

Ishaq Dar to visit US
ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Ishaq Dar will visit the United States next week to attend the annual meeting of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, source said on Monday. Ishaq Dar to be accompanied by a delegation will visit the US from April 10 to 16. According to officials, the finance minister will also hold talks with IMF and World Bank officials.

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SC reserves verdict in election delay case

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court Monday reserved verdict on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) plea against the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to delay the elections of provincial assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

A three-member SC bench comprising Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan reserved the verdict after hearing all the parties, including the government, the PTI, the ECP and others. During the course of proceedings, the secretaries of finance and defence ministries briefed the court and submitted their separate reports.

Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Awan submitted a statement and requested the court to form a full court to hear the case. He also pleaded with the court to dismiss the PTI's petition in the light of what it interpreted as a 4-3 order issued by the apex court on March 1. The chief justice rejected the request for a full court and suggested that a larger bench could be sought.

The AGP also highlighted that the PTI petition was based on the SC's March 1 verdict. Upon this, the chief justice asked how could the ECP give the date of October 8 for polls. The law gave no one the authority to delay elections and only the court could delay the date for polls, he added. He said elections were postponed on the orders of the court in 1988.

Justice Ijaz said the actual matter under consideration was the ECP's decision to postpone elections. He said the Commission was bound to follow the court orders. The AGP said during the first round of the hearings a nine-member bench had conducted the proceedings. The CJP said only one judge had dismissed the proceedings and Justice Athar Minallah had not mentioned rejecting the request in

his dissenting note. Four judges had recused themselves from the bench.

He said there was no doubt in the fact that a judge could not be thrown out of a bench. When the court ordered the reconstitution of a bench, it did not mean that other judges were being removed from the bench, he added. Justice Ijaz said forming a new bench was a judicial directive and not an administrative one. The AGP argued that the opinion of Justice Mandokhail and Justice Mansoor Ali Shah could not be separated.

Justice Akhtar responded by citing Justice Afridi's statement which stated that he had left his inclusion in the bench to the chief justice's discretion. He also pointed out that the absence of the two judges was not brought up during the two-day suo motu hearing conducted by the five-member bench. The chief justice said a new bench was formed and the hearing began again. The

AGP had not succeeded in convincing the court to separate the judges who previously heard the case, from the current bench. Advocate Irfan Qadir, counsel for the Election Commission, said stopping hearings of cases in high courts was not according to the Constitution. He said the KP governor had issued a date for polls in the province and contended that the SC's order regarding the president giving the date for elections was not as per the law. He said the president could not take any decision regarding elections independently. The order given to the president regarding giving a date for elections was unconstitutional, he added.

He said the president was bound by the cabinet's advice in all matters. The president only had authority when it came to the general elections as per the Election Act. The general

elections would be held throughout the country at the same time, he added. He said Justice Qazi Faez Isa's decision had stopped the hearing of all the cases under Article 184(3) of the Constitution. During the hearing, the chief justice asked Pakistan Peoples Party lawyer Farooq H Naek whether he had ended the boycott of the bench.

Advocate Naek said the PPP had objections to the formation of the bench and had not boycotted the proceedings. The chief justice asked who had boycotted the three-member bench. He denied hearing the coalition government lawyers. Advocate Kamran Murtaza, in his arguments, said his client had reservations about the bench.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) lawyer Akram Sheikh said they were yet to take back the power of attorney and they had objections to the bench hearing the case. He also clarified they have not boycotted the proceedings yet. Justice Munib Akhtar said on the one side lawyers were boycotting the hearing and on the other, they wanted to be part of the court proceedings. The chief justice said a question had been raised how could the ECP give the date of Oct 8 for polls as the ECP had no such power to do so.

The AGP said the SC Registrar's Office released a circular after Justice Qazi Faez Isa's March 29 verdict. The court order or decision could not be set aside with a circular, he added. He said the court decision could only be nullified in the review petition. The chief justice said no decision was nullified through a circular, it was only issued on the matter of barring hearings under Article 184/3. He observed that no clear directions were given in the order passed by a three-member bench headed by Justice Qazi Faez Isa.

Cabinet asks President to withdraw services of SC's Registrar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The federal cabinet Monday asked President Dr Arif Alvi to immediately sign the 'Supreme Court Practice and Procedure Act 2023' so that the country could be taken out of the constitutional and political crisis.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired the special meeting of the federal cabinet held at the Prime Minister House, here. The ministers considered in detail two-point agenda. Minister for Law Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar and Attorney General Mansoor Usman Awan briefed the cabinet on different legal matters.

The cabinet examined the issue of issuance of a circular by the Registrar Supreme Court against the order of the Supreme Court's bench headed by Justice Qazi Faez Isa. The cabinet decided to withdraw the services of the Registrar Supreme Court and asked him to report to the Establishment Division.

Imran's plan to sabotage CPEC foiled: Maryam

LAHORE (PPI): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior vice president Maryam Nawaz slammed on Sunday Pakistan Tehreek-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.

Bilawal fears 'martial law' if larger bench not formed

E.P. Report

LARKANA: Foreign Minister and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has warned of deepening 'constitutional crisis' if larger bench is not constituted to hear polls delay case, fearing that it would lead to martial law in the country, on Monday.

Talking to journalists in Larkana, the PPP chairman said that what is happening on the matter of elections was in front of the nation and the country, urging the judiciary to ask three judges about it. Bilawal Bhutto noted that the criticism of higher judiciary by the judges is historical, saying that the fellow judges have also expressed 'lack of confidence' on the three-member bench, hearing a petition by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) against the postponement of Punjab elections.

The foreign minister urged Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial to constitute a larger bench as per the Constitution, saying that judges who were caught consulting with the opposition - Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) - should not be part of the bench. He feared that if larger bench would not be formed then a 'constitutional crisis' will be emerged, which will lead towards 'martial law' in the country. "A nine-member bench has reduced to three judges," he said, adding that the nation will remember chief justice if larger bench is not formed.

He also lambasted Imran Khan, saying that the PTI chairman was chief polling agent of former dictator General Pervez Musharraf. "Remnants of every political dictator have landed himself in PTI," he added. He alleged that Imran Khan decided to release terrorists from jail and due to his decisions, nation is facing terrorism again. However, he vowed, the government will once again confront the terrorists and defeat them.

Meanwhile, PPP Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari also said that the third generation of the Bhutto family was awaiting justice from the Supreme Court for the "judicial murder" of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

In a message ahead of the 44th martyr-

dom day anniversary of the ex-PM, set to be marked tomorrow (Tuesday), the foreign minister said Zulfikar's "judicial murder" was a "black spot" on the judicial system. The PPP chairman said that the presidential reference regarding the judicial murder of the prime minister who gave the country a "unanimous Constitution" has been pending in the Supreme Court for the past 12 years.

"During these 4,382 days, our justice system did not have even a minute to listen to Bhutto shaheed's plea. How many more generations of the Bhutto family will have to wait to get justice?" he asked. The PPP chief said that history has brought so much proof in favour of Bhutto's innocence that even his worst enemies now have to say that the "Quaid-e-Awam" suffered the gravest injustice".

"I appeal to the Supreme Court that the presidential reference sent by President Asif Ali Zardari under Article 186 on April 2, 2011, should be fixed for early hearing." Paying glowing tribute to Bhutto, the PPP chairman said that under his leadership, Pakistan crossed many milestones in political, diplomatic, economic, defence and social terms.

"Raising the political consciousness among the people, giving the country's first unanimous Constitution, making agricultural and economic reforms, starting the nuclear program, establishing Pakistan-China friendship and making Pakistan the diplomatic capital of the Islamic world are few examples of Bhutto Shaheed's achievements," he pointed out. He said that the occasion of Bhutto's martyrdom anniversary is a day of renewal of the pledge that PPP would continue upholding and would not give up at any cost the democracy, the Constitution of 1973, the parliamentary supremacy, rights of workers, farmers, minorities and women, as well as tolerance and equality in the society. "Bhuttoism will continue to remain a beacon of light to guide us, and we will continue to struggle to provide 'roti, kapra aur makan' (bread, cloth, and home) to every Pakistani by establishing a strong democratic system based on justice and fairness," he pledged.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Farooq Naek taking to media persons outside Supreme Court.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressing the National Assembly session.

PML-N endorses PDM's decision, says Info Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Monday said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had endorsed the decision taken by the Pakistan Democratic Movement regarding "no trust" on three-member bench hearing a case of the polls' delay in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"How Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan, who has recused himself from hearing the suo moto case regarding the polls delay, can be made part of the bench which is hearing the contempt case," the minister said while talking to the media after the meeting of the PML-N's Parliamentary Party.

"These are the certain questions which needed clarification and on basis of them we have expressed no trust on three members bench [of the Supreme Court]," Marriyum added. She said election should be held simultaneously and in free, fair and transparent manner.

Nation to back law enforcers: Sanaullah

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan on Monday said it was a critical juncture for the nation which would have to decide whether to support the decisions taken based on collective consciousness or the ones based on "arrogance and stubbornness".

Reacting to a statement of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan, he said, "Niazi is though an anarchist as well as a lawbreaker" yet he had rightly said the nation would have to take rational decisions at the critical time. Whether the nation, he said, would still fall prey to temptation or stand up for righteousness. Whether it would continue supporting those who respected the institutions or the ones who disrespected them to satisfy their egos. Whether it wanted to adopt democratic attitudes or adopt a culture of intolerance. Whether it supported the law enforcers or those who hurled petrol bombs at them.

He said the nation would have to take a decision that whether it stood with those who attacked the courts or sided with those who respected the judiciary. Whether it supported those who did justice or those who "stick to their stubbornness in the name of justice". The biggest question for the nation, he added, was to decide whether it adhered to the democratic values of "respect, and live and let others live", or it stood with the crazies who only went for "killing and burning properties".

PM deplors CJ's remarks over MPs

Shehbaz says no Pak-Israel ties until Palestinians get separate homeland

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday maintained that all the leaders of coalition parties in the Federal Government, during a meeting chaired by him in Lahore last week, had expressed their no confidence in the Supreme Court bench hearing the suo motu case of polls delay.

Taking part in the National Assembly session, the prime minister endorsed the views of Minister for Law Azam Nazeer Tarar regarding the expression of no confidence in the constitution of the bench seized of the matter. He said Justice Ijazul Ahsan, another member of the bench, had recused himself from the bench.

He requested the Chief Justice of Pakistan to constitute a full court sans two judges as it would be acceptable to the nation. Such a contentious decision, he said, would be against the norms of justice.

The prime minister referred to the CJP's remarks in which he stated that certain people speaking in the National Assembly had undergone jail terms and said it was a matter of pride that he had been released by the high court on merit in the false and fabricated cases. Imran Niazi and his collaborators had framed false cases against him and tried to implicate him in those fabricated cases, he added.

It was their right under the Constitution to express their views in the Parliament, he said, adding whether the CJP had referred to the witch-hunting of the opposition leaders during the PTI's tenure. The prime minister said there were serious allegations of corruption against certain members of the bench and by including them in the bench what message was given to the whole country.

He stressed that the law of equality was applicable to all. Double standards would not work. In London's case, Imran's lackey Shehzad Akbar, had got published a false story in the Daily Mail, London, but later the author tendered an apology, he added. The prime minister said Imran Niazi during his rule had no other engagement but to spend his energies on devising nefarious schemes to send opposition leaders to jails.

He mentioned that Imran had sent him twice to jail and was trying to send him for the third time. Even his bail which was granted on merit by the high court during

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the PTI's government was challenged in the Supreme Court, he added. He said he was released on merit and now standing in the Parliament. "My fault was that as leader of the opposition, they were countering the ill-devised policies of the PTI's government and Niazi considered them as hurdles and acted like 'Nero plays the flute when the Rome was on fire'".

Earlier, the law minister briefed the House about the proceedings in the apex court and reiterated that the coalition parties had already conveyed to the court to constitute a full court to hear the instant case.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also, rubbing the social media propaganda, categorically ruled out any possibility of the relationship between Pakistan and Israel until the people of Palestine get their due right of a separate homeland.

Addressing the parliamentary party meeting of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), he resolved that Pakistan would not deviate from its principled position of having no ties with Israel until the Palestinians get their legitimate right. He was referring to the social media posts mentioning any trade activity by a Pakistani Jew with Israel.

"There is not even mention of that. This is just baseless. An individual Jew has traded some goods. The government has nothing to do with that," he commented. Behind such propaganda were the people who opposed a Muslim candidate of London Mayorship and instead supported the Jewish candidate, he added.

The prime minister told the PML-N parliamentarians that before assuming the government, he had not imagined the severity of the situation in form of a destroyed economy and strained foreign relations with brotherly countries, including China and Saudi Arabia. He said under PML-N Quaid Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and with the cooperation of the allied parties, the government was making all-out efforts to cope with the challenges. He said the government had fulfilled all the conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the previous regime had violated the commitments with the global financial institution.

(Continued on Back Page)

Justice Isa seeks removal of SC Registrar

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Strongly reacting to the March 31 circular issued by the Supreme Court Registrar Office "disregarding" a judgement issued by a three-member bench, senior puisne judge Justice Qazi Faez Isa on Monday asked the establishment division to immediately remove Ishrat Ali — the registrar — to prevent him from further "damaging the reputation and integrity" of the top court.

A special apex court bench, with a two-to-one majority on March 29, ordered suspending all suo motu cases — under Article 184(3) of the Constitution — until amendments are made to the Supreme Court Rules 1980 regarding the discretionary powers of the chief justice to form benches. In a letter to the top court's registrar, the senior puisne judge said that the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) cannot issue administrative direction against the judicial order.

"I was astonished to receive your circular" bearing No. Registrar/2023/SCJ dated 31 March 2023. The circular purports to negate, undo, disobey and violate order dated 29 March 2023 of a three-member bench of the Supreme Court, passed in Suo Motu Case No. 4 of 2022. The Registrar does not have the power or authority to undo a judicial order, and the Chief Justice cannot issue administrative directions with regard thereto," read the letter. Slamming the registrar, he further wrote: "Your conduct demonstrates that you do not have the requisite competence, ability and understanding to hold the office of Registrar. Moreover, a bureaucrat holding the office of the Registrar violates Article 175(3) of the Constitution, which mandates the complete separation of the judiciary from the executive. The senior judge asked the registrar to withdraw the circular immediately and inform all those who had set it, adding that it was in the best interest of him and that of the Supreme Court. Justice Isa maintained that the circular refers to a decision of the SC (Suo Motu Case no. 4/2021, PLD 2022 Supreme Court 306), adding, "If you had read it you would have realised that it pertained to invoking powers under Article 184 (3) of the constitution (suo motu). However, in the subject case suo motu notice had not been taken by the bench before which it was listed for hearing on March 15, 2023. You lost sight of this obvious distinction and did not appreciate that the case cited in the circular was not applicable." The SC registrar "apparently violated the Constitution", Justice Isa noted and urged the authorities to initiate disciplinary proceedings against him in according with the applicable laws.



CTD seizes huge cache of arms, arrests three

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Monday arrested three accused and recovered a huge cache of arms that were reportedly used in terrorist activities.

According to the CTD spokesman, the CTD Investigation with the assistance of a federal intelligence agency carried out a raid near Erum Shopping Mall, Sher Shah Suri Road, and arrested Wisal Hussain Afridi, Yasir Mohammad and Atta Muhammad Afridi. The accused transported the seized arms from Peshawar to Karachi via a passenger bus. The CTD also seized the bus used for the transportation of arms.

Recovered weapons include an LMG, six 9mm pistols, eight 30-bore pistols, a pen pistol, 16 magazines, 200 bullets of 30 bore and 750 bullets of 9mm. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations were underway.

Showers lower temperature in city

LAHORE (APP): The provincial capital received drizzle on Monday, which turned the weather pleasant, dropping maximum temperature to 22 degree Celsius. It was for the fifth consecutive day that the city received precipitation in the form of drizzle, shower and heavy fall.

The first spell of showers occurred at early morning while the second at afternoon, while Laxmi Chowk, Iqbal Town, Jail Road, Airport, Tajpura, Gulshan-e-Ravi and other areas also received showers, with maximum rain recorded 10 millimetre at Johar Town.

According to a spokesman for the Pakistan Meteorological Department, more rain-wind/thunderstorm with isolated heavy falls and hailstorm was expected in Khushab, Mianwali, Sargodha, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Hafizabad, Mandi Bahauddin, Sialkot, Narowal, Lahore, Faisalabad, Toba Tek Singh, Jhang, Kasur, Sheikhupura and Nankana Sahib during the next 24 hours.

IGP for strict security on death anniversary of ZAB

KARACHI (APP): Inspector General of Police IGP Sindh Ghulam Nabi Memon on Monday ordered the police officers to implement the contingency plan chalked out for the security on the occasion of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's death anniversary.

He said patrolling, picketing and snap checking should be coordinated and made effective on the routes leading to Garhi Khuda Bakhsh and Naudero. Memon said encroachments on the main routes of Garhi Khuda Bakhsh should be immediately removed. The IGP Sindh instructed that the sweeping and clearance process by the bomb disposal squad along with advanced intelligence collection should be ensured in the surrounding areas of Garhi Khuda Bakhsh and Naudero.

Governor hosts Iftar dinner for media persons, anchors club members

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tesori hosted an iftar dinner in honour of Anchors Club members and journalists from various media houses.

Anchorpersons of various TV channels also attended the iftar dinner held at the Governor House.

Founder Anchors Club Akhtar Shaheen Rind led the delegation included Siddique Sarwar, Muftaba Jokhio, Amjad Chaudhry, Engineer Imtiaz Ali Laghari, Raja Anees, Shazia Khan,

Zafeer Ahmed, Rizwan Jaffer and Mehwish Chauhan.

Anchorperson Hussain Thebo, people from show business and other walks of life were also present at the Iftar dinner.

Sindh Governor said that after taking charge of his office, many people criticized him but he continued the work.

Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori while talking to the Anchors Club members said that the doors of the Governor's House have been opened to the public.

Chief secretary orders campaign against beggary

LAHORE (APP): Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman directed the authorities concerned on Monday to start a campaign against beggary, saying that it was necessary to discourage professional beggars.

He issued instructions while presiding over a meeting at the Civil Secretariat to review measures taken to prevent beggary. The Social Welfare secretary, commissioner Lahore division, CCPO Lahore and officers concerned attended the meeting.

The chief secretary said that beggary was a social evil and it was a collective responsibility of all to eliminate it. He

said that organised groups were involved in forcing women and children to beg for them.

The CS ordered the commissioner Lahore to launch a crackdown on professional beggars and set up special squads in this regard.

The chief secretary said that the beggar children should be handed over to the Child Protection Bureau. He also issued instructions to the police regarding providing support to the district administration for prevention of beggary. The Social Welfare secretary briefed the meeting that a welfare home is working for rehabilitation of beggars.

SACM Waqar Mehdi visits Ramazan Bachat Bazars

KARACHI (APP): The Special Assistant to Chief Minister Sindh, Senator Waqar Mehdi, on Monday, visited the Ramazan Bachat Bazars set up at Korangi Crossing and Eidgah Ground Shah Faisal Colony.

The SACM checked the rates of flour, sugar, oil, ghee, rice, fruits, vegetables, meat, milk, poultry and other items of daily consumption fixed by Sindh government and also held conversation with consumers present there.

Waqar Mehdi, while talking to the media on the occasion, said that items of daily use were being provided to the people in Bachat Bazars at rates lower than the market with the cooperation of the market associations and the super stores.

"We are trying our best to make items of daily use available to people at minimum rates during the blessed month of Ramazan, he said adding that Deputy Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners

were tasked to take action against profiteers and heavy fines were being imposed on violators.

The SACM appealed the public to check the official price list and buy the goods at the prescribed rate and said that complaint against profiteering and hoarding could be filed at the complaint cells established in the Deputy Commissioners' offices so that complaints could be redressed and action could be taken against the profiteers.

Foundation stone of KMC's new council hall to be laid on Ramzan 27

KARACHI (APP): Karachi Metropolitan Corporation has decided to lay the foundation stone for the construction of the new council hall near Nipa Chowrangi on Ramzan 27.

This was decided in a meeting chaired by Administrator Karachi Dr Syed Saif-ur-Rahman on Monday.

In this regard, a committee has also been formed under the chairmanship of the Municipal Commissioner, KMC so that the council hall can be built to meet the needs of the next hundred years.

Municipal Commissioner Shujaat Hussain, Director General Technical Services Syed Azhar Ali Shah, Director General Parks Junaidullah Khan, Senior Director Media Management Ali Hasan Sajid, Director City Warden Raja Rustom, Senior Director State Sumeira Asif, Senior Director Imran Siddiqui, Director Council Abdul Rab, Team leader USAR Humayun and other officers attended the meeting.

The Administrator Karachi said that the existing council hall was facing a lack of space for the newly elected members and this hall was constructed 92 years ago in 1932, the seats of which were increased from time to time.

All former mayors, deputy mayors, administrators, municipal commissioners, DCOs and directors of the council will be invited to the foundation lying of the new

council hall so that all these personalities along with special guests will be present on the historic occasion.

He said that he will request the Sindh government to provide special funds for the construction of this council hall so that its construction can be completed as soon as possible.

The meeting was told that when the municipality was given the status of a municipal corporation in 1933, the number of seats was 57 and there was enough capacity in the hall. In 1953, the municipal seats were increased to 100, in 1960 the number of seats was reduced to 58, increased to 103, Under the changed local government system in 1979, the number of local government seats in Karachi increased to 166, for which there was adequate capacity in the hall. When the two-tier system came into effect, the Metropolitan Corporation Hall had 77 seats.

In 2001, the new municipal district system came into force, the number of council members increased to 255, for which there was not enough room in the hall, so in December 2004, the city council hall was renovated and the number of seats was increased. The Administrator Karachi said that the number of council members to be formed in the future will be 364 while the capacity of seats in the council hall located in the main office of KMC is 310.



ISLAMABAD: MNA Noor Hassan Tanveer calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Over 1.6m families received more than Rs 3b through BISP

KARACHI (APP): Chief Secretary Sindh Dr. Muhammad Sohail Rajpoot on Monday said that the provincial government had allocated Rs15.6bn for more than 7.8m families to purchase flour and earmarked Rs2,000 for every needy family.

This he said while presiding over a meeting to review price control and Bachat Bazars established by the district administrations in each taluka of the province, adding over 1.6 million people had received over Rs 3.23 billion through Benazir Incom Support Program (BISP).

All the divisional commissioners, secretary of agriculture, secre-

tary of general administration, DG Market Committee, all deputy commissioners and others participated in the meeting. The divisional commissioners informed about the measures taken to control the price and availability of essential items in the bachat bazaar.

Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Iqbal Memon said that Rs 9.1 million rupees on account of a fine was imposed against 1833 profiteers in Karachi during the month of Ramadan. Commissioner Hyderabad said that a fine of Rs Four million had been imposed in Hyderabad. A fine of Rs 0.656 mil-

lion was imposed in MirpurKhas Division.

In the meeting, the chief secretary Sindh directed Commissioner Larkana, Commissioner Shaheed Benazirabad and Commissioner Sukkur to increase the amount of fine and directed them to monitor the price control themselves in their respective divisions.

The chief secretary further said that the presence of essential items should be ensured in the Bachat Bazars. He also directed that vegetable and fruit stalls should be set up by the market committee to provide relief to the masses.

Business of substandard agricultural drugs must be stopped: Minister

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Minister for Industries SM Tanveer on Monday said that the business of substandard agricultural drugs and fertilizers should be stopped at all costs. He said this while presiding over a meeting held at Agriculture House. Meeting discussed and reviewed the availability, prices and monitoring system of fertilizers for the Kharif crops.

Representatives of the pesticide and fertilizer industry informed about the problems faced regarding registration of cases and non-opening of LCs.

SM Tanveer said that after sitting together with the stakeholders, suggestions would be made to solve the problems and the federal government would also be contacted in this regard.

He said that non-standard agricultural drugs and fertilizers were poisons and harmful for crops.

Agriculture Secretary Wasif Khursheed said that by convening meeting of all stakeholders, proposals would be made and the federal government would be contacted. He said, "Time for cotton cultivation is near, so the delay in the import of pesticides may lead to problems."

Secretary for introducing new projects

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Livestock Secretary Muhammad Masood Anwar has directed the authorities to introduce all new projects keeping in view the needs of the department.

He presided over a meeting on comprehensive planning related to Livestock department here on Monday.

He said that practical steps were required for export of halal meat in Eastern Asia, Central Asia, China and European countries. Officers were directed to prepare strategy for control of foot-mouth-disease besides its implementation on immediate basis.

Action plan related to foot-and-mouth disease should be shared with federal government, he added. He said that Punjab Agriculture and Meat Company had been assigned special task for boosting export of halal meat. Secretary said that for promotion of smart Livestock farming steps should be taken with the support of Livestock and Dairy Development Board.

