

6 devotees killed in accident

SEHWAN (INP): Six devotees were killed and eight injured in a bus accident on the Indus Highway near Manjhand. The devotees were en route in a coaster from Jamshoro to Sehwan Sharif to the Lal Shahbaz Qalandar shrine. The coaster overturned near Manjahand on the Indus Highway, police officials claimed. The victims and the injured belonged to the same family, they said further.

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CTD kills two terrorists

LAKKI MARWAT (INP): The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) police killed two terrorists during a search operation in the vicinity of the Lakki Marwat police station. During the search operation, six terrorists hiding in an under-construction building attacked the CTD officials. Station House Officer (SHO) Javaid and a policeman got injured in the firing resorted to by the terrorists.

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LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif distributing gift hampers among the staff and prisoners of Kot Lakhpat Jail on the occasion of Eid.

12 killed in attack on Swat CTD police station

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: At least 12 policemen were martyred and more than 40 people injured in a "suspected suicide attack" at a Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) police station in Swat's Kabal on Monday, police said.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayat Khan said security officials were on "high alert" throughout the province. Meanwhile, the provincial health department has imposed a state of emergency at hospitals in Swat.

Earlier, District Police Officer Shafi Ullah Gandapur (DPO) said there were two blasts inside the station, which destroyed the building. CTD DIG Khalid Sohail said the building's collapse caused a power outage, the extent of which is yet to be determined. The building that collapsed was an old one while most offices and personnel were located in a newer building, he added.

The DIG said that the cause of the blasts was not yet known. "Ammunition and mortar shells were kept inside the station. It is pos-

sible that they were behind the explosions. It could also be a suicide attack," he said.

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah condemned the blast and expressed sadness over the lives lost. "This scourge of terrorism will be uprooted soon," he asserted. KP Caretaker Chief Minister Azam Khan also condemned the blast and directed that the injured be provided timely medical attention. The provincial government would not abandon the heirs of those martyred, he assured.

The blast was also condemned by Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori. The latest attack comes as Pakistan faces a rise in terrorism incidents, with militants targeting law enforcers in their new offensive. The security agencies have also ramped up operations against the terrorists. Meanwhile, one hundred and twenty-five police personnel embraced martyrdom and 212 others sustained injuries in different militant attacks across the province during the first quarter of 2023. A total of 25 cases of militant attacks

have been registered with the police during the three months, police data shows.

According to the data, 15 militant attacks were reported against police in January 2023, in which 116 personnel embraced martyrdom and 189 were injured. Three militant attacks were reported in February 2023, in which two police personnel embraced martyrdom and five others were wounded. Seven cases were registered by the police in March 2023, wherein seven policemen embraced martyrdom and 18 others were wounded.

Meanwhile, a senior police official told media that following a surge in attacks on the police in January after the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) called off the ceasefire, the police were equipped with latest weaponry, leading to reduction in the number of attacks in February and March. "There were fewer attacks reported in February and March," the police official said, adding the force was carrying out intelligence-based operations and hunting down the militants.

PM summons cabinet meeting

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has summoned a meeting of the federal cabinet in Islamabad on Wednesday, sources said on Monday.

The sources divulged that the issues related to the negotiation process with the political parties will be discussed in the meeting. The federal cabinet is also expected to take up the overall political situation prevailing in the country with particular focus on matters relating to elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The prime minister will also consult with his cabinet members on convening a meeting of the heads of the allied parties soon.

PM thanks Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, Egypt: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has thanked the leadership of Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Egypt for their help in evacuation of Pakistanis from war ridden Sudan.

PML-N demands CJ's resignation

FAISALABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has demanded resignation of Chief Justice to Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial following leakage of an audiotape involving CJP's mother-in-law and wife of a PTI's counsel.

PML-N leader Tallal Chaudhry demanded resignation of the CJP, saying "The audiotape leaked could not be ignored." Tallal Chaudhry said the leaked audio had strengthened PML-N's stance that an atmosphere being created to benefit Imran Khan and some judges had made decisions on the advice of their family members.

The PML-N leader's demand came after an alleged phone call between CJP Bandial's mother-in-law and the PTI counsel's wife was leaked online yesterday. In the purported audio, the two women can be heard discussing early elections, their support for the chief justice, and their resentment towards the incumbent government.

The two women also talked about their concern for the chief justice amid the ongoing election delay case which is being heard by a three-member bench at the Supreme Court of Pakistan. They also vaguely discussed being in a Lahore rally where there were hundreds of thousands of people. The bench — headed by CJP Bandial and comprising Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar as members — in its April 4 order, directed the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to hold the polls in Punjab on May 14.

The Frontier Post

Marriyum denies rumours about PM seeking NA's trust

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Monday denied the rumours circulating in some sections of media that Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif was seeking the National Assembly (NA) confidence.

"The prime minister has not decided to take a vote of confidence [from the NA]," she said while ruling out any such consultation among the coalition parties. The minister on her Twitter handle account said there was no need for such a move as PM Shehbaz Sharif had already obtained a vote for the leader of the house on April 11, 2022.

She said the people, coalition parties and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) unanimously elected Shehbaz Sharif as prime minister of the country. "There is no truth in such fabricated news," she said while urging the media to refrain from publishing any news about the PM without verification.

Minister for Information while taking a jibe at Imran Khan, said that

he was the first leader whose state-ment was being denied by his own party's official account. In a series of tweets, she said the PTI official account stated that "what Imran said, Imran did not say."

She asked Imran not to play with people's minds and don't tell lies in the face of the nation. She said that this was a reason that a "fraudster" had to put the black canister on his face. She said that Imran was a criminal and would remain a criminal person. She said that Imran had destroyed the society, moral values, politics, economy, poisoned the minds of the masses and filled the hearts with hatred, polluted the politics and paralyzed the country.

She said that it was shameful that according to his own claim, he dissolved the assemblies on the request of Bajwa. The minister said that for the sake of power, Imran Khan insulted the people of Punjab and Pakhtunkhwa, mocked their representatives and dissolved their elected assemblies.

The minister said that PTI lead-

ers abused the judiciary, threw shoes on the picture of the Chief Justice, took the bail relief package by threatening the judiciary. She stated that if the Chief Justice gave a verdict in favour of Imran not because of the Constitution, but due to the fear of the mother-in-law, and advice of children and wives, this will not be allowed to happen. "Neither the nation will forgive those who play with the Constitution, nor will we spare them", she maintained.

She said that it was strange that a woman had become spokesperson of those who threw shoes at the poster of her son-in-law. Marriyum Aurangzeb said that when the Constitution and justice fall victim to the advice of foreign agents, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, children and mother-in-law, then the country has to suffer at the hands of Imran-like thieves, liars, who brought inflation and unemployment. Now, elections will be held on time and not on the advice of Bajwa and the mother-in-law of anyone, the minister added.

Pakistanis safely reach Port Sudan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The evacuation plan of the government met a success as 427 stranded Pakistanis finally reached Port Sudan safely for their onward repatriation from the battle-hit country.

For the last 72 hours, Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif was personally monitoring the emergency plan for the evacuation of Pakistani nationals, according to a PM Office statement. The evacuated Pakistanis who were being repatriated to Pakistan through special flights were provided accommodation and food by the government.

The diplomatic missions of Pakistan and other coun-

tries in the region were supporting Pakistan in the evacuation process. The PM lauded the efforts of Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Minister of State Hina Rabbani Khar, foreign ministry officers and Pakistan's ambassador in Sudan.

He particularly appreciated the military authorities and other relevant people for their expertise and dutifulness in formulating an effective evacuation plan and its successful implementation. He also expressed gratitude to Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Zaheed Ahmed Baber Sidhu and Director General of ISI Lt. General Nadeem Anjum for their special efforts in the evacuation process which

involved multiple challenges and risks.

However, the government authorities evacuated the Pakistani nations through safe routes. They are being moved in small groups from Khartoum to safe locations. The PM thanked the leadership of Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Egypt for extending support for the evacuation of Pakistani nationals.

The measures for the protection of the stranded Pakistani nationals in Sudan were being constantly monitored and Pakistan's embassy was also in constant contact with them. The embassy had also established a helpline where the stranded Pakistanis could contact for any help or guidance.

Army chief celebrates Eid with troops

F.P Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Saturday visited the Pak-Afghan border at Bajaur to spend Eidul Fitr with troops and to uplift their morale and resolve. According to the army's media wing, the COAS Munir hailed the commitment and professionalism of the soldiers posted at the border. The army chief lauded the border security arrangements and operational preparedness.

He expressed that the military is committed towards the defence of the frontiers and Pakistan's armed forces are always ready to thwart any threat to ensure the territorial integrity of Pakistan. "For defenders of Pakistan, irrespective of the difficult terrain or weather and despite being away from the loved ones, duty takes precedence and nothing is more sacred than guarding the frontiers of our beloved country." Earlier on arrival, Commander Peshawar Corps received the army chief.

PPP postpones protest call

F.P. Report

LARKANA: The People's Party Sindh has postponed the protest scheduled to be held on Tuesday (today), across Sindh.

In a statement, PPP Sindh President Nisar Ahmed Khuhro said that the People's Party is currently postponing its protest as a show of restraint. "We demand all institutions including the judiciary to listen to the voice of the people and hold elections in the country on one day. If the voice of the people is not heard, the date of protest will be announced again," Khuhro added.

Pakistan cannot afford separate elections as separa would forever question the transparency of elections. Earlier, People's Party Sindh had announced a protest call across Sindh on April 25 to hold elections of National assembly and four provincial assemblies on the same day, as per Khuhro's statement.

He said that Sindh does not accept the decision of separate elections, except the same-day polls. He said that according to Clause 69 of the Election Act, the elections of the National and Provincial Assemblies should be held the same day across the country. He said that separate elections would be a process of dividing the country into two parts. Khuhro said there was a plan to influence the election results of the national and other two provincial assemblies in the elections of two provinces.

PPP wants to convince allies for talks: Bilawal

F.P. Report

LARKANA: Foreign Minister and Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has stressed upon the national unity and said that it was the responsibility of everyone to play their role and get the country out of the prevailing political and economic quagmire.

Speaking at Eid Milan gathering at Bhutto House Nauzero (Larkana) on Sunday night, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that he was happy to be with his supporters throughout Ramazan and now at Eid as well. Today, Pakistan's democracy, economy and the state are going through testing times, he said.

He said that hopefully, when we would be successful in this effort then I would be in front of you (public) for campaigning for simultaneous elections in all provinces. The Chairman PPP said that we would soon be ready for the 2023 election campaign and the Party workers would enjoy it.

He reiterated that Pakistan People's Party once again had the chance to play its role when the country was divided. Everybody has to play his role for the betterment of the country, he added. He said that the Supreme Court seemed to be divided and the in-fighting between the institutions would ultimately put negative impact on the common people.

He also said that both the

Supreme Court and the Parliament were at logger heads and not ready to accept each other's decisions. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that the conflict between the Parliament and Supreme Court was making the state in-efficient to address the issues of the masses. He asked all the state institutions to resolve the public issues within their respective domains and minimize the problems of the general public.

The Chairman PPP said that his party was trying to reconcile the allies to convince them for negotiations even with adversaries, by keeping the national interest supreme. Only those societies can make progress who can limit their political differences to elections only, he said and added that if the political parties settled down the issue of elections being conducted on a single day we would be in a better position to aggravate the situation of the poor public. He said that we were still experiencing the ramifications of last year's flood along with the negative effect of global recession on our economy. The conspirators are trying to conduct early election in Punjab that will send negative message to all federating units.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that PPP was always standing with the Constitution, the state, the people and provincial rights. He said that the con-

spirators should stop playing with the fate of the country and give chance to all the stakeholders to resolve the national issues. Bilawal reiterated that elections should be held simultaneously in the whole country on same day, adding that the efforts of the conspirators were underway even today.

Their first attempt is to hold elections only in Punjab, he claimed and added, once the provinces are separated from the federation, the winner will face the consequences. The conspirators want political chaos in the country, he claimed. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that PPP was trying to resolve the issues through mutual diplomacy and dialogue in order to save the country from massive damage.

On this occasion, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari were presented with traditional gifts of Sindh Ajrak at the Eid Milan gathering. The gathering was attended by the Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, President PPP (Women Wing) Pakistan MPA Ms. Faryal Talpur, President PPP Sindh Senator Nisar Ahmed Khuhro, Federal Minister Syed Khurshheed Ahmed Shah, Senator Jam Mehtab Dahar, MNA Khurshheed Ahmed Junejo, MPA Suhail Ahmed Sial, MNA Naseebaan Channa, Aijaz Leghari, Ghulam Mustafa Leghari, MPAs, MNAs, prominent citizens of the area, Party leaders and workers.



CCPO lauds police performance

LAHORE (APP): Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Lahore Additional IG Bilal Siddique Kamyana lauded the performance of officials for maintenance of peace in the city and providing fool proof security to the citizens on Eid.

In a statement issued here on Monday, he said, the police performed their duties with dedication and commitment to ensure protection of people as security of the city was beefed up and effective

patrolling was made to avoid any untoward incident. "More than eight thousands police officers and officials were deputed in the city at Masajids, Imambargahs and other sensitive places in the provincial metropolis. More than 400 teams of Dolphins squad and Police Response Unit did effective patrolling in the city. Vehicles and persons were thoroughly checked at e-police check posts at exit and entry points of the city", he added.

Reservation system restarts

LAHORE (APP): Process of booking of tickets at Pakistan Railways reservation offices has restarted across the country after facing a temporary interruption. According to Railways sources here on Monday, National Telecommunication Company team along with the Railways team had completed the work in this regard. Railways administration was apologetic to its passengers for facing a temporary suspension in reservation system.

AIG Ghulam Mahmood Dogar retires

LAHORE (INP): Additional IG Ghulam Mahmood Dogar, former Capital City Police Officer Lahore reached the age of superannuation on Sunday.

He became controversial during his last field posting owing to his alleged political role in the PTI government. Ghulam Mahmood Dogar also remained the head of the joint investigation team (JIT) probing into the assassination attempt on former prime minister Imran Khan in Wazirabad.

He also proposed departmental action against four senior members of the panel for allegedly handling the probe unprofessionally and damaging the high-profile case.

The federal government had transferred and suspended Mr Dogar, but he didn't leave the posting after obtaining the court orders. Then, AIG Dogar was removed from the post of the CCPO Lahore by the caretaker government. He was later restored by the court and was placed at the services of the Establishment Division of the federal government.

The senior police officer also faced a lot of criticism for filing a case against federal ministers.

‘Nationwide immunization week’ begins

ISLAMABAD (INP): World Immunization Week is being celebrated countrywide from Monday in collaboration with all provinces and stakeholders to raise awareness about the importance of vaccination in protecting against diseases, said a spokesman for the Ministry of National Health Services and Coordination. This year's theme 'The Big Catch-up' urges greater engagement around immunization globally to promote the role of vaccines in bringing people together, and improving the health and well-being of everyone, everywhere.

In collaboration with provincial Expanded Programmes of Immunization and other stakeholders, the Federal Directorate of Immunization launched a week-long vaccination campaign in late April to raise awareness about the importance of vaccination in preventing infectious diseases, the spokesman said in a statement. In his message marking the start of World Immunization Week, the Federal Minister of Health, Abdul Qadir Patel, urged parents to vaccinate their children against 12 deadly diseases before the age of two. The ultimate goal of the Week

is to protect more children from vaccine-preventable diseases and raise awareness about the value of vaccines.

The government of Pakistan is committed to ensuring safe and effective vaccines are available and delivered to every child, including those in vulnerable and remote communities. The Minister expressed gratitude to frontline health workers and EPI teams for their tireless efforts in achieving this goal. The government is dedicated to ensuring that vaccination registration and availability reach 100% to guarantee the success of the immunization initiative.

Frontline workers play an essential role in facilitating vaccination in remote and disadvantaged areas, and the government is undertaking all necessary measures to keep the public safe from diseases and epidemics. The Minister emphasized the importance of vaccination in preserving public health and urged parents to vaccinate their children against fatal diseases to safeguard their health in the future. The threat of polio still poses a danger to many children, making it imperative to provide access to polio vaccines during World Immunization Week.

Eid celebrated with great religious enthusiasm in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Like other parts of the country, Eidul Fitr was also celebrated with great religious enthusiasm in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Saturday. Big Eid prayers congregations in mosques and Eidgahs were held in all districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including seven merged districts where ulema and religious leaders threw light on the philosophy of Eidul Fitr. They prayed Allah Almighty to accept their fastings and worships besides sought for mercy and forgiveness.

In Peshawar, the major Eid prayers congregations were held at Eidgah Charsadda Road, Mohabat Khan mosque, Sonehri mosque, Spine Jumat and Zarghoni mosques. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali and caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam along with caretaker Provincial Ministers, advisers, officials and civil society members in large number performed Eid prayer at

Governor House Peshawar.

Besides other, the prayer was attended by caretaker ministers Manzoor Afridi, Adnan Jalil, Shafiullah Khan, Fazal Elahi, Hidayatullah Khan, Mayor Peshawar Zubair Ali, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, Commissioner Peshawar Muhammad Zubair, Accountant General Murtaza Khan, Chairman Public Service Commission Sikandar Qayyum and other government officials, political leaders and members of the social and civil society. Special prayers for progress and prosperity of Pakistan, eternal peace of martyrs and unity of Muslim Ummah was offered. Later, the Governor and Chief Minister openly intermingled with faithfuls after the prayers. They congratulated the Governor and Chief Minister on Eid. Later, governor house was opened for general public where people of all walks life exchanged Eid greetings with the Governor.

Thousands throng Murree to enjoy pleasant weather

RAWALPINDI (NNI): The 'Queen of the Mountains' Murree which is most famous hill station of Punjab attracted a large number of tourists during Eid-ul-Fitr holidays particularly on Sunday and Monday as the citizens reached Murree from different areas to enjoy the pleasant weather.

This year, five Eid holidays (April 21 to 25) were announced by the government on the eve of Eid-ul-fitr which provided a great recreational opportunity for the citizens. On the first day of Eid, people remained busy in greeting relatives, friends and near and dear ones, and rushed to different parks on second and third day of Eid to enjoy the Eid festivity.

Murree Road on Sunday and Monday remained jam packed with stream of vehicles after tourists particularly from twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad and other adjoining areas thronged the Murree hill station to beat the heat and enjoy the eid vacations. From Rawalpindi to Dhokri chowk and then to Chatter Park, the road was jam-packed with vehicles moving at snails pace. Rawalpindi district administration had finalized all the arrangements to ensure security of the visitors and facilitate them particularly during Eid ul Fitr holidays. According to a police administration spokesman, City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Mehmood Hamdani urged the tourists to observe traffic rules on the roads of Murree to avoid traffic mess and any untoward incident during Eid-ul-Fitr holidays.

The spokesman informed that special teams had been formed to facilitate the tourists, adding, parking of the vehicles was not allowed outside the parking areas. There was a complete ban on illegal parking in Murree.

"The beautiful climate of Murree during summer attracts a large number of tourists so motorists face traffic congestion," he said adding that traffic moves slower due to heavy traffic load as compared to the normal days. He said, the CPO had advised the tourists to avoid wrong parking, double lines, speeding and taking selfies in the middle of the roads.

He said, a special plan had been formulated for Murree under which over 1280 personnel including 1000 cops and 280 CTP officials were performing their duties to facilitate the visitors. The Jawans of Murree Tourism Police were also present at different points for the convenience and protection of the tourists, he added.

A specially trained force had been deployed for Murree Tourism Police, he said. Rawalpindi district administration, district police and CTP on the directives of Chief Minister Punjab had taken solid steps to ease traffic flow and facilitate tourists in Murree. The officers of the district administration, district police and CTP were present in the field to monitor the situation. All possible steps were being taken to ease traffic flow and ensure smooth flow of traffic on the roads of Murree, he added.



KARACHI: A larger number of faithful offering Eid al-fitr prayer at Nazmabaad.

Haleem claims his murder planned in Bilawal House

KARACHI (INP): Leader of Opposition in Sindh Assembly Haleem Adil Sheikh on Monday claimed that his murder has been planned in Bilawal House.

In a letter written to the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP), the PTI leader Haleem Adil Sheikh stated that the special task of his murder is given to DIG Farrukh Bashir.

He claimed that he was arrested in fake cases and then they tried to kill him as they had attacked him before. Haleem Adil Sheikh revealed that Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has been given the responsibility to murder him on the orders of Asif

Ali Zardari and Bilawal Bhutto. Despite the death threats, his police security has been taken back, the PTI leader Haleem Adil Sheikh added. He said that sources have told him that he will be Assassinated in a Murtaza Bhutto-style murder or they might kill him in custody after arresting him in fake cases.

Furthermore, he said that this letter is written to inform the top judiciary about threats to his life. If anything happened to him, Asif Ali Zardari, Bilawal Bhutto, Murad Ali Shah and DIG Farrukh Bashir will be responsible for that.

Earlier, the PTI chairman Imran Khan alleged that former president and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari was among four people who were planning to kill him.

Imran Khan had accused Zardari of being involved in the assassination attempt, saying that the former president was among four people who were planning to kill him.

Zardari has given Sindh government's money to a terrorist organization to assassinate me," the PTI chief alleged, adding that they were using the Sindh government's 'looted money' against him.

'Nation is being fooled in the name of negotiations'

RAWALPINDI (NNI): Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rsaheed has said that the government will be transferred if it did not transfer Rs21 billion for the elections. In a message on Twitter on Monday, he said that the reverse countdown of the government will start from April 27. "The government wants to insult the judiciary at all costs, but the defeat is its destiny. The judiciary will win do whatever you want and the law and the constitution will be victorious," he added. Judiciary will open all roads. The government refuses to accept the decision of the judiciary, which tantamount to revolt against the constitution and the law, he added. The former minister said the government has resorted to flouting the decisions of courts.

CM Naqvi inquires after patients at Mayo Hospital

LAHORE (PPI): Punjab caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi Monday paid a surprise visit to Lahore's Mayo Hospital where he went to the emergency ward and inquired after patients.

The caretaker chief minister also inquired after the health of Sughran Bibi — the elderly woman who was injured during a stampede in Sahiwal.

He felicitated the patients and the doctors on Eid and prayed for the speedy recovery of the patients.

He appreciated the spirit of the doctors, nurses and paramedical staff for serving the suffering humanity during the Eid holidays. Mohsin Naqvi also inquired from the patients and their attendants about the medical facilities being provided at the hospital.

"Salutations to those who heal the sorrows of the suffering humanity during the Eid holidays," he said. "[We're] striving to provide the best treatment facilities to the patients in the hospital," Punjab caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi added. Provincial Minister for Specialised Healthcare and Medical Education Dr Javed Akram accompanied the chief minister.

Newborn girl found dead in Karachi garbage dump

KARACHI (INP): The dead body of a newborn baby girl was found in a garbage dump near Inquiry Office No 2 in Nazimabad, Karachi on Monday.

According to the rescue officials, the body was shifted to a Chhipa mortuary after post-mortem.

"Children are the blessing of Allah. Do not kill them.

Put them in the Chhipa cradles. Fill the lap of the childless," Muhammad Ramazan Chhipa appealed to the people.

"Instead of throwing the newborn babies into the garbage pits and drains, put them in the Chhipa cradles installed at the Chhipa centres," he added.

Two youngster drown in sea while swimming

KARACHI (PPI): Two youngsters died while swimming in the sea at Sandspit and Manora beaches in the city of lights during the Eid holidays.

