

Imran's convoy meets mishap

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Four people were injured when a car in PTI Chairman Imran Khan's convoy met an accident on Motorway near Islamabad on Friday. The accident took place in Sukheki as the car driver was trying to film the convoy heading to Islamabad and showing it live on social media. However, the driver lost control of the car which resulted in minor injuries to four persons while the vehicle was completely destroyed.

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RISALPUR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, PAF witnessing the stunning aerobatics display performance by Team Sherdils at the graduation ceremony held at PAF Academy, Asghar Khan.

‘No deadlock’

Govt, PTI to hold final round of talks on May 2

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government and the opposition party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are set to hold the "final" round of talks on May 2 (Tuesday) after the former ruled out the possibility of a deadlock between the sides.

Following the second round of talks — which was held Friday in Senate's Committee Room — the sides decided to consult with their top leadership and allies over the proposals presented during the meeting.

Both delegations were hopeful of concluding on Tuesday, but PTI warned that the talks could "derail" at any point if the law enforcers keep arresting its workers. The talks are crucial to end an impasse over the elections, which has fueled political tensions in the country, leading to an economic crisis, with the Supreme Court also urging the political forces to negotiate and find out a solution to the prevailing turmoil.

The court had directed the political parties to decide on the election date by April 26, but no progress was made till the deadline. In yesterday's hearing, the SC mentioned that it cannot ask parties to hold negotiations forcefully. "The court cannot force [parties] on a dialogue. The court only wants implementation on the Constitution so that the dispute is resolved," Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial said.

But PDM and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has decided to stay away from the talks as his party believes that the negotiations with Imran Khan's PTI would bear no fruit. In conversation with journalists after the talks, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said progress has been made. Without disclosing, he said both sides have presented their proposals. "There is no deadlock in the talks. PTI and the government's commit-

tees will meet on Tuesday at 11am," he said, elaborating that the meeting has been postponed till next week as both sides need to discuss the proposals with their leadership. Talking to journalists, PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi said in his view, "reasonable progress" was made today and that he would inform party chairman Khan about the talks after visiting him in Lahore.

"We presented our point of view and they presented theirs," Qureshi said, without elaborating on what the proposals were so far. PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry, during the same press conference, said the talks were held in a "positive atmosphere", but warned that talks would derail if arrests of his party workers did not stop. "The arrests will destroy the negotiation process. Ali Amin Gandapur has still not been released despite him securing bail in all his cases," the former information minister said.

Fawad said the government and ministers claim that they are not behind the arrests, but warned that whoever was behind the detentions was hurting the negotiation process. Sources familiar with the talks told media that the government has suggested holding polls in September this year. However, the sources said the PTI did not agree to this at first and proposed that polls be held in July.

At this, the sources said, the government representatives told the opposition that they have to present the budget in June and elections in July would be too early. The PTI delegation then agreed to put forward the government's proposal before Khan. The sources added that Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan's lawmaker Kishwer Zehra told the members of the meeting that it would be better if both sides reach a consensus, otherwise, it would be a setback for them if an external force gets involved.

Marriyum pays tribute to PAF cadets

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Friday paid tributes to the cadets who passed out from PAF Asghar Khan Academy Risalpur.

Using her Twitter handle, she quoted a verse from Allama Iqbal: *Ya Rab Dil-e-Muslim Ko Wo Zinda Tamanna Dey. Jo Qalb Ko Garma Dey, Jo Rooh Ko Tarpa Dey.*

Weekly inflation rised by 0.15%

ISLAMABAD (APP): The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 0.15 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on April 27, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 252.20 points as compared to 251.83 points during the past week, according to the PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 46.82 percent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 =100 is covering 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs17,732 witnessed a 0.15 percent increase and went up to 258.12 points from last week's 257.73 points.

Meanwhile, the SPI for the consumption group from Rs 17,732-22-888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175; and above Rs 44,175 witnessed an increase of 0.15 percent, 0.15 percent, 0.15 percent, and 0.14 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 21 (41.17%) items increased, 07 (13.73%) items decreased and 23 (45.10%) items remained stable.

The items, which recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW), included Potatoes (8.22%), Chicken (1.7-5%), Wheat Flour (1.55%), Gur (1.23%), Bread (1.13%) and Rice Irri-6/9 (1.01%). The items that recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis, included Tomatoes (19.20%), Bananas (5.39%), Onions (1.40 %), Sugar (1.19%), LPG (1.09-), Pulse Masoor (0.98%) and Mustard Oil (0.39%).

The commodities that witnessed an increase in price on Year-on-Year (YOY) basis, included Wheat Flour (175.06%), Cigarettes (146-44%), Potatoes (114.45%), Gas Charges for Q1 (108-38%), Tea Lipton (104-28%), Diesel (102.84%), Eggs (91.98%), Petrol (87-81%), Rice Basmati Broken (87.71%), Bananas (86-33%), Rice Irri-6/9 (83-39%), Pulse Moong (67.60%), Bread (61.02%), Pulse Mash (58.10%) and Washing Soap (49.93%). On a Year-on-Year (YoY) basis, the commodities which recorded a decrease in their average prices included Tomatoes (48.33%) and Chillies Powdered (6.48%).

The Frontier Post

Ex-commissioner acquitted

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Anti-Corruption Establishment on Friday acquitted former commissioner of Rawalpindi Mahmood and land acquisition collector Abbas in Rawalpindi Ring Road scam. Anti-Corruption Court Judge Ali Raza heard the case and acquitted both for their alleged involvement in the ring road scam. The ex-commissioner filed the bail plea through his lawyer, stating that he had never been involved in corrupt practices.

Nation stands behind armed forces: PM

F.P. Report

RISALPUR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said that the whole nation stood behind its armed forces like a solid rock and it would continue to do so in future to defeat the evil designs of anti-Pakistan forces.

"This mutual bond of love, devotion and abiding reverence has remained unbroken. I have an unwavering belief that our armed forces will always live up to the expectation of the people in future as well," he said in his address at the passing out parade of cadets at the Pakistan Air Force's Asghar Khan Academy here. The prime minister congratulated the graduating cadets, their parents and the faculty on the most memorable moments of their lives.

PM Shehbaz said over the last two decades the nation had been tested by a combination of challenges such as terrorism, extremism and militancy. "The manner in which our armed forces, including the air force, police and intelligence community have risen to the challenges and neutralized the threats to our national security is simply outstanding." He lauded the PAF leadership to make the Pakistan Air Force a truly professional, progressive and high-tech organization.

He recalled the recent example of the PAF's true professionalism when it showed a befitting and determined response to the Indian aggression in February 2019. "The whole world saw how our brave sons humiliated the Indian air force and show of exceptional skill and expertise," he

added. With respect to the economic challenges, the prime minister said that the global economic crisis adversely affected all walks of life in the country. However, he vowed not to let the people be at the mercy of the disruptions in the global markets.

"We need to build resilience and protect our economy from global shocks. This is possible if we think long and hard and introduce structural reforms in the economy to make it sustainable," he said adding it is for this purpose that he had always been a strong proponent of the Charter of Economy. "Let me assure you that we are making all efforts to bring our economy back on track. Thanks to the tough decisions at the cost of our political assets, we are on the way to overcoming these challenges successfully one day soon." The prime minister said Pakistan was a peace-loving nation and wished to maintain friendly ties with all countries, especially neighbours, however he said "our desire for peace must not be misunderstood as weakness".

He said there could be no peace in South Asia without a just and fair settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in line with the UN resolutions and the aspiration of the people of Kashmir. "We condemn the grave human rights violation in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir and urge the world to take note of the illegal changes by India post August 2019," he added.

Earlier, the PM reviewed the parade and presented awards to cadets. PAF's Sherdil Squadron also displayed a splendid air display on

the occasion. Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Information Minister Maryam Aurangzeb and other civil and military officials were also present on the occasion.

Country's development linked with Balochistan's uplift: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said that the country's development was linked with the progress and prosperity in Balochistan province.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Chairman of Balochistan National Party Sardar Akhtar Mengal, who called on him here, said the skilled Baloch youth were an asset for the country and their uplift was government's priority. The prime minister said the government was making all-out efforts for Gwadar's development as well as for providing the facilities of international standard to the residents of the port city.

The BNP head expressed confidence over the prime ministers's steps for country's security as well as Balochistan's development, on behalf of the people of Balochistan and their elected representatives. He said that for the first time, Prime Minister Shehbaz had made the progress and prosperity of Balochistan's youth as his priority.

Akhtar Mengal said that the prime minister personally sympathised with the flood-hit people of Balochistan which was unprecedented. The BNP chief said that during last one year, the prime minister stabilized the country's economy despite utmost economic difficulties and the natural calamities.

Not received funds for polls: ECP submits report in SC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday submitted a report to the Supreme Court regarding the provision of funds for elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The apex court had ordered the government to provide Rs 21 billion to the ECP for conducting elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by April 27. According to the report, the Commission had not received funds for the elections. Sources revealed that the two-page report stated reasons for the non-availability of funds for the polls. The ECP submitted the report last night to the SC. According to the report, the ECP has not received funds from the federal government so far.

The apex court had issued a notice to the ECP secretary in this regard and

gave the federal government deadline till April 27 for the provision of polls fund for the third time. The Supreme Court on Thursday adjourned indefinitely the hearing of the petition seeking simultaneous elections in the country after hearing from all the sides about the prospects of the talks between the government and the opposition. Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Umar Ata Bandial declared that political parties should sit together and find a solution to the issue, otherwise the court is there to act. He remarked the court had proposed political dialogue keeping in view the prevailing situation in the country. "The political atmosphere is bitter," he said.

CJP Bandial remarked the court could not force the government to enter into dialogue with the

opposition. "There is a proposal, not an order, to hold talks. For now, the court is not issuing any directive or timeline," he made it clear. The top judge observed that there is Constitution and the apex court's judgement if there would be no outcome of the talks.

On Wednesday, National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf wrote a letter to CJP Bandial conveying "profound concerns" of the elected representatives over recent Supreme Court orders and some comments by judges, terming them an "encroachment" on parliament's domain. In his five-page letter, the speaker advised the Supreme Court to "avoid getting involved in the political thicket", saying that "it is best to leave the resolution of political matters by the parliament and the political parties".

ISPR says statement quoted out of context

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Recently, there have been discussions in media on Pakistan Army's combat worthiness in view of the condition of certain weapon systems on its inventory. To this end, views of former army chief on future threat to Pakistan, which he shared with media persons in an off the record interactive session, have been quoted out of the context.

Army assures the people of Pakistan that we always took and will continue to take pride in our operational preparedness and utmost combat worthiness. Pakistan's Armed Forces always did and will continue to keep their weapons, equipment and battle hardened human resource ever ready for the defence of motherland.

PAF Airbus evacuate Pakistanis from Sudan

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the directives of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu has ordered Pakistan Air Force (PAF) transport fleet to carry out swift evacuation of stranded Pakistanis from conflict-hit Sudan.

According to a PAF news release on Friday, the PAF Airbus carrying 149 passengers has safely landed at Karachi through Jeddah. The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) C-130 carrying 110 Pakistani passengers would land in latter half of the day. "Air Force is making all-out efforts to repatriate stranded Pakistanis in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Pakistan Embassies in Sudan and Saudi Arabia," it said.

"The rescued Pakistanis from Port Sudan New International Airport are being transported by Pakistan Air Force (PAF) aircraft. Pakistan Air Force would continue to repatriate the brothers and sisters in distress to their homeland," it added. The evacuated families expressed their gratitude to the Government of Pakistan and appreciated Pakistan Air Force for their timely rescue amidst the rapidly deteriorating situation in Sudan.

Three soldiers martyred in Lakki terror attacks

F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: On Friday night, Security Forces, while fighting gallantly, repulsed three attacks by terrorists on different locations within a span of short time in Lakki Marwat District.

A Motorcycle borne suicide bomber exploded himself near security forces post in Lakki Marwat followed by a fierce fire exchange between own troops and terrorists. Own troops effectively engaged the terrorists as a result of which 4 x terrorists were sent to hell.

In two other encounters with terrorists in general area Amir Kalam and Tajbi Khel, District Lakki Marwat, 3 x more terrorists,



including terrorist commander Musa Khan, were eliminated. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the seven killed terrorists. However, during intense exchange of fire, Naib Subedar Taj Mir (age 40 years, resident of District Nowshera), Havaladar Zakir Ahmed (age 38 years, resident of District Abbottabad) and Sepoy Abid Hussain (age

29 years, resident of District DI Khan) having fought gallantly, embraced shahadat.

Sanitization of the areas is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area. Security Forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve.

Resettlement of terrorists: ANP seeks establishment of judicial commission

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A writ petition has been filed for establishment of Inquiry Commission to place responsibility of resettlement of terrorists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at Peshawar High Court (PHC).

The petition filed by Babar Khan Yousafzai and Hizar Hayat Khan Advocates on behalf of Awami National Party (ANP) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Aimal Wali Khan at PHC.

President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi, former Prime Minister Imran Khan, former Director General Lieutenant General Faiz Hameed, Former Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan and former provincial advisor Barrister Saif while current federal and provincial governments are also made respondents in the petition.

The writ stated that to establish inquiry commission against resettlement of terrorists in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa and identification of responsible persons while to public agreements made with ban outfits because all respondents confessed resettlement of extremists in the province at different forums.

The inquiry committee must be provided stipulated framework to identify facts and figures under the chair of Chief Justice PHC to conclude judicial commission report in this regard. A divisional bench of PHC will hear the writ petition in upcoming days.



BEIJING: Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committees for politics and foreign member Wang Yu shaking hand with Chief of Army Staff, General Asim Munir prior to a meeting.

Minister chairs meeting about livestock sector

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Industries, Trade and Energy SM Tanveer on Friday chaired a meeting at the civil secretariat to discuss the procurement of vaccines aimed at protecting animals from diseases.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Livestock Masood Anwar, Secretary Livestock (South Punjab) Nasir Jamal Hotiana, DG Research, experts, and officers from the Livestock department.

SM Tanveer emphasized the crucial role of the livestock sector in the economic development of the province. He highlighted the immense potential within this sector to generate employment opportunities and income for the youth. Recognizing the significance of safeguarding animals from diseases, he proposed the formulation of a comprehensive action plan to promote the development of this vital sector. He also emphasized the need for disease prevention measures to enhance exports of meat and milk products.

The provincial minister urged the creation of a strategic plan in order to bring about a revolutionary change in the livestock sector. He directed the officials to give special attention to disease surveillance and vaccination programs at the grassroots level. By ensuring the protection of animals and preventing the spread of diseases, the livestock sector can flourish and contribute significantly to the economy, he added.

Hailey College to launch BBA (Replica) program

LAHORE (APP): Hailey College of Banking and Finance (HCBF) Punjab University is all set to launch BBA (4-year) in Commerce (Replica program) in the Afternoon and Evening sessions with the first intake from Fall 2023.

Punjab University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Khalid Mahmood presented approval letter to the Principal HCBF Dr. Ahmed Muneeb Mehta during a simple ceremony at the vice chancellor's office here on Friday. Dr. Ahmed Muneeb Mehta said that this new edition will support HCBF's vision to go an extra mile and provide quality commerce education to the youth of Pakistan.

Aitzaz sees courts determined as polls are imminent

LAHORE (NNI): Legal expert Aitzaz Ahsan has said that the Supreme Court will issue ruling based on the outcome of negotiations, the court has given a chance to politicians and the judiciary cannot step back, the government cannot evade from elections in the country. In an interview with a private television channel, he said that if there is a need to amend the constitution, then PTI members will have to be de-notified, and if that happens, then the PML-N will shun away from the amendment. Aitzaz Ahsan said that he had advised Imran Khan earlier to dissolve the assemblies. He said that PTI members are innocent and cannot understand the cunning politics of the Muslim League (N) who has been doing politics from last 40 years, they are experts in altering their goals and manipulate the situations.

Banned outfits fund raiser arrested

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Friday claimed to have nabbed four accused involved in fund raising for banned organizations.

The accused were arrested on a tip-off from different areas of the city, according to spokesman for CTD. The funds collected for the prescribed outfits were said to be used in terrorist activities in the megalopolis. Arrested were identified as Rahim-ul-Haq, Ghulam Muhammad Khan, Abdullah alias Farooq and Abdulla Nadeem alias Naveed. During preliminary investigations, they confessed to doing fund raising for the banned organizations on the instructions of their central command.

CM Murad visits UAE visa center

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Friday said that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has established one of the largest visa centers in Karachi to issue work visas and provide consular services to employees, who apply for jobs in the UAE.

The Consul General of UAE in Karachi Bakheet Ateeq Al-Remeithi took the Chief Minister round of different sections of the visa center and briefed him about their services. The CM was accompanied by Provincial Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Shah.

The CM was told that the visa Center has been authorized to issue work visas. At this, the CM said that the people of Sindh and Balochistan would be facilitated at the center if they got employment opportuni-

ties in the UAE.

"I believe it would not be an exaggeration to say this Center is the window of employment in the UAE."

The CM was told that the attestation facilities were being provided on a daily basis at the visa center apart from providing consular services to the employees, who apply for jobs in UAE.

"This Visa Center assists the expatriate documents process quite smoothly and checks it thoroughly to avoid any glitch or error in the documentation," the Consul General Bakheet told the CM.

The Chief Minister thanked UAE government for facilitating the people of Sindh and Balochistan by establishing such a state-of-the-art, resourceful, and one-widow facility Center in Karachi.

SOR takes notice of sale of stamp paper on high rates

LAHORE (APP): Board of Revenue Punjab (BOR) Senior Member Nabeel Javed took notice of a complaint by a citizen regarding the sale of Rs100 and Rs 200 stamp papers at exorbitant rates.

He directed deputy commissioners and stamp inspectors across the province to take strict action against stamp vendors involved in this practice.

In a statement issued on Friday, the BOR

spokesman stated that the district administration had been instructed to take legal action against those who did not issue Rs100 and Rs 200 stamp papers to the public.

The spokesman clarified that there was no shortage of any type of stamp papers across Punjab and that the licenses of stamp sellers involved in creating an artificial shortage would be canceled.

According to govern-

ment instructions, stamp papers were issued on plain papers so there was no question of a shortage of stamp papers, the spokesman added.

To address any grievances related to this issue, people could lodge complaints with the Board of Revenue at 042-99210785 and 0300-5122337 or they may contact the respective deputy commissioner's office, the spokesman concluded.

Chinese CG calls on Sindh Chief Secretary

KARACHI (APP): Consul General (CG) of China, Yang Yundong called on Sindh Chief Secretary Dr. Muhammad Sohail Rajput at the Sindh Secretariat here on Thursday.

During the meeting, issues of mutual interest including promoting bilateral relations were discussed, said a statement.

Sindh Chief Secretary assured the Chinese CG of the support of the provincial government and said that the Sindh government and the people of Sindh value brotherly relations with China. He added that there are very good investment opportunities for

Chinese companies and businessmen in the energy and agriculture sectors in Sindh province.

Dr. Mohammad Sohail Rajput said that he appreciates the cooperation of the Chinese government during the floods.

During the meeting, it was agreed to work on the agriculture and technology sectors in Sindh.

At the end, Chinese Consul General Yang Yundong thanked the provincial government for its support and cooperation. The Chief Secretary Sindh presented Sindhi cap and Ajrak to the Chinese Consul General.

Shah assures shifting elephant Madhubala to Safari Park

KARACHI (PPI): Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah has said that all precautionary measures will be taken for the transfer of elephant Madhubala from Karachi Zoo to Safari Park and proposals to build a sanctuary for elephants in the Safari Park should be sent to the Sindh government.

Full scanning should be done including elephants and other large animals. He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting held regarding Karachi Zoo and Safari Park.

Additional Chief Secretary Najam Ahmad Shah, Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saifur Rehman, Head of Four Paws Team Dr. Aamir Khalili, Katrina Hussain, Sabina Dawood, Dr. Javed Memon, Director Zoo Kunwar Ayub, Owais Khan Advocate and other members of the Four Paws team and Officers were also present.

The Local Government Minister said that the government of Sindh is providing all kinds of support for the welfare of animals. We are sorry for the death of Noor Jahan the elephant. The cooperation from the management of Four Paws is appreciated. It is hoped that we will continue to receive the support of this international organization in the future so that if the animals are sick, they can be treated according to the

internationally accepted methods. Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman said while giving a briefing on this occasion that the transfer of Madhu Bala from Karachi Zoo will be done before Eid-ul-Azha. The traffic plan has been prepared, it will be followed according to the procedure and criteria as mentioned by Four Paws team.

He said that 20 acres of area has been allocated in the safari park for large animals, the training of elephant handlers has been started, blood samples of three lions and one tiger in Karachi Zoo have been obtained yesterday and similarly all animals will be scanned.

He said that the sanctuary which will be built for Madhu Bala will be named after elephant Noor Jahan. The Local Government Minister said that he had proposed to build a 1000 acre safari park on the Super Highway so this should also be reviewed so that a large safari park can be built for the citizens of Karachi.

The Local Government Minister said that the health of the elephants Sonia and Malika, already present in the Safari Park, should also be taken care of and they should also be fully scanned. It was decided that the next course of action will be setup on 04th May in the next meeting of the task force.

Action against e-challan defaulters to be ensured; CPO Safe City

ISLAMABAD (NNI): A meeting was presided over by Capital Police Officer Safe City Islamabad Shoaib Khurram to make action against e-challan defaulters more effective, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, as per the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, e-challan tickets are being issued from Safe City Islamabad to the owners of vehicles violating traffic rules with the help of cameras and an automatic system. The CPO Safe City Islamabad has issued orders to the e-challan staff to improve the efficiency of e-challans and solve the problems faced in issuing and submitting e-challans on a priority basis.

During the meeting, it was reported that the e-challans for vehicles taken on lease from banks after violating traffic rules were being sent to the banks instead of the violators. To overcome this problem, the banks need to link the account of the vehicle owner so that the

amount can be paid from the violator account.

In this regard, the SP Headquarters was directed to hold a meeting with the banks so that they can cooperate in collecting the e-challans.

The issuance of e-challans aims to ensure that vehicle owners cannot repeat traffic violations. To make e-challan payment easier for citizens, it is suggested that it should be possible through Link1, he added.

