

LHC to hear petition today

LAHORE (NNI): Lahore High Court (LHC) was set to hear a contempt of court petition against Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz tomorrow (Monday). The hearing would be presided over by Justice Baqar Ali Najafi on a two-member bench on April 3. The petition was filed by lawyer Shahid Rana against the decision of the single bench, which dismissed the contempt plea filed against Maryam Nawaz.

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PM hails reopening of Khunjerab Pass; hopes to boost Pak-China trade

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday expressed his pleasure over the reopening of Khunjerab Pass and said that it would help increase bilateral trade between Pakistan and China. The prime minister termed the occasion a welcome one for boosting trade with 'Iron brother China', PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. He said the reopening of the Pass removed a hurdle that would further expedite the pace of work on China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), adding restoration of the trade route between the two countries, after a span of three years, was a matter of huge rejoice.

The prime minister said that the journey which had started way back in November 2019, had recommenced in the year 2023 and expressed his resolve to move ahead on CPEC with dual speed in compar-

ison to 2018. He said "CPEC is a gift of progress and prosperity given by Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and the Chinese leadership for the region and the people." The affection and cooperation from the Chinese leadership for the people of Pakistan were unforgettable, he added.

The prime minister said 'a foreign funded person' had committed a crime of creating controversy over CPEC. He also appreciated the relevant authorities of the two countries and the team members over the restoration of trade and travel facility.

Economic, law and order situations don't allow immediate elections:

PM Shahbaz: Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif on Sunday declared that the current economic and law and order situations in the country are not worth conducting immediate elections. Such a statement emerged after Prime Minister

Shahbaz Sharif chaired a meeting in which the current political and constitutional situation of the country was discussed. Legal experts, Federal Law Minister Nazir Tarar, Malik Ahmed Khan and Mansoor Awan also participated in the meeting. A briefing was given regarding the hearing of the case in the Supreme Court.

The legal experts briefed PM Shahbaz on the legal and constitutional aspects of the election case in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces. According to sources, the meeting discussed the prevailing political situation in the country and legal issues regarding Supreme Court hearing on polls delay. The constitutional crisis in Pakistan deepened as the ruling coalition in the Centre, led by PML-N, hinted that it would not accept the decision of the three-member SC bench hearing the polls delay case.



SULLIVAN: Destroyed and damaged homes are seen on the southern side of the city the day after a tornado hit Sullivan. — Reuters

Imran Khan says ready for negotiations on elections

LAHORE (NNI): Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan has said he is ready to hold talks on elections.

"I have no contacts with anyone, but ready for talks on elections," Imran Khan was quoted as saying in an interview. The former premier said talks will only be held on elections. "No need for talks if elections are not held." Imran Khan reiterated his resolve that he will not negotiate with the 'corrupts' and 'thieves'.

"How will I negotiate with those who are 'corrupts' and 'thieves'," Khan said. If elections are not held now, the chances for polls in October are less. The former prime minister also alleged that PTI seats were delib-

erately decreased in the 2018 general elections. Lashing out at Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif for making undue statements against the Supreme Court bench hearing the election delay case, the PTI chief claimed it is his hobby to divide Supreme Court for his personal gains. The whole nation stands firmly united with the Supreme Court, he maintained. Earlier, former premier and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan appealed to the nation to stand united for the supremacy of the Constitution in the country.

While addressing PTI workers and supporters via video link today, Imran Khan warned that the country would

not be able to survive if the nation does not stand for the supremacy of the Constitution.

Meanwhile talking to Leader of Opposition in Sindh Assembly Haleem Adil Shaikh and former governor of Sindh Imran Ismail who called on him at his Zaman Park residence here on Sunday, the PTI Chairman Imran Khan has urged the nation to get united to defend the judiciary. Imran gave the party leaders the task to contact political parties and civil society for the supremacy of the Constitution and upholding the rule of law. He told them that the judiciary was under attack and they have to unite the nation to defend it.

Imran's plan to sabotage CPEC foiled: Maryam

LAHORE (NNI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior vice president Maryam Nawaz slammed on Sunday Pakistan Tereek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, saying the latter's plan to sabotage the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) had been foiled.

In connection with the reopening of Khunjerab Pass after three years for trade between China and Pakistan, Ms Nawaz said, "It is the matter of immense delight that Khunjerab Pass has been opened in 2023 after three years.

I would like to felicitate the leaderships and the masses of both China and Pakistan."

In terms of Pakistan-China

friendship, Ms Nawaz said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chinese President Xi Jinping were playing vital role in a bid to further strengthen the ties between the two countries. She went on to say the opening of the Khunjerab Pass will pave way for addressing the difficulties faced by both the nation.

Heaping praise on PML-N supremo over the CPEC, Ms Nawaz lamented the masses would not face severe economic hardships if the trade between the two countries continued with the "speed of the PML-N." Berating the PTI-led government, Ms Nawaz accused the PTI of destroying the CPEC. She Slammed Mr Khan for making

"baseless allegations " about the prevailing of corruption in the projects – under the CPEC.

Earlier, Maryam Nawaz slammed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan, saying the institutions could not run at the latter's will.

Taking to Twitter, Ms Nawaz schooled the deposed premier, saying, "It is a weird joke to see Imran taking the name of the constitution despite the fact that he has been declared as the certified violator of the constitution."

"The conspiracy you plotted with the help of the facilitators has been exposed. Now is the time for you to remain silent," added Ms Nawaz.

سکول داخلہ مہم

2023

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Zardari destroys Bhutto’s Constitution: Qureshi

KARACHI (NNI): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi said on Sunday that PPP was proud of the 18th Amendment but “Bhutto’s grandson has decided to attack Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto’s Constitution. In a news conference on reaching the city, the former foreign minister has asked PPP to clear its stance whether they were standing with the Constitution or abrogating it. “Either the PPP stands with the Constitution or it should announce that it is abrogating it,” he said, adding that the silence that PPP has adopted was not enough. Taking aim at the former president and PPP co-chairman, Qureshi said: Asif Ali Zardari has destroyed what Bhutto created.”

“The National Assembly speaker is an obstacle in our return to the house. Bhutto’s Constitution has been occupied by the Zardaris,” Qureshi added. He further said that under the current political circumstances, the 1973 Constitution that the PPP was proud of, was being tainted. Shah Mehmood Qureshi also lashed out at

Sharjeel reacts to Qureshi’s press conference

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Provincial Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has while reacting to the press conference of Shah Mehmood Qureshi , has said that Shah Mehmood Qureshi keeps changing parties and leaders depending on the situation. Sharjeel Inam Memon in his tweet added that Pakistan People’s party had caught Shah Mehmood red-handed while plotting. He said that Shah Mahmood poses the biggest threat to PTI chief Imran Niazi . “Whoever you do good to, be afraid of his evil” saying is enough and fits people like Shah Mahmood ,’ he added.

the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) for “attacking” the Constitution and “pressurising the Supreme Court”. He went on to say that the coalition government was using every tactic to delay general elections and for that, the new bill limiting the CJP’s powers was also passed in the parliament.

The PTI vice-chairman said that President Dr Arif Alvi has already begun consultations with lawyers. He also urged the legal community “to play a role in the country’s history”.

The constitutional crisis in Pakistan deepened as the ruling coalition in the Centre, led by PML-N,

that to save Pakistan from a political turmoil, everyone will have to sit and talk, he says they will not talk to Imran Khan, Qureshi remarked. Earlier, PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi reached Karachi on Sunday. Qureshi was received at the airport by party leaders Ali Zaidi, Imran Ismail and Haleem Adil Sheikh.

Qureshi is scheduled to meet with leaders of the Grand Democratic Alliance. The PTI has decided to intensify its contacts with other parties in the wake of a stand-off with the government over elections to the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies, and the meeting with GDA is a part of that campaign.

Qureshi says he will convey the message of PTI Chairman Imran Khan to the leaders of GDA, which is in the opposition in the National Assembly. He further told the media that the party’s Karachi President Imran Ismail has invited the GDA leadership for Iftar today. Pir Pagaro and other leaders will participate in the Iftar dinner, Qureshi said.



PESHAWAR: District Orakzai Jirga members calls on Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali at Governor House.

Citizen demands protection after receiving threatening calls

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Abdul Qayum, a resident of Peshawar have received many threatening calls on telephone and demanded for provision of security from concerned authorities.

I have been persistently facing threats to my life and have received many threatening calls on telephone. Due to these threats and fear of the unknown, I have lost my mental peace. These views were expressed and shared by Abdul Qayum and urged the government and the judiciary to provide security to him and his family and order a probe to unearth the culprits behind these threats and bullying.

Qayum said that he was



kidnapped in 2016 while on a business trip to Afghanistan and was released after paying a hefty ransom amounting to \$30000. Qayum added that his family feels insecure and it is incumbent upon the government agencies to protect his family.

While talking to media persons, Qayum recalled

the incident of 2016 when he was kidnapped by some unknown armed personnel in Nangarhar province of Afghanistan while he was on a business trip to Kabul. He narrated the inhumane conditions he had faced while in the captivity of the IS militants. He said he feels like something is going to happen anytime to him and his family. ‘My family is too much stressed and I experience a mental trauma every moment and every day’, he explained.

He also urged the human rights organizations and civil society to play its for his due right and cooperate with him in this regard by conveying his message to concerned authorities and added that he did not know as to how ordinary people are threatened when the law enforcement

agencies had all the required gadgets to trace the criminals. He requested the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of Pakistan and other responsible forums for providing him protection by bringing these hidden elements before the court of law.

Qayum said his business had been badly affected by the threats he was facing as it was difficult for him to continue his normal business. ‘I will have to discontinue my business if government did not assist me’, he expressed with sorrow. He also said his relatives and friends were also scary of the situation who always advised him to keep silent. He maintained that everybody is afraid of these elements and could not even discuss them with family and friends.

8 killed, 1,056 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least eight people were killed and 1,056 others injured in 1,000 road traffic accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours. As many as 545 seriously injured people were shifted to different hospitals, while 511 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by rescue medical teams, said a spokesman for Rescue 1122 here on Sunday.

The analysis showed that 498 drivers, 30 underage drivers, 144 pedestrians, and 422 passengers were among the victims of the road traffic crashes.

SSP visits Jhatpat Market

KARACHI, Apr 02 (APP): SSP District City Arif Aziz had an Iftar with policemen and shopkeepers of Jhatpat market in Lyari area.

Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO) Kalakot Asif Munawar, SHO Kalakot Intiaz Mirjat, SHO Chakiwara Sajid Dharejo, Market Association President Abid Baloch, Bilal Baloch and other shopkeepers were also present on the occasion. SSP City inquired about law and order issues from shopkeepers during his visit to Jhatpat market. Later, he visited Mushtaq Masjid located in Lyari Afshani Street and met Maulana Yusuf Afshani, a prominent religious figure.

CS says jail inmates’ welfare among priorities of govt

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Appreciating the measures taken for the improvement of prisons in Punjab, Federal Ombudsman Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi has said that the work being done for the welfare of prisoners in the province is worthy of emulation.

He stated this while addressing a meeting at the Civil Secretariat here on Friday. The Chief Secretary Punjab, Additional Chief Secretary (Home), IG Prisons and officers concerned participated in the meeting. Speaking at the meeting, the Federal Ombudsman said that the process of prisons’ reforms is underway in all provinces in the light of the directions of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. He said that “exemplary measures” are being taken to enhance capacity in prisons and to resolve the problems of jail inmates in Punjab. He said that work should be started after setting priorities in the development projects related to jails.

The Chief Secretary Punjab said that the improvement of prisons is among the priorities of the provincial government and effective measures are being taken to address the problems of prisoners with a focus on provision of basic necessities for them. The IG Prisons gave a detailed briefing at the meeting.

He said that oversight and welfare committees had been established in all jails. He mentioned that 20-bedded hospitals would be completed in 17 jails by June for treatment of inmates addicted to drugs. He said that additional multi-storied barracks had been constructed in 10 jails at a cost of Rs 1706 million.

He said that nine central jails had been connected with anti-terrorism courts for video link trials.

He said that free legal aid and technical training were being provided to the prisoners in the jails while a Central Complaints Cell had also been established to redress the grievances of the prisoners.

Governor visits Bahadurabad food street

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Khan Tessori on Sunday visited Bahadurabad food street and interacted with the citizens. He said, ‘I am grateful to the people for the title of people’s Governor.’ The citizens were in surprise while seeing the Governor among them.

Governor Kamran Tessori said that the purpose of visiting such places was to meet the people and listen to their problems.

He stated this while addressing Naya Nazimabad Bankers Cup and Football match, said a communiqué here. The Governor said that the players of the city had also achieved remarkable positions in football. He said that the promotion of cricket and games were the need of the hour. He said that the young generation would also get chance to display their abilities. He further said this tournament would play an important role in introducing new talent.

Govt committed to provide low cost housing units to masses: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP):

Minister for Housing and Works Maulana Abdul Wasay on Sunday said the government is fully committed to provide low cost housing units and shelter to the poor and vulnerable segments of society, despite the economic crisis.

While inaugurating the newly constructed 2.5km long footpath by Pak-PWD at Bani Gala, he expressed his satisfaction with the completion of the project and highlighted the government’s commitment to improving the country’s infrastructure. Federal Secretary Ministry of Housing and Works Iftikhar Ali Shallwani was also present on the occasion. The minister said that this project was initiated by the ministry with the aim of improving the area’s pedestrian network and reducing accidents.

Commercial, business centers in private societies turn into begging dens

ISLAMABAD (APP): With the arrival of holy month of Ramadan, a large number of beggars and alms seekers have appeared in the busiest commercial centers and bazaars of private housing societies, causing an undue nuisance for the residents.

As being witnessed, an unusual number of beggars including women, children, labourers and eunuchs of all ages have completely taken over the pedestrian paths and roads in housing societies like PWD, Police Foundation, CBR and Pakistan Town, hampering and disturbing the usual flow of traffic and business activities.

Thanks to the lukewarm response of the relevant authorities, the residents said, these alms seekers and labourers have turned these areas into begging dens.

In every nook and cranny of the main commercial centers of PWD and Police Foundation, you have to face different begging figures of all shades with stretched hands and weeping grimaces, Anwar Sheikh, a cloth merchant told this scribe on Sunday. “This is unprecedented as we have been living in the area for the last fifteen years but had never witnessed such unpleasant sights as hordes of beggars swarm every part. You can’t go with peace of mind to purchase Ifdari or Sehri items from different eateries located in PWD and Police Foundation,” Zarminay Gul Pasha, an apparent jittery woman at a famous bakery opined. “It is now difficult to discern between a professional and deserving alms seeker,” she added hastily.

Mount Sulaiman landslide affect large part highways

ISLAMABAD (APP): Heavy landslides have occurred in the Mount Sulaiman range, due to recent rains in the border hilly areas of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Spokesperson of National Highway Authority (NHA) on Sunday told, a large part of the Balochistan-Khyber Pakhtunkhwa highway has been affected by the landslide at Dhana Sar on the National Highway (N-50) after which

traffic has been suspended. On the instructions of Federal Minister for Communication Maulana Asad Mehmood, the field staff and machinery of NHA have been mobilized to remove the landslide debris from the road.

Meanwhile, Secretary Communications and Chairman NHA Captain (R) Muhammad Khurram Agha were in constant contact with NHA field

officers in Balochistan-Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Member Balochistan Shahid Ehsanullah was himself supervising the restoration work and has expressed hope for complete opening of traffic soon. At present, the NHA staff and machinery were active to remove landslide debris from the road while more heavy machinery has been called from Zhob and Quetta.

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- 4- The EOI alongwith detailed TORs is available free of cost at PPRA www.ppra.org.pk and PIDC www.pidc.com.pk websites.

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Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC)
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SR #	TENDER NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME	BID OPENING DATE & TIME
1	OGDCL-SCM-LH-PNP-UCH-Doc205346188-2023	Procurement of Air Intake Filters	19-04-2023 AT 11:30 Hrs	19-04-2023 AT 12:00 Hrs
2	OGDCL-SCM-LF-PT-PNP-QPR-206185773-2023	Explosion Proof Lights	19-04-2023 AT 11:30 Hrs	19-04-2023 AT 12:00 Hrs
3	OGDCL-SCM-LH-PNP-QA-DIRPURPLANT-Doc206321935-2023	Procurement of Spark Plugs and Air Intake Filters	27-04-2023 AT 11:30 Hrs	27-04-2023 AT 12:00 Hrs
4	OGDCL-SCM-LD-PT-PNP-QP-206188042-2023	Purchase of Fuel Gas Control Valve Installed at Solar Turbines	27-04-2023 AT 11:30 Hrs	27-04-2023 AT 12:00 Hrs
5	OGDCL-SCM-LF-PT-PENFD-SNU-205959412-2023	Instrument Tubing	02-05-2023 AT 11:30 Hrs	02-05-2023 AT 12:00 Hrs
6	OGDCL-SCM-LC-PT-PENFD-206260738-2023	CCTV System for Wali Field, F.R. Lakki Marwat, KPK Province	02-05-2023 AT 11:30 Hrs	02-05-2023 AT 12:00 Hrs
7	OGDCL-SCM-LC-PT-EX-PL-205956696-2023	Hardware & Accessories	02-05-2023 AT 11:30 Hrs	02-05-2023 AT 12:00 Hrs
8	OGDCL-SCM-LB-PEFD-Doc206408760-2023	Procurement of Scale Inhibitor	02-05-2023 AT 11:30 Hrs	02-05-2023 AT 12:00 Hrs

2. Vendors not having Ariba Network ID are requested to register themselves on SAP Ariba Portal by clicking on the link <https://supplier.ariba.com> to access and participate in OGDCL tenders.
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5. OGDCL reserves the right to accept or reject any bid and to annul the bidding process and reject all the bids as per Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Rule-33".
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Mehr Elahi stresses for supply of surface water

PESHAWAR (APP): Special Assistant to Chief Minister KP, Malik Mehr Elahi has stressed on the execution of Greater Water Supply Scheme for meeting the future needs of the provincial metropolis, Peshawar, while keeping in view fast groundwater depletion in the city.

“While realizing the upcoming drinking water crisis in Peshawar, it is need of the hour to fully concentrate on execution of Greater Water Supply Scheme which was approved in 2014 but could not get due attention with the passage of time,” he said while talking to APP here Sunday.

If we want to protect our coming generations from facing sever water scarcity, we have to launch an environment friendly surface water supply projects to meet the future needs, Malik stressed.

The Greater Water Supply Scheme was introduced by Governor KP, Haji Ghulam during his tenure as Nazim Peshawar district, he recalled.

The project was aimed to supply drinking water from the ground water sources to Peshawar through laying of a pipeline. Owing to the depletion of groundwater, the KP government explored the option of surface water supply for residents of Peshawar.

The Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) Peshawar engaged NESPAK to provide consultancy services for carrying out detailed feasibility study and detailed engineering design based on various water sources in the vicinity of Peshawar.

This study named as Greater Water Supply Scheme for Peshawar was submitted in November 2012 and approved in 2014, Malik informed, adding that the installation of 537 tube wells by WSSP for supplying drinking water to 42 urban union councils and extraction of ground water through the use of 1400 tube wells by Public Health Engineering Department and private housing colonies was fast lowering in the city which would create a very serious crisis in near future.

This huge extraction of ground water table need to be halted at the earliest by introducing a surface water supply scheme for which the Greater Water Supply project is very suitable option, Malik Mehar suggested.

Fortunately, Peshawar is surrounded by a number of ground water sources and surface water supply is a viable option to conserve our aquifer, he added.

Mehar Elahi also gave the example of water supply scheme for Peshawar from Bara river. “In far past, a water supply scheme using Bara River water was constructed in the year 1918. It commenced supply of water to the residents of Peshawar in 1923. The system designed for 10 cusec of 24/7 supply in 1908 has become redundant due to construction of SPIRA dam which reduced the downstream flow”.

He said Warsak Dam can be used as an additional source of water through construction of a 16 km long tunnel for water supply to Peshawar.

Excise Police seizes 60 kg hashish, smuggler arrested

PESHAWAR (APP): The Excise Police Station Mardan Region Sunday seized 60kg hashish worth millions of rupees and arrested a drug smuggler, who was dressed in Army uniform, a spokesman of the Excise Police told here.

The alleged accused, wearing an army major uniform, was identified as Iqbal Ali, son of Farman Ali, a resident of Abbottabad, was carrying a huge quantity of drugs, an Excise spokesman said.

The spokesman said that 60,000 grams (60 kg) of hashish worth millions of rupees packed in five sacks were recovered from inside the vehicle after searching the vehicle with a fake major official number plate and black glasses.

A case was registered against the alleged accused and during preliminary investigation the alleged accused confessed to smuggling drugs to Punjab ten times earlier, an Excise spokesperson said.

The spokesman said that according to the special orders of Excise Department Secretary Adeel Shah and Zafarul Islam Khattak Director General Excise, successful operations were being carried out across the province against drug dealers and their facilitators.

Importance of jirga system in tribal districts

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Jirga is an assembly of tribal leaders, where they meet to discuss any issue related to their community. The practice of Jirga is prevalent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) regions of Pakistan. The Jirga system is considered an important tradition in the tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The local people trust this system as it provides a quick solution to their problems. In contrast, the courts take generations to decide on an issue, which leads to the loss of time and resources.

Therefore, most people prefer to solve their problems through Jirga.

Jirgas have played a significant role in maintaining peace and order in the newly integrated tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the last two decades. Security forces along with local elders have ensured peace in these areas through various Jirgas. After the complete elimination of terrorism from these areas, local problems are now solved through polls.

In the tribal districts including Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber and others, the local commanders of Pakistan Army and Frontier Corps communicate with local elders through Jirgas to work together for peace, development and public welfare in the area.

Moreover, Corps Commander Peshawar and Inspector General Frontier Corps (IGFC) also meet the locals to solve the problems of these areas through Grand Jirgas.