Arrangements being finalized regarding Youm-e-Ali (A.S)

KARACHI (APP): Administrator DMC East, Syed Shakeel Ahmed said that necessary municipal arrangements are being finalized rapidly regarding the Youm e Ali (A.S). After visiting Imambargah Shah Najaf, he visited the graves of Syed Suleman Nadwi, said a statement on Monday. Cleaning of the drain at

Imambargah Shah Najaf Jamshed Road and at adjacent roads immediately is being ensured. He said that DMC East will play its role to provide all possible municipal facilities on the route of the procession and steps are being taken to provide municipal facilities to the mourners on the occasion of Youm-e-Ali (A.S) on Ramazan 21.

70 varsity teachers, employees receive performance awards

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Department of Universities and Boards on Monday, granted performance-based awards to 70 faculty members and employees of higher education institutions, educational boards and the department.

The award distribution ceremony, held here at the office of the Secretary of Universities and Boards, was attended by Sindh Minister of Universities and Boards Ismail Rahu and secretary of the department Muhammad Mureed Rahimoon.

Vice Chancellors of different universities of the province, officers of universities, boards and the department also were in attendance.

Sindh Minister Ismail Raho and the Secretary Department of Universities and Boards distributed awards to the profes-

sors, teachers and other employees for showing excellent performance in their respective fields.

Mureed Rahimoon informed that 59 faculty members and other employees of 26 universities, and 11 employees of the Department of Universities and Boards received the awards.

He said that Rs5.5 million were distributed among the winners from performance awards funds while separate amounts had been granted as awards to vice-chancellors, professors and other employees.

Speaking at the occasion the secretary said that it was the era of Information Technology and all universities should focus on the fastest growing technology to equip their students with IT education.



LAHORE: Labourers working at construction work of Sumanabad Underpass.

Turkiye & Syria Earthquake; KU Syndicate decides to donate one day's salary

KARACHI (APP): The University of Karachi Syndicate members on Monday decided to donate one day's salary of the teachers and officers working in BPS-17 to 22 grades for the donation of the earthquake-affected people of Turkiye and Syria.

The Syndicate observed that the recent calamity in Turkiye and Syria had a devastating impact on both Muslim countries and the decision has been made in this hour of need, said a KU's spokesperson. KU Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi chaired the Syndicate meeting which was held at the VC Secretariat. The Syndicate nominates the Vice Chancellor NED University of Engineering and Technology Professor Dr Sarosh Hashmat Lodhi as the member of the Syndicate on the Board of Governor of the KU Institute of Clinical Psychology for a period of three years.

Meanwhile, a member of the provincial assembly, who is also a member KU Syndicate, Sadia Javed, was nominated

as a member of the Syndicate on the BoG of the KU Area Study Centre for Europe for the period of three years. The KU Syndicate nominates Dr Mohsin Ali as a member of the Syndicate on the BoG of the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi for a period of two years.

The KU Syndicate members while showing displeasure with the Finance and Planning Committee meeting's report and proposed minutes urged the Chairman Syndicate Professor Dr Khalid Iraqi to hold a special syndicate meeting on the financial affairs and budget of the varsity after Eid-ul-Fitr. They observed that the KU Director Finance Tariq Kaleem has miserably failed to fulfill the criteria of holding an F&PC meeting, and did not hold any F&PC meeting for the last two and half years. They hoped that financial matters would be properly addressed and reported in the next syndicate meeting. The KU Syndicate meeting appoints Sadia Javed and the Dean Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences

Professor Dr Faiyaz Hussain Madni Vaid to look into the matter of Wafra Matanat Zehra, Taxonomist at the Marine Reference Collection and Research Centre and asked them to share their findings with the members of the syndicate in future.

The KU Syndicate members recommended deducting the amount of house ceiling three times more than the actual amount from the former employees still living on the campus and not vacating their residences. They also directed to suspend people who have illegally occupied the houses in the residential area. The KU Syndicated members objected that the minutes of the last syndicate meeting had been approved and as per the law similar item or resolution which has been passed by the Syndicate meeting cannot be presented again before three syndicate meetings and that's why the agenda of the stoppage of house ceiling could not be discussed at the moment.



Mayor announces amenities for St. John Girls School

PESHAWAR (APP): Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali has said that education plays a frontline role in the uplift of nations and no country could prosper without imparting quality education to its students. Speaking at the annual prize distribution ceremony of St. John Vianney School here on Monday, Mayor Zubair Ali said 'St. John school has a bright history of serving the education sector. He said his father Haji Ghulam Ali also studied here and it was an honor for this school that one of its students was today the governor of the province. He said his father Governor Haji Ghulam Ali after taking charge of the

governorship paid a visit to this school. Mayor Zubair Ali said he is unhappy to see the current situation of the school and pledged that he would do his utmost to revive the lost glory of this school. On the occasion, he announced renovation of the school building and its complete whitewash. He said the improper electricity fittings in the school will also be upgraded; besides, he announced three electric coolers, solar system, provision of new furniture, lights, and 10 sewing machines for female students and other missing facilities for the school. He paid tribute to the school principal and teach-

ers for maintaining the quality of education despite limited resources. On the request of the minority member of Metropolitan, Pervaiz Iqbal, the Mayor directed the officials of metropolitan to provide the announced facilities to the schools at the earliest. On arrival at the school, the Mayor was welcomed by the school principal, Sister Rozi while Father Tariq Mehmood, and Minority Member Pervaiz Iqbal were also present on the occasion. Father Tariq Mehmood thanked the Mayor for sparing his precious time for the wellbeing of the St. John school, its staff and students.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali presenting a trophy to a position holder during annual prize distribution ceremony of St. John Vianney School.

Digital population, housing census to conclude today

PESHAWAR (APP): The first-ever digital and 7th population and housing census 2023, which was launched on March 01 by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, is currently in its final stages and would conclude on April 04. Chief Census Commissioner Dr Naem uz Zafar has said that the people who could not get themselves registered due to some reason, can dial 0800-57574, or use the digital service of self-enumeration while logging on to "self.pbs.gov.pk" or contact the district administration in their respective areas for their inclusion in the census. The self-enumeration portal was the first-ever opportunity provided in any country in South Asia, enabling every resident of Pakistan the option to count himself/herself in the digital census, he added. The launch of the digital census in Pakistan was a significant milestone for

the country, as past methods of counting people were contentious, with concerns raised by various groups about inaccurate counts and the exclusion of marginalized communities, according to a PBS official on Monday. In order to address these issues, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics introduced geo-tagging and real-time data collection and transmission for the digital census 2023, he added. He said as many as 126,000 enumerators were deployed to collect data from across the country. The enumerators were equipped with tablets that contained more than 30 questions covering areas such as population count, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability, and businesses. According to the chief statistician, the estimated expenditure on the exercise was around Rs 34 billion. For the collection of data, the country was divided into blocks, with each

unit having between 200 to 250 households and each enumerator being assigned two blocks in their respective areas to collect the required data in one month. Despite the security challenges and reported attacks on census teams in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the census teams performed their duties with dedication and visited each and every area to ensure the inclusion of every individual in the digital census, he added. All the deputy commissioners were assigned the duties to monitor the digital census by themselves and report to their respective commissioners on a regular basis. "The census would help the government to plan the next 10-year development projects in different districts on the basis of this census and it is important that every individual should act responsibly and ensure his/her entry in the census," the official emphasised.

Cloudy weather predicted

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Monday predicted that mainly partly cloudy to cloudy weather is expected in most districts of the province. However, it said that scattered rain-thunderstorm with gusty winds and isolated heavy falls and hail-storm is likely to occur over Chitral, Lower & Upper Dir, Malakand, Buner, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torghar, Mans-ehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Hangu, Kurram,

Karak, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, North & South Waziristan and Dera Ismail Khan districts. During the last 24 hours rain - thunder storms occurred over most districts of the province. Rain recorded (in mm): Parachinar 27, Kakul 16, Kohat 14, Malam Jabba & Khar Bajaur 12 (each), Balakot 11, Dir 10, Cherat & Landi Kotal 08 (each), Timergara 07, Bannu 06, Kalam 05, Peshawar (City 04 & Peshawar A/P 03), Pattan & Ghalanai 03 (each), Saidu Sharif & D.I.Khan 02 (each), Doshi Takht Bhai & Risalpur 01

(each), Chitral, Buner & Tirah Trace (each). The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of KP were Peshawar City 24/16, Chitral 18/08, Timergara 21/13, Dir 20/07, Mirkhani 20/06, Kalam 15/01, Drosch 20/10, Saidu Sharif 22/10, Pattan 25/14, Malam Jabba 09/03, Takht Bhai 25/15, Kakul 21/09, Balakot 24/08, Parachinar 11/00, Bannu 25/13, Cherat 17/06, D.I. Khan 27/16. The minimum temperature recorded in the province was 0°C in Parachinar.



PESHAWAR: DG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Judicial Academy Farrukh Jamshid awarding certificate to Senior lawyer Ishaq Ali Qazi Advocate.

Minister LG for achieving set targets

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker Minister for Local Government, Elections and Rural Development, Sawal Nazir Advocate on Monday directed the special committee of Local Council Board to take steps for achieving the set goals in the shortest possible time. Presiding over the meeting of the Special Committee of the Local Council Board here, the Minister said the government wanted to provide due rights to its people in a true sense. Special Secretary Local Council Board and members of the committee were present on the occasion. The board members apprised the minister about their performance and challenges being faced by the committee. The Minister stressed the committee members to take steps on priority basis for resolving the issues of people from Bannu district.

ANP announces candidates

PESHAWAR (INP): The Awami National Party (ANP) on Monday announced the names of its candidates for four National Assembly (NA) Peshawar and three Provincial Assembly (PK) Swat Constituencies. A provincial parliamentary board meeting of the party chaired by provincial president Aimal Wali Khan approved the name of Haji Ghulam Ali Bilour for NA-31 Peshawar, Syed Aqil Shah NA-30, Arbab Zain for NA-29 and Saqib Ullah Khan Chamkani for NA-28. Similarly, Asim Khan was named for PK-5 Swat, Sher Shah Khan for PK-6 and Sher Afghan Khan for PK-54.

Time fixed for free flour distribution

PESHAWAR (APP): The Food Department has fixed 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. timing for distribution of free flour among deserving people and warned of strict action in case of violation of the timing. In a press release issued here on Monday, the Food Department said that an entry into online application of free flour would be restricted after 5 p.m. and all the dealers were advised to strictly follow the given timing. Meanwhile, the District Food Department taking notice of public complaints issued letters to police regarding corruption and provision of free flour distribution to unregistered persons by Atta dealers and asked to arrest such dealers and registered cases against them.

Over Rs18m challan tickets issued

PESHAWAR (INP): The CTP issued challan tickets to 92,974 persons over different violations in the month of March and deposited Rs 18.046300 million in the provincial kitty. According to a report issued here by the CTP, 11,998 persons were fined over unregistered vehicles and motorbikes, while the other offences included the use of tinted glass, no parking, lane violation, illegal number plates, and violation of traffic signals. The CTP urged the masses to act as responsible citizens on roads and strictly follow traffic rules to avoid any inconvenience.

ETPB, KP Archaeology Dept sign MoU

PESHAWAR (INP): The Evacuee Trust Property Board and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa department of archaeology and museums have signed a memorandum of understanding for possession and maintenance of a prominent Hindu heritage site Punj Teerath in Peshawar. Under the MoU, the directorate of archaeology would provide full technical support to the Evacuee Trust Property Board for rehabilitation and maintenance of Punj Teerath.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Information Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah Khakhakhel in a meeting with Special Assistant Pir Haroon Shah.

Chief Secretary reviews progress on e-procurement system

PESHAWAR (APP): The Chief Secretary KP Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary on Monday chaired a meeting to review progress on the e-procurement system. The e-procurement system is an online platform that aims to increase transparency and accountability in public procurement and contract awards. The KP government is implementing the system to ensure that the procurement process is fair and open to all qualified bidders, reducing the possibility of corruption and malpractice.

During the meeting, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhary expressed satisfaction with the progress made by the e-procurement system and its potential to bring about significant improvements in the procurement process. He emphasized the need for all concerned departments to fully embrace the system and ensure its successful implementation. He said that the system is an important step toward promoting transparency,

accountability, and good governance in public procurement. Chief Secretary urged all relevant departments to work together to ensure the successful implementation of the e-procurement system in the province. He emphasized that the system would bring significant benefits in terms of efficiency, transparency, and accountability, which would ultimately lead to better public services for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Political instability detrimental to economy

PESHAWAR (APP): The premature dissolution of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab assemblies and heavy foreign loans obtained by the PTI during its last four years tenure had made negative effects on the country's economy and prices stability in the open market. Ikhthair Wali Khan, Pakistan Muslim League-N Spokesman told APP on Monday that the poor economic and fiscal policies of the PTI government followed by violent protests in different parts of the country by its workers in the wake of Zaman Park's skirmishes, premature dissolutions of KP and Punjab assemblies and heavy foreign loans obtained by the PTI had aggravated the economic crisis in the country. Resultantly, the consumers' inflation has reached a record 35.4 percent during last month, which was highest in 49 years.

According to APP market survey at Peshawar, the price of live chicken has increased to Rs365 per kilogram and rice by Rs70 per kg, split chickpeas (chana dal) started selling at Rs220 to Rs260 per kg, while the price of beans soared by Rs60 per kg with rates jumping from Rs281 to Rs339 per kg respectively during Ramadan. The price of spices has swelled from Rs150 to Rs200 per kg while the cost of oil and ghee surged by Rs62 per kg. The vegetables and fruits remained out of consumers' purchasing power in the market where garlic was being sold at Rs360 and ginseng at Rs620 per kg.

The sweet oranges are priced at Rs440 per dozen, oranges at Rs400 per dozen, banana at Rs300 per dozen, pomegranate Rs400, Iranian apple at Rs340 per kg, Kohati guava at Rs350 and strawberry costs Rs280 per kg. The skyrocketing price-hike have also impacted the meat market with beef being sold for Rs700 per kg before Ramadan, but is now priced at Rs800 and Rs1,000 per kg, while the rates of mutton were increased from Rs1,400 to Rs1,600 per kg; thereby increasing to Rs1,800 per kg.

'Govt taking steps for uplift of merged districts'

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Labor, Excise and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi has said that the provincial government wants the rapid development of the merged districts so that the living standard of the tribal people, who have been marginalized for centuries, could be improved at par with the rest of the nation and henceforth they could be fully enabled to contribute in the process of national progress and prosperity. He expressed these

views while talking to tribal elites during his short visit to Khyber district. On the occasion of the visit, the people of the area apprised the provincial minister about some of their individual and collective problems and also assured him of their full cooperation in implementing the government policies. Haji Manzoor Afridi said that the founder of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, has rightly termed the tribal people as the sword arms of Pakistan, because on the one hand, the patriotism

and bravery of the tribal people is beyond doubt, while on the other hand, they are naturally the protectors of the geographical borders of the country. The minister assured that like other merged districts, the people of Khyber will also be benefited from the development and welfare schemes of the provincial and federal governments adding the prevalent poverty and backwardness there would be eradicated from this district for good. He also assured to resolve the problems and issues presented by the tribal people on priority basis.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Labor, Excise and Narcotics Control Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi talking to tribal elders.

PTI framed current govt for inflation and unemployment

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The leader of Tehreek-e-Insaf Zubair Quarshi said that inflation, poverty and poverty are continuously increasing, we strongly condemned the additional burden of 635 billion rupees on the consumers due to the continuous surcharge of 3.23 rupees per unit on electricity on the terms of the IMF. Nawaz Sharif wants a 97 game with the Supreme Court. If it is in their favor, then Sumoto was halal, otherwise it is forbidden. Nawaz Maryam wants a bench of her choice. The coalition government is responsible for the deaths of people on flour. Nawaz Sharif is sitting in London and shaking the cords of conspiracies against the Supreme Court, but times and circumstances have changed. The nation has woken up and the whole nation will respond to the conspiracies against the Chief Justice and the Supreme Court. He said that Chief Justice Umar Attabandial stands with

him on the right. People are dying for flour rows. Such painful scenes are seen only in Ethiopia. Inflation rate has increased to 45.36%. Due to inflation, those who are fasting are not doing iftar and suhoor. The government could not control the prices of flour. Expressing deep sorrow and regret for the tragic incident of the death of women and children due to stampede during the distribution of ration. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf expresses its heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the affected families. Strict action should be taken against the perpetrators of negligence. What happened in the Karachi factory is a painful situation. The hideous face of the gang attacking the judiciary has been exposed in front of the nation. Cheap flour has swallowed many human lives, but the shameless and brutal rulers do not care. The leaders said that Maryam Aurangzeb's fabricated speech against Imran Khan is a child of lies. Instead of giving free death, they are

distributing death among the people. He said that false cases are being made against Imran Khan, he always believes in the supremacy of law. A petition has been prepared against No worker of PML-N has been arrested in our time. The caretaker government should drown in water. According to the country's constitution, elections should be held in 90 days. When Hasan Niazi was judicially remanded, the Karachi police came to pick him up, they are doing everything that can be expected of them, Rana Sana Ullah should be ashamed, he is a murderer, I don't know how to avoid the damage he has caused. As a result of the attack by the Islamabad police on the occasion of the appearance of the Chairman Tehreek-e-Insaf, the squads strongly condemn the breaking of the windows of other vehicles and the torture and arrest of the official photographer. Saad Rafiq's threatening speech is condemnable, Supreme Court should take immediate

notice of Rana Sanaullah's statement. The United Nations should take immediate notice of the desecration of the Holy Quran in the Netherlands and strict action should be taken against those responsible. The international community will have to take urgent measures to prevent these incidents. His desecration is an unacceptable act. The rulers cannot stop us by declaring us terrorists, the workers of Tehreek-e-Insaf are being subjected to the worst state terrorism, which is a shameful act. The government is giving death in the name of free flour. Getting flour has become a matter of life and death. Humanity is becoming dignified by the free flour campaign, there is political instability due to human rights violations. More than 100 cases have been filed against Imran Khan for human rights violations. Maryam Nawaz calls herself the daughter of Pakistan, but her properties and children are in London.



In brief

Four die in car-truck collision

QUETTA (PPI): Four people died after the car they were travelling in collided head-on with a Mazda truck near Dhadhar area of Balochistan on Monday. The collision occurred near Bolan when the 2 OD car travelling from Sibbi to Quetta collided with the Mazda, that was coming from the opposite direction. As a result, four persons inside the car died on the spot. Meanwhile, the truck driver managed to escape after the accident.

DPO reviews security situation Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: The District Police Officer (DPO) Shahzada Umar Abbas Babar on Monday paid a detailed visit to various mosques and sensitive places in the city and reviewed security arrangements of mosques, Imambargha and other worship and sensitive places. The DPO met the police personnel deployed at various mosques and sensitive places and directed them to remain on high alert during the duty and keep a close watch on suspicious persons. He also inspected the security arrangements of mosques, Imambargahs and worship places of minorities' community and issued necessary directives. He reiterated that the police would ensure the safety of the people by all means and said that all the security measures have been put in place in this regard.

Cases of illegal arms registered

ATTOCK (PPI): On the directives of District Police Officer (DPO) Attock Dr. Sardar Ghiyas Gul Khan, police in a crackdown against anti-social elements, said on Monday that they have registered 80 cases of illegal arms while 222 pistols, 5 rifles, 11 guns, 10 Kalashnikovs, 2 carbines, 2 revolvers and 12865 rounds were recovered from drug dealers during last month. Meanwhile, hashish, 160 grams of heroin, 15 grams of ice and 91 liters of alcohol were also recovered after registering a total of 55 cases against the accused. District Police Officer Attock Dr. Sardar Ghiyas Gul Khan said that the action against the criminal elements will continue without any discrimination and the Attock Police will spare no effort to protect the lives and property of the people.

Boy kills maternal grand-mother

BAHAWALPUR (INP): A grand-son killed his maternal grand-mother over petty domestic issue, police said. According to the Rescue authorities, the grand-son after assassinating his maternal grand-mother run away. When the police reached at crime scene it collated all possible evidence and shifted the dead body to hospital for medico-legal procedure but the deceased family denied to shift the dead-body to hospital. However, police completed the legal proceedings for further action. The police claimed that the suspect will be arrested soon and police actively have been searching him.

70,000 patients examined F.P. Report

CHARSADDA: As many as 70,000 patients were examined while 5614 babies were born during last year in Al-Khidmat Hospital Charsadda. 13,000 patients were operated on for different diseases, 1200 eyes operations, 1500 dental operations were conducted during this period.

Residents demand early construction of Boni-Chitral road

F.P. Report

CHITRAL: An important meeting of hundreds of people of Union Council Koh, was held at Safdar house Morilashit village. The elders of the area demanded the construction of Boni-Chitral road, supply of electricity and distribution of free flour of Ramadan package to the residents of the area. The elders warned the government that if their genuine demands were not fulfilled within three days they will be compelled to take the stern step.

According to details, an important meeting of the elders of Union Council Koh, a suburb area of Chitral, was held in Mori Lasht which was presided over by Sharif Hussain Chairman.

The meeting was attended by representatives of all political and religious parties, elected councilors, Nazims, chairmen and social workers who also participated in the meeting. Expressing their concern at the meeting, Haji Safdar Ali Akash and other speakers said that construction

work had started on Boni Chitral road but the work has stopped now and this road presents a scene of ruins. They said that the National Highway Authority (NHA) also removed the blacktopping (coal tar) from this road which was constructed by a Chinese construction company 38 years ago and it was very strong coal tar but after that road was left incomplete. They said that the contractor of NHA removed the strong coal tar (blacktopping) even from such a part of the road where they did not do any work on the road i.e. no opening, no paving, no protective wall or expansion but the contractor removed the coal tar only to collect money.

The speakers said that a 108-megawatt hydropower plant has been constructed in Golain with a cost of billions of rupees, but its survey was wrong at that time and after construction it was revealed that this power plant can only generate 15 megawatts of electricity. They said that the area in its neighbourhood is plunged in darkness. They

said that the free flour in Ramadan from the Prime Minister has not yet distributed at this area. A three-point resolution was also unanimously passed in the meeting demanding the government to immediately start the construction work on the Booni-Chitral road, to provide electricity to the Koh area from Golain Power Station and on behalf of the Prime Minister. In Ramadan, free flour should also be given to the residents of this area.

The people of the area while talking to our correspondent said that due to the dirt and dust on this road, not only the passers-by but the people living near the road are also suffering from various diseases. In the meeting, the authorities were given a deadline of three days and warned that if their genuine demands were not fulfilled within three days, they will be compelled to take stern action, including blocking the Booni Mastoj road, suspending the electricity supply and stopping the delivery of goods to upper Chitral. The meeting ended with prayerful words.

IJT hold protest against UOM admin's failure

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Islami Jamiat Tulba (IJT), a students' wing of the Jamaat-i-Islami staged a protest rally against University of Malakand (UoM) administration outside the main gate at Chakdara. Dozens of the IJT workers blocked the Chakdara Shamoza road for some time and chanted slogans against the varsity administration for imposing a ban on speeches.

The IJT provincial nazim Wasim Haider, nazim UoM Hanifullah, JI candidate for provincial assembly Azizullah Khan and former provincial chief Kalimullah addressed the rally. The speakers alleged that Ice-drug being supplied to male and female students of the varsity by unknown drug dealers while the Vice-Chancellor had kept silent on the matter.

The protestors said that instead of taking solid steps for eradication of this menace the VC had been issuing show cause notices to students' leaders. They said that any ban on the Quranic teachings was unaffordable. The IJT provincial chief demanded permanent staff in the archeology department. The protesting students shouted slogans against the vice-chancellor,

chief proctor and provost for their failure to address the students' problems.

Cricketer Naseem Shah distribute 300 food packages: Pakistan's fast bowler Naseem Shah distributed Ramadan food packages among 300 families under the Shahid Afridi Foundation in his home town Mayar in Lower Dir.

Earlier the Pakistani star cricketer was warmly welcomed by locals on his arrival at his native village, Mayar Jandol. The national star along with his relatives and friends also visited the tomb of his mother and offered fateha for her soul. Speaking on the occasion, Naseem Shah thanked the villagers for their warm reception and said that he started cricketing from this area and joined the Pakistan cricket squad at a young age.

Lauding the humanitarian services of the Shahid Afridi Foundation (SAF), a welfare organization working for the uplift of affected people in Pakistan, Mr Shah said the Foundation had been active to help support poor people across the country. He said the Foundation had been distributing such food packages among poor families in the country to help decrease their miseries.

AKF distributes 200 Eid gifts among orphans: The Al-Khidmat

Foundation district president Hafeezullah Khaksar has said the Foundation distributed food packages worth Rs 5 million among the needy and deserving people in the first decade of Ramadan.

Talking to local journalists at Timergara he said that a total of 1000 food packages and Eid gifts including clothes, shoes etc among 200 orphans and 100 widows were distributed. Khaksar said that like other parts of the province the AKF also launched its sasti roti scheme at three points which would continue till the end of this Holy month.