CPO Safe City has issued orders to ensure the implementation of traffic rules and to start special campaigns for public awareness. Additionally, special orders have been given to improve the efficiency of the electronic traffic ticketing system and implement the new policy soon to maintain the integrated traffic system in the federal capital.

Citizens are requested to abide by the traffic rules and enforce the law, as this will prevent accidents and ensure the protection of life and property of citizens.



KARACHI: The sight of dark clouds looming in the sky during sunset is quite captivating.

Punjab CM reiterates resolve to establish writ of the state in Kachha area

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi presided over a meeting to review the ongoing operation against criminals in the Kachha area.

Inspector General of Police Usman Anwar briefed the meeting about the progress, saying that 51,000-acre land has been cleared of criminals and security checkpoints have been established. Three miscreants were killed, eight injured and 46 arrested, he maintained.

Dens of criminals have been demolished, he said, adding that the offensive has been intensified and fresh fleets reached the area. The chief minister expressed satisfaction with the police feats and reiterated the resolve to maintain the state writ in the area to bring in public welfare projects. He heaped praise on the brave policeperson, saying: "We salute the bravery and spirit of the police officers and youths who participated in the operation. Lasting peace will

return, he said, calling for a comprehensive plan for the reconstruction and repair of roads and bridges in the area. The chief secretary, police big guns and senior officials attended the meeting while officers from the other districts concerned joined the meeting through a video link.

On the instructions of caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, the caretaker provincial health minister Dr Javedikaram reached the burn center of Jinnah Hospital.

122 LWMC employees dismissed

LAHORE (APP): The management of Lahore Waste Management Company has made major decisions to improve the sanitation system in the city, and strict monitoring is continuing on the instructions of CEO LWMC Babar Sahib Din.

LWMC has issued a notification to dismiss 122 employees due to persistent absenteeism. As many as 76 regular employees have been sent back to MCL whereas 46 insourced staff has been terminated. CEO LWMC Babar Sahib Din said that carelessness in the matter of cleanliness of Lahore city will not be tolerated at any cost.

JDC Foundation inaugurates Free Dialysis Center in Malir

KARACHI (PPI): JDC Foundation Pakistan has inaugurated a Free Dialysis Center in Malir.

In the ceremony, the special guest, Minister LG Syed Nasir Hussain Shah praised the services of Raza Malir Free Dialysis DDC and said that the establishment of another free dialysis center by JDC for kidney patients is indeed commendable. He

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CORRIGENDUM

TENDER CALL NOTICE NO. INF(P) 890/23
Last date for receipt of sealed bids is hereby extended upto 02/05/2023. Bidders are requested to visit in the office of the Director General / Project Director PMU-/INL, SDU P&D) Department Peshawar at 02:00 PM. All other terms & conditions remain un-changed.

Focal Person, INL, SDU
SDU Building Gate No. 5, Khyber Road Peshawar
Phone: 091-9210765 & 091-9211053

INF(P) 997/23, The Frontier Post Peshawar, Date: 29-04-2023

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
PAKISTAN PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders on percentage rate basis (not on individual items) are hereby invited for the works mentioned below from the approved PEC registered Contractors and Pak PWD enlisted contractors duly renewed for the current financial year 2022-23. Tender documents can be received from the office of the undersigned during office hours on any working day on payment of tender cost (**Non-Refundable**) up to **15/05/2023** with written request on letter pad accompanied with attested copy of CNIC, Income tax Registration Certificate as active taxpayer (filer). Tenders will be issued to the proprietor of the Firm / Company or their legally authorized representatives having registered power of attorney (duly attested). The tenders in sealed cover should be received in the tender box kept in the office of undersigned on **16/05/2023 up to 12:00 PM** and the respective tenders will be opened on the same day at **12:30 PM** in the presence of contractors or their authorized representatives, having registered power of attorney.

The following instructions may be read and understood carefully in true letter and spirit, as in case of violation of any of these, the tender forms will not be issued. The documents under mentioned must be accompanied with the application, failing which no tender forms will be issued.

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

- No tender will be sold / issued on the date of opening of tenders.
- No tender will be issued / received though post, telegraph or E-mail.
- According to PPRA Rule-25, Bid Security, as stated below against each work in the shape of CDR/Call deposit shall be furnished from any scheduled Bank in the name of the Executive Engineer, Central Civil Division, Pak PWD, Bannu. No tender will be entertained without bid security as stated below against each work or less amount.
- Tender can be purchased on the prescribed cost (Non-refundable) in Cash mentioned against the below noted works from the undersigned during office hours up to **15/05/2023**.
- All CDRs once received may be credited into the Government Account and will be refundable through Government Cheque.
- 1st, 2nd, 3rd, lowest bidders CDR will be retained till acceptance of tender.
- The documents / CDR provided by the bidders if found ambiguous will be verified and in case of fake one, the firm will face immediate / appropriate penal action as per rules and law.
- Tender Notice is also available at PPRA Website (www.ppra.org.pk)
- Under Rule 33(1) of public Procurement Rules, 2004, the competent authority reserves the right to reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to the acceptance of bid or proposal.
- The submission of tenders by the contractor implies that he is fully conversant with the site of work, scope of work and terms and conditions as laid down in the tender documents.

Note:- In case of any public holiday or surprise engagement of the undersigned the schedule of closing & opening will be on 17-05-2023 or 18-05-2023 on same time.

S.No.	Name of Work	N.I.T Amount	Earnest Money/ Bid Security	Period of Completion	Cost of Tender
1	Construction of Black Top Road (FMR) From Tarukhel to Wa rgari (along with Marwat Kanal) Sub Division Bettani Lakki.	45113972/-	920000	90 (Days)	2000/-
2	Construction of Black Top Road (FMR) From Mastikhel to Adezai (along with Marwat Kanal) Sub Division Bettani Lakki.	48531373/-	1000000	90 (Days)	2000/-

Executive Engineer
Central Civil Division, Pak. PWD, Bannu.

PID(P) 133/23



PESHAAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan called on by provincial minister Sawal Nazir Advocate.

Success of education depends on dedication & skills of teachers

Umar Gul

THE role of teachers has never been more important than in today's changing world. As we witness the rapid development of technology, the changing economic landscape, and the ever-increasing diversity of our society, the role of the teacher has evolved to keep up with the times.

In this changing world, the role of the teacher has become more important than ever. Teachers are no longer just facilitators of learning; they are guides, mentors, and facilitators of personal growth. They must be able to connect with students on a personal level, and to help them develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

Gone are the days when teachers simply stood at the front of a classroom and imparted knowledge to their students. Today's teachers must be skilled in a range of areas, including technology, critical thinking, cultural competence, and emotional intelligence. They must be able to adapt to changing circumstances and to meet the needs of a diverse range of learners.

One of the biggest challenges facing teachers today is the rapid pace of technological change. With the rise of artificial intelligence, big data, and other technological innovations, teachers must be able to adapt to new teaching methods and tools. They must be able to incorporate new technologies into their classrooms in order to create engaging and interac-

tive learning experiences for their students.

Another challenge facing teachers is the increasing diversity of our society. As our communities become more diverse, teachers must be able to create inclusive learning environments that respect and celebrate cultural differences. They must be able to connect with students from different backgrounds, and to help them see the value of diversity and inclusion.

Technology has become an essential part of the modern classroom, and teachers must be able to adapt to new technologies and incorporate them into their lessons in order to create engaging and interactive learning experiences for their students. From online learning platforms to virtual reality simulations, technology has opened up new possibilities for education, and teachers must be able to leverage these tools to help their students succeed.

In addition to these technical and cultural competencies, teachers must also be skilled in emotional intelligence. The ability to understand and manage emotions is essential for building strong relationships with students, and for creating a positive and supportive classroom environment.

Certainly! In today's rapidly changing world, the role of the teacher has become increasingly complex and multifaceted. In addition to their traditional roles as educators and subject matter experts, teachers must now also be skilled in a range of areas, including technology,

critical thinking, cultural competence, and emotional intelligence.

Despite these challenges, the role of the teacher remains one of the most important in our society. Teachers have the power to shape the future of our world by helping to educate and inspire the next generation of leaders, innovators, and problem solvers. They are the ones who will help us to create a better world for ourselves and for future generations.

As we look to the future, it is clear that the role of the teacher will continue to evolve and adapt to the changing needs of our society. But one thing is certain: the importance of the teacher will never diminish. We owe a great debt of gratitude to our teachers, who work tirelessly to educate and inspire us every day. Let us all take a moment to thank the teachers in our lives, and to recognize the critical role they play in shaping our future.

In order to support the changing role of teachers in today's world, it is essential that we invest in their professional development and provide them with the resources and support they need to succeed. This includes training in new technologies and teaching methodologies, as well as ongoing support for their social and emotional well-being. In the end, the success of our education system depends on the strength and dedication of our teachers. Let us all take a moment to recognize the critical role they play in shaping our future, and to support them in their important work.

New spell of rain predicted

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Met Office on Friday forecast a new spell of intermittent rain with dust, thunder and hailstorm for most parts of the province during next 24 to 48 hours.

It said that a westerly wave is affecting most parts of the country and likely to persist till the first week of May, adding that the weather would remain partly cloudy over most districts of the province during next 24 to 48 hours.

Scattered thunderstorm-rain with wind-dust storm and hailstorm is likely to occur over Chitral, Lower and Upper Dir, Swat, Buner, Shangla, Kohistan, Torgar, Battagram, Mansehra and Abbotabad. Isolated thunderstorm-rain with wind-dust storm and hailstorm is likely to occur over Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Hangu, Orakzai, Karak, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Bannu, North and South Waziristan districts during the period.

The weather remained partly cloudy in most districts of the province during the last 24 hours however thunderstorm-rain with gusty winds occurred at isolated places in Abbottabad, Mansehra, Kohistan, Upper and Lower Dir, Swat, Bajaur, Risalpur, Khyber and Kurram districts.

The chief amount of rainfall was recorded as: Saidu Sharif 26mm, Balakot 15, Timergara 07, Kakul 33, Pattan 20, Dir 05, Malamjabb 19 and Parachinar 01. The maximum temperature recorded during last 24 hours was Peshawar 33C, Parachinar 23, Bannu 34, Mardan 33, DI Khan 36, Chitral 25, Dir 26 and Malamjabb 17.

Meanwhile, in the wake of rain with dust and thunderstorm alert by the Met Office, and Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), the district administration on Friday finalised a contingency plan to mitigate the possible losses.

According to the office of the Deputy Commissioner, the district administration, while following the guidelines received from NDMA and PDMA, activated all the line departments to identify the vulnerable areas and put in place precautionary measures. A control room has been established at the office of the Deputy Commissioner for prompt response to any emergency situation round the clock.

The Deputy Commissioner directed all the line departments to remain vigilant and give prompt response 24/7 sharply during any of the emergency situations during rain-dust/thunderstorms in the district till May 05.

33rd SMC starts at NIM Peshawar

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The 33rd Senior Management Course (SMC) was started at National Institute of Management (NIM), Peshawar. Director General, NIM, Captain (R) Usman Gul while addressing the inaugural ceremony of the 33rd SMC at NIM Peshawar said that civil servants should modify their attitudes, skills and knowledge to tackle the modern management challenges and changing governance culture.

He said the civil servants must rise above political and ethnic affiliations for effective implementation of the constitution, rule of law and achievement of economic development goals. Captain Usman Gul urged the training participants to follow the best practices of the bureaucracies around the world, which are refashioning themselves to achieve performance standards compatible with the private and corporate entities in terms of service delivery and output.

While underlining the importance of policy for-



mulation processes, Captain Usman Gul advised the trainee officers to optimally benefit from the training modules and equip themselves with the latest techniques of policy analysis and evidence-based decision making. DG NIM said the officers must be able to recommend policies and implementable strategies to augment and promote Pakistan's national interests in order to enhance the quality of life of the fellow citizens. He said this will enable

the government to provide leadership for good governance through creating an ecosystem conducive for vibrant private entrepreneurial activities. At the end, Captain Usman Gul reassured the trainee officers that during the 16 weeks of training, NIM Peshawar will provide the best possible training resources and a conducive and enabling environment for the participants to widen their knowledge base and broaden their mental horizon.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali holding meeting with delegation of mayors from different districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

ANP favours simultaneous, same day polls: Aqil Shah

PESHAWAR (APP): Senior ANP leader Syed Aqil Shah has said that their party is in favour of simultaneous and same day elections in all federating units to bring political stability and curtail expenses on polls.

Talking to APP, he said that though elections should be held in any circumstances, but holding separate elections at provincial and national level will cost additional expenses on it. He said that how first elections will be held in Punjab and followed by Khyber Pakhtukhwa and then National Assembly. The completion of such electoral process will take the period of one year. He said that what is going on in the country is aimed to appease a particular individual and his political party.

He said that the stance of ANP over elections is

clear and it wants simultaneous and the same day polling across the country and will accept the win of any political party. He said that in the elections of 2018 injustice was committed with their party and Imran Khan and his political party was imposed on the country. He said that he himself was candidate on a provincial assembly constituency, but the result was delayed and then a big turn-out was shown in favour of his opponent candidate.

Syed Aqil Shah, who is also a former provincial minister, said that all institutions should work within the ambit of their constitutional parameters. He said that under the constitution, military is responsible for the defense of the country while the dispensation of cheap and speedy justice is the duty of judiciary and parliament will have to

make legislation for the country.

He said that Pakistan Army is also not available for provision of security during election, as it is engaged in combating terrorism inside the country and also defending the frontiers of the state. He said that no other security force is capable to perform such a specialized duty. Furthermore, he said that budget for the current financial year has already been allocated, which could not be diverted to other matters.

He held the PTI chairman Imran Khan responsible for prevailing political turmoil in the country and said that instead of national interest, the politics of Imran Khan is revolving around his personal interests and is bent upon pushing the whole country towards anarchy for that purpose.

PBSA praises Saudi Arabia assistance

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan and Saudi Arabia brotherly nations stand at every odd situation with each other while it is further deepened during provision of humanitarian to the flood victims in Pakistan last year.

This was said by Pakistan Boy Scouts

Association (PBSA) Commissioner Sardar Waqar Shahzad Advocate during his meeting with Advisor for Harmain Sharifan Tilal bin Ahmad-ul-Aqeel and discussed areas of mutual interests. Advisor for Harmain Sharifan Tilal bin Ahmad-ul-Aqeel that Kingdom of Saudi Arabia should extend

her support for Pakistan in every aspect of socio-economic sphere.

PBSA Commissioner claimed that both brotherly nations had history mutual cooperation and cultural heritage. He stressed both should engage on strategic level cooperation for socio-economic uplift of population of both countries.

8 officers of KP police transferred

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General of Police (IGP) has ordered transfer and posting of eight officers of the police force in public interest and with immediate effect.

A notification issued here said that Muzamil Shah PSP (BS-18) who was awaiting posting at CPO has been posted as SP Investigation Mansehra. Similarly, Tajamul Khan Additional SP DI Khan (BS-18) has been posted to CPO Peshawar office.

Acting SP Upper Swat, DSP Khan Khel (BS-17) has been transferred and posted as Acting SP Investigation Swabi in his own pay and scale. DSP Traffic Highway Shazia Shahid has been transferred and posted as Acting SP Traffic CCP Peshawar. SDPO Kohistan Dir Upper Ghulam Sadiq has been transferred and posted as Acting SP Upper Swat. DSP Fazl Wahid has been posted as Acting SP Ababeel Squad Peshawar, DSP DI Khan region Ifikhar Ali Shah has been posted as Acting Additional SP DI Khan in his own pay scale and Acting SP Investigation Mansehra Janas Khan has been transferred and posted to the disposal of Additional IGP CTD KP as Acting SP.

Faiq optimistic about positive outcome of govt-opposition talks

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The ice has started melting as talks between government and opposition have begun to end the prolonged political impasse so this dialogue should reach its logical conclusion. However, despite the developing situation, some political pundits have expressed vagueness about the progress of talks as one of key-ally of the incumbent government didn't part the ongoing negotiation with the opposition.

We, time and again have reinforced that dialogue is the best way to end the current political standoff, Muhammad Faiq Shah - Chairman, Amun Taraqqi Party while commenting on the current political situation during an informal talk with media personnel here on Friday. Shah said the political standoff that had lasted for more than nine months has brought destruction everywhere in the country.

Role of national institutions had been

made controversial while parliament was also treated as a personal servant. "Lodhi", he observed. He added the constitution and laws have been violated for only personal gains while the image of institutions has been tarnished. The ATP chairman said Pakistan has only earned bad on the international level while the enemy took full advantage of the prevailing internal political unrest in the country.

Shah furthermore noticed Pakistan has been isolated at international level owing to the 'flawed' foreign policy of the incumbent coalition government. Talking about the fragile economy, the ATP chairman said the government has failed to devise a joint roadmap to pull the country from the current quagmire situation. Negative growth has been witnessing export, business, industries while poor law and order situation, and political uncertainty has built up an atmosphere of mistrust among investors, Shah noted.



PESHAWAR: A group photo of former president Mohmand Chamber Fayyaz Ali with with FPCCI Coordinator Sartaj Ahmad Khan and others.

PM paid internship program receives overwhelming response of youth

PESHAWAR (APP): The Prime Minister's paid internship program has received an overwhelming response from the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including merged tribal districts, terming it an excellent opportunity for hundreds of thousands of fresh graduates and diploma holders to get the required experiences in competitive working environment.

As many as 60,000 paid internships have been announced by the federal government for the youth of Pakistan including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the Public Sector Development Projects (PSDP), government, private and development departments under the Prime Minister's youth development programme.

Under the landmark program, 20,000 internships would be provided in PSDP and 40,000 in government, private and development departments for a period of six months to one year. The beneficiary would receive Rs25,000 to Rs40,000 per month scholarship besides required work experience in an excellent environ-

ment from the top professionals and experts.

The Prime Minister's youth development program is an umbrella project covering 15 programs including a paid internship program launched for the youth of Pakistan. Under this historic program, as many as 15 initiatives including the Prime Minister's Youth Laptop Program, Ba-Ikhtiyar Naujawan Internship Program, and 5,000 scholarships for students in Balochistan and erstwhile FATA were also announced by federal government for the economic empowerment of the youth.

Providing an excellent opportunity to the young generation to excel in studies viz a viz choice professions, the program would help equip youth with all necessary skills and expertise to compete at local and international levels.

Ehtisham Qasier, a postgraduate student of the University of Peshawar told APP that the Prime Minister's paid internship was a great opportunity for fresh graduates and diploma holders to get practical experiences and excel in their selected professions

besides abroad jobs. Talking to APP, he said that many of his friends and relatives belonging to Nowshera and Peshawar districts have applied for it.

"The applications of the majority of graduates and diploma holders were rejected in the government and private sectors due to lack of professional experiences and skills. The internship would not only provide the relevant experience to the fresh graduates but also provide them cash payment to live with dignity," he said. Ehtisham Qasier said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif deserved full credit and appreciation for launching the paid internship program that would help facilitate hundreds of thousands of young graduates and diploma holders in the country including KP.

Shahryar Zaman, another graduate and resident of Wapda Town Nowshera has also pinned high hopes from the internship program and eagerly awaiting to get work experiences along with payment after selection. PML-N KP spokesman and former MPA, Ikhtair Wali Khan told APP that the program was launched

under the Prime Minister's youth development initiatives by the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives to help serve the over 64% youth population of the country.

He said the Prime Minister's youth development program has started empowering the youth of Pakistan including girls' students with modern and technical education. Besides other goal-oriented and pro-people's projects and initiatives launched by the prime minister in the last one-year of his government, he said that PM's youth development program was among one of the major achievements of the present coalition government aimed at educational, economic and financial empowerment of youth irrespective of their political affiliation, caste and family background.

Inspite of the inherited tough economic and political challenges, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has successfully launched the landmark youth development and economic empowerment program under which scores of services including 'Teleschool Pakistan App,

Google for Education and Digital Continuous Professional Development' started. Successfully handling the challenge of last year's devastating floods, the federal government has provided relief to millions flood affectees in terms of Rs25,000 per individual cash, agriculture and crops packages.

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

The PML-N leader said the free of

charge flour launched by the prime minister has benefited millions of poor households in all provinces including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Ramadan. Wali said scores of alternative energy resources projects including hydel, coal and solar energy were launched in different areas of the country by the government in its last one year aimed to make Pakistan self-sufficient in energy.

He said the people of KP and Punjab were fed up with hollow slogans of PTI, adding Imran Khan had deceived youth on the name of so-called change. Ikhtair Wali said that PTI has closed down its own created Ehtasab Commission at Peshawar that exposed Imran's anti corruption slogans. Ikhtair Wali said that parliament was a supreme institution and Pakistan can achieve height of progress if all state institutions work in its constitutional domain. He said people of Pakistan had pinned high hopes of PML-N as it was the only party that can address the economic challenges and make the country out of economic quagmire.



In brief

Dead body recovered F.P. Report

PABBI: The dead body of Usman Ali recovered from agriculture fields after his abduction from last night while residents had arranged protest against the murder of citizen, on Friday. According to details, Usman Ali resident of Dak Behsud area of Pabbi and driver by profession was abducted by unknown kidnappers while his dead body recovered on Friday afternoon. The residents and relatives of deceased arranged protest against the brutal murder while blamed police for their failure to maintain law and order situation.

Dr. Fazl-e-Manan visits UoM F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Dr. Fazl e Manan, a Meritorious Professor & Executive Administrator for over 30 years' service of excellence in leadership & higher education in Canada on Friday visited the University of Malakand. The vice chancellor UoM Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad and faculty members welcomed the guest. Dr Fazal Manan visited various offices and teaching departments including ORIC Office, 'Kamyab Jawan Markaz', department of education, department of journalism and department of Chemistry. The VC UoM Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad and ORIC team briefly discussed various academic, research and co-curricular activities at the varsity. It is pertinent to mention that Dr Fazal e Manan will conduct an interactive session with the students in the first week of May on skills development and scholarship opportunities in higher education in Canada. The VC UoM Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad thanked the visiting professor and pledged for joint collaboration in academic and research activities.

