

**Traffic police cop killed
F.P. report**

LOWER DIR: A traffic police constable identified as Bakht Zamin 35, a resident of Ouch Sharqi was killed when an unknown motorcyclist youth opened indiscriminate firing on him at a busy square in Talash bazaar here on Tuesday, residents and police said. The attacker taking advantage of the rush fled from the scene. The Talash police registered a case and started a search for the accused.



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

Federal cabinet rejects SC's decision on polls

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Federal Cabinet on Tuesday rejected Supreme Court's decision to reverse ECP's decision to delay elections and hold polls in Punjab and KP on 14 May.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired a meeting of the federal cabinet members and reviewed the decision of a three-member bench of the Supreme Court regarding the elections.

According to media sources, the federal cabinet rejected the Supreme Court's decision regarding the election. Cabinet decided in the meeting that the decision of the Supreme Court is a minority decision which makes it not feasible.

Earlier, The Supreme Court of Pakistan annulled the Election Commission of Pakistan's decision of March 22 to delay elections. The Supreme Court restored the election schedule issued by ECP earlier and set the date of May 14 to conduct elections in Punjab. Much to the joy of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, the three-member bench of the Supreme Court seized with the election date case has declared the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP's) decision of March 22 as unconstitutional and ordered the ECP to resume the election process from where it was halted with minor changes to the date.

The ECP's move to push back elections in Punjab by more than five months was challenged by the PTI, which filed a plea with the Supreme Court. After hearing from all the parties, including the government, the PTI, the ECP, and others, the three-member panel made up of Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan, and Justice Munib Akhtar announced the verdict.

The apex court added that the election process was in its fifth stage when the ECP announced its decision, adding that "Constitution and law do not grant the authorities to postpone the poll date."

Nawaz calls for submitting reference against SC Bench

LONDON (Agencies): LONDON: Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif has rejected the Supreme Court's verdict nullifying the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to postpone Punjab elections, calling for submitting a reference against the three-member SC bench, on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference via video link, the former premier said that the verdict - nullifying the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision to postpone Punjab elections - was enough charge sheet to file reference against the SC three-member bench, which comprised of Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan, and Justice Muneeb Akhtar.

Nawaz Sharif pointed out that the judges in the three-member bench were the same judges who disqualified him for life-time, questioning how the same judges would pronounce any verdict in favour of him. He demanded that a reference should be filed against them in the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) for a 'partisan judgment to facilitate one person'.

Commenting on the SC verdict, Nawaz Sharif said SC judges had re-written the Constitution in the past and no one feels any ashamed or pity on the decisions. "What was the hurdle behind forming no full court bench," he asked. The former prime minister added that those who violated the constitution were allowed to amend the constitution "as a reward".

He alleged that former chief of army staff (COAS) Gen (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa and Faiz Hameed ousted him as prime minister, and "both of them led Pakistan on the path of destruction by bringing Imran Khan".

SC fixes May 14 as new Punjab poll date

— ECP's order to delay elections 'unconstitutional'

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Supreme Court Tuesday quashed the election regulator decision to postpone polls in Punjab province to October 08 and fixed May 14 as the date for polls in the province.

The landmark ruling comes after days of hearings in the Supreme Court in response to a plea of ex-premier Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party over the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) decision last month to postpone elections in Punjab from April 30 to October 08.

Announcing a six-page short order in response to the petition on Tuesday, a 3-member bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Umar Ata Bandial, comprising Justice Munib Akhtar and Justice Ijazul Ahsan directed the federal govt to issue funds for polls. The bench said in its short order, "The impugned order dated 22.03.2023 made by the ECP is declared to be unconstitutional, without lawful authority or jurisdiction, void ab-initio, of no legal effect and is hereby quashed. Neither the Constitution nor the law empowers the Commission to extend the date of elections beyond the 90 days period as provided in Article 224(2) of the Constitution."

In the written verdict, the top court restored the election schedule issued by the ECP on March 8 with certain modifications. The bench made changes in the election program saying the last date for filing appeals against the decision of the returning officer rejecting/accepting the nomination papers is April 10. It added the last date for deciding on appeals by the Appellate Tribunal is April 17. The revised list of candidates will be published on April 18 whereas April 19 will be the last date for the withdrawal of candidature and publication of the revised list of candidates. The order stated that electoral symbols will be allotted to contesting candidates on April 20 and finally polling will be held on May 14.

