

Ahsan meets Nawaz
MADINAH (Agencies): Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal has met PML-N supremo and former three-time prime minister Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif at Masjid-e-Nabuwī in Madinah and inquired about his health on Thursday. Nawaz and Ahsan also offered special prayers for the security and prosperity of Pakistan at the Prophet's Mosque.

 @thefrontierpost

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Shehbaz lauds PKL F.P. Report
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has appreciated the management and doctors of Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute (PKLI) Hospital Lahore for launching an important initiative of the state-of-the-art Robotic Surgery. In a tweet on Thursday, he said this great welfare project was criticized by former Chief Justice Saqib Nisar.

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ISLAMABAD: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, General Sahir Shamshad Mirza called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

‘Constitution Mobile App’ available on both Android, iOS: Marriyum

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Thursday that the newly launched application of the Constitution was available on both operating systems, Android and iOS.

In a tweet, she said the 'Constitution Mobile App' can be downloaded on Android using the link <https://t.co/MXtjRYyhy0>. The minister said that this mobile application can also be downloaded on iOS using the link <https://t.co/8oEEFQ52HG>. It is worth mentioning that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif launched the mobile application of the Constitution on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Thursday said the country had achieved a major milestone by integrating the Constitution of Pakistan in educational curriculum on the occasion of its golden jubilee.

"Integration of the Constitution in the curriculum is a historic milestone. The curriculum does not only include basic components of democracy but also highlights importance and values of the difference of opinion," the minister said while addressing at the launch of the 1973 Constitution mobile application.

In connection with the golden jubilee of the country's 1973 Constitution, the mobile application has been developed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting under the leadership of Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb in collaboration with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA).

The application will act as a digital source to help raise awareness among the general public about the 1973 Constitution. Shehbaz Sharif said the Constitution had its roots in the parliament, adding that according to the world-recognized concept, the judiciary can only interpret the law, but cannot re-write it. "It does not happen anywhere in the world that a court issues a stay order against a legislation which is still in the making," he said. He urged the judiciary to reassess its

Judiciary can interpret law, but can't re-write it: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said there was no example anywhere in the world that the court had stayed law of the parliament.

He said the parliament will use its constitutional and legal right. He said he hoped that the judiciary will uphold the constitution and the law. Addressing the launch of the 1973 Constitution mobile application, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said it was time for the state institutions to get united for upholding the Constitution and keeping the national interest supreme.

He said Pakistan was currently at the crossroads of constitutional challenges, which required a sense of wholeness to be demonstrated by the state institutions. In connection with the golden jubilee of the country's 1973 Constitution, the mobile application has been developed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting under the leadership of Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb in collaboration with National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA).

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role and become the protector of the Constitution.

The prime minister said the 1973 Constitution was the result of the hard toil of the politicians from all backgrounds, who arrived at a consensus in formulation of the sacred document. He recalled that veteran politicians of their times including Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Mufti Mehmood, Khan Abdul Wali Khan and several others rose above their political differences to write a constitution that acted as a binding force for the federation.

He said although politicians made mistakes in the past, but it was the time to rectify them. "We have indeed learned a lesson and we are making efforts to take Pakistan out of these problems," he said. "Great people learn from their mistakes and hold the national interest high." He said the government took over in difficult time, however, said that it would not hesitate in protecting the State and the Constitution. PM Sharif said on the eve of the 50th anniversary, the decision to include 1973 Constitution in the syllabus at schools and college levels was remarkable in raising awareness about its sanctity.

He expressed the hope that the young generation would learn about the Constitution and healthy academics debates would be held at educational institutions. The prime minister felicitated the parliamentarians, Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf, Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah and NADRA on the launch of the Constitution 1973 mobile application.

Bilawal will lead Pakistan delegation to India: FO

Muhammad Asad

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will lead the Pakistan delegation to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Foreign Ministers (CFMs) meeting scheduled to be held in Goa, India on the 4th and 5th of next month.

During her weekly news Briefing in Islamabad on Thursday, Pakistan's Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch told the media that the Foreign Minister will attend the meeting of the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers at the invitation of the current chair of the SCO CFM Dr. S Jaishankar, Minister for External Affairs of the Republic of India.

To another question regarding any bilateral engagement/ interaction with his Indian Counterpart or any other high-level dignitary of India, the Spokesperson told the reporters that the proposed visit of the Foreign Minister is to attend the SCO meeting, not a bilateral trip to a neighboring country. Foreign Office was, currently in the preparatory phase for the tour and any further development/ decision in this regard would be announced in due course of time.

While responding to a media query regarding the return of the Pakistan Envoy to Kabul, the Spokesperson noted that Pakistan and Afghanistan

are two neighbors and it is important for the two nations to have cordial relations and engage in a continuous robust dialogue on all issues. According to Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, Pakistan was committed to a peaceful and state Afghanistan and Pakistan will continue its engagement with Afghan authorities on issues that arise.

Pakistan believes that the return of the Pakistani head of the mission will contribute to our efforts to further consolidate dialogue with Afghan interim government, added Mumtaz Zahra Baloch. To another question regarding an apparent slowdown in CPEC projects, the Spokesperson noted that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the crown jewel of China-Pakistan Economic collaboration.

According to her, the CPEC has offered tremendous economic, monetary, and trade benefits to the people of Pakistan, in respect of massive Chinese investment, energy projects, road infrastructure and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) boosted job opportunities, and economic revival in the country. The Spokesperson was of the view that the CPEC projects are contributing to the economic development and prosperity of the people of Pakistan, while those projects also have the potential to prove their worth in the future.

While commenting on the situation in Sudan, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said

that the government of Pakistan is closely following the developments in Sudan and is continuously in contact with local authorities and the Pakistan Embassy in Khartoum to ensure the safety and security of the Pakistani diaspora in Sudan.

According to her, around 1500 Pakistanis are currently in Sudan whose safety and well-being is a key priorities of the government of Pakistan. To another question regarding the worst human rights situation in India Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK), the Spokesperson said that Indian occupation forces continue to impose curb and restrictions on the religious freedom of the people of Kashmir during the holy month of Ramadan.

According to her, Pakistan would continue to raise its voice on human rights suppression in Indian-occupied territory, while Islamabad will extend all political, diplomatic, and moral support to Kashmiri people in their just struggle for the right to self-determination until and unless they became able to achieve their goal through just, free and fair plebiscite under the UN charter. The Spokesperson stressed that Pakistan's participation in SCO Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in India clearly reflects the country's commitment to the SCO charter, regional affairs, and the overall well-being of the people of the region.

JUI-F chief rules out talks with PTI chief

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Jamiat Ulema Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) Chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman on Thursday ruled out the possibility of holding talks with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chief Imran Khan who was bent upon creating hurdles for the country.

Addressing a press conference here, the JUI-F Chief wondered how dialogue could be held with a person who said that he would accept the elections after he received results and

got a two-thirds majority. He alleged that the PTI Chief wanted things to be done according to his wishes as he had already said that he would dissolve the assemblies again even if he got a simple majority.

He regretted that Imran Khan, who should have been disqualified, was being made the centre of national politics. He underlined the need for the judiciary for dispensing justice, adding that holding elections within 90 days was a constitutional obligation but how a date

given by the PTI Chief after the stipulated time could be acceptable?

He said, "The Parliament had passed resolutions expressing no confidence in the three-member bench of the supreme court." How the political parties could be forced to hold talks with a person who did not have regard for the national interest, he remarked. He said the country was confronting a number of economic challenges due to the flawed policies of the PTI government.

Punjab elections delay case Govt, PTI assures SC to resolve elections issue through dialogue

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Issuing a five-page order in response to plea seeking general elections to all national and provincial assemblies simultaneously the Supreme Court Thursday agreed with deliberations process amongst senior Cabinet members of the government and their interaction with senior officer bearer of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) after Eid-ul-Fitr holidays in the matter.

Appearing before the 3-member bench led by the Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial, comprising Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar, senior leadership of all the political parties except Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Pakistan (JUIP) apprised the position of their parties on a political dialogue being held for settling a single date for holding general election to national assembly and four provincial assemblies.

Representing PPP, senior advocate Supreme Court Farooq H. Naek submitted saying a process for conducting such dialogue has been initiated within the coalition partners of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). He further said that it is agreed that heads of all political parties shall meet with the opposition parties to arrive at a consensus date for holding the general elections to the said assemblies simultaneously.

On behalf of the PML-N, Khawaja Saad Rafique endorsed the statement of Farooq H. Naek and expressed willingness of his party to enter into negotiations with all political parties to arrive at a consensus date for holding of general election simultaneously. Qamar Zaman Kaira, for PPP; Engineer Sabir Hussain Kaimkhani for MQM(P); Tariq Bashir Cheema, PML(Q); Israr Ullah Tareen for BAP and Sardar Ayaz Sadiq duly instructed on behalf of BNP (Mengal) adopted stance of the Naek and Khawaja Saad Rafique.

"The PTI's Vice President Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Hussain Qureshi assured the court that notwithstanding the misgivings of his party with the political environment and disposition, his party was willing to move forward within the framework of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan,

1973 to negotiate on an agreed date for holding of General Elections of the National Assembly and four Provincial Assemblies simultaneously", stated in the order.

However, Qureshi emphasised that the process of negotiations should not be open ended and not to be turned into a ploy for delaying elections, which is the apprehension of his party. He further submitted that such process should be regulated by a timeframe to ensure that the outcome is accomplished expeditiously, failing which the Court's decision for General Elections for the Provincial Assembly of Punjab to be held on May 14 be complied.

On the occasion, Siraj-ul-Haq, Ameer Jamat-e-Islami also appeared before the bench saying, "Dialogue and consultation is not an option in public affairs but a duty as enunciated in the Holy Qur'an". He submitted that the 1973 Constitution forms the inalienable basis for our political structure through democratic government for which elections are indispensable.

According to him the election is not a matter concerning two political parties only but the will of the nation as a whole, adding the world is changing and Pakistan must resolve its own issues. He has further stated that for a political dialogue it is essential for all participants to be flexible about their respective positions and the approach of the parties should not be dictated by ego or pride. He suggested a timeframe under which two important events ought to be accounted for: firstly, the wheat harvesting season in May and secondly the occasion of Hajj. According to him, General Elections could be held immediately thereafter.

The top court said in its order, Having heard the positive statements of political leadership of the country representing all major political parties with respect to the simultaneous holding of general elections of the national assembly and four provincial assemblies gives cause for optimism that they would agree to an election date sooner rather than later.

While citing its earlier order the

court said the judgment relating to May 14 as general election in Punjab Assembly is in field which ruling is binding on all judicial and executive authorities. The bench said in its order, "We are cognizant that if political dialogue extends to address all grievances, then it is likely to be a lengthy process and the correct forum for that is the political arena and political institutions. However, we did not find any reservations to the negotiations being centred solely on a one-point agenda, namely, consensual fixation of a date for holding of general elections of the national assembly and four provincial assemblies which is a constitutional and legal question. It is important that such result is accomplished expeditiously because our judgment rendered in Constitution Petition No.5 of 2023 on 04.04.2023 has already fixed the date of elections to the Punjab Provincial Assembly as 14.05.2023. That judgment holds the field and, therefore, its ruling is binding on all judicial and executive authorities in the country under Article 189 and Article 190 of the Constitution".

The Bench said in its order, "Therefore, the proposal that the first meeting of the representatives of all political parties be held today was appreciated and welcomed by the Court. The Court adjourned the matter till 4:00 pm. The Attorney General for Pakistan was directed to report the progress made in the matter today in Chambers".

Later, the Attorney General for Pakistan along with senior Advocate Supreme Court Farooq H. Naek met the Bench in Chambers and apprised them of deliberations amongst the senior Cabinet members of the Government and their interaction with a senior officer bearer of the PTI. They submitted that a recess is being taken on account of Eid-ul-Fitr holidays because several political leaders and party heads have already left or leaving Islamabad for their hometowns to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr. However, a meeting has been scheduled amongst the said leaders on 26.04.2023. Later, the bench adjourned hearing of the matter till April 27.

Pakistan to celebrate Eidul Fitr on Saturday

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Shawwal moon could not be sighted in Pakistan on Thursday, resultantly, Eid ul Fitr will be celebrated across the country on Saturday (April 22) — making Ramadan of 30 days.

In a press conference in Islamabad, Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Chairman Maulana Abdul Khabeer Azad said: "We have not received any testimony of the sighting of the Shawwal moon across the country." "Eid ul Fitr will be held across the country on Saturday, April 22. The sky was clear in most parts of the country, while it was cloudy in some places," he added. The presser came after the committee's meeting — held at the religious affairs ministry with Maulana Khabir in the chair — ended.

Members of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee, representatives of the Department of Meteorology, Suparco, and other relevant organisations

were present at the meeting. The committee made the decision after receiving input regarding the sighting of the moon from all over the country. Earlier, zonal committees from Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Sukkur, and Quetta confirmed that they had received no testimonies of the moon sighting.

In Karachi, Hafiz Mohammad Salafi — who headed the meeting in the metropolis — said the moon could not be sighted in the city as the zonal committee did not receive testimonies. He said that the moon could have been sighted by 7:17pm. Similarly, in Lahore, the moon could have been sighted by 7:10pm. However, dark clouds and strong winds precluded the possibility of moonsighting.

Zonal committees in Peshawar, Quetta and Sukkur all confirmed that the moon had not been sighted and no testimonies had been received from anyone. The Meteorological Department

and astronomers had previously said that there was little possibility of moon-sighting today and Eid ul Fitr would take place on Saturday. The federal government has announced that the Eid ul Fitr holidays will commence tomorrow (Friday) and will go on till Tuesday (April 25). The moon was sighted in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and as a result, the Gulf states will celebrate the religious event on Friday.

Australian Muslim Council, in a statement, announced that since the Eid moon could not be sighted today, the country would observe the religious festival on April 22 (Saturday). According to international media, Brunei, Japan, the Philippines and Thailand will celebrate Eid ul Fitr on April 22. Eid will also be observed in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore on Saturday as the crescent could not be sighted. In Bangladesh, the meeting to sight the moon will be convened today (Friday).

Dialogue imperative for stability: FM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Thursday said dialogue among political parties was essential to achieve political and economic stability.

Addressing a news conference here, he said Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was making endeavors to convince the allied parties to take forward this process. He said, "Our effort is to save democracy and the federation."

The Foreign Minister however said it will be difficult for PPP to convince the allied parties to hold dialogue with the opponents until and unless the court order of holding elections in Punjab on May 14 was taken back. He said holding elections in one province at this point in time will impact the results of elections in the other three provinces. "We support the idea of holding the elections on one day across the country." Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said the coalition parties were standing firm in backing the decisions taken on the platform of the Parliament.



Murad grants 120 days remission to convicted prisoners

KARACHI (PPI): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has granted special remission to all the convicted prisoners languishing in the Prisons of Sindh Province on the eve of the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr. The Chief Minister through a summary floated by the Home Department granted special remission to all the convicted prisoners languishing in the Prisons of the Province on the eve of the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr for 120 days, except the condemned prisoners convicted of murder, espionage, subversion, anti-state activities, and terrorist activities and those undergoing sentences under the Foreigners Act 1946. In this regard, the home department would issue a notification.

New Chinese CG calls on CM: New Consul

General of China in Karachi Mr. Yang Yundong called on Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah here at CM House on Thursday.

The chief minister welcoming the new consul general of China in Karachi said that the friendship between the two countries was founded by Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Since the brotherly relationship between the two countries has gone on strengthened with the passage of time, Mr. Shah told the new council general to consider Sindh as his second home. He added that the provincial government and the people of the province value brotherly relationships with the Chinese. The visiting consul general thanked the chief minister for his support and cooperation.

Three perished in road accident; five injured

KARACHI (PPI): Three people, including two women and a child, were killed, and five others critically wounded when a speeding bus ran over a rickshaw near Wandhar Adda at Chowk Sarwar Shaheed on Mianwali Road near Multan on Thursday.

The accident occurred when the speeding bus, en route to Mianwali from Karachi, rammed a rickshaw near Sarwar Shaheed Chowk. As soon as news of the accident broke, the police and Rescue 1122 personnel rushed to the site. The performed rescue operation. According to Rescue 1122, two injured were shifted to Nishtar Hospital Multan while three were taken to Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) Hospital Sarwar Shaheed for medical assistance.

The eyewitnesses said that the members in the rickshaw were all from the same family. They said that the bus was in high speed when it hit the rickshaw.

High prices, economic meltdown overshadow Eid celebrations

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Shopping is generally believed to be synonymous with the spirit of Eid. From buying new clothes to food items and other necessities required to cook Eid-special cuisines, the festive feels incomplete without meeting friends and relatives adorned in new attires, eating food items untouched long ago due to various reasons, and sharing happiness with others.

However, this year has people's spirits low as their budgets have shrunk compared to their desires, or more precisely desires cum needs. All thanks to burgeoning inflation and stagnant income, a private television channel reported Thursday.

The markets are drawing crowds but most people concur that they have truncated budgets for Eid shopping. High prices of various articles and inflation

have shrunk options for buyers. It is a safe estimate that items are now priced at atleast 100% higher prices than they were at a year ago. Inflation does not hit anyone hard if their income corresponds to its speed of increase. It has pushed the salaried class, a main component of the economy, out of the "circle of happiness" thus defying the basic definition of economy – known by the name of "circulation of money".

TENDER NOTICE

- Elite Force Police Department Invites sealed tenders for the repair work in Elite HQs at Malik Saad Shaheed Police Lines Peshawar in the current financial year i.e, 2023-24 based on the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Procurements Rules 2014 from approved Government Contractors having previous experience as well as registered with Income tax / Sales Tax Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority, PEC and must be enlisted with C & W Department Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Tenders be addressed to the Deputy Commandant Elite Force Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The last date for submission of proposals is **9th May 2023** and will be opened on the same date at **11:00 hours**, in the presence of committee and intending bidders in office of the Deputy Commandant Elite Force CPO Peshawar. The Completion period of Special/ Petty repair work will be 45 days. Budget of Rs. 5000000 (Rs. 5.0 Million only) is available to meet the expenditure.
- The offers shall be accepted only with original bidding documents, Photocopies will not be accepted.
- Bidding documents including list of Repair Works, Terms and Conditions can be obtained from the office of the Accountant Elite Force CPO Peshawar on any working day in office hour's upto **8th May 2023**.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- The Bidders shall submit 02% Earnest Money with their quotations in the shape of Bank Drafts of any scheduled Bank in favour of the Deputy Commandant Elite Force Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In case of non acceptance of tenders, the earnest money will be refunded after finalization of tender.
- In case of acceptance of tenders, the bidders shall deposit a security @ 10% of the total value in the form of Call Deposit on the name of the Deputy Commandant Elite Force Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Peshawar and sign the contract agreement on stamp paper with Elite Force Police Department which will be applicable upto 30-06-2024; Security shall be refunded on successful completion of the contract.
- The bidder must submit documentary evidence that the firm has capability/capacity to perform the working being tendered.
- The work shall be carried out in Elite Hqrs Building at Malik Saad Shaheed Police Lines Peshawar. The work done by the contractor shall be inspected physically, if not found according to the standard will be rejected and may also result in forfeiture of security and black listing the firm.
- Rates quoted would be considered only if the same are in Pak Rupees and inclusive of all govt. taxes/duties/charges/freight charges as applicable.
- Work shall be completed within 45 days from the date of work order / contract agreement.
- The bidder will inspect the proposed work before submitting the bid if desired so.
- Conditional Tender / Application will not be entertained.
- The Contractor / bidder who quote their bids / rates more than 10% below the Engineer's estimates shall submit an Additional Security in the form of Bank Draft equal to 8% of the Estimated cost. After commencement of work by the successful bidder 8% of the Estimated cost. After commencement of work by the successful bidder 8% Bank Draft may be released with a bank guarantee of the same amount from the scheduled bank.

(IRFAN TARIQ) PSP

Deputy Commandant, Elite Force, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Peshawar.

NOTICE INVITING E-BIDDING

The Public Health Engineering Division DIKhan invites electronic Bids from the eligible Govt Registered Contractors on Single Stage Two Envelope procedure for the following works:-

S. No	Name of Work	Estimated Coat In M	Bid Security i/c stamp duty in M	Period for Completion	Last Date for Submission of Sealed Bids.
CONSTRUCTION OF SOLAR BASED WSS IN PK-98 UNDER DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT PLAN ADP NO. 220693 (2022-23) DISTRICT DIKhan					
1	Water Supply Scheme Village Buzdar U/C Kirri Shamoza	8.321	0.186	As per work order	15.05.2023 at 12:00 Noon
	Sub Head:- T/Well, P/Chamber, with C/Hut, C/Wall, S/Main				
2	Water Supply Scheme Village Sakhani U/C Paroa	8.313	0.186	-do-	-do-
	Sub Head:- T/Well, P/Chamber, with C/Hut, C/Wall, S/Main				
3	Water Supply Scheme village Lunda Para U/C Miran	13.045	0.280	-do-	-do-
	Sub Head:- T/Well, P/Chamber, with C/Hut, C/Wall, S/Main				
4	Water Supply Scheme village Gishkori U/C Miran	11.519	0.250	-do-	-do-
	Sub Head:- T/Well, P/Chamber, with C/Hut, C/Wall, S/Main				
5	Water Supply Scheme village Adil Sipra U/C Naivela	10.286	0.225	-do-	-do-
	Sub Head:- T/Well, P/ Chamber 12x12, C/Wall, Constr: of Plate form/Water Collecting point, S/Tank, Provision made for R.O Plant, S/Main, D/System				
6	Water Supply Scheme village Ghounser U/C Naivela	10.307	0.229	-do-	-do-
	Sub Head:- T/Well, P/Chamber 12x12, C/Wall, Constr: of Plate form/Water Collecting point, S/Tank, Provision made for R.O Plant, S/Main, D/System				
7	Water Supply Scheme Kirri Shamoza U/C Miran & U/C Naivela	1.647	0.040	-do-	-do-
	Sub Head:- Supply Main				
Construction of WSS under ADP No. 265/210473 (2022-23) District DIKhan					
8	WSS FaqeerAbad at Gara Rehman	10.093	0.220	-do-	-do-

1. BOQ's can be downloaded up to closing date of tender, from PHE web site (www.phedk.gov.pk). 2. The Bidders Shall submit a single envelope (Sealed Bid), which shall contain separate sealed envelopes of Financial and technical proposals. 3. The Bid security and quoted Rates on the BOQs shall be sealed in the Financial Proposal Envelopes and Duly stamped with the Firms/Co; Seals, and separate Affidavit of Declaration on Stamp-Paper duly attested by Oath Commissioner shall be provided in the Technical Proposal Envelopes wherein declare that the required amount of security has been provided in the Financial Proposal Envelopes. 4. In the Technical Proposal Envelop technical proposal shall contain documents i.e. CNIC, PEC Registration, Valid enlistment certificates with works department, Form-H in case of companies, Rate Analysis if rate below 10%, (FBR & KPPRA online Verification certificate / Slip) Affidavit of CDR on Stamp Paper, Work order of past 03 years of the same nature, For Water Supply Drilling Machinery owner ship and joint venture Certificate on stamp paper. The Technical proposal shall be opened on the same day submission of bids at 2.00 p.m. in presence of Contractors or their Firms authorized representative (Optional). And shall be processed for Technical Scrutiny, those who are found eligible shall be declared Responsive and shall be informed for further opening of their financial proposal/Bids. 5. The bidders are required to send their bids through courier to the undersigned office. 6. The KPPRA Notification No.6058-71 Peshawar, dated 10 May 2022 is applicable. 7. The call deposits of all the contractors will be retained till approval of the tenders by the tender approving authority. 8. All other terms and conditions will be as per KPPRA rules, PEC, SBDs and other relevant laws. 9. Govt taxes shall be applied as prevailing. 10. Tender Fee 0.03% on bid cost in shape of CDR.

