books. There was no crime of corruption."

Kim Little out for season

LONDON (Agencies): Arsenal captain Kim Little will miss the rest of the season after suffering a hamstring injury in their Women's Champions League quarter-final win. The midfielder, 32, was substituted 12 minutes into the second leg against Bayern Munich in March, which Arsenal won 2-0 to triumph 2-1 on aggregate. Arsenal visit Wolfsburg for the first leg of the semi-final on Sunday, 23 April and play the home leg on 1 May.



LAHORE: Chad Bowes has his stumps destroyed, Pakistan vs New Zealand, 3rd T20.

Ex-skipper Misbah coaches local coaches in dealing with PCB

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Former captain Misbah-ul-Haq has said satirically that the native cricket coaches should not show interest in national team coaching as they have no value in the eyes of Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) officials. Talking to the private channel exclusively, Misbah said that our people and media start criticizing the native coaches and do not let them go. "I have worked with many foreign coaches, and in light of his experience, any coach can improve Pakistan's cricket, he said, adding that if one has passion, he can make a

big difference with full-time work. Taking a jibe at the PCB's decision for hiring foreign coaches, he said considering Mickey Arthur for another role at Pakistan Cricket is a slap on our cricket system for being unable to find a high-profile, full-time coach within the country. He reiterated that the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) should prefer a local coach over a foreign for the national cricket team.

Former Pakistan captain Misbah Ul-Haq said that there was a 'visible' campaign to weaken the current skipper Babar Azam. "The

people sitting outside with some designs are putting pressure on Babar but Babar has silenced them with his performance, Misbah added.

He said that the recent performance of the skipper has expressed that he does not consider captaincy a burden. He further clarified that four years have been invested in Babar Azam and now that he has improved in his individual performance as well as his leadership skills.

He reiterated to experts not to put pressure on him for any other reason, the whole team will be disturbed.

Hockey: Chennai to host Asian Champions Trophy 2023, Pakistan invited

CHENNAI (Agencies): Top-level international hockey will return to Chennai after 15 years this August when the city hosts the Asian Champions Trophy. The tournament, from August 3-12, will feature the continent's top six teams - including Pakistan. Announcing this today, Bhola Nath Singh, Hockey India's secretary-general, said the teams have been asked to confirm their participation by April 25, and that permission has already been sought to allow Pakistan to compete in the event. South Korea, Malaysia, Japan and China are the other teams to take part in the tournament.

"This is not an invitational tournament, the top teams in Asia will play, so there will be no problems with permissions for Pakistan to play," Bhola Nath said. This will be the seventh edition of the tournament and it will serve as a precursor to the Hangzhou Asian Games in September. That, in turn, is

a qualifier for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.

The Pakistan Senior Men's Hockey Team last played on Indian soil during the 2018 World Cup in Bhubaneswar, and the country also had representation during the Junior Hockey World Cup in Bhubaneswar in 2021. They weren't present at the Hockey World Cup in Odisha in January 2023, but that was because they had failed to qualify for the tournament.

Tamil Nadu sports minister Udhayanidhi Stalin said that if Pakistan make the decision to travel to Chennai, adequate security arrangements would be made, in consultation with the Pakistani team and federation. The Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF)'s decision could potentially have far-reaching consequences across sports - particularly for the Cricket World Cup, which is scheduled to be held in India in October later this year.

Indications recently

from the Pakistani side were that they wouldn't travel to India for the World Cup, and that they could play their matches in Bangladesh.

This was after India had made it clear that they wouldn't travel to Pakistan for the Asia Cup, which is now likely to be held in one overseas venue apart from Pakistan. India and Pakistan haven't faced each other in a bilateral cricket series in more than a decade now, with the last series being held in January 2013. In 2019, a Davis Cup tie between India and Pakistan also had to be moved to Nur-Sultan in Kazakhstan, with the political situation in both countries deemed to be unconducive to hosting the tie there.

The geopolitical situation remains volatile, but both Hockey India and the local organisers in Tamil Nadu are confident now that Pakistan will make the trip for Chennai's return to international hockey after a 15-year wait.

Defending champion Evans Chebet of Kenya wins Boston Marathon



BOSTON (AFP): Defending champion Evans Chebet powered to back-to-back victories in the Boston Marathon on Monday as Eliud Kipchoge's quest to add to his collection of major marathon titles ended in disappointment.

In wet and windy conditions, 2022 champion Chebet of Kenya took his time before surging away in the closing stages to become the first man to defend the Boston crown since compatriot Robert Kipkoech Cheruiyot com-

pleted a hat trick of victories between 2006-2008.

Chebet finished in a time of 2hr 5min 54sec, with Tanzania's Gabriel Geay finishing second in 2:06:04, and Kenyan Benson Kipruto third in 2:06:04.

Two-time Olympic champion and world record holder Kipchoge -- who had been bidding to add the Boston crown to previous marathon victories in Berlin, Tokyo, London and Chicago -- trailed home in sixth place in 2:09:23, around three-and-a-half

minutes adrift of Chebet.

Kipchoge had looked in prime form over the opening stages, coolly leading a group of 10 runners through the halfway stage in 1:02:19.

The Kenyan icon still looked in control when the leading group started to thin after around 16 miles, with the pace picking up as the undulating Boston course made its descent.

But the complexion of the race changed in mile 19 when Geay made what turned out to be a huge move that broke Kipchoge's resistance.

As the pack gave chase to Geay, the world record-holder was rapidly left behind and was soon nearly 100 meters off the pace.

Geay remained in the lead through 24 miles in a leading trio alongside Chebet and Kipruto.

But Chebet and Kipruto kicked on in the final two miles and Chebet led with a mile to go before pulling away to retain his crown.

Geay staged a late rally to take second from Kipruto.

Pakistan's Shehroze, Naila hoist country's flag on Mt. Annapurna 1

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani climbers, Shehroze Kashif and Naila Kiani made the nation proud again when on Monday they hoisted the country's flag on Mt. Annapurna 1 (8091), the world's 10th highest mountain, situated in Gandaki province of Nepal.

"Shehroze and Naila and other members of the Seven Summit Treks team have successfully ascended Annapurna this morning between 6:30 to 7:30 am," Karrar Haidri, secretary of Alpine Club of Pakistan told APP.

"Shehroze has now become the youngest mountaineer in the world to summit 11 peaks above 8000 meters, while Naila has become the first Pakistani woman to climb Annapurna. "Naila is also now the first Pakistani woman climber to summit four peaks above 8,000-metre," he added.

Earlier, on Saturday, Sajid Ali Sadpara successfully ascended Annapurna without oxygen. "That is his fourth 8,000'er summit, all of them climbed without oxygen," Haidri said.

"It is heartening to see Pakistani climbers setting new records in mountaineering," he added. According to Haidri, the three Pakistani climbers



were initially together at the base camp. However, Naila and Shehroze, who were climbing with supplemental oxygen, chose a different schedule to attempt the peak. Born on March 11, 2002, Shehroze made history by becoming the youngest climber in the world to summit K2 on July 27, 2021.

He also became the youngest Pakistani to summit Mount Everest on May 11, 2021. After the successful summit of Mount Everest, the Sports Board of Punjab made him the youth ambassador of Punjab. He summited Broad Peak at the age of 17, after which he was called 'The Broad Boy'. He started climbing mountains at the age of 11 with Makra Peak being the first one, followed by Musa ka Musalla and Chembra Peak at 12, Mingli Sar in Shimshal at 13, Khurdopin Pass at 15, and Khosar

Gang in alpine style at 18 years of age.