Polio vaccination drive starts F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: The 15-day long anti polio vaccination campaign started here on Friday in six union councils wherein as many 65,170 children under the age of five would be immunised against the crippling disease. Additional Deputy Commissioner General Abdul Wali Khan presiding over a meeting here directed the health department and district officers to ensure vaccination of each and every child during the drive. It was informed on the occasion that 241 teams of polio workers have been constituted to administer polio drops to the vulnerable children in six union councils of the district including Miskini, Durangal, Mian Kalay, Mayar, Timergara and Chakdara. The ADC directed police to provide foolproof security to polio teams to avert any untoward incident during the drive and also directed Assistant Commissioners Adenzai, Timergara and Samarbagh to personally monitor the polio campaign.

Three killed in car-truck crash

ATTOCK (PPI): Three people, including two women, were killed and four others were severely injured when a speeding car crashed into a truck from the rear side near Kharapa Interchange near Pindigheb tehsil of Attock on Friday. According to the sources, the accident occurred as the rashly driven car, they were travelling in, lost the control after its driver fell asleep while driving. A rescue 1122 team reached the site after the incident was reported and shifted the bodies and injured to the PindiGheb Hospital where two injured were referred to Rawalpindi in critical condition.



SHANGLA: People of Shangla political leaders and religious scholars holding a protest against terrorist attack on CTD police station at Swat.

One killed in Sheikh Maltoon Township

F.P. Report

MARDAN: A man shot killed while returning home from National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) Office near Sector L of Sheikh Maltoon, a posh area of the city, by unknown murderers in broad daylight and escaped from the crime scene, on Friday. The deceased's son Muhammad Sudais filed First Information Report (FIR) and stated that his father had gone to Nadra office along with his other son Shad Ali. The accused shot him to death. He said that he would make a claim when found out the culprit. Police station Sheikh Maltoon has registered a case on the charge of murder and started the usual investigation.

World Immunization Week kicks-off: Public Health Department celebrated World Immunization Week in Mardan district like the whole country from April 24 to 30. To mark the day a public walk was organized at Union Council Bijli Ghar under supervision by District Health Office Mardan for the awareness of World Immunization Week.

The awareness walk started from Dussehra Chowk, passed through the market and different important chowks and ended at the Frontier Primary Healthcare Office Mardan. The participants hold banners and placards from Public Health for World Immunization Week awareness.

Addressing the awareness walk participants, EPI Coordinator Mardan Dr. Imtiaz Ali said that routine

immunization for children is very inevitable. He said that timely immunization boosts children's immune system against diseases, which significantly reduces the rate of diseases. He said routine childhood immunization is a set of immunizations from birth to 15 months.

Completion of the schedule protects children from 12 vaccine-preventable diseases, including tuberculosis, polio, diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, Haemophilus influenzae type B, hepatitis B, diarrhea, pneumonia, typhoid, measles and rubella, said Dr Imtiaz Ali.

According to the media report of Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that in 2021, 25 million children missed at least one routine vaccine, and 18 million received no vaccines at all. In 2021, nearly 40 million children were left dangerously susceptible to the growing measles threat, and an estimated 128,000 died of measles. CDC wrote further that in 2021 and 2022, polio outbreaks were detected in areas with low vaccination rates. Cases of paralysis from polio were found in the several countries.

Dr Imtiaz Ali expressed in his speech that vaccines save millions of lives every year especially among children who are more susceptible due to low immunity. He said further vaccination is a safe and effective way to help them to survive, thrive and reach their full potential in life. He appealed to civil society that children under 2 years cooperate fully with the health department officials and health care officers to

create a healthy society by providing immunization against diseases.

During the awareness walk, besides Dr. Imtiaz Ali, Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Engineer Syed Shahzeb, District Health Officer Mardan Dr. Javed Iqbal, Dr. Umar Sharif, Command Staff and Health Department staff participated.

Ceremony held in honor promoted policemen:

A ceremony was organized in the honor of police officers who were promoted to the rank of Inspector in Regional Police Office Mardan. RPO Muhammad Ali Khan gave inspector badges to police officers promoted to the rank of inspector. DPO Mardan Najib ur Rehman participated in the ceremony. Addressing the ceremony, Regional Police Officer Mardan Muhammad Ali Khan congratulated the promoted police officers and said that they will perform their professional duties with more dedication. He expressed his determination that they make full efforts for the elimination of crimes from the society and public peace.

In the ceremony, Regional Police Officer Muhammad Ali Khan, Inspector Abdullah, Abdul Mateen, Shah Rasool, Mir Zaman, Abdul Hakeem, Momin Khan, Anwar Khan, Muqadam Khan, Sabz Ali, Anwar Khan, Naik Zaman, Behrooz Khan, Shaikat Hayat, Saleem Khan, Sher Zaman, Khalid Iqbal, Abdul Hakeem and Nooradar Khan were placed in the badges of development.

Focus on to promote reproductive health care

F.P. Report

TANK: District Population Welfare Officer Tank Dr. Mohammad Tariq has said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has taken very good measures to promote reproductive health care and reproductive health rights throughout the province for the well-being of the people.

He expressed these views while briefing the media in his office on Thursday, he said that Population Welfare Department had been providing Reproductive Health Services under the Reproductive Health Package, adding that the need was felt to strengthen reproductive health services in relation to Reproductive Health Right under certain Provincial Act. In order to hold wrong-doors accountable.

Reproductive Healthcare rights bill, 2020 has been approved by the Provincial assembly and now called as "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Reproductive Healthcare Rights Act, 2020." He said that any government or non-government institution providing reproductive health services will be subject to the prior approval of the Population Welfare Department and will strive to provide quality reproductive health services to the people across the province at their doorsteps. "Population Welfare Department has also been assigned the powers to monitor the facilities providing reproductive health facilities as well as to ensure the provision of quality facilities", he added.

Essential utilities items smuggling bid foiled

QUETTA (INP): Customs authorities have foiled a bid to smuggle large amount of essential utilities such as sugar and flour along with fertilizers to neighboring countries.

According to the customs authorities, the customs field enforcement unit has seized hundreds of metric tons of essential utilities during several operations during the last three weeks. The customs authorities Khuzdar confiscated 54 metric tons of flour, 70 metric tons of fertilizers along with 64 metric tons of sugar. The approximately 190 metric tons seized utilities are estimated to be worth Rs.80m.

Customs Hyderabad also seized 80 ton fertilizer and 60 ton sugar which were being smuggled to Baluchistan. Customs have been conducting active operation against the smuggling of essential commodities from last three weeks after the Prime Minister Shabbaz Shareef ordered the departments to halt the ongoing smuggling.

To stop the smuggling of sugar, urea fertilizer, flour and other edible items the government has issued instructions to the Chairman FBR for the strictest measures. Collector Enforcement Khuzdar Imran Sajjad Bukhari formed a team under the supervision of Additional Collector Enforcement Sajid Baloch and Deputy Collector Rana Umair.

Landlord cuts servant's hand for lifting work

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Landlord and his accomplices shaved head, eyebrows, Mustache, cut a hand of his servant on leaving work against the will of landlord in village Shory Chathah near Hafizabad.

According to police FIR, four month ago Banyameen son of Akbar resident of village Jharianwala was received Rs. 460000/= for working as 'Seeri' servant with landlord Aslam Hanjra resident of village Shory Chathah. A month ago, Banyameen was fled to leave work without returning advance amount of landlord.

On 25th April, accused Mushtaq resident of Dheengranwala, Aslam Hanjra, his sons Luqman, Usman, Arslan took back Banyameen to his village and accused were tortured him and cut his hand with 'Toka' (used for cutting green fodder) and later accused shaved his head, eyebrow and mustache. The accused also kidnapped father of Banyameen Akbar and made hostage for taking labour forcibly at place of Banyameen. Police have registered a case against accused and arrested two accused. Further investigation was underway while victim Banyameen shifted to Trauma Centre Hafizabad.

One kills cousin and committed suicide:

A boy shot to death her maternal cousin on refusing to elope with him and committed suicide to shot himself in village Lawaray. According to details, Farooq resident of Bhai Pheru was desired to marry her cousin Rubail in village Lawaray near Hafizabad allegedly but parents of girl was refused to give her hand to Farooq.

Farooq visited village Lawaray in absence of parents of Rubail and tried to entice her cousin Rubail to elope from the village but could not convince her cousin. In disappointment, accused Farooq shot her cousin and later he shot himself on the spot. Both were died on the spot. Rescue 1122 shifted dead bodies to hospital for autopsy. The police have started investigation.

Special immunization campaign launched:

Special immunization campaign has been launched to save children from 12 different fatal diseases in the district. In order to create awareness among people regarding importance of the immunization campaign, a walk was arranged by the District Health Authority Hafizabad. ADCG Malik Abbas Zulqarnain and CEO Health Dr. Farehah Malik led the walk. The people belong to different walks of life, officers and officials of

health department participated the walk.

Meanwhile, addressing a seminar, ADCG Malik Abbas Zulqarnain urged the people to cooperate immunization teams of the health department to get inculcate their children for saving their lives and brighten future. CEO Health Dr. Farehah Ikram Malik said on the occasion that this campaign would continue till 30 April and special teams consisting of health workers are visiting door to door for ensuring vaccination of hundred percent children in the district.

Effective patrolling leads to curtain crimes:

In-charge Citizen Police Liaison Committee Rana Khalid Mehmood said that performance of district police led by District Police Officer Dr. Fahad Ahmad remained laudable during Holy Month of Ramadan and Eid days for keeping peace in the district.

In his statement, Rana Khalid Mehmood said that due to effective patrolling and tight checking at entry and exits points of the district was proved result-oriented and sense of security was prevailed in the district. He said that confidence of people on police was reviving day by day due to different steps taken for promoting concept of community policing by the DPO Dr. Fahad Ahmad.

Seminar held to mark world malaria day in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Speakers at a function on Friday urged the government and health authorities to take concrete measures to bring an end to the Malaria that has so far affected billions of people across the globe. The Lower Dir health department in collaboration with a private health care facility arranged the function at the district assembly hall in Balambat to mark the World Malaria Day.

Local people, health professionals, teachers and students of the Government High School Balambat attended the function. The function was addressed by the deputy district health officer Dr Abdul Wali Khan, malaria programme

district coordinator Ebrash Pasha, district entomologist Dr Abdul Waris, Dr Ihsanullah and others. The speakers said that about 650,000 patients died from malaria in 2021. They asked the participants to use mosquitoes' nets while sleeping, fully cover their arms and legs and make sure there was no standing water near their houses.

Ebrash Pasha informed the participants about the free test and treatment of malaria under the health department in the district. He said that there were free tests and treatment facilities in the 72 government and 40 private hospitals in the district. He said that mosquito nets were also distributed in particular months to protect pregnant women

from malaria.

Pasha said that a total of 4,006 patients out of 116,217 patients were tested positive for malaria in the year 2022 in Lower Dir. District medical entomologist Abdul Waris, deputy district health officer Dr Abdul Wali Khan and others also spoke on the occasion. The speakers informed the participants about malaria germs and its prevention. They said that a germ, Plasmodium, caused malaria while mosquitoes spread it. Later a walk was organized in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office, in which the participants were provided with information on how to get prevention from malaria. The participants carried banners inscribed with slogans against Malaria.



QUETTA: National Party head and former chief minister Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch addressing a press conference.

Appeals for free medical assistance

F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: In a heart-wrenching appeal, the public and social circles of Manatu area in West Karam have urged the higher authorities to step in and provide free treatment to a sick woman who belongs to the area. The woman, who is suffering from multiple ailments including heart disease, high blood pressure, and eye disease, is unable to afford the medical expenses required for her treatment.

The locals of the area have called on Peshawar Corps Commander Hasan Azhar Hayat, Caretaker Chief Minister KPK Foreign Minister Sajid Hussain Tori, and other

higher authorities to take immediate action and arrange for the woman's treatment. The situation has become dire for the sick woman, who is living in despair due to her deteriorating health and financial constraints.

The public has highlighted the urgent need for the higher authorities to play their role in providing the necessary medical assistance to the woman. They have urged the authorities to take emergency measures and arrange for the woman's treatment as soon as possible.

It is heartening to see the community coming together to support the sick woman, who is in dire need of medical assistance. The

appeal by the locals of the Manatu area serves as a reminder of the importance of providing access to healthcare for all individuals, regardless of their financial status.

The higher authorities have been urged to take note of the situation and provide the necessary assistance to the sick woman. It is hoped that they will take immediate action to arrange for her treatment and alleviate her suffering.

In times like these, it is important for the community to come together and support those in need. The appeal for the sick woman's treatment is a testament to the resilience and compassion of the people of the Manatu area.



HYDERABAD: Vehicle passing through rainwater during heavy downpour in the city.



Sunak says UK, Italy ‘aligned’ as he meets far-right Meloni

LONDON (AP): Prime Minister Rishi Sunak declared that Britain and Italy are "very aligned" in values as he welcomed far-right Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni for talks focused on migration, defense and the war in Ukraine. While Sunak meets leaders of all political stripes from around the world, he had notably warm words as he greeted Meloni at 10 Downing St., the British leader's official residence.

The Conservative prime minister praised Meloni's "very careful handling of the Italian economy." "I think the values between our two countries are very aligned, which is why we can work so well together on shared challenges, whether it's responding to Putin's illegal invasion in Ukraine, where again I pay tribute to your leadership, but also tackling illegal migration, which is something that is common to both of us," Sunak said. The two governments share an interest in stopping migrants reaching their countries by boat.

Sunak's administration is passing a bill through Parliament that will deny the right to asylum to anyone who arrives in the U.K. without permission. The legislation has been condemned by refugee groups and the United Nations' human rights body. The government also plans to send migrants who arrive by boat on a one-way trip to Rwanda, an equally controversial plan that is being blocked by legal chal-



lenges. Meloni, whose far-right Brothers of Italy party leads Italy's right-wing coalition government, has led a crackdown on people-smugglers and on rescue ships operated by charities that she says encourage migrants to risk dangerous voyages from north Africa across the Mediterranean.

Meloni told Sunak that "tackling traffickers and illegal migration is something that your government is doing very well. I'm following your work and I absolutely agree with your work and I think there are many things that we can do together." Meloni said "there

is much more that we can do on many topics on which we are on the same side - defense, Ukraine." Unlike some far-right populists in the West, Meloni has taken a strongly pro-NATO, pro-European position on Russia's war in Ukraine. After their meeting the two leaders were due to have a private tour of Westminster Abbey, where King Charles III will be crowned on May 6. A group of protesters gathered outside the gates of Downing Street as the leaders met, holding signs that read "No to fascist Meloni" and chanting: "Refugees in, Meloni out."

Israeli army kills alleged Palestinian attacker in West Bank

WEST BANK (Agencies): Israeli forces have shot a Palestinian man in the occupied West Bank as he tried to stab a policeman, the Israeli military said, stirring tensions in the occupied territory. Palestinian officials said that the man had been shot dead, without elaborating on the circumstances. A video circulated on social media showed a soldier firing at a Palestinian multiple times, even after he had fallen to the ground.

Reuters could not confirm the authenticity of the video. An Israeli military statement said the Palestinian was driving but deviated from his lane and attempted to ram into civilians and security personnel who were standing at the junction. The individual then exited the car and attempted to stab a police officer, the military statement said. The Israeli military said the man was carrying a knife, and security forces opened fire and "neutralised" him. The Palestinian Health Ministry said the man had been shot dead by the Israeli military. The Palestinian National Liberation Movement confirmed that the Palestinian killed, Ahmed Yaqoub Taha, was a Palestinian security officer. No other casualties were reported.

Israeli-Palestinian violence has surged this year, with frequent military raids and violence by Israeli settlers amid a spate of Palestinian attacks. More than 90 Palestinians and at least 19 Israelis and foreigners have been killed since January. Israel captured the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which Palestinians want as the core of a future independent state, during the 1967 Middle East war. It has since annexed East Jerusalem in a move not recognised internationally.

Refugees plead for help in Sudan

KHARTOUM (Agencies): As evacuation flights in Sudan continue to take foreign diplomats and citizens back to their countries or to safety in third countries, many people, refugees included, are being left behind to fend for themselves. Fighting continued to rattle various cities across Sudan despite an American and African push to extend a shaky truce between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) group.

The conflict between the two warring sides has so far left hundreds of people dead, closed down more than 60 percent of hospitals, and led to the displacement of thousands of people, according to various United Nations agencies. Many Sudanese have fled to neighbouring Egypt or have been internally displaced. Vulnerable refugees who had sought safety in Sudan are now desperately looking to leave the country. Videos circulating on social media platforms show Rohingya refugees as well as Yemenis and Syrians who are stuck in Sudan with no clear method of evacuation. One Rohingya family is seen appealing for help, with the father of a family - with two young children and a wife - saying that the "situation is very bad". "We are fearful. We need a safe zone because here the situation is very bad, very heavy fighting," says the man, who was not identified. He is seen carrying a placard that reads: "Please help us." After fleeing persecution at the hands of the military in Myanmar, Rohingya refugees find themselves in the midst of another conflict, with no state or body taking charge of evacuating them to safety. The Rohingya are a mostly Muslim ethnic group who have lived in Buddhist-majority Myanmar for centuries. They have been denied citizenship in Myanmar since 1982, which has effectively rendered them stateless. Since the late 1970s, nearly one million Rohingyas have fled Myanmar due to widespread persecution. Students from Yemen are also stuck in Sudan, as their country remains embroiled in crises.

Ailing Erdogan re-emerges by video link with Putin

ISTANBUL (AFP): Turkey's ailing President Recep Tayyip Erdogan re-emerged from a two-day absence and spoke by video link with Vladimir Putin at a virtual ceremony unveiling a Russian-built nuclear power plant. The 69-year-old leader suspended all campaigning for Turkey's pivotal May 14 election after getting sick while conducting a live TV interview.

Erdogan said he had developed an upset stomach while hopping between five cities for rallies and public project launches at the start of the week. Health Minister Fahrettin Koca said that Erdogan had "infectious gastroenteritis" -- a short-term illness caused by the inflammation of the digestive tract. But the scare forced Erdogan to cancel events and then stay at home instead of travelling to the Mediterranean coast for grand opening of Turkey's first nuclear power plant. The video appearance represented Erdogan's effort to project health and vigour at one of the more vulnerable moments of his two-decade rule. But he looked wan and visibly frail as he addressed Putin and the nation from behind his presidential desk. "Our country has risen to the league of nations with nuclear power, albeit after a 60-year delay," Erdogan said in prepared remarks.

Putin praised Erdogan's leadership and said Moscow was "always ready

to extend the hand of friendship" to Turkey. "I want to say it straight: you know how to set ambitious goals and are confidently moving towards their implementation," Putin added. Erdogan is known for his love of campaigning and penchant for political fights. Polls suggested either that he is running neck-and-neck or behind opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu in Turkey's most momentous election in decades. His Islamic-rooted party's control of parliament through an alliance with a far-right group is also under threat. Erdogan had used his rallies to launch fierce attacks at the opposition and portray himself as a man who gets the job done. That image has been shaken -- and his office is fighting back.

The president's powerful media director Fahrettin Altun posted screenshots on Twitter of Chinese state media and some popular accounts speculating about Erdogan's condition being more serious than officially reported. "We categorically reject such baseless claims regarding President Erdogan's health," Altun wrote. "No amount of disinformation can dispute the fact that the Turkish people stand with their leader and Erdogan and his AK Party are set to win the May 14 elections." Rumours about Erdogan's health have been circulating since he underwent two gas-

trointestinal surgeries in 2011 and 2012. The operations left him with a slight hitch in his gait that appears to have fed some of the social media speculation. Turkey does not publicise the results of its leaders' health evaluations and it is illegal to "insult the president". Thousands of people have been prosecuted for the offence -- punishable by either a fine or a jail term of up to four years. Turkey's main opposition leaders all quickly tweeted messages wishing Erdogan a speedy recovery. Erdogan's video linkup with Putin unveiled a project that Russia began building during a chill in Ankara's relations with its Western allies in 2018. Construction of the Akkuyu plant was complicated by sanctions the West imposed on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine.

"Yes, we have certain logistical problems," Akkuyu plant director Sergei Butskikh told reporters on the eve of the launch. "The transportation routes are getting longer. Not all of the shipping companies are able to work with us. So here yes, we feel the sanctions," he added. "But this has not affected the quality of the plant's construction." Erdogan has been one of the few world leaders to maintain good relations with Putin by refusing to sign up to Western sanctions on Russia and trying to mediate an end to the war.

Ex-US VP Pence testifies before grand jury

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Former United States Vice President Mike Pence has testified before a federal grand jury investigating efforts by then-President Donald Trump and his allies to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press. The person requested anonymity to discuss the private appearance before the grand jury.

Pence's appearance in Washington, DC - scrutinizing the president he once loyally served - is a milestone in the US Department of Justice's investigation. It likely gives prosecutors a key first-person account of certain conversations and events in the weeks preceding the deadly insurrection at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021. It also carries significant political implications, coming as Pence hints at entering the 2024 presidential race with a potential run against Trump, the Republican frontrunner. The testimony came hours after a federal appeals court, in a sealed order, rejected a bid by Trump's lawyers to block Pence's appearance. Pence was subpoenaed to testify earlier this year but Trump's lawyers objected, citing executive privilege concerns.

Lawyers for Pence had raised their own, more narrow challenge to the subpoena. They argued that because Pence was serving in his capacity as president of the Senate as the electoral votes were being counted in Congress, he

was protected from being forced to testify about that process. The lawyers cited the US Constitution's "speech or debate" clause, which is intended to protect members of Congress from being questioned about official legislative acts. A judge in March refused to block Pence's appearance, though he did side with the former vice president's constitutional claims that he could not be forced to answer questions about anything related to his role presiding over the Senate's certification of votes on January 6. "We'll obey the law, we'll tell the truth," Pence said in an interview with the CBS News show "Face the Nation" that aired. "And the story that I've been telling the American people all across the country, the story that I wrote in the pages of my memoir, that'll be the story I tell in that setting," Pence has spoken extensively about Trump's pressure campaign, urging him to reject Democrat Joe Biden's presidential election victory in the days leading up to January 6, including in his book, So Help Me God. Pence, as vice president, had a ceremonial role overseeing Congress's count of the Electoral College vote, but he did not have the power to affect the results, despite Trump's contention otherwise. Pence, a former Indiana governor and congressman, has said that Trump endangered his family and everyone else who was at the Capitol that day and history will hold him

"accountable". "For four years, we had a close working relationship. It did not end well," Pence wrote, summing up their time in the White House. The Justice Department's special counsel leading the investigation, Jack Smith, has cast a broad net in interviews and has sought the testimony of a long list of former Trump aides, including ex-White House counsel Pat Cipollone and former adviser Stephen Miller.