Engr: Zeeshan Khan Executive Engineer
Public Health Engg: Division DIKhan

INF(P) 976/23



PAKISTAN ENGINEERING COUNCIL

One-Day Seminar for Awareness of "Price Adjustment Formula" under PEC Guidelines

- PEC developed following Price Adjustment procedure in order to provide an equitable mechanism for implementation by all concerned and notified/circulated to relevant departments/stakeholders and also uploaded on PEC Website:-
 - Unprecedented Price Hike in Construction Inputs – Criteria and Procedure for Incorporation of Price Adjustment Provisions in the Ongoing Contracts August 2022.
 - Standard Procedure and Formula for Price Adjustment (Revised Edition)–May 2022.
- PEC regularly receives queries from the construction industry warranting thorough understanding/clarification of the above documents in their respective project (ongoing and futuristic). In order to get the stakeholders/ procuring agencies and professional engineers engaged in contract management/procurement acquainted with the provisions of Price Adjustment, PEC has arranged "One-Day Seminar" across the country as per following schedule:-

City	Date/ Day	Venue	Focal Person
Islamabad	9 th May 2023 (Tuesday)	PEC HQ, Islamabad	1. Engr. Muhammad Arif Nadeem (Project Director) 0333-7773337 2. Engr. Tajammul Hussain 0348-5562967
Peshawar	16 th May 2023 (Tuesday)	PEC R.O, Peshawar	1. Engr. Muhammad Nawaz (Project Director) 0333-9107275 2. Engr. Abdul Rehman (Sr. Deputy Registrar) 0346-9002910
Karachi	30 th May 2023 (Tuesday)	PEC R.O, Karachi	1. Engr. Ali Zafar (Deputy Registrar) 0336-9224600
Lahore	6 th June 2023 (Tuesday)	PEC R.O, Lahore	1. Engr. Riaz Ahmad (Project Director) 0301-4163577 2. Engr. Wasif Irshad Bhatti (Sr. Deputy Registrar) 0333-6400000
Quetta	20 th June 2023 (Tuesday)	PEC R.O, Quetta	1. Engr. Arbab Mujeeb Ur Rehman (Deputy Registrar) 0333-3101152
Gilgit Baltistan	11 th July 2023 (Tuesday)	PEC B.O, Gilgit	1. Engr. Umair Haider Khan (Assistant Registrar) 0307-8055500
Muzaffarabad	25 th July 2023 (Tuesday)	PEC B.O, Muzaffarabad	1. Engr. Muhammad Junaid Khan (Assistant Registrar) 0347-2417304

- The Registration fee for the seminar is Rs. 2,000 (Rupees two thousand only) per nominee to be deposited in HBL online Account No: 0042 7901 5786 03 Branch Code: 0602.
- Who can attend:**
 - Engineers registered with PEC and engaged in procurement and contract management.
 - Government/Public Sector Procuring Agencies/Department (Federal/Provincial/Local Government).
 - Engineering Consultants/ Construction Managers/ Professionals.
- Interested department/organization may send nomination of suitable professionals in city of their choice related to the subject topic in following format along with scanned copy of fee receipt through email to **m.e@pec.org.pk**.

Sr No	Name & Designation	Name of Organization with address	Email	Contact No.	*PEC Registration No. (in case of Engineer)	Choice of City

*Certificate will be awarded to the participants. One CPD point will be awarded to Engineer registered with PEC. For any assistance or clarification, please contact Engr. Muhammad Saad Jamil (03365099064) or focal person(s) of concerned city.

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PITB, Unicef to collaborate for social protection programs

LAHORE (APP): National Consultant Social Protection UNICEF Pakistan Dr Jasim Anwar paid a visit to the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) headquarters at Arfa Software Technology Park and held a meeting with Board Chairman Faisal Yousaf.

Both sides discussed working together on creating an enabling environment for implementation of social protection programs and development of a social protection registry for Punjab. PITB Director General (DG) e-Governance Sajid Latif was also present.

Unicef agreed to facilitate by organising workshops for the stakeholder, which would help the PITB develop Punjab's social protection registry. The PITB agreed to extend its technical support in successfully rolling out the initiative and expand its overall outreach to the public.

Implementation a comprehensive action plan

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Caretaker Local Government Minister Ibrahim Murad has directed for implementing a comprehensive action plan for maintaining cleanliness on Eid-ul-Fitr. He requested the people to launch their complaints regarding sanitation through helpline 1139.

Chairing a meeting to review cleanliness arrangements, the minister directed the chief officers of local bodies and heads of waste management companies in the province to personally lead and supervise the sanitation operation in their respective jurisdictions. He said that the officers concerned and sanitary staff would not take any leave during Eid days and would continue to work throughout the Eid holidays.

On the other hand leaves of Rescuers have been restricted and the Rescuers shall remain on duty during Eid-ul-Fitr.

In this regard, Secretary Emergency Services, Dr Rizwan Naseer appreciated the Rescue staff for providing round the clock emergency services even while fasting during Ramadan. He also reviewed the emergency arrangements through a video link meeting with all District Emergency Officers (DEOs) held at Emergency Services Headquarters.

Young man shot dead

KARACHI (INP): A young man was shot dead in Sohrah Goth, according to police.

They added that Asal Khan, 22, was killed near the Junejo Colony graveyard. The body was shifted to the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital for a post-mortem examination. An Edhi Foundation spokesperson said that the victim left his residence to offer Fajr prayer but could not return home. Later, his bullet-riddled body was found near the graveyard. Meanwhile, the trussed-up body of a watchman was found inside a factory in New Karachi on Wednesday.

The New Karachi Industrial Area police said that the body of Ghulam Murtaza, 35, was recovered from a towel factory in Block-13-A, Sector-12-D.

An Edhi spokesperson said that the body was lain there for the past many old. There were also marks of torture and his hands and legs were also tied. The corpse was shifted to the ASH.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan and caretaker provincial minister Abdul Haleem giving a shield to Special Assistant Mehr Elahi.

PPP leader calls for simultaneous National, Provincial assemblies polls

PESHAWAR (APP): Former provincial president PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engineer Mohammad Hamayun Khan has called for simultaneous National and provincial assembly elections in the country.

Talking to APP here on Thursday, the PPP stalwart said that due to the peculiar situation, there is a need for settlement of some issues before the general elections. He said that PPP Co-Chairman and former

President Asif Ali Zardari had also favoured the same-day simultaneous elections across the country.

He said that the PPP leadership had also explained the reasons behind holding simultaneous polls that how it would be possible to hold free and fair elections under the supervision of a politically elected provincial government.

In case, going for the elections of only provincial assemblies in two provinces will create a political crisis and holding free, fair and transparent elections for the National Assembly will become impossible.

Furthermore, he said that separate polling of the provincial and National Assemblies will increase the cost of elections, which is not suitable in the prevailing situation of the country. Therefore, he said the leadership of PPP is advocating for simultaneous polls in the country.

To a question regarding the role of the establishment, he said that every constitutional institution

has its due role to play and their working within their constitutional ambit could guarantee free and fair elections in the country. He termed the stance of the establishment during the current situation as welcoming for the future of the country.

He said that this time, the establishment has clarified in unequivocal terms that they are with the people and constitution of Pakistan and will play their role within the constitutional ambit and will not interfere in political matters.

The PPP stalwart said that politicians should set aside their political interests to give priority to national interests over their personal interests. But, unfortunately, he said some politicians are not behaving in a responsible manner. He said that any politician, who takes an oath of public office solemnizes that he will not utilize national secrets for the promotion of his personal interests.

He said that the PPP chairman Zulfikar Ali

Bhutto had assumed the reign of power in a very odd political situation and there were many national secrets in his chest, but he had never disclosed them even at the time when he was given capital punishment and the judges who have sentenced him to death have also declared his punishment tantamount to judicial murder.

He said that today despite the deteriorating political and economic situation, the leader of a political party is disclosing national secrets and spreading anarchy and uncertainty to promote his personal political agenda without showing any concern for the national losses due to his behaviour.

Engineer Mohammad Hamayun Khan has said that the party is emerging as a top popular political party as several influential political families are sitting to join it soon. He said that PPP believes in negotiations and will welcome any serious move for the resolution of the prevailing political stalemate.



PESHAWAR: Provincial leader of PTI Fazal-e-Elahi addressing a press conference. — F.P. photo by Ghulam Murtaza

KPCTA, NUST ink memorandum of agreement

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) and National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), Islamabad signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to encourage University-Industry collaboration.

Director Administration and Finance and Manager Digital Transformation cell visited the university on the directions of Director General KPCTA. Under the agreement, KPCTA and NUST will collaborate on various cultural and tourism promotional activities,

research, and training initiatives in the fields of culture, hospitality, and tourism.

The provincial government is firmly devoted to the promotion of culture and tourism as an established industry within their jurisdiction.

To accomplish this, they aim to create connections between academia and industry, reduce any gaps in the industry, provide opportunities for exposure to new talent, and ultimately increase employment prospects.

KPCTA's Director of Administration and Finance, Khurshid Alam

emphasized the authority's commitment to promoting tourism in the province and outlined ongoing efforts, including the Integrated Tourism Zones project, the launch of a tourism police force, and a 24/7 helpline to support tourists.

Director Khurshid Alam applauded NUST's efforts in technology, digitalization, and tourism research and expressed confidence that the partnership will yield tangible benefits.

The documents were duly endorsed with the signatures of Associate Dean (SEECs) Dr. Dr Faisal

Shafait along with Head of the Department Research (NBS) Prof. Dr. Muhammad Sabir and the Director CTA Khurshid Alam.

The event was graced by the presence of senior faculty member Dr. Hassan Ali Khattak, Associate Professor of the Computer Science department at NUST.

Senior academic staff present on the occasion highlighted the potential for research cooperation and offered their full support by delivering technology-based solutions with a focus on tourism, hospitality, and culture.

Treatment under Sehat Card Plus program restored in KP: Health Adviser

Treatment under Sehat Card Plus program restored in KP: Health Adviser

PESHAWAR (APP): Adviser to the Chief Minister for Health Services, Dr Abid Jamil here Thursday said that treatment under Sehat Card plus program has been restored in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after successful negotiations with the State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan.

Addressing a press conference here, Dr Abid Jamil said that the caretaker government has released Rs 2 billion to State Life and another Rs 2 billion would be released after Eidul Fitr.

He said the past government has started the project in haste and without proper homework to ensure its financial sustainability that resulted in an increase in premium amount to a significant level besides creating a lot of financial problems for the caretaker government.

Abid Jamil said there was hardly in any country in world where free treatment was being provided to the entire population and taxpayers' money was being spent on treatment of influential and wealthy patients.

He clarified that the program was not being closed and would continue. He said Sehat Card plus program would be rationalized and a high level policy board comprising members of healthcare commission, health



department and relevant organizations would be constituted to approve penal hospitals after evaluating its services, equipment and doctors strength.

He said recommendations of the policy board would be tabled before the cabinet for approval. He said efforts would be made to provide free of charge treatment under Sehat Card to poor people and exclude wealthy people.

Chief Executive Officer, Sehat Cards Plus, Dr Riaz Tanoli said that out of Rs33.4 billion arrears, Rs19 billion were paid to the state life insurance corporation and Rs14 billion were still outstanding arrears that would be cleared soon after receiving the tranche amount from the Federal Government.

Abid Jamil said that Rs238 billion were expected to be received from

Federal Government soon that would help address financial problems of Medical Teaching Institutions and Sehat Card Plus.

He said 66 percent treatment under Sehat Card was made through private hospitals and 33 percent in government hospitals, adding district headquarters hospitals would be strengthened for extending full health coverage to patients at their doorsteps.

To a question, Riaz Tanoli said that sehat card program has been protected under a law by the provincial assembly and amendment through an elected assembly would be required to make any significant changes or take policy decisions.

To a question, Dr Tanoli said that treatment was being made in the panel hospitals with complete evidence through a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system.

281 inmates released across KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: On directions of Chief Justice Peshawar High Court (PHC) Musarrat Hilali, the District & Sessions Judges of all the districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa along with the Judicial Magistrates and Executive Magistrates made jail visits ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr.

During the visit, they disposed of petty nature cases. Resultantly 281 cases were disposed of and accused were released from jail to celebrate Eid with their loved ones.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zuabir Ali presiding over a meeting regarding teacher's service structure of Municipal Colleges Girls, Boys and City Degree District College.

PRCS aids one lakh flood's victims in 6 months

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has become the only institution to provide free medical facilities and medicines to over 100,000 flood-affected people at their doorstep in 6 months.

In this regard, PRC KP established mobile medical units for the affected people in Dera Ismail Khan, Tank, Nowshera, Charsadda, and Swat in August 2022. A ceremony was held to appreciate the services of staff and volunteers during the emergency phase, where recognition certificates were distributed among the officials and volunteers who participated in the activities.

On this occasion, the Chairman of the PRCS KP said that the Designations in institutions are temporary, and every person working for humanitarian services is obliged to serve humanity. It is only fair to perform the responsibility that one gets in the best possible way. He thanked the Norwegian Red Cross for their assistance during the flood situation in the province. He said that if the Norwegian Red Cross had not increased their resources, we would not have been able to provide free treatment along with free medicines to the affected people at their doorstep in 6 months in the flood-affected areas of the province.

The best thing about this facility is that it was provided at the doorstep of the affected people. "He further stated that after the completion of the emergency phase, our efforts are now towards rehabilitation, which includes the completion of initial surveys. In addition, work is underway on other projects, including the provision of cash for toilet construction, restoration of basic health facilities, and the provision of expenses other than Insaaf sehat cards for the affected persons in government hospitals in Nowshera, Swat, and DI Khan.

On the other hand, the head of the Norwegian Red Cross for Pakistan, Dr. Aliyar Iftikhar, addressing the ceremony said that the Norwegian Red Cross is working with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society throughout the country to help flood victims. The aim is to assist the affected families in times of difficulty. So far, with the cooperation of the Norwegian Red Cross in KP, help has been provided to a total of more than three hundred thousand people in one way or another, including the provision of medical facilities to more than a hundred thousand people.

In this briefing, Secretary Pakistan Red Crescent KP, Syed Ali Hasan, informed that the number of beneficiaries who have been provided with medical facilities and medicines exceeds one hundred thousand, including 21,205 in Charsadda, 22,516 in Dera Ismail Khan, 37,769 in Tank, and 21,784 affected in Swat district.

According to the Pakistan Red Crescent KP, after the floods, from September to December, complaints of Respiratory Tract Infection,

Urinary Tract Infections, Peptic Ulcer Diseases, Skin Diseases, Lower respiratory tract infections and diarrhea remained high among the affected people.

"Afterwards, in January and February, cases of pneumonia, respiratory distress, and tuberculosis were identified, for which Pakistan Red Crescent provided free treatment and medications. According to the report, at present, Pakistan Red Crescent is working on urgent measures including the provision of clean drinking water in the affected areas."

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3-months remission in sentences for prisoners announced

PESHAWAR (INP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has announced a three-month remission in the sentences for prisoners on the eve of Eid ul Fitr.

According to Provincial Home and Tribal Affairs Department, this remission would not be applicable to prisoners sentenced in murder, spying, anti-state activities, terrorism, rape, dacoity, kidnapping, financial crimes and other heinous nature cases.

The male prisoners aged 65 years and female inmates 60 years of age or above and less than 18 years of age, prisoners who completed their 1/3 sentence would get relief.

Lack of funds forces closure of eight PBM shelters in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Director Bait-ul-Mal Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through a letter to the head of shelter homes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa announced the closure of all eight shelter homes in the province due to lack of funds.

The shelter homes would remain active till the last day of Ramadan, which is expected on April 21, said a letter issued by quarters concerned to all the heads of eight Shelter Homes on Thursday.

It is worth mentioning here that the Shelter Homes Project was launched in KP as a joint venture of the federal government and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, under which eight shelter homes were established and kept operational to date.

The letter said that despite repeated requests by PBM to the federal government, as well as recommendations, the requests of the KP Panagah Welfare Board to the provincial

government, none of the governments had transferred funds to Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal to continue the operations of the shelter homes.

Keeping in view the lack of funds, the shelter homes would either be closed or handed over to the provincial government for continuation of operations in the future, it added.

The letter said that the operations of the eight shelter homes would be closed after serving iftari on the

last day of Ramadan, while all the employees of shelter homes would be considered laid off after April 30.

Shelters Home were being closed due to non-provision of funds by the federal government, it said, adding shelters in Peshawar, Mardan, Abbottabad, Swat, Kohat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan would also remain closed, whereas, after April 30, all the employees of the shelters except the security guard would also be relieved.



PESHAWAR: People busy in purchasing sweets at a shop in preparation for upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations.



In brief

Ramdan package distributed F.P. Report

BARA: Ramazan package was given away to 180 deserving families here in Tarkho Kas, Upper Bara, Tirah Valley district Khyber. District Khyber manager Al-Khedmat Foundation Said Shah Afridi, Ameer Jamat-e-Islami, Bara Khan Wali Afridi, Jamat-e-Islami youth wing Kamar Khel Chief Tariq Ameen participated in the well being activity. The Foundation distributed Ramazan packages among the deserving 180 families in Kamar Khel, Bar-Qamber Khel, Sepah, Nakay, Malakdin Khel etc, areas of Tirah Valley. The package comprised flour, pulses, ghee, sugar and other edible items. Dwellers of the area thanked the organization and lauded the welfare doings of it and said in time of need the Foundation extended every possible assistance to them to ease their miseries.

Secretary visits Children Hospital

MULTAN (APP): Secretary Specialized Healthcare & Medical education (SH&ME) south Punjab, Muhammad Afzal Nasir Khan along with Additional Secretary Muzmal Bashir made a detailed visit to Children's Hospital Multan on Thursday. He met with Dean of Children's Hospital, Dr Muhammad Kashif Chishti and discussed various matters in the meeting. The secretary accompanied by the dean and MS, Dr Muhammad Kamran inspected different departments of the hospital, especially the emergency ward, ICUs and operation theaters. He also asked the attendants of patients about the facilities being extended by the hospital. The secretary reviewed the ongoing projects and the medical facilities available to the patients. On this occasion, the senior faculty, including Dr Waqas Imran, Dr Sohail Arshad, Dr Asim Khurshid, and Rana Zulfikar, were also present.

4 killed as car hits bullock cart

VEHARI (PPI): Four people were killed when car hit a bullock cart near Vehari on Thursday. Police said a speeding car hit a bullock cart near Khadir Pul Luddan Hashilpur Road in Vehari. As a result four youth suffered severe injuries and died. The deceased were identified as 24-year-old Zohaib, 25-year-old Saqlain, 24-year-old Shehryar, and 24-year-old Mansoor. The bodies were shifted to a local hospital for medico-legal formalities. Eyewitnesses said that the car was being driven fast and driver could not control its speed while hitting the cart. No arrest could be made till filing this report. The police have started a probe into the incident. A mourning atmosphere prevailed in the houses of victims.

NOCs issued

SARGODHA (APP): The divisional environmental committee meeting was held on Thursday under the chairmanship of Commissioner Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti at his office. The meeting approved issuance of no-objection certificates (NOCs) for establishment of 31 poultry sheds and 19 petrol pumps. The application submitted for issuance of NOCs included 31 from Sargodha district, 11 from Mianwali and eight from Khushab district. Meanwhile, the commissioner distributed NOC certificates among owners of 45 petrol pumps and poultry sheds, approved in the previous meeting.



PABBI: Activists of Anjuman Tajir Mohajar Bazaar Jaloza Camp holding a banner during a rally against aerial firing on Eid night.

Police arrest 22 anti-social elements

KAHUTA (APP): The district police on the directives of Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi Capt. (r) Muhammad Amir Khan, conducted raids in different areas and netted 22 anti-social elements including drug peddlers, bootleggers and recovered over seven kg charras, one kg heroin, 68 liters liquor and five bottles of liquor.

Police spokesman told on Thursday that Waris Khan, Cantt, Naseerabad, Taxila, Saddar Wah and Dhamial police rounded up Idrees, Ijaz, Naeem,

Numan, Shahab ud Din, Sabir, Zakirullah, Haris and Amir Rehman and recovered over seven kg charras and one kg heroin from their possession.

Bani, Race Course, Dhamial, and Kahuta police rounded up six accused, Kashif, Safeer, Kabir, Zahid, Waheed, and Wajid and recovered 68 liters liquor and five bottles of liquor from their possession. Naseerabad police in their operation managed to net a Proclaimed Offender namely Ramazan alias Jani wanted in a double murder case registered in Toba Tek Singh.

The spokesman said, Gungmandi police conducted a raid and netted an accused for carrying fire-works items. He informed, Gujar Khan police in their ongoing operations against illegal LPG and petrol agencies arrested five namely Aftab, Ashfaq, Sabir, Hanif and Nisar. He said that police also conducted raids in different areas and held 39 professional beggars. The SSP said that strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against the lawbreakers and operations against the criminals would continue.

Anti-dengue measures discussed

SIALKOT (APP): Deputy Commissioner Sialkot Adnan Mehmood Awan has said all departments should intensify their measures for dengue prevention.

Chairing the of District Emergency Response Committee (DERC) for Anti-Dengue meeting here on Thursday, he said that notices should be issued to violators of the Dengue Act, cases should be registered against them and their properties should be sealed if they fail to follow the standard operating procedures (SOPs) despite warnings. The deputy commissioner ordered for issuing show-cause notices to 18 dengue focal persons of various government departments and android users, who did not participate in the training session of the anti-dengue application for the end-users, organized by the Punjab Health Department.

He said the android users, who were negligent in anti-dengue activities and doing bogus actions, Punjab Employees Efficiency Discipline and Accountability (PEEDA) Act would be imposed on them. He also stressed ensuring attendance of the district officers and focal persons of all government departments at the anti-dengue committee meetings. The DC said that dengue larvae had been found at 50 different hotspots in Sialkot district. He said that for preventing dengue spread again, environment would have to be kept clean and dry and departments must perform their responsibilities efficiently.

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Mainly dry weather likely in Balochistan

QUETTA (APP): The Met Office on Thursday predicted mainly dry weather in most parts of Balochistan while gusty winds in central & south-eastern parts and partly cloudy in southwestern areas of the province during the next 24 hours.

"However, there is a chance of light rain and drizzle at isolated places in districts Kech including its suburbs." According to the Met Office, the minimum temperature in Quetta was recorded at 11.0-degrees centigrade and 2.9 degrees centigrade in Ziarat on Thursday. While rain was received in Loralai.

Municipal secretary for cleaning of City: Municipal Secretary Mir Dostain Khan Jamal deni on Thursday said that the cleaning arrangements

would be effective on the routes leading to mosques, Imam Bargahs and graveyards on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. He expressed these views while talking to APP regarding Eid-ul-Fitr.

He said, "The holidays of the municipal employees have also been cancelled and they have been put on alert on duty with the aim to provide facilities to people on the occasion of Eid." He said sufficient arrangements would be made for cleanliness throughout the city, while special duties of the municipal staff were assigned on the routes going to mosques, Eid places, Imam Bargahon and graveyards for the facilitation of masses during the Eid-ul Fitr prayer and afterward.

Fake drugs seized F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Drug control staff seized fake and spurious drugs worth more than Rs1 million, said officials on Thursday.

The drug control team led by Dr Rehmat Shah Garwaki and Imran Burki on a tip off along with other staff and Gomal Police raided a house in Muslim Town Anjumabad on Multan Road where hundreds of injections including various brands of ceftriaxone, cefoperazone, sulbactam, dry suspensions, syrups, tablets, capsules, packaging materials, unit cartons and labels were recovered.

3 died, 2 injured in road mishap

MUZAFFARGARH (INP): Three members of a family including an elderly woman, her daughter and a minor girl were killed and another two sustained injuries in a van-rickshaw collision near Khokhar Adda on Mianwali-Muzaffargarh road in Kot Addu district on Thursday.

According to details, the van was travelling towards Chowk Sarwar Shaheed and collided head-on with a rickshaw near Khokhar Chowk.

As a result, three rickshaw passengers of one family including a minor girl Muqaddas (6) d/o Umair, an elderly woman Naseem Bibi (80), and her daughter Saira (20) died on the spot while two other passengers including the deceased woman's son Abdul Kareem (38), and a woman Misbah (30) wife of Irfan sustained injuries and shifted to Nishtar Hospital Multan. Bodies had been shifted to DHQ hospital Kot Addu for postmortem examination. Chowk Sarwar Shaheed police registered a case. Further investigation was in process.

Smuggled oil recovered: The district government and police have recovered 229,156 litre of smuggled oil during a crackdown started from the last of March against oil smuggling and illegal oil agencies across the district. As per directives of the District Police Officer (DPO) Tanveer Ahmed Malik, the police started a crackdown against smuggled oil and illegal oil agencies. The police have registered 205 cases during the two months and recovered 229,156 litre smuggled oil of worth over Rs 64 million. The police have also taken 45 tankers and trailers into custody during the crackdown. The police arrested 176 outlaws involved in running illegal oil agencies and smuggling oil.

3 labourers killed

BAKKAR (PPI): Three labourers, travelling back to their native places to celebrate Eid, were killed and 20 others critically injured in a horrific collision between Toyota Hilux and a Shehzore loader van on Bhakkar-Jhang Road in Bhakkar on Thursday.

On being informed of the tragic mishap, traffic police and Rescue 1122 personnel rushed the site and started rescue operation. The injured are being shifted to Bhakkar District Headquarters Hospital and an emergency has been declared in the hospital, said a rescue official.

Traders, admn agree on shifting of fruits and vegetables market

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The local administration and the traders related to fruits and vegetables business on Wednesday agreed on shifting the market to Mian Banda instead of the Khungi area. The agreement was made during a meeting of the fruits and vegetables' traders association which was attended by the association president Habib Khan, vice president Fazal Razaq, general secretary Muhammad Ibrahim, Gul Nawaz, local government representatives Kalimullah Sarhadi, Shahab Utmani, Muhammad Yousof and others. The traders' leaders met with the tehsil municipal officer Kashif Khan, accountant Badshah Muhammad and Hanifur Rehman. The traders' representatives informed the TMA officials that they had purchased suitable land for the fruits and vegetables market at Mian Banda.

They said that the site was feasible and accessible for all the stakeholders. The traders requested the administration to ensure the market shifted to Mian Banda instead of the Khungi area that was situated away from the city. On this the administration agreed and it was decided that the fruits and vegetables market would be shifted from the main city to Mian Banda.