He said the AKF also distributed Eid gifts among 400 orphan boys and girls with the financial support of a Turkish Organization, the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) at Timergara in Lower Dir and Barawal in Upper Dir.

Youth killed: A youth identified as Sulman Khan was killed when unidentified person(s) opened indiscriminate firing on him at Khadagzai in the jurisdiction of Chakdara police station. The deceased's father told police that the family had no enmity with anyone. The Chakdara police registered a case and started further investigations.

AD&SJ convicted rapist for death sentence

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAFIZABAD: Additional District and Sessions Judge Hafizabad Malik Shahid Hussain Awan award death sentence in raped-cum-murder case.

According to prosecution, one Shahid Imran resident of village Qila Bukhshah had raped and killed a six-year-old innocent girl.

Kaleke Mandi police was registered a case against Shahid Imran on July 12, 2021 on the application of her father

Muhammad Younas and submitted challan in the court. After observing evidence and hearing to witnesses, the Judge awarded death penalty to the accused.

Three critically injured during attack on trauma center: As many as 3 persons were critically injured in the firing of armed suspects in the Trauma Centre of Hafizabad, out of which two were referred to Lahore in critical condition. According to the details, Imran and Tariq

Aziz were having a land dispute with a person named Qamar. During the fight between the two groups in the village, one person was injured and was brought to the Trauma Centre in a private vehicle.

The other group came to the Trauma Centre and opened firing, as a result of which 3 people were seriously injured, out of which two were referred to Lahore Hospital in critical condition. The police reached the Trauma Centre and started the investigation.

Excise police recovers 60 kg hashish from vehicle F.P. Report

MARDAN: Excise Police Mardan in major operation recovered 60 kilograms hashish worth lakhs of rupees packed in five sacks inside the vehicle of a fake major accused dressed in Pakistan Army uniform was recovered.

According to the Excise Spokesman, under the supervision of Zahid Iqbal Khan Excise and Taxation Officer (Narcotics Control) and Syed Naveed Jamal Circle Officer, Muhammad Riaz SHO Police Station Excise Mardan Region and Farooq Khan and Fayyaz Khan Sub-Inspectors along with other personnel were operating in Nowshera Iqbal Ali, son of Farman Ali, a resident of Abbottabad, was arrested while smuggling large quantities of drugs, dressed in the uniform of a fake Major.

Excise recovered 60000 grams (60 kg) hashish worth lakhs of rupees packed in five sacks were recovered from inside the vehicle after searching the vehicle with fake major official number plate and black glasses. The accused also confessed to smuggling drugs to Punjab 10 times earlier. Cases have been registered against the accused under various provisions for drug smuggling, damage to government property and defamation of the Pakistan Army.

Public servants provide free hand to traders F.P. Report

SHANGLA: The residents claimed that flour dealers had obtained their sacks of free flour under Ramzan package while the needy and poor people from their right by unfair means with the collaboration local officials, on Monday.

According sources, a labor namely Kamal Khan told that waiting for five hours in que to obtain free flour but on his number he was informed that his share has also received by someone. He claimed that neither his family nor by himself he obtained his flour sack but claimed that it is talk of the day that trader with assistance government officials of administration, food department and local government grabbing share of poor people by unfair mean to deprive them from food in Ramadan.

Another labor, Javeed also complaint the same matter that he didn't obtained one sack of free flour in 12 days of Ramadan while traders are grabbing their share with collaboration competent authorities to compelled marginalized segments of society for starvation. They claimed that public servants and traders are collectively compelling deprived segments of society for starvation especially poor and labor class.

Three killed

FAISALABAD (INP): Three people were killed when firing started between opponents over dispute of land in the Nishatabad police station jurisdiction.

Two of the victims were brothers who were identified as Wajahat and Nawazish whereas the third victim was their cousin who was identified as Imran. As per sources, the mourners of the deceased have staged a protest against the murder of their family members and have blocked the Sargodha road.

Distribution of free flour

Women blocks road against malpractice



F.P. Report

BUNER: Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) beneficiary women blocked Buner-Swat against deprivation from free flour and alleged malpractice in the process by distributors with assistance public office-holders, on Monday.

The veiled women in large numbers were gathered at Torwarsak Bazaar despite raining and blocked the main road. These women were allegedly ignored in provision free

flour distribution. They accused the suppliers were distributing free flour to blue eyed males and poor women were deprived of their due right to have free flour package.

However, the suppliers were of the view these free flour were meant to provide against registration online and just single person in a family while these women were either received it themselves or their family members or yet to register themselves online. It's pertinent to mention here the

free flour distribution policy was forced males and females both out of homes early morning and to wander for getting free flour till afternoon.

The government criteria was crystal clear and those registered online were getting it from nearby distribution point but due to lack of awareness especially in the case of women they wanted to get more free flour and almost all of family members that was why unnecessary rush observed at distribution points daily.

Indiscriminate crackdown against outlaw directed

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: District Police Officer (DPO) Lower Dir Tariq Iqbal held a monthly crime meeting with all SDPOs and SHOs, police station-wise performance, crime chart and law and order were reviewed in detail.

In this regard, DPO Office A crime meeting was held under the chairmanship of District Police Officer Tariq Iqbal in Lower Dir. DSP Timergara Syed Rahim, DSP Jandul Bakht Jamal Khan, DSP Maidan Sher Bahadur Khan and SHOs from across the district participated. Regarding the prevention of crime, a detailed review of police station-wise performance, crime vs. chart

and law and order was done. On this occasion, the district police chief directed the SHOs to speed up the campaign to arrest wanted criminals and on a daily basis. Conduct a combined search and strike operation of police stations on the homes of wanted terrorists.

He issued orders to deploy police officers in white sheets for the purpose of information in sensitive places and areas where wanted criminals are advertised. He ordered to play no role. He said that all available resources should be used to eliminate crimes and keep a watchful eye on habitual criminals and give binding bail. He directed the traffic police to crack down on the daily basis of un-helmeted, minor and

unregistered motorcyclists in order to control accidents.

He said that drugs are a curse and our mission is to create a drug-free Lower Dir. The police should tighten the cordon against the drug dealers and get public support in this regard. He directed the SHOs and editors to have better behavior and good manners with the police station goers. He said that their duty is honesty and duty. Pay conscientiously and there is no place for corrupt, corrupt and misbehaving officers in the force. He said that the protection of life and property of the people is the primary responsibility of the police and any kind of abuse will not be tolerated.

Flour distribution inspected under Ramazan package

Saqib Mushtaq

LODHRAN: Deputy Commissioner Syed Mashad Raza Kazmi along with District Police officer Lodhran Hussam Bin Iqbal visited the free flour distribution points on the instructions of Punjab Government.

The Deputy Commissioner made a detailed inspection of various free flour distribution points to review the arrangements and facilities of providing free flour to the citizens by the Punjab government under the special Ramadan package. He visited the free flour points established at Government Graduate College, Government Associate College, Lodhran Public School, Wasaib Marriage Hall, Municipal Stadium and reviewed the administrative issues related to providing free flour to the citizens. He inquired about the free flour scheme from the citizens and directed the



employees on the occasion to treat the citizens with kindness and ensure that the flour is delivered at least in time delivery is possible.

On this occasion, Deputy Commissioner Syed Mashad Raza Kazmi said that the government of Punjab is continuing to provide free flour to the beneficiaries. It

is being given directly. He added that this series of free flour supply will continue till 25th of Ramadan. During the visit, District Police Officer Hussam bin Iqbal also reviewed the security measures taken at the flour distribution points and directed the policemen on duty to discharge their duties actively and responsibly.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto - An ideology

Mustajab Nazir Dhoki

ZULFIKAR Ali Bhutto, the man who changed the meaning of politics in Pakistan. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was the first person who stood for the ordinary people of Pakistan whose voices went unheard in a country full of people with 'elite class' status. A status only granted to those on the very upper echelon of society, the richest and most powerful people in the region.

Being elite never gave people the authority to ignore or silence people weaker or lower than them, instead it meant being their voice. Speaking for the outspoken, protecting the abused, understanding the issues plagu-

ing the classes lower than them and fixing said issues. Being elite meant making sure everyone, regardless of social class could live and prosper in this country together in harmony. This is even more evident when considering the fact that Pakistan was formed with the idea of upholding Islamic values and instilling a sense of brotherhood and camaraderie amongst the people living in it. Instead of this, the title of 'elite' only elaborates on how a person lives in wealth and luxury, driving flashy cars, wearing expensive clothes, ignoring all those around them considered to be in a lower class.

When Bhutto came into power, he struggled and fought for the struggling middle and

lower class in Pakistan. His slogan was 'Roti, Kapra aur Makaan' (bread, cloth and a home) which translates to 'Bread, cloth and a home is what every person wants'. These are essentials every human needs to survive, and any country or society which doesn't grant its citizens these necessities is bound to be plagued with chaos. Mahatma Gandhi said that 'hunger is the mother of all evil', and a hunger for essentials needed for survival which should be provided for and given to everyone lay the foundation for a corrupt and broken society. Bhutto knew that this disparity would cause pain and misery to hundreds of thousands and sought to change that.

Wealth is not that only dis-

criminating factor in Pakistan. Before its independence, Muslims of the subcontinent lived under 'The Two Nation' theory, but unfortunately, even after becoming a separate country the discrimination didn't cease and people still heavily discriminated against each other. Bhutto was a Sindh, meaning he had to face immense discrimination leading to him struggling more, sacrificing more. He had to sacrifice his life and his family for his country, Pakistan. That was the price he paid to make all his work mean something.

He not only founded the Pakistan People's Party, but also founded democracy in Pakistan. Before him, all major political figures were either dictators or slaves of those dictators, but

Bhutto chose to be different. He chose to be good. He chose to be an independent leader whose main agenda was to benefit not himself, but his fellow countrymen. To make Pakistan a better place to live for all its citizens, irrespective of their status or class.

His actions led to Pakistan getting atomic power thus making it more powerful in the eyes of the world. His actions and intentions inspired the king of KSA, King Faisal to gift Pakistan the Faisal Mosque, which is one of it's biggest and most noteworthy mosques as a sign of respect and a token of appreciation. It's unfortunate that this mosque became the final resting place of General Zia, one of Bhutto's greatest

adversaries and dictators.

Bhutto was not biased for just the good of his people, he wanted good for all. Bengalis, known as East Pakistanis at the time were abused and by current Pakistanis. They were discriminated against, they lost their jobs, their women were harassed. They were treated as sub-human. Bhutto saw this and he signed a pact with Indira Gandhi, giving total independence to Bengal and declaring it as Bangladesh, making it an entirely separate nation so that those living there would have easier and better lives. He truly left the world a better place than how he found it. All this proves that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto is much more than just a name. It's an ideology.



SK, US, Japan hold anti-NK submarine drill

SEOUL (AP): The South Korean, US and Japanese navies began their first anti-submarine drills in six months to boost their coordination against increasing North Korean missile threats, South Korea's military said. The two-day drills come as North Korea's recent unveiling of a type of battlefield nuclear warhead prompted worries the country may conduct first nuclear test since 2017.

The maritime exercises in international waters off South Korea's southern island of Jeju involved the nuclear-powered USS Nimitz aircraft carrier and naval destroyers from South Korea, the US and Japan, South Korea's Defense Ministry said in a statement. The training was arranged to improve the three countries' capacities to respond to underwater security threats posed by North Korea's advancing submarine-launched ballistic missiles and other assets, the statement said. It said the three countries were to detect and track unmanned South Korean and US underwater vehicles posing as enemy submarines and other assets. Submarine-launched missiles by North Korea are serious security threats to the United States and its allies because it's harder to spot such launches in

advance. In recent year, the North has been testing sophisticated underwater-launched ballistic missiles and pushing to build bigger submarines including a nuclear-powered one.

Last month, North Korea performed a barrage of missile tests in response to the earlier South Korea-US bilateral military drills. The weapons tested included a nuclear-capable underwater drone and a submarine-launched cruise missile, which suggest North Korea is trying to diversify its kinds of underwater weapons. Photographs in North Korea's state media last week showed about 10 capsule-shaped, red-tipped warheads called "Hwasan (volcano)-31" with different serial numbers. A poster on a nearby wall listed eight kinds of short-range weapons that can carry the "Hwasan-31" warhead. The previous test flights of those weapons show they are capable of striking key targets in South Korea, including US military bases there. Some observers say the warhead's unveiling may be a prelude to a nuclear test as North Korea's last two tests in 2016 and 2017 followed the disclosures of other warheads. If it does conduct a nuclear test, it would be its seventh detonation overall and the first since September 2017.

Foreign experts debate whether North Korea has functioning nuclear-armed missiles. But South Korea's defense minister, Lee Jong-Sup, recently said the North's technology to build miniaturized warheads to be mounted on advanced short-range missiles was believed to have made considerable progress. North Korea could carry out new missile tests in response to the South Korea-US-Japan drills because it views such training as a security threat, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un called recent South Korea-US exercises "reckless military provocations" that disregarded North Korea's "patience and warning." In remarks carried in the Defense Ministry statement, Rear Adm. Kim Inho, chief of the South Korean forces involved in the trilateral drills, said "We'll decisively respond to and neutralize any type of provocation by North Korea."

In addition to anti-submarine drills, the three countries will practice humanitarian search-and-rescue operations, including saving people who fall into the water and treating emergency patients. It would be the three countries' first such training in seven years, the Defense Ministry statement said.

UN urges Yemen peace talks on truce anniversary

UNITED NATIONS (AFP): The United Nations' Yemen envoy warned the war-ravaged country faces a "critical time" and urged steps towards lasting peace, exactly a year since a truce has dramatically reduced fighting. Swedish diplomat Hans Grundberg called the UN-brokered truce that took effect in April 2022 a "moment of hope" and said it was largely holding, despite lapsing in October.

"But the truce's most significant promise is its potential to jumpstart an inclusive political process aimed at comprehensively and sustainably ending the conflict," the UN secretary-general's special envoy said in a statement. Nearly a decade of war in Yemen has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, both directly and indirectly, and set off one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. "There are still significant risks," Grundberg said, calling to "protect the gains of the truce and to build on them towards more humanitarian relief, a nationwide ceasefire and a sustainable political settlement that meets the aspirations of Yemeni women and men".

A landmark reconciliation deal announced last month between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the two regional powerhouses that back rival sides in Yemen's war, added to the optimism that started last year with the truce. Riyadh is leading a military coalition on behalf of the ousted Yemeni government while Tehran backs Huthi rebels, who seized control of the capital in 2014. Amid renewed deadly fighting and warnings from the rebels, the UN envoy said: "The military, economic and rhetorical escalation of recent weeks is a reminder of the fragility of the truce's achievements." He urged the government and the Huthis to "sit together and responsibly engage in serious dialogue" that would lead to "a peaceful resolution of the conflict".

Yemen remains deeply fractured along regional, confessional and political lines, and riven with rival factions including Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group. "At this critical time, any new temporary or partial arrangement needs to include a clear commitment from the parties that ensures it is a step on the course of a peaceful solution... in an inclusive political process," Grundberg said. "Moments like now are fleeting and precarious," he warned. "More than ever, now is the time for dialogue, compromises, and a demonstration of leadership and serious will to achieve peace."

Mozambique works to contain cholera outbreak

QUELIMANE (AP): Weeks after massive Cyclone Freddy hit Mozambique for a second time, the still-flooded country is facing a spiraling cholera outbreak that threatens to add to the devastation. There were over 19,000 confirmed cases of cholera across eight of Mozambique's provinces as of March 27, according to UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, a figure which had almost doubled in a week.

Freddy was likely the longest-lived cyclone ever, lasting over five weeks and hitting Mozambique twice. The tropical storm killed 165 people in Mozambique, 17 in Madagascar and 676 in Malawi. More than 530 people are still missing in Malawi two weeks later so that country's death toll could well exceed 1,200. Freddy made its second landfall in Mozambique's Zambezia province, where scores of villages remain flooded and water supplies are still contaminated. At a hospital in Quelimane, Zambezia's provincial capital, National Institute of Health director general Eduardo Sam Gudo Jr reported there were 600 new confirmed cases a day in Quelimane district alone, but said that the real number may be as high as 1,000. At least 31 died of cholera in Zambezia and over 3,200 were hospitalized between March 15 and 29, according to data from the Ministry of Health.

Harris finds new connections in Africa as historic figure

LUSAKA, Zambia (AP): Vice President Kamala Harris may have traveled halfway around the world to reach this corner of Africa, but she was welcomed as a "daughter of our own country" when she sat down with Zambia's leader. The visit, President Hakainde Hichilema said, was "like a homecoming."

It was a reference to a childhood trip to Zambia when Harris' grandfather worked here, but she heard similar refrains throughout her weeklong trip to Africa that ended. In Ghana, President Nana Akufo-Addo told Harris "you're welcome home." In Tanzania, a sign in Swahili told Harris to "feel at home."

The greetings were a reflection of the enduring connections between the African diaspora in the United States and Africans themselves, something that America's first Black vice president fostered during her trip. Although her historic status has led to extreme scrutiny and extraordinary expectations in Washington, it was a source of excitement over the past week. "She is the ambassador we need at the moment," said Tracy Sharpley-Whiting, who chairs African American and Diaspora Studies at Vanderbilt University. "That's a joyous thing." Harris' background did not spare her from difficult conversations about US foreign policy and she was pressed in Africa about visas, private investment and funding to deal with climate change. There's also skepticism over whether the United States will follow through with its commitments and over its attempts to rival China's own influence in Africa.

But at every stop, Harris was warmly embraced. "Kamala Harris! Kamala Harris!" young girls shouted on the tarmac when she landed in Lusaka. She approached them with her hand on her chest in gratitude. "The VP is here! The VP is here!" The last week produced none of the unfortunate viral moments that dogged Harris on previous foreign trips, such as when she laughed off a question about visiting the US border with Mexico or when she said the US had an "alliance with the Republic of North Korea." Instead, the trip to Africa was largely overshadowed by a cascade of US news, including a school shooting in Nashville, Tennessee, and the indictment of former President Donald Trump.

But anyone tuning in would have seen Harris hanging out with actor Idris Elba and actor-singer Sheryl Lee



Ralph at a recording studio in Accra, Ghana's capital, or collecting business cards from young entrepreneurs in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, or walking through rows of peppers at a farm outside of Lusaka. Sometimes she felt comfortable enough to discard her prepared remarks, a rarity for a politician who sticks closely to the script in Washington. Although Africa remains a poor continent with almost half the population lacking access to electricity, Harris' itinerary was aimed at portraying it as young, dynamic, innovative - and primed for American business opportunities, particularly with leaders from the diaspora. The most glamorous event was a state banquet at the Ghanaian presidential palace known as the Jubilee House, where Black American celebrities, business people and civil rights activists gathered.

In her toast, Harris paid tribute to attendees who "represent the glorious beauty of the African diaspora" and she spoke about "our shared destiny." Akufo-Addo, the president, honored Harris with a local touch. "Since you were born on a Tuesday, I'm sure you would not mind the Ghanaian name Abena, the Akan name for all Tuesday born females, to your name," he said. Raising his glass, Akufo-Addo toasted "the honorable Kamala Devi Abena Harris."

Marc Morial, president of the National Urban League, said there was a "festive and family" atmosphere to be there with the first

Black vice president in US history. "It's a moment of pride," he said. "And it's a moment of opportunity." The trip could be Harris' last foray overseas before the 2024 campaign begins in earnest. President Joe Biden is expected to announce his reelection run, and Harris will be a prime target for Republican attacks. Some of that is the result of Biden's age - he would be 82 when starting a second term in 2025 - and Harris' status a heartbeat away from the presidency.

But like President Barack Obama before her, Harris has faced racism and questions when it comes to her heritage. Her father was born in Jamaica, where most Black citizens trace their heritage to Africa through the slave trade, making it likely that Harris' own ancestors were enslaved. Her mother was born in India, and the vice president was raised in California, contributing to a multicultural background that defies easy characterization. (It was her mother's Indian father who worked in Zambia decades ago, helping to settle refugees in the newly independent African country.) But Harris wrote in her book, "The Truths We Hold," that her mother was clear-eyed about what it meant to raise two daughters in the United States. "She knew that her adopted homeland would see Maya and me as black girls, and she was determined to make sure we would grow into confident, proud black women," Harris wrote.

War crimes warrant for Putin could complicate Ukraine peace

THE HAGUE (AP): An international arrest warrant for President Vladimir Putin raises the prospect of the man whose country invaded Ukraine facing justice, but it complicates efforts to end that war in peace talks. Both justice and peace appear to be only remote possibilities today, and the conflicting relationship between the two is a quandary at the heart of a March 17 decision by the International Criminal Court to seek the Russian leader's arrest.

Judges in The Hague found "reasonable grounds to believe" that Putin and his commissioner for children's rights were responsible for war crimes, specifically the unlawful deportation and unlawful transfer of children from occupied areas of Ukraine to Russia. As unlikely as Putin sitting in a Hague courtroom seems now, other leaders have faced justice in international courts. Former Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic, a driving force behind the Balkan wars of the 1990s, went on trial for war crimes, including genocide, at a United Nations tribunal in The Hague after he lost power. He died in his cell in 2006 before a verdict could be reached. Serbia, which

wants European Union membership but has maintained close ties to Russia, is one of the countries that has criticized the ICC's action. The warrants "will have bad political consequences" and create "a great reluctance to talk about peace (and) about truce" in Ukraine, populist Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said.

Others see consequences for Putin, and for anyone judged guilty of war crimes, as the primary desired outcome of international action. "There will be no escape for the perpetrator and his henchmen," European Union leader Ursula von der Leyen said in a speech to mark the one-year anniversary of the liberation of Bucha, the Ukraine town that saw some of the worst atrocities in the war. "War criminals will be held accountable for their deeds." Hungary did not join the other 26 EU members in signing a resolution in support of the ICC warrant for Putin. The government's chief of staff, Gergely Gulyas, said Hungarian authorities would not arrest Putin if he were to enter the country.. He called the warrants "not the most fortunate because they lead toward escalation and not toward peace."

Putin appears to have a strong grip on power, and some analysts suspect the warrant hanging over him could provide an incentive to prolong the fighting. "The arrest warrant for Putin might undermine efforts to reach a peace deal in Ukraine," Daniel Krmaric, an associate professor of political science at Northwestern University, said in emailed comments to The Associated Press. One potential way of easing the way to peace talks could be for the United Nations Security Council to call on the International Criminal Court to suspend the Ukraine investigation for a year, which is allowed under Article 16 of the Rome Statute treaty that created the court. But that appears unlikely, said Krmaric, whose book "The Justice Dilemma," deals with the tension between seeking justice and pursuing a negotiated end to conflicts. "The Western democracies would have to worry about public opinion costs if they made the morally questionable decision to trade justice for peace in such an explicit fashion," he said, adding that Ukraine also is unlikely to support such a move. Russia immediately

Trump isn't first ex-leader to face legal trouble

NEW YORK (AP): Donald Trump has made history so many times. The first president without government or military experience. The first to be impeached twice. The first to aggressively challenge the certification of his successor. Now, he adds another: Even as he hopes to return to the White House in 2025, he is the first former president to be indicted.

The latest line crossed by Trump challenges again the aura of the American presidency, nurtured in the infallibility of George Washington but made human over and over, through scandals born of greed and the abuse of power, corruption and naivete, sex and lies about sex. Trump is hardly the first president, in or out of office, to face legal trouble. In 1974, Richard Nixon may well have avoided criminal charges on obstruction of justice or bribery, related to the Watergate scandal, only because President Gerald Ford pardoned him just weeks after Nixon resigned the presidency. Bill Clinton's law license in his native Arkansas was suspended for five years after he reached a deal with prosecutors in 2001, at the end of his sec-

ond term, over allegations that he lied under oath about his affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

Some historians wonder about President Warren Harding's fate had he not died in office, in 1923. Numerous officials around him would be implicated in various crimes, including Interior Secretary Albert B. Fall, whose corrupt land dealings became known as the "Teapot Dome Scandal." "The walls were closing in on him," presidential historian Douglas Brinkley said of Harding. Trump's indictment in New York reportedly is linked to how business records were mischaracterized in connection with paying porn actor Stormy Daniels \$130,000 in 2016, shortly before Trump defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton for the presidency, to keep Daniels from going public about a sexual encounter she said she had with him years earlier. Trump denies having sex with her. Trump also is being investigated for allegedly attempting to change the 2020 vote results in Georgia, a state he narrowly lost to Democrat Joe Biden, and for his role in the riot at the US Capitol on

Jan. 6, 2021, when Trump supporters attempted to stop the congressional certification of Biden as president. Trump has denied any wrongdoing and called the New York investigation "a witch hunt."