Historically, Jirgas have played a crucial role in resolving differences and problems between different tribes. The people in the tribal districts unanimously express their confidence in Jirgas, which is also recognized by the state of Pakistan.

However, after the merger of FATA, the judicial system is gradually being promoted in these districts with the establishment of the government machinery. With the passage of time, the dependence on the Jirga system will gradually decrease from these districts.



Ramazan: A holy month promoting interfaith harmony, social cohesion

PESHAWAR (APP): Besides others numerous benefits, the holy month of Ramazan also promote interfaith harmony and social cohesion between the muslims and minorities by making them closer.

Strengthening the bond of love and friendship, the mass Iftar parties in Ramazan with varieties of food, spicy dishes, sweets, fruits and beverages exchange by the fasting Muslims and minorities community's members build spirit of affection and brotherhood besides making positive effects on humans' minds for long.

Rawandar Singh, a 41-year old Sikh, is all smiles and exudes high spirit of sharing and compassion as he seeks solace in dolling out dates and 'pakora' among fasting Muslims during iftaar on returning home from his shop in Hashtnagri Peshawar City.

Wearing the traditional turban, Rawandar Singh had been distributing packets of dates and other edible items among the fasting Peshawarties at Hastnagri bazaar since 2012 after inheriting the notable practice from his father Awtah Singh.

“I feel inner peace and satisfaction while doing the noble practice in all 30 days of the holy month. The soothing moments of distributing iftaar's items including dates, pakora, jalebi and others dishes still alive as fresh as today when I keenly observe my late father Awtah Singh handing over packets of iftaar food to Muslim brothers all along way from Hastnagri to Mohalla Jogan Ramdas in interior City,” Rawandar Singh told APP while distributing dates and pakora among the fasting Muslims ahead of Iftaar on Sunday.

He said the distribution of food in Ramazan was their mark of respect and admiration for our fasting Muslims' brothers besides giving us inner peace and satisfaction,” Rawandar who is being helped by his son in dolling out of dates and pakora said.

Dewa Singh and his son Tajindar Singh, who are associated with telecommunication business in Hastnagri Peshawar, said that inviting people of different faiths in iftaar parties in Pakistan send a strong message of love, brotherhood and friendship to the whole world.

They said without winning hearts and minds, we can't come closer to each other and could not develop a society whose inhabitants enjoy equal rights and respect for each other's beliefs.

They said arranging iftaar parties and Ramazan

Two women die as roof of their house in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (INP): Two women were killed and two other persons sustained injuries when the roof of their house collapsed in Budhbair area of Peshawar on Sunday.

According to rescue officials, the roof of a house situated on Kohat Road, Budhbair caved in. Rescue team reached there and found four persons were buried under the rubble. They pulled them out.

Two of the women pulled out of the rubble were pronounced dead.

The rescuers shifted the injured persons to a nearby hospital for medical treatment.

Minister expresses condolence F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Caretaker Minister for Labour, Excise and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi on Sunday visited Qambar Khel area of Bara Teshil and expressed his condolences with tribal elder Imran Afridi on demise of his uncle Haji Muhammad Noor Afridi who breathed his last the other day.

The Minister remained there for some time and expressed heartfelt sympathies with Imran Afridi and other members of the bereaved family.

He also offered Fatiha for the eternal peace of the deceased tribal elder.

4-day rain, thunderstorm predicted

PESHAWAR (APP): The Met Office on Sunday forecast widespread rain, winds and thunderstorm with snow fall over the high mountain for most parts of province from 2 to April 5.

It said that isolated heavy falls and a few hail storm is expected in Chitral, Lower and Upper Dir, Malakand, Swat, Buner, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torghar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, Hangu, Karak, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Mawat, Tank, DI Khan, North and South Waziristan districts during the period.

It warned that strong wind and hailstorm could cause damage to loose infrastructure and standing crops in the province.

Landslides could also occur in some vulnerable parts in hilly areas during the forecast period and day temperature would fall significantly during the spell.

Meanwhile, PDMA issued alert to all district governments to take precautionary measures to avoid loss of life, damages to infrastructure, crops and animals.

The authority also asked the concerned departments to ensure availability of emergency services, staff, machinery and other resources, remain vigilant in restoring road links in case of landslides, keep monitoring of local Nullahs besides activating emergency helpline No 1700 to respond to any emergency timely.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Labour, Excise and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi offering fatiha for demise of Imran Afridi's uncle Haji Muhammad Noor Afridi.

ANP demands reopening of University of Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial President Awami National Party (ANP) on Sunday expressed concern over the closure of University of Peshawar (UoP) and demanded reopening of the varsity.

In a statement issued here, Aimal Wali Khan said that the university administration and the vice chancellor have failed miserably in reopening the varsity and solving the problems.

Teachers, students and other staff have been protesting for the past one month while the silence of government and top officials on the ongoing protest is beyond understanding.

The closure of the varsity will waste the futures of thousands of students, said Aimal Wali Khan.

He demanded the reopening of the university within a week by sending the VC to home, otherwise the ANP would be at the forefront of protest by teachers and students.

The strike and complete boycott of classes and other duties was launched by the joint action committee on March 7, a day after the mysterious killing of a security advisor of the university Saqlain Bangash at the hands of a private security guard.

Expressing concern over the closure of the historic institution and the unrest of the University staff, he criticized the University administration and Vice Chancellor for failing to address the problems faced by the students, teachers and staff.

He said that ANP fully supported the demand for the resignation of the Vice Chancellor by the Peshawar University Teachers' Association, student organizations, teachers and staff.

He demanded that the Vice Chancellor be removed within a week so that the University can be reopened, and the future of thousands of students in the province can be saved.

He also warned that they would support the ongoing protest by teachers and students with full force if their demands were not met.

Fake army officer arrested with hashish

PESHAWAR (APP): The Excise Police Station Mardan region of Nowshera on Sunday foiled a narcotics smuggling bid and arrested a fake Major of Pakistan Army.

The Excise Police Spokesperson said that the accused, identified as Iqbal Ali who was impersonating as a Major of Pakistan Army, was apprehended while attempting to smuggle 60 kg of hashish in his vehicle.

The arrest was made after Excise Police Station received information about the accused, who attempted to flee but was eventually caught near Risalpur Gate.

The vehicle, with a fake official number plate and black glasses, was searched, leading to the recovery of five sacks of hashish worth lakhs of rupees.

During preliminary investigations, the accused confessed to smuggling drugs to Punjab on ten previous occasions.

A case has been registered against him for drug smuggling and further investigation is in progress.

PHCBA Election to be held on May 6

PESHAWAR (APP): The schedule for Peshawar High Court Bar Association (PHCBA) Elections was announced here Sunday, according to which the nomination papers could be submitted by April 10, 2023.

According to the Pakistan High Court Bar Council Association, the polling for the PHCBA Elections will be held on May 6, 2023. Before fixing April 10 as the last date for submission of the nomination papers, the scrutiny of nomination papers will be held on May 13 and the nomination papers can be withdrawn till April 14. The final list of candidates will be released on April 17.

PR expresses intention of launching ‘Peshawar Cargo Express Train’

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar to Karachi and from Karachi to Peshawar with en-route stopping stations of Lahore and Rawalpindi for attaching and detaching of ZBCs.

The interested parties are asked to submit proposals for launching of the project till April 19, 2023 while a pre-bid with all the interested parties will be held on April 13, the advertisement added.

Meanwhile the plan of Pakistan Railways for launching of Peshawar Cargo Express Train has been highly hailed by business community dealing in import, export and trade with Afghanistan.

Chairman Standing Committee of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) on Railways, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi termed the decision as long lasting demand of business community of the country.

The decision will not only prove as a potential source of revenue generation for Pakistan Railways but will also solve a lot of problems being faced by business community due to transportation of goods between Karachi and Peshawar through bonded carriers.

Transportation of goods in cargo train will also revive the lost livelihood of more than 270 Custom Clearing Agents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and make the newly constructed Aza Khel Dry port as operational, added Zia who is also Chairman Frontier Custom Clearing Agents Association.

He said consignments of different goods including gemstones, minerals, furniture, fruits, handicraft, herbal items and match sticks are exported on daily basis from Peshawar to Karachi and that will be sent through cargo train.

Similarly, raw material for different industries in KP are being transported from Karachi which can also be a source of earning for Pakistan Railways.

He also mentioned that in prevailing scenario of price hike of petroleum products, transportation of goods between Karachi and Peshawar has become much expensive and putting a huge burden on businessmen.

Through launching of the cargo train service, the businessmen will get a relief from increasing freight of transportation of goods through trucks between port city and Peshawar.

Zia Sarhadi stressed upon Pakistan Railways to fully concentrate on execution of the proposed launching of the Peshawar Cargo Train service which will not only benefit business community of the country, but also prove as very beneficial for railway by increasing revenue and employment generation.



In brief

Blind murder case resolved

KASUR (APP): Police claimed on Sunday to have resolved the blind murder case by arresting an accused who turned out to be the killer of his brother. According to police, Akram, resident of Old Lorry Adda was going to Ram Thaman area of Raja Jhang when unidentified persons shot him dead, some ten days ago. A special police team under the supervision of DSP Khalid Aslam was constituted which traced out the suspects. The police arrested victim's brother Imran and his accomplice Bilal. The accused Imran has confessed his crime of killing his brother over property issue. DPO Kasur Tariq Aziz Sindhu has appreciated the performance of investigation team.

Three held with narcotics

SIALKOT (APP): Police claimed on Sunday to have arrested three drug peddlers and recovered narcotics from their possession. In a crackdown against drug peddlers and criminals, the police conducted raids and seized 200 gram hashish from Sajjad, in the jurisdiction of Civil Lines police station; 2,210 kg hashish from Nadeem in Chowk Imam Sahib area in the limits of Nikapura police station; and 540 gram hashish from Sultan in Gohadpur area, in the precincts of Muradpur police station. Cases have been registered against the accused.

Commissioner visits centre

SARGODHA (APP): Commissioner Sargodha Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti visited a free flour distribution centre at Mela Mandi ground on Sunday to inspect the process and the facilities being provided to those coming to there by the district government. Deputy Commissioner Capt (retd) Shoaib Ali also accompanied him. Mela Mandi ground centre is a big flour distribution centre where 80 counters are working 24/7 under the Prime Minister's Free Flour Ramadan package. The commissioner met people and asked them about their difficulties in getting free flour. He also asked about the behavior of the staff working at these centres. He reviewed security situation at the centre and expressed his satisfaction over the arrangements. Ajmal Bhatti said the government was utilising all possible resources to facilitate people. Provision of free flour to deserving people during Ramadan was a proof of its sincerity. He said 60 per cent free of flour distribution process had been completed across the district so far.

Man commits suicide

FAISALABAD (APP): A young man reportedly committed suicide, in the limits of Batala Colony police station. Rescue-1122 spokesman said here on Sunday that Shahid Masih (50), resident of B-block Chaman Zar Colony Warispura ended his life by hanging himself from a rope in his house. The police sent the body to mortuary for post-mortem. The motive behind the suicide could not be ascertained.

AC inspects pace of census

SIALKOT (APP): Assistant Commissioner Sialkot Ghulam Sarwar on Sunday visited various union councils of the city and inspected the pace of census process. Talking to the supervisory staff, he said that timely completion of digital census was a national duty and supervisors should pay equal attention to all blocks in their areas.

PM: Govt to deliver quality medicare

MIRPUR, AJK (APP): Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Tanveer Illayas has said that his government was determined to ensure the delivery of quality medical facilities to the masses close to their doorstep across the liberated territory.

He was talking to a delegation of Mirpur Healthcare Community led by Dental Surgeon Dr. Adnan Marghoub Khan and Dr. Ijaz Raja which called on him here late Saturday.

They briefed the premier about the issues relating to the hospital and medical college. They also presented a charter of demands on behalf of the community. The charter of demands included increasing the honorarium of house officers and post-graduate trainees in the upcoming budget, increasing the salary of medical officers and specialists according to their respective cadres and grades, increase of salary and grant of allowances to doctors working in remote areas, regularization of 120 doctors with more than five years of ad-hoc service who served during the Corona epidemic, addressing the shortage of staff at Kashmir Institute of Cardiology

Mirpur on emergency basis, immediate appointment of Nephrologist at DHQ Mirpur, permanent appointment of Psychiatrist at DHQ Mirpur, establishment of Oncology Hospital in Mirpur for treatment of cancer patients, enhancing post-graduate training opportunities, starting MSMD program organized by universities in various specialties, allocation of 100 kanals of government land for doctors in all three divisional headquarters of Mirpur, Rawalkot and Muzaffarabad.

The AJK Prime minister agreed upon all the demands and assured the visiting delegates that all their legitimate demands would be fulfilled and whatever problems faced by the community would be addressed on a priority basis. He also assured the delegation that during his next visit to the city, he would pay a detailed visit to Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Medical College.

The delegation included Dr. Ashfaq Ahmad Raja, Dr. Tahir Mehmood, Dr. Gohar Latif, Dr. Ahmed Naeem Kayani, Dr. Shoaib Khan, Dr. Majid Altaf, Sajid Ahmad Chaudhry and others, whereas Medical

Superintendent Divisional Headquarters Teaching Hospital Mirpur Dr. Amir Aziz and Principal Benazir Bhutto Shaheed Medical College Professor Dr. Faisal Bashir was also present on the occasion.

Meanwhile, Central Chairman Zakat Council Chaudhry Muhammad Siddique also called on Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan. Speaking on the occasion, the PM directed the concerned authorities to ensure fair distribution of Zakat among the poor and needy in Azad Kashmir. The PM said that as per his announcement, an amount of 6000 and 12000 rupees should be paid as zakat and dowry funds to the needy.

The Chairman of Central Zakat Council, Chaudhry Muhammad Siddique, briefed the Prime Minister about the issues related to the Zakat Council.

The Prime Minister assured him that all the problems faced by the Council would be addressed on a priority basis.

On this occasion, the government ministers including Chaudhry Yasir Sultan, Chaudhry Ali Shan Soni, Chaudhry Maqbool Gujjar were also present.

Rescue 1122 responds to 434 emergencies in March

D.I.KHAN (APP): The district emergency service rescue 1122 sharing monthly performance report said on Sunday that it provided first medical aid to about 416 patients during 434 emergencies over the last month under the leadership of District Emergency Officer Owais Babar.

According to the spokesman of the rescue emergency service, the rescue emergency teams promptly tackled all these emergencies and the emergency response time was recorded at seven minutes.

Giving details, the spokesman said the rescue service responded to differ-

ent kinds of emergencies during March which include 304 medical, 100 road traffic accidents, 07 fire eruptions, 14 bullet injuries or fights and recoveries and 09 others.

During these emergencies, a total of 416 injured were provided with first medical aid and subsequently shifted to hospitals. He said a total of 76476 calls were received by the emergency service, but 59270 of them were fake or irrelevant ones.

During this period, rescue 1122 handled a total of 25 referral-related emergencies, in which 25 patients shifted within the

district. In an emergency case, a patient was taken from DHQ hospital to Peshawar.

The spokesman said the rescue 1122 teams were fully equipped with all necessary equipment and they had been efficiently rendering their services during emergencies.

He said the training wing of rescue 1122, following the directions of District Emergency Officer Owais Babar, also arranged training sessions on first aid or tackling other emergencies for students of different educational institutions and employees of different departments.

9 held over swindling at flour distribution points

MULTAN (APP): Commissioner Multan Division Engineer Amir Khattak on Sunday said that uninterrupted supply of flour at free distribution points have been increased for public facilitation to prevent stampede like mishaps adding that last bag of free flour would be distributed among citizens transparently.

In a statement issued here, the commissioner said that nine swindlers have been arrested so far across the region while 18 have been booked for getting free flour from distribution points and the citizens. He said that free flour was being offered to citizens having original national identity cards (ID) and over three free flour bags have been distributed so far in the region.

Amir Khattak main-

tained that 695,734 flour bags have been distributed in a day from distribution points. He said that number of counters and distribution points have been increased for public facilitation to prevent stampede like mishaps adding that last bag of free flour would be distributed among citizens transparently.

Agri dept seizes over Rs58m fake pesticides in first quarter

Pest Warning and Quality control department has raided against fake pesticides and seized fake and substandard pesticides worth Rs 58.5 million during the end of first quarter of current fiscal year 2023.

Director Pest Warning and Quality Control of pesticides cotton zone Multan, Dr Ghulam Abbas, has

issued the progress report of four divisions of cotton zone including Multan, Bahawalpur, D.G Khan and Sahiwal as performance remained excellent.

Similarly, 89 FIRs were got registered during various operations, including 69 raids made by the departmental teams.

Director pest warning said that the number of misfit samples was 21 adding that the campaign against fake and substandard pesticides was in progress under the directions of Secretary Agriculture South Punjab, Saqib Ali Ateel.

He further said that the raids against mafia dealing with fake and substandard pesticides were being made through track and trace system in order to provide quality agri inputs to growers.

Spurious drugs factory unearthed, material seized

FAISALABAD (APP): A deputy drug controller unearthed a factory producing spurious drugs and seized its material, though its owners and other accused escape from the scene.

A spokesman for the Health Department said here on Sunday that Deputy Drug Controller Mushan Asghar, along with Drug Inspector Khalid Mustafa, and a team conducted raid in Noorpur Main Bazaar Satiana Road and detected manufacturing of spurious drugs in a house under the title of 'HA Herbal Pharma'.

The owner and workers of the factory ran away after seeing the raid team managed to escape from the scene.

However, the raiding team seized huge quantity of spurious drugs from the spot and sealed premises after confiscating its machinery.

Samples of confiscated

drugs were dispatched to the laboratory for analysis and a case was got regis-

125 shopkeepers fined over profiteering, 12 arrested

The price control magistrates imposed Rs 607,000 fine on 125 shopkeepers on the charge of profiteering and got arrested 12 others for violation of the Price Control Act in different parts of Faisalabad during the last two days.

A spokesman for the administration said here on Sunday that the magistrates checked various shops in different markets and bazaars of Faisalabad and found dozens involved in overcharging and profiteering.

They imposed fine on them and issued warning to others to shun profiteering or face stern action.

The magistrates also got arrested a dozen shopkeepers and sealed their shops over violation of the Price Control Act, he added.

DC orders speeding up flour distribution

Deputy Commissioner

Ali Annan Qamar visited various flour distribution points here on Sunday and issued directions for speeding up the pace of commodity distribution.

He visited distribution centres at Samundri, Dijkot, Mamonkanjan, Kanjwani and Rehmay Shah and interacted with people, especially females, and asked them about the facilities being provided to them. He directed the centre management to maintain discipline and expedite distribution process to save precious time of the beneficiaries.

He also reviewed CNIC scanning and issuance of tokens at various counters and directed the centre management to increase the number of counters so that people could get flour bags without any undue delay. He also directed for providing ample sitting capacity under shade so that the beneficiaries could wait for their turn comfortably.



MULTAN: Labourers busy in cutting wood into pieces at their workplace.

Zhob National Highway closed due to landslide

ZHOB (INP): The National Highway in Zhob, Dera Ismail Khan at the point of Dana Sar will remain completely closed for the next 24 hours due to landslide occurred as a result of recent torrential rains, authorities said on Sunday.

A flood-like situation has arisen in the mountainous area of Sulaiman Range, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and border area of Balochistan following the heavy rain.

According to the Pakistan Disaster Management Authority, due to landslide at the point of Khan Rosh Dana Sar in Zhob, Dera Ismail Khan, several vehicles have been damaged and there have been reports of injuries to several people. Many passenger buses and vehicles have been stuck at Dana Sar.

Deputy Commissioner Sherani said that due to landslip in Zhob, DI Khan, the National Highway will remain closed for the next 24 hours.

The administration has warned the people not to travel on the highway.

Policeman shot dead in Abbottabad

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Elite Force constable Sunday was shot dead in a minor dispute by his cousins in Abbottabad Township an area of Nawanshahr police station.

According to police sources, Elite Force police constable Touqir son of Freed was killed by his cousins in a minor dispute about grazing animals in the fields by his first cousins.

Nawanshahr police reached the spot and shifted the dead body of the deceased policeman to Ayub Medical Complex (AMC) Abbottabad and arrested four relatives of the Touqir on murder charges and started an investigation.

After the completion of medico-legal formalities, the dead body of the policeman was handed over to the family.

Youngster shot dead, four injured

BUREWALA (APP): A youngster was killed while four others sustained serious injuries when unknown outlaws attacked a house at Azeemabad Colony in premises of City police station on Sunday.

According to police sources, Shahbaz Rehman of Azeemabad Colony was sitting with his friends inside his house when some unknown outlaws started firing at the house. Resultantly, a youngster namely Omer alias Vicky was died at the spot while four others including Shahbaz Rehmani, Ali Raza, Rana Awais and Muhammad Zubair sustained serious bullet injuries.

Police concerned and Rescue 1122 officials reached the spot and shifted the body and injured to Heshil Headquarters Hospital Burewala where two injured were told to be in critical condition.

Minister for end of across border firing incidents

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Minister for Communications and Works Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran has expressed grief over the martyrdom of Pakistan Army soldiers in the terrorist attack from across the border in Kech and said that the attack on Pakistan Army from across the border is alarming.

He in a message issued

on Sunday called for raising the issue with Iran at the diplomatic level.

Expressing his condolences and sympathy to the families of the martyrs, he said that the attack on the soldiers of the Pakistan Army from across the border is condemnable.

"The federal government must take up the incident at the diplomatic level with

the Iranian authorities.

He said that the blood of the martyrs will not go in vain; the perpetrators of the cowardly attacks have not succeeded in their nefarious design. "The entire nation is standing by the side of the Pakistan Army in the war against terrorism," he said adding that a handful of terrorists will not succeed in their evil intentions.

Eight outlaws nabbed during crackdown

WAH CANTT (APP): Police during crackdown against anti-social elements on Sunday arrested as many as eight outlaws besides

busting a gang while contraband, looted booty and weapons were also recovered from their possession.