Jail visited: The district and session judge Lower Dir Ms Phool Bibi along with senior civil judge

Timergara Farmanullah on the directives of the chief justice of Peshawar High Court on Wednesday visited the district jail Timergara and released four inmates Fazal Wahid, Ijaz Ahmad, Abdullah and Noorullah involved in petty nature cases ahead of Eid ul Fitr on the surety of the assistant commissioner's personal bond.

Maryres' children: The Lower Dir deputy commissioner Iftikhar Ahmad and district police officer Tariq Iqbal on Wednesday called on the children of martyrs police and Dir Levis' officials and distributed Eid gifts among them. The additional deputy commissioner Abdul Wali Khan, DSP headquarters Fakhr e Alam Khan and the Lower Dir Chamber of Commerce vice president Muhammad Imran were also in attendance. Speaking on the occasion the DC and DPO paid tributes to all the 50 martyrs of Dir Levies and police department in the district. They said that they would not leave the martyrs' families alone as peace was established due to their eternal sacrifices.

Eid traffic plan: The Lower Dir police issued its traffic plan for Eid days according to which the tourists going to parts of the district would not be fined. A total 158 traffic officials would remain on duty during the Eid days to guide the tourists wishing to visit the scenic spots. Talking to local journalists DSP headquarters Fakhr e Alam Khan said that all the tick-

eting officers had been strictly instructed that no traffic challan would be given to the tourists during Eid, but they would show good behavior with them so that they come here again with nice memories.

The official said that if the tourists faced any problems during their journey, they should immediately contact the control room on telephone number 09459250048 or traffic in-charge Chakdara on 03453970443 or traffic in-charge Timergara on contact number 03453490896. The official said that security would be provided to 158 mosques and 40 eid Gahs on the Eid day in order to avoid any untoward incident.

Prisoners released: In the light of the orders of Lower Dir Chief Justice Peshawar High Court, Additional Sessions Judge Wari Inam Khan visited District Jail Timergara along with Judicial Magistrate and Executive Magistrate issued orders to release those who were involved in small cases, later he visited all the barracks, especially the women's section, juvenile section, hospital, store and cooking house, and expressed satisfaction with all the facilities, he inquired about the problems from the prisoners. However, no complaint was received, the honorable judge also distributed advance Eid to all the inmates of the juvenile section from his own pocket.

Crackdown launched against transport vehicles

HYDERABAD (PPI): The Secretary Regional Transport Authority Muhammad Saleem Memon has launched operation against transporters charging access fares from commuters during Eid ul Fitr and returned extra charged amount Rs 250,000 to the passengers.

According to statement on Thursday, on the direc-

tions of provincial Transport Minister Sharjeel Memon, RTA checked public transport vehicles heading towards Dadu, Larkana, Quetta and other cities of Balochistan from Hyderabad at Petaro Toll Plaza and found transporters charged extra fares from the commuters. RTA staff also seized some public transport

vehicles for violation of government directives and warned that licences of such transport vehicles would be canceled if they could not implement government decision. RTA Secretary Saleem Memon warned that action against transport vehicles charging extra fares would be continued during Eid holidays.

Two women, child crushed to death by bus

MULTAN (INP): Three people — two women and a child — were killed, and five others were critically wounded in Multan on Thursday after a speeding bus ran over a rickshaw near Wandhar Adda at Chowk Sarwar Shaheed on Mianwali Road.

The accident occurred when the speeding bus, en route to Mianwali from Karachi, rammed a rickshaw near Sarwar Shaheed Chowk. As soon as news of the accident broke, the police and Rescue 1122 personnel rushed to the site.

According to Rescue 1122, two injured were shifted to Nishtar Hospital Multan while three were taken to Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) Hospital Sarwar Shaheed for medical assistance. On the other hand, the eyewitnesses said that the members in the rickshaw were all from the same family.

Three commercial vehicles impounded for over-

charging: The district administration on Thursday impounded three commercial vehicles and challaned varied others for overcharging during a special crackdown launched in the district to discourage overcharging on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

In line with special directives of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Omer Jehangir, the district Regional Transport Authority (RTA) launched a crackdown against transporters charging extra fares from citizens and commercial vehicles involved in other violations. The RTA team impounded three commercial vehicles and challaned 15 others for overcharging. The team also cancelled route permits of two vehicles on overloading while a sum of Rs 175,000 was imposed as a fine on various vehicles over different violations during the crackdown.

The DC directed RTA and city traffic police to continue

crackdown during the Eid holidays and ensure strict action against violators. He asked relevant officers to mention the complaint number on the fare lists which were displayed at all bus and wagon stands.

State land retrieved in Sargodha: The Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) Sargodha retrieved state land from grabbers in Chak No. 112-SB, on Thursday, according to a spokesperson.

He said that ACE Regional Director Asma Ejaz Cheema had come to know that some influential people had occupied the state land in 112-SB worth Rs 3 million. She tasked ACE Sargodha Assistant Director Tasawar Bosal to inquire into the matter and take action. The official, along with his team, conducted a raid and got retrieved the state land from illegal occupants, added the spokesperson.

Crisis to confidence - ensuring stability in European Banking System

Farhan Ahmad

THE European banking industry has faced significant challenges in recent years, posing threats to the stability of the financial system. The global financial crisis in 2008 and subsequent regulatory reforms have increased vulnerability in the European banking sector. The collapse of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) has exposed poor risk management practices, leading to contagion risks and doubts about the effectiveness of regulatory mechanisms. Policymakers, regulators, and stakeholders are actively working towards addressing these challenges and finding solutions to ensure the stability of the European banking system.

The implementation of tighter regulations and stronger capitalization requirements by regulators in response to the global

financial crisis in 2008 has increased vulnerability in the European banking sector. While these measures were intended to enhance the stability of banks, they have also resulted in unintended consequences. The contraction in credit supply, as a result of these regulations, has raised concerns about lower economic growth and further deterioration of bank balance sheets. Additionally, the European Union's efforts to address the high stock of non-performing loans have faced challenges in restoring the overall health of the banking sector and facilitating lending to the real economy.

The lingering effects of the global financial crisis, coupled with the burden of regulatory compliance, have posed significant hurdles for European banks. The increased regulatory requirements, combined with market uncertainties and changing consumer behavior, have impacted the profitability and

resilience of banks. Striking the right balance between stability and growth in the banking sector remains a key challenge for policymakers and regulators. Ensuring that banks are adequately capitalized to absorb potential shocks while also supporting credit availability to foster economic growth is crucial. Sustainable and balanced regulatory frameworks, along with effective risk management practices, will be essential in safeguarding the stability and resilience of the European banking system in the long term.

Transparency and risk management are critical aspects of ensuring the stability of the European banking industry. Regulators and banks themselves need to be vigilant in managing risks and ensuring robust risk management practices. Enhancing transparency in banks' operations, financial statements, and risk exposures can help identify and address

potential vulnerabilities in a timely manner. This includes proper disclosure of complex financial instruments, off-balance-sheet activities, and concentration risks in high-risk sectors.

Strengthening capitalization is also crucial for the stability of the European banking system. Banks need to maintain adequate capital buffers to absorb unexpected losses and shocks. This requires regular assessment of capital adequacy levels, stress testing of banks' balance sheets, and appropriate capital planning to ensure that banks have sufficient capital to weather potential crises. Additionally, banks should diversify their capital sources and avoid over-reliance on specific types of debt instruments, such as AT1 bonds, which can be more vulnerable to market fluctuations.

Efforts to address underlying structural challenges in the European banking sector are

also necessary to foster a resilient and sustainable banking industry. High levels of non-performing loans, particularly in some countries, pose significant risks to the stability of the banking system. Addressing these non-performing loans through effective loan recovery mechanisms, restructuring, and resolution frameworks can help improve banks' asset quality and reduce the risks of contagion.

Furthermore, changing business models in the banking sector also pose challenges. The rise of digitalization and changing customer preferences are disrupting traditional banking models, and banks need to adapt and innovate to remain competitive. This includes investing in technology, developing digital banking capabilities, and exploring new business opportunities while managing associated risks. Banks also need to enhance their risk management practices to

effectively identify, assess, and mitigate emerging risks associated with changing business models.

Policymakers, regulators, and stakeholders must work together to address these challenges and implement effective solutions. This includes strengthening capitalization, enhancing risk management practices, addressing non-performing loans, and adapting to changing business models in the banking sector. Sustainable and balanced regulatory frameworks, coupled with proactive risk management and transparency, are crucial for ensuring the stability and resilience of the European banking system in the face of ongoing challenges. By addressing these issues and implementing appropriate measures, the European banking system can regain stability and continue to play a critical role in supporting economic growth and financial stability in the region.



KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visiting a hospital near Avdiivka in Donetsk region, Ukraine.

67m children missed out on vaccines: UNICEF

NEW YORK (AFP): Some 67 million children partially or fully missed routine vaccines globally between 2019 and 2021 because of lockdowns and health care disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the United Nations said. "More than a decade of hard-earned gains in routine childhood immunization have been eroded," read a new report from the UN's children's agency, UNICEF, adding that getting back on track "will be challenging."

Of the 67 million children whose vaccinations were "severely disrupted," 48 million missed out on routine vaccines entirely, UNICEF said, flagging concerns about potential polio and measles outbreaks. Vaccine coverage among children declined in 112 countries and the percent of children vaccinated worldwide slipped 5 points to 81 percent -- a low not seen since 2008. Africa and South Asia were particularly hard hit. "Worryingly, the backsliding during the pandemic came at the end of a decade when, in broad terms, growth in childhood immunization had stagnated," the report said.

Vaccines save 4.4 million lives each year, a number the United Nations figures could jump to 5.8 million by 2030 if its ambitious targets

to leave "no one behind" are met. "Vaccines have played a really important role in allowing more children to live healthy, long lives," Brian Keeley, the report's editor in chief, told AFP. "Any decline at all in vaccination rates is worrying." Before the introduction of a vaccine in 1963, measles killed approximately 2.6 million people each year, mostly children. By 2021, that number had fallen to 128,000. But between 2019 and 2021, the percentage of children vaccinated against measles fell from 86 percent to 81 percent, and the number of cases in 2022 doubled compared to 2021.

The slide in vaccination rates could be compounded by other crises, Keeley warned, from climate change to food insecurity. "You've got increasing number of conflicts, economic stagnation in a lot of countries, climate emergencies, and so on," he said. "This all sort of makes it harder and harder for health systems and countries to meet vaccination needs." UNICEF called on governments "to double-down on their commitment to increase financing for immunization" with special attention on accelerating "catch-up" vaccination efforts for those who missed their shots. The report also raised concerns about a drop

in people's confidence in vaccines, seen in 52 out of 55 countries surveyed. "We cannot allow confidence in routine immunizations to become another victim of the pandemic," Catherine Russell, UNICEF's executive director, said in a statement. "Otherwise, the next wave of deaths could be of more children with measles, diphtheria or other preventable diseases." Vaccine confidence can be "volatile and time specific," the report said, noting that "further analysis will be required to determine if the findings are indicative of a longer-term trend" beyond the pandemic.

Overall, it said that support for vaccines "remains relatively strong." In about half of the 55 countries surveyed, more than 80 percent of respondents "perceived vaccines as important for children." "There is reason to be somewhat hopeful that services are recovering in quite a few countries," said Keeley, who added that preliminary vaccination data from 2022 showed encouraging signs. But even getting numbers back up to pre-pandemic levels will take years, he said, not including reaching "the children who were missing before the pandemic." "And they are not an insubstantial number."

UN flays Iraq's hasty closing of camp for displaced

IRBIL, Iraq (AP): The United Nations expressed concern over the Iraqi authorities' swift closure this week of a displacement camp that had housed more than 300 families with alleged ties to the militant Islamic State group. The UN office in Baghdad said in a statement that the closure the previous day of the camp known as Jadah 5 in the town of Qayyarah in the country's north was done "without adequate notification or preparation."

Aid workers, who had also criticized the closure as hasty and chaotic, said authorities had notified camp residents that they had to leave - a day before the beginning of the Muslim celebration of Eid al-Fitr, the holiday that follows the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. Initially, the migration and displacement ministry had set a closure deadline for May. Jadah 5 was one of the last remaining camps for the displaced in Iraq, which still has some where 1.2 million people internally displaced after years of conflict. Aid groups have pushed back against their closures, fearing that vulnerable families, including many women and children, would struggle to integrate in their hometowns and would be stigmatized for their perceived or real affiliation with IS militants. Camp residents had said they fear violence from militias and tribes if they go back to their towns of origin.

"The humanitarian community is concerned by the impact of the closure of the camp," the UN office said and reiterated the UN's long and principled support for "voluntary, informed, safe and dignified return of all" internally displaced persons. Ali Abbas, a spokesman for the ministry, said that each family was given 1,500,000 Iraqi dinars (about \$1,030) to find new housing.

Moscow court rejects Kremlin critic's appeal

MOSCOW CITY (Agencies): A Moscow court has dismissed a prominent Russian opposition figure's appeal of his eight-and-a-half year prison sentence for criticism of Russia's actions in Ukraine. Ilya Yashin, 39, a longtime ally of jailed opposition leader Alexey Navalny, was convicted in December for statements he made on his YouTube channel about war crimes allegedly committed by Russian forces in the Kyiv suburb of Bucha.

Yashin said that he had told the truth in his video and that his conscience was clear. He asked for the Defence Ministry's main spokesman - whose words he was accused of contradicting - to be summoned to the court, something the judge swiftly rejected, along with Yashin's overall appeal, according to a Reuters reporter at the court. The charges against him stemmed from a series of online posts discussing atrocities in Bucha, a town outside Ukraine's capital where dead civilians were

found in the streets and a mass grave after Russian troops withdrew. During his trial last year, Yashin argued that a live-streamed YouTube video in which he talked about Ukrainians being killed in Bucha cited official Russian sources along with Ukrainian statements to give his audience an objective view. "I will not renounce the truth behind bars," he said, emphasising that he considered it his duty to tell the truth.

Yashin, one of the few prominent Kremlin critics to have stayed in Russia after President Vladimir Putin launched the military action in Ukraine, participated by video link in Moscow City Court hearing on his ultimately unsuccessful appeal. Moscow introduced sweeping censorship laws shortly after sending its armed forces into Ukraine in February last year. Those laws have since been used to silence dissenting voices. Discrediting the army is punishable by up to five years in prison, while

"deliberately spreading false information" about it, for which Yashin was convicted, carries a maximum of 15 years.

International human rights groups have denounced the sentence as a mockery of justice and called for Yashin's immediate release. Before his sentencing, Yashin addressed Putin directly, urging him to "immediately stop this madness, recognise that the policy on Ukraine was wrong, pull back troops from its territory and switch to a diplomatic settlement of the conflict". Asked at the time about the December 8 verdict, Putin replied that Yashin's lawyers could appeal it. Russian authorities have repeatedly used the law on discrediting the military to stifle dissent. A Russian court convicted top opposition figure Vladimir Kara-Murza of treason for publicly denouncing Moscow's war in Ukraine and sentenced him to 25 years in prison as part of the Kremlin's crackdown on critics of the invasion.

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Cuban MPs vote in new five-year term for president

HAVANA (Agencies): Cuba's National Assembly has ratified another five-year term for incumbent President Miguel Diaz-Canel, in a move expected to result in few changes as the country struggles with an economic crisis and an exodus of citizens. "We must assume this gigantic challenge without slowing down," Diaz-Canel, 62, said in a speech following his victory. He called upon his cabinet to "face up to obstacles and resolve inefficiencies" over the next five years.

Diaz-Canal won reelection with votes from 459 of the 462 legislators present. He first assumed the presidency in 2018 and has largely rejected proposed structural changes to Cuba's political and economic system. "He has proclaimed himself a president of continuity when what the country is asking for, and even the agenda of the Communist Party itself, is an agenda of continuous change," Arturo Lopez-Levy, an analyst at the Autonomous University of Madrid, told the AFP news agency. The legislators who voted to extend Diaz-Canal's mandate only recently faced elections themselves last month for Cuba's 470-member National Assembly.

Pence to target Trump's remarks on China's Xi

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Former Vice President Mike Pence plans to counter his one-time boss and former President Trump's recent remarks praising Chinese leader Xi Jinping in a speech, according to an advance excerpt of his address obtained by Politico. "In recent years, China has only grown bolder in repressing religious liberty, trampling human rights, committing trade abuses, threatening Taiwan and launching aggressive military maneuvers in the South China Sea," Pence is reportedly set to say during his remarks at the Nixon National Energy Conference.

"Under Biden, Chinese influence is even spreading on American soil," the excerpt continues. "China may not yet be an Evil Empire, but under President Xi, it certainly aspires to become one." In a recent interview with Fox News's Tucker Carlson, Trump described Xi as "top of the line" and a "brilliant man." "Some people say Xi is a 'brilliant man.' I happen to think he's an evil man, whose vision for the world is one in which freedom is constrained, but Beijing's power is not," Pence is set to say at the event. "Appeasement has never worked a single time in human history, and it will not work now." "America

and her allies cannot allow either China or Russia to trample the liberty of our friends - we must ensure that our leaders send an unambiguous message that such aggression will never be tolerated," the excerpt adds. The former vice president, who is weighing a 2024 White House bid, has recently taken several swipes at Trump without specifically naming his old boss. At the Republican National Committee's spring donor retreat in Nashville, Tenn., Pence suggested the GOP must "resist the politics of personality and the lure of populism unmoored to timeless conservative values," in a clear reference to Trump.

India will pass China to be most populous nation by mid-2023

NEW DELHI (AP): India is on track to surpass China by mid-2023 as the world's most populous nation, United Nations data said, raising questions about whether a booming, young Indian population will fuel economic growth for years to come. While India's 254 million people between ages 15 and 24 is the largest number in the world, China is struggling with an aging population and stagnant population growth. That has sparked expectations that the demographic changes could pave the way for India to become an economic and global heavyweight.

India's young citizenry could drive the country's economic growth for years to come, but it might just as easily become a problem if they aren't adequately employed. Economists have cautioned that even as India's economy is among the fastest-growing as its population rises, joblessness has also swelled. Tech giant Apple, among other companies, hopes to turn India into a potential manufacturing hub as it moves some production out of China, where wages are rising as the working-age population shrinks. The UN report said India will have about 2.9 million people more than China sometime in the middle of this year. India will have an estimated 1.4286 billion people versus mainland China's 1.4257 billion at that time, according to UN projections. Demographers say the limits of population data make it impossible to calculate an exact date; India has not done a census since 2011.

China has had the world's largest population since at least 1950, the year the UN began issuing population data. Both China and India have more than 1.4 billion people, and combined they make up more than a third of the world's 8 billion people. Not long ago, India wasn't expected to become

the most populous until later this decade. But the timing has been sped up by a drop in China's fertility rate, with families having fewer children. India, by contrast, has a much younger population, a higher fertility rate, and has seen a decrease in infant mortality over the last three decades. Still, the country's fertility rate has been steadily falling, from over five births per woman in 1960 to just over two in 2020, according to World Bank data.

The country's population has more than quadrupled since gaining independence 76 years ago. As India looks set to become the world's largest country, it is grappling with the growing threat of climate change, deep inequalities between its urban and rural populations, economic disparities between its men and women, and a widening religious divide. In a survey of 1,007 Indians conducted by the UN in conjunction with the report, 63% of respondents said economic issues were their top concern when thinking about population change, followed by worries about the environment, health and human rights. "The Indian survey findings suggest that population anxieties have seeped into large portions of the general public. Yet, population numbers should not trigger anxiety or create alarm," Andrea Wojnar, the United Nations Population Fund's representative for India, said in a statement. She added that they should be seen as a symbol of progress and development "if individual rights and choices are being upheld."

Many are banking on India's rising number of working age people to give it a "demographic dividend," or the potential for economic growth when a country's young population is eclipses its share of older people who are beyond their working years. It's

what helped China cement its place as a global power. "So far, we have not been able to tap into our demographic dividend adequately. While the working age population has grown quite substantially, employment has not grown," said Mahesh Vyas, director of the Center for Monitoring the Indian Economy. He added that the country has struggled to create additional employment in the last six years, with the number of jobs stagnant at 405 million India has had a phenomenal transformation - from an impoverished nation in 1947 into an emerging global power whose \$3 trillion economy is Asia's third largest. It is a major exporter of things like software and vaccines, and millions have escaped poverty into a growing, aspirational middle class as its high-skilled sectors have soared.

But so has joblessness. According to CMIE statistics from 2022, only 40% of working age Indians are employed. Poonam Muttreja, head of the Population Foundation of India, agreed, saying the country must plan better for its young people. "This large population will need a huge investment in skills for them to take advantage of the opportunities that will come up in the economy for participating in jobs. But we have to also create more jobs for them," she said, adding that investments were also needed in education.

China responded to news of the UN report with Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin saying "a country's demographic dividend depends not only on quantity but also on quality." "The population is important, so is talent... China's demographic dividend has not disappeared, the talent dividend is taking place and development momentum remains strong," Wang said at a briefing.

US Navy sails first drone through Strait of Hormuz

DUBAI (AP): The US Navy sailed its first drone boat through the strategic Strait of Hormuz, a crucial waterway for global energy supplies where American sailors often faces tense encounters with Iranian forces. The trip by the L3 Harris Arabian Fox MAST-13, a 13-meter (41-foot) speedboat carrying sensors and cameras, drew the attention of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, but took place without incident, said Navy spokesman Cmdr. Timothy Hawkins. Two US Coast Guard cutters, the USCGC Charles Moulthrop and USCGC John Scheuerman, accompanied the drone.

The trip saw the drone safely pass with the accompanying ships through the strait, a busy waterway between Iran and Oman which at its narrowest is just 33 kilometers (21 miles) wide. A fifth of all oil traded passes through the strait, which connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman. "The Iranians observed the unmanned surface vessel transiting the strait in accordance with international law," Hawkins told The Associated Press. He said an Iranian drone and at least one Houdong-class fast-attack vessel operated by Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard observed the MAST-13 drone. The US Navy's Bahrain-based 5th Fleet patrols Mideast waters, particularly the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, to keep open the waterways for international trade, as well as protect American interests and allies. However, Iran views the Navy's presence as an affront, comparing it to its forces running patrols in the Gulf of Mexico.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency acknowledged the drone's voyage, citing the AP. Iran's mission to the United Nations did not respond to a request for comment. The 5th Fleet launched a special drone task force last year, aiming to have a fleet of some 100 unmanned drones, both sailing and submersible, operating in the region with

America's allies. Iran briefly seized several of the American drones being tested in the region in late August and early September, though there hasn't been any similar incidents since. The MAST-13 now is operating in the Gulf of Oman, where a maritime shadow war has played out as oil tankers have been seized by Iranian forces and suspicious explosions have struck vessels in the region, including those linked to Israeli and Western firms. Iran has denied involvement in the explosions, despite evidence from the West to the contrary.

The MAST-13's video feeds can transmit images back to shore and to ships at sea, helping sailors see ships before approaching them, Hawkins said. That can come in handy, particularly as the Navy and Western allies have increasingly seized weapons it believes were from Iran bound for Yemen. "It puts more eyes out on the water, enabling us to better monitor what is happening," Hawkins said.

US sanctions Nicaraguan judges

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The United States has announced sanctions against three Nicaraguan judges for their role in stripping hundreds of activists and political dissidents of their citizenship, as the Nicaraguan government faces allegations of stifling opposition. In a press release, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that the judges had helped facilitate "government repression" and the removal of the citizenship of more than 300 Nicaraguans.

"The United States is taking further action to hold accountable perpetrators of the Nicaraguan regime's repressive actions," Blinken said in a press statement. Nicaragua's government, led by Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and Vice President Rosario Murillo, has been criticised by the United Nations and human rights groups like Amnesty International for using the judiciary to target political opponents. "We will continue to use available diplomatic and economic tools to promote accountability for the Ortega-Murillo regime's abuses," Blinken added. In February, Nicaragua released 222 political prisoners, sending them into exile in the US. Lawmakers then voted to revoke their citizenship, threatening to render them stateless. A week later, a Nicaraguan court also revoked the citizenship of 94 exiled dissidents in a move condemned as illegal by the UN refugee agency.

The sanctions target Nicaraguan judges Nadia Camila Tardencilla Rodriguez, Ernesto Leonel Rodriguez Mejia, and Octavio Ernesto Rothschuh Andino, whom Blinken called "directly responsible" for the controversial decision that had left "many of these individuals stateless". Amnesty International released a report stating that the Ortega government has sought to consolidate power through a variety of means - including "excessive use of force, use of criminal laws to unjustly criminalize activists and dissidents, attacks on civil society and forced exile". The report was released on the fifth anniversary of nationwide protests in Nicaragua in 2018, when citizens took to the streets to demonstrate against austerity measures and social security cuts.

Ugandans rage over roads: 'Not a pothole but a pond'

KAMPALA (BBC): The huge craters that pockmark many of the roads in Uganda's capital have become the subject of a Twitter trend. Using #KampalaPotholeExhibition, residents have been sharing images of the city's many potholes that their vehicles have to gingerly make their way around or through. The local authority has acknowledged the problem, saying the cavities amount to 8,500 sq m (91,493 sq ft) in area.