The bench further ruled in its order saying "In the meanwhile 13 days have been lost on account of the unlawful order made by the Commission. In consequence thereof, the polling day performance must be shifted, and moved forward from 30.04.2023 to 14.05.2023". Reproducing the ECP stance in its short verdict, the bench said that the Commission has categorically submitted if the federal and provincial executive authorities provide necessary aid and assistance to discharge

constitutional obligations then the Commission would be able to organize and conduct the general elections to the Punjab and KPK Assemblies honestly, justly, fairly and in accordance with law.

Issuing directives to federal government the bench said in its order, "The federal government shall forthwith and in any case by 10.04.2023 release and provide to the Commission funds in the sum of Rs. 21 billion for purposes of the general elections to the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assemblies". It further said, "The Commission shall, by 11.04.2023, file a report in the Court stating whether the said funds have been provided and received and if so, whether in full or in part. The report shall be placed before the members of the Bench for consideration in Chambers. If the funds have not been provided or there is a shortfall, as the case may be, the Court may make such orders and give such directions as are deemed appropriate to such person or authority as necessary in this regard".

The bench ruled that the Commission shall be entitled to utilize the funds in the first instance for the purposes of the general election to the Punjab Assembly. "If there is thereafter a shortfall for purposes of the general election to the KPK Assembly, the Commission may make an appropriate representation to this Court for such consideration and orders as deemed appropriate", stated in the short order.

The bench directed the caretaker Punjab cabinet, provincial Chief Secretary and Police Chief to provide a plan acceptable to the ECP about provision of sufficient personnel for election duty and security purposes for holding of the general election not later than April 10, 2023. The bench said in its order that the provincial government and all its officials must discharge their constitutional and legal duties and responsibility proactively in order to provide all aid and assistance to the ECP for holding and conduct of the general election.

Similarly, the bench issued directives to the federal government to exercise its constitutional powers and position in providing all such aid and assistance to the ECP for the holding and conduct of the general elections to the Punjab and KPK Assemblies. The federal government has been asked to provide a plan acceptable to the ECP in this regard not later than April 17, 2023. "Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the

Imran calls for fresh polls

LAHORE (INP): Former prime minister and PTI chief Imran Khan on Tuesday claimed that those who tried to 'kill' him are still in power. In an interview with Times Magazine, Imran said those who tried to 'assassinate' me are frightened that they will be held accountable. If, I regain power. Imran said Pakistan's economy is in worsening condition and only fresh elections can put the ill economy back on track of prosperity.

ZAB is the founder of Constitution: Shehbaz PM equates decision over polls delay to 'judicial murder' reminiscent of Bhutto's case

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday referred to the judicial murder of late prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and said his murder took place on April 4, 1979, and on the same date today, the unfortunate episode was repeated with a decision of the Supreme Court in the polls delay case.

Taking part in the National Assembly session, the prime minister equating the two decisions said today, a murder of justice took place which was highly regrettable. He said in the cabinet's meeting, they had demanded that a reference over the judicial murder of the late prime minister, which had been pending for the last 12 years, should be taken up and decided by the full court.

He said the world knew that ZAB's case was a 'judicial murder'. One of

the former judges, who had decided the case, had accepted it in his memories, he added. The prime minister also lauded late ZAB and said he was among the founders of the 1973 Constitution and his historic contribution would always be remembered. He also asked the House to pray for the departed soul of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on Tuesday said his ministry, as per the Federal Cabinet's decision, would write to the Supreme Court for the hearing of presidential reference regarding the "judicial murder" of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto by a full court bench.

Speaking in the National Assembly, the minister said Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had given the country a unanimous Constitution, but his "judicial murder" reference

had been pending in the apex court for the past 12 years. He said the Ministry of Law and Justice, as per the cabinet's decision, would write to the apex court to form a full court bench to hear the reference so that it might get an opportunity to rectify the historic mistake in the judicial history.