According to Police spokesman, the Wah Cantonment Police busted a gang involved in street crimes and arrested their three members including the ring leader besides recovery of looted booty and arms utilized during various criminal activities.

Police spokesman has disclosed that the gang gang comprising Imam Sajid, Habib and ring

leader Hamza was involved in a number of street crimes including snatching, robbery in the area.

He said that looted booty besides arms utilized in the various crimes was also recovered from their possession.

The spokesman has said that during the preliminary interrogation, the gang has confessed committing various robberies, snatching and street crimes activities in the twin cities of Taxila and Wah.

The same police arrested four liquor sellers and recovered 20 liters of locally made liquor and 80 bottles of liquor from their possession.

Police spokesman that acting on a tip off that liquors manufacturers beefed up supply for upcoming eid festival, a crackdown was launched on liquor manufacturers in the area and arrested four of them who were identified as Adnan, Zahid, Musawar and Hassan.

Separately, Wah Cantonment Police arrested a man involved in street crimes. The suspect was identified as Talha and looted booty including cash, cell phones and gun was recovered from his possession.

Separate cases were registered against the accused under relevant laws.

3 alleged dacoits killed in two police encounters

GHOTKI (INP): Three dacoits were killed in two alleged police encounters in Ghotki and Jacobabad, police reported on Sunday.

In Ghotki, a police party was patrolling Gadu Link Road in Obaru when it saw dacoits there.

Both police and dacoits traded fire. As a result, two unknown dacoits were killed and two of their accomplices fled.

The identity of the slain

dacoits was yet to be revealed.

Police said that the bodies of the dacoits were shifted to the hospital.

Separately, a dacoit was killed while his two accomplices managed to flee during an alleged police encounter in the precincts of Abad Police Station Jacobabad.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) claimed that the dead dacoit was identi-

fied as Shafiq alias Shafu Sarki and weapons, motorcycle and mobile phones were recovered from his possession.

He said the deceased was wanted by the police in more than two dozen of cases including robbery and possession of illegal weapons.

The SSP said that the area has been cordoned off to arrest other fleeing dacoits.

MWMC lifts 200 tons waste in cleanliness operation

MULTAN (APP): Multan Waste Management Company (MWMC) has lifted 200 tons waste during the special cleanliness operation launched in Muzaffarabad area.

Commissioner Multan division Engineer Aamir Khattak while giving the task of cleanliness of all important roads to the Company on Sunday, ordered to pay special focus on the cleanliness of external and internal roads of the city.

He directed the Company to immediately

lift the garbage from the main road of Muzaffarabad and Pir Omar cemetery road.

According to the Company's officials, the Muzaffarabad cleanliness operation would continue for one more day while the way to Pir Omar graveyard has also been cleared.

Youth commits suicide over domestic issues

A youngster committed suicide by standing in front of a speeding train near Mumtazabad railway crossing here on Sunday.

According to Rescue 1122 sources, 22-year-old Fahad Ajmal s/o Ajmal Abi resident of Kachi Abadi Mumtazabad had a dispute with his family over some domestic issues.

On Sunday, in a fit of anger, he committed suicide by standing in front of a speeding train. Rescue officials reached the spot and shifted the body to a nearby hospital.

However, railway police and the concerned police station have started investigations into the incident.

Helpline system launched

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) has launched its helpline system to provide different kinds of services to the citizens.

Inaugurating the helpline system formally, FDA DG Muhammad Asif Chaudhry said that citizens now could contact the FDA through its helpline number 1237 for getting information about legal status of housing schemes in urban areas, their approval, transfer for properties, inheritance mutation, approval of com-

mmercial & residential building plans, amount of various fees, TP reports, ownership certificates, NOC, completion certificates, information about Katchi Abadies, occupation slips regarding FDA City, information about Town Planning, Estate Management and other services.

The system would also help FDA in curbing the role of tout mafia in addition to saving precious time and money of the people by providing them speedy service delivery, he added.

Additional Director General FDA Abid Hussain Bhatti, Chief Engineer Mehrar Ayub, Director Town Planning Junaid Hasan Manj, Director Estate Management Sohail Maqsood Pannu, Director IT Yasir Ejaz Chhattha, Deputy Director IT Abdullah Noor, Deputy Director Finance Humaira Ashraf, Deputy Director Estate Management Mian Izhar-ul-Haq, Deputy Director Legal Shah Jahan Babar and others were also present on the occasion.



Bulgaria votes for fifth time in two years under Ukraine shadow

SOFIA (AFP/APP): Bulgarians vote on Sunday in their fifth general election in two years, a record in the European Union, amid deep divisions over the war in Ukraine.

Russia's invasion of its neighbour has deepened the political crisis that has engulfed Bulgaria since 2020, the worst instability since the fall of Communism.

The poor Balkan nation of 6.5 million people is a member of the EU and NATO. But it is historically and culturally close to Russia.

The country witnessed massive anti-corruption rallies three years ago but, contrary to protesters' hopes of a clean-up in public life, the demonstrations triggered a series of elections.

Conservative prime minister Boyko Borisov, whose decade in office was tainted by allegations of graft, lost power in 2021.

But the country's political parties have struggled since to form stable coalitions, leading to a deeply fragmented parliament and series of interim governments.

"What if the results are the same as in previous legislative elections?" asked Silvia Radoeva, a 42-year-old care worker.

"It's high time that politicians united to deal with everyday problems," Radoeva told AFP, citing "crazy prices, poverty and deplorable med-

ical care". "Faced with war and inflation, (Bulgarian) society is crying out for a solution," Parvan Simeonov, a political analyst with Gallup International, told AFP.

The fight against corruption has taken a back seat, leaving many 2020 protesters disillusioned.

The main players in Sunday's ballot are the same as in recent elections.

The latest polls put Borisov's GERB party neck-and-neck with the reformist We Continue the Change (PP), led by Harvard-educated Kiril Petkov, who was briefly premier in 2022.

Both have around 25 percent support. This time, the PP has joined forces with a small right-wing coalition called Democratic Bulgaria.

"We find the same pattern as in other central European countries -- a former leader who clings on and the other parties who refuse to ally with him, without having much else in common," said Lukas Macek, associate researcher at the Jacques Delors Institute for Central and Eastern Europe. Macek sees no end to this "worrying spiral of elections" unless Borisov withdraws.

"I fear the influence of pro-Russian parties in the next parliament," Ognian Peychev, a 60-year-old engineer, told AFP at a recent protest against the war in Ukraine.

The ultra-nationalist Vazrazhdane party, which defends the Kremlin's war, stands to gain some 13 percent of the votes, according to polls, up from the 10 percent it won at the last general election in October.

The Socialist BSP, the successor of Bulgaria's Communist Party, has also sided with Moscow and objects to sending weapons to Ukrainian forces.

Many in Bulgaria still look to the east, revering Russia as the country that ended five centuries of Ottoman rule in 1878.

"Both Petkov and Borisov are too aggressively critical of Russia," said Mariana Valkova, a 62-year-old entrepreneur who used to work in what was then the Soviet Union.

"I'd rather there wasn't a government and (President Rumen) Radev remained in charge."

Pro-Russian Radev, who has appointed interim cabinets between the string of inconclusive elections, has denounced Petkov and his allies as "war mongers".

He has also spoken out against sending arms to Ukraine.

At the same time, Bulgaria's munitions factories have been running at full capacity making ammunition to be exported to Kyiv via third countries. Polling stations will open at 7:00 am (0400 GMT) on Sunday. The first exit polls are expected after polls close at 8:00 pm (1700 GMT).

Uzbekistan tries to garner backing for controversial vote

JIZZAKH (AFP/APP): On stage in front of a few hundred people, an entertainer desperately tries to sell a controversial April referendum that could extend the rule of Uzbekistan's autocratic leader until 2040.

The April 30 vote is on a constitutional amendment that would introduce seven-year presidential terms and allow President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to run for two new terms.

This would allow Mirziyoyev, in power since 2016, to potentially rule for two more decades.

"Will you come to vote?" the entertainer asks the mostly young crowd.

Few doubt the outcome of the referendum, billed as ushering in an "era of development".

Some of the students at the event in Jizzakh in central Uzbekistan told AFP their professors forced them to come and even provided them with flags, banners and caps.

Anyone attempting to leave the two-hour rally was promptly told to "turn back."

"The constitution is yours, mine, ours!" and "Yes, we'll come vote", the students sing.

The government has spared no resources and called up singers and athletes to beat the general apathy.

The crowd was treated to a free concert by Gulsanam Mamazoitova, a singer with over one million followers on Instagram.

In the audience, Nigora, a student who declined to give her full name, said people in the Central Asian nation "need to support the president and this constitution".

"For me, this referendum is very important," Nigora told AFP.

Oibek Alizhonov, a 45-year-old entrepreneur, said he supported Mirziyoyev's policies "200 percent" and "sees no other leader".

But Saera Yakhshilokova told AFP

"the length of the presidential mandate should not be changed."

"No one should be in power well into old age. Presidents should be changed through elections."

Mirziyoyev introduced some reforms after decades of dictatorial rule under former leader Islam Karimov but he is still criticised for his rights record.

His constitutional reforms started with bloodshed.

Last July, 21 people died in protests over changes that would have undermined self-determination in the republic of Karakalpakstan and forced a rare U-turn by Mirziyoyev.

Azimzhon Okmurodov, a student, said: "I like some amendments on the judicial system, but I do not agree with the extension of the presidential mandate."

"In the end, there will just end up being the one person ruling the country for a long time," he told AFP.

European aviation sector fears CO2 rules could clip its wings

PARIS (AFP/APP): European airlines fear losing out to rivals based outside the EU that can ignore the bloc's emissions-reduction rules to become carbon neutral by 2050.

The "Fit for 55" package sets out an initial goal of reducing emissions by 55 percent in 2030 compared with the 1990 level.

This involves bloc-level obligations to scale up the use of sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs) to be blended with fossil fuels in all flights departing from European airports.

SAFs come from sources such as municipal solid waste, leftovers from the agricultural and forestry industry, used cooking oil, crops and plants, and hydrogen. These technologies are still developing and the end product is more expensive, thereby placing additional costs on airlines obliged to use them while passengers will have to pay more for flights. The aviation sector is growing in Asia and the Middle East and companies based there could benefit greatly as they are not subject to these constraints, industry experts say.

"The European airline

industry has to live with the fact that it's cheaper to bypass environmental reduction ideas if you hop outside of Europe," Carsten Spohr, CEO of German carrier Lufthansa, said at the Airlines for Europe (A4E) aviation summit in Brussels on Wednesday.

Spohr said an airline flying from Brussels to Singapore via Paris, for example, must pay through a carbon emissions trading scheme for the European leg of the trip.

"If you want to go via Doha, you don't need to pay emission trading, you also don't need to be part of blending (SAF and traditional fuels)," Spohr said. Carbon dioxide emissions from aviation have been included in the EU emissions trading system since 2012.

Under this system, all airlines operating in Europe -- both European and non-European -- have to monitor, report and verify their emissions, and to surrender allowances against those emissions.

Qatar has obtained a controversial "open skies" agreement with the European Union to increase flights between the country

and the 27-nation bloc.

Saudi Arabia plans to make Riyadh a gigantic regional aviation hub like Dubai while Istanbul airport, the main hub of Turkish Airlines, has already surpassed London's Heathrow and Paris's Charles de Gaulle by handling 64.3 million passengers last year.

"Istanbul is ideally placed for going to Asia, Africa and eastern Europe. We have to stop being naive," said Alain Battisti, the former president of France's National Aviation Federation.

Istanbul plans to triple its flow of passengers.

"Climate change and the legal regulations that go with it are inevitable. Important measures are going to be taken on the EU side, and as a result, the centre of gravity of air transport is likely to shift to the East," Kadri Samsunlu, the CEO of Istanbul airport, told AFP. A detailed study in March last year by the Dutch research group SEO said that non-European aviation hubs would gain passengers as a result of the EU measures.

It said intra-European passengers could decline by

14 percent.

Augustin de Romanet, head of France's ADP airports group, said a major shift east "would make the European companies bankrupt", though he added: "I think that Europe will eventually avoid this distorted competition".

A4E interim chief Laurent Donceel said Fit for 55 will increase costs for air carriers by 577 billion euros (\$629 billion) by 2050.

The "Europeans for fair competition" group, which includes airlines and unions, is seeking a carbon border tax, like those for imports based on the amount of carbon emissions resulting from the production of the product in question. As a price on carbon, it discourages emissions and as a trade-related measure it affects production and exports. Roman Mauroschat, an aviation policy officer at Transport and Environment, a think tank based in Brussels, said a carbon border tax only made sense for sectors where production risked being shifted to third countries exporting goods to Europe.

Finns vote as far right aims to unseat PM Sanna Marin

HELSINKI (AFP/APP): Finland votes Sunday in legislative elections that could see the country take a dramatic turn to the right, as centre-right and anti-immigration parties vie to unseat Social Democratic Prime Minister Sanna Marin.

After the breakthrough by nationalists in neighbouring Sweden and the far right's victory in Italy last year, Finland could become the latest country to join the nationalist wave in Europe.

The vote comes just days ahead of Finland's formal accession to the NATO defence alliance, made possible after Turkey ratified the country's membership bid on Thursday. "The polls show that the more right-wing political trend in Finland is gaining strength," Juho Rahkonen from the E2 research institute told AFP.

Traditionally, the biggest of the eight main parties in parliament gets the first chance to build a government, and since the 1990s that party has always claimed the prime minister's office. "We are aiming

to win this election and continue our work for a more sustainable future," Marin told reporters at the sidelines of her final campaign event in Helsinki.

The latest survey published Thursday by public broadcaster Yle showed the centre-right National Coalition holding a thin lead at 19.8 percent, with the nationalist eurosceptic Finns Party in second place at 19.5 percent.

The Social Democratic Party (SDP) led by Marin, who took office in 2019 as the country's youngest prime minister at age 34, was in third place with 18.7 percent. "We have had a great campaign. We have the best candidates all over Finland and we are first in the polls, so I'm optimistic," National Coalition leader Petteri Orpo told AFP at a campaign rally on Saturday.

While Marin ranks as Finland's most popular prime minister this century in polls, she is struggling to convert her popularity into SDP seats in parliament.

"Although she is exceptionally popular, she also

arouses opposition. The political divide has been reinforced," Rahkonen said. While some view her as a strong leader who deftly navigated the Covid-19 pandemic and the NATO membership process, others see the rising public debt on her watch and scandals over video clips of her partying as signs of her inexperience. Finland's debt-to-GDP ratio has risen from 64 percent in 2019 to 73 percent, which Orpo's National Coalition wants to address by cutting spending by six billion euros (\$6.5 billion).

Marin has defended her track record and accused the National Coalition of wanting to "take from the poor to give to the rich". A top spot for the far-right Finns Party, and a far-right prime minister, would be a first in Finland, with its leader Riikka Purra poised to top her party's record score. Her eurosceptic party wants a hard line on immigration, pointing to neighbouring Sweden's problems with gang violence as a cautionary tale. "The biggest issue at the

moment is the growing juvenile delinquency," she told AFP on Saturday, claiming that "most of these street gangs and young criminals in the streets are migrants". Support for the populist party has surged since last summer, spurred by the "rise in energy prices and the general decline in purchasing power" following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Rahkonen said.

While the party served in a centre-right government in 2015, it later split into two factions, one hard-line and the other moderate, with only the hard-liners still in parliament.

The Finns Party sees an EU exit as its long-term goal and wants to postpone Finland's target of carbon neutrality for 2035. Negotiations to build a government are expected to be thorny. Marin has ruled out forming a government with what she calls the "openly racist" Finns Party, while Orpo has said he will keep his options open, despite clashing with the Finns Party on immigration, the EU and climate policy.

Nazi monument at Swiss cemetery sparks controversy

CHUR (BBC): For decades the huge monolithic block of granite in the middle of the cemetery in the Swiss town of Chur was ignored by passers-by; no one seemed to know quite what it was.

But the 13-tonne (13,000kg) stone monument that dwarfs the nearby gravestones is now causing controversy - and embarrassment. Research by a local journalist has revealed links to Nazi Germany, and to neutral Switzerland's own awkward relations with its World War Two neighbours. Chur's cemetery is in the centre of town. Many people, like radio journalist Stefanie Hablützel, pass it every day on the way to work or out shopping. Nowadays the monument at the cemetery, untended, is covered in moss. The engravings on it are difficult to discern.

"At first sight it looks like a war memorial," says Stefanie, pointing out some faint lettering: "1914 - 1918; hier ruhen deutsche Soldaten... here lie German soldiers." In fact, thousands of wounded prisoners of war, French and British as well as German, were treated and interned in Switzerland during World War One. Some died from their injuries, others during the 1918 flu pandemic.

But Chur's monument was not built until 1938. "That's 20 years after these men died," says Stefanie. "It wasn't built to mourn these dead soldiers, it was built for propaganda reasons, for the Nazi regime."

Swiss historian, Martin

Bucher, explains that, as the Nazis grew in power in Germany, their propaganda involved cult-like worship of their war dead. In the 1930s the German War Graves Commission became part of Hitler's propaganda machine. Its task, to create visible signs of Nazi power in Germany's neighbours as well as at home.

There were many thousands of Germans living in Switzerland at the time, and, Martin says, they were organised. "In Switzerland all these organisations you know from Germany existed. The National Socialist Party, the German Labour Front, the Hitler Youth. They were all here, but only for Germans, not for Swiss people." Germany's War Graves Commission submitted ambitious plans to build a vast mausoleum in the Swiss town of St Gallen. This was rejected by Swiss authorities. But the monument in Chur was approved. Polished and engraved in Munich, using the Fraktur font, a style regularly used in 1930s Nazi Germany, it was delivered to Chur on the eve of World War Two.

At the time Chur's residents must have known what it was, Martin insists. "On Nazi holidays they put Swastikas on this monument... people would have seen it was a Nazi monument." Some were clearly unhappy. Stefanie Hablützel, who has reported on the story for Switzerland's public broadcaster SRG, uncovered an indignant letter to the local newspaper, written in 1938, asking "why do we have a Nazi stone in our cemetery?" Swiss

sympathisers of Nazi Germany were well-documented in canton Graubünden, of which Chur is the capital. But homegrown Swiss fascist parties never really took off, getting only two seats in the Swiss parliament in 1935, and never standing again. While Switzerland still has no official memorial to the Holocaust, parliament did approve plans for one in March last year. There are, however, around 50 unofficial monuments.

Throughout the war, Germans in Switzerland continued to be active in the Nazi party, and continued to display their Nazi sympathies. And the Swiss, hoping as usual to stay out of the fighting, made compromises with Berlin, banking Nazi gold, and turning away Jewish refugees.

Then, just one day after the war ended, neutral Switzerland got off the fence. "There was a huge purge," says Martin. "The Swiss government tried to punish Swiss Nazis, there were trials."

German Nazis, meanwhile, were expelled. "I think after that a lot of people were thinking it's done now, the Nazis are away, no problem," he says. "And I think they forgot this monument." So complete was this collective amnesia that today, among people like Stefanie Hablützel, born decades after the war, the origins of the monument, and the Nazi presence in Switzerland, were a revelation. "I grew up here in Chur," she says. "And I didn't realise how many Nazi organisations were present in the 1930s, here in Chur."

Even local member of parliament Jon Pult was taken by surprise. "Switzerland wasn't Nazi free, and I knew that," he says. "But I didn't know about this monument."

"I live maybe 500 metres from the cemetery where this stone is, and I walked past that stone probably a hundred times, and I never realised that it is of course a Nazi stone. Now that I know it's very clear. I get it, I see it." Despite a certain embarrassment, very few people have suggested tearing down the monument. But even fewer say it should be left just as it is, Stefanie says.

Instead, consensus seems to be forming around a proposal to re-examine and publicise that period in Swiss history, just as Switzerland had to re-examine, and apologise for, its treatment of Jewish refugees during the war.

"I think it should stay in Chur," says Martin. "But I think it's important to tell people why it is there," he adds. "Maybe it can be a monument to remember all the people who died in the Second World War."

Jon Pult agrees that Switzerland should "create a memorial" out of the monument "to remember the horrific crimes of the Nazis". But also, he says, the monument, and the information he expects to be placed in the cemetery with it, should serve as a warning. "We should create a culture of knowledge about this, because as we know there is always a danger of fascist ideologies, totalitarian ideologies, as we see now for example in Russia."

Pope presides over Palm Sunday after hospital stay

VATICAN CITY (AFP/APP): Pope Francis presided over mass in St Peter's Square Sunday, as he kicked off events leading to Easter, just a day after leaving hospital following a bout of bronchitis.

The 86-year-old's admittance to hospital on Wednesday with breathing difficulties sparked concerns he may not be well enough to attend a series of rites in the most important week in the Christian calendar. But Francis had promised to be present, and he waved briefly to some 30,000 people as he rode in his popemobile through the square, which was adorned with over 35,000 plants and flowers.

He looked serious as he followed the procession through St Peter's Square of religious figures, including red-robed cardinals, carrying large palm leaves and olive branches.

Palm Sunday marks the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem before his crucifixion. Easter Sunday, which this year is on April 9, celebrates his resurrection from the dead.

As a smiling Francis had left Rome's Gemelli hospital Saturday after a three-night stay, he quipped to well-wishers who asked how he was "I am still alive!"

The head of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics has suffered from increasing health issues over the past few years, including knee problems which have forced him to use a wheelchair and walking stick.

Francis was expected to remain seated throughout the mass, while a cardinal conducts the ceremony at the altar.

The Vatican said this was an arrangement adopted prior to the pope's latest illness, as he is no longer able to stand for long periods. Francis felt unwell Wednesday following a general audience in St Peter's Square, but his condition improved after he was given antibiotics.

The hospitalisation was his second since 2021, when he underwent colon surgery, also at Gemelli.