But it added that it did not have the funds to fill them all. When academic, writer and cartoonist Dr Jimmy Spire Ssentongo started the campaign, even he could never have imagined the kind of material that would turn up. "That is not a pothole! That is a pond!" he responded to one person who shared a photo. Some have turned the photos into memes with graphics added - like ships sailing across potholes or people chilling on the beach, complete with palm trees, next to other ones. The florid descriptions accompanying the images - including details such as a pothole's age - might be satirical, but they also point to how long a particular road has been in bad shape. Some potholes feel like they have become permanent geographical features, creating a series of mini lakes whenever it rains.

A few weeks ago, when I tweeted that in one part of town there were potholes within potholes, one follower responded that the ones on the road he regularly uses had become stairs. "We have potholes of every design, and size, deep, shallow, wide, narrow, filled with water and dry ones, they are all in Kampala," the deputy speaker of parliament, Thomas Tayebwa, has been quoted as saying when calling for a minister to explain the situation. The Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), charged with the city's road maintenance, will from time-to-time fill the crevices up with a clay-like soil called murrum. But piles of soil cannot withstand the heavy rainy season and the murrum gets washed away. Dr Ssentongo says his campaign is intended to shame those who are failing to maintain the roads, "to make them uncomfortable at their own incompetence".

"If they have any sense of shame they should act," he said, pointing to the dangers of potholes and the fact that city residents paid tax for roads to be maintained. In response, the KCCA tweeted that the issue could not be trivialised and it was aware of the damage they caused to cars. It said the roads were "due for overhaul... which explains the

high prevalence of potholes and other road damages". "The situation has not been helped by the increased traffic levels on the roads, which in turn causes increased wear and tear," it added. Dr Ssentongo's online "exhibition" is meant to last for a week and the academic is considering running a weekly pothole award in the future. With the authorities being less than tolerant of protests on the streets, many feel this is an innovative way for Dr Ssentongo to address the issue - and no-one has been arrested yet for photographing a pothole. Some online critics have said that the exhibition might affect tourism by keeping potential visitors away from the country. But analyst Ivan Rugambwa disagrees: "The #KampalaPotholeExhibition is not a malicious campaign by unpatriotic citizens looking to tarnish their country's image. "It is a patriotic act of citizen agency to draw attention to the sorry state of their capital so that those charged with the responsibility to fit it can do so," he tweeted. In June 2010, some city residents took to "fishing" along one road in one district of the city, in their own attempt to draw the city authorities' attention to the potholes in the area.

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Pak-Afghan ties, prospects for peace and cooperation

THE Chief of Pakistani’s diplomatic mission in Kabul has returned to Afghanistan’s capital more than four months after surviving an attempted assassination. In the first go after resuming his duties in Kabul, Ambassador Ubaidur Rehman Nizamani called on the Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan at his office in the Foreign Ministry of Afghanistan. During the meeting, the acting foreign minister of Afghanistan Amir Khan Mutaqi hoped that the return of Pakistan’s charge d’affaires in Afghanistan would improve ties between the two countries. Muttaqi welcomed the release of the vast majority of Afghans from Karachi’s prison and urged to further increase transparency in the visa issuance regimes of both countries. Ambassador Nizamani expressed hope that his return would improve the ties between the two countries and that the Pakistan Embassy would collaborate with the concerned Afghan ministry on matters concerning visa issuance and other formalities.

Pakistan Ambassador to Kabul was attacked by a terrorist affiliated with the IS-K inside Pakistan’s Embassy compound in Kabul on December 2, last year. A brave Pakistani security guard foiled the assassination bid while the government of Pakistan called back its Chief of Mission amid anger over insufficient security measures and serious security concerns in the host country. Meanwhile, the diplomatic relations between the two brotherly countries remained downgraded and there had been recurrent incidents of cross-border attacks on Pakistani security forces, exchanges of firing between border troops as well as the accusations of hosting banned terror outfits and exchange of statements regarding interference in internal matters by the political leaders of the two neighbors often appeared in the local and international media over the past months. The bilateral relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan remained soured despite a high-level Pakistani delegation visit to Kabul and the continuous engagement of the two governments over the past several months.

Historically, Pakistan had always faced an uncomfortable and unfriendly situation from its first-door neighbor and brotherly Muslim country in its west, as the successive Afghan governments mostly stuck to their unreal claim on Pakistan’s land, while Afghan leaders always try to leverage Afghan influence in Pakistan one or the other way. Previously, Afghan Republicans blatantly hailed the anti-Pakistan narrative of the PTM, while the current interim Afghan government is hurting Pakistan’s interests by mustering the banned outfits on its land.

The government and the people of Pakistan owe utmost sympathy and brotherhood to their Afghan brethren who suffered unimaginable hardships and miseries due to the persistent conflict and violence in the country over the past decades. Pakistan hosted millions of Afghan refugees on its soil for decades, while Pakistan faced multiple social, economic, financial, and security issues due to the continuous presence and unrestricted entry of Afghan refugees into its country. The current security and economic challenges and the giant of terrorism are the outcomes of Pakistan’s Afghan policy during the Afghan Jihad against the Soviet Union, before and aftermath of the US-led War on Terrorism (WoT) in the AfPak region. Historically, Pakistan had always worked proactively out of love and sympathy for the people of Afghanistan and played a vital role in all regional and global initiatives regarding peace in Afghanistan including the Geneva Agreement and the historic Doha Agreement between the United States and the Taliban. Pakistan thinks the people of Afghanistan have the sovereign right to form an independent government representing all political and ethnic groups in the country. Similarly, the government of Pakistan had been stressing to the global community not to isolate Afghanistan, and help facilitate Kabul in addressing the worst effects of years-long war, and economic and humanitarian crises in Afghanistan.

Pakistan and Afghanistan are not two common neighbors but both nations are tight in multiple bonds of religion, culture, history, language, and Muslim brotherhood. Both countries have a shared fate and a joint destiny, they could not remain indifferent to each other during a difficult time. Both countries have to act rationally by adhering to the policy of peaceful coexistence, non-violence, noninterference, and respect for each other. Meanwhile, continuous diplomacy and bilateral engagements are the only way forward to address each other’s grievances and resolve mutual issues. Pakistan took the lead and repositioned its envoy in Kabul to keep open the window of dialogue and diplomacy despite all oppositions and odds. It is time for the Afghan side to positively respond to Pakistani outreach to help build momentum for the realization of a long-term friendship and strategic partnership between the two neighbors.

Sunak’s wealth isn’t an image problem for voters - except when he refuses to talk about it

Rafael Behr

PEOPLE don’t generally go into British politics for the money, although the money isn’t bad. The basic annual MP’s salary of £84,144 is more than double the UK average. Ministers earn even more. But there are quicker ways to get rich. There are careers where greed can go naked. In politics it has to skulk in itchy robes of public service. Bankers and hedge fund managers don’t need to explain what principle called them to global finance. When Rishi Sunak did those jobs, I doubt he was ever asked why. By the time he switched to politics, he had earned heaps of cash and married Akshata Murthy, the daughter of a billionaire. Cupidity was not the reason he sought office.

Likewise, the prime minister’s failure to declare a conflict of interest over government childcare subsidies probably doesn’t expose venal machination. Only in the flickering bunker light of internet conspiracy theory does it look like a devious diversion of budget resources. Carelessness is the plausible explanation. But it is the cultivated carelessness of an unusually rich politician who is desperate to look normal. Sunak has a reputation in government for nerdy attention to detail. It would be surprising if he forgot that his wife owns shares in a company that trains childminders, or that this company stands to benefit from new government childcare subsidies, when discussing the policy with a parliamentary committee. The prime minister was asked if he had anything to declare. He said no, adding that his interests were declared “in the usual way”.

Downing Street says the spousal connection was

recorded in the register of ministerial interests, which hasn’t been published. The MPs’ code of conduct asks members to be “always frank and open” about such matters, which suggests Sunak should have flagged it to the committee. The parliamentary standards commissioner is investigating, which is embarrassing for a prime minister whose first pledge on taking office was to govern with “integrity

uptight manner suggests the kind of person who is mostly fastidious in buckling up. So the prime minister is not in danger of being reviled as a reprobate. His brand can still be tarnished by hypocrisy. It doesn’t help that his efforts to sound authoritative come across as preachy and his blokeish affectations for the campaign trail are cringemak-

won a majority.

Since then, the cost of living crisis has got much worse, and the Tories have driven the economy into a ditch. But there has been collateral damage to the whole of Westminster, regardless of party affiliation. Voters may doubt that Sunak feels their pain from the comfort of his swimming pool, but they also

ing feature of that story when it broke was Sunak’s tin-eared response. He was reluctant to engage with questions. When pressed, he turned prickly and self-righteous, as though his wife’s honour and not his judgment were the object of scrutiny. It was around the same time that Sunak was filmed failing to operate a contactless card payment device. It was part of a bungled publicity stunt in

their dinky cars, with their insufficient maths qualifications. The investigation into whether Sunak should have declared a conflict of interest to parliament is not going to reveal anything we don’t already know about the prime minister. Nor, I suspect, will it suddenly shift opinions about him. Labour can’t make too big a thing of it, not least because last year Keir Starmer had to apologise for failing to update his entry in the MPs’ register of interests. But the episode points to an insecurity in the Conservative leader: not his fortune, but his resentment of the way it defines him.

Sunak isn’t in politics for the money, but it isn’t obvious what drives him instead. He launched his first leadership bid last summer with a personal film about family and opportunity, making a parable of his immigrant background. When that didn’t win the hearts of Tory grassroots, he rewrote his pitch as a crusade against “woke nonsense”. To woo fanatical Eurosceptics away from Truss, he promised to shred every legacy EU regulation in British law within 100 days of taking office - a commitment as dangerous as it was unrealistic. When Sunak did eventually become leader, his mandate was to clear up the mess left by the person his party had trusted more than him to believe what they believed. The circumstances made a virtue of stability under a prime minister who wouldn’t move fast or break things. But as time goes on, and stability shades into stagnation and decay, there will have to be some sense of direction, of purpose at the top. Then living on a remote planet made of money could be a real problem for the prime minister; not because he is rich, but because he isn’t anything else.

He said no, adding that his interests were declared "in the usual way". Downing Street says the spousal connection was recorded in the register of ministerial interests, which hasn't been published. The MPs' code of conduct asks members to be "always frank and open" about such matters, which suggests Sunak should have flagged it to the committee. The parliamentary standards commissioner is investigating, which is embarrassing for a prime minister whose first pledge on taking office was to govern with "integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level". It isn't much of a challenge to govern more competently than Liz Truss and break fewer rules than Boris Johnson. Sunak paid a fine for attending one of the illegal Downing Street parties during lockdown, but something about his geeky persona meant the smell of reckless wrongdoing didn't stick. It was the same when he was busted for not wearing a seatbelt in a moving car. Sunak's uptight manner suggests the kind of person who is mostly fastidious in buckling up. So the prime minister is not in danger of being reviled as a reprobate. His brand can still be tarnished by hypocrisy.

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ing. That is where the money could get awkward, not as a question of probity but authenticity. Wealth is no obstacle to electoral success in Britain. Labour kept wanting David Cameron’s poshness to be a problem for him and it never was, despite austerity, despite shrinking real wages and rising energy bills. Cameron was accused of being out of touch. Opinion polls proved the charge was resonating with voters all the way up to the 2015 election, when the Tories

don’t want lectures on the subject from Labour. And, to the perennial frustration of the left, plenty of people see “millionaire” as a badge of success, a desirable status, not an insult or a target for expropriation. But they still think dues should be paid, which is why Labour’s attack on the Sunak family finances focuses on the non-domicile status that Murthy enjoyed while her husband, as chancellor, was scraping revenue from everyone else. The most reveal-

which he put petrol in a mid-range car that turned out to be borrowed for the purpose, because it was humbler than any vehicle in his personal fleet.

These are the sorts of details that stick in voters’ minds. They can make the difference between casual acceptance that a prime minister is rich - aren’t they always? - and the suspicion that he lives far away on Planet Money, squinting down on the little people below scurrying around trying to make ends meet in

Saudi-UK partnership ready to grow in all fields

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

BUILDING on a long history of security cooperation, Saudi Arabia and Britain are expanding their collaboration to achieve multiple economic and political objectives under the strategic partnership that was announced during Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s visit to the UK in March 2018. A joint council was established during that visit to “commit to a deeper and more strategic partnership to enhance mutual interests.” That partnership is based on four pillars - political, security, economic and people-to-people engagement. Post COVID-19 shutdowns, there has been considerable progress made on all four pillars, but especially in security collaboration. More needs to be done on the others. On March 28, Saudi Arabia and the UK signed several security agreements in London during a meeting between Saudi Arabia’s Interior Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif and UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman. Earlier in March, UK Defense Secretary Ben Wallace visited Saudi Arabia to meet with his Saudi counterpart Prince Khaled bin Salman and sign defense

deals. On Dec. 13, the two countries also signed a defense cooperation plan in London. Together, these agreements, understandings and visits map out the growing Saudi-UK security partnership.

The two countries’ political-security relationship goes back to the 18th century, after Britain established its Gulf Residency offices in 1763 to manage its growing presence and to deal with Saudi influence in the Gulf. Their relationship was competitive, at times hostile, and remained so until the outbreak of the First World War, when Britain prioritized ending Ottoman rule in the region. This required managing that competition and defusing sources of conflict, especially border disputes. That was achieved through the Darin Agreement of 1915, followed by the Uqair Agreement of 1916. These two instruments were superseded by the more comprehensive 1927 Treaty of Jeddah, which paved the way toward a more peaceful and cooperative relationship. There have been disagreements since then, most notably over the Palestine question, and even armed clashes, but the two sides have overall maintained a close and cooperative relationship over the past 100

years.

Last month, Wallace reiterated the UK’s “unwavering commitment” to cooperation with Saudi Arabia in support of regional stability and security. He cited the “long history of UK-Saudi defense collaboration” and a determination to strengthen their capability to “address shared security challenges for decades to come.” A joint statement issued on March 2 stressed a “common desire for closer industrial collaboration, to develop key capabilities and boost prosperity in both nations, including in support of Saudi Vision 2030 objectives.” The main objective of this relationship is to “support regional stability and security” in the Gulf. But both are also seeking to maximize their benefits by addressing important economic goals. For Saudi Arabia, localizing military industries is a key objective of its Vision 2030, which aims to reduce the Kingdom’s dependence on oil, diversify its economy and trade, and develop public service sectors. Part of the vision is to localize defense industries with the goal of at least 50 percent of military equipment spending being domestic by 2030. Saudi Arabia’s military spending currently exceeds \$50 billion, most

of which is spent on arms purchases from abroad.

For the UK, these agreements are part of an initiative to incentivize greater global industrial collaboration. The defense deals with Saudi Arabia followed an agreement to expand joint efforts with Italy in the space and cyber domains and collaboration on the Global Combat Air Programme to construct a sixth-generation fighter jet. The agreements with Saudi Arabia could include a similar joint aerospace program. The UK Ministry of Defense has recently stated that it wants “to encourage innovation in our business and attract new and nontraditional suppliers in all levels of the defense supply chain. Our military customers have put innovation high on their agenda and we expect this to be reflected in their future requirements.” The objective of sourcing new and untapped supply chains in the defense industry is predominantly underpinned by advances in technology and technical skills.

Saudi Arabia makes sense as a choice for collaboration in the area of the tech-driven defense industry. Vision 2030 has given innovation a high priority and, according to a report by the London-based con-

sulting firm GlobalData, Saudi Arabia’s performance in terms of patents has recently been better than most of its neighbors. In 2021, Saudis were granted 34.6 patents per million inhabitants, followed by Israel (12.5) and Egypt (0.9). Partnering leading Saudi and UK companies could be the fastest way to achieve the alternative supply chains both sides are seeking in the technologically driven defense industry. For example, part of the Saudi-UK agreement signed on March 2 is to conduct a study to find out which areas of collaboration could be worth pursuing in the air combat industry.

The Saudi-UK Strategic Partnership Council, announced in March 2018, aimed at strengthening this partnership in all areas. Regional security requirements have meant prioritizing that aspect of the relationship but, as we have seen in the recent defense and security agreements, both sides are also seeking to include economic objectives, including localizing defense industries and investing in technology-driven security solutions. Progress on people-to-people engagement has also been impressive, supported by the return of students and tourists. Tourism in particular was boosted by

the relaxation of visa rules. Saudi Arabia has granted visas on arrival to British visitors and the UK has granted visa waivers for single-entry Saudi tourists and short business visits. But more work needs to be done for students and longer-term visitors to encourage business people from both sides to travel more frequently and stay longer when needed.

And more work is especially needed to meet the strategic partnership’s objective of boosting two-way trade and investment. Saudi Arabia’s growing economy is fueled by investment, public as well as private, and both local and foreign. In 2022, the Saudi economy marked a historic milestone by exceeding \$1 trillion in goods and services, making it the fastest-growing economy globally and the largest regional economy. British investment could help in that renaissance. Conversely, Saudi and other Gulf investments could help propel the British economy beyond its current post-Brexit slowdown. One way to spur trade and investment would be to create greater awareness of the opportunities available in both economies, along with a willingness to speedily ease trade and investment barriers.

Should Arab Americans vote for someone just because they are Arab?

Ray Hanania

BACK in 1959, there were very few Arab Americans running for public office. One Lebanese American did manage to break through the glass ceiling that year and win election to the US Congress - George A. Kasem in California. However, he only served one term in the House of Representatives. He was later followed by fellow Lebanese American Rep. Abraham Kazen Jr., who won election to Congress in 1967 and held his Texas seat for nine terms.

Although it was not really that long ago, back then there were not many Arab American candidates on election ballots. Now, more than a half century later, we regularly see more Arab Americans than ever enter election contests for every public office, from Congress all the way down to school boards, library boards and city halls.

Still, the progress has been slow. Too slow. The

number of Arab Americans running for and winning office remains low compared to many other ethnic and racial groups in America. The question then becomes, do Arabs simply vote for anyone who has an Arab name? Or do they make the issues they represent the priority? It is a quandary many Arabs face, deciding between racial loyalty and community need.

The issues today are far more complicated for Arab Americans than they were back in 1959, when Kasem won, and even in 1967, when Kazen first triumphed. Those two politicians were pioneers who paved a path for the Arab American community to follow. In 1971, James Abourezk, another Lebanese American, ran for and won a seat in Congress representing the state of South Dakota. After serving only one term in the House of Representatives, he became the first Arab

American to win election to the Senate, where he served one six-year term.

At about that time, Arab Americans were being targeted for political persecution by the administration of President Richard Nixon. Arab Americans, regardless of their patriotism, were seen as potential terrorists and FBI agents were assigned - at great expense - to investigate many of them for merely having a public profile, writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine, or advocating for justice and statehood for Palestine. Abourezk was important because his political success gave him the influence to help launch one of the community’s most important organizations, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, which he co-founded in 1980, the year after he left Congress. He showed that success did not just mean holding on to office and get-

ting reelected. It meant using that success to open doors to other opportunities that had previously been closed to Arabs since they first arrived on America’s shores. Political office can serve as a platform for community empowerment on many levels.

Still, the question the community faces is the choice between loyalty and issues. What if there are two candidates running for office, including an Arab American, but the non-Arab candidate has a record of having championed rights for Arab Americans? Do you abandon the candidate who has served your interests just to elect someone who is Arab? This is a far more difficult question than it seems.

It is a sign of maturity when a community can vote based first and foremost on the issue of who will do more to help them. How an elected official

treats and serves the Arab American community is more important than their bloodline. In Illinois, Arab American voters faced that very difficult choice when candidate Marie Newman challenged incumbent Rep. Dan Lipinski, who lacked an understanding of the community’s needs, in a 2020 Democratic primary. Lipinski and Newman faced off in the 3rd Illinois Congressional District, which a New York Times analysis showed had the largest concentration of Arab Americans of any congressional district in the country. It was an important seat. And as nice a person as Lipinski was, his failure to fully appreciate the needs of his Arab American constituents resulted in his defeat, ending a family dynasty that began with his father, Bill Lipinski, who first won the seat in November 1982.

But the real issue was that Newman, who had

strong progressive and pro-Arab credentials despite not having an Arab background, was also challenged by an Arab American. Rather than rally behind Newman, who had come close to unseating Lipinski in 2018, Palestinian American Rush Darwish also decided to run in 2020, dividing the anti-Lipinski vote. Many Arabs who could have voted for Newman instead backed Darwish, who spent more than \$800,000 on his campaign and received 6 percent of the votes cast. In the end, Newman unseated Lipinski and became the most pro-Arab member of Congress Illinois had ever seen.

Two years later, in March 2022, Newman, facing a difficult fight because the redrawing of congressional districts had weakened her chances, was defeated in the primary for the 6th Illinois District. Newman’s loss was a great loss for Arab Americans.

American patriots: Stand up to bullies, and they'll cower

Andrew Mitrovica

ENLIGHTENED America stirs. A sliver of hope tantalises after years of what has amounted to a new dark age where a kind of Muzak of madness has dominated what could charitably be described as the "public discourse" in the dis-United States. A familiar gallery of rich, pampered bullies masquerading as "journalists", politicians and "free-speech" apostles has enjoyed, until recently, the licence - that money and position afford - to shout and strut about with impunity.

Enlightened America has had enough and now, happily, seems to understand that to defeat a bully means having to confront the bully. What a delight it has been to watch as the elections technology company, Dominion Voting Systems, takes a righteous stand against the rich, pampered bullies at Fox non-News. Rather than cower or demur in the face of a fight, Dominion embraced the necessity to defend the truth and its name after both were assaulted by the prime-time bullies in the service and pay of a billionaire, Australian alpha bully.

Since Dominion launched its defamation suit in 2021, the once-obscure firm has done a wondrous job in exposing how the bullies at Fox non-News not only lied repeatedly about the outcome of the 2020 presidential election, but knew they were lying all along to mollify their fact-allergic audience and to turn, of course, a handsome profit. Opening statements, which were set to begin on Monday in a Delaware courtroom, have been delayed. Reportedly, both sides were said to be trying to reach a settlement before the sensational case goes to trial. Apart from being awarded an oh-so-satisfying mountain of money, Dominion wants Fox non-News to apologise for lying again and again and again about its fic-

tional role in a fictional plot to flip votes from Donald Trump to Joe Biden. Whatever the outcome - inside or outside a courtroom - Dominion has already prevailed by embarrassing a cocky bunch of TV studio toughs who believed, no doubt, that they were untouchable, beyond accountability.

The bullies at Fox non-News share that defining sense of immunity and entitlement with Trump, a career bully they publicly championed, but privately mocked. Like Fox boss Rupert Murdoch and his swaggering company, Trump has had to endure a legal comeuppance that he had, until earlier this month, been able to avoid like a modern-day reincarnation of the slippery mobster, Al Capone. "Don" Trump's reliance on delay and distraction to escape being indicted did not work this time. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg finally did what frustrated prosecutors in his office believed they had gathered ample ammunition to do years ago - charge Trump. Belatedly, Bragg squared up to the bully-in-chief. Enlightened Americans and the country's fraying notion of the rule of law thanked him for it.

For once, Trump's tantrum-trigger trap was shut tight as he sat in a New York courtroom, flanked by lawyers. Trump looked small and defeated, the trademark bluster drained out of him in the remarkable moment by a terse judge who will, in time, decide his fate. The doubters and naysayers who dismissed the indictment as thin gruel missed the point. By challenging the bully-in-chief, Bragg had invited other district attorneys and a special counsel to follow his historic lead and affirm that no one, including former presidents, is above the law. That is important. Still, bullies attract bullies. So, it was no surprise

that full-time flame-thrower, Marjorie Taylor Greene, travelled to New York to exploit the opportunity to confirm her MAGA-spouting credentials. Enlightened New Yorkers were having none of it. Armed only with whistles, they surrounded and drowned out the Georgia congresswoman, as she tried, in vain, to be heard with a bullhorn above the glorious din. Beaten, Taylor Greene retreated into a large SUV and scurried away as bullies are apt to do when they are defied face-to-face. Her gaggle of supporters broke out into a limp chant of "USA, USA" that, like their piqued patron, faded into irrelevance. Perhaps taking his cue from pissed-off New Yorkers, Bragg also put Congressman Jim Jordan, a Trump attack dog, on notice. Bragg was through playing polite with so-called "lawmakers" more interested in protecting a hush-money-paying thug than abiding by the US Constitution.

Bragg is suing the House Judiciary chairman over what the district attorney describes as a "transparent campaign to intimidate and attack" his office's case against Trump. Good for him. Message delivered: Bullies will no longer be tolerated. Meet you in court. The same message was delivered by enlightened voters in Wisconsin, who, in record numbers, showed up at the polls in early April to remove an election-and-abortion-rights-denying bully-in-a-black-robe. Dan Kelly was crushed by former judge and prosecutor Janet Protasiewicz. Her persuasive win means an end to 15-year control of the state supreme court by arch-conservatives at a time it is hearing a lawsuit calling for Wisconsin's 19th-century abortion ban to be scrapped.