While in office, Trump adopted the view of a Justice Department legal opinion that a president could not be indicted. Once a president leaves office, though, that protection falls away. Most ex-presidents of the past half-century have led relatively uneventful public lives - creating foundations, delivering lucrative speeches, or in the case of Jimmy Carter, doing abundant charitable works. Nixon's disgrace scarred him for years, though he eventually reemerged to talk about global affairs and counsel aspiring politicians and potential presidents, including Trump. The immediate cause of Nixon's resignation was the discovery of the "smoking gun" - Oval Office tape recordings, initiated by Nixon himself, that revealed he had ordered a cover-up of the 1972 break-in at Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate complex in Washington.

Prominent Russian military blogger killed

MOSCOW (Agencies): Well-known Russian military blogger Vladlen Tatarsky has been killed in a blast in a cafe in St Petersburg, according to Russian news agencies, quoting sources as saying it was caused by an explosive device. Russian news reports said Tatarsky was killed in the explosion at the Street Food Bar No. 1 cafe. Twenty-five people were wounded, and 19 of them were hospitalised, according to the regional governor, Alexander Beglov. Tatarsky is the pen name for Maxim Fomin, who had accumulated more than 560,000 followers on Telegram and was one of the most prominent of the influential military bloggers who have provided an often critical running commentary on Russia's war in Ukraine.

He was among hundreds of attendees at a lavish Kremlin ceremony last September to proclaim Russia's annexation of four partly occupied regions of Ukraine, a move that most countries at the United Nations condemned as illegal. A St Petersburg website said the explosion took place at a cafe that had at one time belonged to Yevgeny Prigozhin,

founder of the Wagner Group of mercenaries fighting for Russia in Ukraine. Russian media and military bloggers said Tatarsky was meeting with members of the public and that a woman presented him with a box containing a statuette that apparently exploded. A patriotic Russian group that organised the event said it had taken security precautions, but added that "regrettably, they proved insufficient".

Russia's state Investigative Committee said it had opened a murder investigation. There was no indication of who was responsible. The Interior Ministry said everyone at the cafe at the time of the blast was being "checked for involvement". Al Jazeera's Dorsa Jabbari, reporting from Moscow, said there were at least 100 people in and around the cafe for the event organised by the "Cyber Front Z Movement", where Tatarsky was speaking. "This was a well-known and busy area of St Petersburg known as University Embankment, in the heart of the city at 5pm is when the event started. There would have been a lot of people in this cafe and also in the vicinity,"

Jabbari said. Mash, a Telegram channel with links to Russian law enforcement, posted a video that appeared to show Tatarsky, microphone in hand, being presented with a statuette of a helmeted soldier. It said the explosion happened minutes later.

"According to officials in St Petersburg, they are looking for this woman who presented this gift to the organisers and the speaker himself. They're trying to figure out what happened to her, to question her about where this gift initially originated from and what her involvement would be," Jabbari said. Tatarsky had filed regular reports from Ukraine. He championed Russia's war effort while often criticising the failures of the army top brass. After the Kremlin's annexation of four regions of Ukraine last year, Tatarsky posted a video in which he vowed: "That's it. We'll defeat everybody, kill everybody, rob everybody we need to. It will all be the way we like it. God be with you." Russia's foreign ministry paid tribute to Tatarsky, lashing out at Western governments for failing to react to the attack.

"extreme circumstances" of "unforeseeable, serious and irreversible harm", she said. The Rwandan government has said the actions of the police in 2018 were a last resort and that there was violence at the protest. Last month several papers reported that a source in the Home Office had claimed there were plans to get flights to Rwanda off the ground by the summer. But the government has not committed to a timeframe publicly. Ms Braverman said she believed the Rwanda policy would have "a significant deterrent effect" so that people would stop making the journey across the Channel to the UK.

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JALIL AFRIDI
Managing Editor

Printed and published by Mahmood Afridi at
Moraka's Printers, 27 Abdara Road, University Town,
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Peshawar Office: 091-5700095, 0300- 9009001

Peshawar Fax: 091-5703687, Post Box No. 573

E-mail: fppeshawar@thefrontierpost.com

Lahore Office: 0335-4026284

Email: fplahore@thefrontierpost.com

Islamabad Office: 0321-5066253

Email: mahmoodafridi@thefrontierpost.com

Karachi Office: 021-32213411, 0300-8340907

Email: fpkarachi@thefrontierpost.com

“USA and Canada Toll Free Number 1-800-5905747

Pak-China trade and miracle of CPEC

PRIME Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has expressed his pleasure over the reopening of Khunjerab Pass and termed it a booster move for Pakistan's trade with iron brother China. According to the Premier, the resumption of the Khunjrab pass would help increase bilateral trade between Pakistan and China and will further expedite the pace of work on China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Prime Minister Shehbaz appreciated the Chinese love and cooperation for the people of Pakistan and envisioned the CPEC as a gift of progress and prosperity for the people as well as the whole region.

China and Pakistan are first-door neighbors and all-weather friends, who enjoyed the economic and strategic dividends of their all-weather association over the past seven and a half decades. Historically, the two sides' ambition for cooperation and engagement had always created a positive momentum in their economic engagement and military collaboration which further intensified brotherly sentiments between the two nations. Presently, Pakistan and China have close cooperation in diverse fields including trade and energy, education, science, and technology, defense and security, agriculture and space, and IT as well as political and legal matters, while the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the flagship project of Sino-Pak strategic friendship that emboldens the tremendous prospects for regional connectivity, bilateral and transnational trade across East, South, and Western Asia in the future. Pak-China trade has increased many folds after the initiation of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Although the Pak-China trade has always been in favor of Beijing, however, there had been an uptrend in the export of metals, sports goods, and Pakistani products to Beijing in recent years which merits attention by the Pakistani authorities and manufacturers to increase those opportunities in the future.

Khanjrab Pass, the historic and sole border crossing between China and Pakistan was shut down by the Chinese government in late 2019 due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. The crucial trade route remained closed for almost more than three years and was recently reopened by the Chinese Authorities for normal trade and tourism between the two countries. According to experts, the increasing exports from Pakistan to China is a good sign for both countries, which clearly signifies that the deep-rooted trade and commerce momentum has been generated through the CPEC and both nations can equally benefit from the long-term dividends of their joint venture. The reopening of the historic trade route would provide full access to Pakistani traders and businesses to the world's second-largest economy and will lead to tremendous opportunities for boosting bilateral trade, exchange of expertise, and technical cooperation between the two nations in the coming months.

Pakistan's peculiar geography is very germane to China, and the global macroeconomic landscape, while Pakistan could shape into a food basket for China if the country ensures sustainability and predictability in its policies vis-a-vis Chinese current and future investment plans and the quest for regional connectivity and broader economic integration in the region and beyond. Realistically, the successive Pakistani governments had largely been influenced by western propaganda and American persuasion and employed a back-and-forth policy in dealing with China. Pakistan's oscillatory policy seriously estranged Beijing, which is currently seeking an alternative to Pakistan to implement its economic vision in the greater Asian region. In fact, the CPEC is a gift of progress and prosperity that has been vested by the nature to the people of the region yet there is a need for national resilience, political will, and sincere efforts to realize full dividends attached to CPEC in the shape of operationalization of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), bilateral and transnational trade, energy cooperation and greater economic integration in the region. In the current economic meltdown, the CPEC is the only endeavor that promises the revival of a fragile Pakistani economy and offers equal financial opportunities to all nations in the region. Thus the incumbent government must ramp up its work for the full implementation of the second phase of the CPEC to avert the economic crisis and reenergize the national economy in the days to come.

Hosting Russian nuclear weapons will have far-reaching consequences for Belarus

Artyom Shraibman

RUSSIAN President Vladimir Putin's recent announcement that Russia would station nuclear weapons in Belarus made global headlines, but in many ways, it was entirely predictable. Moscow is escalating the conflict at a time when other efforts to convince the West to stop increasing its military aid to Ukraine have failed. After all, Western leaders have no choice but to take the nuclear threat seriously.

In addition, Russia is presenting the deployment not just as a decision made by both countries, but as a response to long-standing requests by Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko. This is Russia's tried-and-tested way of showing respect for its ally, previously cited when dispatching Russian troops to Belarus for training exercises both last February - ahead of the invasion - and in October. It's not yet clear when Russian weapons could appear in Belarus. Putin said only that starting in April, Belarusian pilots will receive training in piloting planes capable of carrying nuclear weapons, and that a nuclear weapons storage facility would be built in Belarus by July 1. According to the Russian

president, control of the weapons will not be handed over to Belarusian troops.

The lack of detail appears to confirm that the announcement's aim is to signal to Russia's adversaries - primarily the United States - that they still have time to change trajectory and agree terms with Russia to ensure that that storage facility remains empty. If nuclear weapons in Belarus were required for military purposes, Russia would hardly have announced that publicly, in advance, and with a specific timeframe. It's true that the Belarusian leader has been talking about the possible deployment of nuclear weapons in his country for almost 18 months now. Even before the war in Ukraine, in November 2021, he floated the idea as a possible response to the deployment of US nuclear weapons in Poland.

Lukashenko could hardly have known back then that a war would soon be underway, and that a year later Putin would want to resort to nuclear blackmail. It's more likely that Minsk was simply carrying out a traditional foreign policy exercise, offering the boldest kind of security services in expectation of potential political and eco-

nomic support from Moscow. Judging from the context in which these threats were made, Lukashenko was also craving recognition and the respect of his peers, and sees nuclear weapons capable of reaching Vilnius, Warsaw, and Kyiv as a way to achieve that.

Yet the chance to intimidate the Lithuanians and Poles will also translate into greater attention to Belarus from NATO. Belarusian nuclear weapons storage facilities, missile deployment sites, and airfields will become a primary target should the Russian-Ukrainian conflict escalate more globally. Overall, it's hard to say whether the idea has more advantages or disadvantages for Lukashenko himself. Ordinary Belarusians are expected to be against the move: about 80% of the country's urban population oppose the deployment of nuclear weapons in their country, according to Chatham House surveys carried out last year.

It would clearly strengthen Belarusian ties to Russia, as the country would essentially acquire a new Russian military base. Ultimately, however, it changes little between Minsk and Moscow, as

both regimes have long since passed the point at which Putin might allow an uncontrolled transfer of power in Belarus. In this context, deploying nuclear weapons gives the Kremlin another reason to leave the Belarusian military stronghold under Lukashenko's control - but there were already plenty of reasons to do that.

Minsk will naturally demand and likely receive some kind of economic aid in return. The Ukraine war would have run a very different course without the cooperation of Belarus, and now Lukashenko is also helping Moscow with its global nuclear blackmail. It would be ungracious of the Kremlin to let such loyalty go unrewarded.

For six months, Lukashenko has avoided becoming more deeply embroiled in the conflict. There has been no shelling of Ukrainian territory from Belarus since October. But the deployment of nuclear weapons, if and when it happens, will be a major new step in Belarus's involvement. It will become harder for those in Europe who have advocated applying differing sanctions to Minsk and Moscow to defend their

position, while hawks such as Poland and the Baltic states will have powerful new ammunition to bolster their long-held argument that Lukashenko should be treated as part of the Russian regime. Neither side is likely to take into account that it's doubtful whether anyone actually asked Lukashenko's opinion on the issue. He has threatened too many times in the past to ask Putin to return the nuclear weapons withdrawn from Belarus in the mid-1990s.

Brussels is already threatening Minsk with new sanctions if nuclear weapons do appear on Belarusian territory. But the most painful sanctions have long been in place, so threats from the West are far less dangerous for Lukashenko than Russia's inevitable ire if he suddenly changes his mind. Another consequence of the announcement is that lobbyists in the UN and from the Global South will face far greater difficulties now convincing the EU hardliners to unblock the export of Belarusian potassium fertilizer through the Lithuanian port of Klaipeda. The EU has for several months been discussing the possibility as a way to alleviate the global food crisis, but loosening sanctions against Minsk at

this point would look absurd. Finally, as long as Belarus remains no more than a corridor for Russian ground troops, their training range, and a base for Russian jets, there's a chance that the country's complicity in this war could stay under the radar of peace negotiators. But if Belarus acquires a full-fledged permanent Russian nuclear base, the Belarusian question will likely feature on any post-war settlement agenda.

Even if negotiations on a new European security architecture take place when Putin and Lukashenko are no longer in power, it will be hard to overlook the presence of nuclear weapons so close to Kyiv and three NATO member capitals. Now the West and Ukraine are more likely to demand the demilitarization of Belarus to at least prewar levels. The fate of Belarus as a state is becoming increasingly tied to the outcome of a future peace settlement. It will be hard for any subsequent government in Minsk to distance itself from Russia economically and politically of its own accord. But once Belarus starts hosting Russian nuclear weapons, it will be downright impossible.

The Moscow Times

US education: Endless burden of deliberate ignorance

Donald Earl Collins

THIS January, Florida's Republican Governor Ron DeSantis blocked a proposed Advanced Placement (AP) African American studies course in his state claiming that it had "a political agenda" and included a study of "Queer Theory" and mentions of "Critical Race Theory". A few weeks later, he threatened to ban the entire AP programme, which offers undergraduate university-level curricula and examinations to high school students.

The governor's move to block the proposed AP African American studies course and his wider attacks on the programme that helps prepare young people for college was a predictable effort to increase his popularity with Donald Trump's base and his chances of securing the Republican presidential nomination. It was also in line with other Republican leaders' interventions in curriculum and book bans elsewhere in the country aiming to prevent anyone from teaching anything dealing with race, sexual orientation and gender identity to American youths. These attacks on so-called "woke education" will have innumerable consequences. The biggest one, perhaps, is one that has gone mostly undiscussed.

If K-12 students are forbidden to learn about the history of racism and anti-racism in the US, about the existence and the struggles of Black folk and queer folk, then when would they learn all this? An undergraduate course on US or African American history

would then become the first time millions of these students will learn about the good, the bad and the ugly in these histories. That is, of course, if they ever attend college at all. And those who encounter these subjects in an educational setting for the first time in university inevitably show some resistance. They try to hold on to stereotypes about Black people, queer people and all the other marginalised groups in the US that they picked up from media and society at large, turning education into a battle for lecturers attempting to teach them the truth about the US and the world. This battle, sadly, has been under way for a very long time. I have taught more than 100 college-level courses in my academic career, including more than two dozen courses in African American history and African Diaspora studies and I have spent so much of that time dispelling stereotypes about Black Americans and racism. Not just with my white students or with students of colour who aren't Black. With all of my students. Stereotypes like all Black people are either mired in endless poverty or super wealthy like Oprah or LeBron James. Stereotypes like African Black folk and Asian Americans achieving success in the US because of their belief in individualism and hard work while African Americans lie around waiting for the US government to cut them a welfare cheque. Or even bigger stereotypes, like the only form of racism in the US is as obvious as the Ku Klux Klan in white sheets and white hoods burning crosses or deranged white

Americans yelling the n-word.

When, as a college professor you are dealing with undergraduates who have heard and taken to heart these and so many other racist stereotypes, and never received any meaningful pushback in K12 classrooms, every lecture, every discussion, and every reading can be like Sisyphus pushing a boulder uphill. Over and over again, I have read writing assignments where students have concluded, "Slavery was a long time ago. We should leave the past in the past and move on." Or, "America has made so much progress on race relations since the Civil Rights Movement," as if racism no longer exists. As an historian and an American Black person, it is infuriating to spend so much time breaking down the legacy of systemic racism and anti-Blackness in the US, in Europe and in the world, only to see so little of what I've been teaching reflected in my students' efforts. And that frustration builds up, semester after semester and year after year. It's a wonder that I and more of my colleagues don't end up resigning and leaving college teaching for good. All of this is a result of a deliberately calibrated ignorance, part of what sociologist Crystal Fleming calls "racial stupidity". As Fleming wrote in her 2018 book How to be Less Stupid About Race, "one of the main consequences of centuries of racism is that we are all systematically exposed to racial stupidity and racist beliefs that warp our understandings of society, history, and ourselves".

Deliberate actions to ban curricula and books on race and racism in the US will inevitably continue to leave higher education faculty like me swimming against a tsunami of racist ideas and students who, more often than not, are proud of their ignorance. And it will set Black, Brown, and queer students up for a traumatising educational experience - one where they will face racist and queerphobic slurs and erasure in classrooms, hallways, playgrounds, auditoriums, media rooms and lunchrooms, from age five until adulthood, every day. Yet there is no Ron DeSantis, Moms for Liberty, or Moms for America working to keep marginalised students from experiencing the default deluge of racism, homophobia and transphobia in America's schools. Those who are working to end so-called "wokeness" in American schools do not care about the trauma marginalised students will experience as a result of their efforts. They only care that people like them - people who are very white and very heteronormative - continue to control the world unchallenged.

Some universities have moved, rather reluctantly, to try to bridge the gap K-12 education leaves around history, race and racism, and queer and gender studies with a first-year course or two on anti-racism and social identity. American University and the University of Pittsburgh are just two examples of institutions that have moved to implement such courses.

American University began requiring AUx I (American University Experience) and AUx II as first-year core courses in 2018, in the aftermath of a series of racist and anti-Semitic incidents on campus and demands from student groups to do more to protect marginalised students. The University of Pittsburgh (my undergraduate alma mater) put together its required Anti-Black Racism: History, Ideology, and Resistance course for all first-year students in "response to the 2020 police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade and many others".

It is still too early to tell if courses like these will work to close the yawning chasm of racist and transphobic ignorance incoming college students hold. As University of Pittsburgh alumna Sydney Massenberg said on the eve of Pitt's implementation of its anti-racism course, "Racism is definitely not going to be something we eradicate by putting students in a couple of classes. Being an anti-racist requires a lifetime of work on everyone's part." And there are other issues with trying to address this ignorance with a few undergraduate courses. Although it is true every student will have certain degrees of ignorance and blind spots around racism and queerphobia, by the time they reached university, most Black and Brown and queer students would have already experienced these -isms, systemically, institutionally, and interpersonally. "Of course ... some people are more afflicted by racial stupidity than others," Fleming wrote regarding

Americans with various layers of privilege, insulating them from confronting their -isms. So these courses may well be setting such students up for more trauma, especially at predominantly white institutions. This is already the case for faculty teaching such courses. "We had our qualifications challenged, we had a lot of coded racist language thrown at us that amounted to 'what about the white students?' They were particularly concerned over conservative white students," Roshan Abraham, a one-time AUx II adviser and an adjunct professor of religion at American University said.

According to one report, at least a half-dozen advisers in the AUx programme had resigned between 2018 and 2020, due in part to the existing institutional racism and the emphasis on not traumatising white students over their racism and other blind spots. Whatever the case, the questions remain: Will the politics of intolerance continue to burden the handfuls of professors like me with the task of dispelling never-ending amounts of racism and stereotypes while attempting to teach? Will universities continue to use cover-your-butt one-credit courses as a way to at least alert students to their own ignorance about marginalised groups in the US and the West? And, most crucially, will the US continue to feed this deliberate ignorance and allow students coming out of its schools steeped in dangerous -isms to destroy any hope of a sustainable future for all Americans in this country?

War in Taiwan will dwarf Ukraine unless the US shows China its teeth

Simon Tisdall

It is generally acknowledged that a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, drawing in the US and possibly Japan, Australia and Britain, could dwarf the Ukraine crisis both in scale and danger. Top US generals and officials have repeatedly warned an attack is becoming more probable and more feasible. And yet it remains spectacularly unclear what the Biden administration would actually do in response.

The longstanding US policy of "strategic ambiguity", designed to leave Beijing guessing about Washington's intentions, has helped keep a lid on cross-strait tensions. But the dynamic has changed radically with the rise of China's president, Xi Jinping, to a position of supreme power and the advent of his aggressive approach to Taiwan and international relations as a whole. Xi vowed again last month to annex the self-ruled island, which he regards as China's property. "We should actively oppose the external forces and secessionist activities of Taiwan independence. We

should unswervingly advance the cause of national rejuvenation and reunification," Xi told the National People's Congress. Xi pointedly did not rule out the use of force.

American ambiguity becomes more problematic as time passes. US president Joe Biden has confused matters further with unscripted remarks. Asked in September whether, unlike in Ukraine, he would send US troops to defend Taiwan, Biden replied: "Yes, if in fact there was an unprecedented attack." This is not official US policy - although it probably should be. Biden's words were swiftly disowned by his senior officials amid furious Chinese protests. Under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, the US is committed "to provide Taiwan with arms of defensive character". The aim is deterrence, not war-fighting. The marked deterioration in US-China relations consequent on Xi's rise and Donald Trump's presidency has led to much unhelpful posturing by US and Chinese politicians. They include Democrat Nancy Pelosi, whose needlessly provocative visit last year supercharged military

tensions, and Beijing's hawkish foreign minister, Qin Gang.

Another row, and more military threats, may be expected if Taiwan's president, Tsai Ing-wen, meets Kevin McCarthy, Pelosi's Republican successor as House speaker, in California this week. Tsai will make an unofficial stopover after visiting two of Taiwan's few remaining allies in Central America. Honduras recently defected to Beijing. The planned McCarthy meeting will be symbolic, lacking practical import. What it will do is advertise the Republicans' headline anti-China stance before next year's US elections. By demonstrating leverage with Washington, it may also boost Tsai's ruling Democratic Progressive party (DPP) before national polls in January 2024. Ambiguity, strategic or otherwise, extends to the Taiwanese side, too. Tsai cannot run again, and it is uncertain who will succeed her as president or whether the pro-independence DPP can retain power. Her party's main opponent, the Kuomintang (KMT),

claims the DPP has trashed relations with China, which it promises to repair.

The KMT has long maintained it is not "pro-China" but pro-peace and prosperity - an attractive message after years of cross-strait turmoil. Last November, the party swept to victory in local elections, capturing the capital, Taipei. Yet suspicions about its willingness to stand up to Beijing persist. When Biden talks about defending Taiwan, he should understand not everyone wants to be defended. This ambivalence was on dramatic show again last week, when Ma Ying-jeou became the first former Taiwan president and most senior KMT-linked figure to visit China since 1949. Ma, in office from 2008 to 2016, claimed his trip was not political, but evidently it was. Such outreach has positive and negative implications for KMT's electoral prospects. Ma, who once said he would "never ask the Americans to fight for Taiwan", explained his visit in remarks Xi could have written himself. "People on both sides of the Taiwan

strait are Chinese people," Ma said. "We sincerely hope the two sides will work together to pursue peace, avoid war, and strive to revitalise China."

Few people want war. And Ma's "we are all Chinese" comment ignored the fact that more than 60% of the island's people now identify as Taiwanese only. While most favour the status quo over a formal declaration of independence, a huge majority opposes rule by Beijing. China's ruthless Hong Kong takeover set a fearsome precedent. Some fear a KMT sell-out. A Taipei Times editorial called Ma's trip a "backward step". It could, the paper warned, "be interpreted as a former leader risking the nation's legitimacy and being used as a propaganda tool by [China] in its desire to annihilate the Republic of China and Taiwan's democracy." It's plain that Taiwan's situation is more complex and nuanced than American rightwingers (and former UK prime minister Liz Truss, who advocates supplying British arms and military support) maintain. The oft-conjured, black-and-white picture of a tiny

democracy united in valiant defiance of towering tyranny is simplistic - and potentially dangerous.

Dangerous, too, is the continuing confusion about US guarantees, real or imagined. Richard Haass, president of the US Council on Foreign Relations, warned in an influential article published just before the Ukraine invasion that Biden's lack of "strategic clarity" could lead Xi, like Vladimir Putin, into fatal miscalculation. "The best way to reduce the risk of war would be to make explicit to China that the US would respond to an attack against Taiwan with all the tools at its disposal, including severe economic sanctions and military force. Washington needs to make it clear to Beijing that the cost of aggression would vastly outweigh any potential benefits," Haass wrote. An American shift towards deterrence with teeth could help head off an Asian Ukraine - and is necessary and urgent. But it won't resolve the wider Taiwan conundrum. That requires the political vision, moderation and disinterestedness that is in global short supply these days.

Eastern Europe must not lag behind on the green transition

LAST year, a severe drought hit much of Europe, with some scientists claiming it was the worst in 500 years. In France, a state of emergency was declared in five northern provinces; in Spain, water reservoirs dropped to 36 percent of capacity; in Italy, the level of the country's largest river Po was six times lower than normal.

Europe's east was also affected. In Hungary, lakes and rivers disappeared, as 90 percent of the country suffered from the drought. In Poland, the lack of rain had a devastating impact on agriculture, with the sector losing some 1.35 billion euros due to lower yields. In Romania, there was a seven-fold increase in wildfires. Despite these damaging effects, national policies in Central and Eastern European countries do not reflect the climate emergency we are experiencing. Governments have been dragging their feet on meeting climate targets and implementing green policy goals within the European community.