Shehroze currently holds two Guinness World Records for being the youngest to climb K2 and the youngest to climb Broad Peak. On May 5, 2022, he became the youngest in the world and the first Pakistani to reach the summit of Kangchenjunga -- the third-highest peak in the world. On May 16, 2022, he summited the world's fourth-highest peak, Mount Lhotse (8,516m), in Nepal.

On November 1, 2022, Shehroze was recognized by Guinness World Records for the year 2023 for summiting Mount Everest and K2. In July 2022, Shehroze and Fazal Ali went missing between Camp 4 and Camp 3, after successfully summiting Nanga Parbat. However, the duo was discovered shortly after.

Naila, a mother of two is a Dubai-based Pakistani banker and an amateur boxer. She rose to prominence after images of her wedding shoot at K2 basecamp in 2018 circulated on social media. She summited Gasherbrum-II (8035m), in 2021, and Gasherbrum-I (8068m) and K2 (8,611), the world's second-highest mountain in July 2022. She climbed K2 shortly after Samina Baig's feat, who is the first Pakistani woman to do so.

Sajid Sadpara, the son of late mountaineer Ali Sadpara has already summited K2, Gasherbrum-I and Gasherbrum-II in Pakistan and Manaslu (8,163m) in Nepal without supplementary oxygen. He aims to climb all of the world's 14 eight-thousanders without supplemental oxygen.

He has made a name for himself in the Alpine community with his summits of the most daunting peaks at a young age. He climbed K2 twice, one time without supplemental oxygen. In 2022, he summited the Manaslu Peak without supplemental oxygen, becoming the first Pakistani to do that.

Earlier, he also set records when he scaled both Gasherbrum-I and Gasherbrum-II in three days and 18 hours without supplemental oxygen.

Wuhan to play host as world snooker returns to China

SHANGHAI (Agencies): The World Snooker Tour hailed the "momentous announcement" of three tournaments in China this year, including one in Wuhan, as the return of international sport to the country gathers pace.

Almost all international sports events were cancelled in China after Covid emerged in Wuhan in late 2019, and they are only just returning after travel curbs were lifted. The World Snooker Tour will stage the first professional snooker tournament in mainland China in four years with the showpiece Shanghai Masters on September 11-17, the WST said.

That will be followed by the Wuhan Open on October 9-15 and the International Championship in November at a Chinese city yet to be confirmed. Total prize money for three events combined will be more than £2 million (\$2.5 million). "This is a momentous announcement for our sport as we ramp up our return to staging events in Asia," said WST chairman Steve Dawson.

"Throughout the pandemic we have maintained dialogue and relationships with the Chinese Billiards and Snooker Association as well as our key partners and promoters across China. "This has allowed us to make a fast return to staging key events now that travel restrictions have lifted."

In a nod to snooker's popularity in the world's most populous country, Dawson added: "We will continue to explore opportunities to stage further events in China and beyond."

Ireland faces follow-on after Jayasuriya's 5 wickets



Prabath Jayasuriya celebrates after trapping George Dockrell

GALLE (AP): Sri Lanka declared on 591-6 and deepened Ireland's distress by reducing the visitor to 117-7 after two days of the first test on Monday.

Prabath Jayasuriya ran through the Irish on a Galle pitch turning more and more by taking 5-42.

Ireland trailed by 474 runs on the first innings. Jayasuriya played four of his previous five test matches at Galle and took five wickets in an innings four times. The slow left-arm laced bite in his early bowling but soon found form.

Ireland, recovering after seamer Vishwa Fernando took two wickets in the second over, was 74-2 when Jayasuriya tempted Harry Tector on 34 to drive a ball that dipped and turned away from the right-hander for a catch in the slips.

Two balls later, Curtis Campher's attempted drive went to Ramesh

Mendis at extra cover. Jayasuriya bowled James McCollum for 35, bagged Peter Moor for 14, and trapped George Dockrell for his fifth five-for.

At stumps, Lorcan Tucker was on 21 and Andy McBrine on 5. Sri Lanka resumed the day on 386-4 and Dinesh Chandimal and Sadeera Samarawickrama became the third and fourth batters in the innings to post centuries. Ireland removed nightwatchman Jayasuriya and Dhananjaya de Silva cheaply to leave Sri Lanka on 408-6. But Chandimal and Samarawickrama combined for an unbroken 183-run partnership in relatively quick time.

Chandimal picked up from 18 overnight to 102 not out with 12 boundaries. He reached his 14th test century and fifth in Galle from 152 balls.

Samarawickrama scored his maiden test century in his

first test in more than five years. Samarawickrama was 104 not out from 114 deliveries, including 11 boundaries.

Sri Lanka declared about half an hour before tea on its highest total in two years. The foundation was provided on day one by captain Dimuth Karunaratne (170) and No. 3 Kusal Mendis (140).

"There was no threat in the pitch and we wanted to bat only once and put the opposition under pressure," Samarawickrama said. "We have declared at the right time because as the pitch got older it started to spin."

Ireland was beaten for pace right at the start, though. Murray Commins was stunned by a first ball by Fernando that seamed away sharply and hit the top of the stumps. In the same over, captain Andy Balbirnie gave Nishan Mudushka a sharp catch at short leg and Ireland was 4-2.

NBA play-offs: Los Angeles Lakers upset Memphis Grizzlies in game 1

MEMPHIS (Agencies): The Los Angeles Lakers upset second seeds the Memphis Grizzlies with a 128-112 win in their Western Conference play-offs first-round opener.

Rui Hachimura scored 29 points off the bench for the visiting Lakers, who are seeded seventh.

Team-mate Austin Reaves hit 23 points, while Lakers stars Anthony Davis and LeBron James combined for 43 points.

Grizzlies guard Ja Morant left the game with just under six minutes left in the final quarter with a hand injury.

All-Star Morant appeared to fall heavily on his right hand after colliding with Davis in mid-air while attempting a dunk.

Despite Morant's



absence, the hosts went on an 11-5 run to cut the deficit down to one point.

But the Lakers responded with a 15-0 run to finish the game and assume home-court advantage in the best-of-seven series.

Hachimura made 11 of his 14 shots, including five

was forced off with injury in the second quarter as the Milwaukee Bucks fell to a 130-117 defeat by Miami Heat. Antetokounmpo will be assessed to see if he can play in game two of the series on Wednesday.

Miami's Jimmy Butler finished the game with 35 points, the 10th time he has scored 35 points or more in a play-off game for the Heat.

Kawhi Leonard notched 38 points, five rebounds and five assists to help the LA Clippers claim a 115-110 victory over the Phoenix Suns.

And Jamal Murray helped the Denver Nuggets stroll to a 109-80 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves with 24 points, eight rebounds and eight assists.



In brief

IRSA releases 99,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 99,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 86,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1434.62 feet and was 36.62 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 26,500 cusecs while outflow as 30,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1106.95 feet, which was 56.95 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 28,300 cusecs and 38,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 34,000, 29,000, 25,800 and 6,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 16,000 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 7,900 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

12 gamblers arrested during raid

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 12 gamblers and recovered stake money Rs 24,200 and five mobile phones from their possession during a crackdown here on Monday, informed a police spokesman. The arrested gamblers were identified as Javed Akhtar, Muhammad Shan, Khizr Iqbal, Waqas, Rizwan Allah, Zubair Khan, Muhammad Dilawar, Bilal Khan, Naqash Khurshid, Hamza, Azhar, and Amjad. Waris Khan police have registered separate cases against them and further investigation was in progress. SP Rawal Faisal Saleem appreciated the performance of the police team adding gambling was the root of other social evils, the accused involved in such crimes cannot escape from the grip of the law. Strict actions against gamblers will continue, he added.