The same message of defiance was delivered by three Tennessee

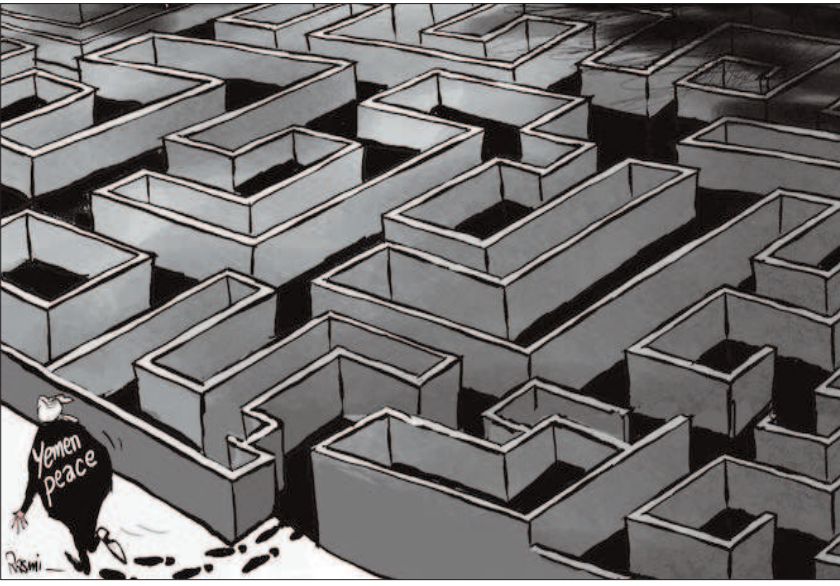
legislators who took on the state's Republican super majority over its failure to protect school children from being dismembered and murdered by automatic weapon-toting assassins.

Two of the three members who happen to be Black - Justin J Pearson and Justin Jones - were expelled from the Tennessee House of Representatives on April 6 by racist Republican bullies intent on silencing dissent.

The gambit failed. Enlightened citizens flooded the streets and legislature in a powerful show of solidarity with Pearson and Jones. Days later, the pair returned to their seats in the state House. The bullies had, once again, been routed. Then, last week, editorial leaders at PBS and NPR told electric car salesman, Elon Musk, and his money haemorrhaging, social media vanity project, Twitter, in effect, to take a much-deserved hike. Musk, the bully with a bulging bank account, had tried to discredit NPR's journalism by labelling it as "state-affiliated media" on its popular Twitter accounts. To its credit, NPR responded to the blatant falsehood and Musk's smear by announcing that it was abandoning Twitter.

PBS did the same after Twitter affixed "government-funded media" to its accounts, as well. Both news organisations chafed at the implication that their newsrooms are staffed by propagandists, not journalists.

Marvellous. Journalists are supposed to stand up to bullies. Pardon the pun, but bully for NPR and PBS. I hope more journalists and news organisations follow laudable suit. Bit by encouraging bit, enlightened America is, to borrow a phrase, taking back its dazed and disoriented country from the grifters and charlatans who have disfigured it for notoriety and cash. That is the definition of patriotism.



Arab migrants' skills should be harnessed

Tala Jarjour

NEWS of tragedy and triumph travel well, owing perhaps to the simple fact that headlines attract extreme stories, stories which catch the eye, seeming unusual. So, we often hear of migrant success stories; the housewife who now runs a catering business in her adopted country is a particularly pleasing one to read, especially when it comes with pictures or videos of delicious Eastern Mediterranean food. These stories, it would not escape the keen reader, are juxtaposed with many an account of desperate crossings - more so when the latter turn fatal. But what about those in between? What happens to the millions of people who neither triumph with economic success nor succumb to a premature death? The millions of lives uprooted by insecurity, destabilized by the lack of safety and unsettled by economic worry. Theirs is the reality of the in-between.

After more than a decade of horrifying news from Syria, two decades of increasingly worrying developments in Iraq, almost five decades of various instabilities in Lebanon and as rapidly shrinking a set of citizen rights in Palestine as the territory, it is small wonder that the region is one of the largest sources of migration in the world today.

But the world has gotten tired of cliches and I am not talking only about refugees or the hundreds of thousands who are in desperate need for humanitarian aid. The Syrian woman who started a successful street corner restaurant, the man who discovered his passion for tagines, are also becoming deja vu. That

Syrian cuisine is finally being noticed by global markets might be a good thing. But is cooking all that Syrians know how to do? Where are the engineers, the doctors, the academics, the scientists, the designers, the artists, the musicians, the thinkers, the traders? We occasionally hear of an actor on stage here or a musician performing there, but where are they really? And where is everybody else? Where did they go? What are they doing for a living? At least until well into the war years, Syria had one of the strongest tertiary education systems in the region. High school students often found no problem integrating into any of the neighboring countries' school systems when their families moved, often for employment opportunities, to Jordan, Saudi Arabia or the other Gulf countries. Similarly, high school graduates, holders of the national baccalaureate, found transitioning into universities, nationally and internationally, seamless, apart from the language shift. So, what happened to the masses of scientifically prepared, academically qualified and professionally trained working-age Syrians who left during the war years and their aftermath? Success stories, no doubt, showcase exemplary adaptability and resilience, especially when they come on the heels of great difficulty. Yet, the world ought to hear more about the stories of migrants and refugees whose uprooting came at a less flexible stage of life. People whose unplanned departure came at the height of a professional path and career, permanently damaging or at least seriously interrupting

hard-earned success. Having invested a good decade or two of their better years in setting strong foundations for what they had hoped might carry them to a comfortable retirement, many Syrians, Lebanese, Iraqis and, before them, Palestinians found that conditions in their host countries were not set up to allow professional practice.

Even if they cook well, a doctor, teacher, journalist, entrepreneur or engineer would much prefer the ability to be productive in what they know best - in their field of expertise. There, too, is where they would bring invaluable additions to the host societies and to their adopted countries' economies. They just need a little more encouragement - structural encouragement, that is, in the form of facilitating the transferability of skills and allowing job flexibility. Where there is talent, a little reassurance goes a long way. And there is no dearth of talent among the well-trained professionals and university graduates of Arab countries whose homelands await better days. Westbound migration from the region is not new, of course, but the ongoing wave is undeniable. It is certainly beautiful to see young Syrians graduating from Western universities, young-adult professional Iraqis entering new jobs, established Lebanese career men and women making their mark in advanced professional positions and retired - or globally renowned - Palestinian professors and doctors. But let us not wait a generation before the next wave of Arab migrant professionals find their place among the workforces of London, Toronto and Berlin.

A chilling insight into life for deported Ukrainian children

David A. Andelman

ALBINA is 11, her little brother Danilo 9, and until recently they lived with their mother Ina and baby brother Kolya, aged 3, in a Ukrainian village barely five miles from the Russian border.

In May, the young family's lives were ripped apart. Albina and Danilo were forcibly deported to Russia, leaving behind their mother and youngest brother. In all, Ukrainian officials estimate roughly 20,000 children have been forcibly removed from their families in Ukraine and taken to Russia or Russian-occupied territories since the full-scale invasion began a little over a year ago.

Some have been subjected to horrific conditions in their captivity. All have been torn from mothers, fathers, families and homes - some for nearly a year, since the early days of the war.

In recent weeks, a handful - including Albina and Danilo - have been reunited with their families thanks to humanitarian organization Save Ukraine and its volunteers who ventured into Russian territory to free the children. These deportations are utterly unconscionable, beyond humanity - as the International Criminal Court has now recognized by indicting Russian President Vladimir Putin and his top aide for children's affairs.

In a lengthy phone conversation with Albina and Danilo's aunt, Yana, this week, we discussed how the deportations unfolded - and the remarkable mission to bring these children home.

Yana, who also lived in the same Ukrainian village as the children, said that within hours of the full-scale invasion on February 24 last year, Russian troops had set up checkpoints throughout the town, carrying out door-to-door searches for anyone with ties to the Ukrainian government, police or military. When the Russians found someone, the individuals simply disappeared, she said.

At 9.00 a.m. the invaders herded everyone into the local sports stadium and announced they had no intention of hurting any civilians, that their quarrel was with the Ukrainian government. In the interim, life went on in the village, while Russian troops patrolled the streets and everyone lived in fear of sudden searches and seizures.

In April, there was a change. There arrived a new set of occupation forces - from the Russian Far East. A region from where troops were already accused of "committing war crimes in Bucha," Yana explained. Then on May 5, the evacuation began. Villagers were given 40 minutes to pack their belongings. A fleet of buses arrived. Albina and Danilo were given no option. But their grandmother, with roots on both sides of the border, and with whom the children were staying, was allowed to accompany them. Mother Irina and youngest sibling Kolya were spared because of his age. The fleet headed for the Russian border. The kidnappings had begun.

Here, Yana picks up the story from the moment the children and their grandmother crossed the border into Russia.

Yana: They went immediately to a filtration camp, and they were told if you have somewhere to live in Russia you can go there. But if not, we will send you somewhere else in Russia.

The grandmother who was with the two children had a house in the Russian region of Belgorod because

her parents had lived there, and this was only about 5 kilometers from the border.

So, this is where they went. The grandmother also had a sister and a brother in the area.

The children went to a Russian school. But the entire time the group of them were trying to plan how the children could come back to Ukraine and reunite with their mother.

They kept thinking that it would just be two to three weeks and it would end, and they could return to Ukraine.

At passport control when they crossed the border into Russia, they were told that they could stay in Russia for up to a year without any problem. They were also promised that they could go back to Ukraine regularly, but this promise was not upheld.

They were also told that after about a year staying on Russian territory, they would have to apply for Russian citizenship. So, with this in mind, they were looking for ways to get out of Russia as soon as possible.

It was just not possible to simply cross the border from Russia into Ukraine because of the heavy military presence. Furthermore, the entire territory, the border territory is completely mined.

Not just the checkpoints and the passport control points and the border crossings - but the houses, the roads. Everything is completely mined and under active shelling so it's just completely unsafe to cross even if they wanted to.

After about six months, the Russian authorities told them they needed to apply for Russian citizenship, or the social payments would stop.

They were heavily putting pressure on the grandmother to apply for Russian citizenship and get Russian documents. They were telling her that this was the only way for her to get medicine for herself and the children.

They were telling her that as a grandmother she was just too old to be without Russian citizenship and without the aid that it provided.

But they did not want Russian citizenship.

The children would constantly keep repeating and telling people that they were Ukrainian and that they were returning to Ukraine at some point.

David A. Andelman: Tell us about the school where the children went?

Yana: The adults in the school were very careful. There was no outright propaganda. They did not do anything to purposely hurt the Ukrainian children.

However, their classmates were bullying the children and poking fun at them for being Ukrainian and saying that it's all Ukraine's fault that this [war] is happening.

In the school that the children were in, they were the only two Ukrainians. They had to learn the Russian national anthem because every Monday they had a gathering of all the children in the school where they all sang it together.

And so the children had to learn it, and they did sing it, because otherwise that would cause some problems for the family.

The children were given special attention from the teachers. They were given individual courses three times a week, meeting individually with the teachers to catch them up on the material that they had missed because they had been going to a

Ukrainian school.

It was all taught in the Russian language.

Andelman: How did they eat, what did they live on?

Yana: The social payments or benefits that were given by the Russian government was 10,000 rubles every month (\$122), until November when they started pressuring them to get Russian citizenship. They went from 10,000 to 5,000 rubles after November.

They were also given humanitarian aid from the Russian government of some non-perishable food items. The grandmother also took some money with her when they were being evacuated.

So, she had that to rely on for the first few days and weeks until it ran out. The house they went to had a small garden and some chickens. The grandmother's sister had a farm a bit further away and once about every two or three weeks, they would send some produce or some meat for the two children and the grandmother.

Andelman: What were they told about their future? Did the authorities threaten to send them deep into Russia away from the Ukraine border?

Yana: All the aunts and uncles and everyone in the family back in Ukraine for the entirety of the 11 months that the children were on Russian territory were trying to find a way to return the children as soon as possible. And this is what the children were being told.

Technically, the Russian authorities could not move the children anywhere further into Russia because the grandmother had a house in this town very close to the Ukrainian border. Still, their future really was so very uncertain.

There was no entertaining of the idea that the children would ever stay in Russia or go any further into Russia.

Andelman: While all this was going on, how were you coping back home in Ukraine?

Yana: It is very difficult for me to speak about this because I'll start crying immediately. I took all of this upon myself to get the children back.

We were also in the process of moving from the small town that they had lived in near the border, to the city of Kharkiv. Our town had shrunk from a population of 1,500 before the war to 85 people. And there was shelling all around.

Andelman: So how did this finally come about? How did you finally arrive on the process of getting them back?

Yana: The most traditional way of returning the children is to have a parent go to Russia physically and get them. However, the children's mother was not given permission by Russian authorities to cross into Russia. She had a small child herself, and other family members who tried to get permission to cross into Russia to get the children, they were also not accepted.

We finally came to Save Ukraine. They filed documents to give a sort of power of attorney/guardianship arrangement to Katya, who is not related to the family in any way, but works as a lawyer for Save Ukraine. She was able to arrange for the trip of the children back into Ukraine.

But we were not able to know which path, how long it was going to be, when it was going to be, what was going to happen. It was in flux the entire time.

Until one day, the children got a phone call that tomorrow they would be put on an evacuation bus and taken back to Ukraine.

So that day happened, they were put on this bus and the journey was very long. It was five days in total.

Andelman: They were only 5 kilometers from the border, and it was a five-day journey?

Yana: It was not a straight shot because of all the fighting along the border. It was a five-day journey total (across Russia, Belarus, into Poland and finally across Ukraine). And the children were very tired, they had no idea where they were.

The children finally arrived back in Kyiv on April 8. The children were in very bad shape, they had been on this journey for five days. They were very young. And they were tired and dehydrated. In total there were 31 children on this evacuation bus. It was a very emotional and stressful affair.

In order to meet the children in Kyiv and return them to their mother, I had to leave my own child, which was the first time that I had ever been apart from my own child. And the whole thing is very difficult to describe in words.

The act of leaving your parents should only be an adult decision - something that's done once you become an adult, deciding whether or not you would like to leave your parents' home or the comfort and environment of your parents. It should not be done by force. This should never happen. What happened to this family should never happen to anyone anywhere.

Children, especially young children, should always be with their parents and not with anyone else.

Ukrainians in this family and so many other families don't "need to be saved," as the Russians repeatedly said to rationalize the invasion and the war and the kidnappings. The children did not need to be saved. Everything was fine. They did not need to be taken to Russian territory.

Andelman: Why do you think they were released now?

Yana: I did notice that around the time of this evacuation bus arriving in Ukraine that the children were on, the Russian children's rights ombudsman, Maria Lvova-Belova, gave a press conference.

I think it's also partly due to the phenomenon of Ukrainian unity that exists now, that this is able to happen - that children are able to be reunited with their families, despite the horrible circumstances and this terrible act.

Ukrainians are coming together to work towards righting the wrongs even during the full-scale Invasion.

Andelman: Did the grandmother come back with the children?

Yana: She is still there.

Andelman: What will happen to her?

Yana: She's going to stay there in Russia and she's going to continue living there. She's not in a physical state to be traveling all around.

Andelman: And the rest of the family?

Yana: The village was liberated by the Ukrainian army in September, which also meant that they were able to freely move around.

As soon as it was possible, they moved to the city of Kharkiv, where it's generally safer. And right now, everyone is there. All the children are at their maternal grandmother's home also in Kharkiv.

They are making Easter bread and coloring Easter eggs - together.

CNN

The new US-Canada border deal is inhumane

Jamie Liew, Petra Molnar & Julie Young

RAZAK Iyal and Reidu Mohammed recently celebrated becoming Canadian citizens. Their stories have been intertwined since they crossed the Canada-United States border to seek asylum near Emerson, Manitoba, on Christmas eve of 2016. Their lives nearly ended on that frigid night at the side of a rural road. The two men survived but both lost all their fingers to frostbite. Others have not survived. On March 31, two families perished at the Quebec-US border, including an infant and a three-year-old.

Stories like Razak and Reidu's have captured intense political and public attention in Canada. Why aren't people going to official ports of entry? The answer is that the law, specifically the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) between the US and Canada, deters people from using official border entry points because they will be turned away and denied the opportunity to make a refugee claim. Canada has acknowledged these crossings by erecting pop-up border stations like one at Roxham Road, facilitating the movement of migrants. Quebec's premier and main opposition leader have called for this makeshift port of entry to be shut down. And now, as part of US President Joe Biden's recent visit to Canada, the two countries have decided to do just that, under a renegotiated STCA that came into effect starting midnight on Friday, March 24. Now anyone crossing any point of the Canada-US land border to make a refugee claim will be turned away. They will not be able to make a refugee claim and will be sent back to the US side of the border. Until

now, this agreement only applied at official land ports of entry which pushed people seeking asylum to cross at unofficial points and made the remote Roxham Road that dead-ends at the boundary line between Hemmingford, Quebec, and Champlain, New York, a legal and well-travelled option.

The newly expanded STCA now applies across the entire Canada-US land border, including areas between official ports of entry and certain bodies of water. Anyone making an asylum claim within 14 days of crossing without authorisation or valid immigration status will be brought back to a US port of entry and excluded from being able to make a claim in Canada. This expanded protocol is a response to heightened political rhetoric that paints people crossing at Roxham Road as illegal and taking advantage of Canada's immigration system. In recent weeks, this processing centre has become a lightning rod for debates about migration and border policy in Canada. Yet while Roxham Road will no longer be a viable crossing route for refugee claimants, this will not stop people from seeking safety and security across the border. The legality of this additional protocol will be tested in courts. In fact, the STCA's constitutionality is before the Supreme Court of Canada right now. Advocates argued that the agreement not only infringes migrants' rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but also violates Canada's international legal obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention which calls on states to provide a meaningful opportunity to ask for refugee protection. Rather

than suspending the agreement as many refugees and their advocates have long called for, the Canadian government has instead expanded it even though its legality is in question. Further, rather than trusting the tools and procedures at our official ports of entry, the Canadian government has chosen a less efficient and inhumane way to manage the movement of people at the border.

The story of Roxham Road is not separate from the wider global context of increasing anti-migration sentiments and stricter border controls, underpinned by systemic racism and discrimination, even as more people are forced to flee their homes due to instability, war and environmental degradation. Policies like the STCA are short-sighted because stricter border policies, militarisation and surveillance do not stem migration. Instead, people desperate for protection simply take more dangerous routes, leading to loss of life, broken families and lifelong trauma. Iyal and Mohammed survived their journey across a remote and dangerous segment of the Canada-US border. Their refugee claims were accepted in 2017, opening their pathway to becoming citizens this March.

They narrowly avoided freezing to death. Others were not so lucky, dying at the border. How many deaths and other casualties of the STCA will it take before Canada reconsiders its reliance on increasingly restrictive and short-sighted policies? For the answer is blowing in the frigid wind along the US-Canada border: the Safe Third Country Agreement offers no real safety to either desperate people or the nations involved.

Aljazeera

Important Notice

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PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 508.48 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 508.48 points, with a positive change of 1.26 per cent, closing at 41,007.82 against 40,499.34 points on the previous day.

A total of 173,790,631 shares were traded during the day as compared to 84,164,030 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 5.724 billion against Rs 3.628 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 324 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 197 of them recorded gains and 108 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 19 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall

Limited with 22,202,737 shares at Rs 1.14 per share, Fauji Food Ltd. with 21,927,736 shares at Rs 6.33 per share, and Pak Refinery with 11,539,538 shares at Rs 13.52 per share.

Khyber Textile witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 42.45 per share price, closing at Rs 722.45, whereas the runner-up was Pak Tobacco with a Rs 30.00 rise in its per share price to Rs 670.00.

Rafhan Maize XD witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 115.00 per share closing at Rs 7900.00, followed by Pak Services with a Rs 59.00 decline to close at Rs 741.10.

Rupee gains 43 paises against Dollar

Pakistani rupee gained 43 paises against the Dollar in the interbank trading on

Thursday and closed at Rs 283.46 against the previous day's closing of Rs 283.89.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 287.5 and Rs 290, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by 83 paises to close at Rs 310.60 against the last day's closing of Rs 311.43, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged and stood at Rs 2.10; whereas a decrease of Rs 1.71 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 352.23 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 353.94.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal went down by 12 paises and 09 paises; clos-

ing at Rs77.18 and Rs 75.58, respectively.

Gold prices increase by Rs 1350 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 1350 and was sold at Rs 218,200 on Thursday against its sale at Rs 216,850 the previous day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also surged by Rs 1157 to Rs 187,071 from Rs 185,914, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22 karat gold went up to Rs 171,482 from Rs 170,421.

The price of per tola and that of ten-gram silver remained unchanged to close at Rs 2530 and Rs 2170 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market rose by US\$ 26 to \$2000 against its sale at \$1974, the association reported.



PESHAWAR: Customers selecting and purchasing artificial jewelry at Sadar Bazaar.

Pakistan earns \$1,718 million from export of IT services

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned US\$ 1,718.250 million by providing different Information Technology (IT) services to various countries during the first eight months of the current fiscal year 2022-23.

This shows a growth of 1.74 percent as compared to US\$ 1,688.845 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the fiscal year 2021-22, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

During July-February (2022-23), the export of computer services grew by 2.77 percent as it surged from US\$ 1,353.365 million last fiscal year to US\$ 1,390.790 million this year.

Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed an increase of 2.92 percent, from US\$ 496.648 million to US\$ 511.162 million while the exports of hardware consultancy services also rose by 152.05 percent from US\$ 1.462 million to US\$ 3.685 million.

The export and import of computer software-related services surged by 11.95 percent, from US\$ 355.142 million to US\$ 397.569 million whereas the exports of repair and maintenance services increased to US\$ 2.134 million from US\$ 0.776 million.

In addition, the exports of other computer services witnessed a decrease of 4.63 percent going down from US\$ 499.337 million to US\$ 476.240 million.

Meanwhile, the export of information services during the period under review declined by 16.43 percent going down from US\$ 3.470 million to US\$ 2.900 million.

Among the information services, the exports of news agency services decreased by 12.42 percent, from US\$ 2.279 million to US\$ 1.996 million whereas the exports of other information services also decreased by 24.10 percent, from US\$ 1.191 million to US\$ 0.904 million.

The export of telecommunication services also witnessed a decrease of 2.24 percent as these went down from US\$ 332.010 million to US\$ 324.560 million during the months under review, the data revealed.

Among the telecommunication services, the export of call centre services increased by 1.54 percent during the period as its exports increased from US\$ 135.453 million to US\$ 137.535 million whereas the export of other telecommunication services decreased by 4.85 percent, from US\$ 196.557 million to US\$ 187.025 million during the period under review, the PBS data revealed.

Among the telecommunication services, the export of call centre services increased by 1.54 percent during the period as its exports increased from US\$ 135.453 million to US\$ 137.535 million whereas the export of other telecommunication services decreased by 4.85 percent, from US\$ 196.557 million to US\$ 187.025 million during the period under review, the PBS data revealed.

A mixed bag on corporate earnings also provided little motivation for traders, while results from US regional banks is coming into focus after last month's turmoil in the sector that saw three go under and Credit Suisse taken over.

Markets have in recent days been optimistic that central banks, and particularly the Fed, will be able to wind down their rate hiking drive soon after data showed inflation coming down, even if at a slower pace than wanted.

SoftBank Group tumbled 1.64 percent to 5,094 yen, Sony Group edged up 0.12 percent to 12,325 yen and Toyota was down 0.52 percent at 1,814 yen.

New Industrial Park Murtaza assures cooperation to ICCI

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Syed Murtaza Mahmud said that promoting industrialization is the key priority of the government to improve the economy and assured that he would fully cooperate with the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) in its endeavors for the establishment of a new industrial park in the region.

He said this while talking to a delegation of ICCI led by Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President.

Syed Murtaza Mahmud said that after the Eid holidays, he along with Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Federal Minister for Board of Investment will hold a meeting with ICCI to take forward the matters for ICCI industrial park.

He said that ICCI will be given representation in the Boards of the attached departments of his Ministry.

He lauded the initiative of ICCI for organizing Pakistan-Ethiopia Business Forum and said that ICCI

should send formal invitation to Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs to attend the Forum while he would cooperate in this regard. He said that the government is working on a new policy for electric vehicles.

He assured that he would cooperate in resolving the key issues of the business community.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President ICCI briefed the Federal Minister about the importance of a new industrial park in the region to promote industrialization, create jobs, improve exports and increase tax revenue.

He stressed that the government should extend all possible cooperation and support to ICCI for the early materialization of this important project, which is in the national interest.

He said that ICCI should be given representation in the Boards of the departments working under the Ministry of Industries so that the business communi-

ty could give its input in their decision-making process for better growth of the industrial sector. He said that ICCI plans to organize a Pakistan-Ethiopia Business Forum during the upcoming visit of the Ethiopian business delegation along with the Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia and invited the Federal Minister for Industries and Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs to attend the Forum.