Smith is separately investigating Trump over the potential mishandling of hundreds of classified documents at his Florida estate, Mar-a-Lago, as well as possible efforts to obstruct that probe. Trump's lawyers in that investigation called the Department of Justice investigation "severely botched" and "politically infected". They urged the House Intelligence Committee to step in by holding hearings and introducing legislation to correct classified document handling procedures in the White House and to standardise procedures for presidents and vice presidents for when they leave office. "DOJ should be ordered to stand down, and the intelligence community should instead conduct an appropriate investigation and provide a full report to this Committee, as well as your counterparts in the Senate," the lawyers wrote. It is unclear when either of the special counsel's investigations will end or who, if anyone, will be charged.

Ukraine received 98% of promised combat vehicles

BRUSSELS (Agencies): NATO allies and partner countries have provided Ukraine with 1,550 armoured vehicles and 230 tanks to form units and help it retake territory from Russian forces, the military alliance's chief said. Jens Stoltenberg, NATO secretary general, said that the deliveries constituted more than 98 percent of the combat vehicles promised to Ukraine during Russia's invasion and war, giving Kyiv a bigger punch as it contemplates launching a counteroffensive.

"In total, we have trained and equipped more than nine new Ukrainian armoured brigades. This will put Ukraine in a strong position to continue to retake occupied territory," Stoltenberg told a news conference. More than 30,000 troops are estimated to make up the new brigades. Ukraine's allies have also sent "vast amounts of ammunition" and some NATO partner countries, such as Sweden and Australia, have also provided armoured vehicles. NATO member countries have also provided anti-aircraft systems and artillery while Poland and the Czech Republic have given Soviet-built MiG-29 aircraft. Stoltenberg emphasised this "unprece-

ented military support to Ukraine" but cautioned that "we should never underestimate Russia."

Moscow was mobilising more ground forces and was "willing to send in thousands of troops with very high casualty rates", he said. In the face of what appears to be a prolonged conflict, NATO countries "must stay the course and continue to provide Ukraine with what it needs to prevail", the alliance chief said. Stoltenberg said that a NATO summit in July in Lithuania would set out plans for a "multiyear programme of support" for Ukraine.

"This will put Ukraine in a strong position to continue to retake occupied territory," Stoltenberg told reporters in Brussels. His comments came a day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he and Chinese leader Xi Jinping had a "long and meaningful" phone call in their first known contact since Russia's full-scale invasion more than a year ago. Though Zelenskyy said he was encouraged by call and Western officials welcomed Xi's move, the development did not appear to bring about any immediate shift in peace prospects. Russia and Ukraine are far apart in

their terms for peace, and Beijing - while looking to position itself as a global diplomatic power - has refused to criticise Moscow's invasion. The Chinese government has viewed Russia as a diplomatic ally in opposing US influence in global affairs, and Xi visited Moscow last month.

"Maybe this war will end at the negotiating table," Stoltenberg said. But he stressed that "it is for Ukraine to decide what are the conditions for talks and what format any talks should have." In any case, Stoltenberg said, "Any possibility for meaningful negotiations requires that Ukraine has the necessary military strength to send a very clear message to President [Vladimir] Putin that he will not win on the battlefield." Last week, representatives of NATO members gathered in Ramstein in Germany for talks hosted by the United States to review the defence systems and supplies Ukraine has said it needs. Zelenskyy has urged Western allies to send modern fighter aircraft and long-range missiles to help repel Russian troops, but NATO countries have so far stopped short of supplying Western-made jets.

Turkish troops shooting Syrian civilians

BEIRUT (AP): A leading international rights group said Turkish border guards have been indiscriminately shooting at Syrian civilians along the border with the war-wrecked country, as well as using excessive force against asylum seekers and migrants trying to cross into Turkey. There was no immediate response from Ankara to the accusations by Human Rights Watch. The New York-based group also urged the Turkish government to investigate and hold accountable border guards responsible for "these grave human rights violations, including unlawful killings, and end the longstanding impunity for these abuses."

Though there have been similar incidents in the past years, the latest followed a February earthquake that hit southern Turkey and northern Syria, killing over 50,000 people, including more than 6,000 in Syria. In Turkey, anti-immigrant sentiment is nearing a boiling point, fueled by Turkey's economic woes. With unemployment high and the prices of food and housing skyrocketing, many Turks have turned their frustration toward the country's roughly 5 million foreign residents, particularly the 3.7 million who fled the civil war in Syria. Human Rights Watch said the latest shooting took place on March 11, when Turkish border guards "viciously beat and tortured" a group of eight Syrians who were attempting to cross irregularly into Turkey. A man and a boy died in Turkish custody, while the six others were seriously hurt, HRW said. It added that six of the guards involved are under investigation by Turkish authorities for their alleged role in the abuse. HRW said that on March 13, a Turkish border guard shot and killed a 59-year-old Syrian man who was plowing his land in an area adjacent to the border. The watchdog said it has written to Turkish officials asking for information about both incidents.

"Turkish gendarmes and armed forces in charge of border control routinely abuse and indiscriminately shoot at Syrians along the Syrian-Turkish border, with hundreds of deaths and injuries recorded in recent years," said Hugh Williamson, HRW director for Europe and Central Asia. Ankara has been taking strict measures over the past years to prevent the flow of refugees from Syria. Well over 1 million migrants entered the European Union in 2015, many of them fleeing conflict in Syria and Iraq. The arrivals through Turkey overwhelmed facilities on the Greek islands, and sparked one of the EU's biggest-ever political crises. To persuade Turkey to stop people leaving its territory, the 27-nation bloc offered Ankara 6 billion euros to care for the Syrian refugees and the prospect of fast-track EU membership talks and visa-free travel in Europe for its citizens. Arrivals quickly dropped to a relative trickle, and the EU is keen to update the arrangement.

US and South Korea to boost cooperation

WASHINGTON (AFP): A US-South Korean agreement on strengthening deterrence against Pyongyang will discourage Seoul from seeking nuclear weapons, but also highlights the near absence of viable ways to remove the threat of North Korea's arsenal. For years, the United States and the international community have unsuccessfully pushed for North Korea to give up its weapons, which pose a long-running danger that has encouraged many in the South to believe Seoul needs its own nuclear arms.

Seeking to head off such a move, Washington agreed to deeper cooperation with Seoul on nuclear issues and the regular deployment of strategic assets to South Korea. President Yoon Suk Yeol, on a state visit to the United States, in turn reaffirmed his country's commitment to non-proliferation. As a result of the joint agreement, "South Korea is going to be more involved in conversations about the nuclear part of deterrence, not just conventional deterrence," said Naoko Aoki, associate political scientist at the RAND Corporation.

This is "a reflection of the increased concerns and tensions resulting from North Korea's nuclear and

missile development," Aoki said, noting that "the geopolitical environment and North Korea's ongoing military modernization plan, among other issues, make it unlikely that North Korea will come to the negotiating table soon." North Korea has defied years of punishing sanctions to continue work on its banned nuclear and missiles programs, and has shown no signs that it is willing to consider giving up weapons it views as insurance against regime change. Pyongyang conducted a record-breaking string of sanctions-defying launches this year, including test-firing the country's first solid-fuel ballistic missile -- a key technical breakthrough for North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's military. Surveys show that a majority of South Koreans believe the country should develop its own nuclear weapons -- an option Yoon had previously hinted Seoul could pursue. The new agreement "is first and foremost about assuring South Korea and proving -ing South Korea and proving -ing South Korea is credible," said Kelsey Hartigan, deputy director of the Project on Nuclear Issues at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, refer-

ring to the US commitment to defend its conventionally armed ally. "The prospects for a breakthrough on denuclearization have always been slim," she said. "The question is not whether North Korea is going to give up its nuclear weapons, it's whether South Korea is going to develop its own in response."

The United States' long-held goal has been the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, and that is unlikely to change. "I don't see the United States formally walking away from its broader policy position on denuclearization anytime soon," Hartigan said. Frank Aum, senior expert on Northeast Asia at the US Institute of Peace, warned of a possible North Korean response to the new agreement. "If we're showing power right now, then it's very likely that North Korea's going to come back and respond with its own demonstration of power. It could be a satellite launch or a seventh nuclear test," Aum said. "Then South Korea will want to respond again to show that it's responding and at some point we're going to run out of nuclear goodies to give to South Korea."

Iran urges Lebanese sides to reach agreement over president

BEIRUT (AP): Iran's foreign minister said that Tehran wants Lebanon's rivals to reach an agreement to elect a new president in the crisis-hit country that has been without a head of state since October. Hossein Amirabdollahian made his comments during his first visit to Lebanon since Iran and Saudi Arabia reached an agreement in China last month to re-establish diplomatic relations and reopen embassies after seven years of tensions that had major repercussions in the tiny Mediterranean country.

The agreement negotiated with China lowers the chance of armed conflict between the Mideast rivals - both directly and in proxy conflicts around the region. The effects of the agreement include eased tensions and an exchange of prisoners between Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Iran-backed rebels, as well as improved relations between Saudi Arabia and

Syrian President Bashar Assad. Lebanese groups are deeply divided between an Iran-backed coalition led by the powerful Hezbollah group and a Western and Saudi-backed alliance. The deep divisions in Lebanon have left the country without a president since the term of President Michel Aoun ended in late October. Speaking during a joint news conference with Amirabdollahian, Lebanese caretaker Foreign Minister Abdallah Bouhabib told reporters, "I am optimistic that every regional agreement and any deal between regional countries is good for Lebanon."

"The agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is important for peace in the region," Bouhabib said. He did not elaborate. Amirabdollahian said Iran encourages all sides in Lebanon to speed up the elections process. "We will back any election and any agreement that is

reached between parties in Lebanon regarding the electing of a president," Amirabdollahian said before heading to a meeting with caretaker Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati. Hezbollah's ally Sleiman Frangieh and army commander Gen. Joseph Aoun, are the top candidates for president. Lebanon's parliament held about a dozen sessions over the past months but failed to elect a head of state amid deep divisions. The largest Christian blocs in parliament have rejected the election of Frangieh and there have been reports in local media that Saudi Arabia is opposed to him becoming president. Frangieh gave a long TV interview in which he said that if he is elected president, he will work for better relations between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. Frangieh also added that his close relations with Hezbollah and Assad could be used for the good of Lebanon.

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Long awaited dialogue and Charter of Democracy

FINALLY, the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led opposition sat at the negotiating table to discuss the poll date following Supreme Court's verdicts in this regard. According to the details, the negotiating teams from warring groups met in the parliament and held the first round of talks, the opposition presented its demands to end the ongoing confrontation in the country. The PTI has called for the dissolution of the national and provincial assemblies in early May. According to the PTI, the government should introduce an amendment to the constitution for extending polls beyond May 14 and the PTI's resignations will have to be called back to give effect to the deal. The opposition demanded nationwide elections for national and provincial assemblies in July this year.

The mayhem of elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces has become a matter of ego for incumbent rulers and combatant opposition over the past year. The politics of agitation seriously undermined the political fraternity and contributed to the unimaginable loss of the political and economic stability of the country. The Election Commission of Pakistan, the Presidency, civil society, and political strategists failed to end persistent antagonism between the contesting political groups, while the apex court issued clear instructions to the government for holding polls in the respective regions but failed to end the fiasco. Currently, a dialogue has been initiated between the coalition government and the opposition to end the deadlock on the date for nationwide general elections in the country. The opposition has put forth its demands while the PDM borrowed some time for an interparty consultation over the PTI suggestions to reach a consensus response of the 13-member alliance.

Over the past year, the irrational conduct of the political stakeholders has exacerbated the problem and stymied unimaginable political instability, while the absence of political dialogue, persistent clashes, and intolerance remained a major hurdle in conceiving an agreement regarding the upcoming polls, the code of conduct for political groups, and ensure credibility of the election process. In fact, the inter-party dialogue was highly essential for onward political stability in the country after the elections, as loser political factions had always fumed tumult and confusion about the electoral process throughout the past. Fortunately, a long-awaited process of political dialogue has commenced that demands seriousness and fairness from across the political spectrum including the treasury, the opposition, and other political factions to make this endeavor fruitful instead of making it a time-buying tactic. The people and the state of Pakistan can't afford further antagonism and political instability in the country and aspects a constructive attitude from the warring political groups at this point in time. All Political stakeholders must abandon the politics of ego, hate, and propaganda by taking a principled course of mutual respect, to preserve public interest, national well-being, and the rule of law that encourage a healthy political process and promote democracy in the country.

Realistically, dialogue and negotiation are the basic pillars of politics and democracy that enable the statesmen to conceive a safe passage out of prickly and cantankerous political situations. At the same time, rigid behavior and refusal to talk always contribute to further disagreement, and confrontation. The people of Pakistan have suffered the pernicious effects of the combative politics of the PDM and the PTI over the past one and a half years. Both factions resolutely stuck to their political agenda and went all out in making up and worsening the political turmoil in the country. Now, the warring groups have moved in the right direction they must continue their dialogue, preserve gains and build their consensus over the upcoming elections at all costs, so the country moves toward calm, and stability.

Putting an end to the crisis in Sudan

ANY violence and instability in Sudan will not only have a devastating impact on the people of Sudan, but it also runs the risk of spiraling out of control and subsequently spilling over to neighboring countries. This could have severe repercussions for the entire Horn of Africa region. This is why finding a realistic and effective political solution for Sudan is critical in order to put an end to the conflict and prevent future violence.

One of the consequences of intensified violence in Sudan is that the refugee crisis could worsen, potentially affecting other countries. Sudan shares borders with seven countries - Libya, Egypt, Chad, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea. As the World Bank has warned: "The high incidence of conflict, particularly past fighting that led to South Sudan's secession, has led to a large population of refugees and internally displaced persons. Sudan is now a source, destination and transit country for irregular migration, including refugees and asylum seekers using the East African northbound migratory route through Libya to Europe. The country hosts an estimated 800,000 South Sudanese refugees and 330,000 refugees and asy-

lum seekers from Eritrea, Syria, Ethiopia, CAR, Chad, and Yemen." It is important to point out that the people of Sudan are the first to suffer from the consequences of any internal conflict and violence. For example, the latest clashes between forces from

tion and prevent economic development. The director of Sudan's Commission for Social Security, Solidarity and Poverty Reduction, Ezeldin El-Safi, who met with delegates from the UN in Khartoum in February,

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

2020, extreme poverty rates from 31 percent in 2014 to 71 percent in 2018 and 95 percent in 2020, and overall poverty rates from 43 percent in 2014 to 80 percent in 2018 and 97 percent in 2020." The first key step to

deliver when our staff is attacked, is thrown out of their offices, when their vehicles looted, and sometimes even their residences being under fire or destroyed." Secondly, mediation plays a vital role in helping to encourage rec-

restore order and return to the path of transition."

Several countries have already shown their desire to resolve the situation by reaching out to the Sudanese leaders. For example, in a tweet posted on the day violence erupted, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said: "We call on the brothers in Sudan to quickly stop military operations, exercise maximum restraint, avoid escalation, and give priority to the interest of the brotherly Sudanese people by preserving their gains and capabilities, and to return to the framework agreement that aims to reach a political declaration that achieves security, stability and prosperity for Sudan and its brotherly people." And the UAE Embassy in Khartoum stated the "importance of de-escalation and working toward finding a peaceful solution to the crisis between the concerned parties."

In a nutshell, the armed conflict in Sudan could quickly spiral out of control, exacerbate the nation's refugee crisis and potentially spill over to neighboring countries, which would have severe repercussions for the whole region. This is why the existence of functioning humanitarian corridors and mediation are critical at this time.

The country hosts an estimated 800,000 South Sudanese refugees and 330,000 refugees and asylum seekers from Eritrea, Syria, Ethiopia, CAR, Chad, and Yemen." It is important to point out that the people of Sudan are the first to suffer from the consequences of any internal conflict and violence. For example, the latest clashes between forces from Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces led to the deaths of hundreds of people, while thousands have been injured so far, according to the World Health Organization. In addition, it is worth noting that, unfortunately, this is a chaos-stricken nation that is already suffering from a stagnated economy and poverty. Any violence will only exacerbate the situation and prevent economic development.

Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces led to the deaths of hundreds of people, while thousands have been injured so far, according to the World Health Organization. In addition, it is worth noting that, unfortunately, this is a chaos-stricken nation that is already suffering from a stagnated economy and poverty. Any violence will only exacerbate the situa-

stressed the alarming growth of poverty in Sudan, which has reportedly reached 65 percent.

Children are most likely to bear the brunt of this disaster. The 2021 extrapolatory analysis of the Household Budget and Poverty Survey conducted by UNICEF indicated that the abject child poverty rate increased "from 12 percent in 2014 to 46 percent in 2018 and 85 percent in

take in this kind of situation is to keep humanitarian corridors open in order to allow humanitarian and medical assistance to enter the conflict-affected areas and to permit the evacuation of civilians from the conflict zone. As UN Special Envoy for Sudan Volker Perthes told reporters last week, when safe passages and humanitarian corridors are not respected, "We cannot

conciliation between the parties in conflict. Otherwise, an armed conflict in Sudan could spiral out of control and impact the whole Horn of Africa region. As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned: "Any further escalation could be devastating for the country and the region. I urge all those with influence over the situation to use it in the cause of peace, to support efforts to end the violence,

Donald Trump may have begun losing

Katherine Miller

WHAT'S the right form of justice for the problem of Donald Trump? There's already been one indictment. There's expected to be another in Georgia, possibly a sprawling one, about the effort to overturn the 2020 election. Although there's a literal point to an investigation (find out what went wrong) followed by a prosecution (hold people accountable), investigations and prosecutions can also take on cultural or symbolic meaning.

The Fox News settlement last week offered a microcosm of what's happening now with Mr. Trump: The Dominion Voting Systems lawsuit was about one thing (the claim of defamation against a business), but it took on a broader meaning (the public learned more about how Republican politics really works right now). And, notably, few agree what the settlement means, whether the \$787.5 million paid by Fox to Dominion reflects accountability or inconsequence, whether an apology was required or whether a trial was, even as the case risked a ruling with unpredictable repercussions.

Different people have different views of what the real problem and the right form of justice look like for Mr. Trump. Maybe the only certainty right now is that the answer will be unsatisfying.

He, meanwhile, has never let up. Last month, Mr. Trump stood with his hand over his heart in Waco, Texas, as scenes from the Jan. 6 riot played on a big screen and a recording by the J6 Prison Choir blasted through speakers at a rally for his presidential campaign.

So what's the point? Mr. Trump is surrounded by disparate legal actions of varying importance by disconnected individuals. But if we step back and think about the meaning of this period, are we trying to move on from the Trump

era, to put it behind us, or to understand what went wrong? "Justice for the problems of the Trump era" or "preventing another Trump presidency"?

If you think hard about the Jan. 6 select House committee, its exact point might seem a little opaque. The committee couldn't arrest anybody; its criminal referrals depended on a different branch of government to pursue them. The point couldn't be justice, and while people may have mistaken the committee for a legal entity, it was a political one.

But the committee served some purpose in American life: Millions of people watched its hearings, millions learned new details about this major event. Maybe the committee's chief purpose, then, was about the documents and the interview transcripts and video - a truth project. Former Representative Stephanie Murphy, who served on the committee, told me in November that this was its meaning: "for history," to "document what happened." To her, a former national security specialist at the Pentagon, the riot revealed the Capitol to the world as a "soft target," and that "if we don't walk away from perilous moments like that and take a moment to reflect and figure out how to improve, then I think we will have failed." In an interview this month, Representative Zoe Lofgren isolated the main question: "We were there for the riot and the mob. How did it happen?" - and took it one further: to make the details "accessible to people," filming depositions (even if only iPhone video or screen capture was available) and releasing the maximum amount of supporting material with the final report. The effect of the committee's presentation, a kind of effort at building consensus about recent history, was less tangible: to reorient the country's attention, through the hearings, to how bad Jan. 6 really was. Attention

is hard to maintain and focus, especially when, with Mr. Trump, it's as if we're always trying to hold water in our hands.

And this can have political consequences. In December, Sean Trende of RealClearPolitics wrote on Twitter that he had come to believe the Dobbs abortion ruling had more of a regional effect on the 2022 midterm results, but it was the hearings that shaped the national choice: "By re-centering Trump in the narrative," the Trump-backed candidates became "less palatable to independents at a time when impressions were formed." With hindsight, that committee had a pretty contained purpose - a public examination and narrative about a catastrophic event in American life, a kind of truth project.

But it's hard to assign a neat goal like that to every piece of the avalanche of litigation, investigation and prosecution that has converged in the last few months, between prosecutions or investigations for things that are or aren't the problem with Mr. Trump (the Stormy Daniels payments, the efforts to overturn the election in Georgia, the handling of classified documents); the lawsuits about Mr. Trump's business dealings in New York; the lawsuits about actors who responded to Mr. Trump's election claims (like the Fox-Dominion lawsuit). We probably wouldn't be here if, after the riot, Republicans had actually barred Mr. Trump from holding office, as my colleagues Ezra Klein and David French recently discussed. Impeachment was another political, civic process, rather than a criminal one. But it didn't work, and now we have this. Without obvious shared goals, arguably all these different prosecutors, officials and individuals are undertaking an inadvertent deterrence project, keeping alive the bad parts of the recent

past and applying pressure on the central players. We talk about a "chilling" effect with abortion laws, regulatory action against corporations and certain speech policies; these "work" by exerting pressure, making people skittish and worried about getting caught up in legal trouble.