Power suspension programme for

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Monday issued a power suspension programme for Tuesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to an IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 07:00 AM to 11:00 AM. Islamabad Circle, Sohdran Road, GOR Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Bhadana, Feeder, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Kahota City-II, Hanif Shaheed Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Miani, Feeder, Jhelum Circle, Gul Afshan Feeder, Attock Circle, Pind Pran, Valley, Gulshan Sehat, Sangjani, Shahullah Dutta, Paswal, Sarai Kharboza, Taxila-2, Taxila-I, Sher Shah Suri, Maskinabad, Ghorghashti, Shakradra, Bolinwal feeders and surrounding areas.

Eight nabbed

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police arrested eight illegal arms holders and recovered arms, and ammunition from their possession during an operation here on Monday. According to the police spokesman, Westridge police recovered 01 pistol 30 bores from Muhammad Ilyas. Similarly, Airport police recovered 01 pistol 30 bores from Ubaid Rahman. While, Saddar Wah police held Habibur Rahman and recovered 01 pistol 30 bores from his possession.

PAC traces financial irregularities worth millions in funds

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on Monday revealed that an amount of Rs 203 million was allegedly embezzled from the funds allocated for the four development projects in 2017-18.

The alleged financial irregularities worth millions were exposed in the meeting of PAC's sub-committee chaired by convenor Ghulam Mustafa Shah.

The participants reviewed the grants allocated for development projects in 2016-17 and 2017-18 under the Law and Justice Division. During the review, the meeting participants found that an amount of Rs 203 million was missing from the grants received for four projects in 2017-18. The sub-committee ordered a fact-finding inquiry into the matter within a month.

The audit authorities reported that it

was a development grant, and 27 percent of the grant was lapsed, adding that the fact-finding inquiry should be done in all development projects.

Meanwhile, the sub-committee expressed concerns over not obtaining approval for various supplementary grants from the Parliament. The audit authorities revealed that a supplementary grant of Rs 35 million was taken but not approved through Parliament. Committee member Syed Hussain Tariq said that supplementary grants are not being regularized, and it is a serious matter that funds are being used without approval. The sub-committee ordered to address audit concerns within a month and directed the Ministry of Law and Justice to schedule regular Public Accounts Committee meetings every month.

HEC advise students to beware of TNE policy violation by HEIs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) on Monday advised the students to beware of Transnational Education (TNE) Policy Violations by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

According to the HEC Officials, "It has been observed with grave concern that several Pakistani institutions offering qualifications in collaboration with foreign universities under Transnational Education (TNE) Policy are violating HEC policies while granting admission to students." "As a result, students are facing problems getting recogni-

tion/equivalence of their degrees from the Higher Education Commission (HEC)," said the officials.

Therefore, all the recognized institutions imparting foreign qualification in Pakistan (list) available at: <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/universities/Pages/Foreign-Collaboration-Institutions.aspx>) are hereby advised to ensure that all the legal/codal formalities are met, as devised by this Commission, at the time of granting admission, while fulfilling all other requirements of the host university/institution as described under TNE Policy.

In addition, to get the

degree recognized/equated by HEC, the students must have twelve (12) years of education as per the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and equivalence issued by Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC) at the time of admission in a degree program. "In case, any violation is found at any stage, HEC shall not recognize these degrees and withdraw the No Objection Certificate (NOC) immediately," the official warned. "This information is being disseminated for the awareness of parents and students," they added.

Preparations for Eid-ul-Fitr gains momentum

ISLAMABAD (APP): With only a few days left in the Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations, the masses are finalizing their preparations to mark the grand festival with great enthusiasm by visiting the main markets and shopping malls in bulk.

So many buyers are thronging to the main markets of the federal capital to complete their shopping as authorities expect more rush during the last days of Ramazan before the festival.

Different famous brands as well as local markets have displayed the latest Eid editions of dresses, shoes and other essential accessories to attract buyers and gain maximum profits while some are offering discounts. Although several buyers altered their mode of shopping from physical to digital one, however, majority of the buyers still prefer visiting the shopping malls themselves to shop for different items for their ultimate satisfaction.

"I have completed Eid shopping for myself and my family so that we can move to our native town a few days earlier. Since the tailors have stopped taking orders for

stitching dresses so I bought ready-to-wear dresses for all my family members", Sherish Batool, a housewife said.

"Shopping during the month of Ramazan and prevailing heat wave conditions is itself a difficult task so I am trying to complete it so that I can focus on prayers to seek blessings of Allah during the last Ashra of the holy month," she added.

Muhammad Taj, a father of three kids said, "I have completed shopping for my family from the famous brands offering Ramazan sale as buying things at full price is not affordable for salaried class during the prevailing inflation."

Dr Faryal Kausar said "Chand Raat is the most exciting time when we all family members visit the nearest market to buy bangles and henna. I have completed all the shopping except bangles and henna as buying such items on Chand Raat doubles the joy of festivity".

A huge rush of people can be witnessed thronging to the main markets of the capital including G-9, G-10, F-6, F-7, F-10, Aabpara Market, etc to buy Eid stuff.

ANF recovers over 72 kg drugs; arrests three

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in seven operations managed to recover over 72 kg drugs, 176 heroin-filled and 124 Ice-filled capsules, 8200 intoxicated tablets, 120 liters liquid Ice drug and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday.

He said in an operation at Islamabad International Airport, 73 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a Jeddah-bound passenger, residents of Bahawalpur.

In two operations at International Mail Office, 8200 intoxicated tablets were recovered from a parcel being sent to America and 190 grams Ice drug from a parcel being sent to London.

In two operations at Lahore International Airport, 103 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a Bahrain-bound passenger and 124 Ice filled capsules from the possession of another Bahrain-bound female passenger, resident of Nowshera.

In sixth operation conducted in Gwadar, 120 liters liquid and five kg Ice drug was recovered. The Ice drug was buried underground to smuggle abroad.

In another operation near Chaman Friendship Gate, 44 kg heroin was recovered from a suspicious parcel.

ANF and FC in an operation conducted in Khyber, 23 kg charras, concealed in plastic bags was seized.

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



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf in a group photo with the participants of the Final Round of the National Bilingual Declamation contest in-connection with Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan at PIPS.

2,956,487 free flour bags distributed

RAWALPINDI (APP): The administration has distributed 2,956,487 free flour bags among poor and deserving families in Rawalpindi division.

According to a district administration spokesman, the administration on the directives of caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi continued free flour distribution here late Sunday night and achieved the target successfully. He informed that 11 mega centers were set up in Rawalpindi district to provide free flour to the citizens. All-out efforts were made to ensure smooth distribution of free flour bags among the poor and deserving citizens and no untoward incident was reported in Rawalpindi, he added.

The distribution of free flour continued till 25th Ramadan, he said and informed that the administration was also taking strict action in accordance with the law against profiteers and hoarders.

