

President felicitates Shahab

ISLAMABAD (PPI): President Dr Arif Alvi has felicitated Muhammad Shahabuddin on assuming office as the 22nd President of Bangladesh. In a tweet, he expressed the confidence that relations between the two brotherly countries would be strengthened during his tenure. Wishing him a very successful term in office, President said he looked forward to work closely with Muhammad Shahabuddin for the mutual benefit of our countries.

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Digital Census date extended

KARACHI (PPI): The digital census has been extended until April 30th for Karachi, Hyderabad, Quetta, Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad, government reported on Tuesday. The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics has extended the fieldwork of the digital census for the third time. Earlier, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) extended the census date till April 15 on the recommendation of the provincial governments.

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No ‘no go area’ in Pakistan, says DG ISPR

— Army rules out leaning towards ‘any political party, ideology’; Civil, military agencies conducting over 70 IBOs per day to stem out terrorism, resurgence

RAWALPINDI (APP): Director General Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Major General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry on Tuesday said the Pakistan Army along with civil and military intelligence agencies is conducting over 70 intelligence based operations (IBOs) on the average across the country to stem out the recent wave of terrorism and resurgence.

The armed forces spokesperson was holding a media briefing on the prevailing security situation, counter-terrorism efforts and IBOs to contain terrorism activities across the country. Major General Chaudhry said the security forces have so far conducted some 8,269 IBOs since 2023 and apprehended 1,378 terrorists and killed 157 among them during the anti-terrorism operations. He added that for the past many months, the terrorists activities were underway to destabilize peace in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provinces.

“The security forces are focusing on it. The civil and military law enforcement agencies (LEAs) have made wonderful measures. However, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Baloch Separatist organizations have been found behind all that,” the DG

ISPR said. He said since the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan, some 436 terrorist incidents took place that martyred 293 innocent civilians and injured 521 individuals. “Today, Alhamdulillah (Thanks to Allah) with the support of the nation, there is no ‘No Go Area’ in Pakistan,” he added.

The armed forces spokesperson underlined that there were few terrorist groups making hostile activities whereas proper efforts were underway to exterminate them. He added that a large cache of illegal weapons, ammunition and ordnance was being recovered from the terrorists during various IBOs and further recovery was underway. The Peshawar Police Lines and Karachi Police Office (KPO) attacks showed the nefarious intentions of the country’s enemies, whereas these terrorists had no contact with Islam, he added.

He informed that Peshawar attack was done by Jamaat ul Ahrar and the attacker hailed from Afghanistan. He added that the Peshawar attack facilitator was arrested who had trained the suicide attackers and received a sum of Rs7.5 million for facilitation and execution of the attack. “The attack on Peshawar Police Lines was



postponed twice due to lack of the people offering prayer in the mosque. In the third time, the attack was executed in the presence of maximum people,” the ISPR DG said. He added that the KPO attack facilitator Aryad Ullah Waheed alias Abdul Aziz was also arrested who received directions from TTP leadership and got Rs 3 million whereas he bought a car from that money to execute the attack.

The ISPR DG mentioned that during the anti-terrorism operations since January 2023, some 137 officers and soldiers have embraced martyrdom and 117 got injured. He said that the nation paid tribute to these brave sons of the soil. He added that the intelligence agencies’ day and night efforts had helped to arrest Baloch terrorist commander Gulzar Alam alias Shambey.

Pakistan armed forces’ efforts were not hidden to

(Continued on Back Page)

COAS in China on four-day visit

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir is in China on a four-day official visit aimed at enhancing bilateral military relations with the neighbouring country, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

“COAS is on a four-day official visit to China for enhancing bilateral military relations,” the military’s media wing said in a brief statement released on Sunday. During his visit, the army chief will hold meetings with the Chinese leadership, Radio Pakistan reported.

This is COAS Munir’s fourth overseas visit ever since he took charge as the army chief. Earlier this year, he undertook a week-long official visit to UAE and Saudi Arabia and held meetings with the top leadership of the Gulf states. During the visit, the officials reviewed Pakistan’s bilateral ties with the two countries and discussed ways to strengthen the relations.

Later in February, the COAS visited the United Kingdom for meetings on defence-related issues. He also attended a conference at Wilton Park, an executive agency created by the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office to foster open dialogue between governments.

Two soldiers hurt in attack on check post

F.P. Report

BARA: Two security troops sustained injuries when unknown militants attacked on Sreen Qabar checkpoint of subdivision Bara, district Khyber on last night.

Police sources informed that on Monday late night hours unknown disclosed armed persons waged an assault on the joint check post of Frontier Constabulary (FC) and police in Speen Qabar area and wounded two of FC soldiers in firing. In retaliation the militants were forced to flee, police said.

Soon after the incident, the reinforcement of FC and police rushed to the spot, cordoned off the whole area and held the position to ensure security. The wounded soldiers identified as Ashraf Khan and Mirza Khan were shifted to Hayatabad Medical Complex for medical aid, police official said. Superintendent Police (SP) investigation, Khyber Zia Hussain visited the checkpoint and collected evidence of the site.

He also examined the outer and inner layers of security measures of the check post. Encouraging the on duty security personnel he urged to utilize bullet proof jackets and helmets during executing their duties and adopted all necessary security steps to foil any untoward incidents.

‘Saqib has gone too far in Nawaz’s enmity’

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Defense Minister Khawaja Asif Tuesday declared that Saqib Nisar has gone too far in the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N)’s supremacy Nawaz Sharif’s rivalry. Khawaja Asif wrote, “Saqib Nisar Sahib! You have gone too far in Nawaz Sharif’s enmity.”

In a statement issued on Twitter regarding the alleged audio leak of former Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar and lawyer Khawaja Tariq Rahim, the Defense Minister said, “Mian Saqib Sahib, listening to your audio, it is very sad. You went too far in Nawaz Sharif’s enmity.” Khawaja Asif further said that 14/15 years ago, Saqib Nisar narrated two reservations to him regarding Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif, which were completely baseless, assuring that can tell the truth to the media.



MINGORA: Commander Peshawar Corps Lieutenant General Hassan Azhar Hayat inspecting the site of blast at police lines Kabal.

PM summons allies partner’s meeting

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has convened a meeting of the coalition parties for consultation in wake of prevailing political situation as the Supreme Court is set to resume hearing on petition seeking simultaneous elections in the country on tomorrow (April 27).

Sources said that the meeting will be held on Wednesday and all parliamentary leaders of the coalition parties are expected to attend it at the Prime Minister’s House. The premier would hold consultation regarding dialogue with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and Punjab elections.

It is pertinent to mention that before Eidul-Fitr, a three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar has granted one week to the political parties to develop a consensus on the date for holding national and provincial elections simultaneously.

The top court had also sought a progress report from them on April 27 about the meeting of political leaders scheduled to be held on April 26. The bench had issued the directives while hearing petitions seeking elections across the country on the same day, a key demand by the coalition government. However, the PTI is calling for snap polls in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where it had dissolved the assemblies earlier this year.

In April 20, the top court bench has issued a five-page order saying, “The Attorney General for Pakistan along with senior Advocate Supreme Court Farooq H. Naek met the Bench in Chambers and

apprised them of deliberations amongst the senior Cabinet members of the Government and their interaction with a senior officer bearer of the PTI”.

It has been further stated in the order that AGP and Advocate Naek sought time for consultation with the political leaders after Eid-ul-Fitr saying, “They submitted that a recess is being taken on account of Eid-ul-Fitr holidays because several political leaders and party heads have already left or leaving Islamabad for their hometowns to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr. However, a meeting has been scheduled amongst the said leaders on 26.04.2023”. Later, the bench adjourned hearing of the matter till April 27.

During hearing of the matter on April 20, the Supreme Court bench has rejected a decision by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to delay elections in Punjab, terming it as unconstitutional. Earlier, the ECP had rescheduled elections in Punjab for May 14. It is pertinent to mention that Constitution stipulates that elections must be conducted within 90 days after an assembly is dissolved whereas Punjab’s Assembly was dissolved in January this year.

PM congratulates Turkish President on maiden flight of Hurjet: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has congratulated the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the successful maiden flight of a light combat aircraft named Hurjet.

In a tweet on Tuesday, he said it is undoubtedly a huge achievement for Türkiye and Turkish defence industries. He wished greater success to brotherly Türkiye in TF-X project.

KP CM orders inquiry into Kabal blast

Kabal CTD incident to be probed: Governor

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan has ordered an inquiry into the incident of blast at CTD Police Station Kabal Swat to ascertain the actual causes of the incident.

A two member inquiry committee comprising Home Secretary and Additional Inspector General, Special Branch has been constituted to this effect.

In a statement issued here on Tuesday in this regard, the Chief Minister has said that inquiry into the incident is underway, adding that though apparently it seems to be caused by any mishap, but nothing could be said with certainty whether it was caused by any mishap or it was a terrorist activity.

Azam Khan lamented that some elements were trying to use the tragic incident for political point scoring without confirming the actual cause of the incident which is inappropriate, and added that such an attempt on the part of those elements would be sheer injustice to the sacrifices of the martyrs and to the feelings of their families.

Meanwhile, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Haji Ghulam Ali here Tuesday said that Kabal CTD blast incident would be thoroughly probed and has termed the premature and early statements of some elements without

KP IGP rules out terrorism

MINGORA (INP): The Inspector General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police has ruled out terrorism from the twin blasts on the CTD police station in Swat.

As per details, the KP IG said that the blast took place when the explosives inside the police station exploded. He said that an investigation to find out the negligence is underway. A two-member fact-finding committee comprised of the Interior Secretary and additional IG special branch has been constituted on the CTD police station attack in Swat.

Meanwhile, the initial investigation into the twin blasts that occurred inside the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) police station in Swat suggested on Tuesday that a short circuit in the ammunition depot caused the explosions.

knowing facts, was an irrational and illogical approach.

In a statement here, the governor said that elements involved in the negative propaganda was against an enemy of the country and the nation. He said politicking on such unfortunate incidents was not only highly deplorable but a deep conspiracy against the country and the nation.

The Governor said such elements would be exposed before masses and their nefarious designs would be frustrated with power of people. The sacrifices of security forces, police and the Pakistani nation for peace would not go waste. The entire nation held sacrifices of police and security forces in high esteem, he remarked.

Collective funeral of nine policemen offered, rescue operation accelerated: The collective funeral of the nine martyred police-

men was offered at Swat Police Line here Tuesday. Besides others, the IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Gandapur, DIG Counter Terrorism Department, Tauseef Khalid, District Police Officer Swat, senior civil and military officers and relatives of the victims attended.

Later, their bodies were shifted to their native villages and towns for last rituals where they were laid to rest full police honour. According to IGP KP, 15 people were martyred including nine policemen and six civilians and about 43 others injured in the last night explosions at Counter Terrorism Department police station’s ammunition depot. As a result of huge fire and blasts, the police station was razed to the ground and also caused damages to the nearby buildings where rescue operations started.

MQM-P collects resignatins from MNAs

KARACHI (Agencies): Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) has collected resignations from its Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) and it will decide the time of their submission in the next consultative session, on Tuesday.

The resignations of MNAs were collected in a Rabita Committee session chaired by MQM-P convener Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui today. Sources told media that the participants of the session expressed reservations about the digital census.

During the session, the convener collected resignations of all MQM-P MNAs, however, the political party is yet to decide on the time to submit them. It has been decided to not accept the digital census as the data of 2.5 million families was allegedly missing. The MQM-P collected the resignations of MNAs in first phase while the resignations of the Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) in Sindh will be collected in the next phase.

The MQM-P Rabita Committee members said that they raised voices against the digital census on all forums. They added that there is no option other than adopting a tough stance after using all options. They said that census is our red line and MQM-P will not step back from its stance and is independent in taking decisions. After Rabita Committee’s session, MQM-P will hold a consultative meeting with the parliamentarians, federal ministers and senators.

The Rabita Committee expressed dissatisfaction with the outcomes of meetings with PM Shehbaz Sharif and ministers regarding the census issue. They said that the federal government exhibited unseriousness to address the issue. The RC members also suggested lodging a strong protest against the federal government’s inaction. Earlier, the political party conveyed its reservations before the Governor of Sindh Kamran Tessori against the digital census in Karachi.

PTI takes Opp benches in AJK Assembly

MUZAFFARABAD (PPI): Former ruling PTI has decided to take the opposition benches in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Legislative Assembly after Imran Khan-led party lost its premier and its cadres split into factions.

The decision was made after PTI chief Imran Khan chaired a key meeting with top leaders to discuss the political situation in Azad Kashmir. PTI leaders exchange views on the situation after the election of the new Prime Minister in AJK’s Legislative Assembly.

Death toll of CTD police station blasts mounts to 16

F.P. Report

MINGORA: The death toll of the twin explosions at the police station of counter terrorism department at Kabal here Tuesday mounted to 16 and injured 51 others. According to district police spokesman, three more critically injured were expired in hospitals.

The dead also include 14 policemen and two civilians. The dead policemen including constable Khalilur Rehman, sub inspector Ashraf Ali, constable Ambar Khan and sub inspector Abdullah. The injured were being treated at different hospitals including Saidu Sharif hospital. The critically injured were shifted to Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar.

The collective funeral of the martyred policemen would be offered at Police Lines Swat at 11am on Tuesday. DIG CTD Khalid Sohail has told media that blast was apparently not a suicide attack. He said there was no attack or firing on the police station and the explosion occurred at a place where ammunition, arms and mortar shells were stored.

The DIG said the cause of the explosion that whether it happened due to negligence or something else was being investigated. He said that bomb disposal squads were also conducting an investigation of the explosion that caused collapsed of the station. Akhtar Hayat Gandapur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General of Police said security officials were on high alert throughout the province and the incident would be investigated.

Secretary Health, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mahmood Aslam Wazir in a statement here said that leaves of all healthcare staff have been cancelled and hospitals of Swat were kept at high alert position. He declared health emergency in district Swat and kept all the hospitals at red alert here. The Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar was also put on high alert to cope with emergencies.

He said all staff was directed to report to their

We say no to terrorism; Swat people come to roads

Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Thousands of people come out and held a huge protests took place to the main city of Mingora and Kabal on Tuesday against the bomb blasts that occurred Monday evening in Kabal Police Lines, killing 17 people and leaving about 73 persons injured. Though the KP police termed the blasts occurred at a weapon storage facility inside an old office of the Counter Terrorism Department on the premises of the police station, however, people in Swat raised questions on police claims and stated it was an incident of terrorism.

Soon after the blasts, all walks of life in Swat condemned the attack announcing protests in Kabal and Mingora bazaar. The protest at Kabal Bazaar was organized by Swat Olasi Pasoon (Swat Public Uprising), while Swat Quami Jirga organized the protest at Nishat Chowk Mingora. Swat Olasi Pasoon’s Fawad Khan, Aftab Khan, Nazif Lala, Muhammad Ali Dagiwal, Idrees Bacha, PkMAP’s Khurshid Kaka Ji, Mukhtiyar Yousafzai, Dr Khalid, Abdul Jabbar Khan, Ayoub Asharey, Hameedul Haq, Irfan Chattan and others addressed the gatherings.

The protests were attended by a large number of people from across the Swat condemning the attacks. They demanded durable peace in Swat and other Pashtun belts and said that the people of Malakand division would no more be deceived under terrorism dramas. “We don’t believe that it was a blast that occurred at the weapon storage facility caused by an electrical short circuit. Looking to the ground reality and facts, it does not seem like a short circuit blast but a planned incident of terrorism,” the speakers said, adding that if it by any chance it was believed that it was an accidental blast at the weapon storage facility, then it seemed an unprecedented irresponsible act.

They said that Pashtun would no more tolerate terrorism on their land as they believed that terrorism in the country was always carried out for dollars. “We say no to terrorism and no to the creation of fake conflict carried out for dollars,” they said. They said that Pashtuns were peaceful and had no space for militancy and terrorism on their land. “In 2007, wrong news was spread against us that the Pashtun are terrorists and they support terrorism, and that time we kept saying that Pashtun were not terrorists, but very few people believed us,” they said, adding that this time they announce it to the entire world that they would not let any terrorist on their land. They said that if terrorists were tried to bring back to Malakand division, the people of Swat would take action against them as they lost trust in the security forces. They demanded that an independent and transparent inquiry must be made to investigate the reality of the blasts that occurred in Kabal Police Lines and bring the facts in front of people.

duty stations while regional blood center Swat was mobilized to provide blood and blood products immediately to the hospitals. He said medicines have been pooled-up to all the hospitals across Swat and all medics and paramedics plus auxiliary staff was available and well equipped to provide relief to the victims.

He said that ICUs and Critical Care Units of Saidu

Group of Teaching Hospital (SGTH) Saidu Sharif were put on red alert with all the needed medicine and machines availability ensured. Aslam Wazir directed all the District Health Officers and medical superintendents to keep a good buffer of medicine and commodities at the respective health facilities under their jurisdiction and to respond well to any untoward situation.



Sindh to receive rain from April 28

KARACHI (INP): The MET Office has forecast rainfall in Karachi and other parts of Sindh from April 28.

Chief Meteorologist Sardar Sarfaraz has said that a westerly wave system will enter in Balochistan from Oman. "A spell of light and heavy rainfall will likely begin on April 28 at noon," weather official said.

Meanwhile, widespread rains will begin across the country on April 29 and this spell will likely to persist until May 10.

"The weather system will bring heavy rainfall in Balochistan, as well as in Tharparkar and Umarkot districts of Sindh," according to the Met Office. This weather system from Oman will also bring rainfall in Karachi and other districts of Sindh.

It is to be mentioned here that Oman has received heavy rainfall last week. Existing hot to very hot and dry weather to persist till 27th April in most cities of the province with daytime maximum temperatures may rise to 40-42°C in the districts of central and upper Sindh, while 36-38°C in Karachi division and other coastal districts of the province.

Four Paws out to save Madhubala

KARACHI (NNI): Four Paws, a global animal welfare organization, is currently working closely with the local authorities to find species-appropriate solutions for the last three remaining elephants in Pakistan, following the death of Noor Jehan.

A team of veterinarians and wildlife experts from Four Paws is in Pakistan to visit Karachi's Safari Park on Tuesday. The delegation assessed the accommodation arrangements for elephant Madhubala, as part of a plan to expand the park's elephant enclosure by three and a half acres.

While one and a half acres have already been designated for elephants Sonia and Malika, the team will evaluate the suitability of keeping Madhubala separately and provide recommendations if needed.

The team will also evaluate the physical fitness of Sonia and Malika to ensure they are healthy and able to adjust to their new living conditions. The Safari Park's elephant enclosure is being expanded to improve the conditions of captive elephants in Pakistan, and the recommendations of the Four Paws team will be carefully considered and implemented as needed.

The presence of the Four Paws team is significant for the park's efforts to enhance the living conditions of Madhubala, Sonia, and Malika. Earlier, the team had recommended relocating Madhubala and her companion Noor Jehan, who passed away on April 21, to a species-appropriate place that meets international standards. Four Paws tweeted that Noor Jehan's tragic story is a reminder of the suffering that captive wild animals endure in Pakistan and around the world.

Railways restores Shalimar Express train service

KARACHI (PPI): The Pakistan Railways (PR) has decided to restore Shalimar Express Train between Lahore and Karachi from May 1, 2023, officials said Tuesday. The Shalimar Express (up and down) will depart from Karachi and Lahore simultaneously at 6 in the morning. In this connection, the PR department has started advance booking. Meanwhile, Pakistan Railways has increased the fares of Shalimar Express. The economy class ticket from Lahore to Karachi has been increased by Rs1000 to Rs3200, while the AC standard ticket from Karachi to Lahore and Lahore to Karachi has been set at Rs5150.

Earlier, Pakistan Railways had increased the fares of Green Line Train by 25 per cent. The fare of business class from Karachi to Rawalpindi was increased to 10,000 and 9,500 from Lahore-Karachi.

CM Naqvi orders better facilities at Afiyat old age home

LAHORE (NNI): Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited "Aafiat Old Age Home", an institution established for elderly in Social Welfare Complex Township and distributed Eid gifts among them. Mohsin Naqvi visited the Old Age Home to comfort the elderly, spent time with them and cheered them on Eid while presenting gifts.

Mohsin Naqvi went to the rooms of all the elderly living in Aafiat and met them individually while inquiring about the facilities provided in the old age home. The elderly expressed their satisfaction over the quality of food and other facilities in Aafiat saying the facilities here cannot be described in words, but unfortunately their blood relations have turned backs towards them and now the outsiders seems to be their own.

Naqvi while talking to the elderly said "I have come to share the joy of Eid with you as it is our responsibility to take care of the elders like you."

The Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister also ordered the registration of all senior citizens residing in Aafiat in the Benazir Income Support Program and also directed to conduct regular medical check-up of the senior citizens. He also met columnist Athar Zameer in Afiyat and assured him of solving his problems. In this regard, he

issued on-the-spot instructions to Provincial Information Minister Aamir Mir and DGPR Rubina Afzal. Later, Mohsin Naqvi also inspected the dining room of the elderly and issued instructions to the Provincial Information Minister Aamir Mir and DGPR Rubina Afzal on the spot regarding improvements.

Provincial Ministers Azfar Ali Nasir, Amir Mir, Deputy Commissioner Lahore Rafia Haider, DGPR and officials of Social Welfare Department were also present on the occasion.

Provincial Minister Azfar Ali Nasir, Lahore deputy commissioner and other officials had accompanied him.

The chief minister also went to Children's Hospital, Lahore where he stopped by the family members of a deceased girl and inquired about the matter. "Our baby girl Kinza Fatima was poisoned by a close relative.

We want the postmortem of the girl," they told the chief minister. Mohsin Naqvi ordered to conduct the post-mortem of the deceased girl and assured the girl's family of justice. The chief minister also visited the emergency ward and reviewed the treatment facilities for the children.

He appreciated the spirit of medics and paramedics for carrying out their duties despite limited resources.

CM Sindh, UAE CG discuss rehabilitation of flood affectees

KARACHI (APP): Consul General of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Bakheet Ateeq Al-Romaithi called on the Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah at Chief Minister house here on Tuesday. They discussed bilateral relations including the

rehabilitation of the flood affectees. Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said that the provision of funds for the construction of flood-stricken houses had been started. He thanked UAE for his cooperation in the rehabilitation process of the flood affectees.

PML-N concludes youth membership campaign

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Youth Coordinator for District Lahore, Hina Parvez Butt, declared on Tuesday that the party's youth membership campaign has been concluded in Lahore. During the week-long campaign from April 3 to April 9, PML-N organized various youth membership camps across Lahore, and more than 69,000 young people completed membership forms to join the political party.

Hina Parvez Butt stated that the membership campaign was a success, and the youth of Lahore showed their trust in the leadership of Mian Nawaz Sharif.

She also expressed her gratitude to the party workers and volunteers who worked tirelessly to make the campaign successful. The PML-N Youth Coordinator further added that the party's objective is to engage and empower the youth of the country. By enlisting more young members, PML-N aims to strengthen its position in Lahore and throughout Pakistan.

The conclusion of the youth membership campaign marks an important milestone for the PML-N as the party prepares for the upcoming general elections. With the support of the youth, PML-N hopes to regain its foothold in the country's political landscape.

Amir Muqam visits and inspects CTD Police Station in Kabal



F.P. Report

SWAT: Adviser to the Prime Minister Engineer Amir Muqam has said that a high-level investigation will be conducted into the incident in which central agencies will also be involved so that the facts can come to light. He announced a financial package for martyrs and the injured, including

civilian victims. Adviser to the Prime Minister Engineer Amir Muqam further said that as soon as he heard the news of the incident, he concluded his engagements in Saudi Arabia and reached the place of the incident directly from the airport. Engineer Amir Muqam prayed for the martyrs on behalf of his leader Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif

and Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif. The adviser said that he has always stood with the people in times of trouble and will continue to stand with them in the future as well.

Later, the Advisor to the Prime Minister visited the injured from the Kabal tragedy at Saidu Sharif Hospital and prayed for their speedy recovery.