During the past year, the Russian invasion of Ukraine provided a justification to side-track the green transition, as the whole continent faced a major energy crisis. In the scramble to keep the lights on, homes warm, and industry afloat, decarbonisation and greening efforts took a backseat. As a result, polluting energy generation has increased in some parts of Europe's east. Poland, which used coal for 70 percent of its energy mix before the war, ramped up the production of thermal coal - the most polluting fossil fuel - and subsidised the use of coal for household heating. Romania also turned to coal, postponing the retirement of 660-megawatt coal units and cutting down 100 hectares (247 acres) of

forest to expand a lignite coal mine.

Other countries have increased reliance on nuclear power for which the jury is still out on whether it is consistent with the basic premises of the green transition. In January, Slovakia put online a new nuclear unit Mochovce 3, which will be joined by Mochovce 4 soon, while Czechia has advanced Western partnerships to build a new Dukovany nuclear plant. New units are being built on the banks of the Danube River in Hungary as a part of the Paks complex in partnership with Russia. But the region was falling behind on green transition targets even before the energy crunch. The deployment of renewable sources of energy hovered below the EU average in Czechia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Poland, and Hungary before the war, according to Eurostat. These countries may struggle to meet the next renewables target set by the EU - 32 percent by 2030. The region's carbon emission reductions in the past two decades have also been inadequate; on average Eastern European countries have cut them by about 15 percent, compared with Western Europe's 25 percent.

Does this foot-dragging on climate action mean that citizens of Central and Eastern European countries are less concerned about climate change than their counterparts in the west? Not really. In a 2021 Eurobarometer poll, when asked whether climate change is a serious problem, respondents from the region overwhelmingly answered in the affirmative. In Hungary, Bulgaria, Croatia, and Slovakia, only 4-5 percent said that it is not a serious problem, while in Poland, 7 percent of respondents

Soa Muzikárová

said so, which is equal to the EU average. But Eastern Europeans are anxious about the losses their economies may incur while going through the green transition. A 2021 poll conducted by the European Investment Bank found that 60 percent of Czechs, 63 percent of Slovaks and 53 percent of Poles believe that climate policies will shrink the economy and 59 percent of Bulgarians and 54 percent of Romanians believe that they will remove more jobs than they will create. By comparison, 44 percent of residents of the EU believe both of these statements to be true. Indeed, heavy industries which tend to be big employers and make up a significant part of national economies in Europe's east will find it hard to adjust to the realities of the green transition; many will have to undergo significant structural overhauls, or even shut down, resulting in significant job loss. In this way, the EU's green ambition is frequently understood as an existential threat to the functioning of the region's economic models.

At the same time, various new regulations issued by Brussels which would require households to abandon cheaper, more polluting consumer products and services are facing resistance in the more impoverished countries of the east, where the "green" alternatives are seen as unaffordable. Local politicians are eager to capitalise on this anxiety. Some present the green agenda as yet another policy in which the EU negligently ignores the troubles of the east; others portray it as an elitist idea that is too far-fetched for ordinary citizens. Political parties that may be open to green policies are cautious as they understand that they involve com-

prehensive economic transformation - raising the bar for skills, jobs, and innovation - which can be a formidable undertaking in a four-year election cycle. The east-west green divide is also palpable in the support lent to green parties in national politics. While the Greens are part of coalition governments in countries like Austria, Germany, Finland and Ireland, in Europe's east they have struggled to jump over thresholds to enter parliament.

All that said, thanks to the EU, Central and Eastern Europe do have access to significant funds that can help it through the green transition. The national recovery plans - the centrepiece of the post-pandemic EU funding - combine cash handouts with reforms, across various policy areas, including education, innovation, energy efficiency, and economy greening. Countries have to earmark at least 37 percent of funds to fulfilling climate objectives.

But some of the region's greatest emitters - notably, Poland or Hungary - had their allocations under the recovery fund frozen by Brussels due to democratic backsliding. Meanwhile, this year, Bulgaria chose not to make use of another source of EU funding for green policies - the Just Transition scheme. While green policies may not be an easy sell in Central and Eastern Europe, governments need to understand that the green transition is crucial to the region retaining its international competitiveness and building economic resilience to be able to weather future climate shocks. Complacency can be costly: it could mar future gains in Central and Eastern Europeans' standards of living and wellbeing and contribute to the climate crisis at a global scale.



Peace in N Ireland was achieved without EU

Arelene Foster

SUCCESS has many fathers, but failure is an orphan. Never has this well-known phrase been more apt than in connection with the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. Over the coming days, EU leaders will happily talk about the success of the Belfast Agreement. Ursula von der Leyen, president of the Commission, has already implied not only that her organisation played a crucial role in the Agreement, but suggested they were now guardians of it.

Nothing could be further from the truth. And if that revisionist attitude is what they intend to bring to the commemorations in Northern Ireland, their time would be better spent taking history lessons in Brussels. The Belfast Agreement came about after years of political talks and negotiations involving the Northern Ireland parties, moderated by the UK government, assisted by the Irish government, and at various points - mostly at the end of the process - cajoled or encouraged by the American administration, depending on your point of view. All these players have a right and an entitlement to remember and celebrate the events that culminated on April 10 1998.

It is of course true that the EU provided funding to the Northern Ireland Executive after the Agreement and some of it has even made an impact. But to suggest that the EU was in some way critical to the actual making of the Agreement is disingenuous

at best. In fact, during the tortuous Brexit negotiations, the EU chose to misrepresent the contents of the Belfast Agreement to the detriment of those of us living here. The EU asserted that there was no border on the island of Ireland, and indeed that the Belfast Agreement promised that. This was news to us, since the border between NI and the Republic had come about as the latter left the UK in 1921. The militarised border, which came to be symbolic of the strife in Northern Ireland, only happened because of the campaign of terrorist violence that engulfed Ulster from the late 1960s. Before then many citizens moved across the border on a daily basis, including my paternal grandmother Kelly, who sold her intricate crocheted Irish lace in Clones, a small market town in the new Republic, four miles from her home in Northern Ireland.

The trope often quoted to justify the disastrous negotiations that led to the Northern Ireland Protocol was that none of us wanted to go back to the "borders of the past". Of course none of us want militarised borders, but please don't misrepresent why we had them in the first place - terrorism, not trade. The Belfast Agreement did the opposite of what some in the EU believe. It established that Northern Ireland was an integral part of the United Kingdom until such time as the people of Northern Ireland decided otherwise. It

is not a half-in half-out situation. Yes, we have institutions for the relationship with our neighbours in the Republic of Ireland, but the sovereignty issue was settled.

It is a matter of record that I did not vote for the Belfast Agreement, as I felt it hadn't dealt with the legacy of terrorism and yet was releasing those who had perpetrated that terror from prison. Those I considered to be terrorists were free to go about their daily lives and even stand for elected office, whilst those who had lost loved ones were just meant to move on, without so much as a recognition that murder was wrong. That, I felt, was morally objectionable. Nevertheless, the Agreement was put to a referendum and then overwhelmingly endorsed. I've always accepted that and, moreover, I now acknowledge that it was correct on the crucial issue of the sovereignty of Northern Ireland - something that should be remembered in Downing Street as they seek to deal with the outstanding issues around the Windsor Framework. Those who wish to be part of the events scheduled to mark the Belfast Agreement are welcome to come to Northern Ireland. But there is a special requisite for the EU, whose leaders must reflect on the damage they inflicted through their refusal to listen to Unionist voices during Brexit talks. As used to be said about the implementation of the Belfast Agreement: no cherry-picking.

The Telegraph

Russia will never recover from this devastating collapse

Richard Kemp

LAST June - on the day the UN gave a Ukrainian civilian casualty count of 9,931 so far in Russia's war - I sat at the UN Human Rights Council as the Russian ambassador excoriated Israel over its latest defensive operations in Gaza. Such unjust condemnation of Israel is common fare at the Human Rights Council and we are all used to the Kremlin's hypocrisy, but how could the Russian Federation use the council as an international platform for its anti-Western bile, despite being suspended in April last year?

In the parody of international order that is the UN, that is no more surprising than Russia's assumption yesterday of chair of the Security Council, despite its president being indicted for war crimes. It epitomises the failure of the UN, formed to bring world powers together to maintain international peace and security. There have been more wars in the 78 years since its founding than in the equivalent period beforehand. The Security Council has failed to put any kind of brake on nuclear proliferation, with Russia's accomplice Iran now on the cusp of becoming a nuclear state. Its impact on the war in Ukraine, the most deadly in Europe since 1945, has been zero. The danger of the Russian Security Council presidency is more in optics than reality. Foreign Minister Lavrov

can use his temporary platform to grandstand, but the inbuilt impotence of the Security Council means he can do nothing to advance Russia's cause. With the exception of China, the other permanent members are likely to show their contempt by downgrading diplomatic representation while Russia is in the chair. Lavrov's lack of authority in the council reflects his country's marginalisation. The successor to a superpower - albeit a malign one - is no longer even a great power.

Its economy is flatlining and its leader, through incompetence, is systematically dismantling an army that was once so powerful that half a million US troops were permanently stationed in Europe to counter it. Russia's demographic turmoil has long been a nightmare for Putin and all he has done is exacerbate it, as thousands of young Russians are slaughtered in Bakhmut and, according to Moscow's media, upwards of 700,000 young men have fled the country to avoid mobilisation. To many countries Russia is a pariah, with even its status as an armed gas station in ruins. It will probably never be able to recover from any of this and will struggle to be taken seriously - except by other rogue states who scent the opportunity to buy oil and gas at a discount, or perhaps a few fighter jets.

Yes, Moscow has nuclear weapons, and Putin

never misses an opportunity to threaten to bring them into play, but he knows that China is unlikely to allow their use. That encapsulates the parlous depths that Putin has dragged his country down to. For the foreseeable future, Russia will be nothing more than a Chinese vassal. During his recent visit to Moscow, Xi Jinping's barely-concealed disdain contrasted humilatingly with his host's lavish hospitality and knee-bending aggrandisement. We don't know what was agreed behind closed doors, but if Xi promised Putin weapons and ammunition, as US intelligence fear, it would not have been to strengthen Moscow but to fuel what is becoming a proxy war between China and the US. Indeed, Xi encouraged this war with a pact of "friendship with no limits" on the eve of Putin's invasion, just as the August 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact between Russia and Germany vouchsafed Hitler's attack on Poland.

As Russia's dependency on Beijing deepens, Putin and his successors need not expect any favours from the Chinese Communist Party. Only in February, Beijing issued a decree that eight Russian cities in east Siberia, which China claims as its own, must be marked on international maps by their Chinese names, including Vladivostok. Xi's eyes may focus increasingly on this long-running territorial dispute and a self-emasculated Russia may not be able to do anything about it.

Now is the time for the world to support the people of Türkiye

Louisa Vinton

ON February 6, in the blink of an eye, powerful earthquakes turned cities into rubble in a vast swath of southern Türkiye. The affected area - three times the size of Belgium - is home to some 15.7 million people. This is arguably the worst natural disaster to have ever hit the country, and the fifth deadliest earthquake in the world in the past 30 years. The human losses and the damage and destruction of civilian buildings are staggering; some 49,000 people died and 272,860 buildings collapsed, were severely damaged or are facing demolition. In particularly hard-hit places like the ancient city of Antakya, the landscape is apocalyptic, with only one in five buildings set to remain standing.

In the early days after the earthquakes, the world reacted with an outpouring of sympathy and assistance. Search and rescue teams and medical crews from 88 countries raced to help and emergency supplies were dispatched from around the world. But for Türkiye to stand a fair chance to recover and rebuild, far bigger resources are needed. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) helped the Turkish government in calculating the financial impact of the disaster and to set priorities for recovery and reconstruction. The result of this joint work, the Türkiye Earthquakes Recovery and Reconstruction Assessment (TERRA), is shocking: the damages and losses caused by the disaster amount to \$103.6bn, or nine percent of Türkiye's GDP.

The replacement of 650,000 destroyed housing units alone is estimated to cost \$66bn. But even

numbers this big cannot convey the loss that the people of Türkiye have experienced. At least 3.3 million people have seen their homes and possessions lost under rubble. Many have lost family and friends, and almost two million are currently housed in tents or containers. Construction of better facilities, both temporary and permanent, is under way at a furious pace, but still, the majority of the earthquake survivors are leading precarious lives in primitive conditions. The disaster and its aftermath have left millions traumatised. The iconic apartment tower, a main vehicle of Türkiye's rapid transition from a predominantly rural country in the 1960s to one that is 77 percent urbanised today, has been transformed in the popular mind from a symbol of success to a source of nightmares. Parts of the affected region look like a landscape from a horror movie, with multi-storey buildings lurching at angles that seem to defy both gravity and engineering. Curtains flap from shattered windows that will never see their owners return.

The worries are not restricted to the 11 provinces that directly experienced destruction caused by the earthquakes. Many had expected the next "big one" to hit the bustling megalopolis of Istanbul, and its population of well over 15 million, which also sits on top of dangerous fault lines. The vistas of destruction in the south have sparked fears of far worse in the north, where thousands of high-risk structures need earthquake-proofing. The trade-off is clear to all: find funds to retrofit now or regret the losses later.

But the heartbreak of the earthquakes' destructiveness doesn't end here. If Türkiye is a treasure house of history, the southeast is a jewel of unique brilliance, a place where the legacies of Hittite, Roman, Byzantine, Christian and Ottoman civilisations are all intertwined, especially in Antakya, a bustling city known for diversity and tolerance and the capital of Hatay province.

So much is now gone. Some of Antakya's ancient treasures survived the earthquake intact; others perhaps can be restored. But the city centre is completely ruined and unliveable, its charming backstreets are obliterated and devoid of life; its residents are either dead - 21,000 people reportedly perished in Hatay province - or departed. Rebuilding physical structures may be possible, but bringing back the city's unique atmosphere may be much more challenging.

This applies to places across the affected region. When reconstruction starts, it must reflect the spirit of "building back better", ensuring that any new buildings conform strictly to zoning rules and seismic risk construction norms. But houses alone do not make a community. Far from it. For that, people need secure employment to ensure a steady income; they need healthcare, education and other public services; they need opportunities to relax and socialise with other people. Even before the earthquakes, the area was one of the less prosperous regions of Türkiye, with GDP per capita ranging from 31 percent to 82 percent of the national average. It was also home to half of the 3.7 million Syrians

who have been offered a haven in Türkiye over the past decade.

Now it is confronted with an exodus of people estimated to have reached three million. For many, this outward migration will probably be temporary. But employers everywhere worry that the workers will not return, that the trauma of losing everything will drown out local loyalties. In Kahramanmaraş, an industrial city famous for its ice cream and textiles, business owners report that they are operating at barely 10 percent of capacity. Factories and farmers alike report a debilitating shortage of workers. The challenges are daunting, indeed, and at UNDP we see the importance of applying the tools of development in devising solutions. Huge investments and a clear vision that builds on the region's strengths and assets will be required to bring the affected areas back to life. There is no time to lose; from the very start, the emergency response needs to incorporate the idea of "early recovery" so that relief funding is used to hire local people and buy local products.

The Turkish government has vowed not to abandon the region. However, as the TERRA has shown, the resources needed to restore normal life would overwhelm the budget of virtually any single state. To rally the world to the cause of recovery, the European Union has pledged support at a donor conference in Brussels. More is needed. In the face of a disaster so unprecedented in scope, the generosity of the international community needs to be just as unprecedented. Reconstruction is not just about bricks and mortar, but about lives and livelihoods, and requires a global effort.

Aljazeera

Opportunities abound if Armenia, Azerbaijan can reconcile

Yasar Yakis

THE Azerbaijani army last week took measures to control new heights on the border with Armenia along a recently built road. This was in line with the terms of the tripartite ceasefire agreement of Nov. 9, 2020. This agreement determined that a new road had to be built to connect Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh, avoiding the Lachin corridor, because the existing corridor crossed the province of Lachin that had to be returned to Azerbaijan.

The Azerbaijani government announced last August that a new road circumventing the city of Lachin was under construction. In turn, Yerevan said the subsidiary connections of this road to the border would be ready by April 1. Therefore, Azerbaijan on March 30 blocked the entrance to Armenia through the Lachin corridor as the new road was now available, allowing people to travel from Armenia to Nagorno-Karabakh. So, everything has unfolded according to previous agreements. The Azeri authorities had warned on time both the Red Cross and the Armenian authorities that the Lachin corridor was soon to be closed. Minor confusion occurred when Armenian and Red Cross cars had to use the dirt roads. Extremists in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh - and particularly in the Armenian diaspora in France and the US - used this

incident and tried to cause a storm in a teacup.

There are already two live conflicts between Azerbaijan and Armenia. One of them is on the exploration of mines in Nagorno-Karabakh without the permission of the Azeri authorities. Strained relations are continuing in and around this corridor, each side blaming the other. The second is the opening of the Zangezur corridor that links the Nakhchivan exclave with Azerbaijan proper. This was a sort of quid pro quo in exchange for the opening of the Lachin corridor. According to Article 9 of the ceasefire agreement, "all economic and transport connections in the region were due to be unblocked and the government of Armenia was expected to guarantee the security of transport between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Region in order to arrange unobstructed movement of persons, vehicles and cargo in both directions." Furthermore, the construction of new transport connections to link Nakhchivan to Azerbaijan proper was also agreed. Now, with the opening of the alternative road, we have to see how the relations will evolve between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The EU will probably get

involved following the recent controversy. It has already attempted to steal the mediation role from Russia and the competition between these two game-makers continues. Russia now has other priorities because of the Ukrainian war, but it does not want its pressure to slacken off. In turn, EU Council President Charles Michel hosted several meetings in Brussels and paid visits to the Caucasus with a view to trying to bridge the differences between Baku and Yerevan, but so far no tangible progress has been achieved. The French parliament, meanwhile, does not miss any opportunity to further spoil Azeri-Armenian relations. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev last week appointed Msim Mammadov as a special representative for the Lachin district, which also covers the Zangezur economic region.

During the 2020 military conflict, extensive physical damage was caused by the Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians to the environment in the Lachin corridor and many of them were illegally settled outside of the administrative limits of the region. Baku announced last year that it would evict the Armenians who had illegally moved into the houses owned by Azeris who had fled during the Armenian invasion of Lachin, as

well as those in the villages of Zabukh and Sus. Azeris were forced to leave the region for the duration of the 30-year occupation. The Azeri government is now trying to prevent Armenians from returning to the houses they had illegally occupied for those three decades. As a second step, it will ask Armenians to vacate the Azeri houses they are occupying illegally. Thirdly, the Azeri government wants to repair the houses that belonged to Azeris and were deliberately damaged when the Armenians had to flee as the advancing Azeri army approached.

Despite this dark background, now that there is a prospect of reconciliation, there is huge potential for cooperation between Baku and Yerevan. Azerbaijan is an oil-rich country of 10 million inhabitants. It is the biggest economy in the South Caucasus. All Azeri economic indicators are three to four times bigger than those of Armenia. Most Armenians are well-educated and skillful. At the end of the day, all Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh are full-fledged citizens of Azerbaijan. If peace could be established in the region, both Azerbaijanis and Armenians would benefit from the opportunities of the prosperous Azeri economy. If only the two peoples could overcome their centuries-old hatred.

Arab News

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PSX loses 110.93 points, closing at 39,889.90 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) declined by 110.93 points on Monday, showing a negative change of 0.28 percent, closing at 39,889.90 points against 40,000.83 points the previous day.

A total of 74,430,002 shares were traded during the day as compared to 112,200,436 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 1.750 billion against Rs 3.933 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 318 companies transacted their shares

in the stock market; 123 of them recorded gains and 172 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 23 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Telecard Limited with 17,784,500 shares at Rs 8.04 per share, WorldCall Telecom with 3,711,804 shares at Rs1.17 per share, and Pak Elektron with 3,568,000 shares at Rs 10.83 per share.

Unilever witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 100.00 per share price, closing at Rs 18,000.00,

whereas the runner-up was Sapphire Tex with a Rs 63.29 rise in its per share price to Rs 1,179.00.

Bhanero Tex witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 58.00 per share closing at Rs 1000.00, followed by Pak Tobacco with a Rs 48.90 decline to close at Rs 621.10.

Gold prices increase by Rs.1200 to Rs. 209,500 per tola: The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 1200 and was sold at Rs 209,500 on Monday against its sale at Rs. 208,300 the previous day,

All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 1028 to Rs 179,612 from Rs 178,584, whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went up to Rs 164,645 from Rs 163,702.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs 80 to close at Rs 2350 and that of ten-gram silver also surged by Rs 68.59 to Rs 2014.74.

The price of gold in the international market rose by US\$ 01 to \$1970 against its sale at \$1969, the association reported.

CCP prepares comprehensive guidelines

ISLAMABAD (APP): In line with its commitment to safeguarding consumers against anti-competitive behaviour and offering valuable insights to stakeholders regarding Section 10 of the Competition Act, 2010, the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has devised comprehensive guidelines pertaining to deceptive marketing practices.

The Guidelines on Deceptive Marketing Practices, which are being issued by CCP under Sections 28 and 29 of the Act, aim to provide a comprehensive explanation of the scope and application of Section 10 of the Act, said a press release issued here.

The guidelines draw upon issues raised in cases involving false or misleading advertising and other deceptive marketing practices that the CCP has resolved or adjudicated since 2008.

Therefore, they contain general information and illustrative examples based on jurisprudence developed through the Commission's decisions over the years, intended to guide all stake-

holders.

In broad terms, the Guidelines cover key concepts such as the principle of net general impression, material information, false and misleading information, and implied and express claims, among others.

It also explains various forms of Deceptive Marketing Practices prevalent in the market and provides guidance on how businesses can ensure they do not engage in such violations.

The Guidelines also touch upon the method of filing a complaint, remedies available under competition law, and the enforcement powers available to the Commission.

The guidelines have been made available on the official website of CCP, which can be accessed at www.cc.gov.pk.

Stakeholders are advised to study the Act in conjunction with these Guidelines and to seek legal advice where necessary. It may be noted that the information contained in these Guidelines is not exhaustive and does not limit the investigation and enforcement powers of the Commission.

The Commission reserve its right to amend these Guidelines from time to time.

In 2008, an Office of Fair Trade (OFT) was established with the goal of encouraging businesses to comply with Section 10 of the Competition Law and improve their trade practices through compliance-oriented approach while taking decisive action against hardcore or flagrant offenders of the Act.

The OFT serves as a watchdog to create a business environment in Pakistan based on healthy competition and to protect consumers from deceptive marketing practices. The OFT also aims to ensure that consumers are provided with adequate information to make informed choices.

It is CCP's mandate, under the Competition Act, to ensure free competition in all spheres of commercial and economic activity, to enhance economic efficiency, and to protect consumers from anti-competitive behaviour, including deceptive marketing practices.

Rupee sheds Rs1.25 against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan rupee weakened by Rs1.25 against the Dollar in the interbank trading on Monday and closed at Rs 285.04 against the previous day's closing of Rs 283.79.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 285.15 and Rs 288 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by 49 paisas which closed at Rs 308.89 against the last day's closing of Rs309.38, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen closed at Rs 2.13 without any change; whereas a decrease of 51 paisas was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 351.15 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 351.66.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal witnessed an increase of 34 paisas each to close at Rs 77.66 and Rs 75.94 respectively.



HYDERABAD: Worker busy in drying vermicelli which used to make a traditional sweet dish popular during holy fasting month of Ramadan at his work palace.

Chairman FBR assures to redress tax issues of business community

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman, the Federal Board of Revenue Asim Ahmad on Monday said that the business community is playing a key role in the development of the economy and showed his commitment to look into the tax issues.

He said that the budget-making process is in progress and ICCI should submit its written budget proposals for consideration and incorporation in the final budget, said an ICCI press release.

He appreciated the initiative of ICCI for acknowledging the role of top taxpayers in the region and said that it would help promote tax culture.

He expressed these views while talking to a delegation of ICC called on him led by President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari.

Special Assistant to PM

on Revenue Tariq Mahmood Pasha said that there is a trust deficit between the taxpayers and the tax collectors and stressed the need of taking measures to build confidence between the two important stakeholders of the economy.

He said that it is very important to create a relationship of trust and confidence between the tax collectors and the taxpayers in order to enhance the tax base and improve tax revenue of the country.

He hoped that ICCI would play a role in achieving this goal.

Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari apprised the Chairman FBR about the various tax issues of the business community that needed his attention for redress.

He said that the completion date of construction projects under the amnesty scheme will be expiring on 30th September 2023 and requested that this scheme

should be further extended, at least for 2 years to facilitate the completion of ongoing projects under this scheme.

Ahsan Zafar said that ICCI should be given representation in FBR tax committees that would help build confidence between the taxpayers and the FBR and improve tax culture.

He said that ICCI plans to confer awards on the highest taxpayers from every sector of the economy in order to acknowledge their key role in the tax contribution.

He said that the Prime Minister of Pakistan would be invited as Chief Guest on the event.

He said that the highest tax collecting officers of FBR should also be conferred awards to recognize their hard work and dedication.