The administration had imposed fines amounting to over Rs 4 million on 1325 profiteers while 318 shopkeepers were sent behind the bars for profiteering and not displaying the rate lists. The DC said, 23 FIRs were also lodged against profiteers and hoarders.

CTP launch crackdown

RAWALPINDI (APP): As residents of the twin cities head to their hometowns and villages to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr, inter-city transporters have started hiking their fares. To stop this profiteering, the City Traffic Police (CTP) has launched a grand operation against these transporters for overcharging passengers. According to City Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimoor Khan on Monday, transporters were already warned to stop overcharging or else they would face strict action in accordance with the law.

He said that CTP had created special squads to monitor those buses and wagons. If they find a public service vehicle (PSVs) fleeing passengers, they would be issued a ticket and slapped with a heavy fine, he added. To make sure that transporters don't dodge the fines, the CTO also directed traffic police, sector in-charges and wardens to keep a strict check on overcharging in public transport.

Parliament must be respected as mother of all institutions: NA Speaker

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Terming the parliament as mother of all institutions, Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf Monday said Constitution of Pakistan is the sacred document that binds 230 million people together.

Addressing the Final round of the National Bilingual Declamation Contest in connection with golden jubilee celebrations of constitution in Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS) in Islamabad on Monday, the NA Speaker stressed to protect the constitution.

"Parliament is mother of all institutions, therefore, it must be respected, the NA Speaker remarked.

Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has said that parliament is plate-form which represents collective wisdom. He said resolution of all challenges is possible only through supremacy of constitution and

Parliament. He also added, "it is constitution which imparts supremacy to constitution."

While appreciating the performance of contesting students from across the country, he expressed his hope that such children would make Pakistan's future bright. He also stressed on the need to acknowledge the importance of inculcating constitution as part of syllabus at every tier of educational sector. He also added, "1973 constitution represents the sagaciousness of collective wisdom as it was first federal, parliamentary and Islamic constitution."

The NA Speaker also said that it was an unmatched political wisdom of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto which enabled this nation to have this sacred document. He said that this constitution is sacred agreement between state and citizen which should

be implemented in letter and spirit.

He also appreciated the efforts of MNA Asiya Azeem, employees of PIPS and National Assembly Secretariat for successfully organizing these declamation contests.

On the occasion, MNA Ms. Asiya Azeem expressed her gratitude to Speaker National Assembly for always encouraging and celebrating diamond jubilee celebration with unmatched zeal and zest. She also said, "these declamation contests are to inculcate basic future of constitution in our children." It is pertinent to mention that final round of declamation contest was organized in connection with golden jubilee celebrations of constitution. Students from across the country participated in the contest. Late on, the Speaker distributed prizes among winners of the declamation contest.

Commissioner visits commercial market to review anti-encroachment operation

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chhatta here on Monday visited Commercial Market to review progress under anti-encroachment operation.

He said the administration had been directed to remove encroachments from the city areas as eliminating encroachments from Rawalpindi city on a permanent basis was the top priority.

Encroachments, lack of public transport and parking areas were major issues in Rawalpindi city, he added. The purpose of the ongoing anti-encroachment operation was to provide relief to the citizens, the Commissioner said.

He informed that the administration had removed encroachments

from eight bazaars of the town. A lot of progress had been made in ending encroachments from different city bazaars during the last month, Liaquat Ali Chhatta said.

After Eid, strict action in accordance with the law would be taken against encroachments in eight more bazaars of the city, he said. All-out efforts would be made to remove encroachments and clear all city areasts, Liaquat Ali Chhatta said.

The Commissioner further said that solid steps were being taken to speed up business activities in Rawalpindi. He informed that the No Objection Certificates (NOCs) would be issued in two weeks to stalled projects of petrol pumps, plazas, and housing societies.

Special desks for issuance of NOCs would be established in Deputy Commissioner and Metropolitan and Municipal Corporation offices, he added.

A control room had been set up in the Commissioner's office for the issuance of NOCs, he informed. The issuance process of NOCs was being accelerated to create maximum employment opportunities, he said.

He further informed that 38 plazas got the approval of the basement parking but later, shops and godowns were set up in the basements. Notices had been issued to the plazas that violated the rules. FIRs would also be lodged against the rules violators and the plazas would also be sealed, he added.

Railways instruct to tighten security in trains, at stations during Eid

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways Police has issued instructions to all Superintendent of Police (SP) Railways to tighten security in trains as well as at stations to avoid any untoward incident during Eid-ul-Fitr days.

The Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique had directed all SPs Railways to depute sufficient force at exit and entry points of all railway stations and strict watch to be carried out of suspicious persons, an official in the Ministry told APP. Pakistan Railways Police Commando Force would be deputed at vulnerable installations and in trains, while bomb disposal staff would also be kept on alert for the search of luggage and passengers at railway stations.

"The SPs Railways directed to conduct complete check and search of empty rakes before trains reach the platforms for departure for their destinations," the official added. All the SPs Railways would also be directed to remain present on Eid holidays and randomly check trains, stations and escorting staff.

The official said the number of passengers was increasing day by day at railway stations and trains ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr and

the Railway administration had arranged special trains across the country to facilitate the extra passengers.

It was pertinent to mention here that Pakistan Railways has decided to run five Eid special trains on different routes including Karachi, Quetta, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Lahore and others from April 18 and 27, for the convenience of the commuters on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The schedule for these trains was recently released by the railway department. The first of these special trains will leave Karachi for Peshawar Cantt on April 18, while the second will depart from Quetta to Rawalpindi on the same day.

On April 19, the third special train will run from Karachi to Lahore, providing a convenient and affordable option for those travelling between the two cities.

The fourth train will be from Rawalpindi to Quetta on April 26, offering a comfortable journey for those who need to travel between these two cities during the Eid holidays.

Finally, the fifth and last special train will run from Lahore to Karachi on April 27, enabling passengers to travel from Lahore to Karachi with ease and comfort.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Mian Javed Latif addressing a press conference at PID.

Covid-19 cases rise in Kabul

KABUL (TOLOnews): Out of 213 samples, at least 70 tested positive for Covid-19 one last week, an official at the Afghan-Japan hospital said. The doctors said the negligence of the public toward the virus is the main reason for the increase of Covid-19. Ahmad Waqas, 13, has been hospitalized for the past three days. "I felt ill on Tuesday. First, I went to the QI-Asa hospital and then I went to FMIC and then came here. I feel better now," he said.

Radio marks 20th anniversary

KABUL (TOLOnews): 20 years ago, Arman radio station began broadcasting in Kabul. The broadcasting of the Arman radio station extended to various provinces across the country. Arman has rapidly become famous among the Afghans due to its unique programs. "It has been 20 years since the foundation of Arman radio station. We can undoubtedly say that the birth of Arman radio station was an important step and even a cultural revolution," said head of radio station.

Afghanistan at highest risk of famine in 25 years as funding runs dry: OCHA

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan faces the biggest risk of famine in the previous 25 years due to financial shortages. The UN office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (OCHA) warned in a new report that Afghanistan is at the highest risk of famine in the last 25 years as funding runs dry. The Organization said that Afghanistan faces a massive humanitarian catastrophe unless urgent assistance is obtained, with

roughly 20 million suffering from severe hunger and 6 million just one step away from famine. The Organization also said that due to severely reduced aid to Afghanistan, the number of individuals who could go hungry right now is among the highest in the world. OCHA reiterated that at this crucial time, the world must not turn its back on the Afghanistan people to continue by saying that they have already suffered

so much; it would be impermissible to subject them to additional suffering by denying them a crucial humanitarian lifeline. OCHA noted that only \$250 million of the \$4.6 billion in aid sought by this Organization during the first quarter of 2023 was granted. Only 5.4% of the total asked by the UN from the international community to support humanitarian needs in Afghanistan is represented by this amount of money.