CPO visits Murree to review security, traffic arrangements

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Mahmood Hamdani on Tuesday visited Murree and reviewed the arrangements made to ensure the security of the visitors.

The Superintendent of Police, Saddar, SP Traffic, DSP Murree, DSP Traffic Murree, SHO and other officers were present on the occasion. The CPO reviewed the traffic and security arrangements and commended the officers for ensuring the safety and convenience of the tourists as there were no reports of fights or scuffles on the Mall Road and law and order problems or any harassment of women issue during the Eid-ul-Fitr holidays. The officers and police personnel would be

given commendation certificates for doing good duty, he said adding, there was excellent coordination with the district administration, Rescue 1122 and other departments concerned.

Best security arrangements were made by Murree, Traffic and Tourism Police to help and assist the tourists, particularly during the Eid-ul-Fitr holidays, he added.

Over 20,000 vehicles entered Murree during the Eid holidays but, the traffic was regulated properly and all-out efforts were made to avoid gridlock.

There was no major traffic congestion problem on the roads of the hill station, he said adding, special attention was also given to the parking which helped

ensuring a smooth flow of traffic. Punjab Police, Traffic Police and Tourism Police tried to provide a safe environment to the tourists and the crime rate was also controlled effectively, he added.

The CPO informed that the senior officers were present in the field to ensure the safety of the tourists and monitoring the situation. He said that all available resources would be provided to the Murree and Tourism Police so that they could provide the best service to the tourists and locals during the summer season.

He appreciated the performance of Murree and Tourism police besides the efforts made by other departments concerned.



LARKANA: Former President of Pakistan and President PPPP Asif Ali Zardari offering Fateha at grave of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto at Garhi Khuda Bakhsh during his visit.

Pakistan detects first monkeypox case

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination on Tuesday reported that Pakistan has detected its first case of monkeypox in a visitor from overseas.

The person was deported from Saudi Arabia and arrived in Pakistan on April 17 with signs of monkeypox, according to health ministry authorities.

The National Institute of Health (NIH), Islamabad, received samples of the person, whose name has been kept private, and a day earlier the institution determined that he was a carrier of the contagious virus.

The person's family are currently being inspected and urged to remain in quarantine in order to prevent the virus from spreading.

The government has also started contract tracing. World Health Organization (WHO) has said that monkeypox typically presents with a skin rash or mucosal lesions that can last two to four weeks along with fever, headache, muscular pains, back pain, poor energy, and enlarged lymph nodes.

Humans can get the monkeypox virus through coming into personal contact with a diseased person, contaminated objects, or infected animals.

Anti-dog campaign demanded

KARACHI (PPI): Former Vice Chairman UC-27 Ratan Talao, Waseem Ahmed on Tuesday requested the District South administration to immediately start a dog killing campaign in all parts of District South areas, Pakistan Chow, Burns Road, Urdu Bazar, Saddar Arambagh, Railway Colony as people living in Karachi are suffering from severe hardship. He demanded that immediate action be taken at the gates of mosques at dawn as the residents of the area have filed a complaint of dog bite.

Parvez Elahi meets PML-N bigwigs

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Chaudhry Parvez Elahi held on Tuesday an informal meeting with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leadership at former defence minister Perviz Khattak's residence.

The former Punjab chief minister reached the residence of Mr Khattak, where he condoled the death of his wife, while former federal minister Moonis Elahi also condoled over the phone. The PML-N leaders – Ayaz Sadiq and Khawaja Saad Rafique – came face-to-face with Mr Elahi on the occasion of offering condolences to Parvez Khattak over the death of the latter's wife.

Mr Rafique and Chaudhry Mr Elahi shook hands with each other. Mr Sadiq also hugged Mr Elahi. During the informal meeting, Mr Elahi and Mr Sadiq also whispered in each other's ear.

The political leaders talked about the solution to take the country out of the quagmire. Mr Rafique, while talking to former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser, said, "We are in touch with you. I heard PTI has changed names."

Mr Elahi said, "The caretaker government period has ended. We have filed petitions regarding Punjab and KP. All the talk is going on about how all the political parties respect and honour the Supreme Court so that the elections can be held simultaneously." The political leaders suggested that the revival of the Punjab and KP assemblies could play a role in terms of addressing the crisis and also in the date of the upcoming elections, adding that after the end of the caretaker government, a new crisis had emerged.

"If the assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are restored, the

way to sit at the negotiation table can be paved," the political leaders added.

During the informal meeting, the political leaders also suggested that both provincial assemblies be restored simultaneously for the elections in October.

The government and the opposition should review the proposal so that the issues can be resolved later on at the negotiating table.

On the other hand, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had summoned a meeting of the coalition parties for consultation on prevailing political situation as the Supreme Court is set to resume hearing on petition seeking simultaneous elections in the country on Thursday (April 27).

The meeting will be held on Wednesday and all parliamentary leaders of the coalition parties are expected to attend it at the Prime Minister's House. The premier would hold consultation regarding dialogue with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and Punjab elections.

Before Eidul Fitr, a three-member bench headed by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial and comprising Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar had given the political parties a week to develop a consensus on the date for holding national and provincial elections simultaneously. The apex court had also directed them to submit a progress report on April 27 about the meeting of political leaders scheduled to be held on April 26. The bench had issued the directives while hearing petitions seeking elections across the country on the same day, a key demand by the coalition government. However, the PTI is calling for snap polls in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where it had dissolved the assemblies earlier this year.

PML-Q announces candidates for Punjab polls

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q) has issued party tickets to candidates for the Punjab elections.

Party tickets were issued by PML-Q Chief Organizer Chaudhry Sarwar and Secretary General Punjab Chaudhry Shafay Hussain on behalf of Party Chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain.

The candidates have been instructed to run a vigorous election campaign in their constituencies.

Speaking on the occasion, Ch Sarwar said that such a situation would not have happened if the development budget of

two and a half thousand billion was used in an appropriate way, adding that Pakistan's debts are increasing whereas the wealth of corrupt people is also increasing. He maintained that no one can raise a finger over the honesty of Chaudhry Shujaat.

Ch Sarwar said, "If he aspired for power, he would have joined another party. No rocket science is needed to change the situation in Pakistan. If we get the government, we will show the actual work."

He claimed that they had a strong team and would give a big surprise

in the Punjab elections. He urged all candidates to set up their offices in their constituencies and strengthen themselves on social media.

Chaudhry Shafay Hussain on the occasion said that the previous government did nothing but made only claims in three and a half years, adding an alternative in Punjab as leadership, Pakistan Muslim League-Q entered into the arena.

Ch Shafay Hussain observed that there is a need to change people's minds, claiming the people did not get the kind of leadership they wanted except the PML-Q.



KARACHI: A large number of people enjoy swings at a festival near Kalpul area.



Governor, CM strongly condemn Swat blast



PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Ghulam Ali and caretaker Chief Minister Azam Khan here Monday night strongly condemned the blast at counter terrorism department station at Kabal Swat and directed the hospitals administration to provide best medical facilities to the injured.

The Governor expressed solidarity with heirs of police victims and eternal peace of the martyred cops and others. The Governor said the sacrifices of the police martyres would not go waste. They prayed Allah Almighty to grant courage to the victims families to bear this irreparable loss with patience.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan meeting with visitors at CM's House.

Ideal atmosphere of peace in MDs to pave path of economic self-sufficiency

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Excise and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi was called on

by various tribal delegations and Jirgas in Peshawar on the third day of Eid-ul-Fitr and apprised him of problems of the merged districts besides exchanging Eid-ul-Fitr greetings with him. A delegation of kukikhel tribe from Khyber district led by the prominent trader leader Pervaz Khan Afridi also held meeting with the Minister and tabled certain problems and demands of the tribal people. Among these issues included ensuring government writ, law and order in tribal districts, increase in education and health facilities, improvement of roads and communication network, ending electricity load shedding, supply of sui gas, prevention of drugs addiction and the launch of alternative

agricultural schemes against poppy crops. The delegations also welcomed the efforts of the provincial minister to establish life-saving medicine industry from poppy produce as well as assured full support and cooperation in this regard. Haji Manzoor Afridi listened to the issues of the tribal leaders patiently and assured that since he himself is the representative of the tribal people and hence in this capacity he will ensure concrete measures at the level of both the provincial and federal governments to solve all these problems for good. The Minister agreed with the argument of tribal leaders that peace is the first imperative for economic, industrial and business development. However, he said that due to the more

than 1,000 kilometers long border with the neighboring country Afghanistan, the possibility of unrest and terrorism in the merged districts is a natural phenomena and assured that the provincial government will secure the borders in all respects with the cooperation of the federal government. He said the government's candid steps will create an ideal atmosphere of lasting peace and harmony so that we are on the path of industrial and economic self-sufficiency in a congenial peaceful environment. Haji Manzoor Afridi also highlighted the measures of his department relating to Narcotics and drugs prevention. He clarified that not only the control of drugs but also the treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts will

be carried out to save our youth from this menace. He on this occasion, announced the establishment of a drug rehabilitation hospital in Tehsil Bara and clarified that if this scheme proved successful, it will be then planned to establish such hospitals in other merged districts as well. Similarly, he said, concrete steps are being taken to increase education, health, agriculture and irrigation facilities in the merged districts. Regarding electricity load shedding and sui gas supply, the provincial minister clarified that both these facilities have become a national issue because the country is facing acute energy crisis, which the federal government is dealing on emergency basis and in addition

to increasing the country's energy production, MoUs being finalized with neighboring countries for electricity and other energy sources, after which all energy needs of the merged districts will also be fulfilled accordingly. Haji Manzoor Afridi further said that the government is also taking concrete steps for the promotion of industry and trade in the province so that apart from strengthening our economy, employment opportunities also increase in the region significantly. He revealed that the establishment of the mega industry for the production of precious life-saving medicines from the poppy crops is also being seriously evaluated, which will directly benefit our tribal.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Advisor to CM on Health Dr. Abid Jamil inquiring about health of injured person in Swat blast.

Peshawar Zoo: Wildlife animals attract children, families on Eid

PESHAWAR (APP): The wildlife animals in Peshawar zoo here Sunday attracted a large number of children and families on the second day of the Eidul Fitr celebrations. Zarafas, lions, cobra snakes, bears, pheasants, dears, cranes, reptiles, birds, parrots and falcons remained center of attraction of children and families arrived from different districts at Peshawar zoo. Spread on 29 acres land near University of Peshawar, Peshawar zoo has drawn influx of visitors and families along with their children during Eid holidays from different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Following improvement of the weather conditions due to heavy rains in Peshawar before Eid, the people accompanied by the children thronged to Peshawar zoo on the first and second day of Eidul Fitr and took keen interest in eagles, cobra snakes, tigers and others wild animals caged there in pleasant environment.

The children accompanied by parents arrived from Khyber, Kohat, Nowshera, Charsadda, Mardan, Mohmand, Swabi, Peshawar and others districts of KP were briefed by the wildlife experts that provides a unique recreational facility to tourists, visitors, wildlife lovers, students and Peshawarites. Peshawar zoo is bigger than all other zoos of Pakistan as it spread on a vast area of over 29 acres of land wherein almost all species of wild animals and

birds existing in the country have been caged in natural habitats. At entrance, big status of elephant and zarafa have been installed in front of main gate that attract attention of visitors and children while passing through Rahatabad Road. Falcons' cage remained a centre of attraction of tourists and children where three large sizes brown and black eagles are kept. On its left and middle sides, zarafas, zebras, camels, dears, ducks, pheasants and others birds draw visitors' attention. A safari bus is also available for visitors to help them in watching all these wild animals in short time besides a restaurant for food services. Free swings, camel and train ride inside facility doubled the joy of children. Shagufta Asad (50), who came to Peshawar zoo along with her children from Nowshera told APP on Sunday that it was a great gift for people of Peshawar, which has not only enhanced beauty of Peshawar but also become a symbol of healthy entertainment.

"In the past, I had visited Islamabad and Lahore zoos to entertain my children. This year I did not go to these cities because of Peshawar Zoo," said Shagufta. "Falcons have always attracted my children and that is why I came from Nowshera district to see them closely in zoo on my kids demands," she said. "It is not only a place of entertainment but a great

source of education and research for students of wildlife and zoology who otherwise travelled to Islamabad and Lahore for this purpose in the past," she said.

She underscored the need for proper shelter shades, trees plantations and proper cold watering for animals, adding services of DVM doctors may be hired 24/7 for looking after medical needs of the animals in harsh weather conditions. Dr Muhammad Naem of the Swabi University said that the zoo was a good addition in provision of healthy entertainment and recreation facilities for residents of Peshawar and adjoining districts. The people from Attock Punjab also visited Peshawar zoo, bringing people of all provinces further closers by enhancing bonds of friendship and love besides knowing about each others' culture and traditions.

The negative effects on people's mental and psychological health put by coronavirus in recent past had almost been ended courtesy by the Peshawar zoo. Its play-lands, train ride, swings, motion and camel ride, cafeteria and safari train added colours of the zoo. He suggested establishment of a testing laboratory at zoo premises for treatment of common diseases would help avoid deaths of precious animals in future. He said fare of zoo was relatively high and children should be exempted from it.

Researchers warn of threats posed by Cryptosporidium, an emerging zoonosis

PESHAWAR (APP): Research scholars of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry have warned of threats posed by Cryptosporidium, scientifically recognized as an opportunistic zoonotic parasite that infects both humans as well as animals and is considered a major cause of diarrhea often resulting in death due to severe dehydration. In a study conducted in three districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Bannu, Lakki Marwat and Kohat, the researchers found higher prevalence of Cryptosporidium among children (30/180) 16.66 per cent as compared to adults (10/180) 5.55 per cent. The study is conducted by several scholars including Naimatullah Khan, Muhammad Hassan Saleem, Aneela Zameer Durrani, Nisar Ahmad, Ayesha Hassan, Sultan Ayaz, Sajid Umar, Muhammad Luqman Sohail, Muhammad Shafee, Ikramullah Khan, Mumtaz Ali Khan, Azmat Ullah Khan, Naimat Ullah Malik and Abdul Razzaq.

"Cryptosporidium infects a wide range of livestock animals and humans, causing substantial economic losses and serious public health concerns," observed the researchers. Exposure to animals, poor sanitation and hygienic conditions are the factors responsible for transmission of the parasitic diseases and these factors are highly prevalent in the study area, where poor sanitation, open toilettries, shared water sources of animals and humans causes its spread among the human population, they added. This is the first study

addressing one of the main causes of neonatal mortality in Southern KPK by Cryptosporidium and its zoonotic potential. A total of 360 stool samples were collected from the District Headquarters Hospitals of all three districts and were screened through microscopy. Results yielded an overall prevalence of 11.11% in all three districts. Prevalence was highest in district Bannu (11.66%), followed by district Lakki Marwat and Kohat with 10% in each district. Statistical analysis revealed significant differences among children of different age groups with highest disease prevalence in children of less than 5 years of age (21.40%) and lowest in children of 11-15 years of age (15.99%). Individuals visiting District Headquarters

Hospitals of the study area with abdominal anomalies i.e., acute diarrhea (three loose stools within the last 24 hours prior to hospital visit) or persistent diarrhea, vomiting (once in last 24 hours before hospital visit) and abdominal cramps were included in the study. All the participants had exposure to livestock and other animals. Higher prevalence was recorded in children having close contact with domestic animals (20%) as compared to those having no contact with domestic animals (12.94%), adds the study. The age of children was found to be a significant risk factor for the occurrence of Cryptosporidium in Southern KP, researchers warn. This high incidence of the disease in children may be related to the lack of pre-

existing immunity. Moreover, children were more exposed to water during playing, increasing the chance of getting infected and there was a more frequent attendance of diarrheic children than adults at DHQs. Cryptosporidium in early age in the study area can also be related to malnutrition which has been described as a potential risk factor for diarrhea due to Cryptosporidium. The researchers suggest prevention as the only way out to protect masses from getting infection from Cryptosporidium. There is no vaccine currently available against Cryptosporidium infection as limited understanding of its specific biology and challenges encountered in vaccine development, they added. Hence, to design effective

disease control and prevention strategies a comprehensive understanding of various risk factors contributing to the spread of disease among human and animal population is unavoidable, they suggested. In conclusion, the study reiterated its warning about the zoonotic transmission of Cryptosporidium, one of the four main causes of morbidity in preschool children. It provides evidence of Cryptosporidium transmission in young children from livestock animals. Furthermore, poor sanitation and contaminated water and the environment fuel the fire of its spread. Due to limited treatment options available and poor healthcare facilities in study areas, situation can aggravate if remain unnoted.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Excise and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi meeting with tribal leader Haji Jan Badshah.

How did wheat production go well despite rains and hailstorms?

Munir Shaheen

As soon as the rain, strong winds, and hail subsided a little, the farmers started the process of harvesting wheat. It is a blessing that the wheat has not been damaged so much due to the hailstorm as we were thinking. This year, wheat has been cultivated on 1.2% less area than last year, totaling to 16.1 million hectares in 2023. Punjab gives importance to the cultivation of wheat, as the most wheat is cultivated in Punjab as compared to other provinces in Pakistan. The institutions were given

the target of 2.79 million hectares in Sindh, 2.22 million hectares in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and 1.36 million hectares in Balochistan, which were achieved. At the time when the rains started, the wheat stalks were full of grains and the crop needed cool weather, which nature provided in the form of rain. Due to the constant temperature below 25 degrees Celsius, wheat developed vigorously, and its weight continued to increase. According to a survey, our wheat was not significantly damaged by rains and hailstorms. Even if there is any wind, due to the good harvest, that loss will not be

seen, nor can it be counted. If we estimate the loss due to rains and hailstorms, even if we estimate 5-6%, it is best. Even if we consider the increase in wheat production due to the weather equal to the loss, we cannot say that the wheat crop has been in a loss. According to a survey that has collected data from different areas of Punjab, wheat production ranges from 35 maunds per acre to 60 maunds per acre, despite the constant shortage of fertilizers. If we take an average of 35 to 40 maunds per acre, our production target is clearly fulfilled. Now let's take a look at the hype

that is being created in the media. Some are saying that the production has decreased, while others are saying that it has increased by 15% compared to last year. They have to prepare by propagandizing ahead of time. The business mafia included in our ruling class tries to import wheat from Ukraine or any other country every year because it benefits them. They cannot take the position that wheat should be imported from outside, otherwise, there is a fear of food shortage in the country. Afghan trade is also an issue of ours, and we want to help our Afghan

brothers in the form of wheat, which is a very good thing. But if the price of wheat in the states of Russia is higher than that of Pakistan, then our wheat starts to be sold in the states of Russia under the pretext of Afghan trade. Thus, the shortage of wheat and flour is created in Pakistan. The disadvantage of this is that the wheat of our country is bought at cheap prices from the farmers and sold at high prices in the states of Russia, and then the people of Pakistan buy defective and expensive wheat from Ukraine. This trend is harmful to the farmers who sell wheat at cheap prices.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali visiting Wazir Bagh.



In brief

Man shoots dead his father

ATTOCK (PPI): An undutiful man shot dead his father in an Attock village on Tuesday and fled from the scene. The recusant was non-compliant to his parents and often quarreled with them. After a tiff with his father Usman, Atif opened fire on him at their home in Tajik village of Tehsil Hazro of Attock, killing him on the spot. After receiving information, a police party arrived at the scene but the killer had made his escape good. The police took the dead body into custody and shifted it to a hospital for post-mortem.

Police recovers 25 sound system

D I KHAN (INP): The district police, while taking action against the violators of Section-144, have recovered 25 sound systems here Tuesday. According to a police spokesman, following the directions of District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani, SDPO City Circle Sardar Alamgir Khan along with DSP Traffic Iqbal Khan Baloch, Station House Officer (SHO) of Cantt Police Station Arsalan Khan Gandapur took action against the violators of Section 144. During the action, the police arrested over dozens of people involved in rioting, making noise and illegal use of sound systems in the city during Eid days. The police registered separate cases against the violators and put the arrested people behind the bars.

50 injured in bus accident

DADU (PPI): A bus travelling inter-city met an accident while travelling on Indus highway in the early hours of Tuesday, witnesses and rescue said. According to rescue sources, the bus was travelling from Larkana to Karachi when it met an accident and collided with a tractor-trolley on Indus Highway. As a result of collision around 50 passengers were injured. The rescue teams arrived at the scene immediately and claimed to shift the injured to a nearby hospital for medical aid.

Many shops fined for profiteering

SIBI (PPI): Fines on several shops selling daily commodities and chickens were imposed besides issuing warnings to other shopkeepers during a crackdown launched by district administration Sibi against profiteers. According to reports, staff of district administration Sibi under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner, Sibi, Ali Shah Abbasi cracked down against profiteers. Owners of several shops selling daily commodities and chickens were fined while warning to other owners of shops were strictly warned to follow the prices of daily commodities and chickens issued by the district price committee, Sibi. Talking to media, on the occasion, Assistant Commissioner, Sibi, Ali Shah Abbasi said that strict legal action would be taken against those shops found violating price list issued by the district price committee, Sibi.

Fishermen advised

QUETTA (PPI): The Fisheries department of Balochistan on Tuesday issued alert to fishermen advising them not to venture into the deep sea owing to high tidal waves. The fisheries department in a statement said that the coastal belt of Balochistan will experience a windy weather from today (April 25) to April 26. Assistant Director Fisheries Balochistan has advised fishermen to stay away from the deep sea today and tomorrow during the windy weather spell.

Swat CTD police station blast Constables Sher Wali and Nasar laid to rest in Buner

F.P. Report

BUNER: The martyred police constables Sher Wali of Jangdara tehsel Daggar Buner and Nasar Khan of Shakmanay tehsel Mandamr Buner dead bodies laid to rest in the ancestral graveyards on Tuesday April 25 who were embraced martyrdom during blasting in the CTD police station Kabal Swat on Monday late night.

The police special squads were solute to their coffin which were covered with national and police flags. The police officers and representatives of district administration with official protocol laid them in graves with pray for eternal rest in peace.

The police officers police personnel the district administration the political social religious figures and general public largely participated in their



funeral procession and attended the Namaz Jinaza and stayed there till final burial rituals. The news about their martyrdom was spread like forest fire in the entire Buner.

The people from all walk of life were dashed to their native villages and offered Fatiha participated in funeral procession and the Namaz Jinaza as well. The martyred families members and others were of the view

it was a shook them when a CTD compound came under explosion and demanded proper investigation so as to find the clue and best adopt preventive measures to avoid occurrence such like incident to best protect the police personnel in larger interest of the families and state as well and to send message of long lasting peace among fellow citizens of this homeland.

Women's vote vital for country's uplift: Samina

F.P. Report

QUETTA: In Pakistan, women are part of more than half of the population and the importance of women cannot be denied. The role of women in the development of any society is an undisputed fact. It is good that Pakistani women are becoming conscious. They are realizing their power. Women's votes are very important in choosing the right leadership for their country and society in elections.

Vote is a national trust and duty and its proper use is the right and responsibility of every Pakistani. We can make a better decision for our future only with the correct use of vote. These views were expressed by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri in one of her statements. She said that the correct use of vote is the duty of every Pakistani man and woman and using the right to vote without any pressure or coercion is a right. Through this we can choose sincere leadership and representatives for the future. She said that no society can deny the importance of vote, no state can become a state without its people.

She also said that unfortunately in Pakistan till today women could not get the rights that should have been given to them regarding the vote. If we look at the extent of the cities, it can be said that the vote turnout is better, but in the rural and backward areas, the number of women voting is negligible. Women need to be convinced that their vote is very important in making the right choice. It is through voting in elections that we decide our good and bad. With the right use of vote, good and sincere leadership can be brought, while on the other hand, wrong people can also come to the assemblies with wrong use. Therefore, for the development and prosperity of the country, 18 Men and women who are over the age of one must register their vote and choose a sincere leader for the nation in order to choose the right leadership on the day of election and for this the correct use of vote is very important and vote registration in the society and it is very important to highlight the importance of exercising the right to vote.