The then president Asif Ali Zardari had sent the reference under Article 186 on April 2, 2011, to the Supreme Court. Azam Tarar said he was sad over the three-member bench's judgment as the apex court was requested multiple times to constitute a full court bench to decide the polls delay case. He said, "Collective wisdom was needed to avert the constitutional crisis and stop further deteriorating the prevailing ones."

(Continued on Back Page)

SBP jacks up interest rate to 21 %

E.P. Report

KARACHI: The SBP's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) in its meeting on Tuesday decided to increase the policy rate by 100 basis points to 21 percent. The MPC noted that inflation in March 2023 rose further to 35.4 percent, and is expected to remain high in the near term. However, there are early indications of inflation expectations plateauing, albeit at an elevated level.

The MPC views Tuesday's decision as an important step towards anchoring inflation expectations around the medium-term target, which is critical for achieving the objective of price stability. The Committee further observed that Pakistan's financial sector remains broadly resilient, while economic activity continues to moderate.

Since the last meeting, the Committee noted three important developments having implications for

the macroeconomic outlook. First, the current account deficit has narrowed considerably, more than previously anticipated, mainly on the back of sizable import containment. Nonetheless, the overall balance of payments position continues to remain under stress, with foreign exchange reserves still at low levels. Second, significant progress has been made towards completion of the 9th review under the IMF's EFF program. Third, recent strains in the global banking system have led to further tightening of global liquidity and financial conditions. These have added to the difficulties of the emerging market economies like Pakistan to access international capital markets.

In this context, the MPC considers the current monetary policy stance appropriate, and stresses that today's decision, along with previous accumulated monetary tightening, will help achieve the medium-term inflation tar-

get over the next 8 quarters. However, the Committee noted that uncertainties attached with the global financial conditions as well as the domestic political situation, pose risks to this assessment.

The MPC noted that the incoming data on economic activity continues to reflect a broad-based slowdown. In particular, there has been a significant decline in sales volumes of automobiles and POL in recent months. Similarly, the contraction in large-scale manufacturing (LSM) accelerated in January to 7.9 percent y/y. Cumulatively, LSM output is down by 4.4 percent during Jul-Jan FY23 when compared with corresponding period of last year. Reflecting these trends, electricity generation declined for the ninth consecutive month in February. In agriculture, the information on cotton arrivals remains as per expectation; however, wheat production target is likely to be missed.

We will try to bury the politics of hatred and division: Bilawal

E.P. Report

LARKANA: Chairman Pakistan People's Party and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that Imran Khan was brought to power once by rigging, but he will not be allowed to get power through the back door for the second time. He further said that the message to all stakeholders is that we have to save democracy and institutions.

Addressing the gathering held on the 44th martyrdom anniversary of the country's first elected Prime Minister, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the PPP Chairman said that on April 4, Pakistanis around the world miss Quaid-e-Awam very much.

He said that President Asif Ali Zardari had sent a Presidential Reference to the Supreme Court regarding the judicial murder of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, but it has not been taken for hearing yet. "While on the one hand the Quaid-e-Awam was martyred, on the other hand the constitution made by him was repeatedly violated, the reforms introduced by him were declared unconstitutional and the rights given to the backward classes including women were also revoked", he pointed out.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, giving a historical reference, said that after the seizure of power by dictator Ziaul Haq and another dictator Pervez Musharraf, the Supreme Court (SC) was asked whether these actions were legitimate, then the superior court had

declared them legitimate. He said that after the restoration of democracy in 1988, the government established by the Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was allowed to run for just 18 months and the government was dissolved on the basis of a newspaper column, but this action was endorsed by the SC. He said that even in 1996, the government of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was overthrown and the judiciary did not restore it. A judge of that bench wrote in his dissenting note that the SC refused to restore the government of the Prime Minister from Sindh for the second time, while the Prime Minister belonging Punjab was restored.

Referring to the murder case of Shaheed Mir Murtaza Bhutto, he said: "The murder also happened to a member of our family and we were blamed for that."