The endless hearings and legal heartburn might be working in a similar manner. As a friend put it to me, post-Jan. 6 prosecutions and the prospect of an indictment in Georgia may be causing people to be less rowdy. In advance of Mr. Trump's New York indictment, his former adviser Roger Stone reminded people to keep their protests "civil" and "legal." Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene said she would "be pointing at people to be arrested if they're being violent." Many (but not all) of the Trump-backed candidates who lost in November conceded their elections within a normal time frame. This was good for the country, but also a bit of a puzzle: Many of these people claimed a major election was stolen, so why wouldn't they do the same for their own? The drag and scrutiny in the aftermath of Jan. 6 might be an answer.

Deterrence is an uneasy goal, however - hard to measure, impossible to predict, and at danger of becoming retribution in the wrong hands, or even hardening reactionary and illiberal elements by accident. Deterrence would also suggest an established kind of consensus: that a specific crime was, in fact, committed and the goal moving forward is to keep other crimes like it from being perpetrated. With many entry points to the problem, and without a shared consensus about what the real problem with the Trump era was, satisfaction here might be difficult to achieve. There's also a kind of dark-night-of-the-soul, "The Godfather Part

II" concern, which surfaced in early polling after the New York indictment, that at least some segment of the country most likely finds that prosecution to be political, and doesn't seem to mind. And Mr. Trump is raising a lot of money and consolidating his polling advantage in the wake of the first indictment.

Consensus and order are unusual, though. Ms. Lofgren noted that the Jan. 6 committee was different from any experience she'd had, beginning with its unique presentation structure. "You had to have a unified view of what was the mission, and the mission was to find all the facts that we could, and then tell them," she said. "There wasn't a political divide on that. But that doesn't mean we saw everything exactly the same way, exactly at the same time." The committee, she explained, used closed-door discussions to reach public unity: "There were times when I thought one thing and by the time we'd spent a couple of hours thinking through it, I became convinced of someone else's point of view. And the same thing happened with other members. That's also rare." Reaching one shared idea of what happened and why things went wrong, even within a smaller group behind closed doors, has real appeal, even if it's not how we would want a country run. Instead, it's like the best society can do is to keep applying a kind of societal weight to Mr. Trump - attention on the accurate memory of the events, the creation of legal hurdles and public scrutiny, possibly doomed prosecutions of varying quality - adding a little more weight, a little more weight, a little more weight in an effort to contain him. It's like some mixed-up version of deterrence and truth, with a society trying something, anything, with possibly volatile precedents for the future.

Even in all this chaos of information and opaque

goals, a story can still stick out as representative of the frustrating parts of this time. In part of the materials released at Christmas by the select committee, in an episode you may have missed, a former White House deputy press secretary, Sarah Matthews, described an argument some of the press staff got into about who would benefit if Mr. Trump called the insurrection off, and whether he should condemn the violence at all. Ms. Matthews wanted him to do that: tell everyone to go home. According to her account of the day from her closed-door testimony, someone suggested that maybe people from the antifa movement were behind the riot; that was, Ms. Matthews said, all the more reason to condemn the violence. According to Ms. Matthews, someone kept arguing that to condemn the riot would allow the media to "win," because Democrats had not been asked to condemn violence during the protests after George Floyd's death in 2020.

"I pointed at the TV," Ms. Matthews testified last year, "and said - I guess yelled - 'Do you think we're winning right now?'" She became emotional, left the room and, later that day, resigned. This is, on the one hand, sort of a pointless thing to know - a vivid but peripheral episode, from overlooked supporting materials to a report from a committee that no longer exists. On the other hand, it speaks to the lasting change in American politics since 2016: When Ms. Matthews was working for House Republicans and testified publicly last summer, the House Republican Conference called her a "liar" and "pawn" on Twitter, before deleting the post. There's something emblematic of this frustrating and confused era in a woman hopelessly shouting, "Do you think we're winning right now?"

The New York Times

Setbacks for Sunak as key UK elections approach

Andrew Hammond

RISHI Sunak faces his first major electoral challenge as UK prime minister on May 4, yet his government is on the rocks following the resignation last Friday of Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab. More than half a year into his term of office, Sunak has had a very mixed start in 10 Downing Street. To be sure, he has not experienced a similar disastrous chain of events to his predecessor Liz Truss, which saw her prime ministership implode within 50 days.

However, the premiership of Truss is an exceptionally low baseline from which to judge Sunak's term. In practice, this has had some ups but a lot of downs too, including a significant number of Cabinet resignations for ethics-related reasons, starting with Cabinet Office minister Gavin Williamson last year and culminating (so

far) with Raab last week.

To be fair to Sunak, there have been a small number of successes. This includes the negotiation of the Windsor Framework that seeks to resolve the challenges of the originally negotiated Northern Ireland protocol. It is Raab's resignation, however, that may well be more salient in terms of shaping the May elections. These ballots include district councils, unitary authorities and directly elected mayors in England, as well as all local councils in Northern Ireland. A majority of the seats up for grabs were last contested in May 2019. In those ballots, the Conservatives lost more than 1,000 seats and control of several councils, while the Liberal Democrats managed to make the most gains. If the Conservatives lose 500 of the more than 3,300 seats they are defending across England to Labour on May 4, it would

be the first time in more than two decades that the Conservatives are not the biggest local party in England. While it is by no means sure that Labour will win a big majority at the next general election, a significant win for the party on May 4 would fuel the growing perception that the party will emerge with the largest number of MPs in Westminster next time. This is encouraging growing numbers of Conservative MPs to announce that they will stand down rather than defend their seats in the general election. With the Conservatives almost certain to lose seats on May 4, an important question for the government will be whether it can subsequently regain any political momentum. This is possible, but is made less likely because it lacks energy after almost a decade and a

half in power.

This is, in part, because so many ministers in Sunak's Cabinet are holdovers from Johnson's governments from 2019 to 2022 (a significant number of whom were in political exile under Truss), including Michael Gove, Oliver Dowden and Ben Wallace, who occupy the same roles as in Johnson's last Cabinet. Other ministers who served in Johnson's top team who are now in new Cabinet jobs include Sunak himself, James Cleverly, Grant Shapps, Gillian Keegan, Therese Coffey, Steve Barclay, Penny Mordaunt, Robert Jenrick and Suella Braverman. However, even if the Conservatives have a very bad night on May 4, Sunak may yet escape a leadership challenge. This is, in part, because of the declining political fortunes of Johnson, whose standing within the party has slipped

(perhaps only temporarily) recently.

Firstly, he last month received a grilling from the House of Commons Privileges Committee, where he was flustered by questions posed by a cross-party group of MPs, including Conservatives Bernard Jenkin and Charles Walker, about the so-called party-gate scandal during the lockdown era of the pandemic. Added to this, Johnson had hoped to lead a major backbench rebellion against Sunak's Windsor Framework, but this failed to materialize. So, barring a major calamity in the coming months, Sunak is set to lead the Conservatives into the next general election, which will most likely be in 2024. But he has a massive political hill to climb.

The task is so difficult for Sunak because public opinion is widely skeptical of his government. He also knows that no party in modern UK

political history has won five elections in a row. So, he has a huge challenge ahead and he faces this in a context where Johnson (and indeed the much wider number of ministers leaving office in recent years, including Truss) could become significant political thorns in his side. In recent weeks, Truss has been renewing her push for a radical low-tax agenda in the face of the threat from non-democratic states. In a recent speech, she argued that a "cartel of complacency" is damaging economic growth in the West and accused key governments of aiding China, Russia and others by refusing to offer tax cuts. Taken together, this is why Sunak's prime ministership is so perilously positioned. While he is now likely to last in office to fight the next general election, the political winds are blowing against him winning a fifth successive victory for the Conservatives.

Lebanon a willing victim as long as the existing system remains

Khaled Abou Zahr

LEBANON on Saturday gave a hero's welcome to banker and former minister Marwan Kheireddine, who arrived in the country after being named as a suspect in France for his role in the alleged embezzlement scheme set up by Central Bank Governor Riad Salameh. There were so many contradictions in this televised welcome. First and foremost, those surrounding him must be just like all the other Lebanese. They lost their savings to the banking system, yet they cheered for him. This makes no sense. The reality is that, in Lebanon, when you get accused of crimes, you play the confessional card.

In fact, it should be the Lebanese justice system conducting these proceedings and not France. However, this is impossible today as the banking system, even if it is corrupt, is at the core of the Lebanese confessional system. As a result, Lebanon has become a no man's land where refugees, whether rich or destitute, are stuck. Kheireddine is not the first rich Lebanese to be hailed a hero while being investigated or judged in another country. In 2019, Carlos Ghosn fled Japanese justice, yet in Lebanon he was even considered as a potential presidential candidate. There were others before him. For now, they are all refugees in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, destitute Syrian refugees are also stuck in Lebanon. The currently unfolding events have shown this to be an additional threat to the country's stability. With calls for their

deportation and incidents in the camps holding Syrian refugees, there is the potential for an explosion, especially in the current regional and domestic geopolitical setting.

Viral WhatsApp clips in Lebanon, showing Syrian opposition leader Kamal Al-Labwani and other unknown Syrian figures, have relayed the fragility of Lebanon and highlighted how a new civil war could erupt due to this situation. The threats are direct. This is something new, or at least it has not happened since the Syrian troops left Lebanon in 2005. Indeed, the delivery of these threats is reminiscent of the past, but with a technological spin.

The refugee file is undoubtedly one that the Syrian regime can use to rebalance its relations with Lebanon - a way to bring back the influence it lost over the past decade. Lebanon is part of its set of geopolitical cards and the regime needs it back. This Syrian objective is also noticeable in its fresh involvement in the choice of the next Lebanese president. This is something the Syrian regime can see as a way forward. How will this take place? And will it go through without any major incidents? The threats made on social media by Syrians regarding the stability of Lebanon confirm that the will is there.

The confessional political system that protects billionaire refugees is what makes Lebanon weak. The threats seen on social media would see the use of this confessional political system to

create an incident. This shows how fragile the situation is. Strangely, many of the Lebanese bourgeoisie will condemn the corrupt politicians and the militia. But in reality, they will accept the loss of their Ponzi dollars because they expect their confessional leader to give them total immunity, just like the refugee billionaires.

This is what they want for their blind loyalty. As long as they condemn a system while benefiting from it and are accomplices in it, there is little hope for change. This is exactly why the youth's "All means all" was a worthy slogan. Because, in Lebanon, you cannot remove a confessional leader without the community losing ground and power - and this is unacceptable to them. This is why the entire system needs to change. Unfortunately, what most people fail to understand is that this power is all artificial and temporarily "rented out." Even the all-mighty Hezbollah is an artificial power, simply because its power comes from the regional situation and not from within the country. It is the specific regional geopolitical situation that makes it powerful today and its unwinding will most certainly bring it to an end. We have seen it before.

For Lebanon to survive, it cannot have a political system that pits people against each other, while allowing the leaders and their followers to trade off on riches. It does not make sense. Nevertheless, Lebanon has to be respectful and understanding of

the geopolitical situation. There is a need to find a way to shift the power-making from outside to inside; to find a new political structure that allows for a political leadership to be aligned with the needs of all the people and not only the influential. I am always amazed when reading headlines in the Lebanese media, especially on the presidential elections. Questions are raised, such as "Will France accept another candidate?" or "Will regional powers refuse this candidate?" These are simply astonishing. With all due respect, why should anyone have a say in the election of an official besides the local population? How can this be accepted? And so, in order to understand who will become an official, everyone analyses regional meetings. It is time to change this. The fact is that the headache caused by this situation for global and regional powers will eventually promote old solutions that will bring more suffering.

This is why I take seriously the threats of Syrian figures on social media against Lebanon. Believe me, in this game, it does not take long for the situation to explode without us understanding why. There is, unfortunately, little chance of the political powers coming to an understanding regarding a new system. Indeed, the Lebanese bourgeoisie and the influential billionaire refugees are still, despite their condemnations, aligned with them. Hence, Lebanon is once again at risk of being the victim of major shifts. However, it is clearly now a willing victim.

Arab News



South Korean conservatives lament ‘nuclear shackles’

William Gallo

THE United States' pledge to reinforce its nuclear umbrella protecting South Korea has failed to quiet some South Korean conservatives who want their country to develop nuclear weapons. Under the so-called Washington Declaration, which was unveiled Wednesday as US President Joe Biden hosted South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol for a state visit, the United States vowed to deploy more "strategic assets," such as nuclear-capable submarines, long-range bombers and aircraft carriers, to South Korea.

South Korea developing its own nuclear weapons if its security concerns were not addressed. If South Korea were to go nuclear, some analysts fear it could set off a chain reaction that would lead to many other countries eventually acquiring their own nuclear arsenals. Although Yoon quickly walked back his comments, that did not stop a wave of analysis by South Korean pundits, politicians and even scholars at government-funded research organizations. The debate

servatives have called for a NATO-style arrangement in which South Korean personnel would be trained to deliver US tactical nuclear weapons in a conflict. However, US officials this week said they did not envision returning nuclear weapons to South Korea. They also stressed that the US president would retain sole authority to authorize nuclear attacks, which is true of every US ally security arrangement. Given such restrictions, some observers predict South Korea's reassurance demands will only grow.

The idea of South Korea getting nuclear weapons was once a fringe idea. But it has gone mainstream in conservative circles in response to North Korea's growing nuclear capability and the rise of "America First" political ideas in the United States. Earlier this year, Yoon himself suggested the US nuclear umbrella was an outdated concept. He later raised the possibility of South Korea developing its own nuclear weapons if its security concerns were not addressed. If South Korea were to go nuclear, some analysts fear it could set off a chain reaction that would lead to many other countries eventually acquiring their own nuclear arsenals. Although Yoon quickly walked back his comments, that did not stop a wave of analysis by South Korean pundits, politicians and even scholars at government-funded research organizations. The debate may endure; opinion polls consistently suggest a strong majority of South Koreans supports getting nuclear weapons.

may endure; opinion polls consistently suggest a strong majority of South Koreans supports getting nuclear weapons.

Chun In-bum, a retired lieutenant general in the South Korean army, is among those who has expressed an openness to nuclear armament. Asked whether the Yoon-Biden deal would quiet the nuclear debate, Chun responded: "No. But we need to give it a try." In Chun's view, the NCG consultation mechanism is a positive development, but will be effective only if it evolves into a regular forum where US officials can learn "what their ally is thinking and why they're thinking that way." Go Myong-hyun, a research fellow at the conservative Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul, also expressed mixed feelings about the Washington Declaration. "The Biden administration has delivered what the South Korean side has been demanding for a while now, which is a greater level of input into the nuclear planning process," Go said. "But it is still no full NATO Nuclear Planning Group with forward-deployed assets," he added. "Only then will independent nuclear armament advocates lose their influence." Some South Korean con-

especially as the North Korean nuclear threat increases. "It is never enough for those who think nuclear weapons are additive," said Jon B. Wolfsthal, a senior adviser to the nuclear disarmament group Global Zero. "The threats will not ease, and so they will want more nuclear options, different types and so on. That is the lesson of the last 75 nuclear years." But others say reassurance measures and an effective North Korea policy are the best way to prevent South Korea from going nuclear. "If South Koreans see North Korea continue to advance its nuclear weapons capability and perceive the US as not being proactive enough to solve this problem, then voices advocating for South Korea nuclear weapons will only crescendo," said Duyeon Kim, a Seoul-based Korea specialist at the Center for a New American Security. For now, it is a victory to simply lower the volume of the South Korean nuclear debate, insisted Christopher Green, a senior consultant for the International Crisis Group. "I doubt either side expected to be able to have the problem go away completely," he said. "At any rate, the can has been kicked down the road."

VOA

Giorgia Meloni, Italy's 'far-Right' PM, doesn't seem so dangerous after all

Fraser Nelson

WHEN Giorgia Meloni became prime minister of Italy, the outside world was in shock. The most Right-wing Italian leader since Mussolini, it was said she was "far-Right" or "post-fascist". Germany's Stern magazine proclaimed her "the most dangerous woman in Europe". It seemed that Italy, where fascism was born, was about to stage its rebirth. She would disguise it, of course: such people always do. Ursula von der Leyen stood ready, warning that the EU had the "tools" to deal with Italy's new leader should the need arise.

There was only one problem with Meloni-the-Monster analysis: it has been rather hard to find anything she has actually done - or proposes to do - that can really be seen as far-Right. She certainly veers from the traditional political script, talking about Italy's declining birth rate and proclaiming herself in favour of God and motherhood. She can fire shots in culture wars when it suits her. But if politicians can be judged by what they do, then the woman who met Rishi Sunak in No?10 on Thursday is a moderate - and, if anything, a stabilising force in Europe.

Since coming to power, Sunak has been on an Italian charm offensive. Giorgio Silli, Meloni's deputy foreign minister, was in London last month. Ignazio Visco, governor of the Bank of Italy, visited earlier this year. Carlo Nordio, her justice minister, has been twice. James Cleverly, Ben Wallace and Kemi Badenoch have all been to Rome in recent months. Sunak is keen to strengthen one-to-one links with European allies after Brexit and Meloni is a great believer in alliances between nation states.

She is quite the Anglophile, speaking better English than any of her predecessors. Sunak set aside three hours for her yesterday: almost a record, by British standards. She shares with him a desire to "stop the boats", a mission which takes on a bit more resonance in Italy where more arrive in a day than Britain sees in a week. She wants more powers to prosecute people-traffickers; Sunak already has them. He wants to deport illegal arrivals to Rwanda; she would never dare make such a proposal. If she did, says the historian David Broder, it would surely expose her fascist past.

But this is the problem when placing new parties on the political spectrum. When Denmark's Social Democrats asked Rwanda to take refugees, did that expose its fascist side? Or simply that the Danes, like the Brits, are trying to stop the modern slave trade by breaking its financial model? When Meloni proclaims, "I am Giorgia! I am a woman! I am a mother! I am a Christian," it is certainly unusual. So much so that it was made into a dance music track.

But are any of these sentiments really far-Right? Might a bit more evidence be needed for such an allegation? Lazy use of such labels can serve to cloud the view of European politics at a moment when clarity is needed most. Huge changes are afoot. In several countries, we see parties in power that didn't exist even a decade ago. Some of the new upstarts genuinely are far-Right. Others are more centrist but with a cruder, more direct style of speaking - and are willing to discuss demographic change. So how to distinguish the populist from the proto-

extremist?

One tell-tale sign is having been cosy with Vladimir Putin. Marine Le Pen had her picture taken with him. Matteo Salvini gave a thumbs-up while wearing a Putin T-shirt in Red Square. Silvio Berlusconi (one of Meloni's coalition partners) exchanged birthday gifts with him. But Meloni has denounced Putin from day one and describes the Ukraine war as a struggle of democracy against autocracy. Which is rare, in a country that's sometimes suspicious of whether to arm Kyiv. For Meloni, this is a matter of principle; she wants her country on America's side. She has no Macron-style urges to overhaul Nato. Another marker of populists is high spending: think Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain or the Five Star Movement in Italy. But Meloni has been almost Sunak-like in pursuing fiscal orthodoxy, looking to cut welfare and keeping deficit reduction targets. She is using her trip to London to assure creditors that she's perfectly sensible and that Italy does not deserve a credit downgrade. The markets, so far, agree. Italian bond markets have been calm. Liz Truss would have loved to have had the same said about her.

So six months in, where is this great danger that Meloni poses? Her party, the Brothers of Italy, does share DNA with the Italian Social Movement, set up in the post-war years to carry on aspects of Mussolini's agenda. Meloni was a member of the party as a student and still uses its tricolour logo. Today, she disavows any nostalgia for fascism but in her teenage years, she was more equivocal. And there's video footage to prove it. My

own hunch is that such controversy is helpful to her. Italians exasperated at the state of their country want a protest vote - and being attacked as a closet fascist will help burnish her rebel credentials. Now and again, she says something to enrage her enemies. Five years ago, for example, she went through a phase of describing immigration as "ethnic substitution" and was duly condemned. But such incendiary language attracts voters worried about immigration, and may even have made them overlook the fact that her actual immigration policy is pretty mainstream.

Let's not pretend that Sunak is above all of this. He hired Lee Anderson as his deputy party chairman who provides a regular supply of controversies: on the death penalty, food banks, nurses' pay and more. Sunak knows his own weakness - he can come across as someone trying to sell you a timeshare - so he needs to balance his managerialism with some controlled explosions. When Suella Braverman goes a bit far and is attacked as an immigration hardliner, this helps. It deflects attention from the fact that the Tories are letting in more than New Labour ever dared. Centrism, nowadays, needs to come with spikes attached. So Sunak has, in Meloni, an ally with whom he has more in common than it suits either of them to admit. And one who, unlike most Italian leaders, may be around for a while given her rising popularity and divided opposition. It may well all be a ruse; she may one day emerge an extremist in disguise. But judging on her first six months, it's a rather convincing disguise.

The Telegraph

World must act to ensure Rohingya children get an education

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim

EDUCATION has a proven track record in being the world's most effective tool for pulling people out of poverty. For the Rohingya, this vital tool has been denied to generations, as they faced wave upon wave of discrimination and genocidal campaigns.

Now, the education situation for Rohingya children in the world's largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar is calamitous. According to UNICEF, only about 23 percent of Rohingya children aged four to 14 years have access to any kind of education in Bangladesh, whether formal or nonformal. This means that the vast majority of Rohingya children in Bangladesh are currently not receiving any education at all. There are several reasons for this. One major obstacle is the lack of resources and infrastructure in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, which makes it difficult to provide education services to all children. This is exacerbated by the sheer size and scale of the Cox's Bazar camp, which Bangladesh is keen on ensuring does not become a permanent settlement.

Additionally, there are often cultural and language barriers that make it difficult for Rohingya children to access what limited education may be available, with some curriculums provided by well-

meaning nongovernmental organizations using Bengali textbooks, which is not the primary language of the Rohingya people and is not the best option for victims of genocide who are trying to preserve their culture, language and traditions. Over the long term, if the Rohingya are ever expected to rebuild their communities, pull their people out of abject poverty and be less reliant on aid, the international community will need to support educational initiatives for Rohingya children in these refugee camps. Such initiatives should be designed and implemented in close consultation with the Rohingya community itself to ensure that they are culturally appropriate, relevant to the needs of the community and responsive to the challenges facing the Rohingya people. Without access to education, it will be difficult for the Rohingya people to ever improve their economic situation, even if they were suddenly able to return to their homeland across the border in Myanmar's Rakhine State.