Senator Samina Mumtaz Zahri further said that women are more than half of the population in Pakistan and the importance of their vote is unquestionable and women can play an important role in electing representatives and sincere leadership for the country.

Democracy cannot be strengthened until time. She said that the number of women in terms of population in the country is more than half of the population, but the registration of women voters is less than 43%. The tragedy is that even the registered women do not exercise their right to vote. Women should exercise their right. Be sure to register your vote to use voting and make better decisions for yourself so that they can use the right to vote to elect real representatives for the development and prosperity of the country. She said that the importance of voting in developed countries. Yes, it is not just a slip, but it is cast considering the destiny of the country and the nation, and women cast votes on the basis of equality. It is alarming-ly low and it is a tragedy that women in our society either shy away from participating in the electoral process or are not allowed to cast their votes. If we know the power of the vote and use it properly. Our problems can be solved better if the competent and original rightful people are put in the position of power.

She said that every single vote of every person, including women, is very important in the upcoming election. There is a dire need for correct use of vote in Balochistan. It is very important to convince women in particular that their vote can bring positive change in the society. She said that the people of Balochistan will no longer be seduced by the so-called representatives and leaders who raise hollow slogans and choose the best for themselves. They will choose sincere representatives. For this purpose, the correct use of vote is the best way through which the people can choose the right leadership and representatives for themselves.

She expressed hope that in the next election, the people will use their right to vote and women will actively participate in the elections knowing the importance of their vote and will reject those so-called representatives and leaders by voting. Those who have fooled the people of Balochistan for many decades and who have always focused on their own interests and only focused on their personal development. In the upcoming election, InshaALLAH, the people, especially women, will choose sincere representatives from Balochistan who they will play an important role in the long-term and sustainable development of Balochistan and will lead Balochistan to new directions of development.

KP's hilly resorts, lakes attract influx of tourists during Eid holidays

KAGHAN (APP): The hilly resorts and lakes in northern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have attracted influx of tourists during five days of Eidul Fitr enjoying its mesmerizing natural and mountainous beauty amid hide and seek between sun and clouds with great fun and excitement in the lap of birds chanting snow-clad valleys.

Arrived in a 'carry van' with hands clapping on national song 'Dil Dil Pakistan' at Saiful Malook and Anso lake in Upper Kaghan valley in Manshera district on last Sunday, the family of Professor Ehtisham Khan of Peshawar was over the moon after visiting the famous oval shape lakes located in the lap of the snow-clad mountains of Malaka Parbath, enjoying the delectable cuisines of KP under an open sky amid laughter all around.

Impressed by the crystal greenish-blue water of the oval-shaped Saiful-Malook lake, the tourists with a big smile on their faces went around the natural wonder after enjoying lunch at 'Dastarkhwan' under an open sky amid cold breeze and pleasant weather. "We have first explored the historic Saiful Malook lake through boats that doubled my family's joy," said Ehtisham Khan, who came here along with her sisters and mother while talking to APP. He said Saiful-Malook's gripping natural beauty with its crystal clean-water emanating from the lofty glaciers of Malaka Parbath on its northeast was amazing and

beyond one's imagination.

Khan said that he had visited many lakes in Pakistan and abroad but the fairytales of prince Saiful Malook and princess Badri Jamal associated with the Saiful-Malook lake were unique and impressive. "The Malook-Jamala fairytale leaves mesmerizing effects on the minds of tourists and forces them to come again and again here." Terming Saiful-Malook lake as his ideal tourist place due to its better road connectivity than other lakes of KP, he said that it was his third trip to Saiful-Malook lake and first with his family that doubled their joy of Eidul Fitr.

He said families could easily come here to spend some time in its relaxed environment before exploring the nearby Anso and Dudipatsar lakes in Upper Kaghan through jeeps and horse riding. Like Khan's family, the lake takes thousands of visitors into pipe-dream with fairy world's thoughts popping up with peace and serenity after entering the natural wonder spreading on 1.06 square miles having 113 feet depth and 3,224 meters height from sea-level following completion of boredom of tedious journey from plain areas of Pakistan to Kaghan valley. Mian Muhammad Bakhash, a noted historian and poet in his book 'Fairytale of Saiful Malook' had narrated about prince Saiful-Malook and fairy princess Badri Jamal during his visit to the lake.

He explained about the epic

romance of Prince Malook when he fell in love with fairy prince Jamala during his visit to this famous lake of Pakistan. Prof Ehtisham mother said Saiful-Malook was the identity of Pakistan and urged visitors to ensure its cleanliness and put all waste in dustbins placed by the government in its vicinity. "I am disappointed to see garbage and polythene bags thrown by visitors at premises of Saiful-Malook and Anso lakes despite dustbins," she said. She said it was the collective responsibility of Kaghan Development Authority (KDA), wildlife department and district administration to maintain its cleanliness and make it pollution-free.

The tear-shaped Anso lake is being considered the highest lake of Himalaya region with 4,126 meter height of the sea level, Payala lake with 2,895 meters elevation, Pyala lake with 3,410 meters height Siri lake with 2,590 meters altitude, Dudipatsar lake with 3,800 meters elevation and Dudibach Star lake in Kaghan valley, which captivate adventure sports enthusiasts. In international practice, she said vehicles were parked outside of the lakes' premises in order to maintain its ecology and protect it from plastic pollution. She underscored the need for construction of parking areas outside of the premises of Saiful-Malook, Mahudhand and other national lakes to protect it from environmental and water pollution.

Muhammad Ali Syed,



QUETTA: A view of tree fallen on the road during fast wind in the City.

Dir personalities awarded with Dir Stars' Award for role in peace

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Dir Qaami Pasoon (DQP), a citizens' apolitical body working for peace and local development in the Lower Dir and Upper Dir on Tuesday awarded its 'Stars of Dir' awards to 20 selected personalities for their remarkable services in various fields like education, social work, journalism, healthcare, agriculture, literature, tourism, peace and development.

An award distribution ceremony in this regard was held at a private wedding hall at Timergara which was attended by the DQP leaders, social and political activists, educationists, lawyers, doctors, journalists, agriculturists, teachers, students and members of different peace jirgas. The Lower Dir martyrs who sacrificed their lives during the war on terror were also remembered and their relatives were awarded with special shields.

The role of political parties was appreciated and commendation certificates were presented to their representatives. The function was addressed by the DQP chief Malik jehan Alam, women's rights activist Shad Begum, educationist Muhammad Rahim Haqqani, social media star Afsar Afghan, ANP's leader Hussain Shah Yousafzai, Malik Nageeb Ahmad Jan, Malik Farhad Ali, representative of minorities' group Sudish Kumar, II activist



Hafiz Yaqubur Rehman and others.

Retired school principal Muhammad Hafizullah Khan was awarded the 'Dir Stars Award' in his role in promoting education, Haleem Asad in the field of journalism, DR Shuiab Khan for his healthcare services, advocate Sher Shah Khan in the field of law, Abaseen Yousafzai in literature, Ms Shad Begum for her human rights' services, Dr Syed Muhammad Ilyas for working for people with disabilities, scholar Dr Zahid Shah in research, Shafiqur Rehman in agriculture, famous cyclist Ms Samar Khan in sports, singer Humayun Khan in music, Bakht Zada Danish in poetry, Arshad Ghafoor in tourism, Dir Qaumi Jirga for peace building, Al-

Khidmat Foundation for social work and Dir Overseas Pakistanis' Association (Dopa) for local development.

The speakers lauded the DQM's role and said it had worked hard to unite different segments of society for collective efforts for peace and development. They said that personalities who worked brilliantly for peace should be honoured during their lifetime. The audience termed the DQP initiative a step forward for promoting love, brotherhood, peace and development. The DQP chief Malik Jehan Alam announced that the organization would continue to encourage the people of Dir for their humanitarian services in various fields.

IGFC South KP hosts Eid Milin party

F.P. Report

WANA: Addressing the Eid Milin party given by IGFC South KP Major General Haroon Hameed in honor of Ahmadzai Wazir tribal elders, scholars, journalists, the business community, and people belonging to different schools of thought, he said that they are striving for peace in South Waziristan and God willing, peace will be established very soon. Commandant South Waziristan Scouts, Muhammad Owais Shamim, was also present with them on this occasion.

He added that South Waziristan is opening up for international trade,

which will increase commercial activities and provide employment opportunities for people. Besides this, the government is also thinking of setting up small factories here, which will provide skills and livelihood to the youth. He suggested declaring the Agri Park as an export trade promotion zone and using it for international trade activities. He also mentioned that the Pak-Afghan border is expanding trade at Angar Ada Gate, and it will benefit all the people in the region. Major General Hameed Haroon said, "I invite those who take up arms to lay down arms and join the national stream. Whoever refuses will be dealt with

iron hands.

There will be no place to hide for any armed group in South Waziristan and the territory of Pakistan, and peace will be established here very soon, and we will see commercial activities and development at their best speed." Tribal elder Malik Ajmal Khan thanked Major General Haroon Hameed and said that Ahmadzai, the Minister of Tribes, is standing behind him, and there will be full cooperation and support. Malik Yar Muhammad marked the Wana Azam Warsak Sarakunda Road and assured full cooperation from the nation.

model eco-tourism resort with provision of enhanced facilities to tourists. Khanpoor Lake in Haripur is most suitable for water sports and paragliding. Tanda dam lake Kohat for ecotourism and Turbella lake Haripur for adventure sports.

Tanda Kohat, Jalozi Nowshera, Kundal Swabi, Chatri Haripur and Jangza Abbottabad have been selected for ecotourism and a road from Maidan to Bishigram lake to be constructed and jeep track at Kandal lake was already built. Waterfalls of Lamchar, Sajkot, Noori, Chajjian Haripur, Jarogo Swat, Lanchar Dir and Umbrella Abbottabad would be developed. As many as 10 camping pods were established at Thandyani Abbottabad, Sharan Naran Manshera, Bishigram and Gabin Jabba Swat, Yakhtangi Shangla, Sheikh Badin Lakki Marwat, Mahaban and Shaheed e Sar Buner, Bamburat Kalash Chitral and Alai Batagram to provide quality accommodation to tourists.

He said 10 more new camping pods would be established at Jarogo Asbshar, Sulatar Swat, Lashkargas Broghal and Surlaspur Shandur Upper Chitral, Kumrat Upper Dir, Kalam, Lilowani and Alpuri Shangla, Samani top Hangu/Orakzai, Larham Top Lower Dir and Bin Shahi Lower Dir. Four historical colonial era tracks' development are in pipelines including Thandyani-Nathiagali having 8, 200 feet height, 40km length and 1500

old trees belt, Thandyani-Biringali track, Dagri Bangla-Meera Jani-Nathiagali track and Kaghan- Mahnoor track starting from Shinkyari to Kund Bangla and onward to Shaheed Pani-Nadi Bangla to Musa Ka Musallah.

Four Integrated Tourism Zones (ITZ) at Mankiyal Swat, Thandyani Abbottabad, Ganol Manshera and Madaklasht Lower Chitral would be developed with a loan grant of USD 70 million from the World Bank for promotion of sustainable tourism. Jeepable tracks in 16 districts mostly in Malakand and Hazara divisions would be constructed to make these lakes accessible for families throughout the year, he maintained.

According to wildlife officials, Saiful-Malook lake spreading on 12,026 acres had been brought under the national park established under the preservation, protection and management act 1975. Under a mega project for Saiful-Malook national park, a parking complex and gate would be constructed besides purchase of machinery and equipment for its cleanliness. The government's pro-tourism policies had made Pakistan an ideal tourist destination in South Asia and huge foreign revenue could be generated by showcasing tourism and mountain treasures including the world's five highest mountain peaks including K-2 found here through digital technology to bolster rural economy and general employment for youth.



Ban Ki-moon urges army to end Myanmar violence

BANGKOK (AP): Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Tuesday urged Myanmar's ruling military to take the initiative in finding a way out of the country's violent political crisis, including releasing political detainees, after a surprise meeting with the army leader who seized power two years ago.

Ban met in the Myanmar capital Naypyitaw with the leader of the military government, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, and other top officials. His mission was made on behalf of a group of elder statesmen that engages in peacemaking and human rights initiatives around the world. Ban is the deputy chair of the group, which calls itself The Elders.

A statement released Tuesday by the group quoted Ban saying "I came to Myanmar to urge the military to adopt an immediate cessation of violence, and start constructive dialogue among all parties concerned." He described his talks as "exploratory." "With patient determination, I believe a way forward can be found out of the current crisis. The military must take the first steps," he said.

The statement said Ban, who flew to Bangkok from Naypyitaw, in his talks stressed the need to implement a peace plan by the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations — ASEAN — and a United Nations resolution to stop the violence between the military and the pro-democracy resistance forces following the army's 2021 ouster of the civilian government led by Aung San Suu Kyi. "ASEAN member states and the wider international community need to show unity and resolve in their commitment to peace and democracy in Myanmar, which is a source of serious international concern," Ban was quoted as saying.

The statement also said Ban "supported the international community's calls for the immediate release by the Myanmar military of all arbitrarily detained prisoners, for constructive dialogue, and for utmost restraint from all parties." The 77-year-old Suu Kyi was imprisoned for 33 years after the takeover on charges widely seen as being trumped up by the military to keep her from playing an active role in politics. Her trials were held behind closed doors, and the military has turned down requests from UN officials, foreign diplomats and other interested parties to see her.

Myanmar has been wracked by vio-

lence since the army's takeover, which prevented Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party from beginning a second term in office. The takeover was met with massive public opposition, which security forces quashed with deadly force, in turn triggering widespread armed resistance. Myanmar's military government has spurned previous outside initiatives calling for negotiations as an infringement on Myanmar's sovereignty, and generally describes the pro-democracy opposition as terrorists.

The Elders' statement said Ban warned that elections promised by the military must be held only under free and fair conditions. Holding elections under current conditions risks further violence and division, and the results not being recognized by the people of Myanmar, ASEAN and the wider international community, it said. State television MRTV reported that Ban and Min Aung Hlaing exchanged views on the situation in Myanmar in a "friendly, positive and open discussion." It did not report details of the meeting, which it said was also attended by the ministers of defense and foreign affairs.

The Elders statement did not say if Ban had made contact with Myanmar's main opposition group, the National Unity Government known as NUG which styles itself as the country's legitimate administrative body. Nay Phone Latt, an NUG spokesperson, told The Associated Press international leaders should know their hands will be stained with blood when they shake hands with the leader of the "terrorist army," referring to Ban Ki-Moon's meeting. "If they want to solve the problem of Myanmar, it is important not to ignore the will of the people of Myanmar," Nay Phone Latt said.

With little progress seen from previous peacemaking efforts, experts were pessimistic about Ban's initiative. "Without any concrete outcome, it's hard to see the value of this visit at this time. There may be more going on behind the scenes, but from the tone of the statement, it doesn't seem like it," Richard Horsey, a senior adviser to the Brussels-headquartered Crisis Group think tank, told AP. "And the prospects of a negotiated settlement in Myanmar are in any case slim - this is not a context where throwing another diplomat at the problem is likely to bring dividends."

Venezuela's Guaido expelled from Colombia

BOGOTA (AFP): Colombia expelled leading Venezuelan opposition figure Juan Guaido, hours after he arrived in Bogota for a conference on his crisis-torn country. Neither Guaido, recognized in 2019 by more than 50 countries as Venezuela's de facto leader, nor Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro were invited to attend the event.

The conference, organized by Colombia's President Gustavo Petro, seeks to restart negotiations between Venezuela's government and the opposition that began in Mexico City in 2021 but reached a deadlock in November. Venezuela's opposition, backed by many countries including the United States, did not recognize Maduro's 2018 re-election in a vote widely dismissed as fraudulent. The next year, Washington ramped up sanctions against Caracas, which were first imposed in 2015 over the brutal repression of anti-government protests.

Last month, a Venezuelan official said free presidential elections in 2024 were dependent on the lifting of sanctions. Colombia's foreign ministry said Guaido, who

arrived in Bogota in an "irregular manner", was taken to the capital city's El Dorado airport for a "departure on a commercial airline to the United States during the night." "The ticket had already been purchased by him," the statement added.

Under Petro's predecessor, right-wing president Ivan Duque, Colombia had been Guaido's main regional backer, breaking diplomatic ties with Maduro's government. The left-wing Petro reversed this decision, taking up instead a leading role in a process aimed at ending Venezuela's crisis through negotiations. Guaido said in a statement he had walked across the border from Venezuela to Colombia.

"I have just arrived in Colombia, in the same way as millions of Venezuelans before me -- on foot," he said. "I hope the summit can guarantee that the Maduro regime will return to the negotiation table in Mexico and that a credible timeline can be agreed upon for free and fair elections to be held as a solution for the conflict."

Guaido later posted a video on Twitter that he

appeared to have filmed from inside a plane. "After 60 hours on the road to get to Bogota, escaping the persecution of the dictatorship, defying the Maduro regime, they are taking me out of Colombia," he said. Even though he was not officially invited to attend the conference, Guaido had hoped to hold talks with visiting officials on the sidelines of the meeting.

The conference is set to bring together nearly two dozen delegations from countries in Latin America, North America and Europe in an attempt to unfreeze negotiations between the government and opposition. Guaido has also called for a protest to be held on Bogota's Plaza de Bolivar square, a short walk from the palace where the conference will take place. Guaido, who led a symbolic "interim government" from 2019 until January this year, has rejected calls by Colombia's Petro for sanctions against Venezuela to be lifted. Venezuela's divided opposition voted to disband its symbolic "interim government" in January and replaced Guaido as the head of a parallel congress made up of opposition lawmakers.

Lebanese, EU legal teams to cooperate in Central Bank probe

BEIRUT (AP): Lebanese authorities and a European judicial team on Tuesday agreed to exchange information about their separate corruption probes of Lebanon's Central Bank governor, officials said. The announcement came during a visit by a European delegation from France, Germany, and Luxembourg — its third visit to Lebanon to interrogate suspects and witnesses in an ongoing investigation of Governor Riad Salameh and associates over several financial crimes.

The officials met after Raja Salameh, the brother of the 72-year-old embattled governor, did not attend a scheduled hearing on Tuesday morning, citing an illness, Lebanese judicial officials said. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the case. The governor and his brother are accused of embezzlement, money laundering, and

illicit enrichment. The European delegation first visited Lebanon in January to interrogate Riad Salameh and others from Lebanon's financial and banking sector, including some of the governor's close associates, in an ongoing probe into the laundering of some \$330 million. The three European governments in March 2022 froze more than \$130 million in assets linked to the investigation.

Separately, France has questioned the chairman of Lebanon's AM Bank, Marwan Kheirredine, on several charges, including money laundering. Reports in Lebanon say the governor and his associates had used commercial banks to siphon off public money. In a two-day visit in March, the European delegation questioned Riad Salameh for eight hours, mainly about the Central Bank's assets and investments outside Lebanon, including

about a Paris apartment and Forry Associates Ltd, a brokerage firm owned by Raja Salameh, who is to appear before French prosecutors in mid-May.

Salameh has repeatedly denied all allegations against him, insisting that his wealth comes from his previous job as an investment banker for Merrill Lynch, inherited properties, and through investments. Other legal proceedings against Salameh are also underway in Lebanon.

In late February, Beirut's public prosecutor, Raja Hamoush, charged Riad Salameh, his brother, and their close associate Marianne Hoayek with corruption, including embezzling public funds, forgery, illicit enrichment, money-laundering and violation of tax laws. Salameh who has held his post for almost 30 years was once hailed as the guardian of Lebanon's financial stability.

US envoy tells Lavrov to release US journalist

WASHINGTON (AFP): Washington's United Nations ambassador made a direct plea to Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to release a detained US journalist and a former US Marine. Linda Thomas-Greenfield's comments came as Lavrov chaired a UN Security Council meeting at the world body's headquarters in New York.

"I am calling on you, right now, to release Paul Whelan and Evan Gershkovich immediately, to let Paul and Evan come home. And to cease this barbaric practice once and for all," said Thomas-Greenfield. She said the men were being used as "political bargaining chips" and "human pawns."

"Using people as pawns is a strategy of weakness. These are not the actions of a responsible country. And while Russia plays political games, real people suffer."

As Whelan's sister looked on from the gallery of the UN chamber, Thomas-Greenfield urged Lavrov to "look into her eyes and see her suffering." "I want you to see what it's like to miss your brother for four years. To know he is locked up, in a Russian penal colony, simply because you want to use him for your own ends," said the US envoy. Whelan was arrested in 2018 and handed a 16-year sentence on espionage charges that he denies.

Last month, Gershkovich was arrested in Russia and charged with espionage. The reporter, his employer The Wall Street Journal, and US officials strongly denied the allegations. Gershkovich, who has also worked for AFP, is the first foreign journalist arrested on spying allegations since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

'Families await news of their loved ones'

KHARTOUM (BBC): A woman whose family is trapped in war-torn Sudan says she has "not stopped crying" while she waits for news. Sherien Elsheikh from Bristol said her husband, parents and sisters are trapped in the country and unable to escape. More than 400 people have died in fighting between rival Sudanese military factions in the country.

The UK government said it was starting to evacuate British nationals, but for Mrs Elsheikh anguish remains. "[My husband] he's locked inside the house, he can't go out at all. My mum, my dad and my sisters - all of them there, so I am feeling lots of pain. "The fighting is so close to them that they can't go out to buy food. They are very frightened. "I haven't stopped crying since yesterday." There is also a great deal of frustration. After contacting the Sudanese embassy in London, and filling out forms in the hope it will help her husband, she said she had heard nothing from government officials.

"Just a confirmation email from them, that's all." Like Mrs Elsheikh, Fadhilraman Mohamed from Bristol is also anxious for news: "My wife went out there about 25 days ago and she was due back today. "But with everything [going on], we are waiting and wondering where she is now. "We have five kids and they are very worried. Even this morning they don't want to go to school. "Every time they keep watching out for news about her.

"It's very sad and very difficult for me to work, you know? To help families, Mohammed Elsharif, from the Sudanese Community Association of Bristol, said he will be seeking assistance from local MPs. "I will contact all of them. "I think it's only through the Foreign Office that the communication can happen and people aren't getting any response from the embassy in Sudan either, so a really difficult situation." British passport holders are being told by the UK government that RAF flights will leave from an airfield near the capital, Khartoum. The prime minister said priority would be given to the most vulnerable, including families with children.



BANGKOK: Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, head of the military council, exchanging views with Ban Ki Moon, former UN Secretary-General, during their meeting.

Haiti's gang violence nears conflict, help needed

UNITED NATIONS (AP): The United Nations chief urged the immediate deployment of an international armed force in Haiti to stem escalating gang violence and the country's worst human rights crisis in decades, warning in a new report that insecurity in the capital "has reached levels comparable to countries in armed conflict."

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued an urgent appeal for a specialized armed force to stop the crisis in Latin America's poorest country last October at the request of Prime Minister Ariel Henry and the country's Council of Ministers. But at a UN Security Council meeting in January neither the United States, which has been criticized for previous interventions in Haiti, nor Canada showed any interest in leading such a force, and there are no signs that opposition has changed. The international community has instead opted to impose sanctions and send military equipment and other resources.

Guterres reiterated in a report to the Security Council circulated that deploying an international force remains "crucial" to help Haitian authorities curb the violence and rights abuses, restore the rule of law, and create conditions for the holding of national elections. The council is scheduled to discuss the report. Haiti's beleaguered National Police Force is facing increasing attacks resulting in growing rates of officers abandoning their posts, absent, retiring and more recently applying to humanitarian parole programs in the United States, the secretary-general said. The programs are open to Haitians seeking safe haven due to

conditions in the country.