According to police, both the deceased youngster were enjoying picnic with their friends and families at the beaches of Karachi. While swimming in the sea both the youngsters were taken away by the strong waves and later drowned in the sea.

The deceased victims were identified as 22-year-old Abdul Kalam and 23-year-old Ghulam Shabbir and both belonged to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The police handed over the dead bodies to the families of the deceased after necessary legal procedures.

Karachi Zoo elephant Noor Jehan buried at Karachi Zoo

KARACHI (PPI): The Karachi Zoo staff buried Noor Jehan, a seventeen-year-old elephant, on Saturday night after she succumbed to prolonged health issues.

According to a spokesperson for the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), her grave was 15 feet deep, 14 feet long, and 12 feet wide, filled with four tonnes of lime and disinfectants. Cranes were used to lower her body into the grave. Despite efforts to save her, Noor Jehan had been suffering from several health problems for the past few days, including a fever, before passing away.

In addition, the zoo administration said that Madhubala, the other elephant, is at risk of contracting the same "dangerous virus" that caused Noor Jehan's death. The transfer of Madhubala to Safari Park has been postponed, and her health will be tested to ensure that she is not infected. If she is healthy, she will be moved to Safari Park, and Sonia and Malika, the other two elephants, will also be tested.

Postmortem report of elephant Noor Jehan likely in two weeks: The post-mortem report of the elephant Noor Jehan, who died on Eid day (Saturday), and buried in the zoo, will be received within two weeks.

It may be noted that a team of veterinary doctors led by the head of Four Paws, Dr. Amir Khalili, conducted the post-mortem of the elephant Noor Jehan, the post-mortem was supervised by the administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman, various samples were obtained from the body of elephant Noor Jehan, which were sent to Lahore for examination. The head of Four Paws team, Dr. Amir Khalili, arrived in Karachi from Egypt, while Dr. Ghulam Rasool of the University of Veterinary & Animal Sciences Lahore was also called to Karachi and he along with Dr. Amir Ismail, Dr. Shahla and other doctors participated in the post-mortem.

Municipal Commissioner Syed Shujaat Hussain, Zoo Director Kunwar Ayub were also present on the occasion. On Monday, the second elephant in the zoo, Madhubala, was scanned and blood samples were also taken to check whether the disease suffered by Noor Jehan did affect Madhubala. Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman was present at the zoo on all three days of Eid and supervised the post-mortem, burial of elephant Noorjehan and scanning of other elephant Madhubala.

CDA launches crackdown on illegal constructions

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Capital Development Authority (CDA) Enforcement Wing and Land Directorate conducted an anti-encroachment operation in Sector C-16 here to remove illegal constructions, encroachments, and unauthorized Afghan settlements.

The operation aimed to preserve the city's aesthetic appeal and restore the sector's cleanliness. Its successful execution sent a strong message to those who engage in illegal activities.

CDA Chairman Captain Noor Ul Amin Mengal directed the operation in sector C-16, which was carried out with the assistance of the district administration, Islamabad police officials, and CDA staff.

The objective of the operation was to

eliminate illegal constructions, encroachments and unauthorized Afghan settlements in the area.

In addition, a joint team was established to survey various areas in Islamabad during Eid ul-Fitr holidays to identify and mark any encroachments or illegal constructions. The team's actions would allow for the timely removal of any identified illegal constructions.

The CDA Chairman emphasized that any form of encroachment or illegal construction would not be tolerated at any cost, and the land mafia would be dealt with constitutionally.

Over the past several months, the CDA had launched several operations against the encroachment mafia and confiscated land worth billions of rupees.



LAHORE: Children enjoying swings in Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park on the 3rd day of Eid-ul-Fitr festival.



Govt endeavouring to allievate poverty in tribal areas, says Minister

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker minister for Excise and Narcotics Control, Manzoor Khan Afridi here Monday said the government was endeavouring to alleviate poverty and accelerate the pace of development in tribal areas.

He paid rich tributes to tribal people for their great sacrifices for the development, security and integrity of Pakistan and assured them that their days of poverty and backwardness

would soon come to an end.

He said that the attitude of neglect and excesses done to tribals in the past was being rectified and redressed, while the losses during operations would also be compensated gradually. The caretaker minister was addressing the Eid milan gathering of tribal elders at his ancestral hujra in Alam Godar tehsil Bara in Khyber district.

Former Senator, Muhammad Shah Afridi and other tribal leaders appreciated the caretaker government's initiatives for the

development of the merged districts including Khyber and assured their full support in implementation of the government's policies.

Manzoor Afridi said that all the denolished houses and buildings would be reconstructed for which comprehensive plan was chalked out.

He admitted that like other parts of the province, the people of Khyber and other merged districts are also facing the evil of drugs addiction, which has become a challenge for the survival of our young generation.

He said his department will not only ensure strict prevention of drugs but will also cherish the great task of treatment and rehabilitation of patients suffering from drug addiction, for which measures are being taken on emergency basis.

The provincial minister also assured to establish a drug rehabilitation hospital.

He clarified that he will endeavor to cherish this project as soon as possible even by meeting the Chief Minister and the Governor in this regard.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan with children during his visit to SOS Village.

Governor House opened for families, children on third day of Eidul Fitr



PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor House Peshawar was opened for families

and children on the third day of Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations by the Governor Haji

Ghulam Ali here Monday.

A large number of children and families visited

the Governor House where swings were also setup for their recreation and entertainment on Eid days.

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali said that full arrangements of entertainment and recreation for families and their children were made on the third day of Eid-ul-Fitr at the Governor House.

He said that the Governor House was also opened for the general public on the first two days of Eid-ul-Fitr.

People from all walks of life including students, teachers, civil society, politicians and minorities visited the Governor House and exchanged Eid greetings with the Governor.

Haji Ghulam Ali intermingled with the visitors and congratulated them on Eid.

PDMA conducts geotechnical survey

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) in collaboration with the Geological Survey of Pakistan on Sunday conducted a geotechnical survey of the landslide-prone area in Torkham, district Khyber to prevent future landslides.

The team examined the geological condition of the risk of landslides in the area and conducted a detailed geotechnical survey of other environmental factors contributing to the risk of landslides in the area.

The findings of the survey would be shared with relevant authorities and stakeholders to take appropriate measures for addressing the risks identified in Torkham, an official of PDMA confirmed.

IGP extends Eid greetings to staff

PESHAWAR (APP): The Inspector General of Police (IGP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Akhtar Hayat Gandapur on Sunday visited Yaka Ghund Police Post in district Charsadda and extended Eid greetings to on-duty staff.

District Police Officer (DPO) Charssada Muhammad Arif and Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Shabqadar Noor ul Amin Khan also accompanied the IGP during his visit.

They mingled with the police personnel, distributed sweets among them, and acknowledged their dedication and efficiency in

performing their duties during the anti-polio vaccination drive, security of census data collection, and in the holy month of Ramadan.

The IGP expressed his admiration for the active participation of the police force in all types of emergencies and their unmatched sacrifices for maintaining peace in the province.

He further stated that his purpose for visiting the police post was to meet with personnel who leave their families on the occasion of Eid ul Fitr to protect the public's lives and property.

Altercation results in fatality, two injured

PESHAWAR (APP): An altercation between two opposing groups in Bari Gada Baba area of Khazana on Sunday resulted in the death of a pedestrian and the injury of two others.

As per the Khazana police, the dispute began with verbal abuse over property, escalating to gunfire.

Naveed Hussain, a passerby, sustained a fatal bullet injury, while Ruaid Khan and Jehanzeb were wounded. Police and Rescue staff rushed to the site and shifted the injured and deceased to the hospital.

The case has been registered against unidentified attackers while the investigation team headed by DSP Rural Nawab Khan has started the investigation into the incident.

Eidi gifts, exchange of sweet dishes overjoy children during Eid celebrations in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The distribution of Eidi gifts (cash amount) among children and exchange of sweet dishes in relatives on the second day of Eidul Fitr on Sunday added colour to the joyous festival in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Known as a land of hospitality, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's people visited houses of their relatives and friends for exchange of Eid greetings, sweets and Eidi gifts to children on the second day of Eid.

As per traditions, the people of KP passed the first Eid day at home and spent the second day by visiting houses of their loved ones, relatives and friends for exchange of Eid greetings and sweets besides distributed Eidi gifts among children.

"I came to my sister house to congratulate her on the joyous occasion of Eid and distributed Rs5,000 Eidi among my nephews today," said Professor Ehtisham Qaiser of Wapda Town Peshawar while talking to APP.

He said the exchange of Eid greetings and distribution of Eidi gifts among children bring people and relatives more closer

besides adding their joy and laughter on Eid.

"I received Rs7,000 Eidi from my relatives, father and friends on this Eid and utilized half amount by purchasing toys guns, visiting parks and Peshawar Zoo. The remaining amount was donated by me among orphans children to include them in Eidul Fitr's celebrations," said Shahryar Khan (14) while talking to APP at Chacha Younas Park. "Helping needy and poor people has doubled my Eid joys," he said.

Shahryar said that he had met with all my friends, cousins and relatives during first two days of Eid and would go to Peshawar along with father to visit Peshawar zoo and recreational spots for entertainment.

He said Eidi received from relatives and loved ones will greatly help pay ticket charges of free swings, foods and transport.

Like Shehryar, thousands of children of Peshawar, Nowshera and Charsadda districts thronged to parks, picnic and recreational points besides Peshawar Zoo to celebrate Eidul Fitr.

"I visited the home of my grandfather on second day of Eidul Fitr and exchanged Eid greetings with him viz a viz his family members. Such joyful events, which comes after a long time following observance of the month long fasting, are creating spirit of love, warmth and brotherhood in the society," Riaz Khan, an Ex PST teacher told APP.

He said parks and recreational spots in Peshawar, Kohat, Charssada and Nowshera attracted people in droves.

Great hustle and bustle was seen at Chacha Younis Park, Shahi Bagh and zoo in Peshawar, Tanda dam in Kohat, Kund Park in Nowshera and Sardaryab picnic point in Charsadda where people mostly children and youth are enjoying free swings, food parties and wildlife animals.

Sardaryab picnic point on Peshawar-Charssada Road and Kund Park in Nowshera was flooded with visitors on Sunday while spicy items including meat, rice and Bar B Que parties were enjoyed by them on the banks of Shah Alam, Khayali and Indus rivers amid funfair.

The riverside views, colourful boats and fried fish attracted visitors at Sardaryab in Charadda district in abundance. Tourists were seen enjoyed Masher, Mallhi, Singhara, Mahasher, Swati, and Rahoo fish besides rice and meat parties on banks of the river.

Local musicians and singers enthralled visitors in Sardaryab and presented local Pashto songs especially during evenings and received warm applause from tourists.

The brightly painted boats on river bank that offer trips to tourists for Rs 200, also attracted tourists in large number at Sardaryab.

Great rush of tourists were seen especially children tried to get place in the boats before enjoying entrance in the rivers.

"I visited Sardaryab on every Eid because the riverside views always gave me a respite from routine life," Abaya Bibi, 20, a resident of Nowshera told APP.

"The natural beauty of Sardaryab, especially its long river shore and travelling inside the river through colour boats gives me immense happiness during Eid," she said.

Eid festivities in Kohat also continued on second day of Eidul Fitr where people enjoyed travelling, swimming, rice, meat and sweet dishes at open at Tanda dam.

Built on River Tochi near Kohat city in 1960, the Tanda dam attracted a significant number of tourists from Hangu, Karak and Bannu districts. "My first priority on Eid vacations to spend Eid

days at Tanda dam to enjoy cool breeze here" Waris Khan, a local tourist of Karak said.

The atmosphere of Tanda dam is very excellent and full of natural beauty and people can come here to enjoy its natural beauty.

The film lovers visited Cinema houses and enjoyed films on big screen. Many well off families had visited tourists destination Nathia Gali, Kalam, Thandayani and Murree besides Ayubia for Eid celebrations due to pleasant weather there.

Entertainment Melas for children were also held at all major cities, towns and villages for children where elaborate entertainment arrangements were made.

"I spent all my Eidi amount on purchase of toys and free swings after visiting entertainment Melas in Peshawar and Nowshera along with my family members," Bilawal Sheraz (12), at Chacha Younis park Peshawar told APP.

He said ticket of free swings is very high that needed to be checked. The children were also impressed with wildlife animals mostly from Asian tigers, lions and snakes during their visit to Peshawar zoo and enjoyed free swings also in the facility.

tyring eight drivers and four injured," he said in a statement here Monday.

The Deputy Commissioner said all the victims were hailing from Afghanistan.

He said after five days of continuous efforts, rescue and relief operations were completed last night with the recovery of the 8th and last martyr and 19th trailer trucks.

"It was a humongous slide of around 120 meters destroying 19 trailer trucks with 13 containers and mar-

80pc rubble of Torkhum landslides removed: DC

PESHAWAR (APP): Deputy Commissioner (DC) Khyber district, Abdul Nasir Khan here on Monday said that the debris clearance operation continued at Torkham where more than 80% of rubble were removed from the site of the landslide.

"It was a humongous slide of around 120 meters destroying 19 trailer trucks with 13 containers and mar-

tyring eight drivers and four injured," he said in a statement here Monday.

The Deputy Commissioner said all the victims were hailing from Afghanistan.

He said after five days of continuous efforts, rescue and relief operations were completed last night with the recovery of the 8th and last martyr and 19th trailer trucks.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Khyber district highly lauded the 16 Engineers of 11 Corps Pakistan Army, Rescue-1122 KP, District Administration Khyber, Khyber Rifles Landi Kotal and other Provincial Departments role in the operation.

The catastrophic land sliding incident occurred on April 18, at 2:18 am at Torkham in Khyber district.



PESHAWAR: Children enjoying hand swing in park during Eid holidays.

Missing children live in Zamung Kor Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Unaccompanied child, Ali who is residing in Zamung Kor Peshawar on directions of local court.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Commission is in the process of tracing of the parents for family reunification.

Similarly unaccompanied child Rashid Ali and Abdullah who are recently in Zamung Kor Peshawar on directions of local court.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Commission is in the process of tracing of the parents for family reunification.

The family members may contact on these numbers: KPCP Helpline: 1121, KPCPWC: 091-9217055, Zamung Kor: 091- 9331937.

Namak Mandai attracts attention of food lovers on Eid

PESHAWAR (APP): Namak Mandi, a famous food street in Peshawar City has attracted a large number of food lovers of Chappli Kabab, BBQ and Mattan Karahi on the third day of Eidul Fitr.

The food lovers enjoyed the mouthwatering BBQ, Mattan Karahi, Chappli Kabab, Peshawar rice Polao, Paye and others traditional cuisines with an aromatic Peshawari Qehwa in all three days of Eid.

Located on the backside of historic Qissa Khwani bazaar, the popular food street with plenty of shops of Mattan Karahi, Chappli Kabab, BBQ, Paye and Peshawari rice Polao is flooded with tourists, visitors and food lovers on Eid holidays following the improvement of weather conditions after heavy rains before Eid.

Sitting in hammock charpays in primitive food shops at Namak Mandai, the tourists and food lovers enjoyed the mouth-watering cuisines along with aromatic green tea, making their happiness doubled on Eid.

"Chappli Kabab and Mattan Karahi is my favorite dish and my Eid seems incomplete without tasting its delectable bites at Namak Mandai," said Professor Dr Muhammad Naeem Khan of the Swabi University while talking to APP at Namak Mandi along with family on Monday.

"I came to my favourite food place to enjoy Chappli Kabab and Mattan Karahi along with aromatic green tea of the Qissa Khwani bazaar after three years. In previous Eids, I could not come here due to cases of coronavirus," he said.

"I have also purchased 5

kg Chappli Kabab and three parcels of Peshawari rice Polao for Eid party at home tonight," he said.

Like Professor Muhammad Naeem, a large number of food lovers visited Namak Mandai and others food streets of Peshawar on Eid days where they enjoyed traditional cuisines including the mouth watering Chappli Kabab and Mattan Karahi due to its excellent taste and deliciousness.

The businessmen said the demands of Chappli Kabab have increased manifold during Eid holidays due to pleasant weather.

Besides enjoying appetizing traditional cuisines at hotels and open restaurants at night, most of Chappli Kabab lovers asked for parcels upto five kg for Eid parties at home.

Inherited Chappli

Kabab's business from his father, Arif Ahmad, a famous Chappli Kabab seller said, "My father Jalil Ahmad had taken over it from his father, Jumma Khan in 1950. Following the death of my father, all his (Jalil Ahmed) six sons had carried forward the legacy of this hard-earned business and continued it till date with a lot of hope to transfer it to the next generation," he said.

"My grandfather had started chappli kabab business from a single 'Karahi' (fryingpan) 73 years ago and today with the grace of Allah Almighty, we have six more shops including one at melody food street, Islamabad, two each at Firdous and University Road, one each at Gul Bahar and Faqirabad Peshawar," he added.

The people of united

India were mostly vegetarians but all kings and invaders from the west including Mughals, Turks, Ghazni and Afghans who conquered India loved meat dishes. They introduced the habit of eating meat in new ways and customs in United India where Mughals made meat-eating a cultural dish by making it a substitute for beef and buffalo meat by adding various spices and ingredients to it.

Before marching towards India, the kings, warriors and invaders had stayed in Peshawar by introducing Chappli Kabab's recipe during the Mughal dynasty, which had later gained international fame owing to its appetizing aroma and delectable taste.

Arif said that its recipe was later shifted to

Karachi, Lahore, Quetta and other cities of Pakistan besides Jalalabad and Kabul in Afghanistan and Amratsar, Lucknow and Delhi in India.

In Peshawar, he said more than 3,500 chappli kebabs' small and big outlets were existed mostly in Firdus, Bakhshu bridge, Warsak Road, Ring Road, Nothia, Namak Mandai, Hastnagri, Ramadas, Faqirabad and Board bazaars, attracting foodies during Eid.

Besides Chappli Kabab, Arif said takeaway service of traditional cuisines including Peshawari rice polao, paye, dampokh, namak mandi karahi, lamb chops, BBQ and others traditional foods have shined during Ramadan iftar parties and Eid days.

He said people also dispatch it to UAE, Saudi

Arabi and other countries for their friends, relatives and loved ones besides used in walima, engagements and haqeeqa of the newborn.

Dr Riaz Malik, a children specialist told APP that Namak Mandi was his favorite food place in Peshawar where he came for the last six years to enjoy its Mattan Karahi and BBQ due to its unique taste and energy perspective on Eid.

"It give us an opportunity to spend some times with my old friends on Eid as the orders generally take close to an hour to prepare, with customers enjoying tea ahead of the meal here."

Riaz urged KP government to convert Namak Mandai a full-fledged food street on the pattern of Gawal Mandi Lahore to generate job opportunities and quality food for people.



In brief

Seven killed in car accident

OKARA (PPI): Seven people including two women and three kids were killed while many others suffered injuries when a car collided with a bus on GT road near Akhtarabad in Okara district. The Rescue-1122 team said a fast passenger bus travelling from Burewala to Lahore collided with a car travelling in the opposite direction while passing. As a result, seven automobile riders from a family were killed on the spot, while one passenger was injured. Rescue-1122 shifted the deceased and injured to Tehsil Head Quarters (THQ) hospital in Renala Khurd near Okara district.

Two youngsters kidnapped

SHIKARPUR (PPI): Two youngsters were kidnapped through a honeybeat call/women voice call by dacoits while one other was shot dead near Shikarpur, police said Monday. As per details, the residents of Amrote Sharif village identified as Khan Muhammad Dall, aged 17 and Ahmed Ali Dall, aged 16, went missing while saying their parents that they were going to meet with their friends one day earlier following which their mobile phones went switched off which caused the unrest amongst the parents. As well as today the parents of two teenagers received a ransom call from dacoits with demand of Rs3 million for their safe release. The parents depicted that they were very poor and were unable to pay the ransom amount to dacoits. They also informed the police about the kidnapping of their beloved ones. They demanded of the police to take immediate steps for their safe recovery from the clutches of the dacoits. Meanwhile, a youth, Shahid Kakepotto, 25, was gunned down by motorcycle snatchers within the jurisdiction of Stuart Gunj Police Station here on Eid night. Kakepotto offered resistance to the bandits following which they shot him dead. The relatives of deceased blocked the Sukkur-Shikarpur section of the National Highway near Jail Chowrangi while keeping the body on road for hours. The road was reopened for vehicular traffic after the assurance by ASP Fazul Shah for early arrest of the culprits. It may be recalled that the law and order situation of District Shikarpur is going to be worst day by day. The heinous offences, including street crimes, snatching of motorcycles and mobile phones, murders, kidnapping for ransom and dacoities are on the rise due to poor performance of District Police.

Woman killed, two injured

PAKPATTAN (PPI): One woman was killed and two other were injured in a firing incident over financial dispute in Pakpattan district of Punjab in the wee hours of Monday. According to the Pakpattan police, the incident of firing has occurred in the Tiba Sherkot area, resulting in the death of a 40-year-old woman and two others being injured. The police reported that the victim has been identified as Tahira Bibi, while the injured include Mumtaz and Yasin. The police further revealed that the culprits resorted to firing due to a financial issue. After transferring the body and injured to the hospital, the police have registered a case and initiated an operation for the arrest of the suspects.



FAISALABAD: Federal Minister for Interior, Rana Sana Ullah talking to media persons.

ANP to convince Fazl for talks with PTI: Hoti

Fazle Haq

MARDAN: Awami National Party (ANP) Central Senior Vice President and former Chief Minister Ameer Haider Khan Hoti on Monday has said that he will convince Maulana Fazlur Rehman to negotiate with PTI.

The hammer should be used for justice, Tehreek-e-Insaf will also be invited in ANP APC, he was talking to media representatives at his residence on Eid. Ameer Haider Khan Hoti said that it is not about May and October, the whole battle is being fought for popularity and acceptance, those who are accepted want popularity and those who are popular are running for acceptance. Political decisions cannot be made by other institutions. There is an economic, political, legal and constitutional crisis in the country. There is a clear division in the judiciary.

We would request that the Chief Justice should end the differences within the judiciary instead of interfering in political matters and the hammer should be used for justice and the constitution. Ameer Haider Khan Hoti said that the Supreme Court called on short notice and therefore did not appear.

Political decisions cannot be made by other institutions. The political people have to come together to solve the crisis. He said that the Supreme Court cannot issue contempt of court notice to the Prime Minister because the Prime Minister had presented the Money Bill in the Parliament, if such situations arise, the court will have to disqualify the entire Parliament.

In certain circumstances, the elections can go ahead for ninety days, Imran Khan is afraid of disqualification. In response to a question, Ameer Haider Khan Hoti said that ANP has called APC on May 3 to resolve the political crisis. Despite the differences, all political parties including PTI will be invited. Contact has been made. A meeting has been arranged in a couple of days. May Allah make the political jarga of Jamaat-e-Islami successful, but one party cannot bear the burden of the current political crisis. He further said that the ANP is in the field and will never run away from the election. The parties that choose to run away from the election themselves will suffer political losses. The issue of elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is in the court.

WSSCM disposed off 590 tons waste during Eid: The Water and Sanitation Services Company Mardan (WSSCM) has disposed off 590 tons waste during Eid ul fitr three days. The waste disposal operation was started from Chand Raat and continued till 3rd day of Eid.