Kabir meets Russian Muslim scholars



KABUL (Agencies): The political deputy prime minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, met with a delegation of religious scholars from Russia's Muslim community. The meeting started with the recitation of the Holy Quran by the head of the Russian delegation, the Imam of Sabor Mosque in Moscow, Mawlawi Sheikh Zalikhayov Ahmed Magomedovich, the IEA said. Magomedovich said the purpose of their visit to Afghanistan is to develop relations between Russia

and Afghanistan. He also noted that there are 20 million Muslims living in Russia and the visit will further strengthen the relationship between Muslims. Other senior scholars included the Deputy Director of Russia's International Islamic Culture, Gadjiy Mohammad Haji Amrovich, the General Imam of the Islamic Institute of Russia and the Deputy Director of International Islamic Culture of Russia Mohammad Bashir Magmidovich. They expressed that after the 40-year war, they are happy with the security and

developments in the country and that the continuation of the current peaceful situation and governance of the Islamic Emirate will eventually lead to the world recognizing the IEA as the ruling government. The delegation also provided information about the spread of Islam in Russia and said that Muslims do not have any problems in Russia. Mawlawi Abdul Kabir welcomed the Russian delegation and said, we expect that your arrival will lead to the development of trade relations between Afghanistan and Russia and that you will take back a good image of Afghanistan to Russia and the world. Kabir asked Russia to officially recognize the Islamic Emirate along with its allies and reiterated assurances that the territory of Afghanistan will not be used against anyone. Kabir also requested that such visits between Islamic scholars of Russia and Afghanistan continue.

41 prisoners, including 7 women released in Ghor



GHOR (Khaama Press): Provincial officials of the Western Ghor province of Afghanistan have exempted 41 prisoners, including seven women, on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. The press office of the provincial governor of Ghor said in a newsletter that the prisoners were released according to the

order of the Supreme leader of the Taliban, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada. The statement added that seven women are subject to this exemption among the prisoners. According to the statement, the released prisoners committed crimes such as moral corruption, theft, bribery and drug

trafficking. Under the condition of anonymity, a professor of sociology stated that the release of the detainees and the exemption are positive developments. The de facto government, on the other hand, "unfortunately criminalized numerous cases and termed its moral corruption, and now they consider it the same as drug trafficking, and this is worrying, he said. In addition, he said that while certain human rights and civil society activists, protesting women, university professors, and writers are detained, others who smuggle narcotics and commit other crimes are often freed.

Many shoemakers out of work



KABUL (TOLOnews): The shoemakers' union in Kabul said that due to economic challenges and the

inattention of the current government, 300 shoemakers had stopped their activity.

"Unfortunately, Afghanistan imports shoes from China with low quality and It is very difficult for us to compete against them," said Mohammad Asif Jami, head of the shoemakers' union in Kabul. Some shoemakers say the lack of raw materials in the country is one of the reasons for the stagnation of the shoemaking market. Shujauddin, who has been engaged in this industry for thirty years, said: "Our raw materials come from abroad, it's our problem and we make shoes with high quality, but we don't have a good market."

Kazakhstan to open trading house in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Kazakhstan will open a trading house in Afghanistan to enhance trade ties between the two countries. Kazakhstan will establish a trade office in Afghanistan to improve trade ties between the two countries, according to the statement released by the office of Kazakhstan's Prime Minister. A Kazakhstan delegation led by the vice prime minister and Minister of Commerce and Integration paid Kabul a visit on Saturday. He met with de facto senior officials during his visit, including Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. The decision was made following the meeting; it was mentioned that the head office of Kazakhstan's trade house would be located in the Herat province of Afghanistan.

The primary responsibilities of the trade representation will be to encourage the expansion of trade and economic cooperation between Kazakhstan and Afghanistan, the expansion of economic telecommunication, transportation, and logistics cooperation between the two countries' regions, the use of Afghanistan's potential for cross-border trade as a transit country and attraction of investment. Meanwhile, the trade representative would set up business-to-business meetings between the business communities of Afghanistan and Kazakhstan.

In addition, both parties aim to increase commerce between Afghanistan and Kazakhstan from \$900 million to \$3 billion annually.

MoD rehires over 200 retired employees

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of National Defense has rehired 226 people who recently retired, including professional military personnel and civilians. The ministry said in a statement this includes air force pilots, officers, consultants, engineers, technicians, managers, agents and low-ranking workers. In addition, the ministry rejected reports of forcing technical and professional personnel into retirement without considering the law. The statement said that the ministry is committed to hiring experts and professionals and will use the experience of its employees when needed. Meanwhile, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the country has directed the army forces in a video message to refrain from celebratory firings over Eid.

IEA unveils new development in Kabul



KABUL (Agencies): Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, the economic deputy of the Ministry of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), says that major infrastructure projects will start soon. Mullah Baradar, who spoke at the announcement of a new development, the Gulbahar Plaza project in Kabul, said that with the rule of the Islamic Emirate

of Afghanistan, security has been ensured throughout the country and investment opportunities have become more favorable – with the plaza being one example. Baradar said that the citizens of the country consider it their duty and responsibility to create facilities and facilitate work opportunities for the people. He added that for the purpose of economic stabil-

ity of the country, the Islamic Emirate will start the reconstruction of major roads, expansion of the railway network and other large infrastructure projects in the near future, which will turn Afghanistan into a connecting point between South and Central Asia – specifically with the establishment of railway networks. Baradar assured national

businessmen and foreign investors that they can safely invest in the country. Gulbahar Plaza is a commercial and residential center and is being built by the private sector in the 9th district of Kabul city. The center will include hundreds of shops and apartments and will cost an estimated \$70 million. The project is expected to be completed in three years.

Samarkand meeting attendees seek good relations with Kabul: MoFA

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said that the neighboring countries of Afghanistan at the Samarkand conference stressed the need for good relations with the Islamic Emirate. The deputy spokesman for MoFA, Zia Ahmad Takal, said that the countries involved in the conference also called for the improvement of bilateral cooperation. "This conference was very effective, during which bilateral cooperation, the political situation, and (bilateral visits) were discussed. They reached an

agreement that the neighboring countries should become closer and share their opinions," he said. According to the spokesman, the acting foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, reached an agreement over the release of 200 Afghan prisoners in a meeting with Iran's Foreign Minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, on the sidelines of the Samarkand conference. "The situation of Afghan inmates in Iran was discussed with Iran and the two sides reached an agreement on the cancellation of 200 Afghan inmates who

were sentenced to death," Takal said. "I hope that there will be coordination in various ways so that the situation of Afghan refugees in Iran can develop and prevent the mistreatment toward the Afghan refugees," said Ataullah Khogianai, an Afghan refugee in Iran. Some political analysts said that the meeting in Uzbekistan will have positive influence in improving relations between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. "The participating countries have offered conditions for the Islamic Emirate. If the Islamic

Emirate fulfils these conditions, the way for the Islamic Emirate's recognition will be reopened," said Sayed Bilal Fatimi, political analyst. "These countries want to ensure the rights of the people and the formation of an inclusive government to put an end to the crisis in Afghanistan," said Sayed Jawad Sijadi, university instructor. The participants in the 4th conference of Samarkand called for the formation of an inclusive government and stressed their support for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

West meets members of Afghan Business Council in UAE

DUBAI (TOLOnews): The Afghan Business Council in the UAE met with US special envoy Thomas West in Dubai to discuss issues facing Afghan businesspeople, including the "economy, banks, health, food-stuffs, women's work," the council said. West is on a regional visit. The US Department of State said earlier that West will visit the UAE, Qatar and Turkey to discuss the situation in Afghanistan.