His increasing health issues over the past year have sparked widespread concern, including speculation that he might choose to retire rather than stay in the job for life.

Francis marked 10 years

as the head of the worldwide Catholic Church earlier this month.

He has pushed through major governance reforms and sought to forge a more open, compassionate Church, although he has faced internal opposition, particularly from conservatives. He has repeatedly said he would consider stepping down were his health to fail him -- but said last month that, for now, he has no plans to quit.

Francis' previous stay at Gemelli in July 2021 lasted 10 days. He was admitted after suffering from a type of diverticulitis, an inflammation of pockets that develop in the lining of the intestine, that required surgery. In an interview in January, the pope said the diverticulitis had returned.

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Francis marked 10 years

Veteran, novice face off in Montenegro's presidential vote

PODGORICA, Montenegro (AFP/APP): Sunday's presidential run-off in Montenegro will pit an establishment incumbent against a rising political star.

On one side is Milo Djukanovic, who has dominated Montenegro's political scene for more than three decades, and on the other is pro-European political upstart Jakov Milatovic.

Here is a brief rundown on the two candidates. Considered the father of the Montenegrin nation by some and accused of being a corrupt autocrat by his detractors, Djukanovic has been a key figure in the tiny Balkan country for more than 30 years.

The 61-year-old was

installed at the helm of the former Yugoslav republic in 1991 by former Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic when he was just 29.

But as Serbia increasingly became an international pariah, Djukanovic pivoted West, broke ties with Belgrade and helped oversee Montenegro's independence in 2006. In the years since, he launched the country's move to begin the process of joining the European Union, and led it to join the NATO alliance in 2017.

But even as he embraced the West, Djukanovic paved the way for Chinese economic influence, while Montenegro remained an attractive destination for Russian oligarchs and dissi-

dents alike.

Over the decades, Djukanovic has ruled as prime minister seven times and served as president twice, as he accumulated vast influence over the country's private sector.

But in recent years, Djukanovic's allure has begun to fade.

During the last parliamentary elections in 2020, his Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) lost its majority in the legislature for the first time. Its recent performance in municipal polls has also been lacklustre. Djukanovic's critics have long accused him of ruling by division.

But he has prested his time at the country's helm as

a period of stability, serving as a fierce defender of the Montenegrin nation against Serbian interlopers, pro-Russian elements and the influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Allegations of corruption have also marred his career, including accusations he played a role in a cigarette-smuggling ring between Montenegro and Italy in a case that was eventually dropped. Djukanovic has repeatedly denied fostering any links to organised crime or stashing money abroad in hidden accounts. "No one, not even the most malicious, will be able to find anything that I have done to the detriment of the state and the law," he said recently.

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American arms flourish terrorism in AfPak region

According to the media, the militants who are carrying out attacks inside Pakistan have obtained US lethal weapons left behind in Afghanistan, and that sophisticated weaponry including long-range snipers, thermal cameras, communication equipment, and modern military vehicles had caused great challenges for Pakistani security forces in Erstwhile FATA and Balochistan. The reports suggest that the influx of American weapons has boosted the military capabilities of the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Baloch separatist groups and caused an upsurge in violence in Pakistan past two years.

A wave of unrestricted terrorism dangling across Pakistan and the nation tolerates extreme grief over frequent terror incidents against innocent civilians and law enforcement agencies in the Erstwhile FATA, Peshawar, and Malakand divisions along with the border belt regions of Balochistan. Unfortunately, multiple measures including in placement of the latest border control systems, the construction of border fencing, checkposts, and military forts on the Pak-Afghan border, along with the enhanced border patrols, and screening of visitors coming from Afghanistan failed to overcome the risks of cross border terrorism and terrorists' movement across Durand Line. Apparently, the slackness of government institutions, corruption, and the lax behavior of security officials helped terrorism regain its roots in its previous hideouts in the country.

Unfortunately, this time the size and gravity of the risk of terrorism are multitudinous than in the past because banned outfits enjoy sanctuaries in neighboring Afghanistan and have passive support from the host government in that country. Meanwhile, the traders of death and destruction are well equipped with the latest arsenals left behind by the United States military during the run from the country. According to the Pentagon report, the US military left behind modern weapons worth \$ 7.2 billion including aircraft, guns, armored cars, communication and specialized equipment such as Night Vision Googles (NVGs), snipers' guns, communication gears, and biometric devices that were grabbed by the ruling Taliban in mid-2021. The reports suggest that a significant amount of those modern weapons and military equipment fell into the hands of war lards, black market, and Pakistani banned outs including TTP, Balochistan Liberation Army, and others, and currently those weapons are virtually being used against the state of Pakistan.

The current situation presents a grave threat to the writ of the law and poses severe risks for Pakistani security troops deployed in the regions adjoining the Afghan border. Surprisingly, the Pakistani military did not share its official perspective on the reports published in local and international media regarding the use of American arms by the banned outfits against the LEAs. Whereas, KP former Police Chief, Moazzam Jah Ansari has told the media last year that the militants picked up sophisticated weapons left behind by the Americans and waged war against the KP Police. As said, terrorist cells successfully used the latest American weapons such as NVGs and sniper guns against Police and inflicted severe losses to their adversary in the past.

Historically, TTP's attacks against the state of Pakistan have increased significantly after the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, because both groups have identical ideologies and pursuing similar manifestos in adjoining nations. Pakistan has persistently raised the issue of TTP safe havens in Afghanistan with Afghan interim authorities who vehemently showed the cold shoulder and refused to cooperate with Pakistan in this regard. Although, the situation is dire and ground realities made it more consequential for Pakistan because of wrong priorities and mishandling of the issue by the PTI government in past years. Pakistan could not tackle this issue alone because of its multidimensional and transnational nature thus Islamabad must engage the global community including the UN, the United States, Iran, and other regional countries including China to build pressure on Kabul to resist its support for terrorism along with preparing for a final and decisive campaign to eliminate the evil from its soil once and for all. So, peace and prosperity rule in the country.

When I wrote here a couple of weeks ago that cracks were already beginning to show in the then barely two-month-old Israeli government, I did not expect that within a short time it would be in full-on crisis mode to the extent that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would sack his Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and expose deep rifts even within his own Likud party.

In a country where security is a key concept used to justify almost everything, the most senior minister in charge of that security was unceremoniously sent packing. And what was his sin that so irked Israel's supreme leader? He dared to use his best judgment, something the prime minister is failing miserably to do at the moment.

Gallant, himself not exactly known for being an ardent defender of democratic values, urged the prime minister to halt the irresponsible destruction of the judiciary's independence, as it had become an issue of contention within the security forces, thus affecting their preparedness.

Gallant was most understated in his assessment, so as not to upset Netanyahu, the very sensitive defendant in three corruption cases, or his family, all of whom are quick to take any sign of criticism very personally.

Worried about the security implications should the government continue with its so-called judicial overhaul, the now former defense minister called for the legislation to be paused for a few weeks to create space for a wider and more constructive dialogue between the coalition government, the opposition, and other important stakeholders in search of common ground.

Considering the widespread public protests, the refusal of many reservists in key positions to serve, and the damage to the economy, all resulting from the attack on the judiciary,

most people would find this request sensible and helpful — but not the 2023 model Netanyahu. As a hostage to the far-right members of the coalition, as well as some members of his own Likud party, especially Justice Minister Yariv

Yossi Mekelberg

leagues in the coalition were cowed into silence for so many weeks. It would have been better if they had shown courage and challenged the prime minister before the country was

streets for nearly three months, and many thousands of reservists from the air force, intelligence corps, special forces, medical corps, cyberwarfare and many other units have been

the defense minister. But in his fear of the far right, and reportedly also his son, he instead caved in to National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir's demand and sacked Gallant.

It was a hasty and nasty move by a prime minister

But the question that should really be asked is not why Gallant spoke up, but why he and some of his more responsible colleagues in the coalition were cowed into silence for so many weeks. It would have been better if they had shown courage and challenged the prime minister before the country was brought to a standstill by the protest movement. The other, equally disturbing, question is this: What possessed Netanyahu, after witnessing the determination of the protesters and the gathering momentum among all who oppose the judicial coup, to sack the defense minister instead of taking the opportunity to heed his advice? The answers to both questions illustrate the eclipse of judgment and the unscrupulousness evident in this government, which prefers to keep itself, rather than the country, intact. The writing has been on the wall for all to see, as hundreds of thousands of Israelis have taken to the streets for nearly three months, and many thousands of reservists from the air force, intelligence corps, special forces, medical corps, cyberwarfare and many other units have been constantly warning that they would not serve under a government that is leading the country toward dictatorship.

Levin, the prime minister has been ensuring that voices of reason are automatically discarded and marked as those of enemies.

It is almost too easy for the protesters to make a hero out of Gallant, a former general, for being ready to sacrifice his own fledgling political career for the greater good. More than simply a savior of Israeli democracy, he was concerned about the ability of Israel's security forces to carry out their missions in the face of a malaise spreading from reservists to regular soldiers.

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brought to a standstill by the protest movement.

The other, equally disturbing, question is this: What possessed Netanyahu, after witnessing the determination of the protesters and the gathering momentum among all who oppose the judicial coup, to sack the defense minister instead of taking the opportunity to heed his advice?

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constantly warning that they would not serve under a government that is leading the country toward dictatorship.

But still the government refused to listen. What Gallant said, when he eventually found his voice and his courage, while Netanyahu was away on one of his brief and futile foreign excursions, was what he should have expressed clearly weeks ago, before the crisis broke and compromised his country's security.

But it is the second question that is even more of a mystery, because Netanyahu had a golden opportunity to halt the devastating legislation and put the onus on the army, its chiefs and

under siege, caught between serving his own private interest in escaping justice in his corruption trial by subordinating the judiciary to politicians (read himself), and serving the best interests of the country by heeding Gallant's plea to halt the crazy legislation.

But Netanyahu, true to character, opted to proceed with the legislation, only to discover that the protests he and his wife faced last weekend in London during their shopping and luxury dining jaunt were merely a prelude to what awaited him at home after sacking Gallant.

Despite the dismissal being unexpected, and tak-

ing place on a Sunday when protesters usually take a breather, almost instantly tens of thousands of people across the country took to the streets to express their dismay and anger at a prime minister who has always promoted himself as “Mister Security” yet who was ready to compromise his country's security if it might help keep him in power and out of jail.

Firing Gallant was not only a miscalculation in terms of gauging the response of the wider population. It also demonstrated that it is not Netanyahu who controls the government, but the government that is controlling him. It took only a night of protests for Netanyahu to revert to what Gallant had advised in the first place and pause the judicial reforms, but by then he had lost his defense minister and angered a number of his fellow Likud members in the Knesset.

To placate his far-right, messianic domestic and regional pyromaniacs, Ben-Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, and get them to agree to delaying the most harmful legislation brought against Israel's democracy since its inception, Netanyahu also agreed to establish a National Guard under the control of Ben-Gvir, as the latter had demanded.

When the going got tough for Netanyahu, he buckled under pressure, incited against those who opposed him in the streets, recklessly pushed his country to the brink of civil war, and handed the leaders of the settlement movement their own militia.

It is only those citizens of all political shades protesting in the streets in defense of the judiciary's independence who, through their conviction and persistence and by setting out their red lines as citizens, are now the backbone of Israel's security and economy and the guardians of the well-being of its society, and who can stop this madness.

Can the UN's new plan for Libya overcome the ‘chicken or egg’ paradox?

Hafed Al-Ghwel

Libya is once again in the headlines, following a recently announced plan by the UN's special envoy to the North African country, Abdoulaye Bathily, to re-energize the stalled political process and bring to a decisive end a decade-long, extremely turbulent transitional period.

Incumbent elites have repeatedly resisted attempts to reach an accord as it would be tantamount to relinquishing their monopolies on power, wealth, the use of force, and the ability to leverage foreign interference to further their narrow interests. In addition, the leading actors want to avoid any accountability from any potential transitional justice initiatives.

This staunch defense of the status quo serves only to promote the antithesis of what most Libyans, and the global community, hope to achieve through a free, fair and credible election process.

Bathily's plan to hold elections this year was well-received, save for some apprehensive voices lamenting its lack of implementability, and the whiff of a woefully familiar insistence on the ballot being some kind of cure-all for Libya's woes.

The UN has nothing concrete to show for nearly 12 years of mediation but now, for the first time in a long while, experts are hopeful that this latest gamble might just turn things around for good. After all, without such ambitious plans — which hint at introducing an alternative path from the existing corrupt institutions, buoyed by a rare international cohesion and shared understanding of the need for elections — a Libya adrift will likely result in renewed conflict.

Heavily armed actors have had time to gather their forces, ingratiate themselves with enterprising external meddlers and consolidate gains from the brief scuffles between the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity and the eastern coalition led by Khalifa Haftar.

Meanwhile, with neighboring Tunisia also under-

going unprecedented crises, sparking a surge in north-bound migration, a return to armed conflict in Libya would have devastating implications for the sub-region, as well as the Central Mediterranean region, and must be avoided at all costs — which

touted Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, which eventually collapsed due to corruption, coercion, intimidation and malign influences, robbing Libya its previous best hope for stabilizing its transition.

impeachable legitimacy will require existing good governance, which Libya desperately lacks.

That level of technocratic competence can only be preceded by a well-established electoral regime,

which is a familiar sense of despair as once-promising aspirations quickly give way, yet again, to nihilism and indignation. In Libya, repeating the same process many times over and expecting a different result has only left a beleaguered

For some reason, Bathily's plan is light on such details, which observers find concerning not only for the glaring vulnerabilities this reveals in its implementability but also for the lack of a credible plan for what will happen after Libyans cast their ballots. They should not only be fully cognizant of what they are voting for; they should also be aware how the resulting government will act, thereby granting it both legitimacy and a much-needed decisive mandate. Unfortunately, as successive UN special envoys have discovered, Libya is trapped in a strange “Which came first: the chicken or the egg?” paradox that would confound even the most hardened elder statesmen. Insisting on elections that are credible enough to confer impeachable legitimacy will require existing good governance, which Libya desperately lacks. That level of technocratic competence can only be preceded by a well-established electoral regime, constitutionally empowered to welcome a plurality and diversity of candidates to campaign unhindered. It would also cultivate trust in its processes and results, which is key to staging peaceful transitions of power.

probably explains the rare convergence of support for Bathily's plan.

But what exactly is this proposal that is being hailed as a promising first step? Bathily wants to convene an electoral steering committee of up to 40 members drawn from across Libya's sociopolitical scene. This would include civil society, activists, community leaders, and even prominent figures among the current political elites.

Such a diverse group would be empowered to lay the groundwork for, and map a path to, elections. The process would require settling squabbles over the constitutional basis for electoral laws, security planning, logistics, and dispute resolution.

It is a plan eerily similar to the 2021 road map that resulted in the once highly-

For some reason, Bathily's plan is light on such details, which observers find concerning not only for the glaring vulnerabilities this reveals in its implementability but also for the lack of a credible plan for what will happen after Libyans cast their ballots. They should not only be fully cognizant of what they are voting for; they should also be aware how the resulting government will act, thereby granting it both legitimacy and a much-needed decisive mandate.

Unfortunately, as successive UN special envoys have discovered, Libya is trapped in a strange “Which came first: the chicken or the egg?” paradox that would confound even the most hardened elder statesmen. Insisting on elections that are credible enough to confer

constitutionally empowered to welcome a plurality and diversity of candidates to campaign unhindered. It would also cultivate trust in its processes and results, which is key to staging peaceful transitions of power.

However, Libya lacks that, too, due in part to a ruling elite that is not keen on the idea of potentially relinquishing its power to newly elected representatives, or being stripped of ill-gotten gains in transitional justice proceedings.

As a result, even if the international community glad-hands Bathily's encouraging proposals, average Libyans remain, for the most part, unconvinced because the plans do not resolve the paradox or provide a suitable road map for dealing with it in an appropriate time frame.

Thus, the prevailing sen-

public feeling resigned in the face of feuding elites, because the alternative is a peace imposed by the force of arms.

So, what will happen next? Provided Bathily manages to leverage international support and can shepherd the next iteration of the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, elections could, technically, take place this year. That will depend on whether deeply involved actors such as Egypt and Turkey follow up on their diplomatic assurances with actual action by pressuring their Libyan proxies to take a seat at the negotiating table.

Next, the UN Security Council would also need to do more than just issue statements or draft interim resolutions. Elections are not easy even at the best of times and all the harder in a country ravaged

by conflict, political divisions and crisscrossed by competing external interests. If this “new” plan is to succeed in seating the next government, as well as sparking the restoration of functional state institutions after years of neglect or usurpation, it will need a more involved Security Council that is not distracted by geopolitical tensions elsewhere.

A key challenge, among several others, is of course security. It is still unclear how Bathily hopes to steer a political process in a bifurcated country where the east and south are controlled by a hostile coalition made up of thousands of foreign fighters and mercenaries, including the infamous Wagner mercenary group.

In addition, for controversial figures such as Haftar and Saif Al-Islam Qaddafi, as much as the ballot is a threat, it also offers a relatively bloodless alternative to state capture, provided they can influence electoral outcomes either during closed-door deliberations by Bathily's proposed high electoral steering panel, or by endlessly litigating its resolutions.

Worse, they could also resort to ballot-stuffing, voter intimidation and unattributed attacks on voting locations, all to create dubious pretexts for contesting election results after the forceful disenfranchisement of Libyans in areas they control.

For now, it can only be hoped that whatever manner of elections transpire will restore some stability and, more importantly, grant legitimacy to a unified executive authority, and not produce another dictator who will dismiss any constitutional basis for future elections.

Setting aside the shaky foundations of Bathily's plans, reenergizing Libya's stalled transition in this way will at least restore some momentum in the parallel tracks aimed at fixing the country's security architecture, finalizing a constitution-drafting process, and initiating a national reconciliation underpinned by robust transitional justice.

Dialogue the best hope for Israeli-Palestinian de-escalation

On March 19, senior political and security officials from Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Jordan and the US met in the Egyptian city of Sharm El-Sheikh to address escalating violence across Israel and the West Bank. Three weeks earlier, a similar session, convened at the request of Jordan, took place in nearby Aqaba.

With nearly 90 Palestinians and 14 Israelis killed since the beginning of this year, the meetings were held amid fears that a convergence of Islamic, Jewish and Christian religious celebrations next month could provoke even greater violence.

As someone who has negotiated ceasefires between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, I can attest that de-escalation will be ineffective unless it is paired with plans to address the economic, social and political dimensions of the crisis.

Legitimate concerns must be addressed within a shared narrative that encourages stepping back from the brink. Only then can meaningful de-escalation occur, creating the necessary space for political resolution.

In Aqaba, the intent was there. Both Israel and the Palestinian Authority agreed to abstain temporarily from unilateral actions that might exacerbate the situation. For Palestinians, this meant pausing their diplomatic efforts within UN bodies, while Israel committed to a four-month halt to discussions about new settlement units and a six-month pause on outpost authorizations.

The agreements reached in Sharm El-Sheikh expanded upon these initial measures and now not only include calls for de-escalation but also outline a framework for action. If implemented, the following three points from the Sharm El-Sheikh communique could serve as crucial stepping stones for progress.

Firstly, the agreement to create a mechanism for strengthening the Palestinian economy must be followed by the swift implementation of several long-standing projects for which the US has consistently advocated.

These initiatives include extending the operating hours of the Allenby crossing to promote Palestinian trade through Jordan, improving 4G mobile telecommunications services and electronic VAT receipts.

In the long term, both the Israeli and the Palestinian economies would benefit from updating and modernizing the economic agreements signed as part of the Oslo framework, known as the Paris Protocol.

New trade arrangements that include crossings and customs areas would also need to be

Nickolay E. Mladenov

cal crisis due to a mix of domestic and external factors that have severely limited the government's capacity to borrow funds, invest in development and, ultimately, pay salaries.

While these reforms would address public payroll reductions, fiscal leakages, corruption and inef-

Palestinian government must reform its controversial prisoner payment system, which faces increasing scrutiny from the US and the EU. This is essential to regain access to some of its tax income, currently withheld under Israeli law, and potential US funding that has been withheld by the Taylor Force Act.

tions begin on these subjects.

The immediate focus of any discussion should be twofold. Firstly, the talks should emphasize the enhancement of security coordination and the empowerment of Palestinian security forces to assume their duties and responsibilities effectively in their areas of operation, particularly in Area A of the West Bank, which falls under its security control.

This would alleviate the need for Israel to take unilateral action and undermine the PA's control in these areas.

However, it is a difficult step for the authority's security forces to take, as they are reluctant to act in places such as Jenin and Nablus due to fears of popular backlash.

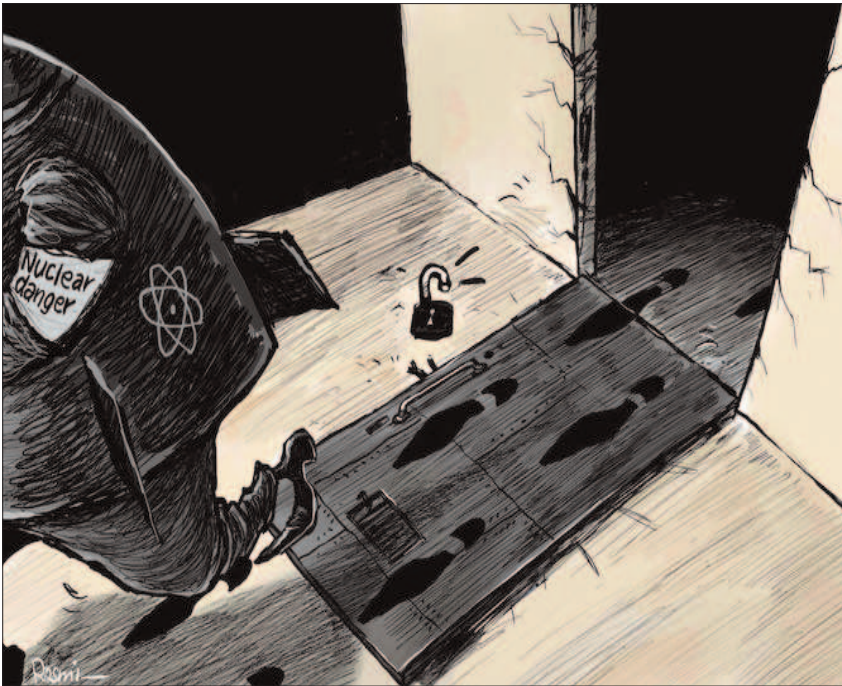
Secondly, improved coordination and communication in tense situations could help mitigate inflammatory statements and actions by all parties involved. The US, Egypt and Jordan have the potential to play significant roles in facilitating such dialogue.