And there is no need to have a one-size-fits-all strategy. Such initiatives can take many different forms, including formal education programs, vocational training and community-based initiatives that promote life skills and social inclu-

sion. The important thing is to ensure that all Rohingya children have access to quality education that can help them to build better lives for themselves and their families, irrespective of where they may end up. There are many reasons why the international community should support education initiatives for the Rohingya. First and foremost, education is a fundamental human right and all people should have access to quality education regardless of their background or circumstances. By supporting education initiatives for the Rohingya people, the international community can help to ensure that this fundamental right is upheld and that the Rohingya people are able to participate fully in society and build better futures for themselves.

Second, education is essential for promoting economic development and reducing poverty. Without access to education, it is difficult for the Rohingya people to gain the skills and knowledge they need to improve their current economic situation and provide for their families. By investing in education initiatives that provide vocational training and other opportunities for skills development, the international community can help to promote economic growth and

reduce poverty among the Rohingya people, even if they are trapped in a refugee camp. Third, education is important for promoting social inclusion and breaking down barriers between different groups. The Rohingya people have long been marginalized and excluded from society in Myanmar and this situation has been exacerbated by the violence and persecution they have faced in recent years. By providing education opportunities that promote social inclusion and tolerance, the international community can help to build bridges between different communities and promote a more peaceful and stable society - even among the different Rohingya groups, which are understandably growing frustrated with their current situation.

Finally, education is essential for promoting long-term peace and stability in the region. We have to hope that the Rohingya will one day soon return to their homeland in Myanmar. An educated Rohingya can help to promote tolerance and respect for diversity, which are essential for building peaceful and stable societies. By investing in education initiatives for the Rohingya people, the international community can help to promote a culture of peace and tolerance in the region as a whole.

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PM announces plans for \$10-14 billion refinerym says Musadik Malik

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister of State for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik on Friday said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had announced to establish a refinery that would cost between \$10 to \$14 billion.

Speaking at a news conference, the minister stated that the government had been actively working on a new energy policy that would focus on creating energy

resources from LPG, LMG, and solar. The policy would also promote energy conservation to ensure sustainable development, he added.

Musadik emphasized that the new policy would bring an end to the monopoly of a few companies that had been exploiting consumers by charging exorbitant prices. The policy would encourage competition among companies, which

would lead to competitive prices for consumers. Landlords and building owners would also no longer be able to exploit tenants by forcing them to pay high energy bills for privately supplied energy resources.

In addition, he added, the government had made it possible to obtain oil from Russia at discounted prices, a feat that previous governments had failed to achieve.

He also urged the people to adopt an energy conservation culture not just for themselves, but also for future generations. The minister was hopeful that the new refinery would create new jobs and reduce Pakistan's dependence on imported fuel. It will also help boost the country's economy by increasing energy production and reducing the cost of production for industries, he added.

The Bank of Punjab announced Financial results for 1st quarter of year 2023

F.P. Report

LAHORE: A meeting of the Board of Directors of The Bank of Punjab was held on April 28, 2023 to consider and approve the un-audited Financial Statements for the 1st quarter of year ended March 31, 2023.

During the meeting, the Board reviewed Bank's performance for 1st quarter of the year 2023 and expressed its satisfaction on overall financial performance of the Bank in the prevailing operating environment.

During 1st quarter 2023, Non-Markup/ Interest Income (excluding gains on securities) increased to Rs. 2.68 billion as against Rs. 1.80 billion during 1st quarter 2022 showing an

increase of 49%. However, Bank's Net Interest Margin (NIM) remained at Rs. 7.77 billion as against Rs. 8.11 billion during 1st quarter 2022. During 1st quarter of the year, the Bank posted before tax profit of Rs. 2.11 billion and Earnings per Share (EPS) for the 1st quarter of year 2023 remained at Rs. 0.40 per share.

As at March 31, 2023, Bank's Total Assets improved to Rs. 1,604.4 billion as against Rs. 1,481.9 billion as of December 31, 2022. The Deposits of the Bank remained at Rs. 1,189.2 billion, while Investments and Gross Advances were recorded at Rs. 803.2 billion and Rs. 612.1 billion, respectively. Tier-1 Equity improved to Rs. 68.6 billion and Capital Adequacy

Ratio (including ASM of TFC-III) stood at 12.91% against regulatory requirement of 11.50%.

The Bank has been assigned long term entity rating of "AA+" by M/s PACRA with short term rating being at the highest rank of "A1+". The Bank currently has a network of 780 online branches, including 140 Taqwa Islamic Banking Branches and 16 sub-branches. Further, the Bank has a network of 715 ATMs providing 24/7 banking services to the customers. Besides, Bank is also offering a wide range of products/services to its valued clients including Branchless Banking, Mobile Banking, Internet Banking, Credit Card and Cash Management services.

Rs75 note like other currency notes is acceptable: SBP

KARACHI (PPI): The State Bank of Pakistan clarified on Friday that Rs75 note like other currency notes is acceptable for all kinds of transactions. Terming baseless speculations about the Rs75 banknote, a State Bank spokesman said that Bank has no intention to withdraw Rs75 currency note in future.

SBP chief spokesman Ali Abid Qamar recalled that this note was issued on August 14 2022 to mark the 75th Independence Day of Pakistan. This note was available to public since September 30 2022, he added.

He also made it clear that the Bank has no plan yet to abolish the Rs10 currency notes. Rs10 note and coins will remain in use, he added. There was also no proposal under consideration to withdraw Rs1 and Rs2 coins, he further said.

To mark the country's 75 years of independence, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) had in August 2022 issued Rs75 commemorative banknote featuring not only the portraits of Quaid-i-Azam Moha-mmud Ali Jinnah, Allama Iqbal, Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah and Sir Syed Ahmed Khan but also highlighting nation's commitment

to address climate change.

The green and white currency note has tones of yellow, where the green represents growth and development and derives inspiration from the country's Islamic identity and the white colour emphasises religious diversity of the population, according to the SBP.

"The Markhor and Deodar trees pictured on the reverse of the Banknote highlight our national commitment to address climate change and its repercussions," a statement issued then by the SBP mentioned.



ISLAMABAD: A hawker is selling fresh cherry and Phalsa (Sherbet Berry) on roadside in Federal Capital.

Centralized Gateway Portal okayed by SECP

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) in order to facilitate digital onboarding of investors in different asset classes in the regulated sectors and evade repeated KYC processing, has approved the development of centralized digital onboarding platform namely Centralized Gateway Portal.

The platform will offer a uniform digital onboarding process and standardized KYC requirements, along with one-time KYC information processing. SECP has tasked the Central Depository Company of Pakistan Limited (CDC) to develop and implement the portal, potentially, within the period of three months.

Pursuant to the above, customers who will onboard through the digital portal, will only be required to fill KYC

requirements once. While opening another account with any of the above-mentioned SECP regulated entities, they will not be required to re-submit the KYC information and documents in same or different asset class. The one-time KYC information processing will be applicable on securities brokers, futures brokers, asset management companies & insurance Companies and their distribution agents, Securities & Futures Advisors and Investment Advisors.

This will significantly facilitate customers, remove duplication and streamline the customer onboarding process. The portal also aims to take advantage of advancements in technology and offer a user-friendly and efficient digital onboarding mechanism, while reducing turnaround time for opening of accounts.

It is also expected to bring efficiency in AML/CGT compliance by centralized identity verification, screening of customers and assisting the intermediaries in risk rating of their customers.

For effective implementation of the mechanism for onboarding of customers in a swift and simplified manner, the SECP has issued a Circular, available on its website, specifying information to be obtained from customers to ensure applicability across all asset classes and bring uniformity in onboarding process. Further, industry participants have been instructed to align their account opening forms with the requirements of Circular and establish required connectivity for sharing of customers' information with Portal with consent of customers.

Pak-German trade can be boosted further via joint efforts: President ICCI

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has said that the current bilateral trade between Pakistan and Germany is around USD 4 billion which can be further increased by renewed efforts from both sides.

While leading a delegation, the ICCI President called on Ambassador of Germany to Pakistan Alfred Grannas and discussed with him matters for further increasing bilateral trade and economic relations between the two countries.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari stressed for strong business linkages between the private sectors of Pakistan and Germany to explore all untapped areas of business cooperation. He thanked Germany for cooperating with Pakistan in many areas including energy saving, education and skills development and said that being an advanced country, Germany

can help Pakistan to improve its economy. He said that over 40 German companies are already working in Pakistan in various sectors including chemicals, pharmaceuticals, automobile, wholesale and stressed that more German companies should take advantage of the investment opportunities in Pakistan, which is a huge market of around 230 million consumers. He also invited the German Ambassador to visit ICCI for an interaction with the business community. Addressing the delegation, German Ambassador Alfred Grannas said that his country shares deep ties with Pakistan. He said that he is working to further strengthen the bilateral relationship between the two countries. He said that Germany can help Pakistan in renewable energy. He said that with the improvement in Pakistan's economy, he would encourage German companies to explore Pakistan for business and

investment. He said that he can connect ICCI with the German trade promotion agency in Dubai to enhance business linkages between the private sectors of both countries. He said that Germany can also cooperate with Pakistan in the electric vehicles sector. Senior Vice President ICCI Faad Waheed said that Germany should cooperate with Pakistan in solar energy to cope with the energy shortage and provide cheap electricity to the people.

Vice President ICCI Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar said that Pakistan and Germany should cooperate in the construction sector as due to rising population, Pakistan is an attractive market for construction activities. Group Leader ICCI Khalid Iqbal Malik said that German automobile companies should consider setting up assembly lines in Pakistan, which is a good market for German automobile brands.

German Companies invited to take benefit of investment opportunities in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) leading a delegation called on H.E. Alfred Grannas, Ambassador of Germany and discussed with him matters for further increasing bilateral trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Germany.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that the current bilateral trade of around USD 4 billion between Pakistan and Germany can be further increased by renewed efforts from both sides. He stressed for strong business linkages between the private sectors of Pakistan and Germany to explore all untapped areas of business cooperation.

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OGDCL partners with IHHN to provide health facilities across Pakistan

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), a socially responsible corporate, has partnered with the Indus Hospital and Health Network (IHHN) to provide quality health services at doorsteps in various districts across Pakistan. Under the OGDCL CSR program, the partnership aims to enhance health services in local communities by establishing and operating upgraded health facilities in various forms.

As a socially responsible corporate, OGDCL has been serving communities by providing treatment and medi-



cines through various health facilities. However, with the growing demand for enhanced health services at doorsteps, OGDCL has partnered with IHHN to cater for health facilities at identified OGDCL operational fields. Under this partnership, IHHN will establish and operate

resulting in community well-being and transformation of their lives through quality services." The founding President of IHHN, on the occasion of the MOU signing, expressed his pleasure and said, "We at IHHN are honored and delighted to partner with OGDCL for well-being of our communities through access to high-quality, free-of-cost healthcare. Access to healthcare continues to be a huge challenge in Pakistan, and OGDCL's commitment to addressing this emergency is most admirable. I'm sure that this partnership will go on to benefit countless people across Pakistan."

Inauguration of Day Care Center at SNGPL Head Office

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Inauguration of Day Care Center at Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) Head Office took place today (Friday).

Addressing the Inaugural Ceremony, Chairperson Board of Directors Roohi Raees Khan said that the Board of Directors with the cooperation of the Company Management, has always endeavoured for the welfare of the Company and its employees. She said that the measures taken by the Board and implemented by the Management resulted in UFG reduction, cost control and successful digitization program.

She added that any organization or even a society cannot prosper without collective efforts hence all the employees, male and female, must



work together and develop tolerance for each other. She said that day care center was a longstanding demand of the Company's female employees which has been fulfilled today. She expressed hope that more initiatives for employees' welfare will be ensured with the cooperation of the Company

management.

Managing Director Amer Tufail appreciated the keen interest and initiative taken by the Chairperson in swift completion of the project. He said that there is room for improvement in every project so in light of the feedback from the employees, the Company will

strive to bring in further improvement in the day care center in future. A documentary film encompassing planning and execution of the day care center was also displayed at the event. The event was attended by the Company's Senior Management and female employees in large numbers.

100pc increase in taxable income limit demanded

KARACHI (INP): Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain has called for at least one hundred percent increase in the limit of taxable income.

In a statement issued here on Friday, he said that the inflation is at 35 percent while food inflation has hit the mark of 47 percent therefore taxable income should be increased from one hundred thousand rupees to two hundred thousand rupees.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the expenses of people have increased many folds, inflation and currency erosion has become uncontrollable, therefore limit of taxable income should be increased, he added.

The salaried class plays a very important role in the country's

economy, but now the same class is currently suffering due to inflation, which should be given some relief, he added. He said that there are lobbies to protect the interests of traders, industrialists, producers and farmers, but there is no voice for the salaried class that pay a lot of direct taxes.

The business leader said that in a country where no one likes to pay taxes, heavy taxes are being collected from the salaried class, while some salaried people are being taxed up to thirty-five percent.

Professionals are taxed at 25 to 30 percent, while if general sales tax, petroleum levy and other expenses are added, this tax exceeds to over 50 percent, he observed.

He noted that businessmen transfer the burden of increased expenses to the public or fire employees, while salaried employees have no

such facility to reduce their expenses.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that skilled people and professionals get up to six times more salary than Pakistan in the Arab countries, therefore people are fleeing the country in record numbers.

This is an irreparable loss for the country, but our policymakers are not ready to understand the implications of this matter.

In addition, the exodus can lead to reduced taxes and the problem of non-availability of manpower for industries and other business sectors, which will be a serious blow to the economy.

He said that all the rich countries, including Arab countries, have developed by understanding the importance of developing human resources, while Pakistan does not pay any attention to this important sector.



Qatar to host Basketball World Cup for first time

GENEVA (Agencies): Qatar is going to host another World Cup. The International Basketball Federation (FIBA) picked Qatar to host the 2027 edition of its marquee men's World Cup. It did not say whether there were any other bidders. Doha will stage all games in the 32-team event, FIBA said, citing upgraded subway and public transport networks that were completed for the men's soccer World Cup played last November and December. "With all of the teams playing in the same city, fans can plan everything far in advance and enjoy a unique experience since all venues are within 30 minutes of each other," the Switzerland-based governing body said. "Additionally, all venues to be used for FIBA's flagship men's event are already constructed, while widely used green technologies will help in delivering the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2027 as a carbon-neutral event." The No. 89-ranked Qatar team will qualify automatically as host. Qatar last played in the event at the 2006 world championship, and lost all five of its games. The women's World Cup in 2026 will be hosted by Germany in Berlin, FIBA also decided Friday. The 16-team tournament will be played in Berlin. Qatar is the third straight Asian host of the men's tournament. China hosted in 2019 and the Philippines, Japan, and Indonesia host this year's edition from Aug. 25-Sept. 12. Spain is the defending champion. Qatar's sports hosting peaked but did not stop with the FIFA World Cup. The basketball World Cup will be one of its major events before hosting the 2030 Asian Games, which will use some stadiums built for the soccer tournament. A long-term goal for Qatar is to host the Olympics, although the next available Summer Games is the 2036 edition as hosts have already been picked for 2028 and 2032. A Doha candidacy was being prepared for the 2032 Olympics when the International Olympic Committee pushed ahead quickly to pick Brisbane. The 100-strong group of IOC members includes the Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, who joined the Olympic body in 2002 as one of its youngest ever members at age 22. Doha tried to enter the hosting contests for the Olympics of 2016 and 2020 but the IOC denied it candidate status. The main barrier was the IOC insisting on the games being held in July-August when temperatures in Doha routinely top 40 Celsius.



Shahzad sets Asian record in Indoor Rowing championship

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan's elderly athlete and badminton champion Mahoor Shahzad's father, Mohammad Shahzad, set an Asian record in Hong Kong Indoor Rowing Championship 2023. Sexagenarian Shahzad claimed three gold medals at the event and registered a new Asian record in the age group by clocking 1 minute and 32 seconds in the 500m race. Meanwhile, he completed the 2000m race in 7 minutes and 12 seconds. Shahzad won his third gold for taking out time in 2000 metres which was 90 per cent of the world record. In February, Mahoor's father had also won two gold medals in the indoor rowing c'ship held in Portugal. It is important to note here that Mr Shahzad's daughter Mahoor is the first ever badminton player to have the honour of representing Pakistan at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Indoor rowing also called 'erging' — named because of the equipment used for this type of sport, the ergometer — is a growing sport with competitions taking place all over the world.

2023 World Cups in wrestling, scheduled ahead of 2024 Olympics, canceled

PARIS (Agencies): The 2023 World Cups in wrestling were canceled on Friday for possible "challenges and complexities" about organizing major events in a pre-Olympic year as all wrestlers are expected to be more focused on the Paris 2024. "United World Wrestling announced the cancellation of the 2023 Greco-Roman, Freestyle and Women's World Cups, which were scheduled to take place in Tehran, Iran on November 24 and 25, and in Coralville, Iowa, USA on December 9 and 10, respectively," the world wrestling's governing body said in a statement. The decision, it said, was made after "careful consideration and analysis of the challenges and complexities involved in organizing such high-profile events during a pre-Olympic year," it said, adding that countries will be focusing on the Paris 2024 Summer Olympics. "... the potential lack of participation in the World Cups in 2023 was a major concern for United World Wrestling," it said. "Additionally, the World Championships in Belgrade, scheduled for September 2023, would have added further pressure on countries," it added. Paris 2024 is set to kick off on July 26.



Meeting of ABAD delegation with Mr. Ghulam Nabi Memon

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Meeting of ABAD delegation with Mr. Ghulam Nabi Memon, Inspector General of Police at CPO Karachi led by Mr. Muhammad Altaf Tai, Chairman ABAD for presenting Cheque of Rs.

15 lacs to Police Commando Shaheer Afridi for participation in International Boxing Event in Dubai. Senior Police officials, Mr. Raheel Rinch, Chairman SR, Mr. M. Hassan Bakshi, Former Chairman ABAD and Mr. Ahmed Bumbiya were also present.

Sri Lanka beats Ireland again, wins test series 2-0

GALLE (AP): Prabath Jayasuriya became the fastest spinner to reach 50 test wickets and Ramesh Mendis claimed his fourth five-wicket haul as Sri Lanka cruised to an innings and 10-run win over Ireland on Friday to seal the series 2-0. Resuming on 2-54, the Irish batters crumbled to 202 all out in extremely hot and humid conditions. "The way the bowlers bowled, it was really amazing," Sri Lanka captain Dumuth Karunaratne said. "The fast bowler, spinners and Ramesh came back very well. The way Asitha (Fernando) bowled was really amazing. If we want to win away series, this is the kind of bowling we need. Ramesh could not do well in the first innings, but he bounced back well."

Sri Lanka, which made its first test appearance in 1982 against England, won the first test by an innings and 280 runs. Friday's victory was the country's 100th test win. Ireland has now lost all six matches since making its test debut in 2018 against Pakistan in Dublin. The Irish fought hard against the strong bowling effort from the Sri Lankans, who worked to a concerted plan with Fernando generating seam and bounce on the fifth-day wicket and spinners getting some turn. One of those bouncers struck the helmet of Ireland captain Andy Balbirnie. He was taken off the field briefly but returned to bat at the fall of Curtis Campher's wicket before the lunch break. Balbirnie then made 46 before holing out



Mendis to Angelo Mathews at mid-off to leave Ireland at 6-143. Paul Stirling (1), one of the two centuries in Ireland's first innings, did little to keep the scoreboard ticking when Kusal Mendis completed an excellent low catch at extra-cover off left-arm spinner Jayasuriya. That was Jayasuriya's 50th test wicket in only his seventh test match. West Indies left-arm orthodox Alf Valentine held the previous record from eight tests. Jayasuriya joins former England seamer Tom Richardson and South Africa fast bowler Vernon Philander as the co-second fastest among all bowlers. Australia fast bowler Charlie Turner holds the

record overall among spinners and fast bowlers, having reached the milestone in only six tests. Jayasuriya took 10-108 in Sri Lanka's innings in the first match and added 5-174 in the first innings of the second test. With two wickets needed, he dismissed opener Peter Moor early in the second innings to move to 49 wickets before claiming the wicket of Stirling. Sri Lanka hit back at regular intervals. Fernando (3-30) was rewarded for some tight bowling when a short ball struck Lorcan Tucker (13) on his ribcage before dribbling into the stumps. He was soon followed by Campher, who was

caught at leg slip by Kusal Mendis when he attempted to sweep. Ireland took lunch at 5-121. While Jayasuriya passed a record milestone, Ramesh Mendis (5-64) took the wickets of James McCollum (10), Ballbirnie (46), Campher (12), Andy McBrine (10) and Graham Hume (10). Harry Tector, however, stroked a career best 85 — his third half-century. "We have to take the positives. To take it to Day 5 was excellent," Balbirnie said. "We know how good a team Sri Lanka is. We need to make improvements. It is not easy. We don't play a lot of red-ball cricket. We have to do things better."

Leclerc beats Verstappen to pole for Azerbaijan Grand Prix



BAKU (AP): Charles Leclerc beat Max Verstappen in qualifying for the Azerbaijan Grand Prix on Friday to end Red Bull's streak of pole positions in Formula One this season. Leclerc and Verstappen had the exact same time midway through the final session of qualifying before both improved on their final runs, with Leclerc going faster by 0.188 seconds in his Ferrari to take pole in Baku for the third year in a row. "For sure I'm surprised. We came into the weekend thinking that it would be a great weekend if we are in front of Aston (Martin) and Mercedes in qualifying, and in the end we are on pole, so it's a really good surprise," Leclerc said. "We must not forget that

our race car is maybe still behind the Red Bull, so it's going to be difficult to keep the lead, but that's the target." Red Bull was on pole for all three races earlier this season, with the driver on pole winning each time. Verstappen said he felt his result was "not bad" but his final run had been "not the cleanest". Verstappen's Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez was third, ahead of Carlos Sainz Jr. in fourth for Ferrari. Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton was fifth for Mercedes and Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso sixth. Hamilton's teammate George Russell was 11th after missing the cut in the second qualifying session by 0.004 seconds.