Chairman PPP said that the SC not only confirmed Musharraf's seizure of power, but also allowed him to amend the constitution, adding that former Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary was also part of the bench that approved Musharraf's coup. He said that President Asif Ali Zardari was unjustly imprisoned until 2005 during Musharraf-regime, adding that General Musharraf had once apologized for keeping President Asif Ali Zardari in jail, but this was taken as NRO and a hue and cry was raised unnecessarily across the country and Justice Chaudhry declared it null and void. "Chaudhry Iftikhar's action was extremely ridiculous, who after



restoration to the post, avoided even to look at the General Musharraf, who actually ousted him, rather removed the elected Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani in order not to violate the constitution," he added.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that since the time of former Justice Iftikhar Chaudhary, dictatorship has been going on in the judiciary, and a one-man show is going on. "If we do not accept dictatorship in Parliament, then we cannot accept dictatorship in judiciary", he added. He questioned: "At the moment, who will save the Supreme Court from the Supreme Court, who will save the judiciary." He said that problems have arisen in the past as well, but it has not happened that all the other judges have expressed no confidence in the three judges.

Chairman PPP said that his party has tolerated a lot and can provide many examples in this regard, but now enough is enough! He said that during the Imran Khan regime, ailing Faryal Talpur was dragged from the hospital on the night of Eid and locked up in Rawalpindi jail, but no one bothered about the law and rights at that time.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that if a Chief Justice wants to build a dam, he can collect funds for it. Former Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed was fond of seeing the Karachi of 1970s, and the houses of the poor were demolished in the name of encroachment. "The former establishment and the former Supreme Court also rigged the election," he added. He said that we want no one may raise a finger on the upcoming election, therefore the PPP demands that there should be a fair and transparent election in the country and that everyone should have a level playing field. "The people should be allowed to decide who will become the prime minister," he added.

Foreign Minister said that on the issue of election against Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani, the judiciary had said that it cannot interfere in the matter of Parliament. But when it comes to "Takht Lahore", the rules change. "In order to fulfill a promise to someone, the constitution was violated, an unconstitutional verdict was delivered and the government in Punjab was given to Chaudhary Parvez Elahi from PDM," he pointed out.

Chairman PPP said that there is weight in the concerns of his party allies regarding the current situation, adding that the allies say that the game being played with the nation and its destiny is malicious. He emphasized that in order to stop this constitutional crisis, we demand that the Supreme Court should form a larger bench, in which all the judges except the two judges who were caught talking to the opposition on the phone are part of it. He said that we want the mistakes made in the past not to be repeated, adding that we want Chief Justice Umar Atta Bandial to be remembered as the judge who saved Pakistan. "All the judges, including our Chief Justice, are appealed to save Pakistan, because the fight for the 'Takht-e-Lahore' will sink the whole of Pakistan," he warned.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that because of the ego of the three judges, if anything happens tomorrow, only his party's leaders and workers will go to jail and fight for the democracy. He warned that if this crisis continues, neither Shahbaz Sharif nor Imran Khan will come to power, rather, the people of Pakistan will have to bear the consequences of such situations. He said that if Pakistan and institutions remain divided due to ego, then the people will have to bear the consequences. "We will try to bury the politics of hatred and division, and this is our message for the whole of Pakistan that neither yours nor mine, Pakistan belongs to all of us," he concluded.



Crackdown on beggars ordered in city

LAHORE (APP): Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa on Tuesday issued orders to launch a crackdown against beggars in the provincial capital.

The city has been divided into four zones and teams of departments concerned would start a search operation on roads, markets, traffic signal and streets to arrest beggars.

All local buses, roads, chowks and markets of the provincial capital are 'workplace' for beggars. The public has to haggle with them daily to steer clear of such alms seekers of all shades and appearances. A large number of beggars have arrived here from other cities and villages which has increased their number many fold, Traffic signals at Shadman, Davis Road, MM Alam Road, Gulberg Main Boulevard, Iqbal Town, Model Town, Kalma Chowk, Ferozepur Road, Johar Town, Walton Road, Mozang, Garhi Shahu, Laksmi Chowk, Railway Station and Chauburji are swarmed by beggars while markets, malls besides public places also seem full of beggars.

International experts reach Karachi

KARACHI (APP): A seven-member team of international experts reached Karachi for the treatment of elephant Noor Jahan at Karachi Zoo, and held a detailed meeting with the administrator Karachi Dr Syed Saif-ur-Rahman and the management of Karachi Zoo on Tuesday. According to the details, a delegation consisting of experts from Egypt, Bulgaria, Germany and Austria reached the zoo on Tuesday where they had a detailed discussion with the Administrator Karachi regarding the treatment of the elephant.