There remains some uncertainty over whether the positive momentum created by the Aqaba and Sharm El-Sheikh meetings can yield tangible results and withstand the pressures, either from the coinciding religious holidays of Ramadan, Passover and Easter, which all occur in April this year, or from the radicals who are intent on escalation.

The true challenge lies in executing the steps agreed upon during the meetings. This necessitates not high-level international events but, rather, diligent efforts in daily communication and a mutual understanding that without such measures, tensions will continue to rise and the situation might rapidly spiral out of control.

The likelihood of all or some of these measures being implemented remains an open question. Yet given that the Middle East Quartet, which united the US with Russia, the EU and the UN to address such situations, is defunct, it is reassuring that Washington is now engaging with Egypt and Jordan in a new format that could bring Israelis and Palestinians together.

Obstacles might arise but the first step on the path toward political resolution is for Israeli and Palestinian security officials to agree that without coordination, the current crisis will only worsen.



Every human can make a difference in fight to cut waste

Ranvir S. Nayar

As the world marked yet another International Day of Zero Waste last week, it may be about time to look seriously at cutting the waste generated in every aspect of human life, mainly due to the modern lifestyle that is unfortunately spreading like a virus around the world, moving from rich countries to developing and even poor countries.

Waste has a serious impact on all aspects of the environment — be it land degradation, global warming, greenhouse gas emissions or increasing the toxicity of our water, air and soil. For instance, food and household waste is said to be responsible for at least 20 percent of methane production in the US every year. Methane is about 80 times as potent as carbon

Bank, the per capita waste generated per day in the North America region — already the highest in the world — is set to rise from 2.21 kg in 2016 to 2.5 kg in 2050. In comparison, the figure for South Asia will rise from 0.52 kg to 0.79 kg and sub-Saharan Africa's will go from 0.46 kg to 0.63 kg.

The situation is no different in water wastage. The per capita consumption of water in the US is 3,800 liters per day, while that of the Democratic Republic of Congo is a measly 34 liters. While domestic water consumption is rising and there can be wastage, the biggest factors responsible for rising water consumption are agriculture, automobiles, beverages and textiles. One pair of jeans takes up to

every institution around the world, but is also the easiest. It is logical as it makes the best economic sense, especially in times like these, where near-record inflation is hurting not just the poor but even the middle classes all over the world. Not many realize the obvious fact that buying only what is needed and in the quantities needed leads to enormous savings for households and companies alike. Also, if one starts to buy only what is needed when it is needed, it will curb the mindless growth in production of all kinds of goods. Once again, more production means more pollution and a negative impact on the environment.

Most ironic of all is that solutions to cut waste exist all around, it is just a question of implementing them. For instance, to cut food

The amount thrown away is rising every year and across all countries, with few exceptions. According to World Bank estimates, global waste generation is set to rise to 3.88 billion tons a year by 2050, an increase of 73 percent over 2020. This could lead to a rise in methane emissions of more than 13 megatons per year in the next decade alone, which would have a severe impact on global warming. Even though most of the growth in waste generation in absolute terms will come from Africa and South Asia, mainly due to sharp increases in population, the burden of the rich nations is not headed for a decrease, even though their populations have stabilized or are decreasing. The rich countries account for only 16 percent of the global population, yet generate 34 percent of all solid municipal waste. According to the World Bank, the per capita waste generated per day in the North America region — already the highest in the world — is set to rise from 2.21 kg in 2016 to 2.5 kg in 2050. In comparison, the figure for South Asia will rise from 0.52 kg to 0.79 kg and sub-Saharan Africa's will go from 0.46 kg to 0.63 kg.

dioxide in heating up the planet. Globally, food waste and other organic waste accounts for 65 percent of all the waste dumped in landfills around the world.

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According to the World

11,000 liters to make, while a cup of coffee takes 140 liters to make.

More waste being consumed around the world means more water is being wasted, which then flows into the ocean of sewage that is being produced every day. More than 2 million tons of sewage and industrial and agricultural waste is discharged into the world's rivers, lakes and oceans every day. This has led to a high level of pollution of natural water resources, notably freshwater supply. As a result, more than 20 percent of the 10,000 known freshwater fish species have become extinct or imperiled in recent decades.

The story is no different when it comes to air or soil pollution, which have also risen sharply in the past few decades due to humanity's activities and waste generation. Mountains of plastic sit all over the world, degenerating into microplastics that pollute air, water and land.

Yet, eliminating or at least reducing waste is not only the most logical step to be taken by every human, every company and

waste, hotels and restaurants can reduce the size of their servings and excess food can be taken home by staff or given to the needy. It is also time to review best-by and use-by dates to ensure that food that is safe to consume is not thrown away. It is also important to link large producers of food waste to food banks. One of the UN Sustainable Development Goals is to halve per capita food waste by the year 2030.

While curbing food waste is more dependent upon individuals, there are areas where governments and businesses need to step in. Governments should provide incentives for the production and purchase of energy-efficient devices and vehicles, as energy consumption is the largest source of pollution. Waste prevention is even better than recycling in fighting climate change and reversing environmental degradation. Its biggest advantage is that waste prevention does not depend on any external factor. Every human can begin to make a difference anywhere and also see the benefits immediately.

US needs to keep its allies to preserve the dollar as a global reserve system

The past decade or so has seen American withdrawal from several conflict zones with little appetite seen for military engagement or involvement in global disputes.

The power of the US now rests almost solely on the status of the US dollar as a global reserve currency, allowing it to use sanctions and exert pressure on countries. In order to maintain this, it must also keep its allies invested in that system.

In fact, the US dollar is more than a currency. There is a whole system built around it. Sovereign financial instruments, be they currency or bonds, are also political documents that have behind them institutional arrangement, credible legal frameworks, international alliances as well as military, political and economic power. Any merchant who invested in Ottoman or Austrian bonds before the First World War learned that lesson the hard way.

But the dollar system is still solid, the only game in town, and there are no indications of its demise. On the contrary, during financial crises, people still rush to it for safety. Istanbul bazaar traders, in these times of inflation, convert their Turkish lira to dollars almost daily as a store of value.

This is partly an intangible faith in its value and convertibility and mainly because there is no credible alternative.

This was tested in 1981 when the US dollar lost about two thirds of its purchasing power through

stagflation and still maintained that status. I remember left-wing student organizations celebrating the end of American capitalism in conferences 42 years ago.

Debt ceilings can be raised multiple times and the country will be immune to financial crises as long as it can print its currency and there is global demand for it. No matter what its share of international trade is, other currencies traded have to pass through dollar-based convertibility to be credible; even gold is priced in dollars.

The world as we know it needs a currency of reference such as the dollar. There is no substitute. Furthermore, the dollar is not only a currency, it is also a platform for trade and payment and dispute resolution, mainly through American courts. To understand this, imagine having to resort to Russian or Chinese courts to resolve disputes.

It took two world wars to dislodge British sterling from that position, and the whole post-Second World War international institutional arrangements as well, as much of international trade is reliant on the dollar since it was adopted as the global reserve currency at the Bretton Woods conference.

That established the current international order and its institutions — such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the International Trade Organization. It would take a huge upheaval in the interna-

Nadim Shehadi

tional system to dislodge the dollar.

Having said that, the very fact that we are asking these questions means that the process has begun. We are seeing numerous alliances being formed to combat the dollar: Every time the US uses sanctions against a country or blocks it from using the SWIFT financial transfers network controlled by the US Treasury or other dollar-based instruments; every time it freezes dollar-based assets, it pushes more actors to start looking for alternatives. Who knows what will happen with central bank digital currency if it also moves to interbank operations. No state can defeat the dollar on its own but alliances are forming with that sole purpose.

When states have an incentive to move away from any instruments or bonds that the US can seize at leisure or displeasure, that system is no longer safe — even America's allies are worried. A friend's father once said that ideally banking should be boring, now it is becoming dangerous.

Russia and China are leading the charge and are gathering allies through several mechanisms. One of them is the expansion of the BRICS alliance already composed of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The acronym was coined by Jim O'Neill, the former chief economist of the Goldman Sachs group who has recently called for its expansion — and there are

already talks with several countries, including some major oil producers, to join it.

China leads the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a Eurasian economic, political, security and defense bloc that is also seeking an expansion of its members. They are already discussing alternative arrangements that would hedge against US-dollar dominance. These efforts have increased with the Ukraine war and the stepping up of Russian-Chinese trade in yuan.

The global economy is also going through a period of instability. In the past 12 years, especially since 2011, we have witnessed increasing protest movements that represent cracks in the post-Second World War system.

In the 1980s, when we spoke of a global debt crisis it was understood to mean the debt of developing countries. In 2023, we automatically also think of some of the leading economies such as Japan and the UK, as well as the PIIGS group in Europe composed of Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain, with Greece having the highest debt to GDP ratio of close to 178 percent. The US is again immune to this but the consequences of a large-scale global crisis remain unpredictable.

There is a new generation that is questioning that world order. A generation that still pays taxes but gets fewer services than the previous one and is expected to shoulder the debt burden their parents'

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No trade relations with Israel, says Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has strongly rejected reports of trade relations with Israel by terming such information "sheer propaganda."

In a press release issued in Islamabad, the Ministry of Commerce stated that the rumours about beginning of Pakistan-Israel trade is sheer propaganda after a news release of American Jewish Congress which was misrepresented. "Even in their press release they nowhere mentioned about official trade between Pakistan and Israel," a spokesman at the ministry said, adding "However, neither we have

any trade relations with Israel nor we intend to develop any."

A Jewish Pakistani Fishel Benkhald had sent food samples to three businessmen in Jerusalem and Haifa through UAE in personal capacity who he met in foreign countries during food exhibitions.

Nevertheless, it was not supported by Pakistan Government and no banking or official channel was involved either.

The spokesman further stated that in our talks with UAE, the issue of origin will be strictly implemented. UAE has curtailed tariffs on 96 percent goods

traded with Israel which has benefited traders from UAE to Israel.

Pakistan has very clear policy of trade with countries. According to Import Policy Order, 2022 Pakistan has explained the prohibition of trade with various economies.

According to the Import Policy Order: "Import of the followings are banned, namely:

(a) goods of Indian or Israeli origin or imported from India or Israel:

Provided that the provisions of this clause to the extent of India shall not apply to therapeutic products regulated by the Drug

Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP).

(b) import of live animals, i.e. cattle, buffalo, sheep and goats and meat & bone meal (MBM) and feed ingredients of animal origin are banned from countries classified by the World Organization of Animal Health (OIE) in the latest edition of Terrestrial Animal Health Code as Controlled Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) Risk and Undetermined BSE Risk.

(c) counterfeit products; and

(d) import of all rough diamonds from Cote d'Ivoire."

PIAF calls for careful policy as record inflation, high cost to hurt economy

E.P. Report

LAHORE: As the Consumer Price Index (CPI) based inflation has reached the highest level of 35.4% since July 1965 the Pakistan Industrial & Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has warned the record inflation and high cost of doing business would hurt economic growth, demanding a careful policy to keep it in control.

PIAF Chairman Faheem ur Rehman Saigol said that the most serious threat to the economy in the current fiscal year would be inflation, as the government plan of approaching the International Monetary Fund for financial assistance has brought a fresh wave of price-hike, because inflation is already hitting due to continuous raise in oil prices and depreciation of local currency.

He predicted that inflation would remain high and may even increase further due to market frictions caused by relative demand and supply gap of essential items, exchange rate depreciation and recent upward adjustment of administered prices of petrol and diesel.

He said that due to the lagged effect of floods, pro-

duction losses, especially of major agriculture crops, has not yet been fully recovered. Consequently, the shortage of essential items has emerged and persisted. Inflation may further jack up as a result of second round effect.

He said the IMF loan would have devastating effects on the economy, as with more taxes and increased rates of utilities, cost of production would further increase. This will render Pakistani exports uncompetitive in the global market.

PIAF chairman said that there is a consensus that a low inflation rate helps economic activities, while high inflation hurts economic growth. The high inflation environment affects decision making of all economic agents in economy, like investors, savers, consumers and producers through uncertainty about the expected payoffs from their decisions.

Moreover, a persistently high inflation also causes erosion of the value of the local currency in terms of foreign currencies. Such uncertainties, in turn, have adverse implications for economic activities.

Chairman PIAF said low inflation helps economic

agents to predict outcome of their economic decisions with fair level of certainty. Especially, producers follow their plans for business expansion with more confidence; and new investment is undertaken in the expectation of predictable returns.

As per PBS data, the food group, which commands a significant weight of 34.58% in the inflation reading, remained the major driver behind the increase. It increased from 170.06 in March 2022 to 250.25 in March 2023, a jump of over 47% while the transport group witnessed an increase of 55% YoY. He warned that inflation is expected to stay in this range at least for the next two months. He said that the transportation index was driven by a significant hike in auto rates in March, alongside, an increase in the POL prices, he said.

In addition to higher food being the usual culprit, higher gas prices amid long-due adjustment in gas tariffs are among key drivers.

Data showed that CPI inflation in urban areas increased to 33.0% on year-on-year basis in March 2023 as compared to an increase of 28.8% in the

previous month and 11.9% in March 2022. On a month-on-month basis, it increased to 3.9% in March 2023 as compared to an increase of 4.5% in the previous month and an increase of 0.7% in March 2022. Meanwhile, CPI inflation in rural areas increased to 38.9% on year-on-year basis in March 2023 as compared to an increase of 35.6% in the previous month and 13.9% in March 2022.

On a month-on-month basis, it increased to 3.5% in March 2023 as compared to an increase of 4.0% in the previous month and an increase of 1.0% in March 2022.

He said that high inflation is just one of the issues currently putting Pakistan's economy in distress as it also faces a balance of payments crisis. Pakistan is reeling from one of its worst economic crises in history. The country has been faced with a barrage of woes with a perceived default risk and a downgrade by international rating agencies reflecting the state of the economy that has also had to bear major political turmoil and frequent change in key leadership.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor displaying different kind of dates to attract customers at H-9 weekly bazaar.

DC fixes retail prices of vegetable and fruits

HYDERABAD (APP): The Deputy Commissioner Fuad Ghaffar Soomro has fixed wholesale retail prices of vegetable and fruits in district

Hyderabad and directed to strictly ensure implementation on the directives.

According to notifications issued here on Sunday, the DC while exercising powers delegated to him by the Government under relevant rules, fixed prices of essential commodities especially vegetables and fruits with immediate effect.

The DC also directed all vendors and shopkeepers to display rate lists at their businesses and strictly implement the prices, failing which strict action will be taken against the violators.

ICBC profit expands in 2022

BEIJING (APP): The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), China's biggest commercial lender, reported a net profit increase of 3.5 per cent last year.

The company's net profit attributable to shareholders stood at 360.48 billion yuan (about 52.46 billion US dollars) in 2022, according to its annual report.

Its business revenue dropped 2.6 per cent year on year during the period, according to the report.

Last year, the ICBC provided over 6.4 trillion yuan of financial support to the real economy.

By the end of 2022, its non-performing loan ratio stood at 1.38%, down 0.04 percentage points from the end of 2021.

35000 gunny bags disbursed

MULTAN (APP): Food department has started distribution of gunny bags for wheat procurement drive as 35703 gunny bags disbursed among 76 farmers across the division so far.

Deputy Director Food Shahid Khokhar while talking to APP here on Sunday said that the gunny bags distribution process was underway at 48 wheat procurement centres in Multan division.

He informed that the wheat procurement drive would also be started within a couple of days as harvesting started in early sowing areas.

He said that the wheat growers were asked to get their wheat dry before bringing at centres as there was some humidity in the wheat due to current rainy spell.

DD Food said that all the arrangements regarding whether procurement drive have been completed as over six lac metric ton wheat procurement target set for Multan division.

DD Food said that 4,83,058 metric ton wheat storage would be done at open place while 1,55,449 metric ton wheat storage in covered place across the division.

Similarly, 1,84,558 metric ton wheat target set for Multan district, 95,764 metric ton for Lodhran, 1,28,185 metric ton for Vehari and 2,30,000 metric ton wheat to be procured in Khanewal district.

Pakistan one of leading countries to use RMB for international trade

BEIJING (INP): Pakistan is one of the leading countries to use RMB for international trade settlement, according to China Economic Net (CEN).

Last November, People's Bank of China (PBOC) signed a memorandum of cooperation (MOC) on establishing RMB clearing arrangements in Pakistan, with Karachi Branch of the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) acting as the RMB clearing bank.

It bodes well for Pakistan to join the RMB settlement service as it encourages industrial transfer by assuaging the concerns of Chinese investors on financial losses due to the violently fluctuating exchange rate in Pakistan.

As more progress is yet to unfold, RMB-PKR dollarisation is expected to play a catalysing role in

Pakistan-China trade.

According to Guan Tao, a chief economist of a leading Chinese securities trader, the overall gloomy outlook on global economy this year and the international confidence in China's performance are enhancing the attractiveness of RMB assets.

Meanwhile, against the backdrop of volatile US dollar policies, more countries are diversifying their currency portfolio to hedge against financial risks.

RMB, as the fifth largest currency for international payments and foreign exchange transactions, is eyeing a boom in its international usage.

In recent years, China has been ramping up support for RMB clearing and settlement in its foreign trade, especially with Belt and Road countries.

In 2021, China's RMB

settlements with Belt and Road countries stood at RMB 5.42 trillion, up 19.6 percent year on year, as per a report released by the People's Bank of China (PBOC).

This week Brazil and China reached a deal to trade in their own currencies, ditching the US dollar as an intermediary.

This move followed the signing of a memorandum of cooperation earlier this year to establish renminbi (RMB) clearing arrangements in Brazil, according to Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning.

"These arrangements will help enterprises and financial institutions in both countries conduct cross-border transactions using the RMB. They will also further facilitate bilateral trade and investment", she added.

Collector Custom Sialkot visits SCCI to discuss EFS-2021 Scheme

SIALKOT (APP): Collector Customs Sialkot Nayyer Shafique visited the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) to discuss the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) 2021.

The awareness session was attended by SCCI President Abdul Ghafoor Malik, Vice President (VP) Amer Majeed Sheikh, Sialkot business community and representatives of various industries.

The SCCI president welcomed the Customs officials at the chamber for the awareness and training session and for enlightening exporters about the main features of EFS and answering questions by exporters.

The collector Customs Sialkot said that currently there was a liquidity crisis in the country due to various reasons and Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) was a good opportunity for the business community in the liquidity crisis.

Addressing the session, President SCCI Abdul Ghafoor Malik said that Sialkot is an important economic hub and totally export-oriented city of the

country. He said it is the only export-oriented city in Pakistan where 99 per cent products produced are exported to various parts of the globe. Through export, Sialkot-based small and medium industries were earning foreign exchange amounting to over US\$2.5 billion per annum and strengthening the national exchequer, the SCCI chief added.

Malik said that thousands of small and medium sized industries were functioning in and around Sialkot and the city was globally known for its quality products, unique export culture and for manufacturing value-added goods like leather products, sports goods, surgical instruments, gloves of all sorts, textiles items, sports wear, martial arts uniforms and accessories, musical instruments, kitchen ware, hollow ware, knives, cutlery items and military uniform badges, etc.

Earlier, Collector Customs Sialkot Nayyer Shafique was welcomed by SCCI President Abdul Ghafoor Malik and Vice President Amir Majeed Sheikh.

Sports goods association signs MoU

SIALKOT (APP): The Corporate Relation Department, under auspices of Student Development Centre, GIFT University Gujranwala, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Pakistan Sports Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PSGMEA), Sialkot.

Chairman PSGMEA Arshad Latif Butt said on Sunday the purpose of signing the MoU was to develop strong academia-industry collaboration, by fostering close relations between the faculty, students and sports goods industry.

He said that closer relations with sports goods industry would also result in feedback on the relevance of academic pro-

grammes, which is very important to produce employable graduates. "Our efforts are aimed at ensuring relevance of the university education with needs of sports goods industry," Arshad Butt said.

Secretary General PSGMEA Mohsin Masood said that the MoU was aimed to promote strong academia-industry link for betterment of the university students and the MoU would play a vital role for productive collaboration between GIFT University Gujranwala and Pakistan Sports Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association, Sialkot.

Arshad Latif Butt (Chairman Matrixintech), Mohsin Masood (Secretary General PSGMEA), Rashid

Butt (Executive Member Popoye Impex), Muhammad Rafi Sony (leader of Association Soni Trading Corp.), Shahid Inam (Delcta Sports), Zainul-Abideen (Uni Pro Manufg.), Samson (Member PSGMEA) and Dr. Muhammad Jhangeer (Agasi Martial Arts) participated in the MoU signing ceremony. From the GIFT University Gujranwala, Dr. Khawaja Jehanzeb (HOD Management Sciences), Dr. Muhammad Hussain Sethi (HOD Fine Arts, Design and Architecture), Waleed Naeem Butt (Deputy Manager Corporate Relations Department), Qasim Mir (Faculty Member) and Faisal Rashid (Faculty Member) were present.