Pierre Gasly had a tough day, coming 19th after hitting the wall in the first session of qualifying. The French driver's Alpine team was left working to fix his car for the second time after a fire in practice earlier Friday caused damage. Gasly's incident caused the second red flag of qualifying after Nyck de Vries took too much speed into a corner and crashed his AlphaTauri into the barrier. De Vries starts 20th and last. Kevin Magnussen is 18th following a technical problem with his Haas. Friday's qualifying session determines the grid for the main Grand Prix on Saturday. There is a sprint race Saturday but for the first time, a second, shorter qualifying session will be held Saturday to set that grid. The new weekend schedule meant there was only a single one-hour practice session, which was disrupted by Gasly's fire and a series of yellow-flag incidents. A typical race weekend without a sprint has three practice sessions before qualifying on Saturday afternoon. "I'm really, really happy with the lap. I mean, it's a very challenging weekend overall for us drivers because very little time to practice," Leclerc said. "We only had one FP1 (first practice session) and then you need to be straight on it but the feeling was good since the start. So we're really, really happy."

Pak-NZ matches: Three arrested for selling fake tickets

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police here on Friday claimed to have arrested three accused for selling fake tickets of Pak-New Zealand matches. According to a police spokesman, New Town police in an operation took action against those selling fake tickets of Pak-New Zealand matches and netted three suspects namely Asim Mehmood, Muhammad Umar and Muhammad Yousaf. The accused were also involved in black-marketing of the tickets of the matches. Superintendent of Police, Rawal Faisal Saleem appreciated SHO New Town Police and his team for taking action against those involved in black-marketing and selling fake tickets of the matches.

Fakhar Zaman satisfied with his current roles for national team

RAWALPINDI (APP): Pakistan's ODI opener Fakhar Zaman, who plays in T20I in the middle-order position said he is satisfied with his current roles in the two formats of the game. Talking to media during the press conference here, he said he believed Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan should open for the team in T20Is. He said he could hit big more often than them, making him a valuable asset to the team's batting lineup in the T20 in middle-order. "I have played as an opener throughout my career but if you look at the team's situation - I don't speak diplomatically - do you think Babar and Rizwan can hit more against spinners or I can? I think I can hit big more often than them so we need a left-hander in a team combination, in-fact we need two left-handers. I don't think anybody else should open given how Babar and Rizwan have been batting," he said while responding to a question. "Cricket is a game in which there is always a need for improvement. Our management is trying to shuffle the batting order to try some new things. The wicket was good but it wasn't like where you even half-hit the ball and you get the desired result. It wasn't that easy today," he said while referring to Thursday's wicket for the first ODI against New Zealand in Rawalpindi. The 31-year-old made a brilliant century to guide Pakistan to a five-wicket win against the visitors. The second ODI of the series will be played at the same venue on Saturday.

Title race is 'not over' warns Guardiola

LONDON (Agencies): Pep Guardiola has warned his Manchester City players that the Premier League title race is not over despite the champions' crucial win against leaders Arsenal. Guardiola's side crushed Arsenal 4-1 at the Etihad Stadium on Wednesday to move within two points of the Gunners with two games in hand. Second placed City will knock Arsenal out of pole position if they win at Fulham on Sunday. But despite City's firm grip on the destiny of the title, Guardiola has no intention of letting his stars rest on their laurels. "People start to say they have the feeling it's over, but it's not over. It will be over when it's over, and it's not over," Guardiola told reporters on Friday. "We still have seven games. Every single game we play for special things, for our opponents and ourselves. We have to do our game." City must win six of their last seven league games to be sure of a fifth title in six seasons, leaving them with little margin for error. They had to wait until the final minutes of the season before clinching the title last term with a dramatic fight-back against Aston Villa and Guardiola is taking nothing for granted. After travelling to Fulham, Guardiola's men host West Ham and Leeds during a hectic period that includes the Champions League semi-final against

Real Madrid, as well as a trip to Everton, who are fighting to avoid relegation. "There are still seven games. For example, I saw 15-20 minutes of Everton against Newcastle at Goodison Park on Thursday and saw how aggressive they are," Guardiola said. "I know at the Emirates we won, everyone was happy. Then we go to Forest and we draw. "Now we won and we go to Fulham, a special stadium, organised team. If we do our job, we'll be closer. Nothing is being taken for granted." Arsenal have gone four games without a win as they crack under the pressure of the title race, while battle-hardened City have reeled off

seven successive victories. Trying to play down the significance of the seismic win against Arsenal, Guardiola added: "It's been normal as usual, nothing special. We make a recovery training session. Today is a day off, so nothing special." After trailing Arsenal for much of the season, treble-chasing City have hit form at the perfect time, finally shaking off the hangover from winning last year's title. "In periods it has been flat. 'Ah, another game' in September time. When this happens it is the worst," Guardiola said. "When you have a team hungry after losing, is alive, it's better. 'Another win, doesn't matter'."

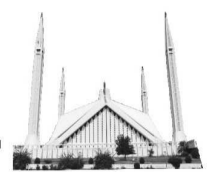
Celtics pull away, beat Hawks 128-120 for 4-2 series win

ATLANTA (AP): After letting the series go longer than it should have, Al Horford and the Boston Celtics were eager to finish off the Atlanta Hawks. Horford made sure his former team didn't force a Game 7. The 36-year-old Horford hit a huge 3-pointer in a late run that carried the Celtics past the Hawks 128-120 Thursday night for a 4-2 triumph in the opening-round playoff series. After squandering a 13-point lead in the fourth quarter of Game 5, which cost them a chance to end the series in Boston, the Celtics were determined not to wilt again. "We talked about finishing the game," Horford said. "I felt the last game, for the most part, we were fine. But tonight there was that sense of urgency. We understood how important it was to not extend the series." Down by three, Boston ripped off an 11-0 run that included three straight 3-pointers, with Horford's big shot sandwiched around 3s from Jayson Tatum and Jaylen Brown. Tatum capped the spurt with a dunk off a Horford miss, giving the Celtics a 121-113 lead with 2:07 remaining. Given how close it had been all night, an eight-point lead seemed like 80 in a game that featured 22 lead changes and 15 ties. Now, bring on Philly. The second-seeded Celtics advanced to face the third-seeded Philadelphia 76ers, who've been resting since completing their four-game sweep of Brooklyn last Saturday. Game 1 is Monday night in Boston.

Brown led the Celtics with 32 points, while Tatum had 30. Horford, who played in Atlanta from 2007-16, chipped in with 10 points, 12 rebounds two steals and three blocks. "It was huge," Brown said. "Al came through for us." After knocking down a 3 from the corner, which put the Celtics ahead to stay, Horford yapped back at an Atlanta fan who had been trash talking him from the sideline. "I appreciated it because he got me going. He said some stuff that I wasn't very pleased with. I took it to heart and I was able to get that shot," Horford said. "I appreciate him for talking trash to me. Some people you can talk trash to. Talk trash to me — it's probably not good for you."



PESHAWAR: Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali along with students at University of Peshawar.



In brief

16 outlaws held

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad capital police apprehended 16 outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered drugs and weapons along with ammunition from their possession. According to a police spokesperson, the Aabpara police team arrested an accused namely Simon Jan and recovered one 30-bore pistol with ammunition from his possession. The Secretariat police team arrested Majid and recovered 310 grams of heroin from his possession. Likewise, the Golra police team arrested two accused namely Javed and Hakim involved in drug peddling activities and recovered 1144 gram of heroin from their possession. Another accused namely Abbas was also held for selling petroleum products illegally. Similarly, the Shahzad Town police team arrested two accused namely Bilal and Zohaib and recovered one 9mm and one 30-bore pistol with ammunition from their possession respectively. Khanna police team arrested Yasir and recovered one 30-bore pistol with ammunition from his possession. Koral police team arrested an accused namely Bilal Khan and recovered one 30-bore pistol with ammunition from his possession. Kirpa police team arrested Fayaz and recovered one 30-bore pistol with ammunition from his possession.

EWA elections held in AIOU

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Employees Welfare Association (EWA) elections for the year 2023-25 were held yesterday on the main campus of the university. Ittehad Group and Alfatah Group contested the election. Ittehad group won seven out of 11 seats while Alfatah group won four seats, said a press release here on Friday. AIOU administration had formally established the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Office for this election and the Controller of Examinations, Mian Muhammad Riaz was appointed as the Chief ECP who conducted the election in a very impartial, transparent, peaceful, and pleasant atmosphere. According to the results, Yasir Mehmood (President), Sadiq Soomro (Senior Vice President), Faisal Munir (Vice President), Amjad Rehman (General Secretary), Aftab Ahmed (Deputy General Secretary), Mohammad Saeed Khan (Joint Secretary), Mohammad Ayas (Finance Secretary), Imran Ahmed (Information Secretary), Yasir Nabi (Sports Secretary), Haq Nawaz (Culture Secretary) and Mohammad Shafiq (Communication Secretary) have been elected.

10 held for possessing illegal weapons

RAWALPINDI (APP): The police on the directives of Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Rawalpindi Capt. @ Muhammad Amir Khan conducted raids in different areas and netted 10 accused of possessing illegal weapons, here on Friday. According to a police spokesman, Rawat and Chontra police rounded up 10 accused namely Hasib ur Rehman, Shoaib, Zeeshan, Zafraan, Yasir, Kashif, Ishaq, Sohail, Faizan, and recovered six 30-bore pistols, a Kalashnikov, a 12 bore rifle and ammunition from their possession. The spokesman further informed that police in their ongoing operation against professional beggars rounded up 23 from different areas.



ISLAMABAD: Former Member National Assembly Hanif Abbasi calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Balochistan Parliamentarians meet Sanjrani

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of Parliamentarians from Balochistan met with Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani at the Parliament House to discuss the development of the province in social, political, and economic spheres.

The group, which included Members National Assembly (MNAs), Senators, and Senior Parliamentarians such as Sardar Akhtar Mengal, Aslam Bhootani, and Khalid Magsi,

exchanged ideas and suggestions on how to overcome the challenges facing the region.

They emphasized the importance of investing in infrastructure, education, and healthcare, as well as promoting local industries and maximizing the use of the province's natural resources. The meeting was productive and aimed to improve the overall state of Balochistan's progress. Senate, Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, appreciated the concerns and suggestions

of the parliamentarians and assured them of his full support in promoting the development of Balochistan Province. He emphasized the importance of unity and collaboration among all stakeholders to overcome the challenges facing the province.

The meeting concluded with a commitment by the participants to work together towards the development of Balochistan Province and to continue engaging with the Chairman Senate on issues of national importance.

Renowned TV host Tariq Aziz remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The birth anniversary of renowned Radio and Television host, film star, poet and writer Tariq Aziz was observed on Friday.

Tariq Aziz was born in Jalandhar on April 28, 1936. After the partition, his family migrated to Pakistan and settled in Sahiwal. Tariq Aziz kicked off his career with Radio Pakistan in the 1960s and later became Pakistan's first television host.

He became popular from his famous program Neelam Ghar which started in 1974 and was later renamed as Tariq Aziz Show which continued for four decades.

He appeared in a number of movies including Chiragh Kahan Roshni Kahan, Salgirah, Qasam Us Waqt Ki, Katari, Haar Gaya Insan and Insaniyat.

He was awarded with Pride of Performance Award by the Government of Pakistan in 1994 for his services to the entertainment industry.

Tariq Aziz passed away in Lahore on June 17, 2020, at the age of 84 due to cardiac arrest.

Three health establishments sealed in ICT

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Healthcare Regulatory Authority (IHRA) has sealed three Healthcare Establishments (HCEs) in different areas of the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT).

According to IHRA, the authority's inspection teams carried out inspections of 42 Healthcare Establishments (HCEs) in different areas of the Capital Territory during the past two weeks. Zahir Khan Clinic, Maryam Clinic and Al-Barka Medical Centre were sealed due to malpractices like the absence of qualified medical staff, unhygienic conditions, not getting registration with IHRA, and functioning during the suspension.

IHRA suspended the services of two Healthcare Establishments (HCEs) over different medical non-compliance. The Right Ways Rehab Center and Grow Hair Transplant and Skin Care Clinic were also suspended. Similarly, 25 Healthcare Establishments were served notices for minor non-compliances and were instructed to comply with the directions given by the inspection team.

Ahsan for prompt measures to evolve effective cyber-security system

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday stressed the need for taking prompt measures to evolve an effective cyber-security system, terming it 'the most important' for the country's economic and defence sectors. Presiding over a meeting on the Cyber Security System in Pakistan, he asked to utilize the skills of cyber security experts in the private sector from within the country and abroad.

He emphasized efficiently tackling the confronted cyber-security-related threats in collaboration with the corporate sector; academia and national-level experts, adding, "In the field of technology, our capacity and speed should be aligned with the global requirements." The planning minister said the government was initiating special programmes in the technology sector to meet 'new challenges' in the field of cyber security.

Raja meets Mirani to discuss country political, economic situation

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Assembly (NA) Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Friday held a meeting with the senior political leader and NA member Aftab Shaaban Mirani at the Parliament House to discuss the country's overall political and economic situation.

The Speaker inquired about Aftab Shaaban Mirani's health and wished him a speedy recovery. The Speaker appreciated Mirani's interest in the proceedings of NA, despite of illness. Aftab Shaaban Mirani commended the Speaker's conduct and man-

agement of the House proceedings with tolerance and courtesy.

He also acknowledged that the current parliament had proven to be a genuine representative institution. He thanked the NA speakers and expressed his good wishes towards them.

Provincial Ombudsman issues arrest orders of 10 accused in Women's inheritance cases

RAWALPINDI (APP): Provincial Ombudsman Punjab Nabila Hakim Ali Khan on Friday issued arrest orders for the ten accused for non-appearance during the hearing of women's inheritance cases. While hearing as many as forty cases of the Rawalpindi division here at the Deputy Commissioner's office, she directed the revenue officer to submit the report of six cases.

Speaking on the occasion, she said that women's rights would be ensured at any cost while the office of Ombudsman Punjab was safeguarding the rights of women under the Punjab Enforcement of Women Property Rights, Harassment Act.

In this regard, she added that she was visiting all the districts and hearing the cases for resolution.

Nabeela informed that women's

ombudsman offices had been established in different regions across the province and in case of property exploitation, women were asked to apply their cases in the relevant offices.

She added that on receiving their applications action would be taken immediately and would be decided within 60 days.

The provincial Ombudsman further informed that the possession and their share would be ensured by the concerned deputy commissioners and police, adding Contempt of court action was also being taken in case of non-payment of rent on the occupied property at the market rate.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Rawalpindi Nabil Sindhu, Consultant Rana Shahid Raza and Staff Officer Hafiz Farooq Anwar were also present on the occasion.

RDA issues notices to four illegal housing schemes

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of Director General (DG) Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa here on Friday issued notices to four illegal housing schemes.

According to an RDA spokesman, the Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate RDA had issued notices to the owners of four illegal private housing schemes namely Pak Sar Zameen Town at Chakri Road, Century Town Housing Scheme, Rawat City

Housing Scheme and Al-Buraq Enclave Rawat.

The sponsors were also warned to immediately stop the marketing of unapproved and illegal housing schemes and get a No Objection Certificate and approval of the scheme as per law, otherwise, strict legal action would be taken against the rules violators, he added. He said, RDA had lodged First Information Reports

against two illegal housing schemes namely Pak Sar Zameen Town at Chakri Road and Century Town. He informed that the DG had also directed the

Director MP&TE to action against illegal advertisements and marketing and FIRs should also be lodged against the illegal housing schemes as another housing scheme, South City Developers was illegally advertising on social media. The citizens were informed that this housing scheme is in District Attock and not in the controlled area of RDA, he added.

The citizens were also advised not to invest in illegal housing projects and check the status of the housing projects on RDA's official website www.rda.gop.pk, he said.

Talha assures maximum facilities for Hajj 2023 despite difficulties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Senator Talha Mehmood has said that despite facing difficulties, there are ongoing efforts to provide pilgrims with the best possible facilities during the Hajj of 2023.

Expressing concerns about significant issues in the Hajj arrangements due to the substantial amount of time that has already been lost. However, he expressed optimism that these problems can be resolved through close cooperation with the Saudi authorities, with whom he recently met and received assurances of support to ensure Hajj is smooth and successful. In an interview with APP, he said arrangements could have been finalized maximum by the end of Ramadan ul Mubarak, but a major portion of arrangements has not yet been finalized.

The major issue was a dearth of foreign exchange.

The foreign exchange payable to Saudi authorities was not paid on time. However, he was optimistic that the issues will be resolved with the teamwork of the ministry officials.

He said nearly 40,000 intending pilgrims would depart for Saudia from Islamabad airport under the Road to Makkah initiative this year. Under the Road to Makkah project, all immigration requirements of pilgrims are to be fulfilled at the Islamabad Airport. This saves pilgrims several hours upon reaching the kingdom since they can just enter the country, having gone through immigration already at home.

The minister raised concerns about the performance of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and has called upon the chief executive officer (CEO) of the national carrier to address the issues. The

CEO has promised to cooperate and ensure timely transportation of passengers. Additionally, the ministry is making efforts to arrange accommodations close to Haram Sharif.

The speaker expressed a willingness to disclose the names of catering companies to the media and warned that penalties would be imposed if quality food are not provided to pilgrims. Talha Mehmood said well-trained and physically fit Moavineen are being finalized transparently. A comprehensive training program has also been arranged for Hujjaj and Moavineen which will start on Monday. They emphasized the importance of transparency in hajj arrangements and pledged to closely monitor the Moavineen-e-Hujjaj. If Moavineen-e-Hujjaj fails to perform their duties, they will be issued warning letters and face the deduction of TAs and DAS for three days.

People throng recreational spots to enjoy rainy spell

ISLAMABAD (APP): A large number of people from the twin cities of are visiting the recreational spots in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) to enjoy the rainy spell that turned the scorching weather into ideal for visitors.

Talking to APP, Amna Ali, a resident of G-11, said she along with her family visited the Pakistan Monument which is a major source of attraction due to its architectural beauty located at a west viewpoint of the Shakarparian hills.

She enjoyed a lot by visiting the Pakistan Monument's museum which reflects and represents the magnificent and rich cultural heritage and history of the country. Pakistan Monument had designed and constructed in a very unique style, she said adding that the architectural marvel commemorates the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the country and symbolizes the patriotism of the Pakistani people.

"The Monument's cleanliness and location besides Shakarparian hills is a source of inspiration for visitors and they love to visit the historical site to refresh their memories regarding Pakistan history and historical perspective," she said.

Amna Ali said the lovely rainy weather and peaceful atmosphere was also a key factor for our trip to enjoy the day. She apprised that security arrangement was laudable and commendable.

Zulfiqar Ali, a resident of G-9, who offered prayer in the Faisal Mosque, said its magnificent architecture left him spell bounded, as it was designed in a very unique style. He said the security arrangements, book and food stalls made their day so pleasant and marvelous, adding despite of rainy weather, the people were visiting

and feeling relieved after hearing Azaan and by offering prayers there, as the practice made them feel spiritual and refreshed.

Sarfraz Ahmed, a resident of G-10, visited along with family and said that eye keeping view of Islamabad from Daman-e-Koh make our visit wonderful and enjoyable. He further said the natural and peaceful atmosphere at Daman-e-Koh, Margalla Hills make the weekend a pleasant and entertained.

"It is a wonderful place to hang out with families where cool breeze is blowing across all the time and natural environment with fresh air fills my lungs."

Huma Ali Malik, a resident of Rawalpindi, apprised that people were observing the nature and natural beauty at lush green and mountain with fresh air.

She urged the Capital Development Authority to make the arrangements to ensure cleanliness and security arrangements to facilitate the tourists.

Car parking facility was provided close to the Northern Spot where a cafe and some small tuck shops cater the needs of guests, she added. An official of Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) said the tourists planning their adventures were advised to take precautionary measures and follow the safety guidelines amid recreational activities in twin cities. He said the tourists and commuters were instructed to follow safety guidelines to avoid inconveniences, problems and any untoward incident. The official said National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) had issued an advisory for tourists to fully cover their bodies to protect themselves from cough, flu, and other diseases.



ISLAMABAD: Aftab Shahban Mirani MNA called on Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf at Parliament House.

Ghazni residents complain

GHAZNI (TOLONews): The residents of Ghazni expressed dissatisfaction over poor internet services in the province, saying that the internet operates very poorly despite having high costs set by the telecommunication companies. They called on the officials of the Islamic Emirate to address this problem. "The internet services in the province are very weak and there has been no attention paid to this and it (works) very poorly," said Javid, a resident of Ghazni.

The Frontier Post

Shawwal 08, 1444 — Saturday, April 29, 2023

72,000 metric tons of cotton harvested

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock said on Thursday that in the past year, more than 72,000 metric tons of cotton has been harvested in the country. The ministry said in a statement that according to the Department of Statistics, last year, cotton was cultivated on 54,869 hectares of land in the country and 72,493 metric tons of cotton was obtained. "Balkh, Takhar, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Herat, Nimruz, Baghlan and Jawzjan had the most cotton fields last year," the ministry said.

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

Afghanistan part of discussion in Blinken's meeting with Guterres



KABUL (TOLONews): The US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with UN Secretary-General António Guterres in Washington D.C., where they discussed various matters including Afghanistan. Speaking to reporters, Blinken said that the US and UN are "working closely together when it comes to Afghanistan – the deep concerns that so many

countries share about the steps the Taliban has taken when it comes to denying the rights of women and girls, the broader humanitarian and economic situation, where again, the United Nations is playing a leadership role." "On this and so many other issues, our collaboration, our coordination is more vital than ever," Blinken said.

But the Islamic Emirate criticized Blinken's remarks, saying that Washington should change its policy toward Afghanistan. "If the United Nations and also the countries have wishes and concerns they should share them with the Islamic Emirate. We have answers for them and if there is any problem, we will make efforts to solve it.