The head of the Afghan Business Council in the UAE, Haji Obaidullah Sader Khail, said that at the meeting he thanked West "for resolving of Afghan passport issue and helping to return the Afghan new banknotes printed outside Afghanistan." "This meeting was attended by the owners of private banks in Afghanistan, businesspeople and President of Afghanistan Chamber of Industries and Mines and the International Finance Corporation World Bank Group representative," the statement said. "I thanked him on behalf of the traders for the arrival

of passports and new printed banknotes in Afghanistan. He (West) played an important role in this regard and this was our demand in many meetings we have had over one last year with him," Sader Khail said. According to the statement, West assured the council that they will work together to find suitable solutions. "West assured the Afghan traders that we will work jointly to find a proper solution the problems

that the Afghan people, traders and particularly women are facing," said Ezatullah Nizazai, an Afghan trader in the UAE. "The meeting took place yesterday and many traders who are living in Dubai, and industrial businesspeople were present. The promises regarding cooperation were made in the meeting," said Khanjan Alokcozai, a member of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Investment (ACCI). The ACCI meanwhile

called on the US to remove sanctions from Afghanistan's banks. "The purchasing that we do outside of the countries for the big infrastructural projects--we should be allowed to purchase big electric turbines for the infrastructural projects," said Mohammad Younus Momand, acting head of the ACCI. According to the Afghan Business Council in the UAE, more than 300,000 Afghans are living in the UAE.

Cancer hospital campaign: Transporter vows \$100,000 donation

KABUL (Pajhwok): A transport company in central Logar province has announced donating \$100,000 to a campaign on social media "build an equipped cancer hospital in Afghanistan" launched by many Afghans. Javed Ibrahim, who has been assisting the needy and poor people in the country, in a video message on his Facebook page two days ago appealed to all investors, national cricket players and charitable organization to donate

to the campaign. He said he alone could not build the cancer hospital and all Afghans should join him in the national project. He added that many Afghans assured him help after his appeal for building a well-equipped cancer hospital in Afghanistan. Ibrahim said: "A sister sent me a message, saying she will sell her gold bangles to donate to the noble cause." He said enough resources were required to

build a cancer hospital, but it was possible through a national campaign, urging the Ministry of Public Health to provide land for the hospital. After the campaign was launched, many Afghans on social media vowed to help and called for initiation of practical work on the hospital. Gulreaz Sherzad, the head of Logar Transport Company, expressed his happiness over the launch of the campaign on his Facebook page and

announced \$100,000 donation. He said the aid would be handed over to the authorized committee after evaluation of the hospital's location, specifications and construction plan and further cooperation would be fully discussed. Abdul Hadi Hamas, head of the Hamas Charity Foundation, wrote on his Facebook page today: "Cancer takes the lives of thousands of our citizens every year, the disease is treatable if diagnosed in

time. Therefore I announce one million afghanis donation from my foundation." He said 250 charities were registered with the Ministry of Justice and if each charity donated one million afghanis, then it was possible to build a well-equipped hospital with 250 million afghanis. Al Burhan Charitable Foundation also said it would contribute to the campaign on its part. Many people called on spin wizard Rashid Khan,

also the Twenty/20 team captain, who is bought at a high price in commercial games of India, Pakistan and other countries, to ask his international friends to build a cancer hospital in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, Atta Charitable Foundation head Attaullah Shaghiwal also asked the government in a video message to give land to their foundation to build a special and standard hospital for heart diseases. He said there should be

a place that was easily accessible to the people from all provinces. Khan Jan Alokcozi, Deputy Director of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, told Pajhwok that he supported the campaign to build a hospital for cancer in the country and announced his cooperation with it. Dr. Sardarwali Waziri wrote on his Facebook page: "Some conscious young people have been talking about building new hospitals for heart and

cancer patients. This idea is great and we really need it." He said previously a lot of work had been done on Nangarhar's Eastern Health Complex, a thousand-bed hospital. He added enough land had been given to the project which had been about 90 percent completed. Pajhwok tried to get the Public Health Ministry's opinion about the establishment of a cancer hospital, but received no response.



ISLAMABAD: Three members dialogue committee of PPP headed by Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani and ANP leaders addressing a press conference.

Fear of harassment during appearance before court

PHC dispose-off Hasan Niazi petition

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Waqar Ahmad disposed off writ petition filed by Imran Khan maternal nephew Hasan Niazi regarding his harassment and creation of hurdle during appearance before court at Nowshera, on Monday.

Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assured that Hasan Niazi shouldn't be arrested in other cases because he booked in First Information Report (FIR) at Nowshera because no other FIR is registered against him in the premise, however, PHC has disposed-off writ petition and stopped competent authorities from harassment of Imran Khan's nephew.

The counsel Qazi Muhammad Anwar Advocate argued that petitioner is spokesperson of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) legal affairs

while booked in several FIRs across Pakistan for Tweeting that "Agar Imran Khan ko Kuch Hogiya to Qari aur Hafiz nahi bachega" (Hafiz and Qari should face the consequences for any damage faced by Imran Khan). He argued that on 10th April petitioner's father Hafeez Ullah Niazi has filed petition before PHC but it was turned down due to availability and freedom of Hasaan Niazi.

The petitioner is appearing before Session Court Nowshera but he didn't aware about how many FIRs have been booked against him in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and as a law-abiding citizen Hasan Niazi requested PHC to provide record regarding cases against him to approach competent for relief, the counsel argued.

The counsel argued that freedom of movement is constitutional right of every citizen and requested that petitioner shouldn't be stopped from entering Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while added for provision of FIRs record

for approaching competent forum. He argued that Quetta High Court has already granted bail to petitioner in identical case to petitioner.

Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javeed and Assistant Advocate General Barrister Yasin Raza argued that petitioner can't take relied on dogmas while added that if any administrative order has passed it should be based on certain consequences. Hassan Niazi didn't filed oath in this instant writ petition while it is filed by the counsel, they argued.

AG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javeed informed PHC that Hasan Niazi is booked in only one FIR at Nowshera while no other case is registered against him while the divisional bench has disposed-off the petitioner and stopped provincial government harassment and creating hurdles during Hasan Niazi appearance before session court Nowshera.

PTI demands contempt proceedings against PM

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Monday demanded the Supreme Court initiate contempt proceedings against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the federal cabinet for not releasing funds to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa polls.

In a tweet, PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry said despite the apex court's orders, the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) decision to not release funds is in violation of the laws. "...the Supreme Court should initiate contempt of court proceedings against the prime minister and the Cabinet and fulfil their desire of getting disqualified through court orders," the former information minister said.

"No parliament has the authority to prevent people from voting. Such a parliament can lay the foundation of a fascist government, but it cannot have anything to do with a democratic system," he said. The PTI's senior leader said in line with the Constitution, the parliament does not have any prerogative over the election processes.