According to the WSSCM, The Management staff were on duty during Eid holidays, 240 sanitation workers and 52 Numbers primary and secondary collec-

tion vehicles participated in the operations on the entire day. 24Complaints were received during Eid which were immediately resolved. The water supply staff of the company also ensured uninterrupted supply of clean water to the citizens while maintenance team repaired leaked pipelines in different areas of the city.

On the directions of Deputy Commissioner Mardan and Chief Executive Officer (WSSCM) Captain Retired Abdur Rahman, sanitation staff of the company cleaned all EidGahs in Mardan city before Eidulfitr. The company's staff knocked every door as well as made announcement through vehicles for appealing the citizens to handover their garbage to WSSCM staff so that to have clean environment on Eid day.

General Manager Engineer Muhammad Khalil Akbar celebrated the Eid with the sanitation workers in field and monitored the cleanliness operation of Mardan city during Eid. He paid tribute to all the staff of the company for their excellent cleanliness, and said that our workers worked day and night to provide clean environment to the citizens of Mardan.

If the cooperation of the citizens continues like this, then the day is not far away when Mardan will be a model city in terms of cleanliness. He added, Engineer Khalil Akbar lauded the efforts of his team and thanked the citizens of the city for their cooperation. Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance and Planning SamiurRahman, Municipal Magistrate Muhammad Buraq Awan and Additional Assistant Commissioner Rashid Khan monitored the cleanliness operation and also distributed gifts among the sanitation workers on Eid day.

Pervez Khattak's wife passes away

Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: The wife of former Chief Minister and PTI KP President Pervez Khattak died due to protected illness in Nowshera district on Monday.

According to his family sources, the funeral of the deceased would be held at Lahore on Tuesday. She was facing health problems for sometimes. Her body was shifted from Manki Sharif Nowshera to Lahore for last rituals and burial.

President Dr Arif Alvi, Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf and caretaker Chief Minister Azam Khan have offered their deep condolences to the members of bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul. They also prayed to grant patience to members of the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss with patience.

Stage actor Aashi murdered

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Prominent stage actor Aashi alias Munazza Multani was murdered in Hafizabad when she came to see her daughter on Eid Day. Police have registered a case against more than 11 men and women accused including famous drama producer Afzal alias Dhotoo Butt.

According to FIR, Aasha Bibi famous as Munazza Multani was married with Zubair Butt resident of Hafizabad some years ago. After passing some time, Zubair alias Jairy was divorced her. On the Eid Day, Munazza Multani came to Hafizabad to see her daughter Eman Fatima.

Where, accused Zubair alias Jairy, Ali Jabran Butt, Raheela Bibi, Janat Bibi, Sadia and more than 5 other people were present there. The accused Zubair alias Jairy, Ali Jabran Butt shot Munazza Multani after exchange of hot words allegedly on the behest of Afzal alias Dhotoo Butt. As a result of which, she was killed on the spot. Hafizabad police have registered a case under sections 302, 148, 149, 109 and 342 against accused and shifted dead body to morgue for autopsy. No arrest was made so far.

Boy committed suicide: Boy committed suicide over some domestic issue in village Qila Ram Kour near Hafizabad, on Monday. According to Rescue 1122, an 18-year-old Ali Asghar son of Bashir resident of village Qila Ram Kour quarrel with his family allegedly on some domestic problems and he hanged himself with ceiling fan and committed suicide. Rescue 1122 shifted dead body to hospital for postmortem.

DC visits hospital: Deputy Commissioner Umar Farooq Warriach visited district headquarter hospital and distributed sweets among patients in different wards and present Eid greetings to patients. Medical Superintendent Dr. Bushra and other doctors were also accompanied by the DC.

PPP wants dialogue to promote democracy: Kundi

D I KHAN (INP): Federal Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Faisal Karim Kundi has said all state institutions should work within their constitutional domain while respecting the parliament as their mother.

He expressed these views while talking to various delegations of elders, party workers and media persons who called on him here in connection with Eidul Fitr to exchange Eid greetings. Speaking on the occasion, Faisal Karim Kundi was of the opinion that there should not be a situation of confrontation between the judiciary and the parliament which was not a debating club, rather

the country's supreme institution, making laws and the rest must follow them.

Conducting elections was the responsibility of the Election Commission, while the Supreme Court was supposed to deliver justice by announcing decisions of the majority, he maintained. Faisal Karim Kundi said that the negotiation was a political process which was pursued by the political parties.

Under the leadership of former prime minister and senior vice-chairman of the party, Yousaf Raza Gilani, Faisal Karim Kundi said PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had constituted a three-member committee comprising federal ministers Qamar-ul-Zaman

Kaira and Syed Naveed Qamar to contact the coalition parties and the PTI in that regard. He said that the PPP believed that Parliament was the right forum for the political parties to initiate dialogue among them for resolving issues instead of any other institution or platform and no one can force anyone to negotiate.

He said PPP President Asif Ali Zardari, too, had already clarified in his speech at the ceremony held regarding the Golden Jubilee of the Constitution of Pakistan the head of the parliamentary system was Prime Minister Mian Shehbaz Sharif and unconditional talks would be held under his leadership.

Two killed, 16 injured in different incidents in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: A youth identified as Hammad 23, a resident of Razagram was killed when two unknown motorcyclists allegedly opened fire on him at Razagram area of Toormang in the jurisdiction of Khall police station here on Monday, residents and police said. They said the attackers escaped from the crime scene while police started a search operation to arrest the killers. According to the residents the victim had no enmity with anyone. The motive behind the incident could not be ascertained. The Khall police registered a case against unknown killers and started further investigations.

Another man identified as Shah Zeb 36 s/o Bahadar Khan, a resident of Shingrai Timergara was killed while four others including Dilawar Zeb, Usman Bacha and others were injured when two parties clashed with each other over a petty issue at near the Air

Foundation School Timergara on the Tangi road here the other day. According to Rescue 1122 officials the parties clashed when their cars slightly collided on the Tangi road on the second day of Eid and one of the parties parked its car to block the way to the other. The injured were shifted to the DHQ hospital Timergara. The Timergara police arrested Talha 21 and Izhar 26 and started further investigations.

Meanwhile 11 persons including women and children were injured when a vehicle they were riding in skidded off the road and plunged into a deep ravine at the Baloda area of Samarbagh here on Monday. The Rescue 1122 medical team shifted six of the injured to the district headquarters hospital Timergara, provided first aid to the rest of the injured and recovered the vehicle. The injured belonging to the same family of Raghagan Bajaur district included Ihsanullah 34,

Miaz Muhammad 40, Arham 3, Humna 18, Hifsa 17, Sama Bibi 19, Razia Bibi 22, Safa 13, Fathima 18, Maria 8 and Marwa 20. The family was coming back home from the Shahi tourist spot.

Also a six year old baby Hora was injured when the roof of her room collapsed at the Makhai area in the jurisdiction of Munda police station here on Monday. The injured baby was shifted to the DHQ hospital and provided with first aid there-in. **Awareness pamphlets distributed among tourists:** Following the directives of the district administration the officials of the forest department kept distributing the awareness pamphlets among the local and outside tourists regarding the protection of forests in the district on Eid days. The tourists have been asked to refrain from forest fires, cooking and cutting of trees while camping in the forest area while visiting the tourist spots.



YAKA GHUND: Inspector General of Police, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Gandapur addressing the officials during his visit to Mohmand District on Eid.

The unspoken truth about mental health of journalists

Fouzia Khan Bhittani

‘It still haunts me. Thinking about that event makes me feel like I'm re-experiencing it. Everything comes right in front of me, that scene, his body drenched in blood, the sighs of his sister, and nobody touching the dead body. I still get nightmares even if it happened years ago,’ said Khan, a senior reporter of Geo News. Referring to militancy in Waziristan, Khan narrated the story of his friend and colleague's death. He was killed by the Taliban and with his body was attached a note which clearly stated that nobody will touch the dead body for up to 24 hours. Khan sat there, waited for 24 hours straight and after that, his body was taken and rituals were performed. This traumatic event left a deep wound that was never healed. That event has shaken him to the level that his psychological condition is still not normal.

The psychological health of journalists is often an overlooked phenomenon. They arrive at a tragic scene even before police and paramedics and are usually the first-hand witness of destruction. Dart Center reported that around 80% of journalists are exposed to trauma related events. Although covering such distressful events are part of their job, but it comes with considerable risks. Meeting tough deadlines, nocturnal schedules, and reporting of disastrous events can lead to psychological distress and mental

health problems. Among those problems, stress, depression, insomnia, burnout, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and substance abuse are the prominent ones. Farzana Ali, Bureau Chief of Aaj TV remembering her experience of APS attack narrated, "It was a stressful event for us specially when we visited the school and saw children's bags and blood everywhere, it was hell traumatizing. I cried during reporting, many time I couldn't control myself when I was talking to their mothers. That was a very difficult phase and I still feel pain when I remember that event."

In an environment where media houses and senior journalists pay little attention to the mental well-being of journalists, it is of no surprise why only few come forward with their mental health problems. When they were asked about their emotional reactions at the time of covering a traumatic event, many journalists said that they tried to suppress their negative emotions and reactions like disgust, anxiety, grief, uneasiness and tears. Nasir Dawar, Director of Wahdat news stated, "Mental health? In this profession, no one even cares about your physical health or safety. Equipment has more value than your life and this is how we reporters, and cameramen are treated by our media house." It was a tragic event for him when they were attacked in Waziristan, and one of their crew members got injured. Upon contacting their head office and telling them the whole story the

very first thing they heard from their bureau chief was "Is DSNG safe? Are all the cameras safe?"

The matter of mental health of journalists is a hard one to raise in Pakistan, as it is considered that journalists are observers. Reporting the suffering of others are their job which makes it irrelevant to report their own suffering. Many reporters recalled feeling numb, or gathering facts and capturing images like a robot on the scene. "Most of the news in our media is dominated by negative and sad news. We are more exposed to negativity and trauma than an average person. Whether you're in the field or on desk, you see images that are traumatic. You slowly get desensitized and a time comes when you don't even feel any emotion that is inborn and natural," added Nasir.

According to Reporters Sans Frontières, Pakistan is considered as one of the most dangerous countries for journalism. Decades ago, journalists were seen as neutral observers, but they are now considered to be useful targets for intimidation, threats, and attacks. Irfan Khan, a senior investigative journalist and chief editor at Wadan news stated, "Pakistan has become a dangerous country for reporters. In Pakistan, elite and mafias are too strong. When you crack a big scandal of theirs, they turn against you and use every mean to keep you away from cracking that scandal. These means even include abducting, torturing and taking someone's life." These events have had negative conse-

quences for Pakistani journalists. Article 19 of the constitution of Pakistan grants every individual the freedom of expression,

but according to the report of Freedom Network, a significant number of Pakistani journalists have faced attempted murder, abductions, illegal detentions by official authorities, physical assaults and verbal threats during the last few years. "For an investigative journalist, it is a rule to keep your safety first before breaking a news. If you think breaking a certain kind of news will bring a threat to your life, you shouldn't break it as no news is important than your life. Many journalists ignore this rule which ultimately result in negative consequences," said Irfan.

Journalistic stereotypes concerning bravery has also undermined the process of acknowledging underlying mental health issues, thus leading affected journalists to suffer in silence. Many journalists had been plagued with unresolved mental health issues and had suffered from work-related trauma and substance abuse. Self-medication, however, is an on-going, hardly tackled phenomenon among journalists. It is also not surprising that a lot of these problems go undiagnosed. "I take a lot of medicines. I think I'm alive because of them. To get rid of those nightmares and insomnia I have to take sleeping pills. Depression and anxiety are killing me but I can't help it out. In our profession smoking cigarette, taking pills and use of alcohol is common because we

have no working schedule, we work day and night. What people use depends on, what calms them down," said Khan.

It has also been seen that many journalists believe that they are immune to the impact of trauma, however, the reality is somewhat different. Many journalists have developed certain coping mechanisms to deal with emotional effects of trauma, but many others are still vulnerable. Literature shows that usually journalists are involved in suppressing their emotions and it is the most common form of coping mechanism in this field. These coping mechanisms like substance use, substance abuse, ignorance and desensitizing oneself from the surrounding might prove effective for a shorter period of time, but these mechanisms result in emotional damage. "In our field it is considered a taboo to talk about your mental health. If someone seeks psychological help, or talks about his mental condition, he is considered insane," added Farzana.

Mental health is important because it plays a crucial role in our overall well-being and quality of life. Our mental health affects how we think, feel, and behave, and impacts our ability to cope with stress, maintain relationships, and engage in daily activities. Many professionals are afraid of being judged by their peers and suffer in silence instead of taking any psychological help. They should be educated about the role of trauma therapists and instead of fighting alone, one should seek profes-

sional help. Their Employers can also provide resources for self-care, such as access to counseling and mindfulness workshops.

Such workshops will help journalists build their skills of managing their emotions during stressful events, which can improve their mental health. "Those workshops proved highly effective as emotions related to that trauma were released. I also went on family holidays which helped me a lot in relaxing my mind," said Farzana.

Journalists often experience high levels of stress and pressure due to the nature of their work so, they should be encouraged to take breaks and prioritize their mental health by promoting work-life balance. A positive work culture should be fostered that prioritizes mental health, such as open communication and a supportive workplace environment as it can help a journalist vent out his emotions. Seminars should be arranged where professionals who have undergone such field work and have cope successfully should be invited to train new recruits and to share their experiences. A medium, that can be in the form of trauma centers should be made where they are able to share what's troubling them. Last but not the least, your mental health is everything, prioritize it. Healing takes time, so be patient with yourself as it took a long time to accumulate the pain. Ask for help because it is a courageous step so, prioritize your mental health before it is too late.

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Ukrainian troop positions spark counteroffensive speculation

KYIV (AP): Ukrainian military forces have successfully established positions on the eastern side of the Dnieper River, according to a new analysis, giving rise to speculation that the advances could be an early sign of Kyiv's long-awaited spring counteroffensive.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, reported that geolocated footage from pro-Kremlin military bloggers indicated that Ukrainian troops had established a foothold near the town of Oleshky, along with "stable supply lines" to their positions.

Analysts widely believe that if Ukraine goes ahead with a spring counteroffensive, a major goal would be to break through the land corridor between Russia and the annexed Crimean Peninsula, which would necessitate crossing the Dnieper River in the country's south. Responding to Ukrainian media reports proclaiming that the establishment of such positions indicated the counteroffensive had begun, Natalia Humeniuk, the spokeswoman for Ukraine's Operational Command South, called for patience.

While neither confirming nor denying the ISW report, she said only that details of military operations in the Dnieper delta couldn't be disclosed for operational and security reasons. Speaking on Ukrainian television, Humeniuk added that it was "very difficult work" when "it's necessary to overcome an obstacle such as the Dnieper, when the front line passes through a wide and powerful river."

The Kremlin-installed head of the Kherson region, one of four parts of Ukraine that Russia said it was illegally annexing in September, denied that Ukrainian forces have established a foothold on the east bank of



the Dnieper. In a Telegram update, Vladimir Saldo said that Russian forces are "in full control" of the area, and speculated that the images referenced by the ISW may have depicted Ukrainian sabotage units that "managed to take a selfie" across the Dnieper before being forced back.

After more than a year since the Russian invasion, recent fighting has become a war of attrition, with neither side able to gain momentum. But Ukraine has recently received sophisticated weapons from its Western allies, and new troops freshly trained in the West, giving rise to growing

anticipation of a counteroffensive. American-made Patriot missiles arrived in Ukraine last week and military spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said on Ukrainian television that some have already gone into battlefield service. The US agreed in October to send the surface-to-air systems, which can target aircraft, cruise missiles and shorter-range ballistic missiles such as those that Russia has used to bombard residential areas and the Ukrainian power grid.

The fiercest battles have been in the eastern Donetsk region, where Russia is struggling to encircle the

city of Bakhmut in the face of dogged Ukrainian defense. Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov claimed Moscow's forces had captured two more neighborhoods in the western part of Bakhmut, without providing further details or clarifying what areas were still in Ukrainian hands.

In the south, the Dnieper has for months marked the contact line in the Kherson region, where its namesake capital is regularly pummeled by shelling from Russian forces stationed across the river. In addition to having established a foothold near

the town of Oleshky, across the Dnieper delta from Kherson, ISW said that Ukrainian troops were also approaching the nearby village of Dachi, citing data from Russian military bloggers.

In Telegram posts, ISW said the bloggers claimed that Ukrainian forces had maintained these positions for weeks and established stable supply lines to them, indicating a lack of Russian control over the area. The Associated Press confirmed the posts from the bloggers, but it wasn't immediately possible to independently verify the data they shared.

Russia is also expected to launch more intensive attacks in the spring, but ISW reported that top Russian defense figures are showing signs that they may be pushing for a consolidation of existing gains in Ukraine, rather than costly new operations, as Moscow struggles with both material and manpower. The think tank cited comments from financier Yevgeniy Prigozhin, the head of the Wagner Group — a private Russian military company whose fighters have spearheaded the offensive on Bakhmut.

Prigozhin's press service posted comments he made on its official Telegram channel in which he argued that Russian forces need to "anchor (themselves) in such a way that it is only possible to tear them out with (the) opponent's claws." The interview was published shortly after Western leaders meeting at the Ramstein Air Base in Germany pledged to train more Ukrainian personnel and keep up their military support for Kyiv.

As Moscow seeks to bolster its troop numbers, the U.K. Ministry of Defense noted in an intelligence briefing that Russian authorities had mounted a large-scale military

recruitment campaign using social media, billboards and state television. It said Russian officials are "almost certainly seeking to delay any new, overt mandatory mobilization for as long as possible to minimize domestic dissent," while assessing that this latest effort would likely fail to meet the defense ministry's stated goal of recruiting 400,000 new volunteers.

In attacks overnight, local authorities in eastern Ukraine reported that Russian forces had launched at least five S-300 missiles at Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city and the surrounding region. The missiles damaged an industrial facility and private homes but caused no casualties, according to Oleh Syniehubov, the Kharkiv regional governor.

In Kherson, one civilian was killed and two were wounded as Russian troops used artillery, drones and warplanes to launch a total of 54 strikes on the province, Gov. Oleksandr Prokudin said on Telegram. Russian forces and overnight also dropped five guided aerial bombs over the Kherson region, Ukraine's Operational Command South said in a Facebook post. According to the post, the bombs were launched from drones and aircraft and damaged multiple residential buildings, but caused no casualties.

Also in the Kherson region, two women, ages 85 and 57, were hospitalized after being wounded in a Russian artillery attack that damaged a local school and about 25 residential buildings in the village of Kizomys, Prokudin said in a Telegram post. In the neighboring Zaporizhzhia region, Russian shelling wounded a 56-year-old man in Stepanohirsk, a town on the banks of the Dnieper river, local Gov. Yuriy Malashko wrote on Telegram.

S Africa shooting leaves 10 family members dead

JOHANNESBURG (BBC): Ten members of the same family have been shot dead in an attack on their home in South Africa, police say. Seven females and three males were killed when their home near the city of Pietermaritzburg was ambushed.

Police Minister Bheki Cele said two suspects had been arrested, one was shot dead and another is still at large. The motive is unclear. South Africa has one of the world's highest murder rates. Police were first alerted to the shooting after neighbours heard gunshots.

Mr Cele said one of the victims was as young as 13, adding: "It's a crime scene,

terrible. Too many people were lost here." They have arrested two people, one was injured, one is dead, one ran away and three firearms were recovered," he told reporters at the scene of the shooting in the township of Imbali in eastern KwaZulu-Natal province. One child has reportedly been taken to hospital.

According to local media, the gunmen managed to gain entry to the property after posing as police officers. Mr Cele confirmed they had located the suspects at the house of a traditional healer, where they had sought refuge. Police said one of the suspects - the man who was

shot dead - had been on their wanted list for a long time.

This part of South Africa is known for featuring regularly in national crime stats for murder rates - a problem that has plagued it for a long time. It's the second mass shooting in KwaZulu-Natal province this week after four people were shot and killed at another home north of the port city of Durban. In January, eight people were shot dead at a birthday party in Gqeberha city in Eastern Cape Province. It followed a string of gun attacks in bars last year, with at least 15 killed in one shooting alone.

After Russia bombs own city, explosive found at site

MOSCOW (AP): Seventeen apartment buildings were evacuated in a Russian city near the Ukrainian border after an explosive device was found at the site where a bomb accidentally dropped by a Russian warplane caused a powerful blast this week, authorities said.

The bomb blast rocked the part of Belgorod, leaving a large crater and three people injured. The Russian Defense Ministry quickly acknowledged that a weapon accidentally released by one of its own Su-34 bombers caused the explosion.

The ministry said an investigation was underway but did not elaborate on the details of the weapon, which military experts said likely was a powerful 500-kilogram (1,100-pound) bomb. The governor of Belgorod province, Vyacheslav Gladkov, reported that sappers examining the site of blast found and decided to detonate what he called an "explosive object" that was "in the immediate vicinity of residential buildings."

The precautionary evacuations ended later in the day, according to Belgorod Mayor Valentin Demidov. "The bomb was removed from the residential area. Residents are being delivered back to their homes," Demidov wrote on Telegram. Russian authorities did not say if the detonated device was dropped by accident and if so, if it was a remnant of or separate from the bomb that exploded in the city.

Belgorod, located about 40 kilometers (25 miles) east of the Russia-Ukraine border, has faced regular drone attacks since Russia sent troops into Ukraine last year. Russian authorities have blamed those strikes on the Ukrainian military, which refrained from directly claiming responsibility for the attacks. The governor of the Kharkiv region, Oleh Syniehubov, said five missiles fired from the Belgorod area hit the region, including one that struck unspecified "civilian infrastructure" in the capital city Kharkiv.

Moscow's invasion of Ukraine has sent relations with the West into deep freeze, with frequent expulsions of diplomats on both sides. The Russian Foreign Ministry said that German authorities had "decided on another mass expulsion of employees of Russian diplomatic missions in Germany." A ministry statement said that "as a reaction to the hostile actions of Berlin," Russia decided to "mirror" the expulsions by Germany and "significantly limit" the maximum number of staff at German diplomatic missions in Russia.

Top election official in Myanmar assassinated by guerrillas

BANGKOK (AP): A top election official in Myanmar was fatally shot in his car in Yangon, the country's commercial capital, in the latest attack attributed to militants opposed to military rule. Sai Kyaw Thu, deputy director-general of the military-appointed Union Election Commission, was shot multiple times, according to the military's information office, media reports and a statement of responsibility from an urban guerrilla group.

The information office said the attack was carried out by the People's Defense Force, the loosely organized armed wing of the pro-democracy National Unity Government, an underground group that opposes the military-installed government that was established when the army seized power two years ago. Many opposition forces including local People's Defense Force groups operate autonomously from the National Unity Government but the military labels them all as "terrorists."

A resistance group calling itself "For The Yangon" said it carried out the attack on Sai Kyaw Thu, a former lieutenant colonel. It declared "Mission: Accomplished" in a Facebook post that was illustrated with three photos of their target. Sai Kyaw Thu is believed to be the most senior official of the Election Commission to be shot since the army seized power on Feb. 1, 2021, from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Resistance groups earlier this year attempted to disrupt preparations for

a new election the military had promised by attacking personnel conducting a population survey that could be used to assemble voter rolls and other low-level election workers. Plans for the polls, whose date was never set, were set back indefinitely in February when the military government announced it was extending a state of emergency due to security problems. Urban guerrillas have carried out many targeted killings, acts of arson and small bombings. Victims included officials and members of the military and their cronies, as well as people believed to be informers or military collaborators.