He further said that the top 10 highest taxpayers of the country should be conferred civil awards on

March 23rd by the President of Pakistan on the recommendation of FBR that would encourage tax culture in the country.

He said that a level playing field should be given to businesses on the installation of POS devices.

Senior Vice President ICCI Faad Waheed said that due to the ban on imports and LCs issues, the industrial activities are badly suffering and stressed that the government should look into this issue to address the concerns of industries.

Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that high taxes on the construction sector is affecting its business activities and said that FBR should reconsider them.

Khalid Iqbal Malik, Zafar Bakhtawari and Khalid Javed, former Presidents ICCI also shared useful proposals to improve the tax base and increase tax revenue of the country.

Turkish stocks down at open

ISTANBUL (APP): Türkiye's benchmark stock index opened Monday at 4,806.4 points, down by 0.14%, or 6.53 points, from the last week's close.

Borsa Istanbul's BIST 100 index closed Friday at 4,812.93 points, down 1.7%, with a daily trading volume of 48 billion Turkish liras (\$2.53 billion).

The US dollar/Turkish lira exchange rate was 19.2024 as of 10 a.m. local time (0700GMT), the euro/lira exchange rate stood at 20.7580, while a British pound traded for 23.5970 Turkish liras.

Pak earns \$484m from travel services' export

ISLAMABAD (APP): The country has earned US \$484.140 million by providing different travel services in various countries during the first seven months of the current fiscal year 2022-23.

This shows growth of 53.67 percent as compared to the US \$315.060 million worth same services provided during the corresponding period of the last fiscal year 2021-22, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

During the period under review, personal travel services increased by 53.16 percent, from US \$313.880

million last year to US \$480.750 million during July-January 2023.

Among the personal services, the exports of health-related expenditure dipped by 10.53 percent while the education-related expenditure also dropped by 4.28 percent.

In addition, other personal services however increased of 54.80 percent.

Meanwhile, the exports of business services grew by 187.29 percent, from US\$ 1.180 million to US\$ 3.390 million, the PBS data revealed. It is pertinent to mention here that the exports of services from the

country, witnessed an increase of 6.39 percent during the first seven months of the current financial year (2022-23) as compared to the corresponding period of last year, it added.

The exports of services during July-January (2022-23) were recorded at US\$ 4196.76 million against the exports of US\$ 3944.84 million during the same period of last year.

The imports of the country witnessed a decline of 32.67 percent, falling from US\$ 6681.39 million last year to US\$ 4498.50 million during the period under review.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): M.V AAL Pusan carrying Router Blade berthed at Multi-Purpose Terminal on Sunday. Meanwhile three more ships, MSC Rania, FSM and Hellas Margarite carrying Containers, LPG and Gas oil also arrived at the outer anchorage of Port Qasim during the last 24 hours.

A total of 04 ships were engaged at PAQ berths during the last 24 hours, out of them, three ships, Meratus Jayawijaya, Confidence and Richmond Park left the port on Monday morning.

The cargo throughput of 32,268 tonnes comprising 7,063 tonnes of imports cargo and 25,205 tonnes of export cargo including containerized cargo carried in 1,210 Containers (3 TEUs Imports and 1,207 TEUs export) was handled at the Port during the last 24 hours.

The commodity-wise break-up of import and export cargo is highlighted as under. There are 09 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, three ships, Everdiki, Calypso Gas and MSC Rania & another ship, Lana carrying Gas oil, LPG and Containers are expected to take berths FOTCO, EVTL and QICT respectively on Monday.

Business confidence slumped

ISTANBUL (APP): Japan's business confidence in March worsened for the fifth straight quarter, dropping to the lowest level in over two years, the country's central bank said on Monday.

According to the Kyodo news agency, the decline stemmed from higher raw material costs and forecasts of slowing global economic growth. The confidence among auto and electronics sectors dropped from seven in December to one in March, below the expectation of three.

Confidence among firms dealing with oil and coal products, paper and pulp as well as food all deteriorated as they remained pessimistic.

Mega projects benefiting ruling elites rather country

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Monday said useless mega projects playing key role in bankrupting the country as such politically motivated projects were not serving the country but politicians and their favorite bureaucrats.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of PEW said that the unnecessary projects were made by borrowing billions of dollars, which benefits politicians and the country suffers.

He said "For several decades, the masses were told that completion of a certain project will usher in a new era of development and prosperity, production and exports will increase; inflation and unemploy-

ment will end but these lies have never come true".

He said that before every such project, the masses were told that it will make Pakistan a developed country, but such moves end up making politicians and their close bureaucrats more prosperous while the lives of people become more miserable.

He said "important institutions like the Planning Commission are kept weak for unholy designs, and if necessary, a new department or authority is created to serve political purposes".

He said that incompetent bureaucrats did not know how to run the institution, but they are experts in pleasing politicians which results in annual losses of

hundreds of billions of rupees to institutions, he observed.

He said that those who claimed to set up industries across the country have pushed the country into an unmanageable debt trap for political and material gains.

He said that the last year Pakistan received foreign direct investment of two billion dollars, while Singapore, which has a population 42 times less than Pakistan and an area 1093 times lesser than our country attracted an FDI of 92 billion dollars.

This is because rules are respected in developed countries while breaking the law is considered a privilege in our country.

Oil prices soar as producers unveil shock output cut

HONG KONG (APP): Oil prices soared Monday after top producers unveiled a shock output cut of more than a million barrels per day, while equities mostly rose after data showed US and European inflation eased further last month.

However, the decision by the OPEC+ cartel fanned concerns about a fresh spike in prices that could put pressure on central banks to push interest rates higher.

Both main crude contracts jumped around eight percent at one point following the cut by Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Algeria and Oman, which was the biggest since the group slashed two million barrels per day in October.

It came on top of a Russian decision to extend a cut of 500,000 barrels per day, and in spite of US calls to increase production.

A Saudi energy ministry official "emphasised that this is a precautionary measure aimed at supporting the stability of the oil market", according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

Crude prices have come down over the past year as concerns about a possible recession caused by higher borrowing costs have offset supply worries sparked by sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

"The production cut, coming at a time of an uncertain global demand environment clearly shows OPEC was not happy with the movement in the oil price which had fallen over recent months," said National Australia Bank's Tapas Strickland.

Analysts said the decision could deal a blow to markets, which had rallied in recent weeks on optimism that the recent banking sector turmoil could force the US Federal Reserve to end its rate hike drive sooner than expected.

"For equity investors, this could be a rude awakening, as markets imply a Goldilocks outlook of reduced discount rates but no recession," said Lazard Ltd's Ronald Temple.

"The OPEC+ production cut is another reminder that the inflation genie is not back in the bottle."

Still, the mood on Asian trading floors was upbeat, with most markets tracking a strong rally on Wall Street in response to news that US and eurozone price rises had slowed further.

The PCE Price Index, the Fed's preferred measure of inflation, slowed to an annual rate of 5.0 percent in February from 5.3 percent in January.

Meanwhile, eurozone prices rose 6.9 percent in March, well down from 8.5 percent in February, beating expectations as energy prices eased. Shanghai, Sydney, Singapore, Manila and Jakarta all rose, though Hong Kong was flat, while Seoul, Mumbai and Wellington slipped.

Tokyo rose despite the Bank of Japan's closely watched Tankan survey showing confidence among the country's largest manufacturers falling to its lowest level in more than two years.

London, Paris and Frankfurt rose in the morning.

US futures dipped as Treasury yields climbed on bets of further monetary tightening by the Fed.

Cineworld drops sale of UK, US businesses after failing to find buyer

LONDON (BBC News): Cineworld has said it will raise new funding as it dropped plans to sell its businesses in the US, UK and Ireland after failing to find a buyer.

The troubled cinema chain saw its share price fall by nearly 30% after announcing it would terminate the move. At the same time, Cineworld said it had struck a deal with its lenders to restructure its substantial debt and exit bankruptcy.

Like other cinemas, Cineworld was hit hard by the pandemic. Many theatres were forced to close

for extended periods during lockdowns, or had to operate at a reduced capacity due to social distancing rules.

They also continue to face tough competition from streaming services.

Cineworld, which is the world's second-largest cinema chain, filed for bankruptcy in the US in August last year as it struggled under the weight of \$5bn (£4bn) in debt.

The firm, which employs more than 28,000 people across 740 sites globally, said it now plans to raise \$2.26bn of new funding.

Cineworld's chief executive Mooky Greidinger said the deal represented a "vote-of-confidence" in the business and propelled the company "towards achieving its long-term strategy in a changing entertainment environment".

The company said it would continue to consider proposals for the sale of its business outside the US, UK and Ireland.

In 2020, a row broke out when Cineworld and rival AMC, which owns the Odeon Cinemas chain, criticised Universal Pictures for releasing Trolls: World

Tour online at a time when cinemas were forced to close because of coronavirus.

Cineworld subsequently signed a deal with Warner Bros to show films in theatres before they are streamed.

After lockdown restrictions eased, cinema chains have seen large audiences return to view the latest Hollywood blockbusters.

Big box office hits in recent months include Top Gun: Maverick, Avatar: The Way of Water and Dungeons & Dragons: Honour among Thieves.

Tokyo stocks end higher after United States rallies

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo shares closed higher on Monday following US rallies, but gains were kept in check as a surprise production cut announced by major oil powers weighed on the market. The benchmark Nikkei 225 index rose 0.52 percent, or 146.67, to end at 28,188.15, while the broader Topix index climbed 0.71 percent, or 14.18 points, to 2,017.68.

The dollar stood at 133.54 yen, against 132.82 yen in New York on Friday.

There was positive trading in Tokyo throughout the day, with investors reassured by data pointing to slowing inflation.

But their enthusiasm was tempered as oil powers led by Saudi Arabia announced a surprise production cut of more than a million barrels per day, calling it a "precautionary" move aimed at stabilising the market.

The reductions -- on top of a Russian decision to extend a cut of 500,000 barrels per day, and despite

US calls to increase production -- risk stoking inflation and pressure to raise interest rates.

"Because of the inflationary impact of higher oil prices, the market is beginning to wipe the slate clean of Fed cuts," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said. "Long-duration assets like gold and some tech stocks have struggled today."

IwaiCosmo Securities said that in Tokyo, too, "the news about (oil) reductions put pressure on rates to rise,

weighing on growth stocks such as those related to semiconductors".

Tokyo Electron, which builds tools to make chips, lost 2.05 percent to 15,710 yen, while Advantest, which makes semiconductor tests, plunged 4.27 percent to 11,640 yen.

Among other major shares, SoftBank Group added 0.69 percent to 5,218 yen, Sony Group was up 0.37 percent to 12,030 yen and Toyota gained 0.90 percent to 1,897 yen.



In brief

Tenpin Bowling Cup on April 8

ISLAMABAD (APP): The one-day Ramzan Tenpin Bowling Cup Tournament will be held on April 8 at Leisure City Bowling Club, Jinnah Park, Rawalpindi. According to the details, the tournament is being organised by Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation (PTBF). President PTBF Ijaz ur Rehman said all preparations for the tournament were finalized, adding it was being arranged on the special instructions of R a w a l p i n d i Commissioner Liaquat Ali Chhatta. The draws for the tournament would be announced on April 7. Whereas, prizes would be distributed among the winning players at the closing ceremony.

Slater charged with assaulting police

SYDNEY (Agencies): Former Australian cricket great Michael Slater has been charged with assaulting police during a confrontation in a popular Queensland holiday town. The alleged incident on Friday left one officer with a cut to their hand, a police spokesperson said. Officers were responding to an alleged domestic violence and medical incident at the Noosa property, they added. Slater, 53, is also charged with two counts of obstructing police and will face court on 2 May. The former batsman was part of the Australian cricket team from 1993 to 2001, playing 74 Tests. He then forged a career as a high-profile cricket commentator but was let go by Australia's Channel Seven in 2021.

Cricketers get hefty pay rise

PERTH (INP): Australia's women cricketers secured a huge pay increase on Monday, with the top contracted player on course to earn more than Aus\$1 million (\$666,000) a year. Payments for professional women will rise 66 per cent under a new five-year deal between Cricket Australia (CA) and the Australian Cricketers' Association. They will share in a pool worth Aus\$133m, up from Aus\$80m in the previous agreement, rewarding not only members of Australia's world champion team but significantly increasing the value of Big Bash League (WBBL) and state contracts. According to the deal, the top CA contract holder who also has a WBBL contract — believed to be national captain Meg Lanning — could now earn more than Aus\$800,000 a year. That could break the Aus\$1 million mark with further earnings in India's Women's Premier League and The Hundred in England. The next six contracted players will earn an average Aus\$500,000. Those who do not play for Australia but compete in the Women's National Cricket League and WBBL will be paid more than Aus\$151,000 annually. "I am particularly pleased this MoU (memorandum of understanding) represents another major step forward in the rise of women's cricket," said CA chief Nick Hockley. "[There are] significant increases in remuneration for the inspirational role models of the world champion Australian women's team and the WBBL who are driving substantial growth in female participation. "Cricket now clearly offers the best earning opportunities of any team sport for elite female sportspeople." The deal will also see the number of CA men's contracts increase from 17-20 to 20-24, recognising the number of players now selected across various formats.



SHEFFIELD: Marco Fu of Hong Kong plays a shot in the qualifying match against Martin O'Donnell of England ahead of the 2023 Cazoo World Snooker Championship.

First Ramazan Sports Series 2023 from April 7: Wahab Riaz

LAHORE (APP): Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz said that the First Ramazan Sports Series 2023 will be organized from April 7 to 11, 2023 on the directives of Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi.

He announced this while addressing a news press conference here at the National Hockey Stadium on Monday.

Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail, Commissioner Lahore Division Chaudhry Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Director Youth Affairs Syed Umair Hassan and other officials were present on the occasion.

Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab Wahab Riaz said the teams from all divisions will participate in the competitions of hockey, football, kabaddi, badminton and table tennis. "The 12 teams of Lahore cricket clubs will compete in the tape ball cricket event scheduled to be played at Gau Shala Cricket Ground".

Giving details of prize money, he said that a huge amount of Rs 85,50,000 will be distributed among top position holder teams of Ramazan Sports Series. "The winners of badminton and table tennis (male and female) events will get Rs 2 lakh cash prize each, while the runners up teams will be given Rs one lakh cash

prize each," he added.

"Rs 25 lakh cash prize will be given to winners and Rs 15 lakh to runners up in hockey, Rs 8 lakh cash prize will be given to winners and Rs 3.5 lakh to runners up in kabaddi, Rs 7 lakh cash prize will be given to winners and Rs 3 lakh to runners up in football while Rs one lakh cash prize will be given to winners and Rs 50,000 to runners up in cricket".

Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports said that Ramazan Sports Series will provide a suitable platform to young talented players of the province to demonstrate their talent in the above mentioned games. "Excellent arrangements will be made for the competitions of Ramazan Sports Series. "The participating teams will be provided all necessary facilities during the Ramazan Sports Series".

He further said that overall 768 male and female players and 135 officials will participate in the 5-day Ramazan Sports Series. "The competitions of badminton and table tennis (male and female) events will be played at NPSC Gymnasium Hall, football and kabaddi at Punjab Stadium, hockey matches at Mini Hockey Stadium while the tape ball cricket event will be played at Gau Shala Cricket Ground," he informed.

Wahab Riaz said that there will be two halves of 20 minutes each in the 8-a-side hockey event. "Park View Housing Society will sponsor the hockey event which is a good sign for the future of hockey in the country. Quetta Gladiators owner Nadeem Omar has also expressed his interest in buying a team in the hockey tournament".

Commissioner Lahore Division Chaudhry Muhammad Ali Randhawa on this occasion said: "We recently organized Jashan-e-Baharan event quite successfully likewise the Ramazan Sports Series will also be conducted in a successful manner".

He said the Ramazan Sports Series will be fully sponsored event as per vision of caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi. "Punjab government will not spend a single penny on this event. The first Ramazan Sports Series event will be a memorable event," he added.

Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail on this occasion said that the teams from 9 divisions are participating in the first Ramazan Sports Series. "Officers at the division level are selecting the teams in collaboration with sports associations purely on merit. Sports Board Punjab is providing the best platform to the players to express their talents," he added.

Danish offers unconditional support for squash uplift

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's top player Danish Atlas Khan has offered his unconditional services to put the country once again on the path to success, saying there was no shortage of talent in the country but a stern roadmap was needed to help regain lost glory in the game. Danish, who is also the nephew of former world squash champion Jansher Khan, said he met with Special Assistant to Prime Minister Faisal Karim Kundi last month and discussed ways for Squash uplift in Pakistan. "Kundi lauded me and my family for making the country proud in the game of squash internationally,"

Speaking about his plan for the revival of the game, he said the Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) was making all-out efforts to promote and encourage the game and players in the country.

"However, other stakeholders must also come forward to help encourage and promote, not only squash but all sports. We should take all departments on board to promote all sports in the country. Wapda, PIA, NBP, Railway, banks, all government departments should include senior and junior players as to support the games," he told APP. He was of the view that in the past, departments used to support players which resulted in giving us many world champions in squash, hockey and cricket.

"Sports cannot grow or flourish, without the support of departments. We should form academies on the grassroots level as well," he said. Danish, who has won 32 gold medals for Pakistan, said PSF was providing players with squash facilities and spending hefty amounts on making squash courts.

"I have requested Faisal Karim Kundi to request the Prime Minister of Pakistan to award funds to PSF so that it can be utilized for the betterment of players," he said.

He said there should be squash courts in schools as to promote the game at the grassroots level. "The more courts and academies there will be, the more talent will come to the fore. In Egypt, players are picked from schools to train in academies with modern techniques and skills and improve their physical fitness."

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

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

Medvedev beats Sinner to win fourth title of year



MIAMI (Agencies): Former world number one Daniil Medvedev won the Miami Open title for the first time by beating Jannik Sinner in straight sets.

The in-form Russian fourth seed broke serve twice in the opening set before powering to a 7-5 6-3 victory.

It is the fifth Masters 1,000 crown of his career and his fourth ATP title of 2023 following wins in Dubai, Doha and Rotterdam. "I'm really happy. It was a tough match," said 27-year-old Medvedev.

"It was probably the hottest and most humid day. It was not easy conditions. I don't know if Jannik had a small injury or cramp. I was also struggling but tried not to show it. "I haven't won't such a big title in probably a year and a half. At the end I was quite shaky so the serve is a little bit tougher. I managed to get myself together and close out the match."

Medvedev, a runner-up at Indian Wells last month, continued his impressive form to win in just over 90 minutes as Sinner tired in the second set after putting up a fight early on. Italy's Sinner, the world number 11, claimed a shock win over top seed Carlos Alcaraz in the semi-finals but could not recreate that display on Sunday.

World number five Medvedev became the first player since Ivan Lendl in 1981 to reach a fifth consecutive ATP final when he beat fellow Russian Karen Khachanov in the last four. He is yet to lose to 21-year-old Sinner in six meetings and also got the better of the Italian in the Rotterdam final in February.

Ireland eye maiden Test victory in Bangladesh

MIRPUR (Agencies): Ireland captain Andrew Balbirnie said on Monday the team were excited but aware of the challenges ahead of their fourth-ever Test match beginning in Bangladesh this week.

Ireland have lost all three of their previous Test matches since becoming a full member of the International Cricket Council in 2017.

They are also scheduled to play two more Test matches against Sri Lanka later this month.

"(There is) a lot of excitement coming into this week," Balbirnie said ahead of the match starting on Tuesday in Dhaka.

Many in the squad have never played a Test before and the length of the game and the conditions would be challenging, he said.

"It's certainly very hot out there. It's a new ground for us as a team," Balbirnie said.

"A lot of our guys have been brought up on white-ball cricket, in T20 cricket. A batter (in Tests) has to set himself to bat for as long as possible. Bowlers have to be as disciplined as possible. That's going to be the biggest challenge."

Ireland found the preceding 50-over and T20 series against Bangladesh tough going, losing 2-0 and 2-1 respectively.

The hosts will be without fast bowler Taskin Ahmed for the Test because of a side strain. He has been replaced in the squad by Rejaur Rahman Raja.

Bangladesh also denied permission to skipper Shakib Al Hasan and his deputy Liton Das to join the Indian Premier League until the end of the Test match.

"We are playing a full team after a long time. We have a good combination. We are all playing regularly, and in good touch," said all-rounder Mehidy Hasan ahead of the Test.

Messi jeered as PSG suffer another home defeat

PARIS (Agencies): Paris Saint-Germain suffered a second home defeat in a row Sunday, falling 1-0 to Lyon as their World Cup winning superstar Lionel Messi was jeered by a section of supporters.

After losing 2-0 at home to Rennes two weeks ago, it was Lyon's Bradley Barcola who inflicted the latest loss for PSG at the Parc des Princes.

The goal by Barcola -- who had come on as replacement for injured Amin Sarr -- made up for a missed penalty by Alexandre Lacazette in the

first half.

It is the Parisians' fifth Ligue 1 loss this season, all of them in 2023, and leaves Christophe Galtier's side just six points ahead of both second-placed Lens and Marseille in third.

The night started in controversial circumstances.

As the team line-ups were announced over the loudspeaker, whistling greeted Messi's name in one part of the stadium.

Fans in another area, however, shouted in response "Messi".

Messi, 35, is nearing the end of his two-year contract

with the Paris club.

Talks have begun on a possible renewal but he has also been linked with a return to Barcelona. In two seasons, the veteran has played 67 matches with PSG including Sunday's game against ninth-placed Lyon and scored 29 goals.

"The whistles, I find that hard," said Galtier. "Leo is a player who gives a lot and who has given a lot since the start of the season."

He added: "With a stroke of genius, Leo is able to deliver the right ball, to provide an assist, to score a goal. I never once thought

about taking him off."

PSG midfielder Danilo acknowledged the team had hit "a difficult phase" which they had to find a way out of, given their rivals were closing in.

"We have to wake up. The title is not guaranteed at all, there are still a lot of matches," he said on Prime Video. "There are lot of things to change, not just the mindset, but it's not up to me to say what."

PSG have been severely hampered by injuries, with Neymar recovering from ankle surgery and their defence decimated.

Enaam Ahmed: most successful Asian driver in Formula history

ISLAMABAD (APP): Proudly waving the flag of Pakistan across the world in the Formula racing circuit, Enaam Ahmed has become the first ever and the only Pakistani to be a World Champion in Karting, beating the records of Formula One drivers Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen.

Not only that, Enaam Ahmed is also the British Formula 3 Champion, the first ever high-level Formula Championship winner in the history of Pakistan and beating the record of Ayrton Senna by winning 13 races in one season.

The 23-year-old is going places around the world with his winning streaks on the dangerous tracks, driving cars at an average 200 miles per hour — making sure that his car carries both British and Pakistani flags.

Enaam is one of the brightest and most exciting young racing talents in motorsport. He has been winning Championships and breaking records from the age of 14. Enaam Ahmed is also the most successful Pakistani heritage racing driver ever in the history of motorsport because he is also known as the most successful British Formula 3 driver in history.

Enaam Ahmed was born to Pakistani parents in London 23 years ago. It was at the age of eight that he started taking interest in racing. His parents started funding their son's passion by sending him to local Go-karting tracks for children but they had no idea that their son would become a European and world champion at

the age of 14 — winning it one year younger than Lewis Hamilton who was 15 when he became the world champion.

When Enaam announced his decision for car racing to his parents, they told him they will not be funding him anymore and he would need to learn to stand on his own feet to explore his opportunities or return to normal life and finish a university degree and then do whatever he wants to.

Enaam Ahmed left the comfort of his home immediately to live in Japan, Spain, Italy, New Zealand and the United States to focus on professional driving. He has not looked back ever since.

In an interview, the star racer explained his achievements. He said: "I was 14 years old when I won five championships in one year, the two most important ones being the European Championship in Go-Karting. I won that when I was 14 years old while Lewis Hamilton had won when he was 15 years old. At the age of 17, I became the British Formula 3 Champion, the first time ever a Pakistani won a major Motorsport championship beating the record of Ayrton Senna."

Naturally, Enaam Ahmed felt very proud when he beat Lewis Hamilton's record at the age of 14 in Go Karting which is the most competitive racing one can do at that age and beating Lewis Hamilton's record was a huge achievement. There was a lot of pressure on him to win those competitions for himself so he could



make his name but also to impress his parents and to show them he made the right decision of leaving home at a very young age — when most of his childhood friends played around the nearby Hyde Park. The most important factor for Enaam Ahmed has been to win these accomplishments as a Pakistani-origin racer. He says with pride: "For me it matters the most that I won these races at the world stage as a Pakistani and races at the world championship level and at the European Championship level as a Pakistani. Not just to do it but to win it, this makes me very proud and there is a long way to go."