Court Notice

IN THE COURT OF SANA AFZAL CIVIL JUDGE (V) KOHAT, Suit no.377/1 Date of hearing.03-04-2023, Titled:-Malak Ahmed Khan Vs Abdul Rauf Notice against:- (Lrs Defendant no 3 Mehraban S/o Khanan Khan) Irfan S/o Mehraban R/o Tohg Bala District Kohat presently in Abroad Rayad Saudi Arabia contact no. 009665808930614 (Defendant) Whereas the above plaintiff has instituted a civil suit of against you defendant in which date of hearing 03-04-2023 is fixed for your appearance. Since your intimation/service is not possible through ordinary means/mode therefore you defendant is intimated through this publication to appear before this court by person or by pleader on date fixed 03-04-2023 otherwise court shall be proceeded in accordance with law order Issued on 29-03-2023. (Court of C.J, V Kohat)

Need stressed to tap potential of trade with UK

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pak-British Friendship Council North West Chapter, Muhammad Arbab Khan Sunday said that he would play a role to further increase bilateral trade ties between Pakistan and UK as both countries have a good potential for trade in many areas for mutual benefit.

He said this while exchanging views with Mian Kashif Ashfaq Chairman UK-Pakistan Joint Business Council and Chief Executive Officer Pakistan Business Council during his visit to the business council office in Lahore, said a press release.

He said that the Pakistani diaspora in the UK was keen to invest in Pakistan as they wanted to see Pakistan as a strong economy. He said that a further conducive business environment would attract

more investment from overseas Pakistanis settled in the UK and other countries.

He invited the Pak business council and Pakistan Furniture Council delegations to visit the UK to explore business collaboration with Britain counterparts and assured that he would cooperate in making their visit successful.

Speaking at the occasion, Mian Kashif Ashfaq said that the UK was an important trading partner of Pakistan and we wanted to further enhance trade and exports with the UK.

He said that bilateral trade between Pakistan and the UK was still less than US\$ 3 billion and stressed the need of developing strong business linkages between the private sectors of both countries to take bilateral trade to higher levels.

He said that the Chinese and Indian diaspora has played an important role in making the economies of their home countries better and stressed that the Pakistani diaspora should also come forward to steer Pakistan out of the current economic turmoil.

He said that the UK has already invested in Pakistan in many sectors including financial services, oil and gas exploration, petroleum refining, electricity generation, pharmaceutical, publishing, industrial chemicals and cement and stressed that Pakistani diaspora in UK should transfer technology and explore joint ventures and investment in Pakistan.

He shared useful ideas for further improving bilateral trade and economic relations between Pakistan and UK.



In brief

Pak blind team to in World Games

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan blind cricket team would feature in the International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) World Games after a gap of 16 years, scheduled to be held in Birmingham, UK from August 18 to 27. "A 20-member Pakistan team will be sent in the extravaganza after full preparation and selection on merit," Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) Chairman Syed Sultan Shah told APP. He said so far besides Pakistan, three other countries have confirmed participation in the cricket event of the World Games which includes Australia, England and India. "Pakistan team will feature in the mega event after a gap of 16 years. Prior to it, Pakistan chipped in the event two times in 2002 and 2006. Pakistan team could not participate in the World Games after 2006 as some visa issues had popped up time and again," he said. "But now we are in contact with IBSA and hopefully, our team will go in the World Games this year," he said. Sultan was of the view that a strong Pakistan blind cricket outfit would be sent to the Games, as we want to win the mega event and make the nation proud. "Pakistan team is very strong and has already won many laurels for the country. I'm hopeful that the Pakistan team will make the country proud in the extravaganza," he said.

Int'l Day of Sport on April 6

ISLAMABAD (APP): International Day of Sport for Development and Peace will be marked on April 6 across the globe including Pakistan which recognizes the power of sport in promoting peace and erasing cultural barriers worldwide. Sport is a positive way of achieving goodwill, healthy competition and cooperation across all cultures. The International Day of Sport for Development and Peace promotes healthy lifestyles and emphasizes the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) focus on giving as many people as possible access to sport. It is day when some of the world's leading sportspeople work together with communities to bring sporting opportunities to enrich lives, particularly children. The IOC and the UN have a long-standing commitment to using sport as a tool for social change and have worked together on many projects over the years. Both organizations have used sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, to bridge cultural understanding and improve education, health, economic and social development.

Butler inspires Heat victory

MIAMI (AFP/APP): Jimmy Butler scored 35 points as the Miami Heat snapped their three-game losing streak to inflict a damaging 129-122 defeat on the Dallas Mavericks on Saturday. Heat talisman Butler produced a typically dynamic performance to steer Miami to a precious win, leading the scoring from 12-of-16 shooting while laying on 12 assists. Cody Zeller provided offensive support with 20 points while Kevin Love and Max Strus added 18 points apiece, with Tyler Herro finishing with 15. Miami improved to 41-37 and remain seventh in the Eastern Conference standings, one win behind the sixth-placed Brooklyn Nets as they chase an automatic playoff berth.

Asalanka, Theekshana star in Sri Lanka's win against New Zealand

AUCKLAND (Agencies): Ish Sodhi's last-ball six tied the game after Dasun Shanaka looked to have almost won it for the visitors defending 12 off the final over, but Maheesh Theekshana held his nerve in the Super Over before Charith Asalanka chased down the nine-run target, to give Sri Lanka their first win of the tour. It was fitting that Asalanka was the man left at the end after his 41-ball 67 had helped propel Sri Lanka to a challenging 196 for 5 at Eden Park. Kusal Perera, back in the limited-overs side for the first time in over a year, also made a triumphant return batting through the innings for a 45-ball 53. With his thirteenth half-century in T20Is, he equalled Tillakaratne Dilshan's record for the most fifties in the format for Sri Lanka. While that would normally be an imposing total, Eden Park with its odd dimensions and especially short boundaries straight down the ground, meant Sri Lanka could never relax in their defence of it. And so it proved. Despite some early wickets in their chase, New Zealand's batters - particularly Daryl Mitchell, who struck five fours and three sixes in his 44-ball 66 - found boundaries with regularity to keep up with the

near 10-an-over required rate. But even if keeping the scoring down was proving difficult, especially later on with a bit of drizzle wetting the ball, Sri Lanka did well to keep picking up wickets at crucial junctures, and in the end did better in the key moments to secure a much-needed win. When Pathum Nissanka nicked one through first ball, the hosts might have had allusions towards repeating the collapse from the first ODI, but Kusal Mendis quickly put paid to any such notions. In a nine-ball cameo the diminutive right-hand batter plundered 25 runs, 24 of which came in boundaries. Adam Milne took the brunt of Mendis' wrath in a 22-run third over, inclusive of two sixes, one an impetuous flick over the shoulder. By the time Mendis departed, holing out at short fine leg after attempting another cheeky ramp, Sri Lanka had raced to 47 off just 3.2 overs. Sri Lanka lost three wickets inside the power-play, but their scoring rate never dipped. Following Mendis' early onslaught, Dhananjaya de Silva stepped in for a 10-ball 15, before Asalanka and Perera took hold of proceedings. Perera had earlier smoked three consecutive boundaries through the off side,

ranging from the arc behind point to straight of mid-off, but once Asalanka joined in, he took a back seat. Unsurprisingly, Asalanka favoured the short straight boundaries, walloping five of his six sixes in the arc in front of the pitch. New Zealand would pull things back after Asalanka's departure, allowing just 11 runs from overs 17 to 19, but such was the platform set by the two half-centurions, an 18-run last over, courtesy Wanindu Hasaranga, was enough to put some gloss on the innings at the death. Sri Lanka looked to have orchestrated a dream start to the defence of their total, getting rid of Tim Seifert and Chad Bowes inside the first two overs, but then entered Mitchell. Off just the third delivery he faced, Mitchell showed his intent, sending a high-elbow lofted drive sailing over the short straight boundary, before repeating the trick in Dilshan Madushanka's next over as well. At the other end, Tom Latham kept the required rate in control, ensuring at least a boundary each over. Together the pair added 63 off 39 deliveries. After Latham fell, Mitchell carried on, putting on a 40-ball 66-run stand with Mark Chapman.

Formula 1: Australian Grand Prix 2023 becomes another race defined by officials' decisions

MELBOURNE (BBC): Max Verstappen called it "a bit of a mess". Fernando Alonso used the word "stupid". George Russell said one of the decisions was "totally unnecessary". The Formula 1 drivers did not mince their words about the Australian Grand Prix. One of the most dramatic, chaotic and bizarre races in memory ended with a predictable win for Verstappen in his Red Bull, a car that is on another planet from the rest of the field. But that was about the only unsurprising aspect of an event that will be added to the increasingly long list of those which have been defined by controversial decisions by the sport's officials.

A capacity crowd of more than 130,000 people in Melbourne's Albert Park witnessed a remarkable race packed with entertainment but also one that raised questions about the direction in which F1's stakeholders have taken the sport in recent years.

Was it sport, or entertainment? Had decisions taken for perfectly reasonable reasons created a perfect demonstration of the law of unintended consequences? The drivers themselves certainly had questions, and admitted they would be raising some of the events of the day when they meet with governing body the FIA at



the next race in Azerbaijan at the end of the month. Sunday's grand prix was stopped three times - only the fifth time this has happened in 36 years - and on none of the occasions was there unanimity as to whether that was the correct decision. The first red flag was caused by a heavy crash for Alex Albon's Williams on lap six of the race, which left the barriers damaged and gravel spread across the track. This prompted Russell, a director of the Grand Prix Drivers' Association, to say: "I don't really know what's going on with some of the decisions. We are all trying to work together with the FIA to improve things but it is a bit of a challenge." Some will point out that Russell's opinion might have been skewed by the fact that he had skin in the game, for he had just pitted for fresh tyres, trying to take advantage of the safety car initially thrown for Albon's crash.

And when the red flag came, it turned what could have been an inspired call - but equally might not have been - into a disadvantage. But Alonso, who was one of the drivers who benefited from that red flag, admitted he was "surprised" by it. Far more controversial, though, were the decisions at the end of the race, prompted by Kevin Magnussen clouting the wall with his Haas on lap 54 - with four to go - and breaking a rear wheel. Again there was a safety car soon followed by a red flag. But the timing of the crash left time only for two racing laps. And on the restart there was another crash, and another red flag. Ferrari's Carlos Sainz tipped Alonso into a spin at the first corner, apparently turning the two-time champion's well-earned third place into zero points. And in the ensuing melee the Alpine drivers Pierre Gasly and Esteban Ocon - both in the points - crashed into each other.

Squash confirmed for 2024 Pan-American Masters Games

ISLAMABAD, Apr 02 (APP): The Pan-American Masters Games announced it would offer squash as one of twenty-six sports at the Cleveland 2024 Games, from July 12 to 21. Held every four years in the Americas, the Games would bring over 7,500 masters athletes from more than 50 countries along with thousands of spectators, families and friends, said a press release. The squash competition would be held at the Cleveland Racquet Club and will be open to players of all abilities. Registration for the Games would open later this summer with additional updates such as sport requirements and hotels will be made available throughout 2023. "Squash is a sport for life, and there is no better showcase of this than the large and active community

of masters players in the United States, across the Americas, and around the world," said Kevin Klipstein, President & CEO of US Squash. "Inclusion in the Pan-American Masters Games will showcase the skill, passion, and international diversity of our sport's athletes. We are grateful to the Cleveland Racquet Club for stepping forward as hosts, and I'm confident it will be an exceptional experience for all players." "We're excited to announce our official sports program for the 2024 Pan-American Masters Games. Our team has been hard at work over the last several months planning an event local, national and international masters athletes will enjoy," said Rachael Stentz-Baughner, Executive Director of Pan-American Masters Games.

Federación Panamericana de Squash President Francisco Paradisi said, "We're delighted to see squash confirmed once again for inclusion in the Pan-American Masters Games. "I wish everyone planning on being part of the Games in 2024 the best of luck." WSF President Zena Wooldridge said, "Squash has one of the most vibrant masters communities in the world, from over 35s to over 85s, with players from 10 different nations - four of those Pan-American - winning gold medals at last year's WSF World Masters Championships. "My thanks to the Pan-American Masters Games for including squash in next year's Games in Cleveland, as well as FPS and US Squash for their tireless work in supporting and promoting our sport."

Markram, Magala star in 146-run victory

JOHANNESBURG (Agencies): Aiden Markram scored his ODI century and went on to rack up the joint sixth-highest individual score by a South African, as the hosts notched up their third-highest score at the Wanderers to win the series 2-nil. Markram and David Miller thrilled a 10,000-strong crowd with a fifth-wicket stand of 199 in 118 balls, at more than 10 runs an over, in the last international of a summer that has seen cricket surge back to life in the country. Fittingly, it ended on a festive note as the hosts donned their pink kit to raise awareness for breast cancer, did their bit to ensure automatic qualification for this year's World Cup and brought back memories of the



2015 edition of this match, when they scored 439. Then, Hashim Amla, Rilee Rossouw and AB de Villiers scored centuries while David Miller did not face a ball and was on 0*

when the innings ended. This time Miller played a key role, first as a supporting act to Markram and then with an aggressive knock of his own, which ended nine short of

a sixth ODI hundred. He and Markram shared South Africa's second-highest stand for the fifth wicket to ensure South Africa set Netherlands a towering total.

Williamson out of IPL with knee injury

NEW DELHI (AFP/APP): Star New Zealand batsman Kane Williamson has been ruled out of the rest of the Indian Premier League season with a knee injury, his franchise Gujarat Titans said Sunday. "It is sad to lose Kane to injury so early in the tournament. We wish him a speedy recovery, with the hope of seeing him in action very soon," Gujarat director of cricket Vikram Solanki said in a statement. "Williamson will now head home to New Zealand for further assessment. The Gujarat Titans will finalise a replacement for the right-handed batter and an announcement will be made in due course," the statement added. Williamson jarred his knee attempting a catch in the opening game of the current IPL on Friday between Gujarat and Chennai Super Kings in front of more than 100,000 fans in Ahmedabad. The 32-year-old New Zealand captain tried to get up but couldn't, and had to be helped off the field by two physios. Williamson's exit after just one match of the big-bucks IPL is a blow to Gujarat as they seek to successfully defend their title after a fairytale debut season in 2022.

Other foreign players at Gujarat include South African big hitter David Miller, Australian Matthew Wade, Afghan spin wizard Rashid Khan, West Indies all-rounder Odean Smith and Irish bowler Joshua Little. Led by Hardik Pandya, Gujarat won the opening game in the world's largest cricket stadium against Chennai, captained by MS Dhoni and featuring England star Ben Stokes, by five wickets. Substitute Sai Sudharsan replaced Williamson in the match under the new "impact player" rule, one of several innovations in the 16th edition of the T20 tournament that runs until the end of May. Other big stars missing this season include England batsman Jonny Bairstow at Punjab Kings, Delhi Capitals captain Rishabh Pant and Mumbai Indians fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah.

Veteran Kvitova defeats Rybakina for 30th WTA title

MIAMI GARDENS (AFP/APP): Petra Kvitova drew on all her experience to claim her 30th WTA singles title with a straight sets Miami Open victory over Elena Rybakina on Saturday. Czech Kvitova, appearing in her first Miami final at the age of 33, triumphed 7-6 (16/14) 6-2 at Hard Rock Stadium, a victory which will return the two-time Wimbledon champion to the top 10 in the world rankings. Rybakina came into the final on a career-best 13-match winning streak after winning the title at Indian Wells and was looking for the rare "Sunshine Double" of both WTA 1000 events. It was a tight, serve-dominated battle until Kvitova broke to go 5-4 up but Rybakina, who represents Kazakhstan, immediately broke back. That set up a tie-break and having a 7-0 perfect record in those contests this season, reigning Wimbledon champion Rybakina would have been confident of her chances but Kvitova's serve was strong and her determination stronger still. The tie-break was a thrilling 22-minute, 28-second, 30-point shoot-out in which Kvitova saved five

set points to emerge triumphant when Rybakina hit a return into the net. Kvitova, a left-handed player, took that momentum into the second set, breaking early to go 2-0 up and from then on she never looked like letting her opponent, 11 years her junior, back into the contest. Rybakina couldn't convert a break point in the next game and then she herself was broken again when serving to stay in the match at 5-2 down. Kvitova, who has now won 30 of 41 career finals, said the tie-break, which saw each player have five set points, had turned the contest in her direction. "That was deciding the whole match for sure. I think it was the longest one I ever played in my life. Nothing is easy hanging out with Elena," she said. "(She hit) so many aces at the beginning of the tie-break, I was like oh my God, I couldn't even play, so it was a little difficult," added Kvitova, who now has nine WTA 1000 titles. Rybakina is part of a talented new generation on the WTA Tour, along with world number one Iga Swiatek of Poland and Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka, but Kvitova said she had been able to

draw on her greater experience. "I think it has played a good role in my mind. I have played so many finals. I know I can play well in a final, no matter who I am facing. So mentally that was important for me to know that," she said. "Of course this means a lot, that at my age I can still win big tournaments, the young ones are coming up all the time, it's tough to face them all the time, it's very tiring," added the Czech. Kvitova won 78 percent of her service points (52 of 67) and finished with 29 winners to 14 unforced errors. Rybakina fired 12 aces in the match and became the first player since Serena Williams at 2016 Wimbledon to hit 10 or more aces in six consecutive matches in a single tournament. The Moscow-born Rybakina said despite the disappointment she was well pleased with her Indian Wells title and runner-up finish on the "Sunshine Swing." "It was really tough in the first set and I think that made a big difference at the start of the second," she said. "I'm happy with the two weeks overall, not so much with the second set but I think it has still been a positive month here in the US," she added.

Pogacar escapes to Tour of Flanders triumph

OUDENAARDE, Belgium (AFP/APP): Tadej Pogacar won the Tour of Flanders on Sunday with a searing solo attack in the final 20km on the 274km one-day race. The Slovenian two-time Tour de France winner now has four Monuments (ultra-long one-day races) to his name after finishing 17sec ahead of last year's winner Mathieu van der Poel. The 24-year-old is attempting the rare crossover of Grand Tour riders to try and win the epic one-day races known as Monuments. Pogacar's soaring triumph makes him the first

man since the great Eddy Merckx to win both the Tour de France and the Tour of Flanders (1969, 1975). Pogacar has twice won the Tour of Lombardy, and has won one Liege-Bastogne-Liege, making this his fourth. "It's a day I will never forget," said Pogacar who was handed a large portion of local speciality chips at the finish line. "I almost cracked on the last climb but it was the only way to go," he said referring to his great rival Van der Poel being a stronger sprinter in a two-up finish. "I feel I can retire after this win and be super proud and happy." Pogacar has two Monuments

he needs to win to have collected all five. "Milan-SanRemo looks like the hardest to go and get, and I might need to put on some weight to win (Paris) Roubaix," he said of the remaining two. Van der Poel was at the heart of the frenetic opening period as the race rolled out of Bruges and this pace began to take its toll in the lush green Flemish plains on a cold day with low hanging grey skies. And the Dutch one-day specialist never gave up even producing a last surge over the final kilometre before exchanging smiles, hugs and congratulations with Pogacar.

Stronger Tiger eyes challenge of return to Augusta National

AUGUSTA (AFP/APP): Tiger Woods says he feels stronger than last year as he prepares to make another emotional return to the Masters. A year ago, Woods stunned the golf world by playing in the Masters, 14 months after sustaining serious leg injuries in a 2021 car crash. The 15-time major champion struggled to walk 72 holes and finished 47th at Augusta National but says his fitness and strength has improved dramatically heading into next week's showpiece in Georgia. "My core is so much stronger than it was then," Woods said. "That's one of the reasons why I've got the (Club) speed that I have. "I've had to use it a different way but also be careful with my back being fused. It's a challenge and that's the fun part about it." Woods shared 45th at the PGA Genesis Invitational six weeks ago, his third-round 67 the lowest round of his comeback from bone-shattering injuries that continue to make walking a greater test than shotmaking. "I can hit golf balls, I can chip. I can putt, I can do all that stuff. But I haven't walked and played a lot so that's the challenge," Woods said.

"The body, sometimes it says no even though the mind says yes." Woods, 47, trimmed his 2022 schedule to the Masters, the PGA Championship -- where he withdrew before the final round -- and the British Open, where he missed the cut. "I'm not going to play any more than probably the majors and maybe a couple more. That's it, that's all my body will allow me to do," Woods said of future years. "My back the way it is, all the surgeries, my leg the way it is, I just can't. That's just going to be my future... Hopefully this year I can get all four and maybe sprinkle in a few here and there. "But that's it for the rest of my career. I know that and I understand that. That's just my reality." Woods has also faced the fact that time is running out for him to even manage a slimmed-down schedule. "There will come a point in time when my body will not allow me to do that anymore," Woods said. "And it's probably sooner rather than later." Woods, whose 82 PGA Tour titles share the all-time record with Sam Snead, has joined Rory McIlroy in TGL, an arena-golf hybrid with video technology combined with a short-

game area set to launch next January. It's with such things, McIlroy said, that Woods will extend his golf legacy long after his playing days. "I think Tiger will still hang around the game forever," McIlroy said. "I'm pretty sure he'll be involved in the game... trying to be an ambassador and bring the game into the 21st century. "Still being around golf and making his presence felt doesn't necessarily have to mean hitting the golf ball in tournament play." For now, Woods said he made progress in restoring his game with four rounds at Riviera. "It means a lot. It's progress, headed in the right direction," Woods said. "It certainly was a little bit more difficult than I probably let on. "Even if I played four days at home, it's not the same as adrenaline, the system being ramped up like that, the intensity, just the focus that it takes to play at this level." Woods must also chill his body after extreme efforts to ready himself for the next day's challenge. "I pretty much lay in ice pretty much all night. It's not fun, very cold all the time," Woods said. "The ebb and flow of that, it's hard. It's hard mentally, it's hard physically."



In brief

IRSA releases 81,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 81,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 59,300 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1427.55 feet and was 29.55 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and out-flow in the dam was recorded as 20,300 cusecs while outflow as 10,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1101.70 feet, which was 51.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 21,900 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 28,400, 32,900, 40,900 and 9,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 23,200 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 8,800 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.