But there are issues belonging to Afghanistan's law and linked to the values in Afghanistan, they should not interfere in Afghanistan's affairs," said Zabiullah Mujahid, Islamic Emirate's spokesman. Women's rights activists meanwhile said the lack of women and girls' access to work and education is a main challenge in Afghanistan. "The participation of all political sides and groups, including women, in Afghanistan, without considering language and ethnicity, is in fact vital for the improvement of the situation in Afghanistan," said Marriam Marouf Arveen, women's rights activist. "As much as these restrictions grow, with education and work of women, it will have a very negative impact on the society which will not be easy to compensate for in the future," said Roveena, a student. This comes as a major UN summit on Afghanistan is due to be held on May 1 and May 2 in Doha.

CSTO security alliance meets on Afghanistan



KABUL (Agencies): The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) said that its 37th meeting of the Working Group on Afghanistan was held. The event was attended by delegations from the organization's member states, the CSTO Deputy Secretary General S. I. Ordabaev, Charge d'Affaires of Afghanistan in the Russian Federation, representatives of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and others. "There was a detailed exchange of views on the situation in Afghanistan.

The participants noted the persistence of unfavorable trends in the security situation, including the growth of terrorist and drug threats emanating from the territory of this country. It was noted that Afghanistan was still in a difficult economic situation and the Afghan people were facing problems in the social and humanitarian sphere," CSTO said in a statement. The Islamic Emirate, however, rejects claim of growth of terrorist and drug threats emanating from Afghanistan. "The concern expressed by the CSTO is not true. Afghanistan is

now secure and stable. It is completely different from years ago. The people of Afghanistan and the world understand this. Misrepresenting the situation means they are not considering the facts. The rumors that are being spread are based on false information," Zabiullah Mujahid, IEA's spokesman said. CSTO is an intergovernmental military alliance in Eurasia consisting of six post-Soviet states: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Tajikistan. Separately, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath

Singh and his Iranian counterpart Mohammed Reza Gharaei Ashtiyani on Thursday exchanged views on regional security issues, including peace and stability in Afghanistan. They also discussed the development of the International North South Transport Corridor to ease logistic problems to Afghanistan and other countries in Central Asia, India's defense ministry said. The INSTC is a 7,200-km-long multi-mode transport project for moving freight among India, Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.

Saur 8 marks 31st anniversary of mujahideen takeover of country

KABUL (TOLONews): 31 years ago today, on Saur 8, 1371 (April 28, 1992), the Mujahideen came to power and the government of Dr. Najibullah collapsed. The Mujahideen included various factions and parties. "The people were not happy with (communists). Some of the communists were in power. The second reason was also that foreign countries did not want the communists to be in power," said Sayed Akbar Agha, head of the Shura-e-Rah-e-Nijat Afghanistan. But the victory of the Mujahideen opened a new harsh chapter in Afghanistan after each party feuded for power and sought to take it through military means. Thousands of Afghans were killed and millions of others were forced to leave



the country for neighboring countries due to severe conflicts across Afghanistan. "The lack of unity and the conflict that began after the Saur 8 among the parties resulted in civil war," said Sadiq Shinwari, a military veteran. "The issue of war was obvious on their first day of

winning the war and eventually after some months, an internal and destructive fight started in Kabul and bitter events happened in Afghanistan," said Asadullah Nadim, a military analyst. Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid said in a statement that the Islamic Emirate

considers the Saur 7 coup a "dark day" and hails Saur 8 as a day of freedom for Afghanistan. Mujahid said that around 1.5 million Afghans were martyred and millions of others faced severe challenges in the fighting against the "communism regime and former Soviet Union." "Saur 7 was a dark day in the country, which we condemn and we don't want its repetition. Saur 8 is the day of rescue and win for Afghanistan, in which, the communist idea faced a defeat in Afghanistan," he said. The Saur 8 was also praised by some influential political figures including former President Hamid Karzai and former chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation, Abdullah Abdullah.

Ahmad Massoud pleads with world not to abandon Afghanistan

KABUL (Agencies): Ahmad Massoud, the National Resistance Front's (NRF) leader, has pleaded with the international community not to abandon Afghanistan. Ahmad Massoud warned against engaging with the Taliban in an interview with The National while he was in Vienna for a conference of anti-Taliban figures, human rights activists and academicians. "If you think you can co-opt the Taliban with money and diplomatic ties, then you are gravely mistaken," he warned. "Afghanistan has become an epic prison for its people and a safe haven for terrorist groups" and was also a country that could revisit the "catastrophic" events of the past, he added. Massoud claimed that the NRF is a diverse coalition of Afghans representing a more palatable alternative government. He said the group is committed to democracy, human rights, and the rule of



law. "We want freedom, liberty, democracy, and justice," he said. While the NRF "do not have any support from anywhere," Kabul already receives \$40 million per week in help, much of it indi-

rectly from the West, notably the US, he said. In his opinion, the Taliban must be pressured by the West to respect human rights and allow the Afghan people to determine their future. "We must not abandon Afghanistan,"

Massoud said. "The country is at a crossroads, and it is up to the international community to decide whether it will go down the path of democracy and freedom or be ruled by a brutal and repressive regime."

Badakhshan farmers ditch poppies in favor of asafetida

KABUL (Agencies): Badakhshan's department of agriculture and livestock officials said that in the past year, more than 5,000 hectares of land has been used in the province to cultivate asafetida – in a move away from poppy farming. According to local officials, there has been a marked increase in cultivating asafetida among farmers. "In (solar year) 1401, about 5,000 to 5,200 hectares of land were used to plant asafetida in Badakhshan province and people's interest is very high," said Nisar Ahmad Mahir, head of the agriculture directorate in Badakhshan. Farmers in Badakhshan also say they have switched to cultivating asafetida instead of poppies over the past few years. Asafetida is the resin collected from the ferula plant and is widely used



for medicinal purposes. Farmers meanwhile earn more money from asafetida than from other crops. "In the past, opium was cultivated on these lands, and now we have planted asafetida seeds instead. Meanwhile, the anti-

We imported one hundred kilograms of asafetida seeds from Tajikistan," said a farmer. "We no longer grow opium because it is forbidden and harmful," said another farmer.

narcotics management officials in Badakhshan have said that they have started a campaign to destroy poppy fields and so far, they have cleared nearly five hundred acres of poppies in Jurm and Argo districts.

MoPH: Nearly 3,500 Covid-19 cases reported in April

The Ministry of Public Health said that in April there have been almost 3,500 cases of Covid-19 reported in the country. According to the ministry, the process of vaccination against Covid-19 will start in several provinces of the country in the next few days. "In last month we also had a campaign of Covid-19 vaccination in 13 provinces, and we will have a booster dose campaign in May," said Sharafat Zaman Amirkhil, spokesman for the Public Health Ministry. The reported number of people infected with Covid-19 from the beginning of this year until the present all over the country is as follows:

Month	Cases	Deaths
January	964	22
February	581	7
March	1295	4
April	3492	4

Maryam, 13, is a student in grade 6 and she said that she has been infected with Covid-19 for six days and was hospitalized in the



Covid-19 department of the Afghan Japan Hospital. "My legs and body were in pain, and we came here to this hospital," said Maryam. "One day I prayed in the morning and after that I felt pain in my body and I came here," said Khalid a patient. Meanwhile, some doc-

tors at the Afghan Japan Hospital said that in the last few weeks the number of positive and suspicious cases of this disease have increased in the capital, and they called on Public Health Ministry to create more centers for this disease. "We also have children

who are sick. We have several child patients whose tests are positive," said Qiyamuddin Fitrat, a doctor. The Ministry of Public Health says that the ministry has all the facilities to treat infected patients and will ask for help from the international community when faced with a critical situation.

Over 290 injured in road accident in Afghanistan's Kandahar: Officials

KANDAHAR (Agencies): According to provincial officials in Kandahar province, over 290 individuals were injured in road accidents during the three days of Eid. The provincial officials added that 135 traffic accidents occurred during the three days of Eid-ul-Fitr. According to Abdul Haleem Hussaini, director of Kandahar's Mirwais Hospital, two hundred ninety-three people were hurt. Similarly, in the most recent traffic accident, a minibus travelling on the Kabul-Kandahar route flipped, killing six persons and injuring another 18. Meanwhile, the officials said over 220 people were injured during the Eid days due to traffic accidents in western Herat province. In addition,



officials added that 75 more people were hurt during the Eid festival due

to other criminal instances in the province of Herat.



ISLAMABAD: Security personnel cover PTI chief, Imran Khan with bullet proof shield on his arrival at court for hearing.

President urges foreign investors to benefit from Pak's policies

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday said as Pakistan offered investment friendly environment, the foreign investors should benefit from its pro-investment policies.

The president, talking to a delegation of the Chinese Company (Easyway Innovation Technology Company Ltd), led by its Chief Executive Officer Joe Hanyu here at the Aiiwan-e-Sadr, said the development of the IT (information technology) sector was one of the major priorities of the country. He said the foreign entrepreneurs needed to invest in the important sector which had immense potential to grow.

The president said the Special Technology Zones Authority offered various incentives, including a 10-year tax exemption for the enterprises, and the Chinese IT companies should capitalize on those opportunities. The Easyway CEO briefed the president about the role of his company in providing various IT services and industry solutions.

He highlighted that the Easyway provided integrated solutions and professional software development for smart transportation, smart logistics and other fields. He said his company had developed e-ticketing system for Pakistan Railways that would help enhance its efficiency.

Out of school children to be enrolled: NA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain on Friday informed the National Assembly that the government had set an ambitious target to bring all 70,000 out of school children in the Islamabad Capital Territory to zero by June 30.

Replying to various supplementary questions during the Question Hour, the minister said currently, around 70,000 children were out of school in Islamabad and all-out efforts were being made to enroll them in schools by June 30. Rana Tanveer said the government had also launched the Schools on Wheels initiative in Islamabad to provide education to the children of rural areas. For the purpose, buses were converted into mobile schools having state of the art facilities, including toilets.

He said on the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the ministry was also planning to provide such mobile buses facility to the children of flood-affected areas of the Balochistan and Sindh. Even the World Bank (WB) had also appreciated the government's initiative, besides assuring provision of 30 buses for the noble cause, he added. He said the WB also intended to introduce such system in Africa. The ministry was ready to assist other provinces if the provincial governments provided buses, he said.

He said the government had also stared the tele school system, besides focusing on distance learning. It had also undertaken accelerated learning programme with the cooperation of the United Kingdom to enhance literacy rate in the country, he added.

Bilawal to attend SCO meeting: FO

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will undertake the visit to Goa, India, on May 4 to attend the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) amid insistence from Pakistan that India should take steps to create an environment which facilitates peace and dialogue on outstanding disputes, especially the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking at the weekly press briefing, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said, "The visit is taking place because Pakistan is an active member of the SCO and the foreign minister has to represent Pakistan in the SCO Foreign Ministers' Meeting. Any activities of the foreign minister during his visit to Goa will be in the context of SCO."

"Pakistan's voice must be heard in the Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of SCO. I reiterate that this visit is taking place in the context of SCO and it is not a bilateral visit and any other noise that accompanies the visit of the foreign minister must be ignored, because that's just noise and has no bearing on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its proceedings," she added. The spokesperson stressed that Pakistan would continue to raise its voice against grave and systematic human rights violations in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

"We will also continue to extend political, diplomatic and moral support to our Kashmiri brothers and sisters for the just and peaceful settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions." She said in the IIOJK, the human rights violations continued unabated. "For the fourth consecutive year, the Indian authorities prevented Kashmiris from attending the congregational Eid prayers at Srinagar's historic Jamia Masjid. Earlier, the occupation authorities had imposed curbs and restrictions on the freedom of religion during the Holy Month of Ramadan as well. We urge the Indian authorities to bring an end to the restrictions imposed on Kashmiris that prevent them from freely practicing their religion."

Last week, she added, around 40 individuals, including women, were arbitrarily

arrested in the so-called cordon-and-search operations. The Indian authorities also attached the properties of two pro-freedom Kashmiris, Syed Shakeel Yousuf and Syed Shahid Yousuf who remained in arbitrary detention. The NGO office of another detainee and a prominent human rights defender, Khurram Pervez, was raided in Budgam.

She said, "We are gravely concerned over these developments. These acts reflect a consistent Indian strategy to suppress the fundamental freedoms in the occupied territory and terrorize the local population." The spokesperson said, "We have said repeatedly that Pakistan wishes to have peace in the region. We would like to have peace and amity with all our neighbours, including India. Pakistan believes that following the events of 2019 and India's belligerent posture in the region the situation for peace and dialogue have been compromised."

Regarding the questions about statements of Indian officials, she said, "Pakistan is a victim of terrorism. We have suffered as a result of terrorism for the last several decades. In this context, we have presented to the international community undeniable evidence of Indian involvement in terrorist incidents inside Pakistani territory."

Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav, she added, was the mastermind of espionage and terrorist activities inside Pakistan. His activities were a testimony of India's irrefutable involvement in terrorism inside Pakistan. To a question about Sudan, she said on Friday morning an aircraft carrying 149 Pakistani nationals evacuated from Sudan arrived in Karachi. Two other flights carrying around 200 Pakistanis were expected to arrive later today. One of them originated from Port Sudan and the other from Jeddah to bring back Pakistanis who had earlier been evacuated there.

"We remain engaged with friendly countries in the region and are especially grateful to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for facilitating this process by providing transport by ferry from Port Sudan to Jeddah and also for hosting Pakistani nationals until their repatriation to Pakistan," she added.

IHC grants Imran protective bail till May 3

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday granted PTI Chairman Imran Khan protective bail till May 3 in a mutiny case registered against him at the capital's Ramna police station.

IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, who presided over the hearing, approved Imran's bail against the submission of surety bonds worth Rs100,000. Earlier this month, Manzoor Ahmed Khan, a magistrate, filed a first information report (FIR) at Islamabad's Ramna police station against Imran for "spreading hatred between the institutions and the public" and for "trying to cause unforgivable damage to the institutions and their top officers".

Earlier Friday, the PTI chief had filed a plea through his counsels seeking protective bail in the case. The registrar's office had raised a few objections to the plea, one of which pertained to the lack of biometric verification. However, the PTI legal team later addressed and resolved these objections

after which it was taken up for hearing. The Lahore High Court (LHC) on April 14 had granted the ex-PM protective bail in the case until April 26. Subsequently, Imran had approached the IHC requesting that the mutiny case against him be quashed. During today's hearing, Imran's legal team comprising Barrister Salman Safdar, Faisal Chaudhry, Ali Bukhari, and others, appeared in court.

At the outset of the hearing, Safdar informed the court that the issue regarding the biometric verification had been resolved. However, Advocate General Islamabad Jahangir Jadoon objected to Imran's plea being heard the same day it had been filed. Jadoon remarked others should receive the same treatment if they filed similar pleas. However, the court emphasised that the petitioner, being a resident of Pakistan, had the right to be granted bail. The advocate general acknowledged the court's stance, but suggested that the petitioner be directed to appear before

the relevant court after being granted bail.

At the AG's request, the court instructed the PTI chief to become a part of the investigation and granted him bail till May 3. The petition, filed by the PTI chief's legal team, contended that the incumbent government had lodged the case against Imran for political reasons and to tarnish his reputation.

According to the petition, the government has failed to find an iota of corruption against Imran and therefore, it is now dragging him into frivolous cases to blackmail him. The petition urged the court to quash the FIR. Hold talks only if govt ready to dissolve assemblies forthwith, Imran tells party leaders During an informal conversation with journalists inside the courtroom, Imran stated that he had requested Fawad Chaudhry and Shah Mehmood Qureshi to initiate talks with the government only if the ruling party was prepared to immediately dissolve the assemblies and hold elections.

Punjab PA candidates allotted election symbols

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday announced the allocation of election symbols to candidates for the upcoming Punjab Assembly elections, and some of the assigned symbols have raised eyebrows.

Despite the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz

(PML-N) not fielding any candidates, the commission allotted random symbols to even the party's bigwigs. Hamza Shahbaz, a former PML-N member who is contesting as an independent candidate from PP-145, was given the election symbol of "Peacock".

Meanwhile, Waqar Ahmed of the Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was assigned his party's symbol, the "bat". In PP-147, Hamza Shahbaz received the "BOAT" symbol, while the PTI's Ghulam Mohiuddin Dewan was given the party symbol. Maryam Nawaz, another former PML-N member, will contest from PP-173 with the symbol of "Tandoor".

Covid claims another life in Pakistan

KARACHI (PPI): The Covid-19 pandemic has killed another Pakistani while infected 23 more during the last 24 hours, says National Institute of Health (NIH) on Friday morning. According to the NIH data, the death toll in the country went up to 30,657 whereas the number of total infections now rose to 1,580,654 after adding the fresh 23 cases.

During the last 24 hours (Thursday), 2,543 tests were conducted throughout Pakistan whereas the positivity ratio dropped to 0.90%. The number of patients in critical care stood at nine. The latest subvariant that causes Covid-19 is spreading rapidly, but the World Health Organization considers it to be no more dangerous than the other variations of the novel coronavirus now in circulation.

A subvariant of the highly contagious Omicron variant of Covid-19, XBB 1.16 — also known as Arcturus — was initially detected in January 2023. It has spread most widely in India but has been found in 31 countries, including the United States. The upward trend of cases warrants public health experts to remind the community on protective measures against the spread of disease," Bernadette Boden-Albala, MPH, the director and founding dean of the University of California Irvine's Program in Public Health.

WHO designated Arcturus a "variant of interest" but not a "variant of concern." The latter "would represent a major shift from previous strains," said Dr Brian Labus, an assistant professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the University of Nevada Las Vegas School of Public Health.

Elahi secures bail in graft case

LAHORE (INP): Ex- chief minister Punjab and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) President Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi on Friday secured bail in a case register against him under corruption charges. Anti-Corruption Court Judge Ali Raza passed the orders and barred the officials from arresting Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi till May 11. Elahi's counsel and prosecutor appeared before the court.

At the outset of the hearing, anti-corruption counsel submitted that during the investigation, Pervaiz Elahi was found 'guilty' of taking Rs120 million from an international firm as a 'commission'.

Govt allows up to 20 per cent rise in drug prices

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the federal cabinet on Friday gave its approval for a 20% hike in prices of essential drugs for a second time in less than three months, making them out of the reach of the poor people amid soaring inflation.

The decision was made during the ECC meeting held with Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Ishaq Dar, according to a statement issued by the Finance Division. The ECC, on February 10, approved an increase in the prices of 20 medicines, including paracetamol.

"To ensure continuous availability of drugs in the market, the ECC allowed as a one-time dispensation, allowed manufacturers and importers to increase their existing MRPs of essential drugs equal to 70% increase in CPI (with a cap of 14%) and MRPs of all other drugs and lower priced drugs an increase up to 70% in CPI (with a cap of 20%) on the basis of average CPI for current year i-e 1st July, 2022 to 01st April 2023 with condition that it should be considered as an annual increase for the financial year 2023-24 and no increase under this category will be granted in next

financial year," read the statement. The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination presented a summary on increase in maximum retail prices of drugs based on the recommendations of the Policy Board of DRAP in the wake of the devaluation of the rupee and inflation.

The ECC further advised the Policy Board to review the situation after three months — in July 2023 and make its recommendations to the federal govt regarding price decrease if the rupee appreciates its value. Meanwhile, the ECC considered and approved a summary of Ministry of National Food Security and Research regarding the fixation of wheat procurement targets for the provinces of Sindh, Punjab, and Balochistan for wheat crop 2022-23 along with cash credit limit.

I — Govt of Sindh assigned a procurement target of 1.400 MMT with a procurement price of Rs 4000/40 Kg.

II — Govt of Punjab assigned procurement target of 3.500 MMT with procurement price Rs 3900/40 Kg.

III — Govt of Balochistan assigned a procurement target of 0.100 MMT with a procurement price of Rs. 3900/40 Kg.

The ECC also consid-

ered and approved Rs. 35 million additional funds as a technical supplementary grant in favour of the Ministry of Interior for the establishment of Passport Processing Centers (PPCs) at the Tehsil level in 30 administrative units throughout the country and creation of 30 posts of MRP operational officers in Department of Immigration and Passports, subject to the approval of the Austerity Committee.

Ministry of Aviation submitted a summary on challenges and re-opening of Roosevelt Hotel, New York and informed that PIA Investment Limited (PIA-IL) management has got an opportunity offered by the New York City Government to utilise the hotel over a period of three years for migrant business @ US\$ 200 per room per day.

The ECC after discussion approved the recommendations of the ministry and approved the formation of a four-member negotiating committee led by the secretary Aviation Division to negotiate with the New York city government and the hotel union. The ECC also allowed PIA-IL/RHC to utilize the funds of \$1.145 million from the available balance as bridge financing to commence the re-opening work at the Hotel.

Pak-EU reiterate resolve to jointly combat terrorism

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and the European Union strongly condemning terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, have reaffirmed their determination to jointly combat terrorism by increasing cooperation on the prevention and countering of violent extremism, offline and online radicalization, and combating terrorism financing.

The matter was discussed during the European Union-Pakistan Counter Terrorism Dialogue held in Brussels Thursday, a Foreign Office statement said. The Dialogue

offered an opportunity to engage in important discussions on counter-terrorism cooperation, as part of a wider engagement on Security matters in the framework of the 2019 Strategic Engagement Plan.

They also discussed counter-terrorism cooperation in multilateral fora such as the United Nations and the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum, which the EU co-chairs. The Dialogue provided an opportunity to exchange views on regional and global challenges, including the wider security

implications of the situation in Afghanistan.

The meeting offered an opportunity to explore concrete ways of assisting Pakistan's efforts in addressing the growing challenges posed by the evolving threats of terrorism. The respective delegations were led by Benedikta Von Seher-Thoss, Managing Director, Common Security and Defence Policy at the European External Action Service and Abdul Hameed, Director General for Counter-Terrorism at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan.

Imran's nephew released

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad police on Friday released 23 PTI workers including the nephew and photographer of former prime minister Imran Khan after a brief arrest.

The PTI workers were taken into custody by

Islamabad police from the surrounding of Islamabad High Court during Imran Khan's court appearance. Earlier in the day, PTI leader Musarrat Cheema in her tweet said Khan's nephew Shersha and photographer Anush had been

arrested by the Islamabad police. The PTI leader in her tweet, said the 'imported' govt is continuing the political victimization of opponents and has recently arrested Khan's nephew and photographer from Islamabad.

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