In November 2021, a former navy officer who was the chief finance officer of Myanmar's military-linked Mytel telecommunications company was fatally shot on a Yangon street. Than Than Swe, then a deputy governor of Myanmar's Central Bank, was shot at her home in Yangon in April 2022. She survived and was promoted to the bank governor. Most recently, a veteran corporate lawyer accused of helping military leaders was shot dead in Yangon by self-proclaimed urban guerrillas in March.

After its takeover, the army clamped down harshly on opponents in the cities, arresting thousands and using deadly force even against non-violent demonstrators. The repression, which has now accounted for more than 3,400 civilian deaths, triggered widespread armed resistance. The military dismissed the members of the previous election commission — which had ratified the victory of

Suu Kyi's party in a November 2020 general election — and appointed new ones. It also detained several members of the old commission, and according to reports in independent Myanmar media, pressured them to say there had been election fraud.

The new military-appointed commission declared the 2020 election results invalid and prosecuted Suu Kyi and 15 other senior political figures for alleged fraud. In the statement, "For The Yangon" claimed Sai Kyaw Thu had been a plaintiff in the election fraud case against Suu Kyi. She and ousted President Win Myint and the former minister of the president's office, Min Thu, received three-year sentences in September last year in that case.

A member of guerrilla group said in a text message that Sai Kyaw Thu was assassinated "for being the deputy director-general of the illegal election commission of the military council, which disrespected the votes of the people in 2020 general election and abused the people unjustly, and also for being the one who falsely prosecuted President Win Myint and Aung San Suu Kyi as an accessory of the military council." "The one who insults the public will be punished by the people," said the member of group, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he fears arrest by the authorities. According to reports in Myanmar's independent media, Sai Kyaw Thu was cross-examined as a prosecution witness in the trials against Suu Kyi last year.

Lawmakers war-game conflict with China, hoping to deter one

WASHINGTON (AP): It's April 22, 2027, and 72 hours into a first-strike Chinese attack on Taiwan and the US military response. Already, the toll on all sides is staggering. It was a war game, but one with a serious purpose and high-profile players: members of the House select committee on China. The conflict unfolded on Risk board game-style tabletop maps and markers under a giant gold chandelier in the House Ways and Means Committee room.

The exercise explored American diplomatic, economic and military options if the United States and China were to reach the brink of war over Taiwan, a self-ruled island that Beijing claims as its own. The exercise played out one night last week and was observed by The Associated Press. It was part of the committee's in-depth review of US policies toward China as lawmakers, especially in the Republican-led House, focus on tensions with President Xi Jinping's government. In the war game, Beijing's missiles and rockets cascade down on Taiwan and on US forces as far away as Japan and Guam. Initial casualties include hundreds, possibly thousands, of US troops. Taiwan's and China's losses are even higher.

Discouragingly for Washington, alarmed and alienated allies in the war game leave Americans to fight almost entirely alone in support of Taiwan. And forget about a US hotline call to Xi or one of his top generals to calm things down — not happening, at least not under this role-playing scenario. The war game wasn't about planning a war, lawmakers said. It was about figuring out how to strengthen US deterrence, to keep a war involving the US, China and Taiwan from ever starting.

Ideally, the members of Congress would walk out of the war game with two convictions, the committee chair-

man, Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Wis., told colleagues at the outset: "One is a sense of urgency." The second: "A sense ... that there are meaningful things we can do in this Congress through legislative action to improve the prospect of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," Gallagher said. In reality, Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, the committee's top Democrat, told lawmakers, "we cannot have a situation where we are faced with what we are going to be facing tonight."

The "only way to do that is to deter aggression and to prevent a conflict from arising," said Krishnamoorthi, D-Ill. The US doesn't formally recognize the Taiwan government but is Taipei's most vital provider of weapons and other security assistance. Xi has directed his military to be ready to reclaim Taiwan in 2027, by force if necessary. Asked about lawmakers' war game, Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy, said China wants peaceful reunification with Taiwan but reserves "the option of taking all necessary measures."

"The US side's so-called 'war game' is meant to support and embolden 'Taiwan independence' separatists and further fuel tensions in the Taiwan Strait, which we firmly oppose," Liu said. In the war game, lawmakers played the blue team, in the role of National Security Council advisers. Their directive from their (imaginary) president: Deter a Chinese takeover of Taiwan if possible, defeat it if not. Experts for the Center for a New American Security think tank, whose research includes war-gaming possible conflicts using realistic scenarios and unclassified information, played the red team.

In the exercise, it all kicks off with opposition lawmakers in Taiwan talking about independence. With the

think tank's defense program director Stacie Pettyjohn narrating, angry Chinese officials respond by heaping unacceptable demands on Taiwan. Meanwhile, China's military moves invasion-capable forces into position. Steps such as bringing in blood supplies for treating troops suggest this is no ordinary military exercise.

Ultimately, China imposes a de facto blockade on Taiwan, intolerable for an island that produces more than 60 percent of the world's semiconductors, as well as other high-tech gear. While the US military readies for a possible fight, US presidential advisers — House committee members who are surrounding and studying the wooden tables with the map and troop markers spread out — assemble. They lob questions at a retired general, Mike Holmes, playing the role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, before deciding courses of action. What are the economic consequences if the US goes maximalist on financial punishments, one lawmaker asks. "Catastrophic" is the response, for both the United States and China. China will hit back at the US economy as well.

"Who's going to tell the president that he has to say to the American people, 'Say goodbye to your iPhones?'" Rep. Ashley Hinson, R-Iowa, asks. Do American leaders have any way to communicate with their Chinese counterparts, lawmakers ask. No, China's leaders have a history of shunning US hotline calls, and that's a problem, the exercise leaders tell them. In the war game, US officials are left trying to pass messages to their Chinese counterparts through China-based American business leaders, whose Dell, Apple, HP and other product operations China all subsequently seizes as one of its first moves in the attack.

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Servitude communities and UN’s feebleness

RECENTLY, the US National Security Council Spokesman, John Kirby commented on the alleged genocide of the Uygur Muslims in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in Northwestern China. According to the American diplomat, it is a kind of issue where constant pressure needs to be applied to China because freedom of worship is a basic right of every human being.

The human rights abuses in Xinjiang, the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, and the situation around the Strait of Taiwan are the current day burning issues while these topics are most popular in the Western capitals. Amid heightened trade war and an all times political tussle between the United States and China, American Strategists always remained mindful of the weak aspects of their staunch enemy and never spare an opportunity to take advantage of it. During this war of wits, western think tanks are conducting extensive research, and holding in-depth discussions and talk shows on the Xinjiang issue, while Chinese dissidents including Uyghur activists, pro-democracy Hung Kungers, and Taiwanese separatists enjoy full freedom, media access, and support of western civil society and human rights groups to campaign for their basic rights and get them through western support.

Historically, International human rights organizations and civil society groups had surfaced a human tragedy in Xinjiang, the Chinese-administered autonomous Mulsim region in late 2017. When a large number of Uyghur and other Chinese Muslims went disappeared and multiple concentration camps had been revealed in certain areas in mainland China. The reports suggested that the Chinese government has initiated a program and established concentration camps officially named reeducation centers by the Chinese government, to host thousands of Uyghur and other Chinese Muslims for the sole purpose of forceful education/ brainwashing to overcome alleged extremism in the Chinese Muslim community. After multiple requests by Human Rights groups and global civil society, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) launched comprehensive instigation into the matter. The UN authorities get involved with the Chinese government regarding serious human rights violations in Xinjiang, while UN investigators interviewed the victims and the people having direct knowledge about the situation in XUAR to validate the information. The UN Human Rights Council categorically objected to multiple Chinese legislation and policies to combat terrorism and extremism in its country, while the so-called re-education camps and forceful detention over mere suspicions of terrorism were declared unlawful by the United Nations. The OHCHR called on the Chinese government to release all individuals arbitrarily imprisoned in XUAR, to review its laws, and implement all internationally binding laws regarding the protection of human rights, labor, and treatment of minorities. Interestingly, the Chinese government termed its Western propaganda and made tall claims regarding the rule of the law, freedoms, and liberties being exercised by the ethnic Uygurs and Muslims residing in XUAR and other parts of China.

Realistically, nations around the globe are more enthusiastic and careful about their political agenda than the preservation of fundamental rights, civil liberties, and freedoms of their citizens. The majority of nations use self-coined rules and oppressive regimes to forcefully annex/ control weak states, ethnic and religious minorities, and ungoverned regions to satisfy their imperialistic designs and hegemonism. These trends not perished the lives of thousands of innocent people but gave birth to human tragedies in Xinjiang, Tibet, Jammu and Kashmir, Indian-held Punjab, Palestine, Arakan, and certain other parts of the world. Meanwhile, the United Nations has failed to provide fundamental rights, freedom, and rights to self-determination to indigenous groups and disadvantaged communities across the world, because powerful nations do not act on the UN decisions on issues pertaining to them. In fact, there is a dire need for restructuring, liberalization, and decentralization of the executive arm of the United Nations to make it democratic, and impartial, so it can perform an effective role in the resolution of global disputes. So, no power could ever violate universal laws and enslave weak societies in the future.

Is it too late to banish the specter of civil war in Sudan?

HERE we are again, with yet another state in the Arab and African arenas erupting in flames. At root, the Sudan conflict is pro-saically simple — two figures are willing to burn their nation to the ground through their all-consuming desire to be president, as if the right to govern could be claimed by force rather than by the popular will.

Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, or Hemedti, is thought to have begun his career as a camel rustler before distinguishing himself with the Janjaweed militia in Darfur, carrying out genocidal campaigns along with systematic rape, looting and livestock raiding. An estimated 300,000 people were slaughtered and 2.5 million displaced during the still-unresolved Darfur conflict.

I encountered Hemedti when I traveled as a journalist with the entourage of the loathsome dictator Omar Bashir when he was president. I recall a short, ineloquent and unimpressive figure, literally in Bashir’s shadow. Having stabbed his mentor Bashir in the back, Hemedti’s forces were responsible in 2019 for an appalling massacre on the streets Khartoum of several hundred civilian protesters who were tortured, raped, murdered and tossed in the Nile —prefiguring the savagery of recent days.

Gen. Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan was a career military officer who was a regional army commander in Darfur before ascending to the highest ranks of the military. When Hemedti and Burhan colluded in their 2021 coup against the civilian leadership, the entire nation rose in anger against them and largely thwarted their ambitions. Now Burhan and Hemedti are waging war against each other. After days of fighting, both sides boast partial control of key institutions such as the presidential palace and Khartoum airport.

The perennial outsider whose tribe is from outside Sudan, Hemedti and his Rapid Support Forces appear to have relished laying waste to prosperous central districts of Sudan’s cosmopolitan capital. In the past few years there has been modest economic progress, with inflation reined in, trade deficit reductions, and progress

ceasefires must we go through to demonstrate that neither side cares anything about the population they aspire to rule?

With streets littered with rotting corpses, citizens are making terrifying decisions about whether to hunker down or flee, with food and water becoming increasing-

Baria Alamuddin

other states where over-mighty paramilitary forces threaten to outgun the army and constitute a state within a state. I’m particularly thinking of Lebanon and Iraq, where military figures have previously warned me that regular armies may ultimately be compelled to confront groups such as

offer weapons to Hemedti, who was also reported to have taken delivery of fuel and weapons from the Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar. Egyptian troops in Sudan were abducted by the RSF and then released, with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi having provided support to Burhan in the past. Hemedti has sought to draw on past associations

To prevent Sudan also plunging into outright anarchy, Arab states must assertively act to halt the carnage. Let’s not have another scenario like Syria, where Arab states are pushed to the sidelines while a host of second-rate powers make the crisis infinitely worse. The international community must do more than simply airlifting nationals. That such measures are being taken indicates that diplomats see this as a long-term conflict rather than a brief and resolvable flare-up.

If both parties are resolved upon fighting to the death, perhaps the least-worst solution is decisively shifting the fight in favor of a swift restoration of order by the national army. Beyond this, Sudanese citizens unambiguously desire a return to civilian governance, with a stark absence of popular support for military leaders on either side. The 2019 Sudanese popular revolution must be carried through to its logical conclusion, ensuring the supremacy of a civilian governing system based on free elections and without a role for anybody wearing military fatigues other than to defend the constitution.

Sudan, with its gold, oil and other natural resources, shouldn’t be an impoverished, dysfunctional nation. The rich agricultural lands to Sudan’s south make the country an essential conduit for the Middle East’s food supplies. But successive leaderships squandered the country’s wealth through systematic corruption and destructive wars.

A more resilient nation, and broader region, must emerge from this catastrophe. African and Arab neighbors, along with the international community, must do all in their power to halt the carnage. Sudan lies at the gateway between the Arab and African worlds — shoring up Sudanese stability and popular governance is crucial for the wellbeing of both.

Arab News

The ease with which he was permitted to build up such a massive personal force is a salutary lesson to other states where overmighty paramilitary forces threaten to outgun the army and constitute a state within a state. I’m particularly thinking of Lebanon and Iraq, where military figures have previously warned me that regular armies may ultimately be compelled to confront groups such as Hezbollah and Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi. The cowardly failure to rein in such paramilitary behemoths when they were smaller and less well armed condemns entire nations to embroilment in conflict. This conflict in Sudan is rapidly becoming internationalized. Russia’s mercenary Wagner group has a long-standing relationship with Hemedti’s RSF, colluding to loot vast quantities of Sudan’s gold reserves. US officials warn that Wagner has rushed to offer weapons to Hemedti, who was also reported to have taken delivery of fuel and weapons from the Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar. Egyptian troops in Sudan were abducted by the RSF and then released, with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi having provided support to Burhan in the past. Hemedti has sought to draw on past associations with various Arab leaders, but many of them appear to prefer a scenario in which the regular army rapidly prevails and restores order. Given the ferocity of the fighting and mass dispersal of communities in Darfur, this conflict risks spilling over into already unstable states such as Chad and Libya. Africa’s entire Sahel region is a patchwork of conflicts — including Somalia, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, the Lake Chad region, Burkina Faso and Mali.

toward debt forgiveness. But each successive military intervention undermined these advances. The latest developments will torpedo the economy completely, torching districts that are traditional motors of the national economy.

Burhan’s army has control of the skies and heavier weaponry, but Hemedti’s battle-hardened forces have recent experience of no-holds-barred conflict, with many having been mercenaries in Libya and Yemen. How many farcical failed

ly difficult to access. Sudan already had Africa’s second-largest displaced population, with over a million civilians forcibly displaced. Even before the latest fighting, the UN predicted that 16 million Sudanese would require humanitarian assistance in 2023.

In a few brief years, Hemedti’s RSF was allowed to mushroom from about 4,000 to 100,000 men. The ease with which he was permitted to build up such a massive personal force is a salutary lesson to

Hezbollah and Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi. The cowardly failure to rein in such paramilitary behemoths when they were smaller and less well armed condemns entire nations to embroilment in conflict.

This conflict in Sudan is rapidly becoming internationalized. Russia’s mercenary Wagner group has a long-standing relationship with Hemedti’s RSF, colluding to loot vast quantities of Sudan’s gold reserves. US officials warn that Wagner has rushed to

with various Arab leaders, but many of them appear to prefer a scenario in which the regular army rapidly prevails and restores order.

Given the ferocity of the fighting and mass dispersal of communities in Darfur, this conflict risks spilling over into already unstable states such as Chad and Libya. Africa’s entire Sahel region is a patchwork of conflicts — including Somalia, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, the Lake Chad region, Burkina Faso and Mali.

The American war on books

ONCE upon a time, George W Bush — former governor of Texas, 43rd United States president and accused war criminal — made a worrying observation: “Rarely is the question asked: Is our children learning?”

Bush did have a point; after all, that question is indeed rarely asked, at least not by people with a command of English grammar. And yet it is a question that increasingly comes to mind these days, and particularly today on World Book Day, as the US state of Texas leads the country in a book-banning frenzy.

According to the literary and free expression advocacy organisation PEN America, between July 1, 2021, and March 31, 2022, a total of 1,586 book bans took place in school libraries and classrooms across 26 US states. Texas was at the vanguard with 713 bans, followed by Pennsylvania with 456, Florida with 204 and Oklahoma with 43.

Heavily targeted for removal were books featuring LGBTQIA+ themes and characters as well as

texts dealing with structural racism in US society — actions that naturally only reinforce the bigoted and malevolent foundations of the so-called “land of the free”. To be sure, book bans are nothing new and have been around in America since the 1600s. In the 19th century, anti-slavery books were banned in the US South. And in Germany, the Nazis banned Albert Einstein’s Relativity: The Special and the General Theory among numerous other titles.

Despite the dubious success rate of book bans, which ultimately depends on how one defines “success”, the feverish rage they have been known to generate can certainly serve as a handy distraction for actual societal problems. Take the case of Llano County, situated northwest of the Texas capital of Austin, where local officials are currently deciding whether to completely shut down the public library system after a federal judge recently ordered 17 banned titles returned to the shelves.

The titles include They Called Themselves the

Belén Fernández

KKK: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group by Susan Campbell Bartoletti, which won Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults award from the Young Adult Library

Services Association in 2011. Also on the list are Jazz Jennings’s book Being Jazz: My Life as a (Transgender) Teen and Robie H Harris’s It’s Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex, and Sexual Health.

Then there’s a children’s book series by Jane Bexley comprising such subversive titles as Larry the Farting Leprechaun, Freddie the Farting Snowman and Harvey the Heart Had Too Many Farts. Which brings us to the following point: In a country plagued by racism, discrimination, socioeconomic inequality, homelessness, depression and addiction, a gas-afflicted snowman should be the least of anyone’s worries.

Mass shootings have become a daily occurrence in the US, and, just last May, an 18-year-old gun-

man killed 19 children and two adults at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas, southwest of Llano County. Give me a farting leprechaun over an assault rifle any day.

Obviously, the presence of any given book on a library shelf does not mean that even a tiny fraction of the population will actually read it. This is especially true in the present era of total digital distraction — another societally destructive trend that will not be solved by, you know, shuttering libraries. But the Llano County showdown is emblematic of the general assault on any lingering sense of community in the US, where the bipartisan ruling elite directly profits from the divide-and-conquer approach and the obliteration of any notion of communal solidarity.

The resulting individual isolation and dismantling of empathy, in turn, helps cultivate a national landscape that is more conducive to mass shootings and the like. But back to farting leprechauns. I myself spent much of my youth in Texas

and have delightful memories of the Austin Public Library, of pre-internet summers spent among stacks of books and of the satisfying sound of the librarian stamping the book checkout cards with a tool I can’t even recall the name of.

Granted, I also engaged in youthful activities like shooting beer cans off fence posts with my parents’ friend’s pistol and learning in school about why it was so great for my country to be bombing people in the Middle East in Operation Desert Storm, waged by the father of the man who would subsequently ask whether our children was learning. Fast forward three decades, and the US continues to devote much of its time and money to destroying other countries. Let Americans start to connect the dots as to why a country with such incredible resources can’t provide affordable housing, healthcare or education, the powers that be pursue a simultaneous domestic assault on freedom of thought and expression — one manifestation of which is the race to ban books.

Aljazeera

Turkiye, Egypt may cooperate to help Libya

TURKIYE and Egypt have been at loggerheads for a prolonged period. It started with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s harsh rhetoric against the rise to power of Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. Erdogan was opposed to his government, mainly because it had succeeded a regime that relied on the Muslim Brotherhood movement that he had supported and that he still supports.

However, time moves fast in the Middle East. Old coalitions collapsed and new coalitions were formed. Those behind the Abraham Accords wanted them to reshape the Middle East. Now, China is mediating between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

At a time when Turkiye was isolated in the region, El-Sisi extended a warm handshake to Erdogan and a new dynamic was unleashed between Turkiye and Egypt. The recent earthquake diplomacy also

helped these two heavyweights of the Middle East thaw their frozen relations. The foreign ministers of the two countries have paid visits to each other’s capitals and the relations have started to move. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has an innate capacity to easily establish friendships. It is thanks to this conciliatory skill that he was able to serve as president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe between 2010 and 2012. He is now using this talent to restore Turkish-Egyptian relations.

However, there are two major issues between Ankara and Cairo regarding Libya. One of them is the memorandum of understanding signed between Turkiye and Libya regarding the demarcation of their maritime jurisdiction areas. Ankara signed this memorandum with the then-legitimate government of Libya. However, it was not ratified

by the parliament.

This question has become more complicated because of the emergence of two powerhouses in Libya. One is the government led by Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh that is supported by the Government of National Unity based in Tripoli. The Libyan Political Dialogue Forum appointed him to act as prime minister until the elections that were supposed to have been held on Dec. 24, 2021. However, for several reasons, these elections could not be held on the scheduled date.

Dbeibeh claims that he still holds the title of prime minister and will continue to do so until elections are held and a successor is designated. The other contender is former Interior Minister Fathi Bashagha. He was selected as prime minister-designate and head of government by the Tobruk-based Libyan House of

Yasar Yakis

Representatives. Bashagha claims that, as Dbeibeh’s term as PM was limited to Dec. 21, 2021, he cannot occupy this post any longer.

The question of the demarcation of the Turkiye-Libya maritime jurisdiction areas also remains in abeyance. Libya’s Government of National Accord deposited the memorandum with the UN and the UN Secretariat on Oct. 1, 2020, registering it in accordance, with Article 102 of the UN Charter. Five countries protested this action and sent a note ver-bale to the UN Secretariat calling for the memorandum not to be registered, but this protest was not considered by the organization. The Turkiye-Libya memorandum is important because it cuts off the connection between the Greek and Egyptian maritime jurisdiction zones. If there is a will, this question may be solved with the coopera-

tion of four countries, namely Turkiye, Egypt, Greece and Libya, or it may be referred to the arbitration of the International Court of Justice.

The second major issue between Turkiye and Egypt is the ongoing political and military instability in Libya. However, this question may now become a vehicle for cooperation. Ankara and Cairo seem to be eager to cooperate in order to stabilize Libya. Turkiye’s deep involvement in Libya had disturbed Cairo in the recent past, because it is Libya’s neighbor. They have a common border of 1,115 km. Several tribes span the border. Libya has been in dire need of political conciliation. Turkiye and Egypt do not have contradictory interests in Libya, which is an oil-rich country that also whets the appetite of several third countries. Ottoman Turkiye had a long-held presence in Libya. Many politically influential

Libyan leaders have Turkish origins and also have relatives in Turkiye. This may facilitate Turkish-Egyptian cooperation if they remain sensitive and protect each other’s priorities.

All sorts of political, religious, tribal and regional rivalries coexist in Libya. The warlord Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar controlled vast swaths of the country, but the military support provided by Turkiye to the Government of National Accord saved Tripoli from a possible collapse. The rivalry is mainly focused on controlling oil revenues. The Middle East has become tired of conflicts. There are all types of seeds of conflict in the region. While the Yemeni tribes are on their way to reaching a compromise, an interecine war erupts in Sudan. In Libya, there is enough money to make every single resident happy, including foreigners, but human avarice has no limits.

Coronation plans excite some Canadians, leave others cold

PLANNING for next month's coronation of King Charles III, the first for a British monarch in 70 years, is being met with subdued enthusiasm in Canada, the Commonwealth's largest country by area. While some Canadians are eagerly awaiting the pageantry-filled spectacle steeped in centuries of history, most of their compatriots say they have little interest in the event and don't want Charles as their king. But Canada is unlikely to cast off the monarchy and become a republic any time soon.