In the tweets, the ex-information minister also mentioned that his party was focused on negotiations with the government, but the rulers were exhibiting a "non-serious" attitude in this regard. Chaudhry added that the negotiations would be held in line with the Constitution and the Supreme Court's orders, while noting that delaying the elections would be tantamount to subverting the Constitution. PTI has formed a three-member committee and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz has tasked two of its senior members to hold consultations with the opposition party amid the tense political situation after the Jamaat-e-Islami's bid to bring both sides to the table.

Javed Latif rejects talks with PTI

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister Mian Javed Latif on Monday categorically rejected the initiation of negotiations with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, stating that the majority of PML (N) members were against engaging in talks with the "miscreant in Zaman Park".

Talking to media representatives, he said considerable members from the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) were in favour of negotiating with PTI's second-tier leadership, especially led by the former foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and former chief minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pervaiz Khattak, without the involvement of Imran Khan.

Latif further stated that negotiating with a "miscreant like Imran Khan, who was responsible for causing unbearable price hikes, rampant poverty, and economic destruction, was not in the interest of Pakistanis".

Imran fears 'action' at Zaman Park during Eid holidays

LAHORE (Agencies): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan informed the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday that he fears the government may launch a fresh "operation" during the Eid ul Fitr holidays at his Zaman Park residence in a bid to arrest him.

The PTI chief informed the court about his concerns during a hearing on his petition seeking details of cases registered against him across the country. During the hearing, Khan's counsel Barrister Salman Safdar told the court that state machinery was being used against his client. He urged the court to stop the registration of cases against the PTI chief.

"Everything has a limit in all cases the police are the complainant," said Safdar, citing the Wazirabad incident and Zile Shah case where the police were the complainant. "If your stance has been recorded then it shouldn't remain an issue," Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh remarked.

However, Safdar told the bench that in all cases terrorism charges were included, adding that the court cannot remain silent over the misuse of authority. "We have to fight on all fronts. Coming to take bail every day is not the solution," said Safdar. He added that in the cases registered, so far, there is no need to

arrest the PTI chief. "Now, Eid is coming and the court will not be working. During these days the police may open another front at Zaman Park," Safdar said, adding that the police should not be allowed to register a case within these days.

"Is there any such precedence?" Justice Sheikh asked. Upon this, the PTI chief came to the rostrum and told the bench that the court had ordered the police not to launch an operation in Zaman Park yet it happened.

"Now during holidays, they will launch an operation. I have credible reports that they will launch an operation. The court must stop them," Khan urged, adding that the "law of the jungle" prevails here first people are arrested then they are informed about the accusations. "I am just informing you about the threats beforehand," Khan said and returned to his seat. Anwar Mansoor, Khan's other lawyer, said that such actions are being used to stop the elections.

"A political leader is being threatened with arrest so he does not go to the people," said the lawyer. Following this, the Punjab government's lawyer told the court that seeking the court's permission for investigating someone is not legal. "Courts have been rejecting such peti-

tions," the Punjab government lawyer said. On this, Justice Sheikh asked the lawyer when there was no need to arrest in old cases and then why does the government want to take action after the registration of new cases.

However, the government's lawyer maintained that the petition was unmaintainable. Moving on, Justice Sheikh remarked that the petition was fine apart from the inclusion of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif as a respondent. Khan's lawyer told the court that the government machinery has never been used like it has been used against his client.

On this, Justice Sheikh informed the counsel that the Punjab government lawyer had referred to the cases of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leaders Hamza Shabbaz, and Maryam Nawaz. At this point, Khan once again came to the rostrum and told the court that the government violated the orders of the court despite its order. "I am trying to stop the bloodshed. We have no faith in this system," Khan said. The court took a brief break and when Justice Sheikh and Justice Farooq Haider returned they announced that they are sending the case to the chief justice of the LHC for the formation of a full bench on the case.

Contempt case against Imran Federal govt files plea for early hearing

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Government on Monday filed a petition before the Supreme Court, seeking early hearing in the contempt of court case against Imran Khan. The federal government prayed the court to fix the case for hearing on April 26.

According to the brief of case, a petition was filed against Imran Khan for disregarding the Order of the court dated 25.05.2022. The Islamabad High Court Bar Association sought a direction not to cause any hindrance in the free movement of the citizens of Pakistan in any part of the country. The high court had directed that the PTI be allowed to hold a gathering at the ground located between Sector H-9 and G-9 in view of the cate-

gorical assurance on behalf of the top leadership of the PTI that their rally would not cause any inconvenience or blockage of Sri Nagar Highway; nor otherwise inconvenience the public and citizenry at large but the respondent did not comply with the said Order, the Chairman PTI exhorted his supporters to reach D-Chowk, hence they marched towards the D-Chowk in pre-planned and pre-conceived manner and when lawfully checked by the police authorities, they resorted to violence and started destroying public and private properties and setting ablaze police vehicles, trees and bushes.

Noticing the alarming law & order situation being created by the PTI workers and

leadership by flagrantly disregarding the Court Order dated 25.05.2022. A number of people were injured during those skirmishes between PTI supporters with the law enforcing agencies. The said Contempt Petition was heard by the Larger Bench on 02.12.2022 and was ordered to be fixed for next week, hence this application.

The petition stated that the matter involved of citizenry at large and the security/protection of the people of Pakistan, assets of the country which have been ruined by the workers of the PTI on command of the Chairman/respondent, therefore, the present case was of urgent nature and needs to be heard and decided by this Apex Court at an early date.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi exchanging views with Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini at Naval Headquarters.

Committee on finance sends polls funds issue back to Parliament

ISLAMABAD (INP): The fate of the Supreme Court's deadline to issue Rs21 billion for elections in Punjab and KP became more uncertain on Monday after National Assembly's Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue sent the poll funds issue back to the parliament.

Last week, the apex court had directed the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to allocate and release Rs21 billion by April 17 (today) for elections in two provinces from the Federal Consolidated Fund (FCF) "lying under its control and management". It had also instructed the central bank to send an "appropriate communication" to this effect to the finance ministry in this regard.

Subsequently, a meeting of NA's finance and revenue committee was called on Monday to discuss the SC order regarding the disbursement of funds. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, SBP Governor Jameel Ahmad, Law Minister Azam Nazir Tarar, Commerce Minister Naveed Qamar were also invited.

AJK Assembly session adjourned sans electing PM

F.P. Report

MUZAFFARABAD: A session of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Assembly to elect a new prime minister was adjourned on Monday without the poll being held. The election was announced after Sardar Tanveer Ilyas' disqualification by the AJK High Court in a contempt case.

The session, which was due to start at 11am, finally began at 3:30pm under the chairmanship of Speaker Riaz Ahmed. However, the session was adjourned till 11am tomorrow without a new prime minister being elected. The PTI enjoys a majority in the AJK Legislative Assembly, but their path to secure a candidate loyal to Imran Khan as the premier may get difficult.

AJK President Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry has rebelled against his own party and created a forward bloc in the assembly. According to sources, Chaudhry's forward bloc has the support of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). However, PML-N AJK President Shah Ghulam Qadir told Daily Jang that as per a "power-sharing formula" their alliance was with the PPP.