Enaam Ahmed has a driving simulator set up at his home in London when he's with his parents. He's in the United States where he spends most time as that's where he drives cars as a professional. He said: "The training is usually twice a day. That's not the hardest part though. The most difficult thing to do is to go

out at that young age and get sponsors as these are sponsors who fund races. I always have to perform and win in order to stay in the game. If you don't perform there are no sponsors behind you to move forward. For example right now I race in the United States in the series called Indy NXT which is leading me to IndyCar — the biggest series in the US."

"I am the first ever and the only Pakistani to take part in these races. Alhamdulillah, I am lucky that I have big sponsors from America who are sponsoring me this year to race in America and they have enabled me to live my dream and get to the top in the two biggest racing series."

Racing is a sport that is considered unique and daring as the drivers are required to have a lot of courage, especially driving at well over 200 miles an hour at high-speed involving quick turns, twists and dangerous corners. Enaam Ahmed's mother doesn't watch any of his Racing and has

avoided watching his races, as she doesn't want to see her son driving at such dangerous speeds.

The racing star says that driving Formula cars is a dangerous sport especially in the US because the average speed there is much higher. He explains: "The walls are very close and these are concrete walls. When you hit a concrete wall at 200 miles an hour you could kill yourself. Racing in America means people get hurt or even killed. That's dangerous but danger is what this sport is all about. And that makes it exciting for me because at the end of the day you have nothing to lose. My mum and dad don't agree with this but that's the way life is."

The British Pakistani racing star left home at the age of 13 and his father told him he would have to find sponsors on his own. "My father told me you are leaving school; you will have to find sponsors and your niche. I had no sponsors at the start but I won massive races, made and broke records and the sponsors came behind me. I had a lot of support from Pakistani Americans. There are two massive sponsors. One is... and the other one I cannot talk about at this stage."

The formula racing driver says he has come across a few Pakistanis and tried to perform with a few of them. He says that they couldn't make it big because they never had the required support base that's required. "I was very lucky that I was racing in the UK from a young age and I had

more exposure. I trained with the best in the racing field. The problem in South Asian countries of Pakistan and India is there are no racing car facilities and the government pays no attention. There are hardly any good Go Karting tracks, the ones made are in a bad shape. Compare this with the European countries where there are 20 tracks in every country and the sport is loved by millions. I am racing in the US right now and taking part in the biggest racing events. No Pakistani or South Asian has made it this far ever. The only higher priority is to win the Indianapolis 500 race. Then I want to be the first Formula one World champion for Pakistan."

Enaam Ahmed said that huge costs are involved in this sport. He says his team spends a minimum of USD\$ 8 million in each season. "Formula 1 is US\$ 150 million a year. Pakistan doesn't have that kind of resources. People in the West spend huge amounts on this sport. I am lucky and glad that I am liked and picked as a driver. I have always taken risks and my belief is that don't look back and don't hold back, even when the world is against me I have always believed that I am the best."

Enaam Ahmed is currently taking part in the IndyNXT series in the US. About his future plans, he is optimistic. He says: "I want to finish this year's season off and race in the Indianapolis 500 next year and be the first Pakistani to do so. Then I will set my target at getting into Formula 1."



In brief

IRSA releases 89,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 89,900 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 65,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1428.75 feet and was 30.75 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 21,900 cusecs while outflow was 7,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1102.90 feet, which was 52.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 19,500 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur has recorded 31,200, 45,000, 40,900 and 9,300 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 26,800 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 14,300 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Power suspension notice

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Monday issued a power suspension program for Tuesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to an IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 07 a.m. to 11 a.m., Islamabad Circle, Sohndar Road Feeder, Rawalpindi City Circle, Madina Colony, Masryal Road, Multabad, Kurry Road Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Adi, Basharat, Lilla Town, Ahmedabad, Toba Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, From 06 a.m. to noon, Islamabad Feed Mill, Jhata Hatil, Pind Jatla, Lab.II, Lab.I, Reliance Weaving Mill, Bhal, Jarrar Comp Feeders, and surrounding areas.

ANF recovers over 447 kg drugs

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in eight operations managed to recover over 447 kg drugs and arrested eight accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that ANF managed to recover five charras-filled capsules from the possession of an Abu Dhabi-bound passenger, a resident of Bannu, netted at Islamabad International Airport. In another operation, 1.2 kg heroin was recovered from a private courier company office near Chandni Chowk Rawalpindi. The parcel was booked for Birmingham. In third operation near Motorway Toll Plaza, 3.6 kg charras was recovered from the possession of an Afghan national. The spokesman informed that ANF in an operation near Islamabad Chungi No 26 recovered 2.4 kg charras from the possession of a drug smuggler resident of Peshawar. ANF and ASF in an operation at Lahore International Airport arrested three accused residents of Okara and recovered 104 heroin-filled capsules from the possession of an accused. He said that in an operation at Karachi International Airport, over two kg heroin was recovered from the possession of a Saudia-bound passenger resident of Chiniot. Heroin was tactfully concealed in a hotpot. ANF and FC in an operation in Noshki managed to recover 416 kg charras while in the eighth operation ANF recovered 22 kg charras concealed in bushes in Dalbandin area.



ISLAMABAD: Adviser to PM Engr Amir Muqam signing final protocol of 20th Ministers of Culture of Member State of Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Pakistan ready to work with all SCO countries for achieving common goals: Amir Muqam

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister for Political, Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture Engr Amir Muqam has said that Pakistan looks forward to working with all Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) countries towards achieving our common goals.

Addressing the 20th meeting of ministers of culture of the member states of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Adviser to Prime Minister Engr Amir Muqam has said that Pakistan attaches a great importance to SCO and strongly believes that it is a unique platform to celebrate our commonalities and to work together to forge a common future marked by our rich cultural heritage. The online meeting was held in chair of Minister of Culture of India and also attended by ministers of culture of SCO Member States and delegates. The meeting was also virtually attended by Federal Secretary for National Heritage and Cultural Fareena Mazhar and other senior officials.

Engr Amir Muqam said that we are ready to collaborate with SCO member states by launching joint initiatives, projects and programmes, ensuring effective participation of folk artists in cultural festivals and events, promoting exchange of research scholars, museums technicians and managers as well as and

arts and craft experts and undertaking joint publications to focus on cultural similarities in the member state.

“We strongly believe that cooperation in all fields of cultural is crucial to promoting mutual understanding and cooperation among our member states”, he added. Adviser to Prime Minister said that Pakistan is home to a variety of ancient sites and historic structures that offer a unique glimpse of Taxila, these archeological wonders are a reminder of the region’s rich cultural heritage.

Engr Amir Muqam said that Pakistan considers that cultural relations among SCO member states are crucial for promoting mutual understanding, building bridges of friendship and strengthening our cultural ties.

Adviser to Prime Minister said that Pakistan supports further expansion of cultural exchange programs, organization of the cultural events and festivals and promotion of our cultural heritage among SCO member states under SCO umbrella.

He said that SCO has become an important platform for the participating countries to enhance their cultural exchanges and promote mutual understanding.

Adviser to Prime Minister said that the role of the SCO in promoting cultural relationships is becoming increasingly important as it seeks to build bridges between its members and foster closer ties between them.

Engr Amir Muqam said that the SCO member states have diverse cultural and historical traditions, and it is essential to explore and celebrate this diversity. It is the land of spectacular Gandharan Civilization, the Hindu Shahi temples of the Salt Range and Tharparkar, he said, adding that it is not only the ancient sites and historic monuments, but equally the historic urban cores, stretched from the peaks of the Khyber in the farthest north to the southern-most edge of the mighty river Indus- Peshawar, Multan, Thatta and Karachi and scores of other living cities.

Adviser to Prime Minister Engr Amir Muqam further said that the intangible cultural heritage of Pakistan in the form of folk music and arts is equally rich and diverse.

“It is essential to focus on the role of technology in promoting cultural exchange” he said, adding that the digital era has opened up new avenues for promoting cultural exchange and collaboration.

Engr Amir Muqam said that cultural tourism is another area here we can promote cultural exchange and cooperation, adding that “Our region is home to some of the world’s most iconic tourist destinations”.

He said that we can discuss and work towards creating a framework that promotes the exchange of cultural artifacts and exhibitions, as well as the exchange of experts in the field of cultural heritage and museums.

Shazia for extending maximum relief to deserving beneficiaries

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Shazia Marri on Monday directed the officials concerned for vigilance and concrete efforts to ensure the disbursement of Benazir Kafaalat and other initiatives in a more transparent manner. She was presiding over a high-level meeting to review the various initiatives of the Benazir Income Support Programme.

The meeting was held on zoom and was attended by the Secretary Benazir Income Support Programme Yusuf Khan, Additional Secretary Dr Tahir Noor, and all director generals including heads of provinces and regions.

The Secretary BISP briefed the minister regarding the ongoing quarterly disbursement of Benazir Kafaalat which has been enhanced from Rs 7,000 to 8,500 by the federal government.

The details of other initiatives including the disbursement of Benazir Taleemi Wazaif, Sindh Government’s payments of wheat seed subsidy to farmers of flood-affected areas of Sindh, and atta (flour) subsidy payments, were also discussed.

The ongoing survey of the National Socio-Economic Registry ‘Dynamic Registry’ was also discussed under which the status of already registered beneficiaries is being reassessed.

Dynamic Registry also gives the new deserving beneficiaries the opportunity to take benefit from the initiative on qualify-

ing the criteria/ poverty benchmark.

The Regional DGs for Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu Kashmir briefed the minister with regard to complaints of illegal deductions received, recovery made and the POS agents blocked under the complaints of deductions. The provincial DGs discussed about the shortage of manpower in the meeting.

Shazia Marri said that we needed to educate beneficiaries that the government of Pakistan had increased the amount of Benazir Kafaalat for quarter of Jan- March and April- Jun from Rs 7000 to Rs 8500 and RS 9000 respectively.

She urged the beneficiaries to lodge their complaints in case of unlawful deductions in the nearest BISP office.

The minister directed the field staff to enhance vigilance at the grassroots level to control the complaints of illegal deductions received from some areas against the POS (Point of Sale) agents of partner banks. She further urged the partner banks, i.e. Habib Bank in Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan and Bank Al-Falah in the rest of the country to simplify the payment mechanism through their ATMs so that the beneficiaries of Benazir Income Support Programme could withdraw their funds easily. The minister asked the Secretary BISP to work out a plan to address the issue of shortage of manpower in the provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir.

Commissioner visits Denny’s school to review SSC annual exams arrangements

RAWALPINDI (APP): Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chhatta here on Monday visited Denny’s Higher Secondary School, center of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) annual examination and reviewed the arrangements made by Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Rawalpindi.

The commissioner visited various examination halls and rooms and inspected the arrangements and the exams holding process.

The commissioner also checked attendance of the students and their roll number slips. “Transparent examination is the first responsibility of all of us,” he said adding, there would be no compromise on the transparency of the examination system.

Deputy Commissioners, Additional Commissioners and Assistant

Commissioners of all the districts would monitor all the examination centers on daily basis, he informed.

Strict action in accordance with the law would be taken against cheating mafia and no one would be allowed to violate the rules, he said and informed that separate raiding teams had been formed to make monitoring system more effective.

He directed the monitoring teams to perform their professional duties without any discrimination.

An IT clerk had been appointed for each examination center who would assist the resident inspectors to ensure timely attendance of the candidates and the board staff online, he said.

Security personnel had also been deployed outside each examination centre, the commissioner added.

Heads of police stations to declare assets for transparency in policing affairs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad police officials have been directed to ensure transparency as well as professional attitude in policing affairs and to disclose their assets as well.

These directions were made by City Police Officer (CPO) and Deputy Inspector General of Police (Operations) Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari in a meeting held on other day. He directed all Station House Officers (SHOs) to declare their assets as a measure to ensure transparency in policing affairs.

The meeting was presided by Inspector General of Police (IGP) Akbar Nasir Khan and performance of police officials and their efforts in curbing crime were reviewed. It was attended among others by CPO/DIG Operations, AIGs, SSP Operations, SSP CTD, Zonal DPOs, SDPOs and SHOs of police stations.

CPO Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari said that present and former SHOs should work together and to make a concrete action plan to deal with criminal elements including proclaimed offenders.

He directed the investigation officers to meet with the complainants and brief them about the development of their cases. He said that the weekly performance of each officer will be reviewed.

He said that cleanliness of the police stations should be taken care of and biometric attendance should be ensured in all wings of the operations division. He

also directed to make patrolling system more efficient.

Meanwhile, IGP Islamabad reviewed performance of each police officer and said that all officers should adopt comprehensive strategies to prevent crime in their respective areas. Safe city monitoring should be implemented at police station level to help SHOs in tracing criminal elements at the earliest, he added.

He further instructed that the SHOs should spend time in the police stations and focus on resolving the cases on logical and professional grounds. The IGP Islamabad said that a special plan should be made to eliminate serious crimes, especially street crime, and special attention to be given to curbing drug trafficking, especially in educational institutions.

He said that postmortem should be conducted in case of any suspicious death while crackdown against those possessing illegal weapons to be accelerated. More personnel are being provided in police stations, he said adding that special campaign against offenders should be continued and they should be brought to justice.

He emphasized that the challans of the under investigation cases should be completed as soon as possible and to be submitted in relevant courts. In the meeting, IGP Islamabad listened to the problems of all the SHOs and said that their problems will be solved on a priority basis.

Birth anniversary of Nazia Hassan observed

ISLAMABAD (APP): Nazia Hassan, one of the most iconic figures in the history of Pakistan pop music was remembered on the occasion of her birth anniversary on Monday.

Pop queen of the 80s and 90s, she was Pakistan’s, as well as the subcontinent’s, sweetheart whose songs were on everyone’s playlist. Born on April 3, 1965, into a well-to-do Karachi family, the “Queen of Pop”, as she was called, started her career at the age of 10 as a child artist. She rose to prominence through the popular Pakistan Television programme ‘Sung Sung’. She was also a recipient of the country’s highest civilian award, Pride of Performance. In addition to singing in films, Nazia was also a philanthropist and was appointed by UNICEF as its cultural ambassador in 1991.

The journals currently enlisted in HEC Journal Recognition System (HJRS) will also have to apply afresh for accreditation in FY 2023-24. The applications should be submitted online at research.hec.gov.pk before April 07, 2023. Application submitted through other means like post/email etc. will not be entertained. The applicants may visit the portal where applications are submitted (research.hec.gov.pk) to get updated status of applications.

HEC invites applications for accreditation of Pakistan-based research journals

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC), has invited applications for accreditation of Pakistan based research journals for year 2023-24 (July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024).

According to official sources, HEC facilitates national research journals registered entities through financial support and capacity building to enhance their publication standards. These entities include Universities/Degree Awarding Institutions Sector R&D Organizations and non-profitable academic societies with the mandate having registration with Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) Societies only. National research journals complying with HEC requirements for recognised annually through an open call.

Applications are invited for the year 2023-24 (July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024)

from all Pakistan based research journals, which meet the following minimum eligibility criteria i.e valid ISSN, Journal Title, Journal owned by any University/DAI/R&D Organization/ Private Society/NGO and Functional Website of journal. Meanwhile, Editorial /Advisory Board Composition (An academic editorial/advisory board (or equivalent), with PhD degrees in relevant fields (i.e., area of publication) or FCPS/FRCS/MCPS degree for medical journals and strong research and publications background also required. The journal must have published minimum 5 original research articles per issue. At least 2 review reports of each article.

The editor of journal will provide recommendation letter of head of institution in case of approved educational institution (public/private) or R&D public sector organizations. The journals owned by

non-profitable academic societies with the mandate for research will be considered only after the registration with Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) and or Registrar of Societies (Registration with other organizations will not be accepted).

Journal listed in removed list of Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ) or Australian Business Deans Committee (ABDC) will not be considered for accreditation.

The journals currently enlisted in HEC Journal Recognition System (HJRS) will also have to apply afresh for accreditation in FY 2023-24. The applications should be submitted online at research.hec.gov.pk before April 07, 2023. Application submitted through other means like post/email etc. will not be entertained. The applicants may visit the portal where applications are submitted (research.hec.gov.pk) to get updated status of applications.

Balochistan-KP roads opened for traffic

ISLAMABAD (APP): The roads of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which were affected due to landslides, were opened for traffic within 12 hours after National Highway Authority’s (NHA) stern measures on emergency basis. According to the details, due to landslides caused by recent heavy rains in Danasar, an area adjacent to Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the main highway was severely affected and all traffic was suspended.

Federal Minister for Communications and Postal Services Maulana Asad Mahmood had issued immediate instructions to the concerned authorities of NHA that the affected road should be restored for traffic on an emergency basis.

The field staff of NHA was immediate-

ly mobilized, supervised by NHA Member West Zone Shahid Ehsanullah and were in communication with the Minister and the Federal Secretary to inform them about the latest situation.

General Manager Balochistan North Agha Inayat, Director Raheel Ahmed and Deputy Director Maintenance also contributed in the restoration works.

Through all these efforts, the affected national highway in remote area like Dhana Sar was restored to minor traffic within 12 hours and for all traffic within 24 hours.

It could have taken several days, but NHA engineers and other related staff completed the work while fasting during Ramazan. The efforts of the officers and staff were highly appreciated.



ISLAMABAD: Workers busy in fixing the damaged section of the road at Zero Point.

16 illegal guns recovered

NIMROZ (Agencies): 15 rifles and 1 Kalashnikov, which were kept illegally, were recovered and seized in two separate operations by Nimroz intelligence forces in Nimroz province of Afghanistan. The General Directorate of Intelligence of Nimroz Province said that their forces in two separate operations, recovered and seized 15 rifles, 1 Kalashnikov and a quantity of ammunition, which were kept illegally, from some properties Nimroz province of Afghanistan.

The Frontier Post

Ramazan 13, 1444 — Tuesday, April 04, 2023

Perpetrator of blasts held

BALKH (Agencies): The Intelligence Department has announced the arrest of one of the perpetrators involved in several deadly attacks in the Balkh province of Afghanistan, including the assassination of Mohammad Dawood Muzamal, governor of Balkh. The department aired the “confessions” of a young person saying he was involved in at least five attacks, including the governor of Balkh, Tebyan centre and several Shiite centres in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Officials report increase in revenues by Balkh RA

BALKH (TOLNews): Officials from Railway Authority in Balkh province said the revenues for the past solar year – March 2022 to March 2023 – showed a 33 percent increase compared with the previous year.

Head of the department, Mohammad Shafiq Mahmood, said they collected 2.5 billion Afs in the solar year 1401 (March 2022 to March 2023) while it was 1.8 billion Afs in the

solar 1400. “This year we had a 33 percent increase in revenue compared with the previous year,” Mahmood said. Officials from the Chamber of Commerce and Investment said the Balkh railway is one of the key routes for trade, including exports and imports.

“Transfer of goods through railway is an effective and safe,” said Ahmad Shakib Akbari, a member of the chamber.

“If the railway is con-

nected with Kabul, Herat, and Kandahar provinces, it will lead to a major development in trade and transit activities,” said Qalandar, an investor.

According to the railway authority statistics, 2.6 million tons of goods entered the country through the border between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan in the past year, and 7700 tons of goods were exported to other countries through the route.

Thousands of needy families receive aid

TAKHAR (Agencies): According to local officials, thousands of needy families and those affected by natural disasters in Yanki Qala and Chah Aab districts of Takhar province received humanitarian assistance.

Mawlawi Noor Mohammad, Provincial Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department Chief told Bakhtar News Agency that the World Food Program distributed food and non-food items to 4,593 families, while each family received flour, cooking oil, and other food items.

In addition, the Afghan Red Crescent Society, with the cooperation of the IIHF institution, provided food and non-food items to 400 families in the capital of the province.

The Provincial Natural Disaster Department head, Mawlawi Sajid Sayeer, also said that 115 families who were victims of a recent earthquake in Farkhar, Kulfgan, and Warsaj districts of the province assisted with food and non-food items.

Two killed in mortar mine blast

WARDAK (Agencies): Two children were killed when the unexploded device from a past war exploded in the eastern province of Wardak in Afghanistan, according to local sources.

The explosion caused by a mortar mine of past wars resulted in the death of two children in Sayedabad district while the children were playing with it, Yusuf Israr, the provincial police spokesperson, said.

A similar incident occurred in the Sarkhakan area of the Shah Joi district of Zabul province, resulting in one child's death and three others' injuries.

Meanwhile, according to local sources, another blast that happened on Tuesday, March 28, caused the death of two children and injured four others in the northern Jawzjan province.

Recently, the incidence of unexploded devices from past wars has increased in several parts of the country, resulting in the death and hurt of men and women, including children.

The presence and existence of unexploded devices and the remnant in war-torn Afghanistan pose significant threats to people's lives, particularly children.

Since last November, international bodies have contributed to support demining in the country, including Australia, Denmark, Germany, Japan, Sweden, the United States, the UK, the UN Central Emergency Response Fund and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

However, Afghanistan is still reportedly one of the most mine-contaminated countries in the world, taking the lives of scores of people monthly, including children, due to the explosion of unexploded devices left over from the four decades of civil war.

MoEW need 10b Afs to conduct 411 water projects



KABUL (Agencies): Deputy Minister of Energy and Water, Mujib-ur Rahman Umar Akhandzada says that the Ministry of Energy and Water needs more than ten billion Afghanis to conduct 411 water projects in 1402.

The Ministry of Energy and Water, sharing its annual reports with media today, Monday, said: “These projects include micro and macro dams, water control

dams, and canals, reinforcement of retaining walls, strengthening of underground water, development of the water project.

Developing the Panjshir river to connected with the Kabul river and maintenance and care of water facilities are the priorities of this ministry's work plan, the Ministry officials said.

In the supply of drinkable water in Kabul, he said: “To prevent water

consumption, the management of underground water and the strengthening of water supply networks are working on plans, so that the problems of the citizens of Kabul regarding the lack of drinking water will be addressed and to solve this problem better and sooner, the work on the projects of Shah and Arous Dams, Shah Tut Dam and Panjshir Darya continues with sincerity.

In this press conference, the head of energy and water Engineer. Rafiullah Stanakzai said 80 percent of Kabul's electricity is imported and the rest is supplied from Sarobi and Naghlo dams.

According to him, 700 megawatts of electricity are needed to supply power to Kabul, but currently, only 350 megawatts of electricity are in the electricity supply networks in Kabul.

Over 76,000 tons of commodities exported from Herat: Officials

HERAT (TOLNews): Officials within the Chamber of Commerce and Investment of Herat said that more than 76,000 tons of commodities have been exported to various countries from this province.

Based on the statistics provided by the chamber, the commodities are worth of \$102 million.

This is a 15 percent increase compared to the

previous year.

“In 1401, 76,300 tons of various types of commodities have been exported to the gulf states, US, EU and neighboring countries,” said Mohammad Younus Qazizada, head of the chamber.

The union of exporters in the western zone said that the rate of export would increase if they were provided with more

facilities.

“To reach out to better markets in European countries, the Ministry of Commerce can facilitate commerce opportunities through the establishment of exhibitions abroad, so that we can display Afghanistan's products for foreigners and thus we can get access to better markets,” said Mehdi Akrami, deputy head of the union.

The local officials in Herat meanwhile pledged to provide further facilities for the traders in the country.

“The local government of Herat welcomes the increase in exports and is ready to help the investors in this regard,” said Nisar Ahmad Elyas, a spokesman for the Herat governor.

Commodities from Herat have been exported to 25 countries around the world.

Baghlan schools faced shortage of textbooks

PUL-I-KHUMRI (Pajhwok): A number of students and teachers of public-sector schools in northern Baghlan province complain about a lack of textbooks over the past five years.

However, the officials concerned say all-out efforts are ongoing to address the issue at the earliest possible.

Masehullah, a student of 10th grade at the Islam Qala School, told Pajhwok Afghan News he had not received textbooks from the school over the past five years.

He said: “Last year, we were not handed 16 subject textbooks. A book is very necessary. If we don't have it, how will we continue our lessons? Students cannot afford to purchase textbooks in the market.”

Simeen, a primary schoolteacher, confirmed not a single book was distributed to students last year. This year, she stressed, the government must focus on addressing the problem.

“Last year, I was teaching three subjects. Only five of the 45 students had textbooks. The rest were unable to purchase books and could not study properly,” she added.

Muzamil, a student of 6th grade at Maihan

School, recalled he had books for two of nine subjects last year.

“I could not learn the subjects, whose textbooks I didn't have. And I bunked classes — afraid of the teachers.”

Ghulam Jilani, another student, also urged the government to provide them with textbooks urgently this year.

Shamsia, a teacher at Maitan High School, students said students were given new textbooks several years ago as e old ones were no longer useful.

“Absent textbooks, neither teachers can teach nor can students learn. This is a big challenge that the government must deal with,” she remarked. A number of other teachers and students also urged the government to resolve the problem with a sense of urgency.

Sher Mohammad, a resident of Pul-i-Khumri, told Pajhwok his three school-going children had not been given books for the past five years.

He noted: “Each book costs 30afs. Most of families cannot afford to purchase books for their children. As a result, children go to school without books all the year round.”