Director of Zoo Khalid Hashmi, zoo veterinarian Dr Aamir Ismail, Abida Raees, director of Pakistan Animal Welfare Society Mahira Umar and other officers were also present, said a statement.

These experts belong to the animal welfare organization Four Paws this organization has a global reputation for the care and treatment of animals around the world.

The Administrator Karachi said that all arrangements are complete for treatment, medicines, X-ray, crane and special lighting in the elephant enclosure. He thanked the team of experts for coming to Pakistan on the invitation of Karachi Metropolitan Corporation for the treatment of Noor Jahan, the elephant.

He said no effort will be spared in the care and treatment of the animals present in Karachi Zoo.

Dr Amir Al-Khalili, the head of the team, while speaking, expressed his satisfaction with the arrangements and said that on Wednesday, he will start the regular treatment of elephant Noor Jahan and if a minor operation is required, that will also be done. He said that according to the initial report, the elephant is suffering from joint pain due to which one of its legs is affected and facing difficulty in walking. He said that animals can get this kind of disease and it is a normal thing.

CM Naqvi inquires after woman who injured at free flour centre

LAHORE (PPI): Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday visited an elderly woman Sughran Bibi, who got injured in mayhem while trying to get flour at free flour point in Sahiwal, and inquired about her health.

The CM also met the injured woman's son and assured him the best medical treatment of his mother. He assured the boy that Punjab Health Minister Dr Javed Akram, Secretary Health and hospital administration are personally monitoring

the treatment of his mother.

Additionally, CM Naqvi gave Sughran Bibi's doctors the necessary instructions regarding her treatment and directed them to keep him informed of the patient's progress every day.

"We pray for the speedy recovery of Sughran Bibi," he added. Sughran Bibi will soon recover and rejoin her loved ones, he said, expressing his satisfaction over the medical treatment being meted out to the woman at Mayo Hospital.

Sharjeel pays rich tribute to Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Provincial Minister for Information Sindh Sharjeel Inam Memon paid rich tribute to Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto on his 44th death anniversary. He added that 4th April is the darkest day in the history of Pakistan.

The minister said that family of Shaheed Bhutto and the entire nation are still waiting for justice in the judicial killing of the great leader despite the passage of 44 years. In a statement, the minister said: 'It was the fault of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto that he laid the foundation of the nuclear program of the country? Was it the fault of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto that he gave a unanimous constitution to the country? Was it the fault of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto to bring back 93000 prisoners of war from Indian prisons in an honorable manner?'

Sharjeel Inam Memon said, was it fault of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto that he got back 5000 square miles land of the country occupied by the enemy country.

He further said why the judiciary have no time for the reference forwarded by former President Asif Ali Zardari during his tenure in power. Mr. Memon asked whether the reference pertaining to the judicial killing of Shaheed Bhutto is not admissible. He added that Pakistan Peoples Party is ready to accept any decision of the court in this regard. He said that on the 44th death anniversary of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, they appeal judiciary to take up the reference for hearing and provide justice to the great leader of the nation. He said that Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto raised the moral of broken nation by using his political and diplomatic skills and made national defense invincible.

Faryal pays tribute to former PM ZAB

KARACHI (INP): President of Pakistan Peoples Party's Women Wing and Member of Sindh Assembly Faryal Talpur has paid tribute to Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto on his 44th martyrdom anniversary.

In her message here on Monday, she said the former prime minister was a great and visionary leader

not only of Pakistan but across the world including the Islamic world, adding that such leaders were born in centuries.

Faryal Talpur said that people would never forget the services of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto that includes the gift of giving the Constitution of 1973, agrarian reforms, rights of workers and farmers, housing for poor citizens

including employment for millions of Pakistanis at home and abroad.

She said that his big initiatives also included constructing Steel Mills, Port Qasim, Heavy Mechanical Complex, Nuclear Program, making Pakistan-China friendship strong, and the leadership displayed in organizing the 'Organization of Islamic countries'.

Research Project Funds Award ceremony held at KUST



F.P. Report

KOHAT: Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan, Vice Chancellor KUST handed over award letters to six faculty members of different faculties for the Research Project proposals submitted to ORIC that were peer reviewed by experts in the area outside the university.