"Since the beginning of 2023, 22 police officers have been killed by gangs," Guterres said. "These trends are expected to accelerate unless efforts are redoubled to urgently equip and train police, recruit new officers and improve working conditions to retain existing personnel." As of March 31, he said, the national police force stood at 14,772 officers but according to the police administration only about 13,200 personnel are available for active duties because of desertions, suspensions due to investigations, and other absences.

Since the assassination of President Jovenel Moise in July 2021, Haiti's gangs have grown more powerful and violent. In December, the UN estimated that gangs controlled 60% of Haiti's capital, but most people on the streets in Port-au-Prince say that number is closer to 100%. "Rough estimates by the national police indicate that there are currently seven major gang coalitions and approximately 200 affiliated groups," Guterres said. "Gangs ambushed and attacked national police infrastructure, causing serious damage to several police facilities and burning others to the ground."

Compounding the gang warfare is the country's political crisis: Haiti was stripped of all democratically elected institutions when the terms of the remaining 10 senators expired in early January. Secretary-General Guterres said in the report that Haiti is facing escalating kidnappings and violent crimes committed by gangs competing to expand territorial control throughout the capital Port-au-Prince. He said the violence has spread to previously unaffected

neighborhoods and several municipalities in the Artibonite region, which is north of the West region where Port-au-Prince is located.

He said that during the first quarter of 2023 reported homicides rose by 21% to 815 cases from 673 during the last quarter of 2022 while kidnappings increased by 63% to 637 during the same period from 391 in the last three months of 2022. "The human rights situation of those living in gang-controlled areas remains appallingly poor," he said, pointing to killings, attacks, sexual violence and snipers on rooftops frequently firing at people in their homes and on the streets. In their pursuit of more territory, he said, gangs also continued to use rape and other forms of sexual violence "to instill fear and assert control over communities" with women and girls disproportionately affected.

Calling the socio-economic outlook for Haiti "dire," Guterres cited a World Bank forecast that the economy is expected to contract for the fifth year by 1.1% in 2022-2023. He also warned that food insecurity is at "an all-time high" with 4.9 million Haitians in serious and critical states of malnutrition, "which is four times more than in 2017." On the political front, the secretary-general said action to address gang violence must be accompanied by concrete steps to resolve the political crisis.

He expressed hope that the three-member High Transitional Council installed in February "will help to generate the consensus required to find a way out of the political crisis" though his report cites calls for broadening efforts to reach agreement on a road map to elections.

UN fears more 'displacement' from Sudan despite cease-fire

GENEVA (AP): The UN refugee agency warned Tuesday of "further displacement" of people from Sudan after thousands streamed into neighboring Chad and South Sudan despite a tenuous cease-fire between the two warring Sudanese generals battling for control of the country.

The fighting has plunged Sudan into chaos, pushing the already heavily aid-dependent African nation to the brink of collapse. Before the clashes, the UN estimated that a third of Sudan's population — or about 16 million people — needed assistance, a figure that is likely to increase. Since the outbreak of the fighting on April 15, at least 20,000 Sudanese have fled into Chad and some 4,000 South Sudanese refugees — who had been living in Sudan — have returned to their home country, UNHCR spokeswoman Olga Sarrado said Tuesday.

The figures could rise, she cautioned. Sarrado did not have figures for the five other countries neighboring Sudan, but UNHCR has cited unspecified numbers of those fleeing Sudan arriving in Egypt. "The fighting looks set to trigger further displacement both within and outside the country," she said, speaking at a UN briefing in Geneva.

The UNHCR was scaling up its operations, she said, even as foreign governments have raced to evacuate their embassy staff and citizens from Sudan. Many Sudanese have desperately sought ways to escape the chaos, fearing late their all-out battle for power once evacuations are completed. Several previous cease-fires have failed, although intermittent lulls during the weekend's major Muslim holiday allowed for dramatic evacuations of hundreds of diplomats, aid workers and other foreigners by air and land.

More than 800,000 South Sudanese refugees live in Sudan, a quarter of them in the capital of Khartoum, where they are directly affected by the fighting. Overall, Sudan hosts 1.1 million refugees, according to the UNHCR. There are also more than 3 million internally displaced persons, mostly in Darfur, a region mired in decades-

long conflict, it said. Along with the refugees, the UN migration agency said there are 300,000 registered migrants, as well as tens of thousands of unregistered migrants in the country.

Marie-Helene Verney, the UNHCR's chief in South Sudan, said from its capital of Juba that "the planning figure that we have for the most likely scenario is 125,000 returns of South Sudanese refugees into South Sudan, and 45,000 refugees," Sudanese fleeing the fighting. The UN Population Fund has said that the fighting threatens tens of thousands of pregnant women, including 24,000 women expected to give birth in the coming weeks. For 219,000 pregnant women across the country it is too dangerous to venture outside their homes to seek urgent care in hospitals and clinics amid the clashes, the agency said.

Dozens of hospitals have shuttered in Khartoum and elsewhere across the country due to the fighting, and dwindling medical and fuel supplies according to the Sudanese Doctors' Syndicate. "If the violence

does not stop, there is a danger that the health system will collapse," the UN agency warned last Friday. The International Committee of the Red Cross welcomed the announced cease-fire as a "potential lifesaver for civilians" trapped in their homes in fighting-hit areas.

"It's clear that this cease-fire must be implemented up and down the chain of command and that it must hold for it to give a real respite to civilians suffering from the fighting," said Patrick Youssef, ICRC's regional director for Africa. He called on the international community to help find a "durable political solution to end the bloodshed." Spokesman Jens Laerke of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, said it has been forced to "reduce our footprint" because of the fighting, and he pointed to "acute shortages of food, water, medicines and fuel and limited communications and electricity" and new reports of looting of humanitarian warehouses and aid stockpiles.

Kenya starvation cult: The unbearable stench of mass graves

NAIROBI (BBC): In the middle of a forest not far from Kenya's coast, piles of fresh earth topped with crucifixes await the attention of forensic experts. About 14 mass graves have so far been dug up and Hussein Khalid has spent the past four days watching people exhume dozens of bodies.

"The stench is unbearable," he tells the BBC. The dead are thought to have been members of the Good News International Church. It is believed they were persuaded to starve themselves in order to reach heaven before what they were told was going to be the end of the world. Mr Khalid runs the rights organisation Haki Africa, which took the authorities to the grave sites

at the end of last week after being tipped off by some locals.

The place is "quite hidden" inside Shakahola forest and he says that he and his team needed to cut back shrubs and bushes in order to drive there. Eighty-nine bodies have been exhumed so far, but the final count could be much higher as the Red Cross has said that said 112 people have been reported missing. Mr Khalid estimates that there are around 60 mass grave sites in the area and only a quarter of those have been examined. Police say that 29 survivors have been found so far, but it seems that not all of them wanted to be rescued, so convinced they were about what they

were told about the end of the world.

Mr Khalid came across a woman in her late 20s "looking extremely frail" with sunken eyes. But she did not want to be helped. "When we tried to administer first aid to give her sips of water with glucose with a spoon, she completely refused. She sealed her mouth shut and she was signifying that she doesn't want any help," Mr Khalid says, adding that the woman was now being treated in hospital. He also came across a man in his 40s who was able to talk.

"He said he didn't need any saving, and that he was in his senses and he knows what he's doing and he should be left alone. He even called us enemies of him going to heaven." That man has also been taken to hospital. Victor Kaudo from the Malindi Community Human Rights Centre, which is helping exhume the bodies, says he thinks there are about 150 bodies. He said his organisation had been contacted by a whistleblower who wanted help rescuing his three children.

"It was quite unfortunate because we only rescued one whom we found in a house, tied with a rope," he told the BBC. "And this kid we believe to be six years of age. But his sister and brother were already dead and they had been buried the previous day before we got there."

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Spate of terrorism, rationality and stratagem

A suspected suicide attack at CTD Police Station in Kabal, Swat has resulted in the martyrdom of 12 policemen and 57 people including policemen and civilians sustained serious injuries. According to the details, two consecutive blasts totally collapsed an old building comprising offices and an ammunition store inside the police station complex on Monday evening. The senior Police official told the media that the cause of the blasts could not be identified so far as the stored ammunition might cause a blast due to negligence, whereas the possibility of a suicide attack could also not be ruled out at this point in time.

A fierce battle between the outlawed terror outfits and KP Security Forces is continuing over the past few months after the banned TTP called off its ceasefire in November last year. The security forces are haunting down the terrorist groups in Erstwhile FATA and settled districts adjacent to the Pak-Afghan border. The banned outfits are on the run and trying to regain their foothold by continuous attacks against the LEAs and Police. The reports suggest that one hundred and twenty-five police personnel embraced martyrdom and 212 others sustained injuries in about 25 militant attacks across the province during the first quarter of 2023. The nationwide death tally stood at 358 while injuries reached over 496 people when it comes to terrorist activities in Balochistan, Sindh, and other parts of the country. The Police Officials claimed that the force was carrying out intelligence-based operations against the militants and the scourage of terrorism would be eliminated from the province very soon,

The statistics regarding the terror incidents, casualties, injuries, and financial/property losses of the LEAs portray a grim law and order situation in various parts of the country. Despite multiple successes including the busting of terror cells, killing, and arrests of senior terrorist commanders, the performance of Police and LEAs was not upto the par as this frontline force failed to protect itself from terrorist attacks and casualties of Police during the previous quarter was one of the highest in the past decades. There had been major attacks on Police facilities including CTD Complex DI Khan, Peshawar Police Lines, Mianwali, and Luki Marwat, while the Swat CTD incident was one of the major setbacks and failures for the Police department over the past few months. Ironically, despite successive massacres and the revelation of serious security lapses in the Police system and other LEAs, no accountability of wrongdoers, no improvement, and institutional reforms/ training in the Police system had been made so far. Hence, the Country's political leaders, senior commanders of the LEAs, and the public used to mourn over every new occurrence and promise to take revenge and forget the issue until another catastrophe tragedy happens.

Unfortunately, neither the Pakistani political leadership nor military strategists and intelligentsia could access the full extent and gravity of the problem of terrorism and extremism that has taken deep routes in our society. A huge chunk of the population in various parts of the country had been radicalized due to policies of the past governments. Historically, Pakistani rulers had used religion for political purposes and state-sponsored jihad in Afghanistan and Kashmir not only radicalized the society but encouraged the religious clerics and Military Generals to preach jihad and lead armed groups to realize their nefarious political goals. It is high time that the political leadership feels its responsibility and adopts a consensus nationwide strategy to address the grave consequences of its previous policies, regulate all educational and religious activities, enforce strict laws, ban hate speech, and promote tolerance, and brotherhood in the society. All successive governments put off this essential task to their successors while the catastrophe multiplied over the years and reached an almost irreversible peak. Therefore, the incumbent government must initiate full-fledged counter-terrorism and counter-extremism campaigns across the country so these perils could be eliminated from our soil once and for all.

How did Sudan go from casting off despotic rule to this?

FOUR years ago, almost to the day, the people of Sudan were celebrating a revolution after overthrowing longtime dictator Omar al-Bashir. Now the East African country faces the possibility of a complete collapse similar to the chaos we see today in Yemen or Libya. On Saturday, rival military factions began fighting each other in the capital of Khartoum. The two sides battled for control of the nation's airports, bases and military compounds. Violence quickly spilled into the streets and across the country. Some 45 million Sudanese effectively are held hostage and are unable to venture out of their homes for fear of being killed in the crossfire. At least 180 people have perished in the fighting, including three World Food Programme humanitarian workers.

The conflict pits two bitter rivals and their powerful armed forces against each other. On one side are the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF), led by Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. On the other side are the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a paramilitary group led by Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemeti. There is no good side in this conflict. Both have been accused of a long litany of human rights violations.

How did Sudan go from casting off despotic rule and creating a fledgling democracy a few years ago to teetering on the brink of state collapse? On April 11, 2019, Sudan's longtime dictator, Bashir, was overthrown. The cause of Bashir's removal was months of protests led by Sudan's unions, which spurred a military coup from the SAF and RSF. Both Burhan and Hemeti joined forces to remove their former boss. It was a moment of promise because there was hope for democracy. I remember walking around the "sit-in" - a giant carnival of freedom in the middle of Khartoum that protesters had blocked off to demand

change. It was electric.

But social movements such as the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA) - the union behind the protest - often struggle to translate the momentum of their demonstrations into real political power. The reason for this is, in part, structural. Social movements such as the SPA are often based on grassroots activism. A dictator can

challenges, the pro-democracy forces struggled to bargain with the disciplined military.

Any momentum that pro-democracy advocates had during the negotiations was stamped out in June 2019 when RSF soldiers violently dispersed the sit-in. More than 100 people were killed. After the June

Justin Lynch

minister. Burhan was the head of state and wanted to preserve the powers of the SAF.

Hamdok often told me that revolutions come in cycles. The 2019 removal of Bashir was a high point of revolution, and he saw his job as making as many reforms as possible before the low tide of counterrevolution swept him away. Hamdok found

The way that the constitution was written meant that Hamdok had limited power as the prime minister. Burhan was the head of state and wanted to preserve the powers of the SAF. Hamdok often told me that revolutions come in cycles. The 2019 removal of Bashir was a high point of revolution, and he saw his job as making as many reforms as possible before the low tide of counterrevolution swept him away. Hamdok found that the legacy of 30 years of dictatorship meant that Sudan's political and economic models were dilapidated. But Burhan and Hemeti blocked the big reforms that Hamdok wanted to make. Outside Khartoum violence grew. Parts of Sudan such as Darfur saw a new round of conflict between ethnic groups orchestrated by RSF troops. More than 430,000 people were displaced due to conflict in Sudan, mostly in Darfur.

Soldiers did not hide the atrocities they committed against civilians. I remember drinking tea with a soldier aligned with the RSF at his house in Darfur as he explained why he had recently participated in the burning down of a village from another ethnic group. The soldier reasoned that a member of his tribe had been killed in an altercation, so the RSF-aligned forces took revenge by torching a village that had been home to 30,000 people. At least 163 people died. Tensions between the SAF and RSF grew. Burhan viewed Hemeti and his RSF forces as upstart usurpers from Darfur who were undisciplined. Hemeti on the other hand believed that it was time for Darfur to lead Sudan.

arrest one or two leaders of an organization but not an entire country. However, once a dictator is overthrown, these kinds of social movements often struggle to build the leadership hierarchy necessary during political negotiations that take place. Like many other movements, Sudan's protesters were unable to translate mobilization into political power. Civilian leaders entered into a negotiation with the military over the future of the country shortly after Bashir fell in April 2019. The two sides were not evenly matched. Because of these leadership

massacre and the leadership challenges, a transitional constitution was signed in August 2019 that gave the SAF and RSF most of the power in Sudan. Burhan was the head of state, and Hemeti was placed in an elevated political position. Elections were promised in 2022, but few believed they would actually happen. The transitional period began in August 2019, and I interviewed Abdalla Hamdok, the civilian prime minister, several times for a book that I co-wrote on Sudan's revolution. The way that the constitution was written meant that Hamdok had limited power as the prime

minister. Hamdok found that the legacy of 30 years of dictatorship meant that Sudan's political and economic models were dilapidated. But Burhan and Hemeti blocked the big reforms that Hamdok wanted to make. Outside Khartoum violence grew. Parts of Sudan such as Darfur saw a new round of conflict between ethnic groups orchestrated by RSF troops. More than 430,000 people were displaced due to conflict in Sudan, mostly in Darfur. Soldiers did not hide the atrocities they committed against civilians. I remember drinking

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2021 coup, the United States and United Nations pushed a worse version of the transitional constitution in Sudan. They argued that it was the best way to bring democracy. The idea was to restart the transitional period, but I and many others argued it was shortsighted and wouldn't work. Returning to a government led by Burhan was clearly not going to usher in democracy. If the plan ended in a coup the first time, why would it work the second time?

Some activists stopped partnering with the US and came to see the UN mission as a roadblock to democracy because of these policies. I felt sorry when I spoke with the best American and foreign diplomats, who also understood the international policy in Sudan wouldn't work. They saw the flaws but felt powerless to dissent and were forced to carry out decisions made many levels above them. What preceded this weekend's outbreak of clashes was a controversial part of the international policy that tried to unify the SAF and RSF. The idea was to make a single army, but neither Hemeti nor Burhan wanted to give up the power they had amassed. The plan to unify the military hadn't worked in similar contexts. It was a repeat of the 2013 and 2016 unification processes that took place in South Sudan with similarly bloody results. Instead, the tenuous relationship between Burhan and Hemeti boiled over due to the pressure. It can be easy to look at the recent history of "revolutions" in countries such as Myanmar, Tunisia, Egypt and Sudan and conclude that they eventually backfire. I don't agree. I learned from Sudanese activists that a nation's political fortune is an active battle. We can one day hope that Sudan sees dreams of democracy come true. But right now, the Sudanese people are just hoping to survive the day. The lesson from Sudan is that a revolution is only the start of change, not the end.

CNN

The seeds of Sudan's collapse were sown decades ago

THE speed with which Sudan unravelled was the first indication that it had all been building up for a long time. The country's collapse is the result of a series of failures, complexities and complacencies that have been rumbling away in the background for so long that those living with them assumed they would continue on for ever. That was until a paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), and the country's army went to war over who runs the country - and trapped the Sudanese people between them.

The country's capital, Khartoum, has become a war zone, with surreal scenes of tanks, missile strikes and plumes of smoke rising throughout the city. The conflict erupted exactly four years after a colossal revolution succeeded, against all odds, in removing President Omar al-Bashir after almost 30 years of dictatorship, economic pillage and genocide

- and in doing so, created a power vacuum over which the two forces are fighting.

Sudan's tragedy is that of a country that dared to ask for more and is now being punished for it. It joins a grim procession of Arab states that, over the past 10 years, overthrew dictators only to see hopes for democracy dashed. If a post-revolution nation was lucky, as happened in Egypt under Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the old regime simply re-established power, except this time becoming even more brutal and paranoid. In the worst-case scenarios that played out in Libya, Yemen and Syria, the state descended into civil war, creating an exodus of refugees making the perilous journey to Europe.

But Sudan's is also the tragedy of a country where a reckoning has been long overdue. Last week's events started 20 years ago, in the marginalised western region of Darfur. A rebellion against the government was brutally suppressed by a group of fighters and raiders called the

Janjaweed. Bashir, a military man who came to power through an Islamist-backed military coup in 1989, was unwilling to send his precious army into the fray, and instead stoked tribal and ethnic differences and supported the Janjaweed to act as his proxy. Hundreds of thousands died, women were systematically raped and millions were displaced.

The genocide drew international scrutiny and sanctions - and the international criminal court indicted Bashir. But nothing within Sudan changed. The Janjaweed formalised into the RSF and became more powerful under the warlord Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (known as Hemeti), whose ambitions grew as Bashir gave him free rein to accumulate influence and assets, as long as he protected him. Hemeti did not keep his side of the bargain and piggybacked on the demands for democracy in 2019 - and along with the army, pushed Bashir

Nesrine Malik

aside.

There are other protagonists, too, who have locked in Sudan's fate. The international community applied clumsy sanctions that did little but weaken the Sudanese people's capacity to resist their despotic government; a cynical cohort of undemocratic governments and monarchies in north Africa and the Middle East backed both the army and militia after the 2019 revolution, in order to extinguish the prospect of a democracy flourishing in their back yard; and lately, Russia has partnered with the Sudanese militia to extract gold and forge security interests.

It's painful to confront, but it's not all the responsibility of local leaders and international players. At home and among those who are now caught in the crossfire, there was co-optation and a shortsighted belief that what happened outside Khartoum didn't matter. Bashir's regime created a large class that thrived under his govern-

ment and his patronage encouraged them to wilfully ignore events. The war that now tears Khartoum apart is just a taster of what several regions across the country reaped for years, as the capital enjoyed peace and times of prosperity. This disconnect fostered bitter resentments, fractured national identity and maintained a vast lawless hinterland in which mercenaries and warlords thrived.

And so the brief period of hope that Sudan experienced in the wake of the 2019 revolution was soon thwarted by reality. Slogans calling for democracy, even if they were momentarily chanted across the land, were soon drowned out by demands from the different factions, rebel groups, civilian parties and embedded elite interests who all had a different idea of the Sudan that should emerge after the revolution.

This might sound all too much like an obituary for the country of my birth. But it is an attempt, per-

haps a naive one, to plot some sort of future for Sudan by situating this conflict in a wider context of global irresponsibility and local dereliction. I dare to think of that postwar future because something new did emerge in the 2019 revolution: a determination that the Sudanese people would no longer accept military rule, no matter how large a class of beneficiaries it creates. That resolve was paid for with the lives of hundreds who have died at the hands of security forces in the last four years, demanding the ejection of the army and all militias from power.

To that tally, hundreds more are now being added as the Sudanese ushered in Eid by sheltering from the bombs and bullets of two parties that never had the people's interests at heart. It is a dark moment, no doubt. But perhaps there can be some hope, if it means that once and for all the Sudanese people understand that peace for some will never endure, unless there is peace for all.

The only glimmer of hope in Sudan

Maria Maalouf

THE outbreak of violence in Sudan last week, which is now simmering between the country's two most powerful military leaders and their forces, was sadly predictable. The alliance of convenience between the two warlords - built on a shared contempt for the democratic aspirations of Sudanese civilians - has crumbled into a battle for supremacy, in which civilians suffer collateral losses.

After the popular revolt that toppled Omar Bashir in 2019, Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan - the commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces - and Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo, aka Hemeti - the commander of the Rapid Support Forces - overcame bureaucratic and ethnic prejudices by championing a common cause. Unfortunately, their partnership was built on undermining, delaying and obstructing Sudan's transition to democratic civilian rule. The two leaders

sought to evade accountability for crimes dating back to the genocide in Darfur and the recent massacre of more than 120 unarmed protesters in June 2019.

Above all, their arrangement was based on the shared understanding that the Sudanese army would never be accountable to civilian authorities. But they have yet to decide which leader will end up at the top once civilians are permanently sidelined. For the Sudanese army and the Rapid Support Forces, the partnership has been very successful. They pretended to be partners of the Sudanese civil parties while exploiting their bickering; they have derided international partners who support a civilian-military transitional government; and they pretended to be responsible parties on the world stage by pledging to participate in counterterrorism operations and declaring their support for the Abraham Accords and normalizing relations with Israel.

The Sudanese Resistance

Committees - the tireless, decentralized protest movements that were the primary engine of Bashir's ouster - generally remained suspicious of the two military leaders. Still, the international community adopted what it convinced itself was the only realistic approach - dealing with the two warlords. The Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces were firmly embedded in all aspects of Sudanese life. Dagalo, in particular, sought to enrich himself, including through mining schemes with the Russians. Avoiding severe consequences for repeated acts of impunity that might have led to change, the West has instead appeased and courted the two warlords.

In October 2021, during Jeffrey Feltman's tenure as the first US special envoy to the Horn of Africa, he and his team of American diplomats held a series of meetings to address what Al-Burhan and Dagalo

instigated were their concerns about the transitional arrangements. In a closing session that included leaders and civilian Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, the US delegation presented ideas for easing tensions and addressing some of the leaders' concerns to renew momentum behind the civil-military partnership. The two commanders and Hamdok adhered to the plan proposed by the Americans. But five hours later, despite US support for the compromises they favored, the two leaders staged a coup, arresting Hamdok, his government and dozens of others. The American team tried to work with the two commanders in good faith, but their move showed that they never intended to reciprocate. Since then, history has repeated itself over and over again - the armed forces and RSF leaderships have made commitments, only to break them later. More recently, the

UN, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development facilitated discussions on forming a civilian government.

The Quartet - the US, the UK, Saudi Arabia and the UAE - helped broker a framework agreement. One can argue whether the formation of a civilian government in early April, as planned during these discussions, would be sufficiently credible in the eyes of the resistance committees. But that is all in the past now, as the Sudanese army and the RSF have given up on negotiations and decided to go after each other instead. Al-Burhan and Dagalo seem to be fighting a fight to the death.