He also apprised the Minister of the key issues of the business community and sought his cooperation to redress them.

Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President of ICCI informed the Minister about the difficulties of cooking oil manufacturers due to restrictions on LCs and said that he should play a role to address this issue.

Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General UBG and Faizan Shahzad also spoke at the occasion and gave useful proposals to promote industrialization in the country.

ENGRO announces financial results

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Engro Corporation (PSX: ENGRO) announced its financial results for the quarter ended March 31, 2023.

Overview of Financial Performance

Engro Corporation's standalone revenue for the first quarter was PKR 6.4 bn - down by 21%, primarily due to lower dividends received from Engro Polymer & Chemicals Limited (EPCL) due to reversal of commodity cycle and increase in gas prices.

Correspondingly, the Company posted a 12% decline in PAT of PKR 6 bn in Q1 2023 against PKR 6.9 bn in Q1 2022.

On a consolidated basis, Engro Corporation's revenue grew by 10% to PKR 97.3 bn in Q1 2023 from PKR 88.3 bn in Q1 2022.

The Company posted a PAT of PKR 8.8 bn in Q1 2023, which is 41% lower than PKR 14.9 bn in Q1 2022.

The PAT attributable to the shareholders is PKR 5 bn, translating into an EPS of PKR 8.18 per share (Q1 2022: PKR 13.84 per share). Major variance was attributable to the macro-economic headwinds resulting in commodity cycle reversal, lower DAP demand and increasing cost pressures.

Dividend Declaration

During the first quarter Board meeting, the directors conducted a comprehensive analysis of the investment opportunities available, prevailing economic situation including but not limited to the prohibitive cost of capital and challenges on import of plant, machinery and raw

materials, and the capital structure of the Company. After extensive deliberation, the Board concluded that keeping in view the current circumstances, the most optimum utilization of cash was to pay dividends to shareholders, as a result the Board decided to declare a PKR 40.0 per share dividend.

It is worth noting that this decision will not have a significant impact on long-term investment program of the Company which will continue to be funded by retaining future dividends and/or capital reallocation.

Within its long-term investment program, Engro will continue to strive for global competitiveness within the businesses it operates and continue to explore opportunities for increasing exports and international footprint.

Markets swing as inflation, rates worry investors

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Asian markets fluctuated Thursday following a tepid performance in New York and Europe as traders fret over the inflation outlook and central bank plans to hike interest rates to tame rampant prices.

Wall Street closed relatively flat following mixed corporate results, and as a Federal Reserve report said that the US economy was "little changed" in recent weeks.

A mixed bag on corporate earnings also provided little motivation for traders, while results from US regional banks is coming into focus after last month's turmoil in the sector that saw three go under and Credit Suisse taken over.

Markets have in recent days been optimistic that central banks, and particularly the Fed, will be able to wind down their rate hiking drive soon after data showed inflation coming down, even if at a slower pace than wanted.

SoftBank Group tumbled 1.64 percent to 5,094 yen, Sony Group edged up 0.12 percent to 12,325 yen and Toyota was down 0.52 percent at 1,814 yen.

However, investors were jolted by news that UK prices were still elevated, rising more than 10 percent on-year last month owing to soaring food costs, fanning bets the Bank of England will have to keep tightening monetary policy.

It also showed that inflation remains stubbornly high and that officials still have their work cut out to bring it down.

"Broader markets are likely still in hawkish shock after the hotter-than-hot UK CPI (consumer prices index) brought back into focus that global inflation is proving more difficult to stamp out amid underlying solid demand," analyst Stephen Innes, of SPI Asset Management, said.

The BoE has hiked rates 11 times since late 2021 in an unsuccessful bid to keep inflation close to a two percent target.

In the United States, the Fed said in its quarterly Beige Book update on the world's top economy that it

had stalled in recent weeks and that liquidity was tightening in the wake of the banking upheaval.

"Several districts noted that banks tightened lending standards amid increased uncertainty and concerns about liquidity," the report said, adding that "overall price levels rose moderately during this reporting period, though the rate of price increases appeared to be slowing".

There was also little inspiration from the corporate world after Morgan Stanley and tech titan IBM reported better-than-expected earnings but Tesla missed expectations with profits down about a quarter on-year in January-February. The flat US markets were a reflection of the "pretty mixed" earnings results in recent days, said Maris Ogg from Tower Bridge Advisors.

"We'll see what happens when we really start getting the regional banks next week," she added.

Leading consortium expresses interest for Rs.12b investment in Silkbank

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Silkbank Limited, one of the key players in the market in Consumer Banking category, has received an Expression of Interest from M/s. Pakistan Housing Finance Company (PHFC), a subsidiary of M/s. Lake City Limited for the injection of equity upto PKR 12,000,000,000/- (Pak Rupees Twelve Billion) as ("Proposed Investment") subject to all regulatory requirements and financial due diligence.

PHFC is leading a con-

sortium of like-minded investor group, supported and backed by the well-renowned and experienced management of M/s. Burj Capital, having requisite experience in setting up and successfully managing Islamic and conventional banks in Pakistan.

PHFC has also informed the Bank that in recognition of their standing in the business community and their intent of giving the management role to banking professionals of standing, M/s. Arif Habib Group is also willing to participate in a consortium as a minor-

ity stakeholder.

In this regard, the Board of Directors of Silkbank has granted its "In-principle approval" to formally pursue the Potential Investment.

The Proposed Investments shall be subject to the approval of the Board, shareholders, Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, and State Bank of Pakistan and appropriate disclosures will be made in accordance with applicable laws, as the matter progresses.

It is expected that the investment will provide a

signification boost to Silkbank's financial position and will enable Bank to further expand its operations by investment into its flagship Retail and Consumer Portfolios which continue to be amongst the top performing businesses in the industry. Bank's Consumer Division, with Credit Cards and Personal Loan products (Personal Installment Loan & Ready Line) have registered phenomenal growth in recent years which is a testament of the customer confidence reposed in the Bank.

Weekly inflation increases by 0.51 per cent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.51 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on April 19, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Thursday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 251.83 points as compared to 250.56 points during the past week, according to PBS data.

As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 47.23 percent.

The weekly SPI with the

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

The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs17,732 witnessed a 025 percent increase and went up to 257.73 points from last week's 257.09 points.

Meanwhile, the SPI for the consumption group from Rs 17,732-22-888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 witnessed an increase of 0.34 percent, 0.30 percent, 0.37 percent, and 0.63 percent respectively.

During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 29 (56.86%) items increased, 08 (15.69%) items decreased and 14 (27.45%)

items remained stable.

The items which recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW) included Potatoes (3.79%), Tea Lipton (3.61%), Gur (3.40%), Bread (2.48%), Chicken (2.00%), Bananas (1.68%), Rice Basmati Broken (1.54%) and Rice Irri-6/9 (1.22%), non-food items, LPG (4.75%), Petrol (3.67%) and Match Box (2.51%).

The items that recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis included Tomatoes (13.11%), Onions (4.62%), Garlic (3.59%), Sugar (1.52%), Wheat Flour (0.93%), Mustard Oil (0.56%), Cigarettes (0.26%) and

Pulse Gram (0.22%).

On a Year-on-Year (YoY) basis, the commodities which recorded a decrease in their average prices included Tomatoes (8.65%) and Chillies Powdered (6.48%).

The commodities that witnessed an increase in prices on a YOY included Cigarettes (151.45%), Wheat Flour (143.88%), Gas Charges for Q1 (108.38%), Tea Lipton (104.28%), Diesel (102.84%), Potatoes (98.74%), Bananas (98.42%), Eggs (97.80%), Petrol (87.81%), Rice Basmati Broken (87.30%), Rice Irri-6/9 (83.52%), Pulse Moong (68.94%), Bread (59.22%) and Pulse Mash (58.35%).

Aramco, SABIC dispatch first accredited low-carbon ammonia shipment to Japan

DUBAI (Agencies): A first shipment of independently-certified low-carbon ammonia has arrived in Japan for use as fuel in power generation.

This initiative is part of broader efforts by Aramco and Saudi Basic Industries Corp. Agri-Nutrients to establish a global supply network for this lower-carbon fuel.

Aramco and SABIC AN also aim to supply low-carbon ammonia to other players to meet their early demand needs.

The shipment is the result of a successful multi-party collaboration across the low-carbon ammonia value chain.

The ammonia was produced by SABIC Agri-Nutrients with feedstock from Aramco, and sold by Aramco Trading Company to the Fuji Oil Company.

Mitsui OSK Lines was tasked with shipping the

liquid to Japan, then the low-carbon ammonia was transported to the Sodegaura Refinery for use in co-fired power generation, with technical support provided by Japan Oil Engineering Co..

The ammonia is categorized as low-carbon because CO2 from the associated manufacturing process was captured and utilized in downstream applications.

Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry has announced plans to increasingly harness ammonia as a fuel for power generation and for ship propulsion, as part of the country's 2050 decarbonization goals.

The low-carbon ammonia that reached Japan is part of broader efforts by Aramco and SABIC AN to establish a global supply network for this lower-carbon fuel.

Aramco and SABIC AN aim to supply low-carbon ammonia to other players to meet their early demand needs.

Olivier Thorel, Aramco senior vice president of chemicals, said: "This is another milestone that highlights the possibilities for low-carbon hydrogen and ammonia made from Aramco feedstock, with the potential to play a role in a lower-carbon future."

"Not only is low-carbon ammonia a means to transport lower-carbon hydrogen, it is an important energy source in its own right that can help decarbonize key sectors - including power generation for both utilities and industries. By dispatching this accredited low-carbon ammonia to Japan, we are helping chart a course for the development of this vital commodity."

Abdulrahman Shams-

addin, SABIC AN CEO, said: "Our aim is to capitalize on this important milestone to grow and expand our positive contribution toward carbon neutrality. SABIC Agri-Nutrients made a public commitment not only to become carbon neutral by 2050 but also to collaborate with customers to help them achieve their net-zero emission targets."

"Customers in the energy, fertilizer and chemical sectors are looking for suppliers of lower-carbon hydrogen and ammonia. And we can meet their demand by leveraging our long-standing strengths across the value chain."

Shigeto Yamamoto, FOC representative director and president, said: "As Japan aims to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, low-carbon ammonia is expected to be a next-generation fuel that can contribute to the reduction of CO2 emissions."

Traders in Japan were "spooked" by the UK reading as well as some underwhelming earnings, IwaiCosmo Securities said.

This caused Tokyo stocks to fall at the open, but they later rebounded, led by gains in shares related to inbound tourism, the brokerage added.

Takashimaya, which

Tokyo's Nikkei index ends higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo's key Nikkei index closed higher on Thursday following recent gains, as investors parsed US corporate earnings announcements for new trading cues.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index gained 0.18 percent, or 50.81 points, to end at 28,657.57, while the broader Topix index edged down 0.03 percent,

or 0.65 points, to 2,039.73. The dollar fetched 134.56 yen, against 134.68 yen on Wednesday in New York.

Market players have been digesting quarterly earnings from the biggest American banks, with Morgan Stanley reporting a sharp decline in profits but still beating forecasts.

Stubbornly high UK inflation also prompted

speculation about further tightening by the Bank of England -- sending global shares lower including the Dow on Wall Street, which closed down 0.2 percent.

"The hotter-than-hot UK CPI brought back into focus that global inflation is proving more difficult to stamp out amid underlying solid demand," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said.



In brief

Benn suspended on 15 March

LONDON (BBC): UK Anti-Doping has confirmed Conor Benn was provisionally suspended from sport on 15 March. Benn, 26, failed two voluntary drug tests last year, testing positive for female fertility drug clomifene on both occasions. After Benn refused to comment on reports of a potential ban earlier this week, Ukad said it had charged him on 3 April with a doping violation. Benn said he "remains free to fight outside the UK". Doping investigations are confidential until a final conclusion is reached, but Ukad has released a statement following Benn's own comments on the issue earlier this week. "Ukad confirms that Mr Benn was notified and provisionally suspended by Ukad on 15 March 2023 in accordance with the UK anti-doping rules," a statement read. "Whilst provisionally suspended, Mr Benn is prohibited from participating in any capacity (or assisting another athlete in any capacity) in a competition, event or activity that is organised, convened, authorised or recognised by the British Boxing Board of Control or any other World Anti-Doping code-compliant sport."

Wahab announces cash prizes

LAHORE (APP): Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz has announced hefty cash prizes for the Punjab athletes participating in the upcoming 34th National Games 2023, scheduled to be held in Quetta next month. Wahab Riaz, in a statement, said on Thursday that players representing Punjab in the grand event of National Games would be given prizes of lakhs of rupees. Revealing prize money details, he said that in individual competitions, gold medalists would be given Rs 5 lakh, silver medalists Rs 2.5 lakh and bronze medal winners Rs 1 lakh, respectively. "In team event competitions, gold medalists will be given Rs 10 lakh, silver medalists Rs 5 lakh and bronze medal winners Rs 2.5 lakh respectively," he added. Wahab Riaz urged the provincial athletes to work hard for the upcoming mega event. "The huge cash prizes will definitely be a big attraction to motivate the Punjab players. Steps are being taken to promote sports culture in Punjab," he added. Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports further said that the welfare of the players is among the top priorities. "Such big cash prizes have never been given in the history of province".

LIV Golf considering women's tour: Greg

LONDON (BBC): LIV Golf is considering creating a women's circuit and has approached American and European players, says chief executive Greg Norman. The Saudi Arabia-backed LIV men's tour began in 2022 with the first event held in June near London. High-profile players, such as 2020 US Open champion Bryson DeChambeau, left the PGA Tour to join LIV. "[A women's tour] is a discussion we have internally on a regular basis," Norman said. "I have personally had discussions with individual LPGA Tour players, LET Tour players, Ladies European Tour. They love what our product is showcasing. They ask all the time, 'How can we get involved?' We'd love to see a LIV ladies series." Norman was speaking in Adelaide, where LIV is hosting its first event in Australia, which starts on Friday.

Pakistan agree deal for Mickey Arthur to lead side at World Cup

LAHORE (Agencies): Derbyshire head of cricket Mickey Arthur will lead Pakistan at this year's ICC Men's World Cup. Arthur, 54, turned down the offer of a second spell as Pakistan coach in January, having signed a contract extension with Derbyshire until 2025. The South African started a consultant role with Pakistan earlier this month but has now agreed to be their team director alongside his Derbyshire role. "I need that adrenaline rush," Arthur told BBC Radio Derby. "I've found the long winters hard here because I wake up for matchday." Arthur, who was in charge of Pakistan from 2016 to 2019 when they became the top-ranked Test side, will also lead Pakistan during a three-Test tour of Australia this winter before returning to Derby. "The lure of them wanting me to help them was too good to turn down," he added. "I wouldn't have

done it if I couldn't have given Derbyshire 100% commitment, which Pakistan have agreed to. "It doesn't affect my role at Derbyshire at all and wouldn't affect any performance. "If I didn't feel I could give Pakistan the same level of commitment I certainly wouldn't have taken it. I've looked at schedules and it's very doable." Arthur has met up with the players in Pakistan during New Zealand's ongoing white-ball tour of the country, before he returns for Derbyshire's next County Championship Division Two game against Durham on 27 April. He said he is already "heavily involved" in Pakistan's selection, as well as having put together their support staff. Former Pakistan head coach Saqlain Mushtaq left the role earlier this year after his contract expired and is now New Zealand assistant coach. Pakistan were beaten by England in the final of the

Men's T20 World Cup in November and then had a poor season at home where they won only one match. They were swept 3-0 by England in their Test series, drew both Tests with New Zealand and then lost the one-day international series 2-1 to the Black Caps. Arthur, who has also coached South Africa, Australia and Sri Lanka, did not have his Pakistan contract renewed in 2019 after the side failed to reach the World Cup semi-finals. Derbyshire chief executive Ryan Duckett said the county would remain Arthur's "main focus". He added: "A coach of Mickey's calibre will naturally attract attention; however I am delighted by his continued dedication to his role, the group of players and club as a whole." Arthur said Derbyshire is "a really special project" that he sees as a "long-term commitment" and that he has not yet "even scratched the surface" of where he wants to take the club.

Gate money from fifth T20I to be donated to Turkiye-Syria earthquake victims

KARACHI (PPI): The gate money from the fifth and final T20 International between Pakistan and New Zealand will be donated to the earthquake victims in Turkiye and Syria. The match will be played at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on 24 April and the fans can buy tickets at pcb.bookme.pk. The border region of Turkiye and Syria was rocked by one of the deadliest earthquakes on 6 February that claimed thou-

sands of lives and destroyed essential infrastructure, including healthcare facilities. In this regard, the Pakistan Cricket Board will play a part in raising donations for millions of people affected on either side of the border by joining hands with the Punjab Government. The Pakistan side will wear commemorative caps to convey Pakistan's everlasting solidarity to the two nations going

through this difficult moment. Fans who cannot attend the match are encouraged to make their donations for the cause. They can send their donations on the following address: Bank name: National Bank of Pakistan Account title: Pakistan Cricket Board Account number: 2081003169856007 IBAN number: PK71NBPA2081003169856007

Man Utd must 'use emotion as tool': Ten Hag

LONDON (BBC): Manchester United boss Erik ten Hag says his side must "use emotion as a tool" when they face Sevilla in their Europa League quarter-final second leg. The tie is delicately poised at 2-2 after United conceded two late goals in the first leg at Old Trafford. "The timing of emotions is important in big games - we must focus on the best game you can as a team and individual," Ten Hag said. Sevilla have won the trophy a record six times. But Ten Hag said he is "confident" his side can get back on track on Thursday with victory in Spain to progress to the semi-finals. "Defensively we are good, we have the most clean sheets in the Premier League so our organisation all over the pitch is good and attacking we should have scored more goals over the season," said the Dutch boss. "I am confident, especially now we

have all the players on board, we score every game." United went 2-0 up at Old Trafford before Sevilla staged a late comeback as Tyrell Malacia and Harry Maguire scored own goals. "We played over 60 minutes quite well and the last 30 minutes we became passive - it is not acceptable, we know that," said Ten Hag. "When you only play a game for 60 minutes you get punished." Meanwhile, United's top scorer this season Marcus Rashford could return from a groin injury for the return leg in Seville. Sevilla boss Jose Luis Mendilibar said Rashford is "one of the best players" around but his side "won't change our mentality" whether he plays or not. Ten Hag said on Wednesday Rashford has trained once with the team but has not yet decided whether he will feature in the match or not.

Grizzlies, Bucks bounce back as Nuggets see off Wolves

LOS ANGELES (AFP/APP): The Milwaukee Bucks and Memphis Grizzlies bounced back to level their respective NBA playoff series' with crucial victories Wednesday, as Jamal Murray delivered a 40-point masterpiece to give the Denver Nuggets a commanding 2-0 lead over the Minnesota Timberwolves. Top seeds Milwaukee shrugged off the injury absence of Giannis Antetokounmpo to thrash the Miami Heat 138-122 to tie their best-of-seven Eastern Conference series at 1-1. In the Western Conference playoffs, Memphis also overcame the loss of a star player -- Ja Morant -- before grinding out an attritional 103-93 win over LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers. Arguably the performance of the night however came in Denver, as the Nuggets' Murray poured in 40 points in a 122-113 victory over the Timberwolves. Denver, the No.1 seeds in the West, now lead the series 2-0. It was the latest milestone in Murray's long road back from a serious knee injury. The 26-year-old point guard missed the entirety of the 2021-2022

campaign after undergoing surgery to repair torn knee ligaments in April 2021. Denver looked to be cruising to victory after leading 64-49 at half-time before a 40-point Minnesota third quarter turned the game on its head to leave the Timberwolves up by two. But Murray and Michael Porter Jr. combined for 23 fourth-quarter points to seal Denver's victory. "It was a passionate, heartfelt performance," Denver coach Michael Malone said of Murray's display. "Just the fact that he's missed the last two postseasons, just to have him back, and playing at that level -- Jamal overall was terrific." Murray was almost outshone by Minnesota's Anthony Edwards, who finished with 41 points in a losing effort. In other games, Xavier Tillman scored 22 points and pulled down 18 rebounds in the Grizzlies' win over the Lakers. A bruising game saw the Lakers' Anthony Davis suffer a cut on his right eyelid while James was drawn into a verbal back and forth with Memphis's Dillon Brooks. The Grizzlies led by as many as 16 points on

the way to a 59-44 halftime lead as the harried Lakers failed to find a way to get their offense firing. Davis blocked five shots in the first half but connected on just one of nine shot attempts. He finished with 13 points on four-of-14 shooting. James led all scorers with 28 points and Japan's Rui Hachimura added 20 to become the first Laker to score 20 points off the bench in back-to-back playoff games since Magic Johnson in 1996. But unlike in game one, there would be no late resurgence from the Lakers, the Grizzlies absorbing the Lakers' second-half push. Jaren Jackson Jr., the newly named NBA Defensive Player of the Year, scored 18 points, Desmond Bane added 17 and Brooks chipped in 12. Tyus Jones, starting in place of Morant, added 10 and eight assists. Tillman said the Grizzlies will summon a "road-warrior mentality" for game three of the best-of-seven series in Los Angeles on Saturday. Brooks made no apology for trash-talking James. "I don't care -- he's old," Brooks said of the 38-year-old James. "I poke bears."

Nadal pulls out of Madrid in worrying French Open blow

MADRID (AFP/APP): Rafael Nadal said Thursday he will miss next week's Madrid Masters as he continues to struggle to recover from a hip injury, dealing a significant blow to his French Open preparations. "For the moment I've missed Monte Carlo and Barcelona. And unfortunately I won't be able to be in Madrid either," Nadal said on Instagram. "The injury still hasn't healed," he added. The 36-year-old Spaniard has not played since losing in the second round of the Australian Open in January. Nadal is hoping for a record-extending 15th French Open title at Roland Garros in May, but his hip flexor problem he suffered in Melbourne has badly disrupted his run up to the tournament. The 22-time Grand Slam champion -- he shares the men's record with Novak Djokovic -- had originally thought he would be out for up to two months. He pulled out of hard-court tournaments at Indian Wells and Miami, with his sights set on a return at the start of the clay-court season, but it did not come to fruition. "In principle it was supposed to be a recovery period of six to eight weeks and now we're around 14," said Nadal. "The reality is that the situation is not what we would have hoped for. All medical indications have been followed, but the healing has not gone as they told us initially and we find ourselves in a difficult situation."

Sabalenka beats Krejckikova for third time in 2023

STUTTGART (AFP/APP): World number two Aryna Sabalenka got her clay court season underway with a straight sets victory on Wednesday over Barbora Krejckikova in the pair's fourth meeting of 2023. Australian Open champion Sabalenka saw off her 12th-ranked Czech rival 6-2, 6-3 in just 75 minutes to become the first player into the quarter-finals. Sabalenka, the runner-up in Stuttgart to Ashleigh Barty in 2021 and Iga Swiatek last year, had lost to Krejckikova in Dubai this season but gained revenge at Indian Wells and Miami. Wednesday was their first career meeting on clay and Sabalenka was rarely threatened by the 2021 French Open champion. "It's really difficult, but at the same time it helps me to learn how to

stay focused from the first rounds and fight for every point," said Sabalenka on facing a fellow Grand Slam champion. She hit 10 aces and never faced a break point as she cantered to her 21st win of the season, behind only Jessica Pegula and Elena Rybakina, who have each won 22 matches so far this year. Wimbledon champion Rybakina reached that mark Wednesday with a 7-5, 6-3 win over Germany's Jule Niemeier. Coco Gauff made her clay court season bow with a tough, mistake-ridden three-set win over Veronika Kudermetova. The 19-year-old American, runner-up at the French Open last year, came through 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (7/3) to set up a last-16 clash with another Russian player, Anastasia Potapova.

Nadal said he and his team have decided to try a different treatment and see if things improve, but that he was not setting a deadline for his comeback. "I can't work on what I need to compete. I was training but a few days ago we decided to change course a bit, to try another treatment and see if things improve to try to get to what comes next." "I can't give deadlines because if I knew I would tell you, but I don't know," he added. "This is how things are now." Nadal's fitness problems

have become an increasing issue since he won his 14th French Open crown last year. At Wimbledon last summer he was forced to withdraw from his semi-final because of an abdominal injury. Last month he dropped out of the top 10 for the first time since 2005, and is currently ranked 14th. The French Open starts on May 28, with Nadal now in a race against time to be fit for the Rome Masters -- the last major tune-up event before Roland Garros.