"If the candidate for PM was from PPP then we would have been bound to vote for him," explained Qadir. He added that the PPP did not contact the party when it was negotiating with the forward bloc and neither did the latter contact them. "If the situation remains like this then PML-N, with its seven votes, will make its own decision," said the PML-N leader. However, sources shared that after seeing Qadir's reaction AJK President Chaudhry reached out to the PML-N to seek support for the forward bloc candidate.

Use of unapproved funds by AJK ex-PM Tanveer Ilyas unearthed: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) chief secretary took notice of the use of secret funds and additional grants without approval during the tenure of former prime minister

Sardar Tanveer Ilyas and sought a report from the Finance Department on Monday.

It has been learnt that the secret funds and additional grants had been used without approval at the behest of Sardar Tanveer Ilyas. The government funds bigger several times than the approved budget had been withdrawn. An additional budget of Rs750 million had been withdrawn for the AJK PM secretariat in violation of the approved budget of Rs199.09 million, an official document reveals.

Under the head of the secret services fund, Rs60.5 million had been withdrawn in violation of the original budget of Rs20 million. The additional supplementary budget had been released in the first three quarters of the current financial year. The AJK Finance Department did not bring the matter of additional budget to the notice of the chief secretary. The AJK chief secretary sought the details of the additional funds released.

SC has not authority to change even one point of Constitution: Memon

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Provincial Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that it has been decided to file FIRs against the transporters if they charge more than the fixed fares from the public on the occasion of Eid. If transporters have any concerns on this issue, they might contact the government. He said that people go to their native areas, cities and villages to meet their loved ones on Eid. No one will be allowed to take advantage of people's compulsion.

He expressed these views while addressing a press conference at the Sindh Archives Complex today along with Provincial Labor Minister Saeed Ghani and Pakistan Peoples Party leader Salman Abdullah Murad. He said that there is a storm of inflation, the way oil prices have increased, everything has become expensive and people are very worried. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Sindh government is endeavoring to reduce the burden of inflation on the people.

He said that when the agenda of increasing the fares of the People's Bus Service came up in the Sindh Cabinet, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah had deferred it and said that the Sindh government will bear the subsidy on it. He said that two routes of electric buses have been started in Karachi, another and third route of electric bus service will be launched from Tuesday (Today). It will start from Powerhouse Chowrangi

via Sohrab Goth, Shah-i-rah Pakistan, Teen Hatti, Guru Mandir, MA Jinnah Road, Tower and end at Keamari.

Sindh Information Minister said on the issue of census that the Sindh government has serious reservations on census and they are in constant contact with the federal government on this matter. He added that Sindh government had conveyed its concerns to the federal government, on which the federal government has assured that the concerns of the Sindh Government will be addressed. He said that the final results of the census will show how far the reservations of the Sindh government were addressed.

The provincial information minister said that the Sindh government has fixed the support price of wheat at Rs 4,000 per maund for the current season. Two days ago, a fake notification of Rs 3,000 per maund was circulated on social media. After investigation it is revealed that the social media people of PTI was involved in it. PTI social media cell created a notification with the fake signature of Secretary Food and made it viral. He said that one can guess that PTI people can go to such extend. Mr. Memon added that a criminal conspiracy was made to mislead people.

The aim of this fake notification was to bar growers and farmers not to sell their wheat to the government and give wheat to private entrepreneurs so that there will be a wheat crisis in the province. He said that police and FIA

have been instructed to take action against the people involved in this conspiracy. He said that Sindh government has fixed the highest support price of wheat in Pakistan.

The process of procurement of wheat is smoothly underway. Provincial Food Minister Mukesh Kumar Chawla is personally monitoring the wheat procurement process. He said that the Sindh government is making every effort to fulfill the purchase target. He said that wherever there are complaints in this regard, those are being resolved immediately. Now the transportation of wheat is being controlled at the district level, so that wheat cannot be transported and smuggled out of Sindh.

He said that the support price of wheat is for the people of Sindh and not for the people of Afghanistan. Commenting on the current political situation of the country, he said that Imran Khan and Zalmay Khalilzad are both thieves and thugs who are currently on the same platform. The minister said that Zalmay Khalilzad is interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan. Imran Khan and Zalmay Khalilzad have two things in common. Imran Khan and Zalmay Khalilzad both are the supporters of Taliban. Both are also facing the charges money laundering. The minister said that Zalmay Khalilzad transferred dollars to his wife's account and US government is investigating the matter. He said that who is Zalmay Khalilzad and

who has authorized him to advise the government of Pakistan on the dates of elections.

Provincial Minister of Information said that Imran Khan who has been propagating the narratives of foreign conspiracy, has himself become imported. He demanded that an investigation should be conducted as to which senators and parliamentarians of foreign countries Imran Khan has been in contact. He said that Imran Khan is begging the US parliamentarians to bring him back to power. He said that Imran Khan has caused irreparable damage to the institutions of the country and the values of our society and created division in institutions and society of Pakistan. Today, because of this, the Supreme Court has divided into two parts and two thoughts are found in the Supreme Court. He said that one thought says that they are everything, they have all the powers.

This thinking is not ready to obey the constitution, law and parliament, nor are they willing to accept the powers of the parliament. He said that they are saddened by the division in the judiciary, Pakistan People's Party believes in the independence of the judiciary. We have never fought with the court or conspired against the courts. He said that they had 100 reservations against Ifikhar Chaudhary, but Pakistan People's Party played the most active role in the struggle for his

restoration.

Pakistan People's Party workers were martyred in the bomb blast. Then it is the same Supreme Court, where Pakistan People's Party did not get any justice. He added that there is a mindset. Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto was judicially murdered. Shaheed Mohtarama Benazir Bhutto's government was overthrown twice, but not received any justice from supreme court. He said that Pakistan People's Party has always been remained the target of judiciary. Ifikhar Chaudhary and whoever came after him as Chief Justice, they kept a grudge against Pakistan Peoples Party.

He said that during the tenure of the last four Chief Justices, judges were elevated in the Supreme Court, not a single Sindh-speaking judge was elevated to supreme court. He said that the people of Sindh are asking why the Supreme Court has been made a no-go area for Sindh-speaking judges, or Sindh-speaking judges have been banned from entering the Supreme Court?

He said that the fifth and sixth judges on fifth and sixth serial seniority were elevated. He said that Pakistan People's Party has believed in federalism, we do not believe in prejudice, but it is our responsibility to raise our voice for the people who elected them. On this occasion, Provincial Labour Minister Saeed Ghani said that in the past, the army had imposed martial laws in the country, but now judi-

cial martial law has been imposed. He said that there has been a demand to form a full court bench on constitutional matters, but this demand has not been implemented even once during past one year. What are the reasons and why the most competent judges of the Supreme Court, whom no one can point a finger at, are not included in the benches formed on constitutional issues?

He said that in the constitution, all institutions have their own powers and all institutions have to use their authority within their ambit. He said that if the Election Commission deviates from its jurisdiction, then the Supreme Court will hold them by the neck and imprison them in the wall. Saeed Ghani said that the Election Commission is not subordinate to the Supreme Court in any way. In the Constitution of Pakistan, there is a separate chapter for the Election Commission and a separate chapter for the Supreme Court.

These two institutions have an independent status in the constitution, but the Supreme Court is interfering in the affairs of the Election Commission on a daily basis. Similarly, he said that the State Bank is an independent institution, it does not have the authority to use the funds without the instructions of the Ministry of Finance. But the Supreme Court is unconstitutionally issuing direct instructions to the State Bank to release the funds to the Election Commission.