"The monarchy is hard-wired into the Canadian constitution and just because most Canadians have little interest in it does not mean that the monarchy is on its death-bed," said Cape Breton University professor David Johnson, an expert on Canadian politics and constitutional matters, in an email exchange with VOA. Many Canadians, like their American neighbors, are fascinated by not only the pageantry but also the tabloid-worthy drama that surrounds the royal family. But unlike the United States, which threw off royal rule in 1776, Canada still recognizes the king or queen of England as its head of state.

While the inhabitants of Windsor Castle have no role in day-to-day governance in Canada, the monarchy is embedded in its institutions, with the face of the ruling monarch adorning its currency. The monarch's representative, known as the governor general, presides over the annual opening of Parliament, and lieutenant governors perform similar ceremonial duties in each of the 10 provinces. But Canadians are increasingly seeing that legacy of

colonial rule as an outdated relic, a change in attitude that has been brought to the fore by the death of Queen Elizabeth II and the imminent coronation of Charles. "It's not surprising that recent polling on this shows the vast majority of Canadians to be uninterested in the coronation, the king, and the institution of the monarchy in Canada," Johnson said. He cited a Research Co. poll conducted in early March that showed only 19% of survey respondents wanted to see Charles remain as Canada's head of state. Several other polls have produced similar findings.

"Some 44% of respondents wish to see an elected head of state in this country," Johnson wrote. "I am in no way surprised by any of these numbers," said Johnson. "Only some one-third of Canadians generally express views supportive of the monarchy in Canada (and I am one of them) while the majority show little interest in it, and are perplexed as to why the head of the Windsor family in the U.K. is our head of state."

Among those with little interest in the monarchy are the residents of predominantly French-speaking Quebec, who feel more affinity with France than with Britain, and the more than 8 million Canadian residents — accounting for almost a quarter of the total population — who came to Canada as immigrants. One of the most outspoken proponents for cutting ties with the monarchy is Tom Freda, director of the advocacy group Citizens for a Canadian Republic, who sees the coronation as an opportunity to advance his cause.

"Anything that gets Canadians thinking about the monarchy is a

good thing," Freda said in an email exchange. "Because when they do, the majority always see it as an anachronistic colonial relic that needs to be sent to the history books. This is the conundrum monarchists face with an absentee monarch," Freda told VOA. "If they [royal family members] stay in Britain, Canadians will always think they're British and symbols of our colonial past," said Freda. "But if they visit (or are in the news for any other reason), the sheer ridiculousness of having a head of state who is a hereditary monarch and lives in a castle on another continent, becomes front-and-centre."

Freda believes not much would change if Canada were to become a republic. "Where there will be a change is in the enhanced sense of Canadian identity we'll all feel when it happens," Freda said. "This has proven to be the case in all the news stories on Barbados' transition to a republic. Barbadians interviewed describe a renewed sense of pride in their country for taking the last step to independence." But any attempt to cut Canada's ties to the monarchy would encounter constitutional hurdles and likely run into stiff opposition from the one-third of Canadians, especially older ones, who still revere the institution.

"Abolishing the monarchy would require a feat of political maneuvering that has rarely been seen throughout the years, requiring unanimous agreement among the House of Commons, the Senate and all of the provincial legislatures," wrote Amanda Connolly in Canada's Global News. Her September 18 article followed remarks by Prime

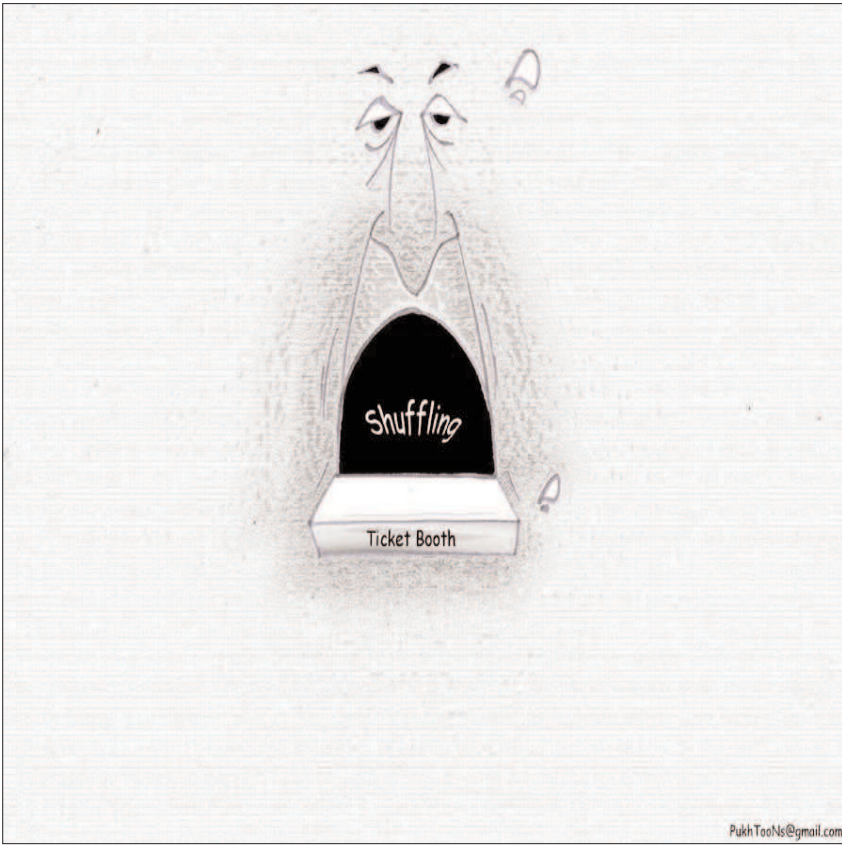
Minister Justin Trudeau ruling out any such effort in the near future. Canadian royalists, meanwhile, are heartened by an uptick in approval of Charles himself, who has managed to achieve a stature as king that long evaded him as Prince of Wales.

Historian Robert Lacey, who wrote the companion books to the blockbuster TV series "The Crown," told VOA he could not speak to Charles' popularity in Canada but said it is growing in the United Kingdom. "Quite a lot of people in Britain say I've never had much time for Prince Charles but I quite like King Charles," Lacey told VOA via Skype. "In his speaking, he's developed an appeal that people didn't quite expect."

Johnson pointed out that polling shows the next generation of royals is more popular in Canada than the new king. "54% of respondents like the Prince and Princess of Wales, and 46% like Harry, 41% like Meghan," he said. Regardless of public opinion, the federal government is moving ahead with plans for a day of festivities to mark the coronation, though the prime minister might skip the events in London.

In a March 16 press release, Trudeau's office announced plans for Coronation Day celebrations that would "acknowledge the special relationship" between Canada and the new king, including "artistic performances, and special unveilings" at various Ottawa locations. "All Commonwealth nations will be represented, likely by governors-general," Johnson told VOA. "This will probably be the case for Canada, although this has not yet been stated. The prime minister has a Liberal Party convention to attend that weekend."

VOA



Dominic Raab is just the latest culprit

AND another one bites the dust. Dominic Raab is the third man to exit the cabinet during Rishi Sunak's six months at Number 10 and the umpteenth minister to be sacked or compelled to quit during the long years of Conservative government. He was the deputy prime minister. That's a big title, his departure has generated large headlines and he's not gone quietly into the night, banging the door behind him with a lot of uncontrite noise about being treated unfairly.

Yet his fall will probably merit only a small paragraph in the histories of these years. I say that because resignations have been so common. Bullying, sexual predation, cronyism, rule-busting, law-breaking, illicit lobbying for commercial interests. Name a genre of bad behaviour and these years have served it up. All political eras have their share of scandal. The distinguishing characteristic of this one is that there have been so many of them and of so many different types.

Cheerleaders for Mr Sunak hail the removal of Mr Raab as evidence of the prime minister's commitment to professional standards. The opposition parties scoff at any claim that this is testimony to Mr Sunak's upstanding character when it was he who restored Mr Raab to the role of DPM, knowing of the many accusations that he had bullied civil servants in three departments.

Point trading of this kind is to be expected at Westminster in the fallout from a cabinet resignation, but what of the public? Beyond the advantage-seeking bear pit of SW1, the majority of voters will be neither shaken nor stirred by the news that another minister, even a very senior one, has been defenestrated. That's because there is a profound public cynicism about politics that should worry all of its practitioners.

Meanwhile, north of the border, the coils of scandal are tightening around Scotland's governing party. The family home of Nicola Sturgeon was raided earlier this month and Peter Murrell, her husband and the party's former chief executive, interrogated by detectives investigating allegations of financial chicanery. The police have since seized a luxury motorhome from the drive of Mr Murrell's elderly mother and detained for questioning the party's treasurer, who resigned from the role the following day. The new leader, Humza Yousaf, floundered when asked whether the SNP is currently a criminal organisation. Holyrood is rife with speculation that the police will soon be asking Ms Sturgeon to assist with their inquiries. The former first minister is the only senior SNP figure named in the party's most recent accounts who has not yet been arrested.

Labour is feasting on a banquet of embarrassment for its primary opponents on both sides of the border. Sir Keir Starmer can deploy the same attack line on the Tories and the SNP, depicting both of them as decadent parties presiding over

Andrew Rawnsley

exhausted and failed governments that have been in power for far too long.

Yet Sir Keir ought to be aware — I am sure he glances at opinion polls from time to time — that a lack of public trust in his opponents does not automatically translate into faith in him and his party. If anyone thinks every minister in a Starmer government will be a paragon of virtue and entirely immune to the corrupting temptations of power, then I have a bridge and a bag of magic beans to sell you. Those who can remember Labour's last period in office will not recall it as a communion of saints and a scandal-free zone. Labour minds should be focused not just on exploiting the vulnerabilities of their opponents. Sir Keir's preparation for government needs to include a lot of serious thought about how he will ensure that ethical standards are higher and more rigorously enforced than we have been used to. Just saying it will be so isn't enough.

We have a crisis of public faith in politics. This did not start with Boris Johnson, though it was certainly made worse by his debauched regime, and the crisis clearly has not been ended simply by replacing him with a different face at Number 10. The most obvious culprits are trust-smashing events that fuel justifiably fierce public outrage. Partygate and, before it, the expenses scandal did terrible damage to the reputation of politics. The disintegration of respect for Westminster is also the product of the relentless accumulation of other scandals that have made parliament look like a rogues' gallery. An unprecedentedly high number of MPs — mainly, but not entirely Tories — have been suspended or thrown out by their parties during this parliament as a result of pending investigations into misconduct.

Daniel Greenberg, the parliamentary commissioner for standards, took up the post remarking that we are experiencing a "low point in the reputation of politics and politicians".

There are plenty of decent people at Westminster. It is not exclusively populated by venal and self-serving villains who are in it only for themselves. But it is not hard to understand why so many of the public have become so thoroughly alienated. The Policy Institute of King's College London has published new research into how voters view their politicians in countries around the world. The findings about the UK are bleak. Fewer than one in four of us has confidence in either the government or parliament and fewer than one in seven has confidence in the political parties. That's a historic low. We were once a country that had a lot of reverence for its democratic institutions. We are now much less trusting of politics than many of our European neighbours. Confidence has plunged heavily among millennials. Gen Z are reaching adulthood with dismal levels of trust.

This is terrible news both for politicians and the

public. When the people have so little faith in them, leaders lose the benefit of the doubt, "the most precious commodity in politics", as Sir John Major once put it. It becomes much harder to bring the country together in any common endeavours or to build a consensus behind difficult decisions that need to be taken in the national interest.

Unaddressed, this crisis of trust is likely to prompt more of the public to give up on politics by simply disengaging from it while turning others angry and prey to the anti-democratic piers of authoritarianism.

There is no magic bullet for improving trust in our politics, but there are some remedies that Westminster could implement if it had the will. A vital step is to recognise that abominable conduct by some politicians is an important driver of the crisis and we need substantial improvements to the rules governing behaviour. The guardrails have often been exposed as too feeble, while some of the watchdogs that are supposed to keep our politics clean have been toothless. David Cameron's lobbying of ministers and officials on behalf of Greensill Capital during the pandemic was a shocker — not least because the former prime minister could seek to exploit his contacts inside government on behalf of a commercial interest and not be in breach of any of the existing rules. Confusion about the required transparency of declarations of interest apparently extends to the very top of the current government.

Rishi Sunak has been placed under investigation by the standards commissioner after failing to publicly declare that his wife owns shares in a firm that supplies childminders when a committee of senior MPs questioned the prime minister about his plans to increase incentives for childcare.

There's so much laxity in the policing of conflicts of interest that Richard Sharp helped facilitate a personal loan for Mr Johnson and Mr Johnson put the other man forward to be chairman of the BBC and this was kept concealed from the appointments process.

Tougher rules and sterner policing has been many times recommended by a variety of expert bodies and reports. What's been lacking is the political resolve to do it. The other thing we need is an effort to improve the calibre of those coming into politics. Parties select their candidates for parliament on the basis that they have a local support base or an influential sponsor or are in tune with the ideological fashion of the day or because they have a talent for mouthing beguiling bullshit. Much less emphasis is put on ensuring that would-be MPs are capable of acting with integrity. That needs to change. None of the parties should be complacent. All should be addressing this crisis with urgency. Our democracy is in extremely poor health when such a huge majority of people feel that they can no longer trust their government, their parties or their parliament.

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Taiwan could teach a master class in preparing for the worst

ACCORDING to the Washington Post, leaked Pentagon documents on the messaging platform Discord recently revealed that US military officials have doubts about Taiwan's ability to repel an air attack from the Chinese military and, moreover, that the US itself may be limited in its ability to detect a coming attack on Taiwan. These reports add to concerns in the region, particularly as China launched a series of military drills in the air and waters near Taiwan, in the wake of House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's recent meeting in California with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-Wen.

Taiwan has taken on increased attention in the US in recent years, particularly given heightened tensions in the relationship between Washington and Beijing. Strong bipartisan support for Taiwan across the last two presidential administrations, as well as on Capitol Hill, has only added to the sense that America is taking more of an interest in the pivotal role that Taiwan plays in the Indo-Pacific region.

So, too, are there increasing efforts in Taiwan to understand the nature of America's commitment to it and the extent to which military and other support might extend — particularly if China chooses to become more belligerent toward Taiwan in the future. I visited Taiwan in late March as part of a US delegation that met with senior Taiwanese leaders in government and civil society, including Tsai. The visit revealed that while most residents of Taiwan are living their lives as usual, the island's leaders are deeply focused on preparing for an attack from the People's Republic of China and understand well the role that electoral poli-

tics—both in Taiwan and the US—will play in what comes next.

This focus is not only warranted, but wise, given the arguably increasing threat Taiwan faces from China. Taiwan is only about 100 miles east of mainland China, so it's probably no surprise that the specter of a Chinese military attack is a front-and-center concern for the leadership in Taipei. The incumbent administration is particularly focused on this because of complaints at high levels of both the Taiwanese and US governments about the lack of preparation and poor morale in the Taiwanese military.

During our visit, senior officials emphasized changes to enhance preparedness and improve military training, and have moved to increase mandatory military conscription terms for male citizens from four months to one year beginning in 2024. We also heard several laments about the slow pace of military equipment deliveries (such as of Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, F-16 aircraft and anti-ship missiles) from the US—a perspective that Taiwanese officials have expressed to US leaders for some time. Several members of Congress have asserted their intent to press the Biden administration on accelerating deliveries, but manufacturing constraints, supply chain disruptions and, to a lesser degree, demand created by weapons shipments to support Ukraine in its battle against Russia have contributed to the slowdown.

Presidential politics are never far away from any conversation about the future of the self-governing island. There was considerable curiosity from Taiwanese officials about how the 2024 US

Lanhee J. Chen

presidential election will develop—something to be expected given the reality that whoever occupies the White House plays a significant role in dictating the tone and tenor of the bilateral relationship between Washington and Taipei. Former President Donald Trump is lauded in Taiwan for strengthening ties between the US and Taiwan, initiating high-level diplomatic visits between senior US administration officials and their Taiwanese counterparts and going so far as to take Tsai's congratulatory phone call after his 2016 election, in what was then seen as a breach of diplomatic protocol.

Nonetheless, several senior Taiwanese officials expressed disbelief when I told them that Trump might actually be the Republican nominee for president again, particularly given his recent legal troubles. President Joe Biden is also viewed favorably in Taiwan, particularly because of promises that the US would defend Taiwan if it was attacked by China. His comments seemed to indicate a change to existing US policy toward Taiwan on this question, which has been encapsulated by the term "strategic ambiguity"—that is, a deliberate vagueness regarding questions of if, and to what degree, the US would intervene if China were to engage in military aggression against Taiwan. But senior administration officials have repeatedly stressed that, notwithstanding Biden's statements, US policy toward Taiwan has not changed.

While Taiwanese officials were much more circumspect in their evaluations of Biden, we met a number of Taiwanese citizens outside government who expressed concerns about his age and

showed bemusement about the seeming lack of competition for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination in 2024.

Taiwan's next presidential election will take place in January 2024 and already both major political parties (the incumbent Democratic Progressive Party, or DPP, and the Nationalist Party, or Kuomintang) are positioning themselves for the upcoming campaign. While there are differences between the parties on economic and social issues, the primary cleavage between them is how Taiwan will approach China and the broader geopolitical issues at play in the region.

The Kuomintang, which has promised some rapprochement with Beijing, is effectively arguing that a vote for the DPP is a vote for conflict (and perhaps even war) with China. The DPP, on the other hand, claims that only its leaders will continue to foster closeness between the US, other regional allies and Taiwan. The debate will only intensify as both parties select their nominees and the electoral campaign kicks into high gear in the next few months.

Taiwanese officials must deal with the reality that with each passing day, an attack from China may be drawing near. Their focus on military readiness, but also politics both at home and in the US, is reflective of this concern. But while Taiwan's leaders have their eyes turned toward a pending threat, what was clear during our visit was that the threat from China wasn't front of mind for most ordinary Taiwanese citizens. Instead, they were focused on leading their lives, all while trusting that their elected representatives are doing all they can to protect them against what may be to come.

CNN

Brussels' backdoor EU army plays into Putin and Xi's hands

ON Wednesday the European Parliament voted to set up a new force of 5,000 troops to allow the EU to "respond decisively... in order to assert itself as a credible security and defense actor". The plan is to start exercising this year and have full operational capability by 2025.

This amounts to nothing more than another military white elephant. Even its name — the Rapid Deployment Capability — smacks of bureaucratic impotence. And the very idea is absurd: given the wide array of national self-interests and often fundamentally diverging geopolitical priorities among member nations, its deployment would inevitably be met with opposition by one country or another, even if — as is planned — there was no need for agreement from all members. You just have to look at the dithering and division in the EU when Putin invaded Ukraine, which was a black and white case compared to pretty much any future conflict scenario: Germany initially sent only combat helmets to help Kyiv

in its hour of need, and for months vetoed plans by other countries to donate German-manufactured tanks and other lethal weapons. So much for responding decisively.

Underlining the nonsensical thinking behind this plan, Brussels has actually had such a force at its disposal since 2007, the EU Battlegroups, each 1,500 strong states and intended for exactly the same purpose as is now proposed. But they have never once been used despite several compelling opportunities to do so over those years. As the EU itself admits: "issues relating to political will, usability, and financial solidarity have prevented them from being deployed".

This latest Brussels vanity project could be dismissed as just another waste of EU taxpayers' money, but it has much more serious consequences. It is the latest of many attempts to create an EU army through the back door. That would be a disaster: centrally controlled, languid, neutered by 1,001 national caveats and pulled in a

hundred different directions. Had an EU army been responsible for arming and training Kyiv's forces then Ukraine would have collapsed.

What is more, even this relatively modest project will undermine the Atlantic Alliance by eroding the already paltry contributions of most European member states, which collectively generate less than 20% of Nato's overall military capability. As the European Parliament's report on the new force makes clear, troops assigned to the Rapid Deployment Capability cannot be used by Nato in any circumstances. But undercutting the US and Nato, which he has described as "brain-dead", remains high on EU army enthusiast Emmanuel Macron's agenda. On his return from Beijing last week he was openly railing against American influence and demanding European strategic autonomy, a sentiment that also has sympathy in several other EU capitals.

Richard Kemp

The Telegraph

ADB operations reach \$20.5b in 2022, addressing crises, building resilience

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Asian Development Bank (ADB) committed \$20.5 billion from its own resources in FY 2022 to help Asia and the Pacific continue its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic despite fresh economic headwinds and crises.

Financial and operational results were published in ADB's annual report 2022, said a news release issued here on Monday.

The report summarizes how the Bank combined finance and knowledge and leveraged partnerships to help the region cope with economic shocks exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a worsening food crisis, and extreme weather events.

"Our support in 2022 helped our developing member countries (DMCs) navigate the immediate impacts of these crises while bolstering their longer-term resilience in

critical areas such as climate change and food security," said ADB President Masatsugu Asakawa.

The \$20.5 billion comprised loans and guarantees, grants, equity investments, and technical assistance provided to governments and the private sector. ADB mobilized an additional \$11.4 billion in co-financing.

ADB committed \$6.7 billion in financing for climate mitigation and adaptation in 2022, making progress toward its ambition of providing \$100 billion in cumulative climate financing during 2019–2030.

To address the region's worsening food crisis, the ADB provided \$3.7 billion under its \$14 billion food security program, delivering essential food relief for people most in need and strengthening food production systems.

To support economic recovery, the ADB financed

institutional reforms, strengthened public service delivery, and growth in key economic sectors.

The ADB's \$3.9 billion in commitments to the private sector included vital liquidity support to enterprises facing a difficult business environment.

Meanwhile, the Bank made wide-ranging investments in quality infrastructure as well as in education, health, and other social sectors that contributed to building economy-wide resilience.

Promoting gender equality remained at the forefront of ADB's work, with 97 percent of the Bank's operations in 2022 contributing to this agenda.

These operations included initiatives to improve women's access to quality jobs, foster women's entrepreneurship and build women's resilience to climate change.

The Annual Report 2022 provides details on how

ADB is evolving to better meet the changing and complex needs of its DMCs.

These include measures to unlock greater resources to support the region's development through an ongoing review of the bank's capital adequacy framework, as well as structural and nonstructural organizational reforms guided by a new operating model.

"I am confident that these reforms will ensure ADB delivers greater impact in the region, including by scaling up climate financing, mobilizing more private sector investment, and providing a wider range of development solutions in response to client needs," said the ADB President.

The ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty, he added.



PESHAWAR: Peoples purchasing sweets from shop.

\$68 billion withdrawn from Credit Suisse

ZURICH (AFP/APP): Tens of billions were withdrawn from Credit Suisse in the first three months of 2023, the bank's earnings report showed Monday, providing clues to the towering challenges ahead as UBS prepares an emergency takeover.

Switzerland's long-time second-largest bank saw 61.2 billion Swiss francs withdrawn in the first quarter alone, it said Monday in what is likely its final quarterly report before it is swallowed by its larger domestic rival, UBS.

The bank also reported deceptively bloated net profits for the quarter, after its high-risk debts were wiped out in the mega-merger deal, but warned of "substantial" losses to come.

Investors had been eagerly awaiting the results as they seek clues to the magnitude of the challenges facing UBS, Switzerland's largest bank after it was strangled last month by Swiss authorities into the shotgun marriage.