It is to mention here that KUST is one of the leading universities in the country that is awarding research funds for innovative projects to the university faculty from its own finances. The process of research funds award includes advertising Research proposals through ORIC within the university for all the faculty members.

The proposal received were further sent for evaluation and marking to experts in the area outside university within country. After receiving the evaluation and marking from experts, a committee headed by Prof. Dr. Sardar Khan, Vice Chancellor KUST and members including Prof. Dr. Tasleem (Dean Chemical and Pharmaceutical Sciences), Prof. Dr. Shahid Niaz (Dean Biological Sciences), Prof.

Dr. Nasser ur Din (Dean Social Sciences), Prof. Dr. Wali Khan (Dean Physical & Neumal Sciences), Dr. Wasiullah Malik (Director ORIC), Prof. Dr. Daud (Dept of Biotech) and Dr. Humera Manzoor, Associate Prof (Management Sciences) evaluated the projects and external evaluation markings for the research proposal and finalized the recommendation for award of six research projects grant purely on merit basis. Prof. Dr. Sardar told all the successful faculty members during the research grant award ceremony that university will utilize maximum resources to promote innovative and impactful research culture within campus.

Also, establishing such a culture within campus to impact nationally and internationally is his top priority for which he was, is and will always be striving to his maximum. The Vice Chancellor appreciated the role of faculty members within campus whose efforts and hardwork have enabled innovation and research culture within campus that is impacting students that are further impacting society.



FAISALABAD: Caretaker Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi is visiting flour distribution point at Hockey Stadium Madina Town.

Thar Coal Project has poisoned drinking water, new report shows

KARACHI (PPI): The Thar Coal project has poisoned the drinking water of Thari communities, a new report authored by Dr Mark Chernaik of the Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (ELAW) has shown.

The report raises serious questions about Engro's claims that their coal power operations are not harming the drinking water or the integrity of sub-soil and water aquifers in Block II of Thar coal area.

Toxic water in Thar: Based on testing conducted by Mehran University of Engineering and Technology's Soil and Water Pollution Control Laboratory, which is approved by the Sindh Environmental Protect Agency (EPA), Dr Chernaik's report notes that "excessive levels of selenium, arsenic, mercury, chromium and lead...is of recent origin and associated with coal activities in the Thar coalfields."

The testing was conducted on nine water samples in and near the Thar Coal Block II on 28 June 2022. The tests confirm that all the samples

exceed the permissible limits for chloride, TDS, mercury and lead. Eight of the nine locations also show an excess fluoride. Arsenic was also found to be in excess of permissible limits at four of out of six locations tested. Health impact: The reported numbers pose a serious threat to the health of local populations. Across the six locations:

Lead levels were found to be more than 7 times higher than WHO standards and also in excess of Sindh standards: Mercury levels were found to be 19 to 95 times higher than WHO and Sindh standards: Selenium levels were found to be 6-20 times higher than WHO standards and Sindh standards; and Arsenic levels were found to be 2 times higher than WHO standards. Lead, mercury, selenium and arsenic are toxic heavy metals that can have significant adverse effects on human health and the environment when present at high levels. Lead exposure can affect the nervous system, causing developmental

delays, cognitive impairment, and behavioral disorders in young children and children and pregnant women. It can also cause anemia, kidney damage, and reproductive problems. Mercury

exposure can cause developmental delays, cognitive impairment, and behavioral disorders. Long-term exposure to mercury can also cause kidney damage, respiratory problems, and neurological damage. High levels of selenium can cause gastrointestinal problems, respiratory problems, and neurological problems. High levels of selenium in the environment can also lead to reproductive failure and deformities in wildlife and cattle. Arsenic exposure can result in a range of health problems, including skin lesions, cancer, and neurological problems. Long-term exposure to arsenic can also cause cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Engro's failures and apathy of regulators: Engro has failed in its duty to safeguard the health of the people of Thar while making big profits.

PFA to launch special campaign before Eid

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Food Authority (PFA) Director General Raja Jahangir Anwar directed the additional director general (Operations) to launch a special campaign before Eidul Fitr and decided to issue a quarterly seasonal food calendar for the public interest. Chairing a meeting on Tuesday at his office, he reviewed administrative matters, management structure, operational strategy and progress of the authority while each officer presented his report.