With impressive speed, regional leaders agreed to send a team of three heads of state to Khartoum, showing that Sudan's neighbors know that the region, too, would suffer in the event of an all-out civil war. The African Union, the UN, the EU and the US can be expected to support this ini-

tiative, and such support will be essential. But given that the international community has been deeply tarnished by its insistence on working with the same leaders responsible for the recent violence, the region will have to take the lead.

A ceasefire based on power-sharing between the two warlords will not be stable and it is not easy to ignore the Sudanese people's aspirations for democracy and civilian rule. Even at the peak of Al-Burhan and Dagalo's partnership, brute force did not defeat the resistance committees. Until now, civilians in Sudan have been facing a united front composed of Al-Burhan and Dagalo. Assuming it survives, it is understood that the civilian authority will better confront a security apparatus that is likely to be divided and fractured and less able or willing to impose its rule. This outcome may be unlikely, but it is the only glimmer of hope one can find in this horrific tragedy.

The Pentagon leaks reveal the rot at the heart of US intelligence - but they haven't hurt Ukraine

Frank Ledwidge

SO far this century, there have been three major public "compromises" of US intelligence material. The first - the WikiLeaks series initiated by Chelsea Manning - revealed the mayhem at the heart of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Edward Snowden's vast cache uncovered the US state's campaign of unlawful surveillance against its own people. Over the past week, we have seen yet another collection of secret documents ruffle the feathers of US intelligence.

Of the three sets of leaks, the most recent is, in itself, the least politically damaging. But what they demonstrate again is the dangerous self-created and continuing rot at the heart of the US intelligence system: the combination of over-classification and the widespread availability of access to secret material. Given the nature of the documents available so far, most of which seem to be daily updates and analysis, there seems to be little operationally damaging intelligence. Most significant perhaps is the "revelation" that US intelligence was spying on allies such as South Korea and Israel. Any government leader with significant links to the US who believes their ally is not keeping a close eye on them needs to fire their counter-intelligence advisers. It therefore should have come as no surprise to President Zelenskyy that he was also on the receiving end of US surveillance. As for the UK, no one should have been shocked by the news that the only UK

troops not subject to any form of effective democratic oversight - special forces - are deployed in Ukraine in considerable numbers.

It is unlikely that these people (and their counterparts from elsewhere in Europe and the US) are directly involved in combat; rather, they are training Ukrainian soldiers and assisting in planning operations. While it would be difficult for Russia to argue that their presence denoted direct involvement, should the opportunity present itself it could suit Russia to do so, nonetheless. Also of some significance are the concerns expressed in the leaks that Ukraine may "fall short" in its long-awaited spring offensive. While much has been made of this, General Mark Milley, the chairman of the US chiefs of staff, has recently made similar views clear in public. More importantly, the leak represents another own goal by an intelligence bureaucracy with a pathologically confused attitude to information management. A rational approach to access to secret information is based around classification according to reasonably clear definitions of various levels of secrecy; distinguishing and defining "confidential", "secret" or "top secret", for instance.

So far so good; the US does this well. This should be accompanied by a "need to know" approach. In other words, "Does a person or institution with access really need to know this to function effectively?" One might

be given to wonder why a junior reservist airman in Cape Cod, Massachusetts - if indeed he was the source of the Discord leaks - should "need to know" about Ukrainian plans to strike Russia, or the political machinations of the Israeli intelligence services.

The answer, of course, is that he doesn't - but has access anyway. The reason for this lies in two countervailing but powerful impulses that, taken together, are fatal to secrecy. On the one hand, US military and intelligence personnel have a serious, almost paranoid, habit of over-classification - treating anodyne military information in much the same way as genuinely sensitive material. As Bill Burns, the director of the CIA, put it last Tuesday: "There is a serious problem of over-classification." The situation is compounded by a system that then sprays that classified information to huge numbers of people with security clearances. An astonishing 1.2 million US government employees have access to top-secret information. A further 1.6 million can read material that is merely "secret". The real surprise is how apparently few huge leaks have occurred.

Apparently, The worry for the US, and by extension western intelligence organisations, is that there is a real possibility that they have occurred. The kind of leaks we have seen from Manning, Snowden or in the Discord files are politically embarrassing, but are they really damaging?

Breathless claims by officials and politicians that "lives are at risk" are likely to be specious or "significantly overwrought", as with previously publicly acknowledged leaks. Indeed, a case can be made that the Discord leaks are rather more damaging to Russia than to any western power. Consider the extent of information revealed about Russia's internal confusion, with the security services arguing with the defence ministry over proper death counts, for instance. The motivations for Manning, Snowden and the person behind the latest leaks may differ. They have in common that all were content for their material to be publicised. Literally everyone knows what has been released. Really serious leaks are not publicised, by anyone. They are kept very, very secret. These may well have happened, we just don't know about it.

While Russia's intelligence agencies have given every recent appearance of being inspired more by Inspector Clouseau than The Americans, they have a long history of highly effective work. And the capabilities of China's ministry of state security and relatively new strategic support force dwarf those of Russia. Rather than fulminating about the latest embarrassment and casting about for people to blame, the US intelligence "community" needs to get busy sorting out the systemic vulnerabilities it has created for itself. It can be sure that Russia, China and others are working very hard to exploit them.

The Guardian



This Eid, we remember Syria's disappeared

Fatima Sleiman

MY life was shattered on September 14, 2014, when my son, Samer Reda Abdelfattah was seized by the Syrian regime. Samer was just 29 years old when he was detained. A father of three, he is a kind and respectful man, loved by everyone around him. His youngest child was only five months old when Samer was taken from us.

I will never forget the last time I heard from my son. He left our home early in the morning after the Fajr prayer. Samer worked as a bus driver and that day he was transporting students from Atarib to Mamoun University in Aleppo when he was stopped at a regime checkpoint and taken into custody. The last time we heard from Samer he was still at the checkpoint. His father called him at 11am to ask him to collect groceries from Aleppo on his way home. Samer acted as though nothing was happening, he had no reason to suspect otherwise.

Minutes later, we received a call from a man at the checkpoint. He told us Samer had been detained. My other son rushed to the checkpoint and begged for Samer's release, but he was told to leave or risk being taken, too. It was heartbreaking for him to have to leave his brother in danger. The moment I heard the news that my son had been detained, my heart sank and I started to pray. I have not stopped praying since. We have tried everything to secure Samer's release but military officials repeatedly tell us they don't know why Samer has been taken and that we must wait.

Samer has now been gone for eight and a half years. Although we cannot

be sure that he is alive, my heart tells me that he is. Ramazan is an especially difficult time for our family - I am filled with bitter-sweet memories of Samer. Our time together was always joyful, as he had a knack for telling jokes and lifting everyone's spirits.

One of his favourite things about Ramazan was gathering around the iftar table with our family. He would often ask me to prepare him any dish with wings that could fly, and we would share a laugh over his love for grilled chicken. Samer also had a sweet tooth and adored knafeh, although he was always gracious when I made other desserts and said they were lovely.

He was a genuinely kind person, and his absence has left a void at our iftar table. To honour Samer's memory, I prepare his favourite dishes and set aside his portion to donate to those in need. Four months ago, we received news from a former detainee from Daraa recently freed from Sednaya prison - Syria's most notorious detention centre. He told us Samer was being held in an underground cell there. He said that while Samer had told him the names of his wife and two older children, he had forgotten the name of his youngest child. I wonder what those monsters did to my son in the al-Assad regime's dungeons to make him forget his own son's name.

Hearing news that he may be alive gave me some hope. Along with thousands of mothers whose children are forcibly disappeared or detained, I am waiting for my child to be released. Two and a half years ago I joined Families for Freedom, a women-led

movement of Syrian families advocating for the freedom of all Syria's disappeared sons and daughters, because I wanted to find solidarity in my struggle. With over 100,000 detainees and disappeared persons in Syria, I knew that I was not alone. Our goal as a movement is to bring attention to our loved ones who have gone missing and to fight tirelessly for their freedom.

We want our loved ones to know that we are doing everything in our power to bring them back, and we urge the international community to support us to pressure the Syrian government to release all detainees. One of the things we are calling for is for the United Nations to establish an independent and international institution that will help families like ours find out the whereabouts of their loved ones. Seeing my son free again sometimes feels like a distant dream, but the news of occasional releases keeps me holding onto the hope that one day I will receive a call or a knock on the door and it will be him.

Every day I wish he would come back, I wish I could see him and talk to him. My dear son Samer, you would be proud of your children; they are growing up to be good young men, just like you. Your memory always remains with me. I give zakat in your name, hoping that God will protect you and bring you back to us safely. I will keep fighting for you.

As we celebrate another Eid without him, I am reminded of his absence and long for his jokes and warm presence. My determination to see him again keeps me going, and I will not stop fighting until he and all detainees in Syria are free.

Ukraine can retake Crimea within months

Ben Hodges

SOME Western politicians believe it is impossible, or perhaps undesirable, for Ukraine to retake Crimea, and are instead chasing a false peace whereby Kyiv agrees to keep the peninsula in a grey zone. They may even want the status quo, with Crimea remaining under complete Russian control. Such politicians do not understand military strategy and cannot read a map.

Underlying this problem is the fact that our leaders have not yet established whether they genuinely want Ukraine to win. If they did, there would be no question that Ukrainian forces should be supported this summer in their endeavour to take back Crimea, which would lead to the total collapse of Russia's campaign.

No amount of political sophistry will change the fact that Crimea is the decisive terrain in this war. You can kill many hundreds of Russians on the outskirts of Bakhmut and have little strategic effect. But if you remove hundreds from Sevastopol, the Russian navy base in Crimea, you will have changed the course of history and effectively ended the war.

In recent months I have pushed a three-point plan to do just that. The first task - isolating Crimea - can be achieved imminently with a successful Ukrainian offen-

sive beginning this summer. Kyiv's forces can easily break the Russian-occupied land bridge.

The second task is to make Crimea untenable for Russian forces. This can be done with long-range precision missiles provided by the West, which can target the Sevastopol navy base and the dozen or so other bases at places like Saky, and the logistics hub at Dzhankoi, and the main Russian headquarters at Heniches'k. The final task would be to liberate Crimea itself, occupy the peninsula and complete the destruction of the Kerch Bridge connecting it to Russia.

The Ukrainians have the will, manpower and military competency to do all of this. Western politicians just need to agree that this is the quickest way to end the war and give Ukraine the weapons it needs.

There is no need to travel the world looking for a "diplomatic solution" - which has come to mean a division of Ukrainian land - when this much simpler solution is ready for the taking. In a matter of months, not years, it would bring peace. The Russian navy would lose its greatest hub, and Putin and his evil aides in the Kremlin would be humbled to such an extent that their administration would fall into deep peril. Is this not a better path for the rules-based

international order?

The Russian people themselves are losing the will to defend Crimea. It used to be said that even Russian leaders we liked - those, like Alexei Navalny, who stood up to Putin's oppressive rule - believed Crimea deserved to be annexed. For a long time, Navalny refused to publicly support the immediate return of Crimea to Ukraine. Yet the failure of Putin's full-scale invasion has changed matters. In February, the Russian dissident published a 15-point plan outlining his vision for post-war Russia. It states that Ukraine's borders should be those "recognised and defined in 1991" - which include Crimea.

The same shift can be observed in broader society. Putin's annexation of Crimea was extremely popular when it was easy and bloodless. Less so when Russian lives are at stake. Remember the sight of vacacioners fleeing the peninsula as soon as the first rockets hit? They showed no attachment to that supposedly "sacred" land.

Russia is not what it once was, having lost confidence and military esteem. Its last hope is to wait desperately for political winds to change in the West. Are we going to give it that opening? Or shall we finally send a message to the world that Europe will be defended?

The IMF is wrong yet again on interest rates

Roger Bootle

MUCH ink has been spilled over the IMF's recent forecast that the UK economy will be the worst performer among the G7 this year. Yet its forecasting record on such matters is not good. In fact, the really interesting prognostication from the IMF was its suggestion that after the current inflation scare is over, the world will be headed back to a regime of extremely low interest rates. Can this be right?

Interest rates seem to move in large waves as the system shifts from one regime to another. I have lived through several distinct interest rate regimes, starting with low single digit rates in the 1950s and 1960s, through the emergence of double digit rates in the 1970s and 1980s, then the establishment of what seemed like a new normality in the '90s and early noughties of rates in the 4-7pc range, followed by the long period of near-zero rates from 2008 to 2021, and then the more recent hiking of rates to the 4-5pc range. People tend to believe that the interest rate regime in which they are currently operating is somehow God-given and inevitable. If only.

Everyone operating in financial markets and those of us who are subject to their vagaries should have constantly before us a chart of the history of interest rates. It concentrates the mind. The key is to recognise when one regime is about to give way to another. Policy-makers are currently locked in a battle to reduce inflation and we do not yet know how high rates will have to go to achieve victory. But the really important question is what follows

next. That depends upon whether we have fundamentally broken out of the regime that ruled from the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) up until the recent policy tightening. The IMF authors believe that we haven't. But we first need to understand the forces that underlay that previous regime. If you look at the history of global real interest rates, you see a decided downward trend from about 1990 to the pandemic. Over these years there was an endemic weakness of aggregate demand. Policy-makers countered this weakness with low interest rates, sometimes bolstered by QE, which fed through to lower bond yields.

The \$64,000 question is what caused this weakness of aggregate demand. The short answer is that against the backdrop of sluggish real investment by companies, there was an inherent tendency towards high saving. There was an international and a domestic aspect to this story. The international aspect was the emergence of substantial current account imbalances between major countries. Huge persistent surpluses were run by China and a group of other rapidly growing Asian economies, as well as Japan, the oil-producing countries and Germany. The advent of the euro effectively brought the Germanification of much of Europe, such that the euro-zone as a whole became a large surplus area. Within western countries there were also some key domestic influences, especially increased inequality of incomes. Whereas people lower down the

income scale tend to spend a high proportion of their incomes, the better off tend to spend proportionately less.

Over and above this, there was a clear demographic influence as a higher proportion of workers moved into the prime saving years of middle age, running up to retirement. The GFC of 2007/9 added two further twists. First, the aftermath involved tighter regulation of banks which inhibited their inclination to lend. Many potential borrowers also felt wary of resorting to the banks for finance. Second, alarmed by the huge rise in their debt ratios, several governments, including ours, tightened fiscal policy. Suffice it to say that hardly anyone in the economic firmament, including the IMF, saw these factors coming. This should make us wary now of accepting a consensus view of the future of interest rates.

Actually, I reckon there are some good reasons why the years to come may not see a return of the previous regime of ultra-low real interest rates. Perhaps the most important factor is demographic. Throughout much of the west and also much of Asia, populations are ageing and in quite a few cases falling. As people move from their late working years into retirement, they move from peak saving into dissaving. This is now going to happen on a significant scale in many countries, including China and much of Europe. Mind you, the danger is that a falling population leads to weaker investment spending, as has happened in Japan. Moreover, as workforces

contract, the global bargaining power of labour should increase, thereby making possible a shift in the distribution of incomes towards real wages. To what extent this leads to a narrowing of the distribution of incomes depends partly upon what happens with AI, namely whether it substantially reduces the demand for labour, and especially lower paid labour, and whether it leads to substantial new investment opportunities. Admittedly, not everyone is optimistic on this but I am.

Furthermore, once the world significantly reduces its use of fossil fuels, then the endemic over-saving and huge current account surpluses of the oil-producing countries will end. Suppose that I am wrong. This would spell a return to the recent policy of ultra-low interest rates and QE, as the IMF suggests. Yet given the distortions and risks created by this policy, blithely returning to it would surely be unwise. An alternative would be to try to shore up demand through looser fiscal policy, including substantial amounts of infrastructure investment. Admittedly, in most countries in the west, that option is stymied by the already worryingly high levels of public debt. A third way would be to try to stimulate business investment. Deregulation and radical structural reform of everything from planning systems to the adoption of road pricing schemes, which would revolutionise the market for transport, offers a way forward. Devising such a programme and pushing it through, however, would pose a real challenge for governments.

The Telegraph

Battleground town of Chasiv Yar: Inside Russia's war in Ukraine

Heather Murdock

IN the past week, at least three people have died in the shelling that slams both in and out of Chasiv Yar, Ukraine, sometimes every few minutes. City workers say their main job now is to get people, and anything else of value, out. "Many people have already left," says Yevgeni Dmytriev, 32, the city administrator, when we meet him by his van near the center of town. The local government building is now a distribution point for emergency aid like food and wood to burn for heat. Businesses are closed. Their windows are either boarded up or smashed in.

"Some humanitarian aid is still here," explains Dmytriev. "We want to move this humanitarian aid from here to a safer place." Chasiv Yar is about 10 kilometers from the city of Bakhmut, where the longest and deadliest battle in Ukraine is currently taking place. Chasiv Yar is close enough to be hit by artillery aimed at Bakhmut, but it is also a target itself. Every tree-lined block in the city appears to have been bombed and most of the people we see are armed and armored soldiers.

The roads are largely deserted, but tanks and vehicles carrying soldiers into battle whip by from time to time. Across the street, a team of three journalists wearing helmets and blue body armor wander through the city's central park. At this moment, the nearby blasts are

the Ukrainian Army's artillery firing on Russian forces, but that can change in an instant.

Outside a community shelter about five minutes' drive away, Alexandr Cverkovich, a 38-year-old aid worker and head of the Peace and Kindness Fund, oversees the delivery of boxes of food and water. He also wears body armor, and he and his colleagues are dressed in camouflage. Early last month, Cverkovich delivered supplies to Bakhmut. Now Chasiv Yar is as close as aid organizations and most journalists can get to the heart of the battle zone. And the conditions in Chasiv Yar are now, in many ways, eerily like those in Bakhmut two months ago, he says. "[Chasiv Yar] is heavily damaged now," he continues. "Last time we were here it was in one piece." The community shelters here are called "invincibility points," providing electricity to charge phones and internet access. About 20% of the population remains in Chasiv Yar, but most city services are not operating. The thousand-plus people still in town are mostly old, sick, poor, or all three. Phone numbers for evacuation teams are printed on small paper handouts in the shelter and hung on the wall, but they are not often called.

This situation was also similar in Bakhmut a few months ago, say aid workers. Back then all the people in Bakhmut who wished to flee

were long-gone. But now things are different.

The only way out is by rescue by an armed military unit, and soldiers are busy fighting to hold onto the city and their lives. "We got lucky," says Svetlana, a 74-year-old former librarian who escaped Bakhmut last week after spending three days trying to wave down soldiers as they passed by, usually fleeing bombings. But Alexandr, a 67-year-old Chasiv Yar resident and shelter volunteer, says he and many others have no plans to leave, despite warnings. In cities, towns and villages across Ukraine's conflict area, people live under fire in order to care for elderly or sick relatives or neighbors, pets or farm animals. "[My home] was damaged," he says, matter-of-factly. "The windows were blown out. So we covered them with plastic tarps."

It is also commonly believed that many civilians who still live in Ukraine's eastern war zone stay because they support the idea of Russian rule. Besides cross-border familial and cultural bonds, Russian is the most used language here and it's not hard to find people who are nostalgic for the time of the Soviet Union. But we meet no one living side by side with Ukraine's defending forces who overtly declares loyalty to Russia's invading army. While having a cigarette outside the shelter, Vladimir,

80, tells us he is not interested in talking of the Soviet days. But he points out what he perceives as the futility of this war. He says that, in his opinion, neither the United States nor Britain would be able to beat Russia in battle, so he doesn't believe Ukraine can win now. "Let's all be friendly," he says, emphatically repeating the final word in English with his finger pointed.

"Friendly." While we talk, residents and volunteers continue to move boxes of food into the shelter, and no one even blinks when the nearby artillery is fired. But one blast accompanied by the whistle of incoming weaponry makes a few people start and one woman declare, "It's normal" as Yan Boechat, our videographer, drops his camera to look for the location of the hit.

It isn't near enough to endanger us, so he continues his work. Inside the shelter, the lights go off. It is 3 p.m. and the generator needs to rest until morning. There is no electricity, gas or running water in town. The only internet connections are brought in by the army. With the shelter dark for the day, locals begin to make their way home with packets of donated food. Some have bicycles but most are on foot. "I've stayed here at home for the whole war," says Olga, 72, as she prepares to leave the shelter. "But now I am considering evacuation. Maybe."

VOA

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ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chairing a meeting on revenue performance of FBR at Finance Division.

Bank loans to govt surged 182 per cent

ISLAMABAD (PPI): During the first nine months of the current financial year, loans given by commercial banks to the federal government increased by 182 percent, while loans to the private sector decreased by 83 percent, according to a report on Tuesday.

Data from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) shows that these banks are willing to invest in government projects instead of lending to the private sector.

This reflects the growing need for liquidity for the government due to the decline in tax collections, but it also highlighted the

growing risks of lending to the private sector due to unusually high interest rates.

According to the SBP, from July to April 7, the federal government was given a loan of Rs20.94 trillion, which was Rs1,043 billion during the same period last year, showing an increase of 182 percent.

The reduction in tax revenues was due to lower duty collection as imports were drastically reduced to save foreign exchange reserves in view of repayment of loans.

Inflation crossed the 35 percent mark in March and reached the highest level in

history, but despite this, revenue collection through sales tax could not be promoted.

The shortfall in the first nine months of revenue reached Rs278 billion as the total collection was Rs5.155 trillion against the target of Rs5.433 trillion.

Another major reason for the reduction in taxes could be a major reduction in private sector credit that pushed growth to an all-time low.

During the first nine months, private sector credit declined by 83.6 percent or Rs993 billion to Rs194 billion from Rs1187 billion in the same period last year.

PFC team left to participate in 133th Canton Fair

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Furniture Council's delegation Tuesday left to participate in the world's top 133th Canton Fair to showcase Pakistan's products and explore new export markets besides attracting foreign investments.

Chief Executive Officer PFC Mian Kashif Ashfaq said today that it's efficient trade platform for global business opportunities which is being held since 1957. It will provide an opportunity to present a world class range of Pak made furniture products and all other allied services including import and export mainly with various and flexible pattern of trade.

He said PFC and Chenone will both hold a series of meetings with other multi nationals and exchange their professional expertise with each other for further improving the quality of their products at par with international standards in order to bolster the rate of trade in the field.

He said nearly more than 25000 Chinese's best foreign trade companies and about 6000 overseas companies are likely to participate which he added will help determine market potential and evaluate competition besides initiating joint ventures and project partnerships.

Mian Kashif urged the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan to manage single-country expos in all major countries for the effective and result-oriented promotion of Pak products which can compete globally with their competitors in terms of its best quality.

He said these Pak expos will help find out new partnerships to increase the volume of exports and enter into new joint ventures in their areas of interest.

Tokyo shares inch up at close ahead of earnings

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks ended slightly higher on Tuesday after a mixed close on Wall Street as investors await corporate earnings reports in Japan and the United States.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index rose 0.09 percent, or 26.55 points, to end at 28,620.07, while the broader Topix index added 0.24 percent, or 4.81 points, to 2,042.15.

Traders cheered strong financial results from motor maker Nidec, which "beat market expectations and lifted investors' optimism about other earnings reports in the manufacturing sector", Daiwa Securities said.

"Tech-related shares were solid, as were financial-sector issues. Domestic-dem and stocks also advanced," the brokerage noted.

But gains were capped as technical charts warned of short-term overheating, Daiwa added.

Some investors moved to lock in profits as they awaited more corporate earnings and major economic indicators such as US gross domestic product and spending, analysts said.

Lingering worries over earnings from some US lenders hit by the sudden collapse of Silicon Valley Bank also weighed on the market. "But factors such as the yen's relative weakness continued to provide support" in Tokyo trading, IwaiCosmo Securities said.

Federal Minister gets briefing on FBR's revenue targets, performance

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting on the revenue performance of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) here on Tuesday.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, FBR Chairman Asim Ahmad, senior officers from the Finance Division and FBR attended the meeting, a news release said.