The results seemed to be greeted with some optimism. In early afternoon trading, Credit Suisse's shares rose nearly two percent to 0.81 Swiss francs a piece and UBS were up 1.6 percent at 18.35 francs a share, as the Swiss stock exchange's main SMI index rose 0.14 percent.

Tokyo shares edge up

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks closed higher on Monday, tracking modest gains on Wall Street last week ahead of corporate earnings season in Japan and the United States.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index added 0.10 percent, or 29.15 points, to end at 28,593.52, while the broader Topix index rose 0.11 percent, or 2.28 points, to 2,037.34.

"A sense of reassurance spread across the market after US shares advanced on Friday while the yen's rise halted," IwaiCosmo Securities said.

But the market also lacked incentives to go higher ahead of major company results coming up in Japan and stateside, and the first board meeting for newly appointed Bank of Japan governor Kazuo Ueda on Friday. Global investors will be focused this week on earnings from tech behemoths including Amazon, Microsoft, Google parent Alphabet and Facebook owner Meta.

Investors' worries over a broad recession also eased after fresh surveys of US purchasing managers indicated strong business activity, Daiwa Securities said.

"On the other hand, investors found reason to be cautious, given the uncertainty over the policy directions of the US and Japanese central banks as well as corporate earnings," Daiwa added.

The dollar stood at 134.17 yen, against 134.09 yen in New York on Friday.

The aviation sector benefited from strong tourism demand. ANA Holdings jumped 3.74 percent to 2,958 yen, while its rival Japan Airlines rose 1.95 percent to 2,612 yen. Among other major shares, Nintendo gained 1.29 percent to 5,591 yen, and SoftBank Group rose 1.16 percent to 5,054 yen. Toyota gave up earlier gains and ended down 0.22% at 1,798 yen.

Stocks seek direction before tech earnings results

LONDON (AFP/APP): European and Wall Street stock markets were largely flat Monday after some losses in Asia, as investors awaited earnings from US tech behemoths this week.

Bourses in New York, London, Frankfurt and Paris dipped in and out of negative territory throughout the day.

All eyes will be on results from the likes of Amazon, Facebook owner Meta, Google-parent Alphabet and Microsoft.

The companies' health and outlook reports could give clues regarding the Federal Reserve's next move regarding interest rates.

"The first quarter earnings reporting period will go into hyperdrive this week, which is partly why things are starting today at a slow pace," said Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare.

There is uncertainty on when the Fed will end its campaign of raising rates, let alone when it could begin to cut borrowing costs.

Inflation remains elevated, but there is an expectation the US and other economies could avoid falling into recession this year.

A survey Monday revealed that business confidence in Germany, Europe's biggest economy, edged up in April.

At the same time, analysts warned that optimism about falling energy prices

and China's reopening was being offset by worries about higher interest rates.

Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management noted that China's rebound following the end of its growth-sapping zero-Covid policies was likely to cool, relying now on higher income growth and improved consumer sentiment.

"So the easy part is done; now, the consumer will need to do the bulk of the heavy lifting," he said.

Earlier advances in markets slowed during the day as anxious investors waited for news.

"With such an action-packed week investors are best described as 'skittish', fretting that data will prompt a reversal in markets but at the same time hoping for just enough good news to give stocks a reason to move out of their recent narrow range," said Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at online trading platform IG.

One of the first to report this week was drinks giant Coca-Cola, which recorded higher quarterly profits but activity still below pre-pandemic levels.

"There's plenty of uncertainty out there in terms of the direction of inflation, both of the consumers reaction to it, and the input side," said Chief Executive James Quincey.

Also this week, investors will be watching important economic data from South Korea, Australia and the

eurozone, as well as Bank of Japan chief Kazuo Ueda's approach as he chairs his first key policy meeting.

In parliament on Monday, Ueda suggested the bank would stay the course in terms of monetary stimulus, adding that inflation was expected to cool below two percent in the second half of the fiscal year ending next March.

Elsewhere on the corporate front, Credit Suisse revealed that more than \$68 billion was withdrawn in the first three months of 2023, in what are likely its final quarterly results before it is swallowed by rival UBS.

The bank saw its net profit swell to \$13.9 billion -- up from a significant loss a year earlier -- after holders of high-risk Credit Suisse debt were wiped out in the emergency takeover deal.

The problems at Credit Suisse will continue to prompt fallout across the banking sector, said Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets UK.

"It's set to be a big week for the UK banking sector in the wake of the problems thrown up by the collapse of Credit Suisse and subsequent turmoil across the sector," he said.

"This morning investors got the first look below the bonnet so to speak and it wasn't a pretty sight.... not so much a bank run as a sprint."

Free Trade Zone Achievements, Future Development Forum held

BEIJING (APP): The "Free Trade Zone Ten-Year Achievements and Future Development Forum" hosted by the Free Trade Zone and Port Professional Committee of China International Trade Association was successfully held in Beijing.

TK Law, founder and CEO of TKing Technology Co., Ltd. delivered a speech at a sub-forum to explore the development potential of "Trade + Metaverse".

TKing Technology focuses on artificial intelligence algorithms and virtual reality research.

After years of deep cultivation, it has made significant technological breakthroughs and completed commercialization in the fields of ultra-realistic digital human generation algorithms, object 3D reconstruction, and 3D real-time virtual fitting.

After being appointed as a metaverse backbone node construction and operation entity for the "Spark-Chain Network" by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology of the People's Republic of China, the China Academy of

Information and Communications Technology King Technology using Blockchain-based Identifier (BID) and rights confirmation system and combined with industrial digital technology, created a new metaverse retail platform "Tking Meta".

Tking Meta integrates fashion, culture, community, NFT and entertainment, empowering the digitalization of countries and entities, building a Web3.0 metaverse ecosystem.

Along with the deployment of overseas super nodes of the "Spark-Chain

China sees surge in entry, exit trips in Q1

BEIJING (APP): Immigration authorities across China handled nearly 65.07 million exits and entries in the first quarter of the year, a year-on-year increase of 116.2 percent, the National Immigration Administration (NIA) said Monday.

Of the total, 32.35 million were made by Chinese mainland residents, 29.49 million by Chinese residents in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, and 3.23 million by foreign nationals.

As China started managing COVID-19 as a Class B infectious disease on Jan. 8, the NIA accordingly adjusted its policies and measures to meet the growing demand for entry and exit trips and ensure the smooth operation of the country's ports.

The NIA also stepped up the crackdown on criminal cases jeopardizing the country's national border and frontier management. In Q1, the administration handled 6,968 such cases, busting 510 criminal gangs and capturing over 10,000 suspects.

New company launches in Türkiye tick up in Q1

ANKARA (APP): The number of newly established companies in Türkiye rose by 8% year-on-year in the first quarter of this year, the country's top trade body said on Monday.

A total of 35,032 companies were set up in January-March, data from the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB) showed.

Among them were 3,878 foreign-partnered or foreign-funded companies, down from 4,336 last year.

During the three-month period, 4,195 firms went out of business, an annual hike of 32.8% from a year earlier. In March, 11,319 new companies were set up, marking a slight rise of 1.2%. Some 1,254 new foreign-partnered or foreign-funded companies were launched in the country, versus 1,742 in March 2022.

Europe opens down, Asian stocks mixed

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): European stocks opened down on Monday and Asian trade was mixed, with investors mostly treading water ahead of key data releases this week, including earnings results from US tech behemoths.

US equities futures were also down following a muted finish on Wall Street last week, with a wait-and-see mood taking hold of markets as they awaited results from the likes of Amazon, Microsoft, Google parent Alphabet and Facebook owner Meta.

"Mega tech earnings will be important this week for the rally in risk sentiment since the beginning of the year," Tapas Strickland of National Australia Bank said. Traders will also be looking for clues about the US Federal Reserve's next steps on interest rates.

Though swaps markets indicate that some traders think a peak and subsequent cuts are just around the corner, upcoming US data on growth, inflation and wages could see that forecast change, analysts say.

Meanwhile, moves by leveraged investors suggest they foresee more rate hikes to come.

"The thought that the Fed is going to aggressively cut into year end is misleading," Kim Strand, head of fundamental research and ESG integration for Franklin Templeton Investment Solutions, told Bloomberg Television.

"We believe what the Fed is saying: that it will hike and stay there until you see these areas of inflation coming down."

Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Seoul and Singapore were all down on Monday. London, Frankfurt and Paris also opened lower. Mumbai, Tokyo, Wellington, Taipei and Manila were all up.

Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a note that China's rebound following the end of its growth-sapping zero-Covid policies was likely to cool, relying now on higher income growth and improved consumer sentiment.

"So the easy part is done; now, the consumer

will need to do the bulk of the heavy lifting," he said.

Also this week, investors will be watching important economic data from South Korea, Australia and the eurozone, as well as Bank of Japan chief Kazuo Ueda's approach as he chairs his first key policy meeting.

Responding to questions in parliament on Monday, Ueda suggested the bank would stay the course in terms of monetary stimulus, adding that inflation was expected to cool below two percent in the second half of the fiscal year ending next March.

Credit Suisse, meanwhile, revealed on Monday that more than \$68 billion was withdrawn in the first three months of 2023, in what are likely its final quarterly results before it is swallowed by rival UBS.

At the same time, the bank saw its net profit swell to \$13.9 billion, up from a significant loss a year earlier, after holders of high-risk Credit Suisse debt were wiped out in the emergency takeover deal.

Saudis constitute 82.2% of workforce activities

RIYADH (Agencies): Reflecting the success of localization efforts, Saudis constituted 82.2 percent of the number of workers in the financial and insurance sectors in 2022.

Saudi citizens who are working in financial and insurance activities reached 75,001, while foreigners totaled only 16,290 or 17.8 percent, bringing the total number of workers to 91,291 last year.

Male workers made up 93 percent of the workforce in financial and insurance activities -- reaching 71,648 workers in 2022, while the number of females working in these activities hit 19,643, according to Al-Eqtisadiyah.

Saudi females made up the majority in these jobs, constituting 18,983 workers, whereas the remaining 660 females were foreigners. With 71,387 workers, the Riyadh region account-

ed for 78.2 percent of all Saudi workers in these sectors.

Makkah ranked second with 11,487 workers and Al-Sharqiyah region came in third with 7,202 workers.

In April, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development implemented the initial stage of localizing 30 percent of consultancy professions and businesses across the Kingdom.

In October last year, HRSD minister Ahmad bin Sulaiman Al-Rajhi said these decisions have contributed to raising the number of Saudi workers in the private sector to over 2.12 million.

Al-Rajhi added that private sector establishments' compliance rate with the labor system and its regulations reached 98 percent during 2022.

Additionally, the moves by the ministry have con-

tributed to reducing the unemployment rate of Saudi citizens to 9.7 percent, as well as increasing women's economic participation rate to 35.6 percent.

Across the board, authorities and ministries are also implementing Saudization initiatives.

This aligns with the Saudi Vision 2030 goal to reduce unemployment rates by increasing employment opportunities in the Kingdom.

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IMF urged to release tranche for Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Iftikhar Ali Malik on Monday urged the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to immediately release its tranche for Pakistan in the wake of billions of dollars guarantee by United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists and traders led by Mian Ejaz Ahmad Arain, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Falcon International here today he said, "Pakistan's worsening economic situation amid its continuing political turmoil is critical and calls for bold and timely action by policymakers."

He said, "The economic

crisis has adversely affected its human development indicators, including poverty, education, health, gender equality, and environmental sustainability."

He said, "The high rate of inflation, a weakening currency, and dangerously low foreign exchange reserves, along with the high cost of doing business, have intensified the grim economic outlook."

He said the economic crisis could deepen if IMF bailout is delayed further as foreign exchange reserves were at a historical low.

Ifthikhar Ali Malik said, "The current account deficit is expected to soar further as import restrictions on some of the essential items have been lifted

after many months. "Food and fuel prices are soaring with the weekly inflation outlook standing at 45.4 percent while the currency depreciates."

He said, "Pakistan's economy is in dire straits and still awaiting a much-needed USD 1.1 billion tranche of funding from the Washington-based International Monetary Fund (IMF) despite fulfillment of all required obligations."

He said, "In the prevailing scenario, IMF must release the bail-out package immediately without further loss of time to help strengthen Pakistan's national economy and steer the country out of a monetary quagmire."

China's shipbuilding sector continues to lead

BEIJING (APP): China's shipbuilding industry continued to lead globally in the first quarter of 2023, boasting the biggest international market share in terms of output, as well as new and holding orders, official data showed Monday.

The country's shipbuilding output hit 9.17 million deadweight tonnes (dwt) during the period, accounting for 43.5 percent of the world's total, data from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology showed.

New orders, another major indicator of the ship-

building industry, rose 53 percent year on year to 15.18 million dwt, with a global market share of 62.9 percent.

The sector's holding orders totaled 114.52 million dwt at the end of March, expanding 15.6 percent year on year. The volume represented 50.8 percent of the global market share.

Meanwhile, sales of high-end passenger vehicles produced in China continued to expand rapidly in March, data from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers shows.

During the period, some 355,000 domestically produced high-end passenger cars were sold in China, up 16.8 percent month on month, according to the association.

The figure soared 31.3 percent from the same period in 2022, 23.1 percentage points higher than the growth of all passenger vehicles, the association said.

A total of 943,000 domestically produced high-end passenger vehicles were sold in China during the first quarter of this year, up 2.4 percent year on year, the data also reveals.

**In brief****Gate money of match to be donated**

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The gate money of the fifth match of the T20 cricket series between Pakistan and New Zealand will be donated to the victims of the February 6 twin earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, according to Pakistan's cricket governing body. The match, final of a five-match series, will be played in the garrison city of Rawalpindi on Monday. The green caps are leading the series by 2-1 as the fourth fixture played in Rawalpindi was called off due to massive rain accompanied by a hail-storm last week. "The border region of Turkey and Syria was rocked by one of the deadliest earthquakes on February 6 that claimed thousands of lives and destroyed essential infrastructure, including health-care facilities," said a statement by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). In this regard, it added, the PCB will play a part in raising donations for millions of people affected on either side of the border. Pakistan will wear commemorative caps to convey Islamabad'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," the statement added.

Pliskova out of Madrid Open

MADRID (Agencies): Karolina Pliskova has withdrawn from the Madrid Open due to a knee injury, but the former world No. 1 said she hopes to recover in time for next month's event in Rome ahead of the French Open. Pliskova, 15th in the world rankings, tweeted that she suffered the injury during her quarterfinal loss to Iga Swiatek at the Stuttgart Open last week. The Italian Open runs from May 9-20 before Roland Garros, the second Grand Slam of the year, begins May 28. Pliskova's best result at the clay-court major came in 2017 when she reached the semifinals.

Warriors and Knicks win

NEW YORK (Agencies): Defending champions the Golden State Warriors held off a fourth-quarter comeback from the Sacramento Kings to win a thriller in the NBA play-offs. The third-seeded Kings trailed 102-92 after three quarters, but were handed momentum by a Stephen Curry error. Leading by five, with 45 seconds left, Curry called a timeout with none left, and had to hand over possession. The Kings reduced the score to 126-125 but Harrison Barnes missed a buzzer-beating three-pointer chance to win it. That allowed the sixth-seeded Warriors to tie the series at 2-2. Two-time NBA most valuable player Curry ended the game with 32 points while De'Aaron Fox top-scored for Sacramento with 37. Game five is in Sacramento on Wednesday evening. Knicks one win away from semi-finals Jalen Brunson scored 29 points as the New York Knicks beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 102-93 at Madison Square Garden to open up a 3-1 series lead. The Knicks are now only one win away from advancing past the first round of the Eastern Conference play-offs for the first time since 2013. Brunson was among four Knicks players to score double figures along with RH Barrett (26 points), Josh Hart (19) and Mitchell Robinson, who had 12 points and 11 rebounds.

PCB's interim management committee gets extension

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): The interim management committee currently running the PCB has been granted an extension of two months by the prime minister of Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif, who is also the patron of the cricket board. The length of the extension is more than had been expected.

Over the weekend, ESPNcricinfo had reported that the Inter-provincial coordination (IPC) ministry, which acts as a conduit between the board and government, had recommended that an extension of between two to a maximum of four weeks be considered for the management committee that runs the PCB's daily affairs. They had also asked the prime minister to name two nominees to the PCB board, one of whom would be expected to become chairman. There was no word on the nominees in the notification issued by the IPC's office.

That means the current PCB set-up, led by Najam Sethi, has been given till June 21 this year to implement the various changes they were targeting when they took over from the Ramiz Raja-led board in December last year. Sethi came in leading a 14-member management committee with a brief to replace the

board's 2019 constitution with the one that was in place in 2014. The biggest change that will entail is the return of the regional and services department set-up in domestic cricket. Once again that will mean a total upending of Pakistan's domestic cricket structure, which had been operating for the last three seasons on a leaner six-team model of provincial teams. That model was based on the Australian Shield structure, at the behest of then prime minister - and former captain - Imran Khan.

The management committee is also responsible for forming a board of governors and electing a chairman, with

Sethi himself in the fray, according to the 2014 constitution. That process will begin with the election commissioner convening a special meeting with member boards, according to the 2014 constitution. The PCB's board will comprise ten members: four regional representatives (top-four teams from the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy), four representatives of services organisations (top-four department teams), and the two members nominated by the patron/prime minister. The federal secretary of the IPC ministry (or any other officer nominated by them) shall be an ex-officio, non-voting 11th member.

While speaking on his YouTube channel Caught Behind, Latif praised Khan's deep understanding of the game of cricket, highlighting that the former captain has an astute eye for talent and has made accurate predictions about many players in the past.

According to Latif, Khan's cricketing acumen is unparalleled in the world, which makes his statement about the Pakistan captain significant. "[Imran] Khan sahab has given a very strong statement. There is no match to his cricketing acumen in the whole world. He made predictions about many players in the past and most of them came true. One or two mistakes can happen. But he keeps a keen eye on cricket, so his statement was timely," said Latif.

In a recent interview, Khan lauded Babar's batting potential, stating that he has the ability to surpass his contemporaries. "Our captain [Babar Azam] is an outstanding batsman. I have seen a batsman of such quality after a very long time. I have analysed him in every way, because I analyse batsman through a bowler's lens. His technique, talent and temperament are all brilliant. It is very rare to find all three of these things in one batsman, but he has them all. He has the potential to go ahead of everyone," Khan had said.

Earlier this month, Chairman of the PCB Management Committee, Najam Sethi, had announced Babar as captain only for the New Zealand series. He offered conditional backing to Babar and said that Pakistan captain will not be changed as long as the team keeps winning, and the final decision will be made in consultation with Mickey Arthur.

Rashid lauds Imran strong, timely statement on Babar Azam

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Rashid Latif on Sunday appreciated Imran Khan's strong and timely statement about Babar, the current captain of the Pakistan national cricket team.

While speaking on his YouTube channel Caught Behind, Latif praised Khan's deep understanding of the game of cricket, highlighting that the former captain has an astute eye for talent and has made accurate predictions about many players in the past.

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PCB decides to retain Babar Azam as captain till world cup

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has decided to retain Babar Azam as the captain until this year's World Cup played in India in October-November.

According to sources, the PCB took a decision in this regard after consultation with newly appointed team director Mickey Arthur.

They said that Arthur met PCB management committee chairman Najam Sethi, chief selector Haroon Rashid in the presence of Babar and expressed the confidence

that the "team is fully capable of winning the World Cup," with right guidance.

It is reported that Sethi has given him full authority to Arthur and has assured compliance with his suggestions.

Meanwhile, an official announcement to name Babar the captain in all three formats until the World Cup will be made soon.

It may be noted that Arthur has been entrusted with the task of designing, formulating and overseeing strategies for the Pakistan men's team.

Arthur, 54, will also be a part of the coaching staff for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023, away tour to Australia and home series against the West Indies. He will also be present with the side for Pakistan's matches against India in the ACC Asia Cup.

It may be recalled that during his previous assignment with Pakistan team from 2016 to 2019, he coached the Green Shirts to No. 1 position in Tests and T20Is and helped the side to win the ICC Champions Trophy 2017.

Tendulkar, Lara honored with gates at SCG

SYDNEY (Agencies): Sachin Tendulkar and Brian Lara have been honored with gates at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

All visiting cricket teams will enter the playing arena through the Lara-Tendulkar gates in future at the iconic Australian stadium, Cricket Australia announced Monday. Tendulkar had an average of 157 in the five test matches he played at the SCG and said it's his favorite ground outside of India.

"I have had some great memories at the SCG right from my first tour of Australia in 1991-92," Tendulkar said in a statement. "It is a great honor to have the gates ... named after me and my good friend Brian."

Lara's 277 at the SCG in 1993, his fifth test, was the first of his 34 test centuries

for the West Indies. Lara's average of 54.85 in four tests at the SCG was also above his career average of 52.88 in 131 test matches.

The gates were unveiled on April 24 to mark Tendulkar's 50th birthday.

"This is a fitting and timely gesture by the SCG to recognize Sachin and Brian Lara as two legends of the international game with exceptional records at the SCG," Cricket Australia chief executive Nick Hockley said.

"Their feats will no doubt be an inspiration to not only visiting international teams, but all players fortunate enough to walk onto the hallowed turf of the Sydney Cricket Ground."

Three Australian cricket greats have long been honored with entrances named for them at the SCG. The Australian cricket team

enters the field of play via the Don Bradman Gates, while the Arthur Morris and Alan Davidson gates are at the entrance to the stadium. The SCG is the traditional venue for Australia's first test match of the year.

Tendulkar is a record-setting cricketer who played 200 tests for India, scoring 15,921 runs at a career average of 53.78. Three of his 51 test centuries were posted at the SCG. Lara played 131 test matches for West Indies and his 400 not out against England in 2004 remains the highest individual score ever in a test innings.

"I'm deeply honored to be recognized at the Sydney Cricket Ground, as I'm sure Sachin is," Lara said in a statement. "The ground holds many special memories for me and my family."

Top Indian wrestlers demand arrest of ex-federation chief

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Top Indian wrestlers, including Olympians and Commonwealth Games champions, were on the streets of New Delhi on Monday to demand the arrest of the sport's former federation chief over allegations of sexual harassment and intimidation.

The wrestlers, both men and women, mounted protests in January demanding an investigation into then Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. The Indian Olympic Association formed a panel to investigate, but the athletes say there has been insufficient action since then.

"Some people manipulated our minds and damaged our protest," Olympic bronze medalist Sakshi Malik told reporters at the protest on Monday.

"Now we will not repeat that. Now we appeal to all the sportspersons, political

parties and elders of the wrestling world join us."

The athletes, including an underage wrestler, filed a complaint with police on Friday demanding a case of sexual assault be registered against Singh and their allegations properly investigated. Police have not registered a case against Singh so far.

"If it goes on like this it obviously breaks the athletes' spirit," Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist Bajrang Punia, who is male, told AFP at the protest. Both Malik and Punia said the protest would continue until Singh, an MP for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, was arrested.

He has denied the allegations, saying they were a conspiracy to replace him in the legislature. Singh "is a powerful parliamentarian of the ruling party", said Punia. "The athletes are fearful for their lives but despite that they have

shown courage and still no action is being taken. This is very saddening."

Broadcaster NDTV reported that the government was to disband the WFI and hand its affairs to a new panel to hold board elections, where Singh would not be allowed to stand. Last year India's national cycling team coach was sacked following sexual harassment charges.