Four liquor supplier netted

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 04 liquor suppliers and recovered 80 bottles and 20 liters of liquor from their possession during a crackdown here on Sunday, informed a police spokesman. The liquor suppliers were identified as Adnan, Musawar Zahid and Hassan Iqbal. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and further investigation was in progress. SP Potohar Muhammad Waqas Khan appreciated the performance of the police team adding that the crackdown will be continued against drug dealers and liquor suppliers.

New ITP office lacks basic safety measures

ISLAMABAD (APP): The newly established office of Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) at Faizabad lacks proper security measures, despite receiving an average of over five hundred daily visitors for various affairs. The Faizabad office became fully operational on February 20, 2023 where various sections including licensing and education wing are operating. Police source said that more than five hundred persons visit this office on daily basis for various affairs mainly related to licensing and driving classes. A visit to the office has revealed that the vast area has no boundary wall and fiber rooms have been placed for police officials and Jawans. A small canteen is also there but it lacks proper facilities while the mosque has space to accommodate only 10-15 faithfuls. There is no proper wash room facility for visitors and even for the cops serving there. Police and their work are both widely perceived as sensitive, and the sacrifices as well as deaths of police officers or law enforcers in the war against terrorism attracted major headlines. Despite high profile, there is surprisingly little security in this newly established office of ITP and basic safety measures have been neglected in this vast area. A small gate has been installed for entry of visitors where only two law enforcers have been assigned duties. These cops are sitting under an outdoor umbrella cover in the tough weather who mostly allow visitors to enter into the ITP office premises after little questioning with them related to their visit. The staff attached to the offices of Chief Traffic Officer and Superintendent of Police (Traffic) has no proper sitting arrangement and they have been also using fiber rooms.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for of Housing and Works Maulana Abdul Wasay along with Federal Secretary for Housing and Works Iftikhar Ali inaugurating the newly constructed 2.5km long footpath.

Hafiz Hamdullah raises concerns about justice being flouted within judiciary

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) spokesperson Hafiz Hamdullah called for a full court to resolve political, constitutional, and judicial crises in Pakistan. In a statement released on Sunday, Mr Hamdullah questioned why there were restrictions on the formation of a full court if it was not unconstitutional.

He also argued that if elections in 90 days were a constitutional requirement, then fair and transparent elections, national security, and compliance with census and constitutional requirements. Mr Hamdullah criticized certain lobby groups for ignoring these other constitutional requirements and pushing for elections

to be held in instalments. He argued that those advocating for such a move could not be well-wishers of the country.

He further questioned whether judges who did not support the formation of a specific bench were rebellious against the constitution. Mr Hamdullah also raised concerns about justice being flouted within the four walls of the judiciary.

CDA to auction commercial plots in Islamabad to boost revenue

ISLAMABAD (APP): The capital Development Authority (CDA) is all set to auction commercial plots in various developed sectors of the federal capital, beginning on May 3, aiming to generate more revenue for the city and attract investors to participate in the auction.

Talking to APP, an official in the authority urged interested investors to participate in the auction, which will take place at the Jinnah Convention Centre in Islamabad. The development is expected to have a significant impact on the commercial estate market in the capital city.

He said the auction in various sectors of the Islamabad capital territory would continue till May 5, adding that the authority has already publicized the auction schedule of various plots in different newspapers. The official said that the real estate experts have announced it as a must-avail investment opportunity for investors nationwide and overseas. The participants investing in the public sale can possess commercial plots with 'legal protection.'

The details about the commercial plots located in the developed sectors of the federal capital included various centres, agro farms, petrol pumps, E-II northern strip, Class-III shopping centre, Park Enclave commercial and Blue Area E-11/F-11, Canopy side, he added. The participant, the official said that whoever submits full payment within 30 days of the bid acceptance letter would be offered a 10 percent rebate on the remaining amount.

He said the list of protocols announced by the authority in the auction voucher for prospective investors included a facilitation team presence is mandatory for the assistance of investors, 25 percent amount of the bid amount would be considered the first instalment, 1st instalment should be submitted within thirty days of bid acceptance, CDA to collect the advance tax on a pro-rata basis, site and marketing offices charges would not be included, building plan will be approved after the submission of 1st instalment centres. The official said the CDA auction voucher allowed accommodated investors with a one-window directorate to make their payments.

Belgium values Pakistan's efforts for peace: Envoy

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to Pakistan Charles Joseph M Delogne on Sunday said that Pakistan was an important country in the region and Belgium valued its efforts for bringing peace and stability.

The envoy made the remarks during a seminar titled "Pak-Belgium Relations: Past, Present and Future" which was organized by Policy Institute for Peace and Development (PIPD) and Bahria University, Islamabad.

"Pakistan and Belgium enjoy friendly and cooperative relations based upon common interests and shared values of democracy, pluralism and trust," he added.

The ambassador said that the bilateral diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Belgium were established soon after Pakistan's independence in 1948.

He further said that both countries had strong trade and economic relations in the areas of Textile, Pharmaceutical products, machinery, medical equipment, iron, steel and chemicals.

Addressing the students, he highlighted the two types of academic scholarships; ARES and VLIR-OUS that can be

acquired by HEC and Ministry of Education directly with the counterparts in Brussels. President Policy Institute of Peace & Development Ms. Wadana Khattak stressed upon the crucial role of cultural diplomacy and people to people contact in bringing the nations closer.

"Culture, art, music and sports, two countries can build a stronger and lasting relationship with each other," he added.

She expressed the dire need for cross-cultural collaboration between Pakistan and Belgium both at the government and public level to further enhance the ties and foster the already strong diplomatic relations. Dean Department of Social Sciences Dr. Adam Saud presented a scholarly expose at the historical and current perspective of relations between Belgium and Pakistan while exploring the new domains of cooperation and strengthening of bilateral ties. He said that there exist a number of areas in which Belgium and Pakistan can jointly work to benefit mutually from such as information technology, science, medical and industrial research and agricultural innovation.

Minimum Sadqa-e-Fitr fixed at Rs 320 per head

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Chairman Mufti Muneeb ur Rehman has declared the minimum amount for Sadqa-e-Fitr at Rs 320 per person, which is an obligatory charitable donation that Muslims are required to pay during the holy month of Ramadan.

The rate is based on the prices of staple food such as flour, dates, raisins, cheese or barley, as per the Islamic Shariah.

The importance of Sadqa-e-Fitr lies in helping the poor and needy people in society, especially during the festive occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. This act helps the poor and needy during the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr and is a way for Muslims to give back to their community and earn blessings from Allah Almighty.

According to Mufti Muneeb, the market price of 2.25 kilograms of flour, the amount for Fitrana is calculated as Rs 320 per head. The faithful who

want to pay Fitrana equal to the price of barley, and dates should pay minimum Rs 480 and Rs 2,800 per head respectively.

Similarly, the faithful wanted to pay Fitrana at the rate of raisin should pay Rs 6,400 per head for first class dates and Rs 4,800 per person for second class raisin. A Muslim, who possesses food in excess of his needs, must pay Sadqa-e-Fitr before the Eid prayers.

If the person is a breadwinner, he should also pay Sadqa-e-Fitr for his dependents, such as wife, children, dependent relatives or servants.

Mufti Muneeb also advised the people to pay the amount to the poor before Eid-ul-Fitr so that they could also celebrate the festival. The most deserving people for Sadqa-e-Fitr are close relatives followed by neighbours and the poor.

Mufti Munibur Rehman said real spirit of Fitr and Fidyah is two-time meal of a

destitute person, so it is better to pay the meal cost of a hotel. However, those who are wealthier, they should try to pay more to extend assistance to the poor in this time of skyrocketing inflation.

If any one had been unable to keep fast for the whole month of Ramadan, he or she should pay the whole month Friday as compensation worth Rs 9,600 in proportionate to flour price, Rs 14,400 for barley, Rs 84,000 for date, Rs 192,000 for raisin first class and Rs 144,000 for second class raisin.

Similarly, Kufara (compensation) for leaving 30 fasts in wheat would be Rs 19,200, for wheat Rs 28,800, for barley, Rs 168,000 dates, Rs 384,000 raisin first class and Rs 2,88,000 for second class raisin. Kufara in wheat would be Rs 3,200, barley Rs 4,800, dates Rs 28,000, raisin Rs 64,000 first class and Rs 48,000 for second class raisin.

Railways to complete Sibi-Harnai track by June

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways is putting maximum effort to complete the reconstruction and renovation work on the strategic Sibi-Harnai railway track with the assistance of the National Logistics Cell (NLC) and hopefully, it would be operational by June this year.

"The railway track was made dysfunctional after a series of bomb blasts which damaged as many as 22 steel bridges in the highly rugged and inaccessible area," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. He said the track was badly damaged in 2006 and so far about 97 per cent of the reconstruction work of the project was completed and the remaining work would be completed soon.

The official said that Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique had also taken a keen interest in the projects and directed

the concerned official to complete the project at the earliest. In March 2016, he said that a contract for rehabilitation and restoration of the Sibi-Harnai railway track along with the up-gradation of railway stations was awarded to the NLC as no other construction firm agreed to undertake the project due to the prevalent security situation and enormity of the task.

During the initial survey of the track, the official said it was found that 22 steel bridges of different sizes were completely destroyed and required replacement.

He said in addition, massive river protection work was to be undertaken to save the infrastructure. The quantum of work, non-availability of road access, and requisite resources made the project a formidable challenge, he added.

The official said undertaking the project with the

sincerity of purpose and utmost sense of duty, NLC officers, engineers, and construction workers braved harsh weather conditions and a hostile security environment and subsequently completed 97% of the rehabilitation works in record time.

The major task was the fabrication of steel bridges. The steel bridges were fabricated in Karachi and were transported all the way to the project site after being painstakingly assembled by NLC engineers in a befitting manner, he added.

He said a total of nine railway stations along with tracks had been upgraded by NLC engineers including the reconstruction of Harnai Railway Station and a complete renovation of Sibi Railways Station, which could be regarded as the finest railway station in Balochistan.

PTDC hopeful for boom in tourism sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) after taking numerous measures to promote tourism in Pakistan by projecting and marketing the country's history, culture, arts and tourism, was hoping to achieve a boom in the tourism sector. After realizing the growth potential of the tourism sector in the country, the PTDC initiated devising policies, strategies and frameworks to attract tourists coming from various parts of the country and the world.

"Pakistan is rich with cultural heritage and potential for immense tourism due to its unmatched landscape, natural beauty, diverse culture, and cuisine," said a press release issued by PTDC.

"It is representing the country by organizing domestic and international events and exhibitions for assisting

tourists with the provision of transport and accommodations facilities within the country."

"The incumbent government has taken many initiatives to promote and revive the tourism industry to explore historical sites to yield desirable results in this sector."

"The Task Force on Tourism had already been formed to achieve milestones in the sector as it is contributing massively to the socioeconomic development of the country, it added.

"A large number of tourists including local and foreign dignitaries are visiting Pakistan due to its diverse tourist sites."

"Due to the attention of the PTDC with the financial support of the present government, it is utilizing all available resources to evolve policies to facilitate tourists, said a press release.

Lush green Daman-e-Koh major source of attraction for tourists

ISLAMABAD (APP): A beautiful recreational spot Daman-e-Koh in the Federal Capital Islamabad a major source of attraction for the visitors including international tourists.

Talking to APP on Sunday, 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 during the holy month of Ramzan. 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 Lahore, apprised that people are observing the nature and natural beauty at lush green and mountain with fresh air. During the holy month of Ramzan, she said that a large number of people are visiting this place to make their weekend full with enthusiasm.

She urged the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to make the arrangements to ensure cleanliness and security arrangements to facilitate

the tourists. Car parking facility is provided close to the Northern Spot where a cafe and some small tuck shops cater the needs of guests, she added.

Huma Ali further said the CDA should establish a mosque for offering prayers five time at Daman-e-Koh. It is pertinent to mention here, the lush green hills of Margalla around 3000 feet above the sea level and 1000 feet from the federal capital, a salubrious spot called Daman-e-Koh (in the lap of the mountain) is surely a place where natural and man-made beauty intrigues the heart and mind of every visiting individual.

WASA authorities directed to disconnect connections of defaulters

RAWALPINDI (APP): Managing Director (MD) Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi Muhammad Tanveer has directed the authorities concerned to disconnect connections of the defaulters.

According to a WASA spokesman, the MD had directed the authorities to ensure 100 percent recovery of the outstanding dues from the defaulters.

The MD had also appreciated efforts of the officers who showed good performance in revenue recovery campaign and reprimanded those whose performance was not satisfactory.

The MD had directed the authorities to accelerate the crackdown against the defaulters.

He informed that the officials concerned had been directed to ensure supply of clean drinking water particularly during 'Sehri and Iftar' hours. The supply of clean drinking water to the citizens was being ensured from the filtration plants during 'sehri and iftar'. Steps were also being taken for immediate repair in case of malfunction of tube-wells, he said.

He said like other parts of the country, the citizens here were also facing water shortage, which was mainly due to the decrease in the level of underground water and lack of timely construction of new water reservoirs.

In this situation where WASA was making every possible effort to provide clean drinking water to the citizens, it was also responsibility of the citizen to use water carefully and try to save this priceless blessing of Allah Almighty, he added.

He urged the citizens to come forward and play their due role to conserve water.

He also asked the citizens to cooperate with WASA and pay their water and sewerage bills on time. In order to save and prevent wastage of water, WASA had improved the quality of water and taking measures to eliminate underground water leakages, which would not only save water but also help eliminate dengue. The MD had asked the officials to further improve the service delivery so as to enable uninterrupted water supply to the citizens during Ramazan, the spokesman said.



ISLAMABAD: A view of construction work of expressway with the help of heavy machinery in the Federal Capital.

Weapons sized, 2 people held

PAKTIA (Agencies): Security forces have discovered and sized weapons in the Mirzaki district of Paktia province, officials said. Provincial police officials told this news agency that police officers discover and sized 18 Kalashnikovs and 40 pistols being carried in a car during an intelligence operation in the province. The security officials arrested two people in connection to the illegal trafficking of weapons.

The Frontier Post

Ramazan 12, 1444 — Monday, April 03, 2023

Ammonium Chloride recovered

NIMROZ (Agencies): Police of Nimroz recovered thousands of kilograms of ammonium chloride, and arrested two people on charges. 40,000 kilograms of ammonium chloride recovered by police in the customs office of Nimroz and two people have been arrested on charge said a police of the province. The materials were placed in two transit vehicles and were imported into Afghanistan, the source added.

3 British nationals being held by Taliban



KABUL (Khaama Press): Three British nationals are currently being held in custody by the de facto government in Afghanistan, including so-called “danger tourist” Miles Routledge. According to the report, the other two men are charity medic Kevin Cornwell, 53, and another unidentified UK national who manages a hotel in Kabul. Officers from the Taliban’s General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) detained Mr Cornwell at his hotel in January. He is suspected of keeping an illegal handgun in his room safe.



Yet according to his family, he received a licence for it. Routledge had been evacuated from Afghanistan by the British military in August 2021, but he just made the decision to go back. He is a famous YouTuber who travels to dangerous countries and posts about them on social media. Mr Routledge’s Twitter states that he goes “to the most dangerous places on Earth for fun”, listing off recent destinations as Afghanistan, South Sudan and Ukraine. In February, he tweeted that if he were ever placed

on a “no-fly list”, he would take an “Uber to Afghanistan.” “We are working hard to secure consular contact with British nationals detained in Afghanistan, and we are supporting families,” a spokesperson for Britain’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) told Reuters. Earlier, the UK government advised British nationals against all travel to Afghanistan. British people have been advised by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) of the UK to keep a low profile and use caution if they decide to travel to or stay in Afghanistan despite the “heightened” risk of imprisonment. Furthermore, due to the high level of security, the statement advised British citizens to stay away from Kabul Airport, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, religious gatherings, festivals, and marketplaces.

Deadline set for those who carry weapons to apply for a license

KABUL (Agencies): The Ministry of Interior has asked all the Mujahideen of the civil and military departments who carry weapons to apply to the relevant departments of the Ministry to receive a license to carry weapons legally from now. “To stabilize and identify irresponsible armed persons and abusers,” the Ministry decided to issue legal licenses for those who carry weapons” said the Ministry in a statement. The applicants are asked to apply from Sunday, all the applicants could referred to the directorate of public services of the Ministry of Interior, to have the forms for obtaining a gun license, added the Ministry in its statement. The Ministry of Interior set a deadline of one month for those who carry weapons with a license, to apply for the license, otherwise after the deadline they will face legal actions.

Contract for lead mining project in Kandahar awarded to private firm

KANDAHAR (Khaama Press): The contract for the extraction of Bibi Gawhari lead mine in Khakrez district of Kandahar was awarded to a private company. The acting head of the Kandahar Mines and Petroleum Department said the company will build a 250 km road that connects Kandahar with Uruzgan and that 17% of the revenue of the mining project will be given to the government. “If they complete processing here, they will give 15% to the Islamic Emirate. If they partially process it, they will give 16% to the Islamic Emirate, and if they transfer the raw material and process it outside the country, they will give 17% to the Islamic Emirate,” said Abdul Hanan Hamed, the acting director of Kandahar Mines and Petroleum Department. “This mine’s contract and extraction are handled by professional engineers and advanced machinery,



and it is processed in the country,” said Obaid Rahman Bahar, the company’s CEO. Analysts said the country will benefit from legal mining extraction by implementing such projects. “The extraction and pro-

cessing of mines within the nation can lead to economic growth and create jobs for the people,” Bashir Shabiri, an economist noted. “If mines are extracted legally, it can provide jobs to the suffering people of Afghanistan in various

areas,” said Mohammad Sulaiman Sirat, a mining affairs specialist. This comes as a few days ago, the contract for Shur Andam cement production project in Kandahar was awarded to a private company.

Former military doctor shot dead in Parwan



PARWAN (Khaama Press): Former military doctor Shabir Shirzad who served former Afghan intelligence agency, was shot dead by Taliban forces in Northern Parwan province, local sources confirmed.

A former military doctor, aged 32, while he was heading to the capital city of Kabul, Taliban took him out of his vehicle and shot him in Ghorband district; his brother has confirmed the incident in a tweet.

His brother, Sameer Shirzad, said that he had been living in foreign and recently returned to Afghanistan to participate in the funeral ceremony of his slain uncle. He also added that Mullah Jan Agha, a local Taliban commander in the district, had murdered his brother. Doctor Shirzad was a medical degree from medical science, Afghanistan and a master’s degree in criminology from Turkey university. Before the regime changed in Afghanistan, he had served at the National Directorate of the security health department, a former intelligence agency of Afghanistan. The Taliban authorities have yet to comment on the incident.

USIP expert syas int’l aid to Afghanistan ‘slipping,’ changes needed

KABUL (TOLONews): William Byrd, a United States Institute of Peace (USIP) expert writing for the LAWFARE blog, said that international aid to Afghanistan is decreasing, and he proposed a number of changes to the world’s approach to helping Afghanistan—including coordinating aid efforts and utilizing the Afghan Trust Fund in Switzerland—to improve the situation. Byrd wrote: “International humanitarian aid is critical in responding to natural disasters and other short-term emergencies. But as the UN itself recognizes, such aid is not well positioned to respond to—let alone resolve—a prolonged economic crisis such as the one currently occurring in Afghanistan.” He continued: “This is particularly true when humanitarian aid is a pri-

mary source of external financial support propping up the economy and when the national government—the Taliban regime—is at odds with donors and harms the welfare of its own population, especially women and girls, as evidenced by the Taliban’s bans on female education and women working in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Given these challenges and the myriad humanitarian needs elsewhere in the world, support for continuing massive aid to Afghanistan is slipping.” Along with proposing ways to empower the Afghan private sector, Byrd spotlighted a failing of the international community: “there has been too much focus on Taliban behavior and the international community’s unsuccessful efforts to influence the Taliban. Too little attention,

meanwhile, has been devoted to aid agencies’ and donor countries’ own aid practices and performance and delivery modalities, which lie within their control.” Byrd lays out a plan for how humanitarian aid should be gradually lessened on the one hand, but how on the other hand long-term stability for the Afghan economy should be increased. He writes: “The international community should make much greater use of the Afghan private sector in the delivery of aid, which will reduce associated costs while providing a modest economic boost. There is a widespread consensus that humanitarian aid alone is not the solution to Afghanistan’s economic crisis, but unfortunately there is little prospect for traditional development aid to ramp up.”

In response to Byrd’s comments that the ban on women working in NGOs and the ban on women and girls’ education are contributing to the precarity of continued international aid, the Ministry of Economy said that it has not placed any restrictions on the activities of humanitarian organizations. According to the ministry’s figures, there are now 360 NGOs operating in the nation, with the majority of them engaged in providing humanitarian help. “There are 360 NGOs operating in the country right now, most of their activities are in the relief and humanitarian section,” said Abdul Latif Nazari, deputy of the Ministry of Economy. Some economists said that banning women from working at NGOs will reduce humanitarian aid.

“Banning women’s work in NGOs, especially organizations that provide health care, might have a negative impact on the continuance of these institutions’ activities and the supply of services,” said Shakir Yaqobi, an economist. “The international community has given its help, including its humanitarian aid, which relies on employment policies of women in Afghanistan,” said Sayed Masoud, an economist. Byrd in the blog post also said: “The international community should explore ways to use the \$3.5 billion of Afghan central bank reserves in the Afghan Fund in Switzerland to strengthen the country’s balance of payments and support the private sector, without directing these funds to the Taliban regime.”