The FBR Chairman gave a detailed presentation on revenue targets and performance of FBR for the

period July-2022 to March-2023, expressing strong resolve to make all-out efforts in meeting the remaining revenue collection targets during the last quarter of the financial year 2022-23.

The Finance Minister expressed satisfaction and extended his full support to the FBR in performing the revenue-collection duties.

Ishaq Dar also stressed the need for stepping up the efforts to achieve the 'true tax potential' existed in the country.

Chinese Charge d'Affaires calls on Ishaq Dar
Chinese Charge

d'Affaires Pang Chunxue called on Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar here on Tuesday and discussed bilateral relations between the all-weather and time-tested friends, China and Pakistan.

Highlighting deep-rooted historical bilateral relations between the two countries, Ishaq Dar commended the Chinese support for Pakistan and underscored the need for further deepening the existing ties in economic and trade as well as financial sectors.

Extended Eid greetings to the people of Pakistan and the Finance Minister,

Ms. Pang Chunxue praised close and shared friendly relations between the two countries.

She assured the Finance Minister of the continuous support of the Chinese government to the people of Pakistan.

The two sides discussed bilateral relations between the two countries and avenues to enhance existing cooperation in multiple fields.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar appreciated Charge d'Affaires Pang Chunxue for all the support and cooperation which Pakistan had been receiving from the leadership of China.

Fragility of US financial system affect Pakistani banking industry

BEIJING (INP): Fragility of the US banking system also affected the Pakistani banking industry, leading to further non-performing loans and poor credit underwriting. The latest Global Financial Stability Report (GFSR) released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned about the risks in the global economy, particularly the fragility of the US banking system.

According to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Tuesday, this fragility has had numerous spillover effects on socio-economic and financial stability, leading to a decrease in global GDP growth.

The report suggests that the US banking system has been further eroded by the irrational fiscal and monetary policies of its financial regulators, particularly the Federal Reserve System.

The constant hikes in interest rates have had negative impacts on the domestic, regional, and international banking and financial systems, hindering investment and business activities.

The IMF report exposes the deepening flaws in the banking industry of the US, which has led to a lack of trust among depositors in banking industry bosses and regulators.

The closure of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) and Signature Bank, and the strict supervision of other banks by US financial departments and regulators, have created panic among common depositors. As a result, clients have started withdrawing their hard-earned funds from these banks, which has undermined their solvency.

This has affected market confidence and triggered significant emergency responses by the authorities. The 25 biggest banks in the country garnered \$120 billion in deposits following the collapses and subsequent rescues federal regulators announced on March 12 while deposits at smaller banks fell by \$108 billion, as per The Wall Street Journal.

The report also suggests that the US economy could enter a recessionary phase

in 2023, which could reduce lending from regional and community banks, leading to a contraction inching towards a downturn in the economy.

The IMF forecasts in its latest World Economic Outlook that the US economy will expand 1.6 percent this year, down from 2.1 percent in 2022, and the global economy is predicted to grow 2.8 in 2023, down from 3.4 percent in 2022. These predictions are not good signs for global economic recovery, and financial stability could be at higher risks if the US economy enters a recessionary phase.

Critical analysis suggests that US banks' lending capacity will decline by 1% in 2023 due to falling bank stock values. The decline in lending by regional and smaller banks could impact economic growth and financial stability, as they account for more than one-third of total bank lending.

Recession concerns and worries about high inflation pose significant risks to the

US banking and finance sectors, which could spread to the broader economy and hurt business and consumer confidence.

The US banking and finance sector's structural flaws have created numerous faulty lines for both its own country and global economic growth. Financial market volatility and prevailing shadow banking have widened the elements of uncertainty, leaving the financial sector unsettled.

Unfortunately, the US bank's failure has also affected the Pakistani banking industry, leading to further non-performing loans and poor credit underwriting.

To address these issues, US policymakers and financial regulators should amend their inappropriate policies and fix flaws through focused apparatus. Monetary policy should focus on price stability to keep inflation expectations in check. The US policymakers should strive to bring down inflation while avoiding a recession and maintaining financial stability.

Current account surplus will not stabilise economy: ICCI

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt on Tuesday said the first current account surplus in two years will not help stabilise the currency and the faltering economy.

The current account turned to a surplus of 654 million dollars in March against a deficit of 36 million dollars in February but it will not help the economy as it is not a result of exports, remittances or foreign investment, he said.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here on Tuesday that the

current account recorded its first monthly surplus since November 2020 but it has been achieved by reducing imports by 11.25 billion dollars which damaged manufacturing, closure of many factories, resulted in massive unemployment, reduced taxes and stoked inflation.

A massive decline in imports affected the economy as large-scale manufacturing declined by 11.4 percent, exports nosedived and the overall economy would hardly see half a per cent worth of growth, he added.

The business leader said that exports of goods in the July-March period declined

to \$21.09 billion compared to \$23.71 billion last year while exports of services increased by \$250m, he informed.

The business leader said that the government is hoping that the current account for the whole year would be around six billion dollars which is still quite a big amount for a country having a dismally low foreign exchange reserves, he added.

The government is making its best efforts to convince the IMF to release the stuck-up tranche of \$1.1bn, which may also unlock inflows from other sources, but the deadlock persists.

The current development

in the current account is not sustainable, as it is not backed by any positive development. Pakistan has always financed the current account deficit through borrowing which was unsustainable because it burdened the country with high-interest payments.

A very high balance of payments deficit causes a loss of confidence in local and foreign investors. Therefore, there is always a risk, that investors will remove their investments causing a big fall in the value of currency that leads to a decline in living standards and lower confidence in the investors.

Hong Kong shares drop sharply on major losses in Chinese firms

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Hong Kong shares fell sharply on Tuesday on the back of major losses in Chinese firms, as a lack of clear direction ahead of key announcements this week presented a challenge for global investors.

It was the third straight day of losses on the Hang Seng Index, with Alibaba Group Holdings down more than three percent, internet giant Baidu down nearly four and pharmaceutical maker Wuxi Biologics dropping almost seven.

The index had shed nearly two percent at the close.

"Investors seem to be having concerns about the sustainability of the recovery in China and the heightening of geopolitical tensions," Redmond Wong, of Saxo Capital Markets HK, told Bloomberg. Shanghai was down as well, while Taipei lost more than 1.5%.

Seoul was another big loser, despite of a surge in media stocks following a \$2.5 billion investment announcement by Netflix, as well as new data showing South Korea had dodged a technical recession in the first quarter.

Manila, Bangkok, Kuala

Lumpur and Singapore were also down, while Tokyo, Mumbai, Wellington and Jakarta were up.

US equity futures were trading lower and bourses in London, Frankfurt and Paris all opened down on Tuesday after spending the previous session dipping in and out of negative territory. Traders have largely been trading water ahead of earnings results from US tech behemoths such as Amazon, Microsoft, Facebook owner Meta and Google parent Alphabet.

Investors are also waiting for important economic data from Australia and the eurozone, as well as a policy meeting of the Bank of Japan. Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a note that despite "a reasonably constructive picture on the economy front", it was tough to get "a clean read on anything happening this week".

"One of the most challenging things about navigating this bear market and the widely anticipated coming recession is that we've had to differentiate between real and nominal economic and market variables like nothing in recent decades,"

he said. US calendar also includes readings on first-quarter gross domestic product and an update on consumer confidence, as well as a potential vote in the long-running political stalemate over the US debt ceiling.

Moody's Analytics said in a note Monday that a Republican plan to raise the debt ceiling in exchange for cuts in government spending would lead to a drop of 0.6 percentage points in US potential growth for 2024 and eliminate 780,000 jobs.

Following recent shocks in the banking sector, UBS on Tuesday posted an underwhelming first quarter net profit of \$1.0 billion but insisted it had seen strong client inflows as it prepared to integrate its stricken rival Credit Suisse.

Shares in UBS, Switzerland's biggest bank, were down around four percent in early trade following the announcement.

US lender First Republic Bank reported a more than 40 percent drop in deposits in the first quarter this year, but added that the situation had stabilised since late March. Its shares fell more than 20 percent in after-hours trading following the

earnings report, its first since the dramatic failures of Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank last month shone a spotlight on regional lenders and their vulnerabilities.

Benchmark interbank gold prices mixed

BEIJING (APP): China's benchmark prices for spot interbank gold transactions were mixed Tuesday, according to the China Foreign Exchange Trade System.

The benchmark price for gold that is 99.95 percent pure or above stood at 441.09 yuan (about 64.07 US dollars) per gram, up 9.12 yuan from the previous trading day, while the price for gold that is 99.99 percent pure or above went down 0.8 yuan to 441.64 yuan per gram.

Spot transaction prices on the interbank price inquiry market are allowed to rise or fall within 15 percent from the benchmark prices each trading day.

NEV purchase tax exemption up 36%

BEIJING (APP): China's vehicle purchase tax exemption for new-energy vehicles (NEVs) went up 36 percent year on year in the first quarter of 2023, amid the country's continuous efforts to promote automobile consumption and advance green development, official data shows.

A total of 21.24 billion yuan of tax was waived off in the January-March period, according to the State Taxation Administration.

China has been implementing the purchase tax exemption policy since 2014 to shore up the development of the NEV sector. In September 2022, it extended the preferential tax policy to the end of 2023.

Partly boosted by tax incentives, China's NEV sector has been growing rapidly over the years. During the first quarter, the retail sales of NEVs jumped 22.4 percent year on year to 1.31 million units, industry data showed.

Businessmen condemn blast

ISLAMABAD (APP): The business community across the country Tuesday strongly condemning the Swat blast expressed solidarity with valiant Pak armed forces and law enforcing agencies to frustrate the evil designs of anti-state elements and stamp out terror.

Chairing a meeting of business leaders President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Iftikhar Ali Malik said the entire business community with absolute unity in their ranks is on one page with Pak armed forces and law enforcing agencies to defend the geographical frontiers and flush out terrorism from the motherland.

He said that Pakistan is facing gigantic and myriad challenges including terrorism with a bleak economy and is passing through a critical period of history.

He said that with the proverbial resilience of our people, we are destined to overcome this challenge and will soon emerge as a stronger country.

He said that better law and order is a prerequisite for strengthening of national economy and promotion of a democratic system besides the inflow of foreign investors in every sphere of life.

He said that the patriotic business community will help thwart the targeted anti-state subversive activities by a section of disgruntled and unscrupulous elements. Earlier Iftikhar Ali Malik prayed to Almighty Allah to grant the strength and vision to fulfill obligations to the nation to the best of our abilities and in line with the principles set by the father of the nation.

"We, by playing our part in the development of the country, can make Pakistan unassailable against security and economic challenges," he added.

Prominent present among them were Zubair Tufail, SG UBG Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary Information Dr Mirza Ikhtiar Baig, Khalid Tawab, Mian Adress, Sh Tanvir and Dr Nouman Idris Butt.



In brief

Tottenham offer to fans ticket cost

LONDON (Agencies): Tottenham Hotspur players have offered to reimburse Spurs fans the cost of their match tickets from the 6-1 defeat at Newcastle United on Sunday. Spurs were 5-0 down after 21 minutes of the game and interim manager Cristian Stellini has since been sacked. "As a squad, we understand your frustration, your anger," said a statement from Tottenham's players. "It wasn't good enough. We know words aren't enough in situations like this but a defeat like this hurts." Tottenham's next game is at home against Manchester United on Thursday, when Ryan Mason - who worked under Stellini and former manager Antonio Conte - will be in charge. Spurs are fifth in the Premier League table, six points behind third-placed Newcastle United and Manchester United in fourth. Newcastle have played a game fewer than Tottenham, while Manchester United have two games in hand on the London club. "We appreciate your support, home and away, and with this in mind we would like to reimburse fans with the cost of their match tickets from St James' Park," added the statement.

India recall Rahane

NEW DELHI (INP): Ajinkya Rahane earned a recall on Tuesday to India's squad for the World Test Championship final against Australia in June. Indian selectors named a 15-man squad led by skipper Rohit Sharma for the title clash at The Oval on June 7-11. Batsman Rahane, who last played a Test in January 2022, makes a comeback after an excellent showing in the IPL where he hit a match-winning 71 not out off 29 balls for Chennai Super Kings on Sunday. The usually sedate Rahane has surprised with a newfound explosiveness and has a strike-rate of over 199 in five IPL matches this season. T20 sensation Suryakumar Yadav has been dropped. He made the five-day team for Australia's recent visit and played his only Test in Nagpur. Struggling batsman K.L. Rahul keeps his place after he was dropped from the XI for the final two Australia Tests. Pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah and wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant are not included because of long-term injuries. Mohammed Shami leads the pace attack alongside Mohammed Siraj, while K.S. Bharat remains the lone wicketkeeper.

Wimbledon to make Ukraine donation

LONDON (Agencies): Wimbledon is set to donate more than £500,000 to Ukraine relief after the "difficult decision" to lift its ban on Russian and Belarusian players. The All England Club (AELTC) and Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) will also fund accommodation for Ukrainian players. Russians and Belarusians were not allowed to play last year in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Chairman Ian Hewitt said lifting the ban did not lessen the AELTC's "total condemnation" of the invasion. Wimbledon and British tennis' governing body the LTA were punished for their stance last year by the WTA and ATP with heavy fines and the removal of ranking points, and overturned the ban last month. "This was an incredibly difficult decision. I personally say that I found this probably the most difficult decision during my chairmanship," Hewitt, who is standing down at the end of this year's championships, told the annual Wimbledon spring news conference on Tuesday.

Ireland take charge in Sri Lanka with highest Test score

GALLE (Agencies): Ireland posted their highest Test score of 492 as Paul Stirling and Curtis Campher became the third and fourth Irishmen to hit centuries in the game's longest format.

Before rain stopped play on day two in Galle, Sri Lanka reached 81 without loss in reply, 411 runs behind.

Nishan Madushka was unbeaten on 41 and Dimuth Karunaratne 39 not out.

Stirling scored 103 and Campher 111 after captain Andy Balbirnie made 95 on the opening day.

Lorcan Tucker scored a useful 80 while Prabath Jayasuriya, the home hero of the first Test, took five wickets for 174.

Asitha Fernando and Vishwa Fernando took two wickets each for the home side. Ireland only gained



Curtis Campher made 111 off 229 balls

Test status in 2017 and have lost all five games in the red-ball format.

Their previous highest Test score was 339 against

Pakistan in their inaugural match in 2018.

In punishingly hot and humid conditions, Stirling retired hurt with cramps

on day one after reaching 74 but came back to the crease the following morning after Tucker fell.

Stirling reached his

maiden Test century in style, upper-cutting Fernando for six over deep point.

The batter now has centuries in all three formats of the game.

Soon afterwards the same bowler dismissed Stirling for 103 as he hooked a short delivery into the hands of Dhananjaya de Silva on the fine-leg boundary.

Campher was well caught by a diving De Silva at first slip to give Jayasuriya his third wicket in the innings.

Sri Lanka's openers negotiated the final session without much trouble, although Ireland's quicks found the outside edge of Madushka's bat with the new ball.

Ireland trail 1-0 in the two-match series after losing the first Test by an innings and 280 runs.



Taimoor to fight for WBC Continental C'ship title this month

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's Asian heavyweight boxing champion Taimoor Khan would be up for the next fight for the World Boxing Council (WBC) Continental Championship on April 27 in Thailand.

Khan would face his Thai rival for the World Boxing Council Continental Championship fight on April 27. "This is the first time, a heavyweight boxer from Pakistan will compete for the continental champion title," he told APP. Khan was undefeated in seven bouts so far, while his rival boxer Chomphoophuang Panya is undefeated in 25 bouts.

"I'm determined to win the title of heavyweight continental champion for Pakistan for the first time," he said.

It may be mentioned that Taimoor Khan retained his Asian Boxing Federation Heavyweight Championship title after defeating his Thai counterpart, Aekkaphob Auraiwan, in a highly-anticipated bout in Bangkok earlier this year.

He knocked out his opponent in the second round to defend his title and extended his overall fight record to seven wins, which now include six knockouts.

Babar Azam explains why fifth T20I vs New Zealand was lost



LAHORE (PPI): Pakistan captain Babar Azam thinks that Shadab Khan's failure to catch Mark Chapman at a vital moment turned the tide of the game, as the left-hander went on to produce an undefeated hundred and win the fifth T20I for New Zealand, bringing the series to 2-2.

In the fourteenth over, Chapman attempted to go deep against Shaheen but spliced it, allowing it to travel to Shadab, who dropped an easy catch while sprinting across from wide long-on. Chapman completed 104 not-out innings from 57 balls while batting on 67 at that time.

At the news conference following the game, Babar stated, "The dropped catch cost us the game." The Pakistani skipper, however, immediately defended his all-rounder and vowed to continue to back him.

"Shadab has performed quite a bit in the past. We don't care if his performance isn't strong in one particular series. He will perform once again with our support." "I believe that the way we initially started, you kept in mind about 180, 190 on these surfaces in Pindi. And given how Rizwan and Iftikhar were performing, I believed 200 was possible because the wicket improves even more in the second innings," according to Babar.

The five-match ODI series between the two teams will begin on April 27 in Rawalpindi.

Danish wants Pakistan to regain lost glory in squash

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's top player Danish Atlas Khan has offered his unconditional services to put the country once again on the path to success, saying there was no shortage of talent in the country but a stern roadmap was needed to help regain lost glory in the game.

Danish, who is also the nephew of former world squash champion Jansher Khan, speaking about his plan for the revival of the game, said the Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) was making all-out efforts to promote and encourage the game and players in the country.

"However, other stake-

holders must also come forward to help encourage and promote, not only squash but all sports. We should take all departments on board to promote all sports in the country. Wapda, PIA, NBP, Railway, banks, all government departments should include senior and junior players as to support the games," he told APP.

He was of the view that in the past, departments used to support players which resulted in giving us many world champions in squash, hockey and cricket.

"Sports cannot grow or flourish, without the support of departments. We should form academies on the grassroots level as

well," he said.

Danish, who has won 32 gold medals for Pakistan, said PSF was providing players with squash facilities and spending hefty amounts on making squash courts.

PSF funds should also be increased so that it can be utilized for the betterment of players. He said there should be squash courts in schools as to promote the game at the grassroots level.

"The more courts and academies there will be, the more talent will come to the fore. In Egypt, players are picked from schools to train in academies with modern techniques and skills and

improve their physical fitness."

Danish, who won the silver medal in the World Junior team championship in Ecuador in 2010 as a team captain and bronze medal in World Junior Championship, said, "If we want to compete with international players then we have to train like them and use the same track they have been working on".

He said the coaches should also be qualified as they have to pass training onto the players. "I have also offered my unconditional support to PSF and for the promotion of the game in the country and I hope we will get a world champion soon," he said.

Guardiola tells Man City not to let grip on Premier League title go

LONDON (Agencies): Pep Guardiola has urged Manchester City not to let the destiny of the Premier League title slip out of their hands in a potentially decisive clash at the top of the table against Arsenal on Wednesday.

City trail the Gunners by five points, but have two games in hand and home advantage when the sides meet at the Etihad as they aim for a third consecutive title.

Guardiola questioned his side's hunger to continue dominating English football earlier this season, but they are now closing in on a treble of trophies. City face Real Madrid in the Champions League semi-finals next month and will take on local rivals Manchester United in the FA Cup final on June 3.

"When we started this season, first game, second game, third game, after (winning) back-to-back Premier Leagues, it is not a final," said Guardiola at his pre-match press conference on Tuesday.

"Now the last few months I have had that feeling with the FA Cup and Champions League and Premier League, that is the truth because we see the end is real, real close."

Arsenal's blistering start to the sea-



son put them in pole position to win the Premier League for the first time in 19 years. But Mikel Arteta's men have shown their inexperience in recent weeks as three consecutive draws have allowed City to close in down the home straight.

"After the first round (19 games) of the Premier League, (with what) Arsenal have done, it's difficult to think we are here in that moment," added Guardiola. "Now we know exactly what we're playing for. We have had many months to arrive at this part of the league to have the chance in our hands."

"Of course, they have it in their hands too, because if they win it depends on them. The destiny will be in their hands. "But if we win, definitely the destiny will be in our hands."

Arteta, who worked for three-and-a-half years as Guardiola's assistant at City, denied the top-of-the-table clash will be decisive in the title race.

Guardiola agreed with his protege, but did not play down the importance of landing a major blow to City's title rivals.

"It's a really, really important game because we can get points and our biggest opponent this season cannot," said Guardiola. "It's really important, not decisive because there's still many tough games for both sides. We have more games to play but we can't deny how important it is."

The two Arsenal players with Premier League title-winning experience collected their medals at City.

Oleksandr Zinchenko and Gabriel Jesus return to the Etihad having played a major role in Arsenal's rise from finishing fifth last season into title contenders.

But Guardiola insisted there is no regret at having let the pair go.

"Everyone agreed. The players wanted to leave, the club wanted to sell and the club wanted to buy."

"It's more than just one person. They were happy and we're happy. We have no regrets."



MADRID: Eugenie Bouchard of Canada in action against Elizabeth Mandlik of the United States during the second round of qualifications on Day Two of the Mutua Madrid Open.

UK government wants Russian state-funded athletes ban

LONDON (Agencies): Russian and Belarusian athletes who receive state funding must remain excluded from international sport, says UK culture secretary Lucy Frazer.

Last month, the International Olympic Committee recommended that Russian and Belarusian athletes are allowed to compete under a neutral flag.

However, the IOC has yet to make a decision on the 2024 Paris Olympics. Frazer said athletes who receive Russian or Belarusian state funding cannot be considered neutral. Speaking as part of a Council of Europe hearing on Russian participation in international sport, Frazer called for clarity from the IOC on "far too many unanswered questions".

"There is no reference anywhere in the recommendations to state funding, which I have said is a breach of neutrality," Frazer said.

Frazer also urged that athletes and support personnel who actively support the war in Ukraine, or those who are contracted to the Russian or Belarusian military or security agencies, must remain barred.

Following the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Manchester United terminated their sponsorship deal with Russia's national airline Aeroflot, while Everton also suspended sponsorship arrangements with companies part-owned by Russian billionaire Alisher Usmanov.

The IOC's recommendations and its delay in making a decision on whether Russian and Belarusian athletes can compete at Paris next summer mean that, in some sports at least, athletes from those countries will be able to enter Olympic qualification events.

Earlier this month, Ukrainian government minister Oleh Nemchinov said Ukrainian athletes should not be allowed to compete in qualifying events for the 2024 Paris Olympics if Russians are taking part.

A host of international athletes have criticised IOC president Thomas Bach's claim that Russians and Belarusians competing as neutrals in their sport "works".

Great Britain announced this month it would boycott the men's World Boxing Championships over concerns about Russian and Belarusian participation, following the decision to miss the women's championships in February.

Frazer added that the IOC needs to ensure loopholes could not be exploited, such as contracts with the military or security agencies being paused for long enough to enable athletes to compete.

"The IOC must clarify their position or go back to the drawing board. Resolve the issues I have set out today," she said. "Implement an approach that guarantees only truly neutral athletes can participate."

Gaby Ahrens, chair of the athletes' commission of the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa, appeared on behalf of the IOC.

"If the Olympic Games become a platform only for athletes coming from like-minded countries or whose governments are at peace, it would not be a true reflection of the world," she said.

"If governments took over the decisions regarding which athletes can partake in which competition, it would mean the end of world sport as we know today."

At Wimbledon this summer, self-funded tennis players from Russia and Belarus will be able to take part provided they sign declarations of neutrality and do not express support for the war.

LeBron leads Lakers past Grizz 117-111 in OT for 3-1 lead

LOS ANGELES (AP): When LeBron James got back to the Los Angeles locker room after Game 4, his fellow Lakers greeted him with a symphony of beats.

They were simply saluting the G.O.A.T. in his own language to celebrate a performance that was anything but old — and a gritty win that put the Lakers on the brink of the second round. James made the tying layup with 0.8 seconds left in regulation before scoring four of his 22 points in overtime, and the Lakers surged to a 3-1 lead in their first-round playoff series with a 117-111 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies on Monday night.