India is a deeply hierarchical society, and some wrestlers say they were earlier intimidated into not coming forward because of their humble origins.

India's #MeToo movement gathered momentum in 2018 after a Bollywood actress accused a senior actor of sexual harassment.

Soon after, other women came forward with multiple allegations, including against a former government minister, but activists say there has been little fundamental change.

Chevron Championship Lilia Vu wins first major after play-off success

THE WOODLANDS (Agencies): American Lilia Vu beat compatriot Angel Yin in a play-off for her first major title at the Chevron Championship.

Vu started the day four shots back but moved up the leaderboard with five birdies - including two on 17 and 18 and one bogey for a 10-under total.

Yin had victory in her grasp but bogeyed 16 and 17 before ensuring a play-off with a birdie at the last.

But her second play-off shot hit the water and Vu holed a long birdie putt for the win at Carlton Woods in Texas.

"Everything happens for a reason, all the bad things," said Vu, 25, who had considered quitting the sport a few years ago.

"The past two days, I was very angry. I didn't feel like myself. I just felt like I was getting angry



over every single little thing, and that's usually not how I roll."

Vu said she thought of her grandfather, who left his native Vietnam with his wife and children and died early on during the Covid-19 pandemic, to keep herself going.

"Today, I was getting really upset on the course, and I just had to remind myself, 'Grandpa is with you and he'd be really disappointed if you were getting upset like this and that you didn't get your

act together,'" she added.

It was bitter disappointment for Yin, who started the day at the top of the leaderboard with compatriot Allisen Corpuz, who finished on seven-under after a 74 and had the outright lead through 13.

"Just wasn't hitting it very good. Honestly, I held it together, and then 16 and 17 really just was like bad club decision," said Yin.

"Obviously in the play-off hole, I just didn't hit a good shot. It just kind of spoke a lot about today."

American Nelly Korda holed an eagle putt on 18 to finish third, one shot back, after missing the tournament a year ago following surgery for a blood clot in her arm. Her performance will see her move back to the top of the world rankings.

Barcelona ends Atletico's winning run, moves closer to title

MADRID (Agencies): In a slump and facing the hottest team in Spain, Barcelona came through with an important win for its title hopes and quelled any fears of a late collapse.

Barcelona ended a three-game winless streak — and Atletico Madrid's 13-game unbeaten run — with a hard-fought 1-0 win on Sunday to stay on track for its first Spanish league title in four years. The home win restored the team's comfortable 11-point lead over Real Madrid with eight rounds remaining.

The victory also halted a six-game winning streak by Atletico, which lost ground to Madrid in the fight for second place. Madrid, which is focused on the Champions League and the Copa del Rey final, beat Celta Vigo 2-0 at home on Saturday.

Ferran Torres scored a 44th-minute winner at Camp Nou with a well-placed low shot from just inside the area to end Barcelona's recent problems entering the final stretch. It hadn't scored in three straight games after being humiliated at home by Madrid 4-0 in the Copa del Rey semifinals and held to scoreless draws against



modest league opponents in Girona and Getafe.

"We had to win no matter what, it was an important match to keep us on track to winning the league," Torres said. "It was difficult, against a team that was unbeaten in 13 matches and that was one of the hottest teams this season." It was the 23rd clean sheet in the league for Barcelona, which last won the league title in 2019. It has conceded only nine goals in 30 league matches this season.

Third-place Atletico, which has the second-best defense with 22 goals conceded, trails Madrid by five points. It was the third straight win by Barcelona over Diego Simeone's team, whose last win against the Catalan club was in 2021. Atletico is

winless at Camp Nou in 17 consecutive league matches. Its last league loss this season had been at Barcelona in January.

"They deserved the victory because they were more efficient," Simeone said. "We had our chances but didn't take advantage of them." Atletico, the 2021 champion, threatened first with a shot by Antoine Griezmann that hit the crossbar three minutes into the match.

Atletico struggled early in the season, quickly falling out of contention for the league title and finishing its Champions League group in last place, but it had been the hottest team in Spain in 2023. Barcelona coach Xavi had the return of Pedri and Frenkie de Jong after they missed several matches

because of injuries. SEVILLA'S MOMENTUM

Youssef En-Nesyri scored a winner four minutes into stoppage time as Sevilla kept its momentum with a 2-1 win over Villarreal at home. It was the third victory in a row for Sevilla, which eliminated Manchester United in the Europa League midweek. It moved to 12th. Villarreal stayed sixth after its second straight loss and missed a chance to move closer to the Champions League places.

RELIEF FOR VALENCIA

Valencia took a step forward in its fight against relegation with a 2-0 win at last-place Elche. The result ended Valencia's 10-match winless streak in away matches in the league.

It had lost eight in a row on the road. Valencia stayed in 18th place with the same points as 17th-place Almeria, the first team outside the relegation zone. Elche is 17 points from safety.

GETAFE IN DANGER

South Korean midfielder Lee Kang-in scored a pair of second-half goals as Mallorca came from behind to beat relegation-threatened Getafe 3-1 at home.



Paul Stirling is helped off the field

74 came off 133 balls with six fours and three sixes.

Balbirnie, meanwhile, raced to his third half-century off just 43 balls with 10 boundaries but was sedate after the milestone as he built the crucial partnership with Stirling.

Balbirnie missed out on the chance to become only the third Irishman to score a Test century, caught after a wild paddle sweep off Kusal Mendis for 95, beating his previous best of 82.

Tucker was then caught bat-pad by Mendis off Jayasuriya but the appeal was turned down and skipper Dimuth Karunaratne chose not to review.

This is now Ireland's second-highest total in Test cricket behind the 339 all out against Pakistan in 2018.

Ireland are yet to win a game in the five-day format since obtaining Test status in 2017, losing all five of their outings so far including to Bangladesh in early April.



In brief

Dry weather today

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mainly dry weather is expected in most parts of the country, while hot in central and southern parts. According to Met Office, partly cloudy weather is expected in Sindh and Balochistan with chances of rain in Turbat and Gwadar. However, according to the synoptic situation, continental air is prevailing over most parts of the country. During the past 24 hours, the weather remained dry in other parts of the country, while hot in central and southern parts. Meanwhile, today's recorded highest maximum temperature (°C): Lasbella, Mithi and Padidan 41°C.

Govt takes initiatives to enroll children

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The government has taken several initiatives in the education sector over the last one year with focus on modern modes of education to enroll out of school children. 'Schools on Wheel' initiative was launched with the aim to provide education to the children of rural areas at their doorsteps. The government is aiming to widen its scope to all the federating units, according to a Radio Pakistan's report. Most recently, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif launched Teleschool Pakistan App, Google for Education and Digital Continuous Professional Development initiative to provide online education to students from grade 1 to 12. The government has also announced to establish a network of Danish schools in the far flung areas of Balochistan in order to provide quality education to the students there.

FIA arrests six members

ISLAMABAD (NNI): The cyber-crime branch of the Federal Investigation Agency in a raid arrested six members of a fraud gang. The accused were depriving citizens of their finances by introducing themselves as bank employees to get access to their personal data. "They transferred Rs. 19,58,500 from the bank account of the complainant," FIA Rawalpindi spokesperson said. "Arrested accused have been named as Farooq, Umar Usman, Noman, Irfan, Aslam and Adnan," FIA stated. "They were using modern technology to call their victims," FIA said. "The FIA has recovered seven mobile phones from the accused and a case has been registered under the PECA Act," spokesperson added. The FIA Anti-Human Smugglers and Trafficking Circle (AHTC) had arrested 1263 human traffickers, smugglers and agents during the year 2022. According to a report shared by FIA, around 2446 cases against human traffickers were registered in the year 2022 while FIA immigration staff processed 16.7 million passengers on departure and arrival check posts during the period.

14 bids to smuggle 8220 flour bags foiled

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Food Department and district police have foiled 14 bids to smuggle 8220 bags of wheat flour, fine flour and granulated wheat besides seizing 120 tonnes of flour during the last three days. According to a district administration spokesman, the relevant authorities of the food department along with Potohar Division police conducted raids and rounded up 14 drivers Mumtaz, Afzal, Sohaib, Roshan Muhammad, Nadeem, Gulam Nabi, Usman, Ismail, Abdul Qadir, Aman Shah, Ismail ul Haq, Waqas, Sadaqat and Zahid Khan on recovery of 8220 flour, fine flour (maida), granulated wheat (Suji) and 120 tonnes flour.



ISLAMABAD: Children eager to watch the stuffed wild mountain animals during their visit to Pakistan Museum of Natural History on the 3rd day of Eid ul Fitr festival.

Efforts afoot to provide maximum facilities to pilgrims: Talha

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood on Monday said despite difficulties, efforts were afoot to provide maximum facilities to pilgrims during Hajj 2023. Talking to the media in Makkah, the minister said due to time constraints, he had made an emergency visit to Saudi Arabia in order to give a final shape to the Hajj arrangements for pilgrims. He said he was holding meetings with quarters concerned for the provision of the best possible facilities to the Pakistan pilgrims in Mna, Arafat and Muzdalifah.

He stressed the importance of providing adequate arrangements for pilgrims' residence, food, transport, and medical needs during their holy journey in Makkah and Madina.

Senator Talha Mahmood said the proposal of hiring services of Pakistani expatriates in Saudi Arabia who were acquainted with the local rules and regulations, areas and language were under consideration. He believed that this step would enable the pilgrims to be entertained in a more appropriate manner and would help reduce the overall expenses, stating that bringing Moavineen-e-Hujjaj from Pakistan would be a costly decision.

He said inflation and the depreciation of the Pakistan rupee were the main factors affecting the overall cost of Hajj operation this year adding that he would bring

all the matters and his efforts to the notice of the federal cabinet and media on his return to Pakistan.

Later, Senator Talha travelled to Madina where he paid homage at the mausoleum of the Holy Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him.

He also offered Nawafil in Riaz-ul-Jannah, Masjid-e-Nabvi and prayed for the peace, progress and prosperity of Pakistan.

The government's efforts to ensure maximum facilities for pilgrims during Hajj 2023 demonstrate its commitment to the welfare of Pakistani citizens. The hiring of Pakistani expatriates to assist with the arrangements would be a step to enable the pilgrims to have a comfortable and fulfilling holy journey.

Three held, huge amount of drugs recovered

Pak students talk with Taikonauts

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistani students expressed deep interest in getting space science knowledge from Chinese Taikonauts in an online interaction organized by the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, Gwadar Pro reported.

Dozens of Pakistani school students, the majority of them girls, attended an online event 'Talk with Taikonauts of Shenzhou-15', co-hosted by the Embassy. "Talk with Taikonauts of Shenzhou-15" event was significant for broadening horizons for the youth and lighting up their dreams about exploring the mysterious and diverse universe.

Ms. Pang Chunxue, Charge d'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy said, Pakistan and China are collaborating in a number of fields and this time it is about space science. She said youths are young ambassadors of China-Pakistan friendship and hope of the two countries, the iron-clad relationship between China and Pakistan should be passed from generation to generation. A student of Beachonhouse School Islamabad said it was a great opportunity for her to witness this historic event where she listened to the astronauts talking to students from the space center.

She said she is encouraged to become an astronaut in the future.

Another student of Islamabad Model College, who got an opportunity of asking a question to Chinese Taikonaut said, the Taikonaut responded to her question about how they breathe in space and that a specific human suitable environment is built for astronauts in space where they can breathe. "For me, it's not less than a miracle and a lifetime opportunity to speak to the astronaut based in the space center," said the student.

This year is the tenth anniversary of BRI and CPEC. Science and Technology cooperation is an important part of it, which will provide strong support to the high-quality and sustainable development of CPEC. Prof. Dr. Shahid Mahmood Baig, Chairman of Pakistan Science Foundation said Pakistan and China's collaboration in space science has made remarkable gains. He said recently Pakistani seeds sent into space in collaboration with the Chinese space mission provide an example.

"It's a big jump for Pakistan with the help of China," he said. He said such events will pave the way for the two countries to further enhance cooperation in space science and technology.

Chinese staff share joys of Eid festival with Pakistani colleagues at CPEC projects

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Grooving to festive Pakistani music on Eid night after enjoying a feast thrown by Chinese colleagues, Junaid Ali thought that despite being hundreds of miles away from home, he celebrated the festival to its fullest.

Working at the Matiari station of the Matiari-Lahore transmission line under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Ali had to stay at the station to ensure stable operation of the grid where his Chinese colleagues tried their best to make his and other locals' Eid the most memorable one in their lives. "They celebrated the Eid with us, greeted all of us individually for the Eid, and we got a good bonus for the festival," Ali said, adding that "the best part of the day was the pre-dinner speeches where both Chinese and Pakistanis spoke their heart out about the friendship, brotherhood, and unity of the people of two countries in short speeches."

Launched in 2013, the CPEC is a corridor linking Pakistan's Gwadar port with Kashgar in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, which highlights energy, transport and industrial cooperation. The project of 878 km-long power transmission line was invested in, constructed, and run by the State Grid Corporation of China, and started its commercial operation in September of 2021. The project will transport

power from the new generating units located in the south of the country, including Thar coal-based projects.

The project has a large number of Chinese and local employees who not only work together to serve the people of Pakistan but also share each other's joys and sorrows together.

"We celebrate the Spring Festival with Chinese colleagues, and they celebrate Eid with us; we savor their noodles and dumplings, and they relish our biryani (spicy rice cooked with meat), we are fond of table tennis, and they try to learn and play cricket with us ... CPEC has developed strong cultural ties between us, and today's Eid celebration is an illustration of it," Ali told Xinhua news agency. The big family of the Thar Coal Block-II Coal Electricity Integration project was jubilant on Eid night after celebrating the festival together in the remote desert located in Pakistan's south Sindh province. The project, which was built by China Machinery Engineering Corporation, has a major power plant under CPEC in Pakistan to help the country meet its electricity demands by using locally available coal and started its commercial operation in October of 2022.

"CPEC has brought us closer in a way that we learn from each other and appreciate each other's customs and traditions. Today's Eid celebrations serve as a practical example of the positive outcomes of this cultural exchange, which has fostered everlasting

friendship between our nations," Syed Farrukh Shah, a deputy manager of the health, safety and environment department of the project, told the Chinese news agency. He said that their Eid day started with Chinese colleagues presenting sweets to Pakistanis, greeting them the Eid, and the highlight of the day was the dinner on the open lawn under the stars of the peaceful Eid night sky. "The tranquil night, the delicious food, and the joyous atmosphere all around filled my heart with gratitude, and it was so heart-warming to see Chinese colleagues join in the festivities with such enthusiasm," he said. Pakistani experts who have been observing the strengthening of people-to-people relations over the years are of the view that cultural festivals like Eid make the bond stronger and give an opportunity to deepen the understanding of each other's culture and customs.

In a conversation with Xinhua, Raja Tahir Qayyum, currently working in the operations department of CPEC's Karot Hydropower project, and has over 11 years of experience working with different Chinese companies, said that celebrating festivals together is just like cementing the bond. "The beauty of CPEC is that through it not only Pakistan's road and infrastructure was upgraded, but the bond between the two nations also got stronger due to increased cultural exchanges," Qayyum said.

Dialogue only way to steer country out of crises: Mushahid

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed on Sunday said only political dialogue can steer the country out of present crises.

Mushahid Hussain Syed prayed for the success of efforts being made by PM Shehbaz Sharif, JI Chief Sirajul Haq and FM Bilawal Bhutto for consensus on the election. "The only way to get Pakistan out of the quagmire is through dialogue."

The PML-N senator said he has always been a supporter of consultation and dialogue between political leadership and parties? Mushahid Hussain Syed further said he was the

first who highlighted the need for a political dialogue to defuse tension in the Senate? "If we can talk to Modi, the terrorists, why can't we talk to the opposition, he asked."

Earlier, JI chief Sirajul Haq held meetings with PTI Chairman Imran Khan and Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif at their residences in Lahore with an agenda to bring the government and opposition closer and end the ongoing political crisis. Sirajul Haq along with a three-member delegation held separate meetings with PM Shehbaz Sharif and Imran Khan and urged both parties to sit on the negotiation table.

Minister urges masses to take action for protection of our planet

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman has urged the masses to take action to protect our planet and work towards a more sustainable future. In a series of tweets, the federal minister wished Eid greetings to the nation and shared her thoughts on World Earth Day which was celebrated across the globe under the theme 'Invest in Our Planet'.

Senator Rehman wrote, "I wish my countrymen a very happy Eid. Today is not one but two most important days, along with Eid, Earth Day is

also being celebrated all over the world including Pakistan; aiming to assess and spread public awareness of the environmental threats facing our earth."

She added that climate change was a global crisis that was directly affecting our planet and lives. "Our Earth is facing unprecedented environmental challenges, from climate change to existential threats. Indiscriminate use of land resources is causing pollution and other environmental problems," Sherry Rehman said.

The minister underlined that the world would have to prioritize investing in

renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, elimination of plastic, climate-friendly lifestyles and forests to protect the earth.

"This will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, preserve biodiversity and reduce other environmental impacts. Remember we will breathe only when our earth breathes."

Let's work together for a green and healthy earth and Pakistan," Sherry Rehman said. Sherry Rehman said this will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions, preserve biodiversity and reduce other environmental impacts.

CDA launches crackdown on illegal constructions and encroachments

ISLAMABAD (APP): Capital Development Authority (CDA) Enforcement Wing and Land Directorate conducted an anti-encroachment operation in Sector C-16 here to remove illegal constructions, encroachments, and unauthorized Afghan settlements.

The operation aimed to preserve the city's aesthetic appeal and restore the sector's cleanliness. Its successful execution sent a strong message to those who engage in illegal activities.

CDA Chairman Captain Noor Ul Amin Mengal directed the operation in sector C-16, which was carried out with the assistance of the district administration, Islamabad police officials, and CDA staff.

The objective of the operation was to

eliminate illegal constructions, encroachments and unauthorized Afghan settlements in the area.

In addition, a joint team was established to survey various areas in Islamabad during Eid ul-Fitr holidays to identify and mark any encroachments or illegal constructions.

The team's actions would allow for the timely removal of any identified illegal constructions. The CDA Chairman emphasized that any form of encroachment or illegal construction would not be tolerated at any cost, and the land mafia would be dealt with constitutionally. Over the past several months, the CDA had launched several operations against the encroachment mafia and confiscated land worth billions of rupees.

Commissioner visits Murree to review arrangements made to facilitate tourists

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chhatta accompanied by Regional Police Officer, Rawalpindi Region Syed Khurram Ali Shah and Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Hassan Waqar Cheema on Monday visited Murree and reviewed all the arrangements made to facilitate tourists.

The Commissioner visited the facilitation centers, control room, hospital during the visit and reviewed cleanliness arrangements made by Rawalpindi Waste Management Company, traffic arrangements finalized by City Traffic Police

and security arrangements.

The Commissioner appreciated the performance of the administration and expressed satisfaction over the arrangements made by Traffic Police, Rescue-1122, Tourism and Health departments, Civil Defence and other departments concerned to facilitate the tourists.

He said, negligence on part of the officials concerned would not be tolerated. He said that all resources should be utilized for the convenience of tourists. He added that the police and the administration should fully be prepared to deal with any situation.

He said that best arrangements were made for the tourists coming to Murree.

The RPO said that police had provided best security and guidance to the citizens coming to Murree on the occasion of Eid ul Fitr.

He said that the Murree Tourism Police contingent had been working day and night to help, guide and protect the tourists.

He also commended the traffic wardens and tourism police personnel on duty in Murree and said that along with maintaining law and order, the convenience and guidance of tourists should be given priority.

3 held, huge amount of drugs recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in eight different operations, arrested three accused including an Afghan national and recovered over 207 kg of drugs, and 530 intoxicated tablets, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday.

He said in an operation at Islamabad International Airport, ANF and ASF recovered 80 grams of Ice drug and four grams of marijuana from the possession of a Brazil-bound passenger, a resident of Kabul, Afghanistan, going on flight no QR-615.

In another operation conducted at a private courier company office in

Islamabad New Airport Society, 596 grams heroin was recovered from a parcel booked for Nottingham, England.

In the third operation at Multan Airport, 530 intoxicated tablets were recovered from the possession of a Dubai-bound passenger, a resident of Muzaffargarh.

The spokesman said that in the fourth operation, suspicious material absorbed in books was recovered from a parcel booked for Australia at a private courier company office on Karachi Mehran Road. The total weight of the parcel was 12.350 kg, he added.

In an operation near Jamrud Road Takhta Baig

Checkpoint, 24 kg of marijuana was recovered from the possession of an accused resident of Khyber while in another operation near Panjgur Turbat Highway, 80 kg of marijuana was recovered from bushes.

Around 15 kg of crystal heroin concealed in a fuel tank was recovered from an oil tanker intercepted in Turbat, he added.

In the eighth operation, conducted near Gwadar Jiwani, 75 kg of marijuana was seized from an abandoned house.

He said that separate cases had been registered against the accused while further investigations were in process.

9,000 refugees deported

KABUL (Agencies): Human Rights Watch in Türkiye have says that 9,000 Afghan refugees have been deported from the country so far. The process of deporting refugees, including Afghan refugees, from Türkiye has intensified on the eve of the country's presidential elections. The head of the Association for the Support of Afghan Refugees in Turkey, Ali Hekmat said that this country has deported about 29,000 refugees from January 1 to the first week of April.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Shawaal 04, 1444 — Tuesday, April 25, 2023

5 injured in road accident1

GHOR (Agencies): In a road accident five people, including three children, were injured in Ghor province. The incident took place on Sunday, in the central city of Firozkoh, when two cars collided and ran over pedestrians, said local officials of Ghor. five people, including three children, were injured in this incident, a Traffic source told Bakhtar News Agency. Medics at Ghor Central Hospital reported that the health condition of one of the injured was alarming.

‘Efforts underway to protect 120 Afghan citizens trapped’



KABUL (Khaama Press): The acting Foreign Minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, revealed in a recent public address that at least 120 Afghanistan citizens are trapped in the Sudan conflict. At a meeting in the Khost province, Muttaqi announced the authorities' desire to protect and assist

these citizens trapped in the war-torn region of Sudan. As the fighting between the two opposing groups of the Sudanese military forces grew worse in Khartoum, numerous countries decided to expel their people and diplomatic personnel. The conflict in Sudan, involving the Sudanese

army and the "Rapid Forces," began on April 15 in the country's capital city of Khartoum and has since expanded to other regions. More than 400 people have died as a result of the increasing violence, according to the most recent data. Muttaqi remarks on the trapped Afghanistan citizens in Sudan came amid a political, economic, and humanitarian crisis. However, he has not elaborated on how to protect and save the 120 trapped citizens. Several countries have evacuated their citizens from Sudan, including the US and the UK, and others are in the process of evacuating.

Deputy PM meets local officials of Nangarhar

KABUL (Agencies): Deputy Prime Minister, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir praised efforts of Nangarhar local administrations in a meeting with a number of local officials of the province. Deputy PM, Mawlawi Abdul Kabir, met with Mawlawi Rabbani, the Deputy Governor and a number of heads of local administrations of Nangarhar, according to a statement released by his office. The local officials of Nangarhar shared details about the development projects and the security situation of that province, they said that with the cooperation of the people, security is maintained in Nangarhar and the people support the local administration with good coordination. Deputy Prime Minister, Kabir, praised local officials of Nangarhar for providing better services to the people of and appreciated their services.