Shah Zaman Zamani, a civil activist, believed books were more impor-

tant than anything else in terms of education.

“Lack of books causes problems both for teachers and students in the classroom, especially primary school students, whose familiarity with reading begins with books.”

In the absence of books, it is difficult for teachers to implement lesson plans for first to sixth grade students,” he explained.

He said the government was responsible for providing people with a suitable learning environment and teaching materials in time.

Maulvi Amanullah Haqyar, director of education, said he had shared the problem with the Ministry of Education, which had promised a solution.

He acknowledged textbooks were not supplied to Baghlan schools from 1396 to 1398. Of 1.3 million books promised to Baghlan by the ministry, nearly 800,000 have reached the province.

The rest of books would arrive in a few days and their distribution to students would begin soon, the official assured.

According to information from the education director, there are 609 schools in the province, where 369,800 students are enrolled.

Patients hail improved service of Jawzjan Maternity Hospital



SHIBERGHAN (Pajhwok): Some women in Shiberghan, the capital of northern Jawzjan province,

have hailed the improved service of the maternity branch in the Provincial Hospital and demanded

more improvement and the availability of free medicines.

According to the infor-

mation of the Provincial Health Department, 4,800 births registered last year in the maternity branch with most of them of a male sex. Of the total delivery cases, 1,200 conducted through operations

Patients hail improved service:

Gul Bibi, who gave birth to her second child in this hospital, told Pajhwok Afghan News: “The service of the hospital has much improved; doctors paid attention the patients and were merciful. They gave us some medicine as well, while in the past I took medicine from outside, they discharged patients soon from the hospital because there was no enough space.”

Her child was born through medical operation and for three days she received the needed medicine from the hospital.

“I am 32, hospitalized for the delivery of my second child, doctors were really helpful and my child is completely health,” she said.

She added during pregnancy she came to the hospital for checkup but due to a large number of patients and lack of space patients were faced with the problems.

She hoped that the hospital will continue offering improved service to its patients and would provide all the medicine to the patients free of cost.

Sharafat, another woman who come to the hospital for delivery, said: “During pregnancy I faced a lot of problems but here the doctors helped me a lot.”

She said during her first pregnancy she was unable to eat good food due to economic problems thus after few hours of delivery her

child died.

She currently gave birth to daughter and added she received most of medicines from inside the hospital.

Taza Gul who brought his daughter in law for delivery to the hospital, said: “All the medical service and necessary medicines are provided free of cost here.”

He said the distribution of medicine was a positive step because most of families are economically not sound and it would be difficult for them to buy medicines.

Officials pledges to further improve health service: Dr. Wesalah Yasa Sharif, a gynecology specialist, said: “The maternity branch was one of the key sections of the hospital where 10 doctors as many nurses and five midwives were performing services.”

“Twenty-four hours

service is provided and every personnel has its own turn of duty,” she said.

She said most of women remained careless during pregnancy and when their condition deteriorates they referred to the hospital which sometimes cost the lives of mother and child.

Dr. Sharif said: “Women should be very careful to their health condition during pregnancy and referred to the doctor monthly for check, especially after the fourth month of pregnancy.”

She said during one month more than 400 child delivery are conducted through operation, adding that if mothers remained careful regarding the delivery the number of operation could decline.

Health Department Director Qari Zabiullah Hussaini acknowledge some problems existed in

the past and added more facilities and services had been provided to the patients of maternity hospital after the hospital was shifted to the new building and more personnel were appointed to the maternity section.

“We have no problems with the personnel and equipment because all these issues were addressed before the hospital could be shifted to its new building,” said Hussaini.

He said due to the fact the maternity ward needed a huge space so it was not shifted to the new building and was still operating in the old building.

“Besides improved health services we provided dried milk and other infant food to the newly born children. These items are provided to the health department by aid providing NGOs,” he added.

Law Minister asks President to sign Practice and Procedure Bill, 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on Monday asked President Arif Alvi to sign the Practice and Procedure Bill, 2023 which had been passed by both houses of the Parliament.

Speaking in the National Assembly, the minister said the bill had been pending with the president for the last four days, and he should fulfill his constitutional duty and sign it as required by the Constitution. On the occasion, he also recalled the unconstitutional steps by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership at the time of their ouster from power.

As regards the suo motu case regarding the polls' delay in Punjab, Tarar reiterated the demand for a full court bench of the Supreme Court to decide upon the matter. Collective wisdom was needed to avert the

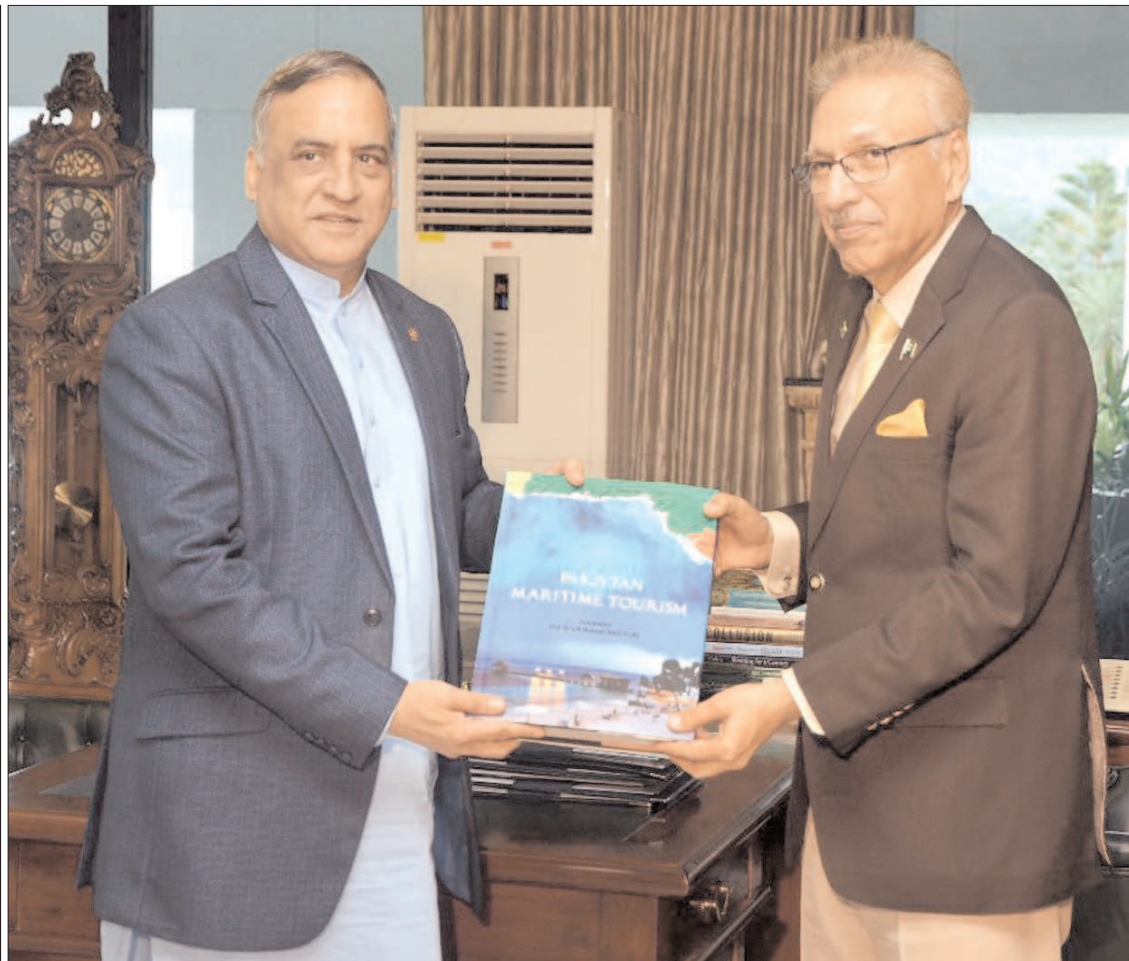
looming constitutional and stop further deteriorating the prevailing economic and political crises. He regretted that the suo motu proceedings were initiated by a nine-member SC bench, which had been relegated to three members. Justice Mandokhail, one of the senior judges on the bench, recused himself from hearing the case.

Whether the verdict announced by the three-member bench would be acceptable to the nation or implementable, the minister questioned. He was of the view that general elections across the country should be held simultaneously for the sake of political and economic stability. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), he said, had postponed the elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa keeping in view the security, political and economic chal-

lenges faced by Pakistan at the current juncture.

Tarar said Article 224 asked for the general elections at the same time across the country, while as per Article 254 polls could be postponed due to the extraordinary situation. "The ECP has the mandate to adjust the schedule of the election keeping in view the ground realities" he added.

The minister viewed that the Election Commission had announced the date of the election in October after hearing all the stakeholders. "There were several examples in the past when elections were postponed due to certain reasons," he added. Tarar said two provincial assemblies were dissolved by the PTI-led governments in January just to satisfy the ego of one person, i.e., PTI Chairman Imran Khan.



ISLAMABAD: Professor Dr. S M Shehzad presenting his book 'Pakistan Maritime Tourism' to President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

IHC seeks reply from govt in Imran security case

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday sought a response from the federal government in a plea moved by the former prime minister and PTI chief Imran Khan for revoking his security.

The case was taken up by Islamabad High Court Chief Justice Aamer Farooq. The former prime minister filed plea in the IHC after 'threatening' statements from Interior Minister, Rana Sanaullah. At the outset of the hearing, the top judge asked Is Imran Khan being not provided security as former prime minister?

Imran Khan's security was revoked by the interior ministry, Faisal Farid advocate replied to the IHC CJ query. The IHC while issuing notices to the federal government and Interior Ministry summoned their reply by April 6. The former prime minister is facing several cases and has been complaining about the 'non-provision' of security from the federal government despite life threats.

Earlier, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) issued the notification of security SOPs for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan's court appearance. The Islamabad administration and police were directed to arrange strict security on March 9 amid the PTI chief Imran Khan's court appearance. The IHC also asked PTI chief's lawyers to provide a list of 15 names, and the Attorney General's office and IG Islamabad were asked to provide 5 names each.

Finland to join NATO today

BRUSSELS (Agencies): Finland will become the 31st member of the world's biggest military alliance on Tuesday, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg says, prompting a warning from Russia that it would bolster its defences in response.

"This is a historic week," Stoltenberg told reporters on Monday on the eve of a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Brussels. "From tomorrow, Finland will be a full member of the alliance." He said he hopes Sweden, who applied for membership at the same time as Finland, will also be able to join NATO in the coming months. The former Norwegian prime minister said that on Tuesday afternoon that "we will raise the Finnish flag for the first time here at the NATO headquarters. It will be a good day for Finland's security, for Nordic security and for NATO as a whole."

Stoltenberg said Turkey, the last NATO country to have ratified Finland's membership, will hand its official texts to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday. Stoltenberg said he would then invite Finland to do the same. Finnish President Sauli Niinistö and Defence Minister Antti Kaikkonen will attend the ceremony with Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto. "It is a historic moment for us," Haavisto said in a statement.

Pak-China to ensure development of CPEC

BEIJING (APP): Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal reached here, after attending the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Annual Conference-2023, to hold important meetings with Chinese authorities. During a meeting with President of 'Power China' Chan Guanfu, the minister appreciated the contribution of Chinese enterprises in the success of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Ahsan Iqbal said the people of Pakistan would never forget that China helped them at a time when the whole country was plunged into darkness due to power shortages. Through CPEC energy projects Pakistan was able to overcome its energy shortage, he said recalling Power China's longstanding friendship with Pakistan and many important projects undertaken for enhancing Pakistan's energy & infrastructure including coal-fired power plants in Port Qasim, RLNG power plant in Haveli Bahadur Shah and Dawood Wind Power Project.

He invited the power China' to invest in solar energy for which the government has announced a special initiative to launch 10,000 MW. He assured 'Power China' of the government's full facilitation for the implementation of the projects and resolution of all issues. Later Chairman of 'China Road and Bridge Corporation Du Fei' called upon the Planning minister.

Ahsan Iqbal underscored the importance of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in strengthening and modernizing infrastructure in Pakistan in the last few years. He highlighted the role of connectivity projects in the socio-economic development of Pakistan, acknowledging CRBC's contributions to executing important transport

and infrastructure development in Pakistan from the construction of KKH in 1966 to the construction of the Havelian-Thakot motorway in 2017-18.

The minister welcomed the proposed Karachi coastal comprehensive development zone (KCCDZ) project, which envisaged an investment of over \$ 3 billion in Karachi, Babusar Tunnel Project, feasibility study for the new Karachi-Hyderabad Motorway alignment (M9) and other important projects. Ahsan Iqbal expressed confidence that these projects would act as an emerging hub for tourism, IT, ports, shipping and services as it would also create thousands of new jobs for talented youth.

He assured the government's full support for the successful implementation of the proposed projects. The Planning Minister also highlighted the special friendship and iron brotherhood between China and Pakistan, which is time-tested and timeless. He hoped to promote cultural exchanges and enhance people-to-people contacts between the two countries to further strengthen the existing friendship and foster better understanding to explore each other countries' rich history, natural beauty and cultural heritage.

Chinese company representatives appreciated the contribution of the minister in making the CPEC a success, assuring full support in taking CPEC into the next phase of cooperation. They thanked the minister for the assurance to address the concerns of the companies. Ahsan Iqbal assured that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was personally supervising the progress of CPEC projects and that the new government was committed to reviving the same speed with which CPEC was moving during 2013-18.

PTI leaders get bail extension in riot case

ISLAMABAD (INP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Islamabad on Monday extended the interim bails of several Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders in the judicial complex riot case.

PTI leaders Asad Umar, Aamir Kayani, Zulfi Bukhari, Khuram Shehzad, Umar Ayub, Hammad Azhar, Ali Awan Nawaz and Shehzad Waseem were present in court along with 75 other party workers produced by police. PTI's lawyers Sardar Masroof, Ali Bukhari and Naqem Panjotra were also present in the court.

During the hearing, the judge remarked that until the Islamabad High Court (IHC) gives a decision on the case, the ATC cannot announce a verdict. Judge Abbas added that when a matter is being heard in

the IHC, hearings cannot be held in sessions courts. At this point, the investigating officer said PTI leaders have not yet been made part of the investigation. Moreover, during the hearing, PTI leader Shibli Faraz's application for exemption from attendance due to coronavirus was also filed.

Panjotra then made his remarks during the hearing and argued that Hasan Niazi was arrested without being present at the premises. He furthered that PTI leader Murad Saeed's house was raided and Farrukh Habib's in-law's residence was also raided, adding that PTI leaders have problems appearing in court due to the fear of abduction.

The judge then inquired under which plea shall the leaders be given protection. To this, the lawyer

replied that an application for protection has been filed in the IHC but a decision has not been made yet.

The court also accepted the pleas of Shibli Faraz, Murad Saeed, Farrukh Habib and Hasan Niazi for exemption from their appearance today and extended the interim bails of the PTI leaders till May 17. On March 18, the PTI chief Imran Khan reached the G-11 Judicial Complex accompanied by 4,000 activists to appear before a district and sessions court in the Toshakhana case – in which he faced charges of concealing details of the gifts he had acquired from the depository in his asset declarations submitted to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), which had then filed a complaint against him.

PM deplors CJ

(Continued from Page 1)

He said recently Pakistan was hit by the worst flood and the Federal Government alone had spent Rs100 billion to support the suffering people. The prime minister recalled that during the tenure of Nawaz Sharif till 2017, the country was progressing with the sugar price at Rs 52 and the dollar rate at Rs 100. He said during its four-year tenure, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government took loans even more than those taken during the 70-year history.

The previous government not only violated the IMF agreement but also questioned the transparency in the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) projects which

impacted the Pak-China bilateral relations. It was alleged that the CPEC projects involved 45 percent corruption and such allegations were repeated not only in the cabinet but also in the Parliament and private meetings, he added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said the leadership of the PML-N and other allied parties rendered immense sacrifices and also put their politics at stake to protect the state which was in no way a bad deal. "Though the situation is tough now, the time will come when it will change... Pakistan is genuinely at a crossroads. Today we have to live within the ambit of the Constitution and law," he remarked.

The prime minister told the meeting that during the PTI government, there was

no shortage of wheat in the country rather it was a scandal. However, the incumbent government timely imported the commodity to avert any shortage. He said the government had launched the history's biggest project of distributing three wheat flour bags to needy families during Holy Ramadan which would benefit around 100 million people.

He said the government was striving to improve the situation but political stability was a must to achieve the desired goal. Drawing a stark comparison, the prime minister said Nawaz Sharif's daughter was implicated in corruption cases but contrary to that the PTI wanted to save Imran Khan's wife claiming that she was not a public office-holder.

SBP likely to raise interest rate

KARACHI (INP): State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is likely to raise the interest rate by 2 per cent at the upcoming meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to unlock the stalled IMF loan program, sources said on Monday.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is scheduled to meet tomorrow to discuss the interest rate. The sources privy to the development said that the interest rate might be jacked up by 22pc from 20pc to meet IMF condition. They further said that the International Monetary Funds (IMF) has demanded to take the interest rate near to the inflation rate.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif-led government is taking desperate measures to get much-needed funds, but the IMF is not looking satisfied with the prior steps taken by the incumbent government. On March 2, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) raised the monetary policy rate by 300 basis points to 20per cent.

"This decision reflects deterioration in inflation outlook & its expectations amid recent external and fiscal adjustments. Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) believes this outlook warrants a strong policy response to anchor inflation expectations around the medium-term target of 5-7 percent," the statement said.

SC rejects Fawad's request

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court (SC) on Monday rejected the request of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry to order to de-seal the entry points of the Red Zone.

The PTI leader appeared in the apex court and said that the entry points of the Red Zone had been sealed. "It seems as if we were in Gaza. Even the lawyers are being prevented from entering the Red Zone. Arguments are taking place at the entry points," he argued before the court.

"We are conducting hearing of the case. It is not necessary for thousands of lawyers to come. If you have given a call to the lawyers, talk to them," Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial said. The nine workers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), whose post-arrest bail petitions had been dismissed in the case of vandalism and torture of policemen in Zaman Park, were Monday produced in an anti-terrorism court (ATC) of Lahore.

The accused were produced before the court after their judicial remand ended. "Weapons and petrol bombs had been recovered from these suspects," the investigation report said. ATC Administrative Judge Abhar Gul Khan conducted the hearing. It is to be noted here that 93 suspects in the case have been released on bail.

ATC in Lahore Monday extended the interim bail of PTI leaders till April 17 next in the case of vandalism in the judicial complex during the appearance of PTI Chairman Imran Khan. Judge Raja Jawad Abbas heard the pleas of the PTI leaders. Asad Umar, Zulfi Bukhari, Umar Ayub, Hammad Azhar, Amir Kayani, Ali Nawaz Awan, and Raja Khuram Nawaz were among the PTI leaders who appeared before the court.

Six die in rain related incidents in KP

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: At least six people have lost their lives and 22 others have been injured due to roof collapse incidents caused by the torrential rains in different areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

The KP Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) on Monday reported three casualties in Peshawar, deaths of children in Mardan, and a woman in South Waziristan. The heavy rainfall also caused damage to several houses in the province.

The KP PDMA has issued an alert regarding the heavy rains in different parts of the province from tonight till Wednesday. The authority has warned of potential landslides in hilly areas of the province during this time. Tourists were advised to take necessary precautions and remain extra cautious during the forecast period.

Meanwhile, the intermittent rain which started from March 16 and continued till Monday in most parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa claimed two lives and damaged 135 houses. According to the Provincial Disaster Management

Authority (PDMA), heavy rains caused flash floods in South Waziristan where two persons riding in a pickup van were swept away in Tehsil Birmal area on their way from Azam Warsak towards Zarmilan.

The vehicle was completely damaged by flood water and both the persons identified as Muhammad Suleman resident of Zarmilan and Karam resident of Kazha Punga died on the spot. The dead bodies were recovered by the district administration and handed over to the bereaved families.

Similarly, due to heavy rains, hailstorm from March 16 to April 02, flash floods were reported in Rodhs Pir Kach, Chowa and Soheili areas in district Tank. Consequently, the rural settlements of Pai, Muhammad Akbar, Gul Imam, Abizar, Qutab colony near station road, Yaqoob colony, Khan colony, Gara Budha, Kot Allah Dad, Bara Khel and Gara Baloch near Sheikh Market were affected and 135 houses were partially damaged, however no loss of human live and livestock was reported.

The district administration took prompt action and diverted flood water from

the mentioned location with the help of machinery and saved a huge population from devastation.

The Met Office has forecast mainly cloudy weather for most districts of the province, however scattered rain-thunderstorm with gusty winds and isolated heavy falls is likely to occur over Chitral, Lower and Upper Dir, Malakand, Buner, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan, Battagram, Torghar, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Hangu, Kurram, Karak, Kohat, Bannu, Lakki Marwat, Tank, North and South Waziristan and Dera Ismail Khan districts while isolated hailstorm is also expected at a few places in the province.

The chief amount of rainfall recorded during the last 24 hours in major cities of the province was Sadiu Sharif 07mm, Balakot 05, Chitral 06, Timergara 08, Drosh 05, Kakul 25, Kalam 01Mirkhani 02, Dir 06 and Malamjabbba 15. The minimum temperature during the period was Peshawar 16C, Parachinar 01, Bannu 13, DI Khan 17, Chitral 08, Kalam 01, Dir 07 and Malamjabbba 06.

IHC issues notice to NAB in Toshakhana probe

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) issued notices on Monday to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) seeking replies over its investigation into the Toshakhana (gift depository) case while the matter remains sub judice.

The high court announced its reserved verdict over an application filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's wife and former first lady Bushra Bibi challenging the summons notices issued by NAB. Chief Justice (CJ) IHC Aamer Farooq and Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz presided over the hearing.

During the hearing, the petitioner's lawyer Khwaja Haris argued that the NAB notices contained incom-

plete information. "They are issuing notices stating that powers were abused without detailing who abused their powers at what level," Haris maintained. The lawyer argued that the NAB was legally bound to provide information about why someone is being summoned but notices "merely state that the inquiry is against public office holders".

"The questionnaire seeks answers but the charges are yet to be detailed," he added stressing that summons orders can only be issued once it has been clarified that the concerned party is being ordered to appear as the accused or a witness. He also said that the orders were issued just a day after former NAB chief Aftab Sultan resigned from his post who "had

revealed that there was pressure on him".

Notably, the petitioner had requested the court to declare the notices from February 16 and 17 illegal. She had requested that the NAB inquiry be stopped from being converted into an investigation until a decision is taken on the application in which NAB has also been made a party. The anti-graft watchdog had summoned Bushra Bibi in the Toshakhana case on March 21.

Earlier, the accountability watchdog had summoned the PTI chief and his wife to their Rawalpindi office on March 9 for an investigation in the Toshakhana case. Imran's summons notice was sent to his residences at Bani Gala and Chak Shehzad in Islamabad.

Rahul Gandhi appeals defamation conviction

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Top Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi appealed on Monday against the defamation conviction that resulted in his expulsion from parliament two weeks ago.

Gandhi, 52, who was sentenced to two years imprisonment in a case about remarks he made in 2019 seen as insulting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and those sharing his surname, is looking to overturn the conviction before elections due next year. The sentence also renders Gandhi ineligible to stand in the polls, which the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is widely expected to win convincingly.

Modi's government is widely accused of using the defamation law to silence critics, and the case in the premier's home state of Gujarat is one of several lodged against his chief opponent in recent years. "In this struggle, truth is my weapon, and truth is my

support!" Gandhi tweeted after he left the crowded court complex in Surat city in the western state of Gujarat, waving to supporters and Congress members who had gathered in large numbers.

Gandhi was accompanied by his younger sister, Priyanka Vadra, en route from the airport to the court in a bus with large windows through which he waved at supporters. The first hearing will be on April 13, Hiral Panwala, a member of Gandhi's legal team, told Reuters. Critics say the defamation conviction came after Gandhi repeatedly raised the issue of Modi's relationship with business tycoon Gautam Adani both inside and outside parliament.

The two men — both Gujaratis — have been close associates for decades, but Adani's business empire has been subject to renewed scrutiny this year after a US investment firm accused it of "brazen" corporate fraud,

which it denies. Gandhi is the leading face of the opposition Congress party, once the dominant force in Indian politics but now a shadow of its former self.

He is the scion of India's premier political dynasty and the son, grandson and great-grandson of former prime ministers, beginning with independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru. But he has struggled to challenge the electoral juggernaut of Modi's party and its nationalist appeals to the country's Hindu majority. Gandhi's conviction hinged on a comment he made while campaigning ahead of the last general election, when he referred to two fugitive businessmen, both surnamed Modi, and asked: "How come all thieves have the name Modi?" Prime Minister Modi and his BJP swept back to power in that election. Gandhi's Congress recorded its worst performance ever, winning 52 seats in the 542-member lower house of parliament.