The 38-year-old James also grabbed a career playoff-high 20 rebounds for the first 20-20 game of his 20-year career. The top scorer in NBA history added seven assists and two blocked shots while committing just one turnover in his record 270th playoff game.

"I just try to be as great as I can be offensively, but more importantly on the defensive end," James said. "That was the mindset tonight. I was able to make a couple of plays. ... My teammates told me I had 20 and 20. It's the first time I've done it in my career, so that's pretty cool, I guess."

James never responded with words after Dillon Brooks dismissed him as "old" following Game 2 last week, but his play con-



tinues to make the Grizzlies' agitator look just as hubristic and foolish as he sounded. It has also put the second-seeded Grizzlies on the precipice of first-round elimination. Austin Reaves scored 23 points and Anthony Davis had five of his 12 in overtime for the seventh-seeded Lakers, who won two straight home games to move one win shy of their first playoff series victory outside the Florida bubble since 2012.

"He just took over down the stretch," Davis said of James. "Got us a bucket to get to overtime. ... All our guys, it was a good team effort. This team is not going to go away." Los Angeles surged back from a seven-point deficit with five minutes left in regulation with a rally that abruptly began when D'Angelo Russell hit three consec-

utive 3-pointers, and the Lakers never trailed in OT. "I'm so proud of our guys, the way we fought," Lakers coach Darvin Ham said. "We found a way." Game 5 is Wednesday night in Memphis.

Desmond Bane scored 36 points and hit a tiebreaking layup with 6.7 seconds left in regulation for the Grizzlies, who will have to rally from a 3-1 series deficit and win a Game 7 for the first time in franchise history to advance. Bane scored 14 points in the fourth quarter, but was held scoreless in overtime, missing his only two shots.

"Obviously, LeBron gets to his right hand, which can't happen at the end of the game," Memphis coach Taylor Jenkins said. "Some breakdowns for us. Very disappointing loss."

Ja Morant scored 19 points with his injured right hand, but Davis blocked his jumper at the regulation buzzer. The Grizzlies then missed six of their first eight shots in overtime while committing two key turnovers. Brooks had 11 points for Memphis after getting ejected from Game 3 for striking James in the groin. Brooks and Morant both declined to speak to reporters afterward.

James coolly scored the basket that forced overtime over heavy defensive pressure, and he hit a huge layup while getting fouled to put the Lakers up by five with 29.1 seconds to play in OT. James flexed and roared at the ecstatic Lakers crowd after that shot, celebrating one of the most exciting moments of his five-year Lakers tenure.

"I've been a part of moments where you know you get a dagger play or a killshot," James said. "I felt like that play — it wasn't going to close the door, but there wasn't much light at the end. I just let the emotion come over."

Dennis Schröder and Austin Reaves buried two free throws apiece to seal the Lakers' 12th win in 15 games dating to the regular season. The Lakers trailed for much of the second half, and Davis didn't look sharp for much of Game 4 while struggling with an apparent hip injury that required a heating pad on the bench.



In brief

Police reunites missing boy with parents

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police Kohsar police station team reunited a missing boy with his parents, a Police Public Relation Officer said. According to the details, a respected citizen Zarif submitted an application at Kohsar police station and stated that his son Ahsan had been missing and could not be traced despite hectic efforts by family members. Upon receiving the application, the Kohsar police team immediately started the investigation. The police team used technical and human resources and succeeded to trace the missing boy and reunited him safely with his family. The parents appreciated the police team's efforts and thanked the Islamabad capital police for immediate action.

Liquor dealer arrested

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital Police Aabpara police team raided a distillery and recovered 60 liters of liquor, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directions, the Aabpara police team headed by SHO Aabpara conducted a successful raid at the distillery and recovered 60 liters of alcohol. Police team also nabbed a former jailbird liquor dealer namely Shahid Anwar during the raid. Cases have been registered against those running this distillery and further investigation is underway. On the instructions of CPO/ DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari a special campaign is already in progress to make Islamabad a "drug-free" city and strict action is being ensured against those involved in drug pushing activities or using drugs. "We are committed to eliminate the drug menace from the city and no one would be allowed to ruin the future of our young generation" he added.

Seven criminals arrested

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police apprehended seven outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directives, the Aabpara police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Waqas possessing illegal weapon and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from his possession. Similarly, the Khanna police team arrested two accused namely Muhammad Hanif and Muhammad Hassan possessing illegal weapons and recovered two 30 bore pistols with ammunition from their possession. During the crackdown against proclaimed offenders and court absconders, the Islamabad capital police teams arrested four absconders and proclaimed offenders from different areas of the city. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. CPO/ DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in drug peddling and possessing illegal weapons and said that the safety of the lives and property of the citizens is our prime responsibility.



ISLAMABAD: A passenger bus staff off loads the baggage as people come back to the city after spending Eid ul Fitr holidays in their hometowns.

Malik emphasizes business-friendly environment to boost UK-Pakistan ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Jawad Sohrab Malik met with Andrew Dagleish, High Commissioner to the British High Commission, and Hamed Kamal, Deputy Director (Trade) Department for International Trade, to discuss measures to enhance trade and investment relations between Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

During the meeting, the SAPM highlighted the prospects of creating a business-friendly environment in Pakistan to attract more investment in the country's economy. He emphasized the need for tangible measures to facilitate foreign direct investment (FDI) from the UK, including

the creation of a mechanism for prompt redressal of legitimate concerns, such as the issue of free flow of capital.

Matters related to UK Pakistani diaspora also came under discussion since UK is home to more than 1.6 million citizens of Pakistani origin therefore, their concerns need to be given due consideration.

Both sides emphasized the significance of bilateral trade between Pakistan and the UK, and discussed ways to explore new avenues and markets, diversify products and services, and create jobs under the UK's Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS) in the Post-Brexit scenario. They also highlighted

the potential for tariff reductions and simpler terms for Pakistan, including duty-free exports from Pakistan to the UK.

High Commissioner Andrew Dagleish expressed keen interest in harnessing Pakistan's economic potential for foreign investment in various sectors.

He acknowledged the longstanding strong economic relationship between Pakistan and the UK in many areas.

The meeting also addressed concerns of the Pakistani diaspora in the UK, with a commitment to give due consideration to their issues.

Other bilateral and regional issues of importance were also discussed during the meeting.

Int'l Chinese Language Day celebrated across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The International Chinese Language Day was celebrated across Pakistan over the weekend as more and more Pakistanis enrol to learn one of the most popular languages in the world.

Pakistanis are also interested in the Chinese language due to the massive investments by China in Pakistan, mainly under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

According to Gwadar Pro, this year, International Chinese Language Day was celebrated in Pakistan under the theme "Chinese Language: Facilitating Dialogues across Civilisations".

The China-funded Confucius Institutes and Confucius Classrooms across Pakistan held a series of activities, providing a language and culture feast for language lovers.

In Pakistan there are five major Confucius schools operating including the ones in National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Islamabad, the University of Sargodha, the University of Punjab, the University of Agriculture and the University of Karachi. More than 30,000 students in these institutes are learning the Chinese language. The Chinese language is one of the most spoken languages in the world. It is the language of the second-largest economy in the world. Therefore, many people from developing countries are learning this language.

This language has a very rich heritage that has existed in the world for thousands of years.

Chinese is one of the official languages of the United Nations. To give honour to this language, the UN observes Chinese language day every year on April 20. Initially, it was celebrated in 2010 to boost multilingualism and cultural diversity. Moreover, the United Nation wanted to promote the equal use of all of its six official languages which are English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish.

The first UN Chinese language day was celebrated on November 12, 2010. However, in 2011, the date was changed to April 20.

Citizens throng picnic spots during holidays to celebrate Eid

RAWALPINDI (APP): Thousands of fun-seekers including women and children thronged parks of the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad during holidays to celebrate the Eid festival.

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 the second and third day of Eid to enjoy the Eid festivity.

The citizens were seen flocking parks like Nawaz Sharif Park, Ayub National Park, Family Park Commercial Markets Satellite Town Rawalpindi, Jinnah Park and other parks on the second and third days of Eid. However, the people were complaining about lack of facilities at the parks and high rates of edibles at canteens and cafeterias as well. They were also irritated while paying extra money for parking facilities at certain parks. All amusement parks were open from 8 am to 1.30 am on the three-day Eid holidays as children enjoyed rides, swings, moto boating and riding, dodging cars and horses and camel rides.

Families and children also enjoyed mini-train rides while children enjoyed themselves by taking pictures with wild and caged animals in zoos and parks.

At Ayub National Park, the families

indulged in boating in droves and riding motor boats while children enjoyed the waterfall in 'Joy land'. Little kids and girls played on electronic swings. Ayub Park saw families in droves as the newly built amusement park teeming with all kinds of flowers remained the main attraction. Children and families also enjoyed wild animals, birds and pets in some parks and zoos.

Murree Road on Sunday and Monday remained jam-packed with a stream of vehicles after tourists particularly from the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad and other adjoining areas thronged the Murree hill station to enjoy beautiful weather. From Rawalpindi to Dhokri chowk and then to Chatter Park, the road was jam-packed with vehicles moving at snails pace. The parks in Rawalpindi were specially decorated to make them attractive for visitors. The families visiting the parks of the city complained that overcharging, the sale of substandard food items and non-availability of quality products are the main cause of concern. "The food items being offered at the canteen were really tantamount to fleecing and the children were being robbed off their Eidis in the parks," said Altaf, a 12-year-old boy.

The public transporters including taxi drivers charged higher fares. The rates of chips, biscuits, burgers, soft drinks, mineral water and other items were almost double in the parks of twin cities as compared to open markets.

EST posted in educational institutions across country, including federal capital

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad, managed by Federal Directorate of Education Islamabad and Federal Government Educational Institutions Cantonment Directorate, have demanded Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif to upgrade to grade 16.

The Elementary School Teachers (EST) of educational institutions run by the FDE and FG EI Cantonment Directorate across the country have demanded that they be upgraded from Grade 14 to Grade 16.

The EST teachers of Federal Directorate of Education Islamabad and Federal Government Educational Institutions, Canton Garrison Directorate, Rawalpindi said that the government has deprived them even under the special dispensation given by the Prime Minister to the employees of grades 1 to 15. Grade 16

should have been given while they are being given grade 15.

They said that they have not been promoted for many years, so they should be promoted and given upgradation to grade 16. The teachers say that along with the upgradation in grade 16, EST teachers should be given three to five additional annual increments and this facility should also be given to all TGT and SST teachers.

The teachers say that the Federal Government Educational The formula created by Directorate of Institutions for the promotion and induction of EST teachers is 25% teacher promotion and 75% recruitment of new teachers which is unfair. They said that thousands of teachers have been waiting for promotion for the past 16 years, while the department continues to recruit new teachers every year. According to the

teachers, the FG EI directorate has not promoted EST teachers since 2007, while hundreds of new teachers have been recruited until 2022. In this way, thousands of teachers are deprived of their basic rights.

Malik Gulzar Ahmed, Arif Abbasi, Osama Mumtaz Qureshi and others said that inflation in the country has increased so much that they cannot live on their current salaries, so the government should give them their basic rights.

Demanding to take immediate notice of injustice and oppression.

The teachers said that teachers are called the architects of the nation, but it is this class that lives the most backward and poor lives in the society. They have appealed to the Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif to announce a special package for teachers' promotion and salaries.

Safe City project playing effective role against traffic rules violators

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police

Safe City Command and Control center has crackdown on suspicious persons, vehicles with black glasses, non-pattern number plates and motorcycle riders, during the last week, and shifted 05 motorcycles, 04 vehicles and 54 beggars to different police stations for legal proceedings, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police Safe City project is playing an effective role against traffic rules violators and main-

taining law and order in the federal capital.

Under the supervision of CPO Safe City Shoaib Khurram, not only all suspicious activities are being monitored with Safe City high tech cameras, but the safety of life and property of citizens is also being ensured. During the last week, through Safe City high-tech cameras 723 motorcycles were checked out of which 05 bikers were challan for violating traffic rules, while 171 motorcycles without number plates were shifted to different police stations.

During the monitoring, 439 vehicles were found suspicious and having

black papers, out of which black papers of 170 vehicles were removed, while 07 vehicles were also impounded at different police stations on the basis of fake number plates. 45 vehicles were issued challan tickets for zebra crossing violation, 17 suspicious people were checked during monitoring while 54 beggars were shifted to police stations for legal proceedings.

In case of any emergency, citizens can call "Pukar-15" for immediate assistance. The Islamabad capital police is always ready to protect the life and property of the citizens, he maintained.

Capital Police to constitute special squads for action against signal violators

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police has decided to accelerate efforts to ensure implementation of traffic laws and take strict action against those involved in violation of red-signal, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police have decided to assign a task to the traffic congestion unit for taking stern action against those violating red signals while additional squads would be constituted for the purpose.

A special campaign is underway to check violations while various squads are performing duties at main roads and boulevards of the city and taking action against the violators.

Efforts are underway to ensure a disciplined traffic system in the city and he also

appealed to the citizens to follow the traffic rules in order to maintain the smooth flow of traffic in the city.

Islamabad capital police personnel have been directed to ensure implementation on traffic rules and regulation irrespective of status and rank and demonstrate patience and politeness while issuing traffic violation tickets to the road users.

The Islamabad capital police are utilizing all available resources to facilitate the general public. The force issues traffic violation tickets not as a punitive measure but the purpose is to ensure a safe road environment in the Capital and secure the lives of the people.

The education wing is also directed to give awareness to the road users about traffic laws and Islamabad capital police FM Radio 92.4 to air special programs in this regard.



ISLAMABAD: People enjoy walk in Rawal Lake to celebrate the last day of Eid ul Fitr festival in the federal capital.

Military vehicles repaired

KABUL (Agencies): As many as 1,535 various military vehicles which had been destroyed and unusable have been repaired by the engineering team of Joint Military Training Command of the Ministry of National Defense of Afghanistan, a statement said in a statement. The repaired military vehicles include 1,250 Rangers, 60 Humvees, 75 internationals, 42 coasters, 13 forklifts, 22 Teller trucks, 17 Fords, 5 excavators and 10 bulldozers, said the statement.

The Frontier Post

Shawwal 05, 1444 — Wednesday, April 26, 2023

Group of abductors arrested

KABUL (Agencies): The Intelligence forces of IEA, arrested a group of 6 people on charges of abducting and murder. The intelligence officers arrested a group of kidnappers, who abducted a resident of in the 9th police district of Kabul, Sayed Akarem, and demanded money in exchange for his release, the General Intelligence Directorate, in a statement. The abductors despite receiving the money from the family of the victims, they killed him, further said the statement.

Afghan Taliban ready to help US in countering IS

WASHINGTON (INP): The Afghan Taliban are ready to cooperate with the US in combating the militant group Islamic State (IS) as they see jihadists 'a threat to their own power-base,' Washington Post reported.

The Afghan government has been battling IS since August 2021 when it seized power after a 20-year-long war with the US and its allies, the report said while quoting US defence officials.

A senior defence official told that "the duelling groups of religious fanatics are openly warring," with the IS, attacking Afghan Taliban's targets with the latter retaliating by targeting the former's hideouts across Afghanistan.

"I would never want to say that we had mortgaged our counterterrorism to a group like the Taliban, but it's a fact that, operationally, they put pressure on

ISIS-K," the official said. "In a strange world, we have mutually beneficial objectives there."

Some part of the Post's report was based on a leaked Pentagon assessment, claiming that the IS was once again using Afghanistan as a staging ground for plots against America, Europe and Asia.

The report portrayed the resurrected threat as a growing security concern.

When asked to comment, a US defence official acknowledged that "the [Afghan] Taliban has served as a check on ISIS" since 2021, when the group took over Kabul.

The Pentagon assessment cited specific plans to target churches, embassies, business centres and the World Cup soccer tournament. The report said that The White House declined to verify the assessment's authenticity, although it was labelled top-secret and

bore the logo of the Defense Department's organisations.

The classified documents were posted online as part of a wider leak by Massachusetts Air National Guard member Jack Teixeira, who federal authorities said shared them with friends on a private Discord server.

Current and former US officials told the Post that the leaked reports support earlier warnings that terrorist cells could return to life in Afghanistan.

The Biden administration, however, defended its counter-terrorism policies in a statement to the newspaper. The United States "maintains the ability to remove terrorists from the battlefield without permanent troop presence on the ground," National Security Council Spokesperson Adrienne Watson told.

Nathan Sales, the State Department's coordinator

for counterterrorism told the Post that IS "has the ambition to attack American interests in the region and ultimately the US homeland itself."

He urged Washington to make an urgent plan to attack the group's leadership and infrastructure.

The Afghan Taliban has rejected the US intelligence assessment as incorrect.

A spokesperson for the Taliban's Political Office, Suhail Shaheen, said IS "has been suppressed" and the report "does not reflect ground realities in Afghanistan."

"Such reports reflect personal desires" of their authors, he said, adding: "The fact is that the [IS] has no physical presence in Afghanistan as it had during the invasion."

Kazakhstan to ramp up trade with Afghanistan

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Kazakh deputy prime minister says his country plans to ramp up trade cooperation with landlocked Afghanistan. Serik Zhumangarin, who also holds the trade portfolio, was quoted as saying on Monday: "We cooperate and trade with Afghanistan..."

The premier, according to Kazinform, put the bilateral trade volume at a billion US dollars — higher than Kazakhstan's trade levels with Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. He saw bright prospects for Kazakhstan delivering wheat, flour and seed oil to Afghanistan. Zhumangarin added: "We have already opened a trade house there and appointed our representative who will coordinate all this work, because Afghanistan is a diverse country."

He hinted at inviting Afghan traders to a business forum to help them see the investment/trade opportunities offered by Kazakhstan.

Deputy PM meets Turkish Ambassador in Kabul



KABUL (Agencies): Deputy Prime Minister, Mawlawi Abdul Salam Hanafi, met with Cihad Erginay the Turkish ambassador to Afghanistan.

Ambassador Erginay in a meeting with Hanafi said that the Turkish government is making efforts to develop ties between the

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and the international community, a statement said released by Deputy PM Hanafi's office.

The businessmen and investors of the Turkey have a serious tendency to invest in Afghanistan in the sectors of industry, trade and mining, Erginay said

quoting the statement.

For his part, Deputy PM Hanafi, while welcoming ambassador Erginay, said that the Islamic Emirate wants to have ties with all states and is pleased to develop ties with international communities.

"Currently there is ample opportunity for all

kinds of investment in the country and the Islamic Emirate supports the investment of all investors, mainly Turkish investors in different sectors in Afghanistan" Hanafi added.

He thanked the Turkish government for its assistance to the Afghans and asked for more supports.

Taliban recognition not to be discussed



KABUL (Khaama Press): Naser Ahmad Faiq, the Chargé d'Affaires of Afghanistan Permanent Mission to the United Nations, said that the recognition of Afghanistan's de facto regime is not on the agenda of the UN meeting on Afghanistan.

The meeting will cover a unified framework of the international community about political, economic, and social challenges in Afghanistan, said Naser Ahmad Faiq in an interview with BBC.

"In this meeting, we will discuss a solution for

Afghanistan's political, economic and social issues; the recognition of the current regime will not be an issue of the meeting," he said.

The remarks by Faiq came after the confusion raised by UN Deputy Chief Amina Mohammad, who proposed a conference to discuss the recognition of the Taliban.

Mohammad's remarks were confronted with massive criticism both at the national and international levels.

Since the Taliban retook control of the country, they have issued several decrees restricting women from the public arena, including education and work.

The UN will host the international conference on Afghanistan in Doha on May first week.

23 killed, nearly 500 injured in traffic accidents

KABUL (TOLONews): At least 23 people have died and nearly 500 others have been injured in traffic accidents within the past four days in 15 of the 34 provinces in the country.

Due to the high quantity of traffic during Eid al-Fitr, the rate of traffic accidents has rapidly increased.

These traffic accidents mainly occurred in Kabul, Parwan, Faryab, Herat and Nangarhar provinces, where many citizens from across the country were traveling for picnics during national holidays.

TOLONews reporter Naseer Ahmad Salehi interviewed one of those injured in a traffic accident.

Abdul Qadeer was riding a motorcycle from Obih district of Herat when he had an accident with a car.

Abdul Qadeer broke his

foot and suffered many other injuries.

"I was driving the motorcycle slowly. The (car) came directly from front at a high speed. My food is broken," he said.

TOLONews findings of victims of traffic accidents during the Eid days show: At least six people were killed in traffic accidents in Parwan province.

Four people were killed in Kabul and six others were injured.

Four people were killed in Faryab and 11 injured.

Three people were killed and two others were injured in Kunduz.

One person was killed and 200 others were injured in Herat.

One person was killed and 122 others were injured in Nangarhar.

One person was killed and 13 others were injured in Ghazni.

One person was killed

and 11 others were injured.

One person was killed and seven others were injured in Balkh.

One person was killed and seven others were injured in Badakhshan.

Seven others were injured and two others were injured in Jawzjan.

47 people were injured in Badghis.

29 people were injured in Ghor.

Eight people were injured in Nimroz.

Six people were injured in Maidan Wardak.

"We had more than 60 traffic accidents on the first day of Eid. We had 63 cases on the second day, and we had 74 cases on the third day. Four traffic accidents have been registered in the Emergency room," said Farhad Afzali, head of the emergency room at Herat hospital.

"During the three days

of Eid, 122 injured people were referred to the hospital of Nangarhar. One person among them has died," said Naqibullah Rahimi, a spokesman for the Nangarhar public health department.

The victims of the past four day's traffic accidents included women and children as well.

"The teenage boys also included my nephew; they were driving fast and they lost control of (the car) when they reached near the bridge," said Abdul Jabar, a traveler in Jawzjan.

"The people below age 18 should not ride motorcycles. Their parents should be careful," said Abdul Sami, a resident of Jawzjan.

Lack of attention of drivers and sub-standard roads are said to be the main causes of traffic accidents in the country.

Five-year plan in place to produce electricity

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Energy and Water says in order to solve the electricity supply problems in Afghanistan, the ministry has prioritized energy-generating projects and drawn up a five-year plan.

The spokesman for the ministry, Qari Matiullah, said that construction of Sarobi Phase-II and Bagh Dara hydro-electric dams are also included in the five-year plan.

Matiullah said that the survey and mapping of Sarobi Phase-II dam has also been completed.

"The total cost of Sarobi Phase-II dam is estimated at \$300 million and it will have the capacity to produce 180 megawatts of electricity," said Matiullah.

"We have a five-year plan to produce energy from domestic sources. For example, the Bagh Dara dam, Sarobi Phase-II dam, and the Naghlu solar power project." Members of the private sector meanwhile say economic development in the country is not possible without electricity and that the ministry should increase efforts to develop electricity production in Afghanistan.

"Energy and electricity are important pillars in industry, production, trade, agriculture and still in our normal life; without energy, the country cannot be prosperous," said Khanjan Alokozai, a member of ACCI.

essential health and educational services for the Afghan people.

The ADB has released its annual report titled "Building Resilience in Challenging Times."

The \$405 million, the ADB said "is aligned with ADB's approach for fragile and conflict-affected situations."

"By the end of 2022, it had provided nutritionally balanced food to almost 1.19 million people, including 583,958 women and girls, and helped sustain production of wheat and livestock, along with livelihoods support for 201,829 rural households, benefiting 1.9 million people, including 956,704 women and girls," the report is said. "At the same time, 5.31 million people (62% female) received access to basic health and essential hospital services and about 1.9 million people (50% female) were

vaccinated against COVID-19."

The Ministry of Economy (MoE) said that the ADB has been one of the main supporters of development projects in Afghanistan over the past two-decades.

The Asian Development Bank has been one of the main supporters of the infrastructural projects in the energy sector, transport, agriculture and water development sources. The resumption of its activities will cause an improvement in the economic and employment situation in the country," said Abdul Rahman Habib, a spokesman for the MoE.