Transport sector to be developed

KABUL (Agencies): Officials of the Ministry of Transportation and Aviation say that they are trying to encourage the private sector to invest in the transport and aviation sector. According to officials, efforts are underway to standardize the transportation sector in the country. They said there is potential for investment in this sector. They also said that currently a good platform for investing in the transportation sector in the country has been provided. "We are giving the private sector the opportunity to build terminals so that we can create a favorable working environment for the people," said Imamuddin Ahmadi, the spokesman of the Ministry of Transportation and Aviation. On the other hand, some members of the private sector have said that they have started the process of investing in the transportation sector in the country. At the same time, economic experts believe that the expansion of standard investments in the field of ground and air transportation in the country can increase the income of this sector and provide work for thousands of citizens of the country.

Mujahid says leaked Pentagon document by US is propaganda

KABUL (Khaama Press): The de facto administration on Sunday said that the leaked documents are propaganda that Daesh is using the country to plot and coordinate terror attacks against the US and its allies. The Taliban senior spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, said that the US Department of Defense is part of a continuing propaganda campaign. "Some Western media published reports that a certified document of the US Ministry of Defense shows that Afghanistan has become a so-called centre of terrorism; we strongly reject this claim," Mujahid tweeted. He also said that Daesh and other militant groups "have been severely affected and are in the process of being destroyed" in the country. "It is obvious that the spread of such biased reports shows that some people in America have not forgotten their hatred and enmity with the people of



Afghanistan," he added. Earlier this week, leaked Pentagon documents claimed that Afghanistan had become a significant coordination hub for Daesh to plan attacks across Europe and Asia and reports shows that some people in America have not forgotten their hatred and enmity with the people of

claimed that the attack planning exposes deliberate efforts to hit embassies, churches, business hubs and the FIFA World Cup football competition, which drew more than 2 million fans last summer in Qatar. Pentagon authorities were informed of such plots on December 9; Daesh leaders in

Afghanistan orchestrated these plots. The leaked documents stressed the growing threat posed by Daesh in Afghanistan. However, there is no indication of a rebirth of al-Qaeda, as many counterterrorism experts had expected would happen following the US withdrawal.

Iran stresses its claim on shared water resources with Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Foreign Minister of Iran, Hossein Amir Abdollahian, once again emphasized the issue of Iran's right to the Helmand River. Abdollahian said in an interview with IRNA Govt News Agency that based on the order of the Iran President, Ebrahim Raisi, during the one and half years, the foreign ministry, and the special envoy for Afghanistan, Kazem Qomi,

have pursued the matter consistently. Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian has claimed that the Taliban government of Afghanistan, unlike the former Afghan administrations, have confirmed Iran's right to the Hirmand River and emphasized the need to direct it towards Iran as soon as possible. "In my recent talks with Mr Muttaqi, acting Foreign Minister of the de facto

government of Afghanistan in Samarkand city, we emphasized the issue of Iran's claim on the Helmand River in detail," he stated. He further noted that "those collective efforts will continue till achieving the desired result." Meanwhile, "Iranian citizens of Sistan are quite right in their protests about this issue, and the esteemed president has repeatedly emphasized the great

importance of this issue and the need to resolve the problem through diplomatic efforts," Amirabdollahian said. Earlier, he tweeted that he discussed the disputed water resources with his Afghan counterpart Amir Khan Muttaqi while they were both in Uzbekistan, Samarkand. The Taliban authorities have not commented on the Iranian Foreign Minister's Remarks.

Review of curriculum 50 per cent complete: Ministry

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Higher Education said that the curriculum review is 50 per cent complete.

4.2 magnitude earthquake hit Afghanistan's Faizabad

FAIZABAD (Khaama Press): An earthquake of 4.2 magnitudes hit 32 km north of Faizabad city of Badakhshan province of Afghanistan on Sunday. The earthquake of 4.2 magnitudes occurred at 10:40 pm local time, 10km depth on Sunday with the epicentre of Raghistan, Badakhshan province of Afghanistan, the Indian National Center for Seismology reported. No casualties have been reported so far. Recently, natural disasters, including earthquakes, landslides, heavy rain and flooding, have left human and financial damage. Twenty-nine people have died across 31 provinces of the country, according to Shafullah Rahimi, a spokeswoman for the State Ministry for Natural Disaster Management. In contrast, over 105 people have suffered injuries from the recent earthquake and flash floods from 21 March to 20 April. Meanwhile, he continued, there were financial losses due to the natural disasters, including the loss of 848 cattle, 155 residential homes, 1,242 partially damaged homes, and 7,106 acres of agricultural land. Afghanistan is a disaster-prone region, including earthquakes. Last month, a strong earthquake of 6.5 magnitudes hit Afghanistan, killing at least 19 people and injuring more than 200.

Due to the lack of a proper response system and management, natural disasters leave massive damage in the country. NEILI (Pajhwok): The residents of central Daikundi province have turned to growing Paulownia trees as its wood is used in various industries and its leaves in some medicines. Agriculture companies in Daikundi say Paulownia tree wood is used in making furniture, cabinets, boxes, toys, plywood, musical instruments, housing construction, for packaging and paper. Mohammad Aziz, the head of Insaf Agricultural Company in Daikundi, said many farmers planted Paulownia trees this year and his firm alone sold 4,000 seedlings to farmers. He added Daikundi environment suited Paulownia trees which grew fast. "This tree needs sufficient water in the beginning, but gradually its water need decreases". He said the wood of Paulownia was widely used in various industries and had good income. Its wood is used in ships and airplanes due to its light



that the reforms in curriculum should come into effect based on international standards. "The standards and measures and current needs should be considered and then the curriculum should be changed," said Fazal Hadi Wazeen, a university instructor. "The former curriculum

is being used in Afghanistan and we don't know what are the new initiatives in the world," said Hassibullah, a student. This comes as the fate of the female students has yet to be clarified as they have been banned from going to universities since last December.

Daikundi residents turn to growing Paulownia trees

weight and resistance, he adds. He also explained that the leaves of Paulownia tree were useful in treating liver, spleen and some other diseases. He said that Paulownia wood had a unique quality and was used in making all kinds of musical instruments, sports equipment, match boxes and others. Hanif, another employee of Insaf Agricultural Company, said Paulownia trees were promoted for the first time in Daikundi this year and many people bought its seedlings for planting. He said Daikundi residents started growing the tree after knowing its benefits. He said Paulownia tree was widely cultivated in other countries and was major of source of income for farmers. He explained Paulownia tree begins to sprout three months after sowing and grows up to 15 meters in four years. He said other wood used

in construction of houses in Daikundi did not last long and got destroyed after a few years, but Paulownia wood lasted long for its good resistance. Nasir, a farmer, told Pajhwok after hearing about Paulownia benefits, he bought some seedlings and planted them in his fields. He said most agricultural products of Daikundi province were less profitable than the labor they required. He hoped farmers' economy would grow after turning to cultivation of Paulownia trees. But Daikundi Agriculture Department officials expressed unawareness about people's increased interest in growing Paulownia trees in the province, saying no one had shared the matter with them. Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock director Sher Ahmad Rafi said no organization or individual had approached them for planting and promotion of Paulownia trees.

Artists concerned about inattention to engraving and painting



KABUL (TOLONews): The lack of attention to the arts, particularly engraving and painting, is a cause of concern for artists in the country. They said that in the current situation, some artists are leaving the country, and those that remain face many challenges. They said that if attention is not paid to this area, the arts of painting and engraving will be lost in the country. Frozan is learning to

engrave and she is concerned about the future of this art. "Nobody recognizes engraving, nobody has information about it, but it is appreciated in foreign countries," said Frozan. "Our country has lots of arts so girls can show their talents with them," said Tabsom, an engraver. The art of painting also faces the same fate as engraving, artists say. Painters in the country also complain about the

lack of attention to this art. "Art shows a country's identity, like today if we know about a country's history it's because of art," said Jawad Poya, a painting teacher. "I am so happy doing art and I want to continue working," said Khatera, a painting student. The art of engraving in the country has more than a thousand years of history and goes back to the Timurid dynasty.

Water in Lake Qargha rises bringing more tourists

KABUL (TOLONews): The water level in Band-e-Qargha has increased and people who live around the Qargha Lake say they are happy about the increased water level. People said that visitors increased due to the rise in the water level at Band-e-Qargha. It has been 12 years since Mallik Mohammad started work in Band-e-Qargha, and he said that if

Band-e-Qargha has water, the number of visitors will also increase. "I'm so happy that the water level has increased, and we pray for more rainfall to eliminate drought in our country," said Malik Mohammad. "It has been one month since the water increased in Band-e-Qargha, and lots of people came here and visited, and restaurants have restarted their work," said

Fazli Ahmad, a representative of the hotel management department in Band-e-Qargha. "Qargha is the reason people come here, they all come because of water; this year, God's grace is clear, it is raining, and the water is increasing," said Rahimiullah, a visitor. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Energy and Water said that this year the water level has increased by 46 percent

compared with last year. "Compared with last year, this year's rainfall was very good and water has increased by 46 percent," said Habib Rahman Haqqal, the area head of the Kabul River. Various parts of the country have witnessed rainfall in recent months and, according to officials, the amount of rain has been higher compared to previous years.

Afghans says interest in books decreasing due to internet, poverty

KABUL (TOLONews): On World Book Day, Afghans say they fear the weakening of book culture in the country. They said that economic challenges and the use of the Internet by youth are the reasons that they are not interested in studying. "People have the most interest in social media and do not have an interest in studying books, and because of economics most citizens are illiterate," said Ahmad, a book reader. "In Afghanistan, the study is not important for people, and we call on the Islamic Emirate to provide opportunities for people to study," said Hameed, a book reader. Meanwhile, some booksellers said that the book sales market is also facing stagnation. "In Afghanistan, the culture of book reading is at its lowest level, so we expect the Islamic Emirate and our people to pay attention to books and the culture of reading," said Mukhtar, a bookseller. Some Kabul residents called on the Islamic Emirate to do something



to develop the reading culture. "We ask the Islamic Emirate to create libraries and bring books; without study, we cannot progress," said Mohammad Azmari, a Kabul resident.

"Book studying is a good thing, and we should try to study," said Ahmad Zubir, a Kabul resident. World Book Day is an annual event celebrated on April 23, and this day is named by UNESCO.



KARACHI: President Dr. Arif Alvi exchanging Eid greetings with people from different walks of life, including diplomats, at an Eid Milan event.

Sudan fighting: Civilians in untenable situation

KHARTOUM (BBC): People are making "desperate attempts" to flee Sudan after more than a week of fighting there, the Red Cross says. The situation was now "untenable" for civilians left without food or water, and some hospitals had stopped working, spokeswoman Alyona Synenko said.

Convoys leaving the capital Khartoum had encountered robbery and looting, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said. People getting out of Khartoum spoke of corpses left lying on the street. "We saw bodies everywhere - there's no security whatsoever so nobody dares go collect them - but there's utter destruction too. Everything is just devastated," Italian NGO boss Stefano Reborra told the BBC.

South African diplomat Clayton Monyela said all routes out of Khartoum - a city of six million people - were "risky and dangerous". "The airport remains closed, the fighting continues," he told the BBC. He reiterated a call for a ceasefire to allow people to leave, and aid to enter. Sudan was suffering an "internet blackout" with connectivity at 2% of ordinary levels, monitoring group NetBlocks said on Monday. In Khartoum, the internet has been down since Sunday night.

Meanwhile, water and electricity have been restored to some parts of the capital, but not all of them. One Nigerian student told the BBC: "The taps are outside in the street and that's the scary part - sometimes we are going out to get water but there is shooting or explosions going on, so we just have to run there and get the water and come back."

Numerous countries have evacuated their civilians - and thousands of other people have made risky escapes. Many of those who have

left Khartoum have headed to other parts of the country where they have family ties - leaving parts of the city centre completely deserted. Others have gone north to Egypt by bus, or headed south.

Officials in neighbouring South Sudan said the roughly 10,000 refugees who had arrived in recent days came from Eritrea, Kenya and Uganda - as well as from Sudan and South Sudan themselves. Multiple countries have stepped up efforts to evacuate diplomats and civilians from Khartoum. By Monday about 1,100 European Union citizens had been taken out of Sudan, an EU diplomatic source told the BBC. The bloc believed about 1,700 EU citizens had been in Sudan when the fighting began.

The US said it had airlifted fewer than 100 people by helicopter on Sunday in a "fast and clean" operation. The American embassy in Khartoum is now closed, and a tweet on its official feed says it is not safe for the government to evacuate private US citizens. The UK government airlifted British diplomats and their families out of the country. Foreign Minister James Cleverly said options to evacuate remaining Britons were "severely limited". Canada has evacuated its diplomatic staff. Turkey - a key player in Sudan - began evacuation efforts by road from the southern city of Wad Medani on Sunday, but plans from one site in Khartoum were postponed after a nearby explosion.

More than 150 people - mostly citizens of Gulf countries, as well as Egypt, Pakistan and Canada - were evacuated by sea to Saudi Arabia. Long lines of UN vehicles and buses were seen leaving Khartoum on Sunday, heading east towards Port Sudan on the Red Sea

and carrying "citizens from all over the world", a Sierra Leonean evacuee told AFP news agency. However many foreign students from Africa, Asia and the Middle East are among the foreigners still trapped in Khartoum.

The western region of Darfur - where the RSF first emerged - has also been badly affected by the fighting. The UN has warned that up to 20,000 people - mostly women and children - have fled Sudan to seek safety in Chad, across the border from Darfur. However in other parts of the country, some semblance of normalcy has emerged.

In Omdurman, across the Nile from Khartoum, there has been less gunfire and explosions than in previous days, possibly to allow civilians to leave. Heavy fighting outside the army headquarters has stopped. As a result, for the first time since hostilities broke out more than a week ago, women and children have been out on the streets, visiting neighbours and going to markets, which still have some basic supplies such as oil and wheat.

There are long queues outside the few bakeries that remain open. More than 400 people have died in the conflict, and thousands have been injured, according to the latest tally from the World Health Organization. But it is feared the true toll is much higher.

Several ceasefires that seemed to have been agreed were subsequently ignored - including a three-day pause to mark the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, which started on Friday. The UN's World Food Programme says the fighting could plunge millions more Sudanese into hunger in a country where a third of the population already struggles to get enough to eat.

Nawaz for maintaining discipline within PML-N

ISLAMABAD (INP): Advisor to the Prime Minister and senior PML-N leader Engineer Amir Muqam called on party's Quaid Nawaz Sharif and Senior Vice-President Maryam Nawaz in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on Monday.

During the meeting, the overall political and economic situation of the country came under discussion. A detailed discussion on the party issues related to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was also held. The PML-N Quaid laid stress on the importance of maintaining discipline within the party.

Nawaz Sharif felicitated Engineer Amir Muqam on performing Umrah. Amir Muqam also held a one-on-one meeting with Nawaz Sharif with focus on the current political and economic situation of the country, with a specific focus on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Later, PML-N Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz also joined the meeting. Nawaz Sharif, who is also chief of PML-N extended his congratulations to Engineer Amir Muqam for performing Umrah, and stressed the importance of maintaining discipline within the party, while also commending his efforts for the party.

Advisor to the PM expressed his congratulations to Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz on their Umrah pilgrimage and praised Nawaz's leadership for saving the country from terrorism and loadshedding, constructing motorways, and bringing economic stability to the country. He expressed his confidence that with Allah's blessings, Pakistan would overcome its current crises.

Memon blasts Imran's interviews

E.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that Imran Khan's own interviews are proving to be a charge sheet against himself. He said that Imran Khan's statement in which he asserted that the government in two provinces were dissolved on the orders of General (R) Bajwa, proves that this person's politics is hundred percent based on lies.

In a statement on Monday, the provincial information minister said that Imran Khan had launched a heinous campaign against General (R) Bajwa before dissolving his governments in Punjab and Khyber pakhoonkhaw. "If General Bajwa is being held responsible, then why did he (Imran) dissolve his governments of Punjab and KPK on the advice of General (R) Bajwa?" minister added.

He said that all these things reveal that Imran Khan is fooling the entire nation. Imran Khan can not to be trusted further. Memon added that this person has become a mentally ill adding that enmity with Pakistan is the only mission of Imran Khan. He said that the followers of Imran Khan should open their eyes and get rid of this liar.

Alvi exchange Eid greeting with people

E.P. Report

KARACHI: President Dr Arif Alvi exchanging Eid greetings with people from different walks of life, including diplomats, at an Eid Milan event, at Governor House. The President exchanged Eid greetings with diplomats and discussed issues of bilateral interest. Diplomats of various countries like Indonesia, Japan, China, Saudi Arabia and others were present on the occasion.

The President called for further improving bilateral economic and trade ties with friendly countries for the mutual benefit. In his conversation, he urged the diplomats to work cooperatively to strengthen existing bilateral ties and to work on extending bilateral trade cooperation with Pakistan.

Later, members of the civil society also talked to the President regarding the steps that could be taken to encourage youth towards earning livelihood through various computer courses under the Presidential Initiative on Artificial Intelligence and Cloud Computing.

No talks with Imran, says Fazl

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) head Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman reiterated that they want the PTI chief Imran Khan out of politics but the Supreme Court is including him back in the political circle.

"We do not agree with the philosophy and reasoning of talks with Imran Khan who ruined the national economy. "Why the government should "bow down" to the PTI chief and hold talks with "someone who bankrupted the country". Addressing the media persons at Dera Ismael Khan, Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that he stands by every word he uttered against the Supreme Court in his previous press conference.

He said that Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazal (JUI-F) is yet adhesive to his old stance that there should not be dialogue with the PTI chief. He said that it is surprising that an election in 90 days is a requirement of the constitution, but if Imran is satisfied, then

there is no problem. "The Supreme Court rather than "uniting" is "pressurising" politicians to unite."

The PDM president also asked the Supreme Court not to disrespect the Parliament's resolution regarding the release of funds for the Punjab elections. He also urged the politicians to tell the Supreme Court, respectfully, that they do trust them. It is a matter of concern and shock that the Supreme Court is completely divided today. He also asked the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) not to show any weakness in court.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl Chairman Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman has also called an important emergency meeting of the party's central committee in Islamabad on April 26. The meeting is expected to last for three to four days.

According to JUI-F spokesman Muhammad Aslam Ghauri, the primary focus of the meeting would be to deliberate on the current situation that emerged

in the wake of judicial crisis. The meeting aims to determine the party's position in light of current situation in the country.

In addition, the peace and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the merger of Federally Administered Tribal Areas would also be discussed. The meeting would also deliberate on planning for the upcoming national and provincial assembly elections. Furthermore, the late Mufti Abdul Shakoor would be honoured, and the circumstances surrounding his martyrdom would be critically examined during the meeting.

This emergency meeting holds significant importance in shaping the future direction of JUI-F's political stance, particularly in light of the ongoing political turmoil in the country. The meeting would be closely watched by political analysts, and the outcome is expected to have far-reaching implications on the country's political landscape.

Same day polls to help ease political situation: SAPM

LAHORE (INP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) Malik Ahmad Khan called for holding election to National and provincial assemblies at the same time to ease political situation in the country.

Addressing a press conference here at Governor's House, he explained that under Article 81 to 84 of the Constitution, parliament would have to vote for all such grants/ expenditures, which could not be approved in the budget, and it was literally surprising for him when the honorable bench interpreted that it should be taken as 'ex post facto', and for him, it was tantamount to dictating the Parliament.

Holding of election within 90 days is a fact. Perhaps the makers of the Constitution did not envisage a situation under a political expediency as to how to hold elections in some provinces where assemblies were dissolved

three months before their completion of constitutional term, while the federal and rest of the provincial assemblies were intact. Right now, electing new governments in two provinces, especially in Punjab, the biggest province, would mean creating monopoly of the ruling party of Punjab to easily form governments in Centre and other provinces later on, and it was nothing but a sheer conspiracy against people's right to vote, he added.

Malik said that Parliament was a supreme institution and legislation was only its mandate, asserting that parliament was performing within the ambit of the Constitution, and no one could restrain it from performing its constitutional responsibilities. The SAPM said that as per Article 3, under Article 209 of the Code of Conduct for Judge 2009, a judge must keep his conduct in all

things official and private, and free from impropriety. According to Article 4, a judge must decline resolutely to act in case involving his own interest, including those of persons whom he regards and treats as his near relatives and close friends.

To a question, he expressed grave concern over leaked audio of Rafia Tariq. He stressed the need for taking effective measures to cope with the elements/ hackers, who were accessing the sensitive calls of judges, political leaders, generals and bureaucrats, and leaking those audios. To another question, Malik said that the PML-N was a public party and never shied away from elections, and it had also been elected to the assemblies through elections several times. He reiterated that general election would be held on the same date and under the respective interim governments.



JEDDAH: Advisor to Prime Minister Amir Muqam called on PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif.

Man shot dead in Jerusalem after ramming car into civilians

JERUSALEM (Agencies): A Palestinian man has driven his car into a crowd on a Jerusalem street, injuring five people before being shot dead by a passerby, Israeli police said. Hours earlier on Monday, Israeli troops killed a Palestinian during a raid in the occupied West Bank, the latest in a long series of incidents during an upsurge in violence over the past year.

Israel's ambulance service said it treated five people who were injured by the car before transferring them to a hospital, including a 70-year-old man who was in a serious but stable condition. Videos obtained by Reuters news agency showed a man lying stretched out on the hood of a car that was stopped in the middle of the road as shots rang out.

Speaking at the start of ceremonies commemorating Israel's military dead, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the driver of the car, a 30-year-old from East Jerusalem, had tried to hurt civilians deliberately. "This terrorist attack, in this place, at this time, reminds us that the land of Israel and the State of Israel are acquired through many trials and tribulations," he said.

Israeli-Palestinian violence has surged this year, with frequent military raids and violence by Israeli settlers amid a spate of Palestinian attacks. More than 90 Palestinians and at least 19 Israelis and foreigners have been killed since January. Earlier on Monday, Israeli forces killed a Palestinian man during a raid on the Aqabat Jabr refugee camp near the West Bank city of Jericho.

"During the activity, two suspects were spotted fleeing the scene. The soldiers responded with live fire. Hits were identified," the army said. It did not elaborate on why the two Palestinians were targeted. The official Palestinian news agency WAFA quoted the governor of Jericho as saying that a man was fatally shot and three others wounded by the troops.

The statement from the governor said the army had not handed over the man's body to his family. Separately, the Palestinian Prisoner's Association advocacy group said Israeli security forces had carried out 30 arrests in the West Bank overnight and early on Monday. Israel captured the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which Palestinians want as the

core of a future independent state, during the 1967 Middle East war. It has since annexed East Jerusalem in a move not recognised internationally.

Jordan says MP held by Israel over alleged arms, gold smuggling: Israel has detained a Jordanian member of parliament in a case related to the alleged smuggling of arms and gold into the occupied West Bank, Jordan's foreign ministry said. Imad al-Adwan, a member of Jordan's parliament who had crossed a main border crossing along the Jordan River earlier on Sunday by car, was being held and interrogated by Israeli authorities, Sinan Majali, a Jordanian foreign ministry spokesperson, said in a statement to state media.

"The ministry and all relevant agencies in the kingdom are working to ascertain the details of this issue and address it as quickly as possible," Majali said. Al-Adwan had been arrested "for interrogation in a case concerning alleged smuggling of quantities of weapons and gold", he said. A spokesperson for Israel's foreign ministry declined to comment on reports of the arrest.