World Snooker Championship 2023 results Robert Milkins beats Joe Perry 10-9 having trailed 7-2

LONDON (BBC): Robert Milkins produced one of the great World Championship comebacks as he fought back from 7-2 down to beat Joe Perry 10-9 and reach round two. The 'Milkman' looked down and out overnight but raised his game to win eight of the next 10 frames to secure a famous win at the Crucible. "My belief was terrible at 7-2, but the crowd got behind me and I was reeling off frames," he told BBC Radio 5 Live. "I'm chuffed to bits. It really was a tale of two halves." Milkins added: "I just said to myself 'go out there and make the score respectable'. I fancied the job when I got back to 7-4." Qualifier Perry, a 2008 Crucible semi-finalist, was a clear favourite to win the all-English tie, but Milkins - enjoying his best season to date, having won the Welsh Open - rallied with breaks of 51, 53, 55 and 59 to lead 9-8. Perry compiled a 63 break to force a decider, but Milkins held his nerve to clinch victory with a match-winning run of 63. "I haven't been here [at the Crucible] for five or six years and it's quite intimidating," added Milkins, who faces either compatriot Shaun Murphy, the 2005 world champion, or Chinese qualifier Si Jiahui in the



next round on Saturday evening. "It's not every day you play with crowds on top of you, but it would have been a nightmare if it's have lost the last two from 9-8 up. "But I have to play better than that if I'm to progress to the quarter-finals." A frustrated Perry branded himself a "shambles" but was unanimous in defeat by Milkins, one of his good friends. "I started bad but gradually got worse and didn't play well enough," said Perry. "Pretty much all of my career I've dominated Rob Milkins, but I was

disappointed with what I was doing." The opening session of the pair's match was halted on Monday evening when a protestor climbed on the table and covered it in orange powder. Another protestor tried to glue herself to the other table where Mark Allen and Fan Zhengyi were playing, but was stopped by referee Olivier Marteel. "I was a little bit shaken up. It wasn't a very nice experience," added Perry. "But it [the incident] didn't have any impact on the match. "For Rob it was probably a massive help, but it doesn't get away from how rubbish I was."

Seven-time F1 champion's family plan legal action after AI-generated 'interview'

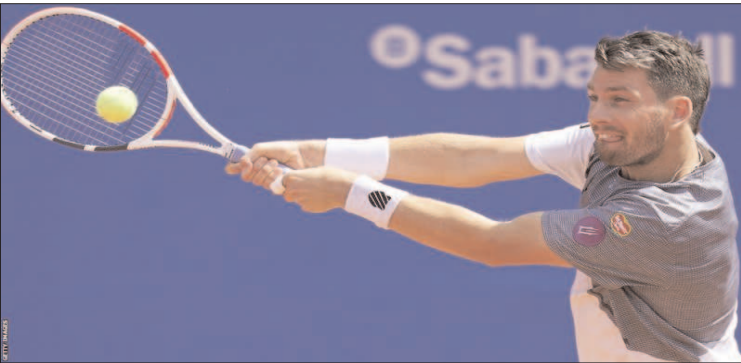
Michael Schumacher's family are planning legal action against a magazine which published an artificial intelligence-generated 'interview' with the former Formula 1 driver. Schumacher, a seven-time F1 champion, suffered severe head injuries in a skiing accident in December 2013 and has not been seen in public since. Die Aktuelle ran a picture of a smiling Schumacher, 54, on the front cover of its latest edition with a headline of "Michael Schumacher, the first interview". A strapline underneath reads "it sounded deceptively real", and it emerges in the article that the supposed quotes had been produced by AI. The article was produced using an AI programme called character.ai, which artificially generated Schumacher 'quotes' about his health and family. "I can with the help of my team actually stand by myself and

even slowly walk a few steps," read the Schumacher 'quotes'. "My wife and my children were a blessing to me and without them I would not have managed it. Naturally they are also very sad, how it has all happened. "They support me and are standing firmly at my side." The family have confirmed to news agency Reuters that they are planning to pursue the matter legally. The magazine's publishers told BBC Sport they would not be commenting on the issue. Following his skiing accident, Schumacher was placed into an induced coma and was brought home in September 2014, with his medical condition since kept private by his family. Schumacher won two of his F1 world drivers' titles with Benetton in 1994 and 1995, while he claimed five in a row for Ferrari from 2000 to 2004. His seven F1 titles is a record shared jointly with Lewis Hamilton,

while Schumacher achieved 91 race wins over his career, a record Hamilton surpassed in 2020. The German originally retired from racing in 2006 but returned in 2010 before again retiring two years later. Schumacher's son Mick used to drive for Haas in F1 and is currently a reserve driver for Mercedes. In a 2021 Netflix documentary, Schumacher's wife Corinna said: "We live together at home. We do therapy. We do everything we can to make Michael better and to make sure he's comfortable, and to simply make him feel our family, our bond. "We're trying to carry on as a family, the way Michael liked it and still does. And we are getting on with our lives. "Private is private", as he always said. It's very important to me that he can continue to enjoy his private life as much as possible. Michael always protected us, and now we are protecting Michael."

Barcelona Open: Cameron Norrie beaten by Lorenzo Musetti in last 16

BARCELONA (BBC): British number one Cameron Norrie was beaten in the last 16 of the Barcelona Open by Italian Lorenzo Musetti. Seventh seed Norrie, 27, controlled the first set and had openings in a tight second but Musetti fought back to win 3-6 6-4 6-1 in the clay-court event. At 4-4 in the second set Norrie moved to 15-40 on Musetti's serve, but missed the break-point chances and had his own serve broken in the next game. British number two Dan Evans plays Russian Karen Khachanov later. Musetti, the 21-year-old world number 20, has achieved his best career results on clay and beat Novak Djokovic at the Monte Carlo Masters last week in a run to the quarter-finals. That run was ended by compatriot Jannik Sinner, who he will face again in



the quarter-finals in Barcelona. Sinner beat Japanese 16th seed Yoshihito Nishioka in three sets while second seed Stefanos Tsitsipas eased past Canada's Denis Shapovalov 6-3 6-2.

Meanwhile at the Bavarian International in Munich, Alexander Zverev was beaten 7-6 (7-2) 6-4 by Australian world number 82 Christopher O'Connell.



In brief

IRSA releases 156,100 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 156,100 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 193,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1436.21 feet and was 38.21 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 48,700 cusecs while the outflow was 30,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1108.85 feet, 58.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 57,100 cusecs and 38,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 56,000, 37,300, 25,500 and 6,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 62,300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 17,800 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

NHMP foils attempt to smuggle wheat, flour

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) has foiled attempts to smuggle a huge quantity of wheat and flour. Thirty-eight suspicious trucks were seized in various operations near Main Tall Plaza Islamabad, Chakri, Neela Dulha and Kallar Kahar, said a press release on Thursday. During the checking, a total of 438 tons of wheat and 40 tons of flour were found in these trucks. The flour and wheat were handed over to the concerned food authority after completing the preliminary legal proceedings.

Two bike lifters arrested

RAWALPINDI (APP): In an operation against criminal elements, Rawalpindi Police here on Thursday arrested two street criminals, bike lifters and recovered Rs 19,500 snatched cash, five stolen motorcycles, weapons and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, R.A.Bazar police arrested two members of Farrakh gang namely Farrakh ringleader and Saifullah, wanted in various cases. He informed that the police team constituted under the supervision of SHO R.A.Bazar Police Station on the directives of the Superintendent of Police conducted a raid and managed to net the accused. Police also recovered Rs 19,500 cash, five stolen motorcycles, weapons and other items from their possession. As per the preliminary police record, the criminals were also involved in other crimes, he said.

Police arrest six gamblers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi district Police arrested six gamblers and recovered Rs 21,650 stake money, seven mobile phones, and valuables from their possession, said a police spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that Race Course police conducted a raid and arrested six gamblers namely Asad, Zulfiqar, Abdul Qadir, Zeeshan, Kaleemullah, and Ijaz who were allegedly involved in betting while playing cards. A case has been registered against them while further investigation is under process. Superintendent of Police, Potohar Muhammad Waqas Khan said that gambling is the root cause of other evils and those involved in such crimes do not deserve any concession.



RAWALPINDI: People are eagerly making their way home to celebrate the joyous occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr with their loved ones, carrying their belongings with them at Faizabad Bus Stand as the Ramadan is about to end.

Radio Pakistan is identity, proud of country: Mushahid

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Defence Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed visited Radio Pakistan, Islamabad today for a video podcast interview in the newly established state of the art podcast studios.

Director General Radio Pakistan Tahir Hassan apprised the Senator of the latest initiatives taken by Radio Pakistan to align the national broadcaster with modern day requirements.

Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed visited different sections of Radio Pakistan including newly established sports channel, Exclusive English Channel 87.6, technology channel, the World and External Service and renovated on modern lines the most popular Saut-ul-Quran Channel of Radio Pakistan. He also visited News and Current Affairs Channel, General News Room, Social Media

section and renovated news studios.

The Senator appreciated the initiatives undertaken by Director General Radio Pakistan Tahir Hassan to equip the National Broadcaster with modern gadgets to meet the changing needs of broadcasting and revive its old glory as well as the steps taken by him to improve its revenue.

The Senator congratulated the Director General Radio Pakistan for his steps on war footing to modernize Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation saying he is really amazed to see the state of the art studios developed just in a few months, terming it the vision and dedication of the current management of Radio Pakistan. Speaking on the occasion, Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed said Radio Pakistan is the identity and proud of Pakistan.

Expressing his special affection for Radio, he said Radio is his romance which

he developed at a very early age when his father gifted him a Radio set on passing the matriculation examination with flying colours. He said that he used to listen to different foreign radio stations and actively participated, through letters, in their programs.

He said the role of Radio for spreading information is very significant and that it is Radio that developed his interest in foreign affairs.

Mushahid Hussain Syed recalled his days as the Information Minister when he inaugurated a FM channel and organized a concert of AbidaParveen at Hyderabad Radio Station. He also said that he had got approved hefty specially. The Spokesperson also advised the public to keep a safe distance from electric wires, poles, transformers and meters during rain. In case of any emergency, the consumers could register their complaints at the concerned office number or IESCO helpline number 118.

Rain causes tripping of several IESCO's feeders

ISLAMABAD (APP): Several feeders of Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) were on Thursday tripped due to late-night rain in various areas of the company's regions. Power supply to various areas attached to Peshawar Road, Saghi Morgah, Sikhoh, Muslimabad, Charing Crossing, Golra and Westridge feeders remained suspended due to the developing of fault, the IESCO spokesperson told in a statement issued here.

The fault also occurred at PTCL, Jail Park, Dhok Noor, Shamsh Colony, Sihala, Gulistan e Johar Colony and Jhangi feeders, he added. The IESCO concerned staff actively engaged to clear the faults and address individual complaints of the customers. The IESCO chief was monitoring the power restoration operation personally. The Spokesperson also advised the public to keep a safe distance from electric wires, poles, transformers and meters during rain. In case of any emergency, the consumers could register their complaints at the concerned office number or IESCO helpline number 118.

Kachhi Canal Extension project

ISLAMABAD (APP): Phase-1 of the Kachhi Canal Extension Project being constructed in the Dera Bugti district of Balochistan is likely to complete by mid of this year. Official sources told APP here that the 40-Kilometer (Km) long main lined canal with the 32-Km distribution system would irrigate additional 30,000 acres of land in the Dera Bugti district after its completion.

They said Kachhi Canal Project was planned to execute in three phases to irrigate 713,000 acres of land in Dera Bugti, Naseer Abad, Bolan and Jhal Magsi. The 363 km long Kachhi Canal under Phase-I had already been completed in 2017 and was irrigating some 72,000 acres of land in Dera Bugti.

It is worth mentioning that WAPDA is constructing Kachhi Canal Extension Project under Phase-I in the Dera Bugti district of Balochistan.

Talha Mahmood leaves for Saudi Arabia to review Hajj arrangements

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood, left for Saudi Arabia to review the arrangements for the upcoming Hajj pilgrimage on Wednesday night.

The minister has traveled to Saudi Arabia at his own expense to ensure the provision of facilities for intending Pakistani pilgrims.

During his visit, he would perform Umrah and pay homage at the mausoleum of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). He would also meet with Saudi authorities to discuss the arrangements for Hajj and raise any concerns regarding the facilities provided to Pakistani pilgrims.

Minister Talha would visit the Pakistan Hajj Mission in Makkah and the Pakistan House in Madinah to take a briefing on the arrangements for the upcoming pilgrimage. This visit would provide an opportunity for the newly appointed minister to evaluate the arrangements and ensure that they meet the requirements of Pakistani pilgrims. Earlier, addressing a press conference in the ministry, he urged the Saudi government to waive all the taxes being collected from Pakistani pilgrims in the wake of mandatory Hajj expenses.

He said that Pakistan was in severe financial crisis these days and this generous initiative would give a positive message to the world that Pak-Saudi relations go beyond the diplomatic ties.

Highlighting the Saudi government's supportive role, the minister emphasized that such taxes would add a significant financial burden to the already expensive

pilgrimage for Pakistani pilgrims, however, the taxes levied on them would create a financial obstacle for those wishing to perform the mandatory pilgrimage.

He further informed that almost 40,000 intending pilgrims would be benefited from the facility of 'Road to Makkah' project at the Islamabad International Airport (IIA). Under this facility, their immigration process would be completed at the airport, reducing the time and effort required to complete it, he maintained.

He said due to shortage of time, the scope of the project could not be expanded to other airports in the country. However, he assured that efforts were being made to increase the number of pilgrims availing this opportunity to its fullest from the IIA.

Talha Mahmood expressed his hope that the 'Road to Makkah' initiative would be available at other airports across the country by next year, providing pilgrims with greater convenience and ease during their journey to Saudi Arabia.

Regarding the selection of Moavineen-e-Hujaj, he categorically stated that they would be appointed as per direction given by the federal cabinet adding that experienced and trained people would be selected for the job after proper scrutiny.

He said despite a lot of pressure particularly at the front of foreign exchange, the ministry was launching Hajj operation by May end. He also sought out media's support in case of providing right information to the people and asked to pin point the weaknesses in the system so that they could be removed for the convenience and betterment of the intending pilgrims.

Comprehensive Eid security plan devised for Capital

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police have finalized a comprehensive security plan for the Eid ul Fitr following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr Akbar Nasir Khan and also augmented the security at public, worship places and other important buildings to thwart any untoward incident, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, the security plan was reviewed here on Thursday in a meeting presided over by SSP (Operations) Malik Jameel Zafar and attended by zonal DPO's, SDPO's and SHO's of all police stations. SSP Operations Islamabad has devised the special security plan and all police officials have been directed to remain on high alert and fully prepared to avert any untoward situation during Eid days.

According to the security plan, more than 3500 policemen would patrol various sectors to check possible house burglaries during Eid holidays. The

SSP Islamabad has also directed for effective security measures in the city on this occasion. There are 1037 Masjids and 28 Imambargahs which will be covered by armed guards and policemen during Eid ul Fitr prayers.

Policemen would also patrol in the various sectors and police in charge of circles would ensure proper security at the Eid congregations in various locations. According to this plan, beat systems have been introduced for security at main shopping centers, markets and additional deployment of policemen has been ensured there especially for Chand Raat. The contingents of mobile reserve police and prisoner van movement would be part of security measures at important shopping centers including Jinnah Super market, F-10 and Aabpara market. Policemen have been assigned duties at bus stands, graveyards and railway stations while special deployment will also be made at Faisal Mosque. All SHOs have been directed to

conduct security meetings with managers of bus stands as bus stands were identified for security duties. Following these meetings, special police pickets have been erected in the vicinity of bus stands and police would check the passengers and other suspects there. As per security duties on Eid, the policemen would patrol in the various sectors and contingents of Pakistan Rangers, FC and police commandos will assist police in these security duties. Vehicles of police stations and falcons would patrol in their respective areas while additional vehicles were also provided to each police station for success of the patrolling plan.

Police teams have been constituted for patrolling in various urban sectors and rural areas. Keeping in view the rush of visitors at public places, security measures have also been taken at Shakarparian, Daman-e-Koh, Yasmin Garden, Manal, Lake View Park, Chattar Park and Centaurus.

CTP issue traffic plan for Chand Raat, Eid ul Fitr

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi here on Wednesday issued traffic plan for Chand Raat and Eid-ul-Fitr.

According to a CTP spokesman, the CTP had finalized a special traffic plan for Chand Raat and Eid ul Fitr, under which additional personnel would be deployed at important markets, shopping malls, public places and mosques to control the heavy traffic.

Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Tamoor Khan said under the plan, traffic wardens had been assigned

duties to maintain traffic flow particularly on Chand Raat. CTP on the directives of the CTO would take strict action against the violators and the motorists had been urged to cooperate with traffic police, he said.

City Traffic Officer, Tamoor Khan advised the citizens to follow the traffic rules and not indulge in over-speeding. Traffic wardens were also instructed to deal with the motorists politely, he added.

Tamoor Khan said that 1100 traffic police personnel including DSPs, inspectors, traffic wardens and traffic

assistants would perform their duties. 35 special pickets had been set up at various places in Rawalpindi city to check one wheeling and car skating on Chand Raat and Eid holidays. Seven special squads had also been formed which would take action in accordance with the law against the traffic rules violators, he informed.

CTP had also formulated a comprehensive plan to regulate the traffic of tourists at the hill station of Murree, he said and informed that 260 traffic wardens would perform duties in Murree.



ISLAMABAD: The federal capital is adorned with a beautiful view of clouds hovering above it.

Expired food destroyed

KABUL (TOLOnews): The Kabul intelligence gathered nearly one hundred tons of expired food and non-halal meat and set it on fire, said an intelligence official. Health officials of intelligence in Kabul said that most of these materials were collected from PD9 and PD16 in Kabul in the past month. "35 tons of pork and 65 tons of expired meat were set on fire," said Abdul Qader Mangal, a health official of Kabul Intelligence.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Friday, April 21, 2023

Meeting to be held in Doha

KABUL (Agencies): The UN Secretary General is convening an international meeting on Afghanistan May 1-2 in Doha, in which special representatives of a number of countries will participate. Antonio Guterres will host the meeting, gathering featuring special envoys on Afghanistan from various countries who aim to "clarify expectations", according to spokesman Stephane Dujarric. The purpose of this meeting is to strengthen the international interaction with Afghanistan.

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

Flash floods, earthquake kill 29 in past month

KABUL (Khaama Press): At least 29 people were killed across 31 provinces due to flash floods and earthquakes in the past month, officials said.

According to Shafiullah Rahimi, a spokesperson for the State Ministry for Natural Disaster Management, 29 people have died in 31 provinces of the country. In contrast, more than 105 others have been injured due to the recent earthquake and flash flooding during the last solar month (21 March to 20 April).

Meanwhile, he added that the natural disasters had physical and financial

damages, including 155 residential houses being destroyed, 1,242 being partially damaged and 848 livestock perished, and 7,106 acres of agricultural land being destroyed.

Officials said that the affected families were assisted with relief such as food, tents and blankets.

"This ministry has distributed emergency aid to about 40,000 families in cooperation with government institutions and other organizations, and the process is ongoing," Rahimi said.

Earlier, nine provinces of Afghanistan, including Balkh, Zabol, Faryab, Uru-

zgan, Nimroz, Nangarhar, Kunar, Nuristan, and Laghman, were severely hit with heavy rain, snow and flooding. As a result of heavy rain, more than 756 homes were destroyed partially or entirely.

Meanwhile, in March, local officials said a powerful tremor of 6.5 magnitudes rocked Afghanistan last week, killing ten people, injuring more than 60 people, and damaging more than 800 houses.

Afghanistan is the most vulnerable country to various natural disasters, including flooding, earthquake, avalanches, heavy rains and landslides.

Afghanistan 'safe haven' for terrorists

KABUL (Khaama Press): According to defence and counterterrorism experts, al Qaeda and ISIS-K are flourishing in Afghanistan, again turning into a "safe haven" for terrorists who are increasingly posing a threat against United States.

"The terrorist threat environment in Afghanistan has deteriorated dramatically since August 2021 - and it is getting worse," Tuesday, Nathan Sales, a former State Department counterterrorism coordinator, made a statement reported by Just the News.

He further elaborated that due to the various groups and the lack of capability to fight terrorism on the one hand and the absence of US pressure, Afghanistan has become a breeding ground for growing terrorism.

"Due to a combination of Taliban-provided safe haven, the Taliban's lack of counterterrorism capability, and the absence of sustained counterterrorism pressure from the United States, Afghanistan has become hospitable terrain for various terrorist groups," he added.

Earlier last month, Army General Michael Kurilla told the US Senate Armed Services Committee that ISSI-K is rapidly growing in Afghanistan, potentially launching "overseas operations" in Europe and Asia.

He warned that the Islamic State could carry out operations against the US or West interests within six months or so.

Meanwhile, the experts expressed their concerns over the capability of the militant groups, mainly ISIS-K and al Qaeda, after the withdrawal of the US left behind nearly \$7.2 billion worth of equipment.

However, the de facto authorities claim they can prevent any attack from Afghanistan against other countries.

Chicken processing plant opened

M A Z A R - E - S H A R I F (TOLOnews): A privately-run chicken slaughterhouse was opened in Mazar-e-Sharif, costing one million dollars. Officials said the plant will follow health standards for slaughtering chickens, which will benefit the population.

"We have invested nearly one million dollars here to keep our city clean, and we have the capacity to slaughter 90 chickens here," said Aziz Ahmad Nasserei, head of the slaughterhouse.

Officials of Balkh said that the creation of a chicken slaughterhouse is important for the health of residents. "It's a good thing because of the environment and people's health," said Shamsuddin Khalid, head of the agriculture department in Balkh.

"We support our traders, and the municipality department is with them," said Mohammad Nasim Abid, deputy head of the municipality department in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Meanwhile, some residents of Mazar-e-Sharif said that establishing this slaughterhouse will prevent the slaughtering of chickens in every corner of the city, in front of women and children.

SIGAR Chief says US aid could be funding Taliban

KABUL (Khaama Press): The United States aid to Afghanistan may currently fund the de facto government of Kabul, said John Spoko, SIGAR Chief.

The US Congress heard from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), John Sopko. He said he could not say with assurance that US aid to Afghanistan was "not currently funding the Taliban."

"While I agree, and we all agree Afghanistan faces a dire humanitarian and economic situation, it is critical that our assistance not be diverted by the Taliban," SIGAR chief John Sopko said as he testified before the US House Oversight Committee. "Unfortunately, as I sit here today, I cannot assure this committee or the American taxpayer we are not currently funding the Taliban," said Sopko.

"Nor can I assure you that the Taliban are not



diverting the money we are sending from the intended recipients, the poor Afghan people," he added.

He added that since Mr Biden withdrew US forces from Afghanistan in 2021 after 20 years of fighting there, the Taliban's attempt to retake control of Kabul has drawn more attention to Sigar.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration has tried to

channel funding into Afghanistan through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the international community rather than interacting directly with the Taliban authorities.

SIGAR warns in its most recent report that aids to the Afghan people could be diverted before it reaches its intended recipient if there are no US observers

on the ground to monitor the use of the cash.

Meanwhile, Mr Biden and his Democratic Party accuse the late President Donald Trump of reaching a deal with the Taliban that virtually guaranteed a quick withdrawal with little time to spare.

The deal has set the conditions that led to the disastrous 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Khalilzad proposes measures for UN Chief meeting on Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): Zalmay Khalilzad, the Former US envoy for Afghanistan, informed in a series of tweets on Tuesday that he welcomes the decision by the UN Secretary-General to host a meeting in Doha of Special Envoys for Afghanistan.

Khalilzad welcomed the meeting, which will be held in the first week of May and proposed four key measures.

He recommended that the "full implementation of the Doha Agreement should be embraced as the common goal."

He added, "Major figures from the previous Afghan government embrace the agreement as the best framework for dealing with Afghanistan's challenges. The agreement has not been fully implemented, and no alternative has comparable broad support among Afghans and the international community."

He also suggested that a road map for implementation be drawn up, considering the current conditions in Afghanistan.

He continued, "To develop the road map, the Secretary-General and the Envoys should have a session with the Taliban during their deliberations."

"This is needed to determine whether the Islamic Emirate remains committed to the Doha Agreement and to communicate the international community's commitment to work with them and others on a roadmap for implementation."

"This includes a sequence of steps by the Islamic Emirate and the international community. The roadmap must address the issue of women's education and employment," Khalilzad said.

Finally, he recommended a follow-up to the meeting. He said, "The Secretary-General should

appoint a personal Envoy to work with Afghans and the relevant international in developing and implementing the roadmap."

Meanwhile, SIGAR said in a report earlier that the Doha agreement paved the way for the collapse of the previous government while strengthening the Taliban then.

In this regard, Khalilzad was the builder and initiative of the Doha agreement, which was a complete failure. Meanwhile, several Afghan experts believe Khalilzad has been hired "to lobby the Taliban group."

Khalilzad remarks a day after the UN deputy Chief, Amina Mohammad, that the organization plans to arrange a conference in the coming days to discuss granting recognition to Afghanistan's Taliban.

Mohammed meanwhile said: "We have amazing envoys that work on



Afghanistan, and we have Afghan women too, and what we are hoping is that we will gather them now in another two weeks in the region, and they will have that first meeting of envoys across the board, the region and internationally with the secretary general for the first time."

She continued by saying that it would be "a principle recognition" and "in other words, there are conditions."

Uzbekistan sends 185 tons of aid to Afghanistan



KABUL (Khaama Press): Uzbekistan dispatched 185 tons of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, according to officials. The humanitarian aid of 185 tons included food comprising flour, wheat, vegetable oil, pasta, canned goods, sugar, and instant food items, said an official statement reported by Gazeta. UZ.