According to the ADB's report, in Afghanistan, the drought and flash floods worsened food insecurity and contributed to soaring prices of staple items, which impacted the entire population.

This comes as the resi-

dents of Kabul called on the Islamic Emirate and relevant organizations to create job opportunities for them.

"We want them to provide us jobs so we can be out of poverty," said Khan Wali, a resident of Kabul.

Economists believe that the lack of implementation of development projects in the country has caused a surge in unemployment.

"The implementation of development projects, particularly the infrastructural projects, can ensure economic stability in Afghanistan which can also create jobs and improve economic opportunities," said Shakir Yaqoobi, an economist.

According to the report, the ADB announced a \$14 billion package of support to strengthen food security between 2022 and 2025, committing \$3.7 billion in 2022 in a bid to alleviate the food crisis in the region.

Afghans complain of high-priced airfare

KABUL (TOLONews): A number of travel agencies said that the price of airplane tickets has doubled since last year.

According to these agencies, the current price of tickets for Kabul to Dubai has increased to \$500, but it was \$250 two years ago.

"Before, the price of tickets for Kabul- Dubai and Kabul-Istanbul flights was more than \$200 and now it's more than \$450," said Hasib Ahmad, a travel agent.

"The prices are so high and face people with challenges for both airfare and transit (of goods) that go to Dubai and Istanbul," said Tamim, an employee of a travel agency.

According to travel

agencies, the number of passengers on flights has decreased.

Some traders said that due to the suspension of flights of foreign airlines, the price of tickets has increased, and they asked the Islamic Emirate to monitor the price of tickets.

"Unfortunately, recently airlines increased the price of tickets, and that price is so high for passengers and traders," said Mahboobullah, a trader.

"We call on the Islamic Emirate to provide help for traders to travel and to control the prices," said Ezatullah Niazi.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation said the increase in the price of airplane fuel

in the world is the most important reason for the increase in the price of air travel in the country.

"We have a certain price for foreign flights but if they increase it more we will interfere as we interfered with foreign flights in the early days of the Islamic Emirate," said Imamuddin Ahmadi, spokesman for the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation.

Currently, Mahan, Taban, Kam Air, and Ariana companies are transporting passengers abroad, and so far, major foreign aviation companies such as Emirates, Turkish Airlines, and Fly Dubai have not resumed their flights in Afghanistan.

Andkhoi vegetable, fruit stallers demand rent reduction

MAIMANA (Pajhwok): Some vegetables and fruit stallers in the Ankhoi district of northwestern Faryab province have complained against the rent of their stalls while local official pledged to address their demand if there was possibility.

They complained against the drop in their sales said the situation reached at a point from where they could not generate 500 afis for the monthly rent.

Omedullah, who has a stall on the Mandawi road in Andkhoi City, said that he had a moveable stall and could win the bread for my ten member family, but after the municipality to have a stall and pay the

rent his profit disappeared, the fruit on his stall spoiled and people met their demand from other places.

He said, the municipality of Andkhoi charged every stall 10,500 afis at the beginning and asked the stall owners to pay 500 afis monthly rent as well, in such low sales in the market, this amount of money is back breaking.

Najibulla, a vegetable seller has similar complaint, he said I had had a stall at the side of the road and paid 120 afis monthly to the municipality, the level of my sales was good at that time, but the municipality forced him to get the stall and charges us 500 afis monthly rent.

He said: "The ordinary

people are not able to buy, it is drought during this year and no one is listening to our complaints ... we want a discount in the monthly rent and the municipality must also collect the other stalls from the side of the road to encourage the customers to purchase from our stalls".

Mohammad Yousuf, the potato seller said: "The attempt of the municipality for making the stalls for fruit and vegetable has brought an order to the city, but now we do not know wither to win the bread for our families or to pay the municipality monthly rent due to the low level of sales".

Yousuf asked the municipality to decrease

the monthly rent of the stalls.

Abdul Sattar, the leader of stallers welcomed municipality initiative to bring vendors at a specific place and added the move helped bring order and discipline in the city. The customers also could find a specific area for fruits, he added.

The complaint of the vendors is legitimate and asked municipality to rethink about the monthly rent of the stalls and asked to round up scattered stalls and bring all to a specific place.

He added, majority of the expectations of the vendors are not realistic, they dump their groceries on the side of the road and

sell it on a price that they wish and they do not have the habit to stay in their stalls.

Haji Sayed Aslam, a local elder, has also praised the action of the municipality for collecting the vendors into specified locations, it has cleaned the city and prevented more accidents in the city, he said.

Andkhoi Mayor Damullah Atiqullah Karimi said, the workers and vendors occupied the roads, it was hard for the pedestrians and traffic to move on the roads, so the municipality created specific locations for the stalls.

So far 160 stalls have been built in three locations of the city every stall



cost 10,500 afis and every stall owner must also pay 500 afis monthly rent as well, Karimi said.

Referring to the com-

plaints of the sellers he said: "The stalls were built under the supervision of a commission with the lowest cost, the sellers paid for

the cost of the stalls, but if there was possibility in the discount of monthly 500 afis amount we will consult about it."

Sindh Cabinet demand suo moto notice of Imran’s interview

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Provincial Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon and Sindh Chief Minister’s Adviser on Law Barrister Murtaza Wahab has demanded Suo moto action on the recent interview of PTI Chief Imran Khan and the activities of President Arif Alvi in the President House. They added that country is facing serious crisis due to unconstitutional dissolution of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assemblies and added that probe should be initiated on the matter whether the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies were dissolved in a constitutional manner.

They said that efforts were under way to bring judicial coup in the country. They expressed these views while holding a joint press conference at the Sindh Archives Complex on Tuesday. Provincial Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that a serious situation is developing in the country.

Attempts are being made to bring judicial coup in the country. He said that in the past things used to happen behind the curtains but now things are in front of the whole nation. When the curtains are coming down on the important national issues, doubts are also increasing in the minds of nation. He said that questions are being raised on the ways cases are being handled in our judiciary on personal likes and dislikes.

The minister said that the day before yesterday Imran Khan had made dangerous revelations in his interview. He has revealed the meeting with General (R) Bajwa in August in the President of Pakistan House. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that before this meeting, Imran Khan had launched a social media campaign against General (R) Bajwa. He said that what is the responsibility of the President’s House. It is became the center of conspiracies. He said that the meeting between an army chief and a former prime minister had been kept secret, no press release had been issued from the president House on the meeting. He said that Imran Khan

has said that he dissolved the Assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the advice of General (R) Bajwa.

He said that today a audioleak of former chief justice Saqib Nisar has surfaced. He said that Saqib Nisar was completely involved in conspiracies and there was a grand nexus . He said that entire tenure of Saqib Nisar and his decisions have become a question mark. Right from the beginning Saqib Nisar had played the role of the facilitator for PTI Chief Imran Khan. The minister declared former Chief Justice Saqib Nisar as a member of Tiger force of PTI. He blamed that benches were formed on their own choice to get verdict in their favours. The minister raised a question whether all the decisions of Saqib Nisar should not be annulled. He said that political parties were being directed to hold dialogue which is not the function of judiciary. Under which provision of the constitution these orders are being passed.

He said that efforts are being made to bring judicial coup in the country. The minister said that these institutions are the hope of the entire nation, but unfortunately a few people are tilted to a particular party on the basis of personal likes and dislikes that raised question mark on the whole judicial system of the country. Mr. Memon remarked that Imran Khan was a puppet, earlier he was acting on someone else's instructions, now he is ready to act on someone else signals.

The minister maintained that PTI Chief had earlier tried to defame the Pakistan army, at some points, he targeted the judiciary and now this person is plotting to defame the country. Imran Khan wants to target our country and a social media cell of PTI abroad is engaged in this task,' the minister added. Provincial Information Minister said that after the recent interview of Imran Khan, PTI workers should open their eyes and the second tier leadership of Tehreek-e-Insaf should rebel against him (Imran Khan). Speaking on this occasion, advisor law Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that those who

were holding secret meetings with Imran Khan should keep in their minds that even after the passage of three months, these secret meetings are not revealed in such way.

He demanded to initiate investigation on the dissolution of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assemblies . Advisor law pointed a big contradiction in 63 A verdict saying that whole procedure was mentioned in 63 A but that was set aside while giving verdict on it. Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that enactment is the function of parliaments and assemblies all over the world. But unfortunately, the constitution is changed through some court decisions in our country. He said that they wanted that uncertainty should end in the country. But will the judiciary decide the future of the people? Then verdict should be passed that all decisions will be made by the Chief Justice instead of the Parliament. He said that politicians are the representatives of the people and millions people send them to represent them in the parliament, yet they cannot amend the constitution.

He said that decision had been taken that affected the elected governments and prime ministers of the country. Once again there is rummers that prime minister is being targeted . He said that how can a law be repealed before it is notified. He said that there is process of legislatio, for which the National Assembly and the Senate exist. He said that with a stroke of pen a legislation made by parliament is being undo. Adviser law, said that politicians are held accountable every day. Similarly the bureaucracy is made accountable. So why not the judges be made accountable. He said that Justice (R) Naseem Hasan Shah had declared the decision of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto incorrect, should he not be held accountable.

He said that the audio tape which leaked today is telling their role. He said that orders had been issued to demolish Nasla Tower while the building on Constitutional Avenue of Islamabad have been regularized. But no action has been taken against any respected judge till date.



ROME: Evacuees from war-torn Sudan leave an Italian military plane upon their arrival at Ciampino airport, Italy. — Reuters

Pakistan reports first monkeypox case

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Pakistan has detected its first case of monkeypox in a person who travelled to the country from abroad, the Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination confirmed Tuesday.

Health ministry officials, talking to private TV channel, said the person was deported from Saudi Arabia and landed in Pakistan on April 17 with symptoms of monkeypox. The samples of the person, whose identity has been kept confidential, were then sent to the National Institute of Health (NIH), Islamabad, and a day earlier, the facility confirmed that he was a carrier of the infectious virus.

The officials added that the person is a resident of either Rawalpindi or Islamabad, and his relatives are now being screened and asked to remain in quarantine to ensure the virus does not spread. The authorities have also begun contract tracing. They said that airports across the country have been put on high alert after the detection of the virus, while the ministry has sent NIH the samples of suspected patients.

Mpox (monkeypox) is a viral illness caused by the monkeypox virus, a species of the genus Orthopoxvirus. Two different clades exist — clade I and clade II. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said that the common symptoms of monkeypox or mpox are a skin rash or mucosal lesions which can last 2-4 weeks and are accompanied by fever, headache, muscle aches, back pain, low energy, swollen lymph nodes.

Mpox can be transmitted to humans through physical contact with someone who is infectious, with contaminated materials, or with infected animals. The disease is treated with supportive care. Vaccines and therapeutics developed for smallpox and approved for use in some countries can be used for mpox in some circumstances. Since May 2022, a global outbreak of human monkeypox infections has been reported in over 78,000 people.

Sudan’s warring rivals agree 72-hour truce

KHARTOUM (Agencies): A US-brokered 72-hour ceasefire between Sudan’s warring generals officially came into effect Tuesday after 10 days of urban combat killed hundreds, wounded thousands and sparked a mass exodus of foreigners. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) agreed to the ceasefire “following intense negotiations”, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement shortly before the truce took effect at midnight (2200 GMT Monday).

Previous bids to pause the conflict failed to take hold, but both sides confirmed they had agreed to the three-day halt. “This ceasefire aims to establish humanitarian corridors, allowing citizens and residents to access essential resources, healthcare, and safe zones, while also evacuating diplomatic missions,” the RSF paramilitary tweeted. In a statement on Facebook, the SAF said it would also abide by the ceasefire on condition its rivals did so.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned earlier that Sudan was on “the edge of the abyss” and that the violence “could engulf the whole region and beyond”. The fighting has pitted forces loyal to army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan against those of his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the RSF. The RSF emerged from the Janjaweed militia that then-president Omar al-Bashir unleashed in Darfur, leading to war crimes charges against Bashir and others.

The Forces of Freedom and Change, the main civilian bloc which the two generals ousted from power in a 2021 coup, said the truce would allow for “dialogue on the modalities of a permanent ceasefire.” At least 427 people have been killed and more than 3,700 wounded, according to UN agencies. Among the latest to die was

the assistant administrative attache at Cairo’s embassy in Khartoum, Egypt’s foreign ministry said.

The official was killed while heading from home to the embassy to follow up on evacuation procedures, it said. More than 4,000 people have fled the country in foreign-organised evacuations that began on Saturday. The United States and European, Middle Eastern, African and Asian nations launched emergency missions to bring to safety their embassy staff and Sudan-based citizens by road, air and sea.

But millions of Sudanese are unable to flee what is one of the world’s poorest countries, with a history of military coups. They are trying to survive acute shortages of water, food, medicine and fuel as well as power and internet blackouts. UN agencies reported some Sudanese civilians were able to escape “to Chad, Egypt and South Sudan”.

“We must all do everything within our power to pull Sudan back from the edge of the abyss,” Guterres said. He had also, again, called for a ceasefire. Britain requested an emergency UN Security Council meeting on Sudan, which was expected to take place Tuesday, according to a diplomat. A UN convoy carrying 700 people completed an arduous 850-kilometre (530-mile) road trip to Port Sudan on the Red Sea coast from the capital, where they left behind gunfire and explosions.

The United Nations head of mission Volker Perthes said the convoy arrived safely. A UN statement separately said he and other key staff will “remain in Sudan and will continue to work towards a resolution to the current crisis”. With Khartoum airport disabled after battles that left charred aircraft on the tarmac, many foreigners were airlifted from smaller airstrips to countries including Djibouti and Jordan.

Lathani gang’s head of Kacha area offers ceasefire

RAHIM YAR KHAN (INP): Shabbir Lathani, the ringleader of Lathani Gang in Kacha area has offered negotiations to police if “fake encounters” are stopped.

According to media reports, Shabbir Lathani in a fresh video message uploaded on social media rejected the claims that there were terrorists, dacoits and “enemies of the country” in the Kacha area. He added poverty and tribal feuds were the actual issues plaguing the area and could be resolved through mediation.

He said he and other members of his gang belonged to the Mazari tribe and their clan was led by their elder Nawab Sukhani. He said all the cases registered against him

and Qabil Sukhani were the result of internal tribal conflicts. He accused that many “false” FIRs had been registered against him and his brother Mira Lathani.

He said that in 2016 when the operation was initiated against Choutoo Gang, they were in Sindh and had met with officers of police and intelligence agencies at Dera Morr, along with Sardar Sakhi Sultan Shar. He claimed that in the meeting they had offered to surrender on the condition of withdrawal of cases and mediation to end the tribal feuds.

Shabbir Lathani, in the message, denied there were any militants in the Kacha area belonging to the banned Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP) or nay other

terrorist group, as being claimed by police. He appealed to tribal leader and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf formed MNA, Sardar Riaz Mehmood Khan Mazari, son of Sarda Balakh Sher Mazari, to not to portray the “unrest” in the Kacha area as a law-and-order issue.

He said there was crime in the Kacha area due to poverty, hunger and tribal quarrels and that mediation between tribal people could help solve the problem and restore peace there. He said peace could be restored in the area through provision of electricity and construction of schools and roads, regretting that ex-MNA Riaz Mazari never demanded a school for the area despite being a parliamentarian.

Another convoy arrived: FM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari while reiterating the government’s commitment to the welfare of overseas Pakistanis, on Tuesday said that Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to lead in the relief and rescue of Pakistanis in Sudan as today, another convoy of 211 Pakistanis dispatched from Khartoum, arrived in Port Sudan.

“With the latest convoy, the total number of Pakistanis who have been evacuated to safety has reached 700. Ambassador Meer Bahrose Regi’s team in Khartoum and Port Sudan are working day and night to facilitate the stay of Pakistanis who are still in Sudan until their evacuation to Pakistan,” Foreign Office Spokesperson quoted the foreign minister in a press statement.

The foreign minister, in his statement, further said that they remained engaged with the friendly countries in the region especially with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to facilitate the evacuation process. He also appreciated the hard work of Pakistan missions in the region and the entire foreign office team led by foreign secretary Dr. Asad Majeed Khan, who was leading the inter-agency coordination process.

Tarar voices for transparency to ensure rule of law

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Law Azam Nazeer Tarar on Tuesday said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) believed in the supremacy of law and the constitution and wanted transparency in all matters as it was utmost necessary for ensuring rule of law in the country.

Addressing a press conference flanked by SAPM Malik Ahmed Khan here, he said that peoples’ confidence in the national institutions could be ensured through transparency. Parliament being the legislature and supreme institution of the country, was mandated to make legislation as per the constitution, he said and added that Practice and Procedure Act was passed by the upper and lower houses of the Parliament by using its constitutional right, however a ruling was given to stop the act before its imposition.

He said the Parliament and the political fora were the right place to discuss political matters. In the past, courts have tried to avoid questions being raised on political matters, Tarar said, adding when political matters were taken to court, it only harmed the country and the nation. Tarar said that an audio

leak between former chief justice Saqib Nisar and the PTI lawyer Khawaja Tariq Rahim had raised questions as various political matters and cases which were in the courts had been discussed in the audio tape.

The conversation in the audio leak was aimed to create rifts among the institutions and to further deepen the prevailing crisis, he alleged. The country was passing through a tough situation, whereas, the audio leak was referring to further intensify it. Matters pertaining to future were discussed in the call, he said adding that the perception regarding ousting of prime minister of elected PML-N government in 2016-17 was getting strengthened that it was pre-planned.

SAPM Malik Ahmed Khan said that interpretation of the constitution was a right and duty of the courts, however, they could not rewrite the constitution. He said various powers were abundantly misused in the courts including the suo moto powers particularly in political matters. He said the PML-N was never afraid of going into elections, however, it wanted a level playing field for everyone so that no one could raise questions over the conduct of elections and their transparency.

He said, a ruling was

given for conducting elections in the Punjab province in 90 days, whereas, the matter of elections in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was set aside. The SAPM said that conspiracies were being hatched against the PML-N government from the day one. There should prevail sanity and political discourse in the country to take the things forward as the parliament was a supreme institution, he added.

To a question, Federal Minister Azam Nazeer said that some elements wanted to see the government in contempt of court, but the government did nothing which come into the purview of contempt of court. To another query regarding audio leak, he said that it was an era of information technology and anything could come out as it was not a matter of Pakistan only and it happened everywhere in the world.

Malik Ahmed Khan said while responding to a question, under the article 18 of the constitution, it was the responsibility of Election Commission of Pakistan to conduct elections and they had to ensure implementation over it. The minister and SAPM Malik Ahmed Khan demanded forensic audit into the alleged audio tape.

No ‘no go area’ in Pakistan, says DG ISPR

any and if compared to the world forces under which circumstances and resources it fought against terrorism, there was no precedent to it, he added. “Our fight will continue till termination of the last terrorist,” he vowed. Highlighting the Western Border Management measures, the ISPR DG said almost 98 percent border fencing along 2,611 kilometers Pak-Afghan international border was completed and 85 percent fencing was completed along Pak-Iran border.

He added that 85 percent construction of forts along Pak-Afghan and 33 percent along Pak-Iran border was completed. During this entire process, he said many soldiers of Pakistan Army embraced martyrdom to complete fencing. He added that 65 percent area in the newly merged tribal districts was cleansed from mines as some 98,000 mines have been neutralized.

Agencies add: In response to a question, he said the Ministry of Defence had already given a briefing to the Supreme Court regarding the deployment of troops for elections, which was based on “ground realities”. The defence ministry briefed the apex court last week on why the government could not provide army personnel for elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa — and the report has not been made public yet.

The government has repeatedly maintained that the polls cannot take place not only due to the ongoing economic turmoil, but also due to terrorism threats, and with the army busy in counterterrorism operations, it could not allocate security forces for elections.

To a question about what was in the report that the defence ministry had submitted to the top court, Maj Gen Chaudhry said that had there been a need to make the briefing provided to Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial public, then it would have already been disclosed. “Those talks were held just between the institutions,” he said. “It is not in the interest of the nation, country, and the army to push the armed forces into politics,” the military’s spokesperson remarked, a position that his predecessors have also maintained.

The ISPR DG added that it is the government’s prerogative to summon the Pakistan Army under Article 245 for election security or during natural disasters. At the start of the news conference — his first after taking over the post — he said the purpose was to elaborate on the army’s professional activities, including analysing its counterterrorism operations. “The contacts between the

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Baloch [insurgent] organisations and foreign intelligence agencies have been proven.” Pakistan’s civil and military agencies took great steps against terrorists, he said. Giving a breakdown of the menace of terrorism during the current year, he said 436 incidents had occurred, in which 293 people were martyred and 523 injured.

During this period, security forces conducted 8,279 intelligence-based operations (IBOs), in which 1,535 terrorists were killed. Around 70 IBOs were being conducted daily, he added. “There is no no-go area in Pakistan,” he emphasised. However, terrorists were still disturbing the country’s peace. The ISPR DG further said that 137 security officials have been martyred so far this year while 117 have been wounded. “The war against terrorism that Pakistan has fought is unprecedented and will continue till the last terrorist is eliminated,” he asserted.

“Terrorist organisations and their facilitators’ have no ideology, religion or faith. They attack mosques, police, religious scholars, mediapersons and citizens,” he said. He also expressed sadness that the police were blamed for any terrorist incident

no matter how small. The police had given countless sacrifices, he said.

Referring to the suicide attack on a mosque in Peshawar in January, which claimed the lives of over 70 people, the ISPR DG said the blast was carried out by the banned militant group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar on the TTP’s orders. “The attacker belonged to Afghanistan. The facilitators have been arrested. These terrorists were trained in different areas of Afghanistan.”

The masterminds of an attack on the Karachi police chief’s office have also been arrested, he said, adding that the terrorists had taken Rs3 million to carry out the attack. “No individual or group will be allowed to take the law into their own hands,” he stressed. “Attempts to sabotage CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) and other projects are being thwarted. All projects are being provided complete security. “Different social welfare programs have been announced after slashing the army’s budget. The navy and airforce have also participated in relief activities.”

The ISPR DG said the army had reviewed its expenditures in view of the country’s economic situation. “Petroleum, ration and non-operational movement are being reduced.

“The journey towards permanent peace has begun.”

Maj Gen Chaudhry further said around 3141 kilometre-long border has been fenced along the frontiers with Afghanistan and Iran to prevent infiltration of terrorists. He said 98% border with Afghanistan and 85% with Iran has been fenced, while 85% of forts along the Afghanistan frontier and 33% with Iran have been completed. He further said that 65% of erstwhile tribal areas have been cleared of land mines.

The ISPR DG added that it isn’t possible to completely seal the border between the two countries, and in the local context, Pakistan is home to over five million Afghan refugees, while the movement of people between the borders of the two states was substantial. “On an annual basis, around 20,000 people cross the Pak-Afghan borders,” he said, noting that the local authorities were in talks with the interim Afghan government over border management.

Highlighting measures for the socio-economic uplift of the people, the ISPR DG said that 3,654 projects are being completed at a cost of Rs162 billion in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while 95% of the affected population has returned to

homes. He said that around 14,000 people have been given jobs in Pakistan Army and the Frontier Corps under Youth Employment Scheme.

Similarly, over 1,200 students are getting an education in various institutions. The military’s spokesperson added that with the growing population, Pakistan also faces a food security challenge. “Governments in developed countries also use the army to improve agriculture. In this regard, the federal and provincial governments will decide what Pakistan Army’s role will be,” he said. The Punjab government has allocated over 45,000 acres of land to the Pakistan Army for a “Corporate Agriculture Farming” project in the shape of a “joint venture” to enhance the crop yield in order to ensure food autarky.

However, officials in the Punjab government were prompted to issue a clarification and provide a rationale for allocation of land to the Pakistan Army. A senior government official, on the condition of anonymity, said: “From the onset, it should be clear that the ownership of the land remains with the Punjab government.” “The Pakistan Army is only providing a management structure; the corporate sector and local farmers will also be involved in the cultivation process,” he added.