Head of Afghan Business Council meets Niklasson

DUBAI (TOLONews): Haji Obaidullah Sader Khail, head of the Afghan business council in the UAE, in a meeting with Tomas Niklasson, EU Special Envoy for Afghanistan, discussed trade problems, especially the transfer of money from banks. The Head of the Afghan business council in the UAE said that the traders are faced with challenges when making money transfers to buy food materials. “We discussed the money transfer challenges and we also discussed the \$239 million frozen assets in Europe and the \$500 million in the US,” said Sader Khail. Meanwhile, Yonis Momand, the head of the chamber of commerce and investment, called on the international community to lift restrictions hindering Afghanistan’s private sector. Yonis Momand said that due to banking issues, traders cannot improve



trade relations with the world. “We call on the international community to not create challenges for our private sector,” said Yonis Momand. Some economists said that banking issues impede access to raw materials for production.

“When we want to transfer money for raw materials, transfers are very slow and it effects raw material prices in the markets,” said Azrakhs Hafizi, an economist. The UN in a recent report said that in the past one and half years 700,000 people have lost their jobs due to the economic crisis.

Over 800,000 Afghans returned from Iran last year: MoRR

KABUL (TOLONews): The Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR), said that more than 800,000 Afghans returned from Iran over the last year. 400,000 of these immigrants have been forcefully returned to the nation, according to Abdul Mutalib Haqqani, the spokesperson for the ministry. The ministry added that these immigrants were expelled from Iran due to illegal immigration and a lack of documents. “In the last year, 820,000 immigrants from Iran returned to the nation, of which 400,000 were forcibly returned and the rest returned voluntarily,” said Mutalib. Meanwhile, some citizens consider poverty and unemployment as the main cause of illegal immigration

and asked the Islamic Emirate to provide employment opportunities for them. “I’m a university graduate, I don’t have work, and the economic condition is very severe, therefore I have to go,” said Mohammad Zia, a resident of Kabul. “I ask the Islamic Emirate to provide employment opportunities for youth inside the country, so they can work inside their community,” said Khaliq Dad, another resident of Kabul. According to certain immigration activists, migrants face several issues along this path, including robbery and hostage-taking. “To get out of this situation, it is essential that we develop a plan and fundamental solutions for a sort



of legal immigration,” said Asifa Stanekzai, an activist for immigrant rights in Iran.

Previously, the Iranian embassy in Afghanistan, said that more than 6 million immigrants from

Afghanistan reside in Iran, and about 2 million of them lack proper documentation for residency.

Use of smart phones by kids hazardous: Experts

KABUL (Pajhwok): Health experts have warned against the use of smart phones by kids as a toy and said this could cause cancer, tumor, memory loss and eyesight problems in the future. They said the use of smart phone was the need of the hour but its excessive use was not only harmful for kids but as well as for elders because they produce a type of ray. With the advancement of technology and internet the use of smart head-phones which has active internet and connected to social media networks is commonly used by the people of all ages especially among youth. **Parents who relax kids**

with mobiles Fawzia from the Chahrahi Qambar area of Kabul said: “My child is 5 year old and he is accustomed to playing with the smart phone, when he sees it with me or his father he cries to take it and start exploring the mobile. He knows several option and programmers in the mobile.” She said she knew the handicaps of mobile phones for kids but she had no option to relax her kid but to give the mobile. She was worried about the sleep issue of her kid and said most of the time her kid afraid in the sleep and woke up suddenly. Fatimah, the resident of Darulaman area, said: “I

try a lot to keep my kids away from mobiles but nowadays it is very difficult to keep children away from mobiles,” she said. Referring to the negative effects of mobile she said kids could not be relaxed with other option and playing tools. “I am not at home during the day and come in the evening so when I don’t have time to play with them, they do home chores I have to give them mobile to keep quiet and I could work,” she said. Farid the resident of Paktiakot area of Kabul, said: “Two years ago, I installed the PUBG game on my phone and sometimes I played by myself, but most of the time my little brother, who was 5

years old, played it. Gradually, my brother’s interest in this game increased and he didn’t even sleep at night until the morning and was busy playing PUBG.” He added later his brother paralyzed and his condition worsened finally he died. He said: “When my brother was paralyzed, we went to the doctor to find out why this happened, because he didn’t have any disease before and he was completely healthy. The doctors said that the effect of excessive use of mobile phones was reason behind his illness.” Health experts believed excessive use of mobile phones were dangerous for

everyone specially children. **Use of smart phones by kids hazardous** Dr. Fridullah Umari, trainer and internal diseases specialist in Antani Hospital, said various researches that have been done showed that people and children who spend most of their time with mobile phones will face vision problems, overweight, brain problems and deafness in the future. He said the excessive use of mobile among children less than 4 years old will cause different ears, brain cancers and they will reach adulthood before normal age. He said says that the use of mobile phones and

tablets causes addiction, and the use of the Internet also causes moral disorders. “My advice is that in order to keep your children calm don’t give them mobile phones and tablets and don’t gamble with their lives. At the same moment, they may calm down for a few minutes, but in the future, it will cause trouble and unrest for the child and his family, which should be avoided by keeping mobile phones and tablets away,” said Dr. Umari. He referred books and notebooks that have interesting paintings as alternative for mobile phones to relax children. Dr. Syed Farid Shah

Rafie, another internal diseases expert, said The research that has been done showed that children who are under two years of age should be kept away from smart phones, because of various complications such as learning disorders, weakening of the brain, delay in the speed of brain growth, eye problems, appetite disturbances, cancer diseases and The risk of brain tumors will also there in the future. He believed the use of electronic devices, especially mobile phones, has spread radiation, which is likely to cause cancer among children, because this radiation is carcinogenic.

An internet page Dr. Mohandas wrote: “In recent decades, the use of mobile phones is more than just a call. On an average, each person picks up their cell phone more than two hundred times a day to work with it. The range of mobile electromagnetic waves overlaps with the human intercellular communication system, and this issue causes irreparable disorders in the body.” Mobile phones cause damage to the retina, sleep disorders, neck syndrome, the possibility of brain cancer, negative effects on the fetus of a pregnant mother, depression and hearing loss in the eyes of the user.

Marriyum deploras PTI's propaganda against free flour

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb fired a broadside at the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for unleashing a targeted social media campaign against the free flour scheme launched by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to provide relief to the masses in the holy month of Ramzan.

"Ironically, those who have looted the people's flour, bread and sugar for four years are trying to make the prime minister's free flour scheme controversial," she said while referring to the previous government's tenure.

The minister, in a news statement, said the PTI leadership which had a "dirty mindset" did not even spare people-centric projects, politicizing them just to achieve their ulterior motives. Marriyum urged the media to refrain from publishing false and anti-public news which reflected such "filthy mindset".

Imran Khan might have ordered infected wheat during his government's tenure, she said sarcastically while dismissing reports circulating on the social media regarding distribution of low quality edible at free flour centers.

She said that it was beyond her

understanding that why the PTI leadership got hurt when the projects like metro, orange train, free flour and electricity were initiated for the people of Punjab. Imran Khan, who had deprived the people of sugar and wheat, was worried that how Shehbaz Sharif had been ensuring free distribution of these edibles among the masses, Marriyum remarked.

She said people did not need to worry as the country no longer had a prime minister like Imran Khan who did not only render the people jobless by robbing them of their employments, but also forced them to have their three times meal on Langar Khana (food centres).

The minister said that now the country was blessed with a prime minister like Shehbaz Sharif who worked tirelessly to chart Pakistan on path of progress and development by ensuring massive job opportunities for youth and reducing poverty. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has resumed all the development projects that were halted by Imran Khan who now bent on politicizing the free flour scheme, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb added.

Death toll from US storms rises to 29

TEXAS (Reuters): The death toll from a violent storm that whipped up tornadoes in the Southern and Midwestern regions of the United States rose to at least 29 over the weekend, according to officials and media reports.

In Memphis, Tennessee, two children and an adult were found dead on Saturday after the storm's heavy winds knocked trees onto several houses, according to the Memphis Police Department.

In Tennessee's McNairy County, officials reported that an additional two people

had died, having reported seven deaths earlier on Saturday, according to local media. The bodies of a couple were found at a campground in McCormick's Creek State Park in Owen County, Indiana, according to the state's Department of Natural Resources.

Another 15 deaths from the storm, which generated tornadoes in several areas, were earlier reported in Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Delaware, Mississippi and Alabama. Scores of people were injured and many buildings damaged or destroyed. U.S. President

Joe Biden declared a "major disaster" in Arkansas on Sunday, ordering federal aid to help with the recovery. The National Storm Prediction Center warned of severe weather on Sunday in parts of North and Northeast Texas around Dallas and Fort Worth, including very large hail, significant wind gusts and a "strong tornado or two."

Similarly severe weather, including thunderstorms, was forecast for Tuesday in much of the Midwest between Chicago and Little Rock, Arkansas, the center said.

IK's petition to dismiss all cases against him is set for hearing today by LHC

LAHORE (NNI): Former Prime Minister Imran Khan's petition to dismiss all cases against him was set to be heard by the Lahore High Court tomorrow. Justice Ali Baqar Najafi would preside over a two-member bench to hear the case on Monday (April 3rd).

Imran Khan nominated the federal and Punjab government, as well as the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in the case. The constitutional plea was submitted through Barrister Salman Safdar.

According to the petition, the government was targeting Mr Khan's party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and was harassing them through similar cases on political grounds.

The petition further argued that the government had filed over 100 cases against PTI chief, which amounted to an abuse of power. The petition stated that 121 false cases had been filed, which violated Articles IV, IX, Fifteen, and

XVI of the Constitution.

PTI supremo's petition requested the Lahore High Court to order the dismissal of all cases against him, call for the detailed records of all cases filed against him, and stop proceedings in the filed cases until the final decision of the case.

The petition also requested the court to order institutions where cases are registered to provide Imran Khan an opportunity to be heard by giving notice first and order the release of all arrested workers.

statement by selling Toshakhana gifts was a deliberate attempt at tax evasion," the advisor alleged.

Additionally, Imran Khan allegedly failed to disclose the proceeds from the sale of Toshakhana gifts in his wealth declaration submitted to the ECP, which was also a flagrant violation of the law, he added.

'Paying respect to constitution of country compulsory for everyone'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Advisor to Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Qamar Zaman Kaira on Sunday said that our party always respect the constitution of the country as rule of law maintain the stability and help to uplift the country matters. Talking to a private news channel, he said taking gifts from Toshakhana was not a crime, but selling gifts

received as Head of the State was not morally correct.

Criticizing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan, he said, that by selling Toshakhana gifts, the PTI chief did not disclose the earned income in his income statement, which was a clear case of "tax evasion". "Imran Khan's failure to disclose earned revenue in his income

statement by selling Toshakhana gifts was a deliberate attempt at tax evasion," the advisor alleged.

Additionally, Imran Khan allegedly failed to disclose the proceeds from the sale of Toshakhana gifts in his wealth declaration submitted to the ECP, which was also a flagrant violation of the law, he added.

Despite Trump ire, prosecuting ex-leaders is common in democracies

WASHINGTON (AFP/APP): Donald Trump has denounced his indictment as an abuse befitting a banana republic, but the move in fact puts the United States in line with fellow advanced democracies that have prosecuted former leaders.

France, Israel, Italy, South Korea, Romania and Croatia are among countries where courts have convicted a former president or prime minister, with charges pursued against former top leaders in a number of other democracies including Germany, Japan and Portugal.

For the United States, there is no precedent in the republic's nearly 250-year history -- Trump is the first president, current or for-

mer, to be charged with a crime. Trump, who has faced a slew of legal accusations, is expected to turn himself in Tuesday in New York over a \$130,000 payment allegedly made to an adult film star to buy her silence during his 2016 campaign over an affair.

"There is evidence out there that democracies can be, and are, able to hold former leaders accountable," said Shelley Inglis, a former United Nations expert on democratic governance and rule of law who is now at the University of Dayton.

"It's a teaching moment for the United States, when you haven't had that sort of test, to think about what is the strength of our democratic institutions when they're meeting the biggest

challenge -- to hold the most powerful people to account," she said.

She pointed to France -- where two former presidents, Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy, were convicted of corruption -- as an example where democratic institutions were not weakened but strengthened, despite "inevitable" accusations from partisans that charges are politically motivated.

Israel imprisoned former prime minister Ehud Olmert over fraud and former president Moshe Katsav for rape. Israel's current and longest-serving prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, faces charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust. Recent attempts by his government to weaken the judiciary sparked massive protests.

Yasin Malik appears via video conferencing before Jammu court

ISLAMABAD (APP): A local court, Sunday in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, deferred the identification of six accused, including Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front Chairman Mohammad Yasin Malik in the case of the murder of four Indian Air Force personnel in Srinagar in 1990.

According to Kashmir media service, CBI chief prosecutor Monika Kohli said the identification was deferred due to non-availability of some of the accused in the court in Jammu. He said Muhammad Yasin Malik, who is detained in Delhi's Tihar Jail, was present during the hearing of the case through video conferencing. Monica Kohli, who is also Senior Additional Advocate General, told reporters that some of the accused were not present in the court and the identification was postponed till further hearing.

Mohammad Yasin Malik was arrested by India's notorious investigative agency, National Investigation Agency (NIA) in April 2019 in connection with the fake funding case.

'Those who filed false reference should be ashamed'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan on Sunday said that those who had filed a false reference against a Supreme Court Judge should be ashamed of talking about the honour of the judiciary.

"The gang led by Imran Khan has always stood against the constitution, justice and the people," he said in reaction to a statement of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi.

The minister said they are the ones who had filed a baseless reference against Justice Qazi Faiz Isa besides threatening a female judge but they had no shame while lecturing others to respect the judiciary. "The 'Rangbaaz' of Zaman Park and 'Dabba Peer' of Multan along with their three associates are insulting the opinions of the majority of Supreme Court judges. Ironically they, who had threatened a female judge, have now become spokespersons and supporters of three judges," Rana said. "The 'Dabba Peer', the 'Dabbu', the dacoit and the intellectual are waiting for Imran's disqualification so that they could take over the party's leadership," he added.

Govt cannot last till June 8, tweets Rashid

RAWALPINDI (NNI): The head of Pakistan Awami Muslim League and former federal interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed has castigated the ruling alliance saying that October 8 is far away; they will not even see June 8.

The former minister tweeted that only a person like "Rana Sanaullah Khan can give a statement regarding filing references against three judges. These judges gave verdicts against the PTI. But this does not mean that they would get arbitrary decisions from the judges," Rashid wrote in another tweet that the "caretaker governments in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will end in 90 days. The result of filing references against judges will also be zero. The country is going towards anarchy. Their [PDM] problem in the election in 90 days, which will prove to be the political death of the group of 13."

He said that "the government's attempt to evade elections, pressure on the judiciary, and the death of poor while trying to get a bag of free flour are all signs of danger."

"Judiciary is the red line. They have to accept the decision of either judiciary or the people on the streets. They have to clarify on Israel, trade with India and their assets," Rashid said that "record high inflation and unemployment could lead to civil war. People do not have money to bury their dead. The value of dollar has doubled [against rupee]. Banning TV channels will force people to switch over to social media."



LAHORE: A large number of people are taking free flour bags during the Holy month of Ramadan by the Government Center Shadra.

Khunjerab Pass opened for Pak-China trade after 3 years

BEIJING (APP): The Khunjerab Pass, a major trade route between Pakistan and China was opened after a closure of almost three years in wake of Covid-19 pandemic. The pass that connects Gilgit-Baltistan with China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous region was closed in the year 2020 after spread of Covid-19 outbreak. According to official sources, the Chinese authorities have shared a letter with Pakistani officials regarding the reopening of the pass for the trade. The port authorities on the Chinese side of Khunjerab Pass have been instructed to take all necessary measures regarding Covid-19 before the start of the arrival of

goods from Pakistan.

Similarly, Pakistani border authorities have also been instructed to take all measures regarding Covid-19, ensuring the containment of the disease.

It may be mentioned here that as result of cold weather and lack of oxygen in the high altitude, Khunjerab Pass generally opens from April 1 to November 30 every year, and remains closed from December 1 to March 31 of the following year. But to ensure the smooth customs clearance of Pakistan's urgently needed and other supplies, the port was temporarily opened twice early this year. Though with difficulties

including extremely cold weather, heavy snow and lack of oxygen, the local customs have worked around the clock to ensure the transportation of cargo.

This year, the last temporary opening was last for 12 days between January 30 and February 10 while the first port opening was between January 19A and 20 this year. The two temporary openings facilitated 128 cross-border personnel visits, 328 transportation vehicles' passes, and more than 6,000 tons of goods exported, as per foreign affairs office of Kashgar prefecture. It is believed that the reopening of the border crossing will help boost economic activities between the two countries.

Talks with MQM-P, other old allies restarted, claims Parvez Elahi

LAHORE (PPI) Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Parvez Elahi claimed on Sunday that his party had restarted talks with its old allies, including the Muttahida Qami Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P).

In his statement, the former Punjab chief minister went on to claim the MQM-P was of the view there was no benefit to continuing to extend support to the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM).

"The Balochistan government and the GDA are also having reservations over the government's anti-state policies," Mr Elahi claimed. In connection with the alliance, PTI chairman Imran Khan will reveal the next strategy after summoning the meeting of

all the parties, he added.

Bashing Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif, Mr Elahi said, "The cabinet meeting has been presided over by absconder Nawaz Sharif, which is a big joke with the nation and the institutions of the state."

Mr Elahi went on to claim the PDM's tactics of delaying the elections will be thwarted.

On Friday, former Punjab chief minister Parvez Elahi said on that the Supreme Court (SC) bench will not be formed at the will of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior vice president Maryam Nawaz. Mr Elahi called on the former

Punjab Assembly lawmakers, during which he recounted his tenure -- from 2002 to 2007 -- as the Punjab chief minister, saying, "The international institutions highlighted the development and prosperity in Punjab during my tenure from 2002 to 2007. The global institutions declared the developing countries' prosperity to be a role model."

He took a jibe at Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and accused him of "transforming the agricultural province [Punjab] into Ethiopia."

In connection with the judicial reform, Mr Elahi said, "It has been written clearly in Article 141 that the parliament cannot do legislation against the Supreme Court."

Ji chief to contact parliamentary parties for 'consensus on polls'

PESHAWAR (NNI): Jamat-e-Islami (JI) Amir Sirajul Haq has announced to contact parliamentary parties for 'consensus on general elections' amid deepening political crisis in the country. In a statement, JI chief invited all political stakeholders to start negotiations from the platform of Mansoor -- head office of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan. Sirajul Haq maintained that the elections in two provinces -- Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) -- will not solve the prevailing crises. He noted that elections across the country should be held on the same day. "The differences between Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) have created a constitutional crisis in the country", he said, urging the political parties to work for positive developments.

"Institutions are becoming controversial", Sirajul Haq said, adding that

political issues will not be resolved in the courts. He further said that martial law, technocrat government or presidential system will not resolve the issues. Earlier this week, the coalition parties expressed "lack of confidence" in three-member bench of Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan hearing a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) petition against the delay in polls of the Punjab Assembly. The decision was taken during a high-level meeting of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) parties, chaired by Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif to discuss the "overall political situation of the country".

The coalition parties expressed lack of confidence in the Supreme Court bench -- comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Muneeb Akhtar.

The meeting was summoned after the Supreme Court rejected the rul-

ing alliance's plea for a full court bench in the polls delay case. The apex court itself witnessed high drama, with two judges recusing themselves from the remaining three-member bench. Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail withdrew from the bench a day after Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan rescued himself from hearing the case. Earlier in March, Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announced to delay of the Punjab by-elections which were scheduled to be held on April 30.

The ECP withdrew the Punjab Election Program notification issued on March 8 and decided to postpone the Punjab election and announced October 08 as the new date for elections in Punjab. The ECP spokesman said that the president Dr Arif Alvi also been informed about the postponement of elections in Punjab, adding that the new election schedule will release soon.

Russian strike on eastern city Kostyantynivka 'kills six'

BAKHMUT (BBC): Ukraine says heavy Russian shelling has killed at least six civilians in Kostyantynivka, an industrial city near embattled Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine.

Missiles and rockets damaged 16 apartment blocks and other buildings including a nursery school, head of the presidential staff Andriy Yermak said on social media.

The toll was not verified by the BBC. The city is just 27km (17 miles) west of Bakhmut, where many have died on both sides in months of heavy fighting. Mr Yermak said the Russians hit Kostyantynivka with S-300 surface-to-air missiles and Uragan rockets, and at least eight people were injured.

The city is near Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, two key cities which Russia is striving to capture in order to complete its occupation of Donetsk region. Kostyantynivka's population before Russia's February 2022 invasion was about 70,000. Explosions also rocked Russian-

occupied Melitopol on Sunday, the southern city's Ukrainian mayor Ivan Fedorov said. He said the blasts targeted the rail depot there.

Melitopol has been hit repeatedly by Ukrainian missiles because it is a transport hub for the Russian military, lying just north of Russian-occupied Crimea.

On Saturday Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu told fellow Russian commanders that steps were being taken to ramp up ammunition production. "The volume of supplies of the most needed ammunition has been determined. Necessary measures are being taken to increase them," he said.

Independent military analysts have said repeatedly that Russia is running short of precision weapons, after firing so many in the Ukraine war.

Mr Shoigu and the defence ministry have been sharply criticised by Yevgeny Prigozhin, head of Russia's Wagner mercenary group, who accuses them of depriving his troops of key ammunition. Wagner

officially called a private military company - has suffered heavy losses in the Bakhmut fighting, with convicts released from Russian prisons drafted in to swell the group's numbers.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky insists that, despite heavy casualties, his forces entrenched in ruined Bakhmut will not surrender the city.

The Russians are reported to have made small gains there in recent days. Bakhmut has little strategic value, but Ukraine has seen it as an important drain on Russia's military equipment and manpower.

In a Telegram post on Sunday Mr Zelensky praised his compatriots in a message marking a year since Russian forces were expelled from the Kyiv region. "Ukrainian people! You have stopped the greatest anti-human force of our time. You have stopped a force that despises and wants to destroy everything that gives meaning to people. And we will free all our lands," he said.