The humanitarian aid was dispatched to Hairatan and transferred by the Uzbek special representatives Ismatulla Irgashev, First Deputy Head of

Surkhandarya region Anvar Oripov to the acting minister of Economy of Afghanistan, Deen Mohammad Hanif.

Meanwhile, the Uzbek delegation discussed enhancing bilateral trade between both countries.

Since the Taliban took over the country, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated. According to a recent study released by the UNDP on Monday in Kabul, Afghanistan remains among the world's most impoverished countries due to the "unparal-

leled shock."

The study added that due to the Taliban's repressive policies, particularly about women, the long-term prospects for economic development are still dim and inadequate. Impoverished people increase dramatically from 19 million in 2020 to 34 million in 2022.

"If foreign aid is reduced this year, Afghanistan may fall from the cliff edge into the abyss," warned Abdullah Al Dardari, the UNDP Resident Representative in Afghanistan.

IEA seeks to expand economic ties with Central Asian countries

KABUL (Agencies): Ministry of Industry and Commerce officials said they will increase efforts to expand economic relations with Central Asian countries in the coming year.

According to officials, Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan are interested in expanding economic relations with Afghanistan.

Last week, Kazakhstan's minister of trade visited Kabul and discussed the issue of expanding trade ties with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

"The two sides discussed increasing the level of trade between the two countries to \$3 billion, building transportation infrastructure, railways, regional

connectivity and investing in Afghanistan's mineral resources," Abdulsalam Jawad, the spokesman of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, said.

Economic experts said that if Afghanistan can strengthen economic relations with Central Asian countries, it will have a positive effect on the economic situation of Afghanistan and the region.

"The more our economic relations with Central Asia expand, the more it will help Afghanistan's economy and trade. Both Afghanistan and Central Asia will gain greatly. The Islamic Emirate should pay attention to this and if our relations with them expand, it will benefit Afghanistan," Abdul Jabbar Safi, head of the Union of

Industrialists, said.

Experts believe that Afghanistan can connect Central Asia to South Asia, and it plays an important role in expanding trade relations in the region.

"I think Afghanistan should start economic development from Central Asian countries, countries that have rich resources and will help Afghanistan's economic system," said Taj Mohammad Talash, an economic expert.

Officials of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce said that the expansion of cooperation in the fields of agriculture, mining, energy production and railway construction in Afghanistan will directly provide employment to thousands of citizens in the country.

Badghis education experts rally call for reopening of girls schools

QALA-I-NAW (Pajhwok): Education experts in north-western Badghis province have asked the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' (IEA) to allow girls to go to schools and put end to uncomfortable situation which created tension and worries among girl students above class sixth.

Upon the resumption of education year last year, government barred girls above class sixth from going to schools and said a strategy was being worked out on the bases of which girls would allow back to schools.

A well-placed source recently told Pajhwok Afghan News that a strategy regarding the school

uniform of boys and girls was prepared and sent to relevant educational departments for their consent.

Girls students in Badghis province said that the closure of schools created serious psychological problems for them.

Shukria, 19, the student of class 11th and 2nd position holder in her class, told Pajhwok Afghan News the closure of girls' school was a serious blow on her and other girls.

She received psychological treatment from a doctor for a long time, said: "The closure of schools for me and other girls who dreamed bright future was disappointing."

She said her purpose was

to learn medicine, become a doctor and serve the people of Badghis, said now getting this target seemed impossible because she got married and her responsibilities had increased.

Shukria said in case there was no ban on girls education above class sixth, her engagement could have been delayed till she finished her education.

But this is not only Shukria who had been affected by education ban but Afsana, 16, the resident of Qala-i-Naw City is another girls who suffered psychologically due to the ban on girls education.

She said before the fall of previous government she studied in class ninth and

she ranked 3rd and attended her studies with full interest and enthusiasm but after ban on girls education above class sixth created psychological issues for her.

She dreamed to become a journalist in the future, said till women and girls were going to universities she was hopeful that time will come when their schools would be reopened but ban on university education she became disappointed and never expect her future dream would become reality.

She said the closure of women and girls universities and schools were the worst news she heard and that resulted into grave psy-

chological problems for her.

"Me and other girls like me who don't go to schools are being encouraged by our families to get married and make a family while we first want education and then get married," she said. Afsana and Shukria asked the IEA not to become a barrier in the way of girls' education.

Education experts in Badghis province also stressed over the reopening of girls schools above class sixths.

University Teacher Nisar Ahmad Akbari termed education the right of all people in a society and said women like men had the right to get education with-

out discrimination.

He said it was government responsibility to provide education facility for all members of society and stressed over the reversal of ban on girls education above class sixth.

Referring to the fact that women comprised half of the society he said depriving women from education would slow paced the development and progress of a society.

"We should resolve this problem and girls should be allowed to go to schools wearing Islamic Hijab this will help in the progress of our society," he believed.

Psychologist Fariba Noorzai said depriving women from their right to

education made women disappointed and left negative impact on the psychological condition of girls.

She said the continued closure of schools could cause psychological disorder, mental issues, stress and losing tolerance among the affected persons.

She said individuals suffering from such problems may harm people around them or sometimes these issues forced the affected persons to commit suicide. She asked the IEA to allow women to go to school while they are clad in Islamic Hijab.

Religious Scholar Abdul Rafai Mateei said there was no argument in the reli-

gious texts where women are banned from getting education.

He said in Islam men and women are encouraged to get education and even the life partner of the prophet was an education lady.

He said: "Allah has created man and woman to build the earth and this could not be possible without education. The way men have the right to education same goes for women. There is no argument in the religion on the bases of which women education is banned."

He said women are encouraged to get education in compliance to Islamic Hijab.





ISLAMABAD: Passengers are rushing to board into vehicle at Karachi Company Bus station as large number of people leaving for their native villages to celebrate Eid.

78 killed in crush at Ramazan charity event in Yemen

SANAA (Agencies): At least 78 people have been killed in a crush at a school in Yemen's capital Sanaa just days before the Eid al-Fitr festival, according to Houthi officials and media.

The crush happened late on Wednesday as hundreds of people crowded into a school in the Bab al-Yemen district of Sanaa in the hope of getting a charitable donation of about \$10 that was being handed out by merchants to mark the final days of Ramazan. A video posted by Houthi television on the Telegram messaging app showed a crowd of people jammed together, some screaming and shouting and reaching out to be pulled to safety. Security staff fought to push people back and control the crowd.

Separate footage released by the Houthis, who control the capital, showed bloodstains, shoes and victims' clothing scattered on the ground

while investigators examined the area. Witnesses Abdel-Rahman Ahmed and Yahia Mohsen told The Associated Press news agency that armed Houthis had fired into the air in an attempt at crowd control, apparently hitting an electrical wire, which exploded and caused panic among those waiting. Al Jazeera however, could not independently ascertain the reasons behind the crush. The Houthi-controlled Ministry of Interior's spokesperson Brig Abdel-Khaleq al-Aghri described the incident as "tragic", blaming the "random distribution" of funds without coordination with local authorities.

The two merchants who organised the event had been detained and an investigation was under way, the ministry said. The Houthis announced they would pay some \$2,000 in compensation to each family who lost a relative, while the injured would get about \$400. At least 73 of the injured

were taken to the al-Thowra Hospital in Sanaa, according to hospital deputy director Hamdan Bagheri, with families rushing to hospitals looking for their loved ones.

Al Jazeera's Mohammed al-Attab, reporting from Sanaa, said the disaster had "sparked nationwide anger". Sanaa has been under the control of the Houthis since 2014 when they removed the country's internationally-recognised government. That led to the intervention of a Saudi-led coalition a year later.

More than 150,000 people, including fighters and civilians, have been killed in the conflict, which has created one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters. More than 21 million people in Yemen, or two-thirds of the country's population, need assistance and protection, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Pak places first order for discounted Russian crude oil

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has placed its first order for discounted Russian crude oil under a new deal struck between Islamabad and Moscow, the country's petroleum minister said, with one cargo to dock at Karachi port in May.

The deal will see Pakistan buy crude oil only, not refined fuels, and imports are expected to reach 100,000 barrels per day if the first transaction goes through smoothly, Minister Musadik Malik told a foreign news agency on Wednesday night. "Our orders are in, we have placed that already," he said.

"Yes it is true that we will be getting only crude, not refined oil," Malik said in response to confirm sources information whether that's correct. He said Pakistan's Refinery Limited (PRL) will initially refine the Russian crude, with other refineries to be included later after a trial run.

Russia had conceptually agreed in January to supply crude oil and oil products to cash-strapped Pakistan at cheaper rates and signed several memoranda of understanding with Pakistan's energy ministry.

Russian Energy Minister Nikolay Shulginov led a delegation to Islamabad in January to hold talks on the deal, after which he said oil exports to Pakistan could begin after March. Following the signing of the deals, Pakistan said it wanted to import about 30 to 35 percent of its total crude oil requirement from Russia.

Millions close to hunger after WFP cuts aid to Kabul

KABUL (Agencies): Amina Mohammadi, a 34-year-old Afghan widow from the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif, is among millions of Afghans reliant on rations provided by the World Food Programme (WFP). But the mother of four is now worried about how to feed her children after the UN food agency last month announced drastic cuts in food assistance. The WFP has warned that if donors do not pledge new funds, the agency will not have the resources to carry out any food assistance by June.

"Our food distributions will drop from 13 million people in March to nine million people in April and five million people in May down to zero in June and onwards," Philippe Kropf, the head of communications at WFP, told Al Jazeera. Last month, the WFP, which provides food assistance to more than 20 million Afghans, said a severe shortage of funds forced it to drastically reduce its food assistance to the South Asian country facing a humanitarian crisis.

"The country is at the highest risk of famine in a quarter of a century and WFP's food assistance is the last lifeline for millions of Afghans," Hsiao-Wei Lee, WFP country director in Afghanistan, said in a statement last month. Six million Afghans, the UN agency warned, are one step away from famine. "Since November last year, the WFP in Afghanistan had been warning that funds would run out. Now faced with funding shortfalls, WFP had to start to reduce its lifesaving assistance to millions of people across the country," Kropf said. The UN agency needs nearly \$800m to run its food assistance programme in the country for the next six months, Kropf said.

Kropf explained that the organisation initially reduced the quantity of assistance to some of the recipients, providing them with two weeks of food per month, as opposed to the previous ration that was sufficient for three weeks. The cuts in food assistance are harder for women-led households in Afghanistan, in particular, where the breadwinners find their rights to employment, education and even movement restricted by the Taliban rulers.

Mohammadi, whose husband was killed last year, says there are no jobs for women in her neighbourhood. "I do everything I can: I wash clothes at neighbourhood homes, I do some tailoring – but it's not sufficient to support my children," she said. Mohammadi told Al Jazeera that the monthly rations and cash she received from the WFP saved her family, including her four children, including three sons – 12, seven

and four, and a 10-year-old daughter, from hunger. "For the last few months, I collected rations of flour, beans, tea, salt, and nutritious food for the children," she told Al Jazeera.

The country has been teetering on the brink of famine and economic collapse since the Taliban's return to power in August 2021 after 20 years of war and US occupation. The war-torn country's economy, which was largely dependent on foreign funding, has not been able to revive because West-led international sanctions have dried up many sources of international aid. The Taliban administration's financial and diplomatic isolation has further exacerbated the humanitarian situation in the country.

Aseel – a company that started out as e-commerce platform, but shifted its technology and resources to address the growing humanitarian crises following the Taliban's takeover in August 2021 – has been using technology to go around sanctions and help people in need. Madina Matin, the communications manager at Aseel, said their digital and tech-driven approach has helped connect donors to Afghan families, benefitting more than 500,000 Afghans in the last year and a half.

"The [US-led] sanctions and banking restriction limit Afghanistan's access to international financial institutions and donors, which can impact the ability of national organisations to secure funding for humanitarian aid," Matin told Al Jazeera, adding that the sanctions also had a chilling effect, creating "hesitancy among donors to provide aid to a country under sanctions". The Afghan administration, which has not been recognised by any country in the world, has appealed for its recognition and the lifting of sanctions. It has also urged the US to release billions of dollars of frozen Afghan funds desperately needed to revive the economy.

The group has faced international censure for its decision to curb women's freedoms, including a ban on university and school education. Al Jazeera reached Taliban officials in two northern provinces, Balkh and Baghlan, who said that they were also concerned about the cutbacks in aid and rations. However, they declined further comment for this article.

With the aid to her family set to be reduced, Mohammadi faces an uncertain future. During the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims fast from dawn to dusk, she is already limiting the portions of the two meagre meals her children have in the day, she said.

Lahore court grants remand of Gandapur

LAHORE (PPI): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore granted three-day transit remand of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Amin Gandapur to Sindh police on Thursday.

ATC judge Abhar Gul Khan heard the case that had been registered against Ali Amin Gandapur in Shikarpur district over anti-state speeches. The Sindh police approached the Lahore court for transit remand of Gandapur. The court first granted two-day transit remand and then extended it by one day due to Eid.

A case has been registered against the PTI leader for delivering a hate speech against state institutions. It is pertinent to mention here that the Lahore police took custody of PTI leader soon after a court in Bhakkar granted bail to a firebrand politician in a case related to opening fire on a police checkpoint.

Gandapur, a former federal minister, was arrested from outside the Peshawar High Court's D.I. Khan bench earlier this month. On April 8, a case was registered against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Amin Gandapur at Islamabad's Golra police station under section 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA).

Death toll from Torkham incident reaches five

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: The dead body of the fifth person was recovered from the debris of the landslide near Torkham Border, taking the death toll to five on Thursday.

According to the rescue sources, the body was shifted to hospital for medico legal formalities. The deceased was identified as Syed Rehman, a national of Afghanistan. Earlier, the bodies of four people were recovered from the debris of the landslide and 12 had been recovered in injured condition.

Meanwhile, the teams of Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps were busy in carrying out the rescue operation in the area. The teams were busy removing the debris of the landslide. Most of the route had been cleared due to the continuous efforts of Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps and civil administration. Heavy machinery was being used to remove the debris of the landslide.

Ali Zaidi sent to jail

KARACHI (INP): PTI Sindh president Ali Haider Zaidi has been sent to jail on judicial remand in a 'fraud' case on Thursday. Ali Haider Zaidi was arrested, last week, after a case was registered against him at Ibrahim Hyderi police station on charges of 'fraud'.

The Karachi PTI president was brought to Malir court in strict security as his physical remand expired today. At the outset of the hearing, police pleaded with the court to extend the physical remand of Ali Zaidi, but it was turned down. The Malir court while ordering police to shift Ali Zaidi to jail on judicial remand directed the investigation officer to submit a challan of the case on the next hearing.

The FIR was registered on the complaint of a property dealer, Fazal Elahi, against the PTI leader. The FIR was registered under Sections 34 (acts done by several persons in furtherance of a common intention), 506 (punishment for criminal intimidation), 420 (cheating and dishonestly inducing delivery of property), 471 (using as genuine a forged document) and 468 (forgery for purpose of cheating) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

Ch. Anwar elected AJK PM unopposed

F.P. Report

MIRPUR: The nine-day hectic tug of power in the power corridors of Azad Jammu and Kashmir ultimately reached to its logical end through a proper constitutional democratic process after Azad Jammu Kashmir Legislative Assembly, the Lower House of the AJK Parliament, elected the Independent candidate Ch. Anwar ul Haq as the 15th Prime Minister of Azad government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir unopposed with a thumping majority of 48 votes in the 53-seat House on Thursday.

The newly-elected Prime Minister Ch. Anwar ul haq will head the coalition set up of the new government of Azad Jammu Kashmir comprising on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), (AJK Chapters) as the law makers belonging to all the three parties reached an understanding to form the coalition government electing Ch. Anwar ul Haq as Leader of the House and the Prime Minister of the AJK government.

The office had fallen vacant after the full court bench of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) High Court on Tuesday last (April 11) had disqualified Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas from being a member of the legislative assembly for contempt of the court. The AJK HC order of disqualification of Sardar Tanveer Ilyas from the PM office was kept intact by the Supreme Court of Azad Jammu Kashmir.

Ch. Anwar ul Haq, origi-

nally belongs to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chapter, elected MLA from Bhimber City (AJK) electoral constituency in AJK general elections-2021, emerged as the only candidate who filed the nomination papers for the top slot as leader of the house by the deadline wee hours on Thursday in line with the elections schedule which was announced late Wednesday. No any other candidate filed the nomination papers by the end of the stipulated time against the triumphant only candidate Ch. Anwar ul Haq for the office.

All two major parties of the formerly united opposition including all 12 belonging to PPP AJK and 07 belonging to PML-N AJK in the AJK Legislative Assembly polled their votes in favor of the victorious PM Ch. Anwar ul Haq during the polling process held later on in the assembly session held in the mid night of Wednesday and Thursday in the State metropolis with the Deputy Speaker Ch. Riaz Gujjar in the Chair. 29 out of a total of PTI members of the AJK Legislative Assembly cast their votes in favor of Ch. Anwar ul Haq electing him Prime Minister.

The only MLAs belonging to All Jammu Kashmir Muslim Conference and Jammu Kashmir Peoples Party Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan and Sardar Hassan Ibrahim Khan respectively did not polled their votes. Likewise, the MLAs Mrs. Shahida Saqbeer and Ali Shan Soni, belonging to PTI AJK, abstained from casting their vote in favor of the only

candidate, Ch. Anwar ul haq, who was later declared elected unopposed as the Prime Minister of Azad government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

Earlier, according to the elections schedule announced by Azad Jammu Kashmir Legislative Assembly on the wee hours on Thursday, the nomination papers were allowed to be filed from 12.40 a.m to 12.55 a.m on Thursday. Scrutiny of the nomination papers were held from 12.55 AM to 1.10 AM on Thursday. List of the Names of the candidates whom nomination papers were accepted was displayed at 1.10 a.m on Thursday. Last date for withdrawal of the nomination papers from 1.10 AM to 1.20 a.m on Thursday.

Final list of the candidates displayed at 1.20 AM Thursday. Election to the office of the Prime Minister held at 1.25 AM on Thursday. Later while addressing the assembly session, PML-N lawmakers in the house former Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider Khan, PML (N) AJK President and former Speaker AJK Legislative Assembly Shah Ghulam Qadir, PPP AJK President MLA Ch. Yaseen, former Leader of the Opposition in the House Ch. Latif Akber of PPP, Ch. Rasheed, Deewan Chughtai and Hafiz Hamid Raza of PTI and others, congratulated Ch. Anwar ul Haq for having been elected as the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu Kashmir securing support of a thumping majority of 53-seat State Legislative Assembly by bagging 48 votes.

President concerned about legality of Caretakers

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi has sent the Prime Minister a letter of Chaudhry Fawad Ahmed, asking him to look into the issues raised by the former Federal Minister to uphold the Constitution and strengthen democracy in the country.

Chaudhary Fawad Ahmed had raised issues in his letter to the President, with regard to the legality

of the interim setups in the two provinces of the country. He had said that the interim governments in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had completed their stipulated period and the Constitution did not provide for the continuation /extension of the period fixed for the interim setup. He had further stated that caretaker governments were introduced as per Article 224 of the

Constitution to facilitate the Election Commission of Pakistan in holding free, fair, just, and honest elections in accordance with the Constitution and the law.

In his letter, President Dr Arif Alvi has asked the Prime Minister, Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, to examine this matter to ensure the upholding the Constitution and strengthening of democracy in Pakistan.

Campaign against excessive fares continues

F.P. Report

KARACHI: On the directives of the Provincial Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon, the campaign against transporters who overcharged passengers on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr continued for the third consecutive day. In this regard, The Transport Department Secretary Abdul Haleem Shaikh directed the officers to take strict action against transporters who charge illegal fare from passengers.

The Secretary transport has said that complaints are being received from all over Sindh regarding excessive fares and directed that the campaign should be accelerated. Meanwhile, separate

teams of transport department have been formed for different areas of Karachi which are engaged in campaign in morning and night shifts. In Karachi 289 vehicles were checked last night and throughout the day today and Rs 551,000 were returned to passengers. The District Regional Transport Authority Jamshoro with coordination of Motorway Police confiscated the documents of 2 coaches in an

action on Indus Highway.

The DRTA also recommended cancellation of the route permits of the coaches. A total of Rs 267,000 were refunded to passengers in Jamshoro. In shaheed Benazirabad, Transport Department officers checked 30 vehicles along with Motorway Police. As many as 09 vehicles were challaned for charging excess fare from passengers and imposed a fine of Rs 8,000 on the them. Rs. 10,000 was refunded to passengers in Shaheed Benazirabad. In Sukkur, An amount of Rs. 5,800 was imposed on transporters for violation of the existing fare structure. Passengers were refunded Rs 12,000 near Rohri on the Sukkur Multan Motorway.

Similarly, transport department officials checked 25 vehicles in Thatta and passengers were refunded Rs 7,500. District Regional Transport Authority Shikarpur fined transporters Rs 5,000 for charging excess fare and refunded Rs 4,300 to passengers. A total of 40 vehicles were checked in Larkana and a fine of Rs 22000 was imposed on complaints of excess fare, and passengers were refunded Rs 16600.

ECP files petition for review

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has filed a petition for review of Supreme Court's (SC) April 4 verdict, nullifying the former's orders of postponing the Punjab elections to October 08.

In a statement, the electoral watchdog spokesperson said that the ECP's legal team has filed a petition in apex court for review of Supreme Court's April 4 order on Punjab elections. Earlier on April 4, the Supreme Court (SC) declared the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) March 22 order on Punjab elections null and void.

Sudan's generals reject negotiations as ceasefire fails

KHARTOUM (Agencies): Warring generals in Sudan have rejected negotiations with each other, as fighting between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) continues, despite repeated attempts at a ceasefire.

Speaking to Al Jazeera on Thursday, the head of Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), General Mohamed Hamdan "Hemedti" Dagalo, said that he would not sit down and talk with his chief rival, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. "We are calling for a humanitarian truce and for a ceasefire for a specific period, but the other side does not want that," Hemedti said in a phone call with Al Jazeera on Thursday. "But we are not talking about sitting down with a criminal. We have been negotiating [with al-

Burhan] for two years, without any results."

"Al-Burhan was the one who started the battles and he is the one responsible for murdering the Sudanese people, so there are no future negotiations with him," he added. Following the interview with Hemedti, al-Burhan also spoke to Al Jazeera, and said that there was no party "with whom we can sit down to negotiate with now". "This party [the RSF] vowed to eliminate the Sudanese army and the rule of Sudan, and it is now stealing the homes of the Sudanese, and this does not augur that it is a party that restores Sudan's permanence."

Both men spoke of the upcoming Eid holiday, with Hemedti saying that he had "no objection" to a truce over Eid, but claimed that the army had

continued attacking his forces despite a ceasefire that was supposed to be observed from 16:00 GMT on Wednesday evening. For his part, al-Burhan said that the Sudanese people "did not deserve to receive Eid while living through this suffering". "The reason for this situation is the personal greed of the RSF," al-Burhan added. Eid will begin on either Friday or Saturday. Fighting in Sudan between the army and the RSF has continued for a sixth day, with more than 300 people killed, including many civilians. Residents of Khartoum have been fleeing the capital, hoping to reach safer areas.

Despite international mediation efforts, there are few signs of de-escalation. Both the Sudanese army and the RSF have been accused of human rights violations during the fighting,

and in the months preceding the conflict, when the two sides united to launch a military coup against a transitional government in October 2021, and cracked down on the protests that followed. Internationally mediated talks to transition the country back to civilian rule were reportedly in their final stages, but a dispute about the integration of the RSF into the army sparked the recent outbreak of fighting.

In his interview, Hemedti attempted to portray himself as a supporter of a democratic transition in Sudan, despite his forces being repeatedly accused of arresting and killing protesters calling for a civilian-led government. "We are defending the realisation of a true democratic transition in the country," Hemedti said. "The only key to resolving the conflict in Sudan right now is bringing al-

Burhan to justice."

"Democracy does not come by the gun," al-Burhan responded in his interview. "The leadership of the RSF covets the rule of Sudan. We say that no one can rule Sudan by force," al-Burhan said. "The Sudanese people want freedom and democracy and know how to take their rights." Hemedti has attempted to shift international perceptions of his image. He first emerged in Sudan as a leader in the government-backed Popular Defence Forces (called "Janjaweed" by rebel groups) accused of human rights violations in Darfur. The RSF later emerged out of the Popular Defence Forces during the presidency of former President Omar al-Bashir, who was overthrown after protests in 2019.

The RSF has used international public relations firms to portray itself

as a defender of Sudanese civilians and a barricade against religious hardliners in recent months, and has taken to publishing statements in English on social media, decrying the army. Hemedti has also rejected accusations that his forces were receiving external support, specifically from the Russian mercenary Wagner Group. "[There is] no truth to [reports of] us receiving any external support," the general said. "These are false accusations made by al-Burhan. We have not even requested external support ... Wagner was brought in to support the army, and not the RSF." Asked about reported Israeli mediation efforts, al-Burhan responded curtly, saying that he did not have "any information" and that he had not received any communication from Israel "until now".