He also directed the operations wing to continue the field activities against adulteration mafia without any discrimination at Sehar and Iftar times. The purp

UVAS observes "World Stray Animal Day"

LAHORE (APP): The University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Lahore observed 'World Stray Animal Day' here on Tuesday at City Campus.

Principal Officer Students Affairs Prof Dr Kamran Ashraf led the walk while Chairman Department of Pathology Prof Dr Asim Aslam and a number of faculty members and students participated. The walk started from the vice chancellor office.

Correction of Name/Father Name

My Bachelor of Business Administration Registrant No 45903, Enrollmen No.01-111162-203 in the name of Muhammad Saqib Awan S/o Muhammad Hanef Issued by Bahria University, in transcript my and my father's name written as Muhammad Saqib Awan S/o Muhammad Hanef which is wrong, correct name is Muhammad Saqib Awan S/o Muhammad Hanif. Now change/correct the name as Muhammad Saqib Awan S/o Muhammad Hanif in documents/record.

Correction of Name/Father Name and Date of Birth

I Muhammad Saqib Awan S/o Muhammad Hanif Resident of House # 21E55, Wah Cantt, Taxila, Rawalpindi do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as under: That I was registered with FBISE at SSC level under Registration No:1122271151 and Passed the SSC Annual Examination 2011 under roll No. 202153. That I have decided to change/partially change my name/ father's name from Muhammad Saqib Awan S/o Muhammad Hanif to Muhammad Saqib Awan S/o Muhammad Hanif which as written as Muhammad Saqib Awan S/o Muhammad Hanif in Board's documents/record. Hence the same may be changed. Also correct in record my Date of Birth 12.11.1995 which is wrong, my Correct Date of Birth is 18.11.1995. The statement given above is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, belief and nothing material has been concealed or withheld.

Federal Insurance Ombudsman calls on Sindh Governor

KARACHI (APP): Federal Insurance Ombudsman Mohammed Khawar Jameel called on Sindh Governor Mohammed Kamran Tessori at Governor House here on Tuesday.

They discussed steps taken pertaining to Insurance, mistreatment and other issues.

Governor Kamran Tessori said that the problems related to insurance would be resolved on a priority basis.

PPP issues notice to Gabol for disturbing remarks

KARACHI (INP): The PPP on Tuesday has issued a show-cause notice to senior politician Nabil Gabol for making insensitive comments during a recent interview on YouTube.

His statement sparked a controversy on social media prompting swift condemnation from the wider public.

Taking serious notice of his remarks, PPP Sindh President Nisar Khuwro issued the notice to Nabil Gabol, calling on him to explain his remarks with-

in three days. In case of non-clarification, it added, organisational disciplinary action will be taken against him.

According to a spokesperson for the party "Inappropriate conversation and use of un-parliamentary words are not the policy of PPP".

The party's spokesperson also stressed that there is no place for such remarks or non-parliamentary language within the party's policies.



LAHORE: A vendor selling traditional food stuff to customers for sehri at Anarkali Bazaar during Holy Fasting Month of Ramzanul Mubarak.

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INVITATION TO E-BID THROUGH SAP ARIBA DISCOVERY

Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), the largest Exploration & Production listed Company of Pakistan, invites Sealed E-Bids through **SAP-Ariba Discovery** for the service/material given below under competitive bidding procedure as per Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules:

SR #	TENDER NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME	BID OPENING DATE & TIME
1	OGDCL-SCM-LH-PROD-KUNNERPLANT-DOC206405300-2023	PROCUREMENT OF SPARE PARTS FOR MAJOR OVERHAULING OF WAUKESHA ENGINES	19-04-2023 At 11:30 HRS	19-04-2023 At 12:00 HRS
2	OGDCL-SCM-LH-PNP-UCH PLANT-DOC206403650-2023	PROCUREMENT OF AIR INTAKE FILTERS HEPA	03-05-2023 At 11:30 HRS	03-05-2023 At 12:00 HRS
3	OGDCL-SCM-LC-PT-LOG-KOTSARANG-206488812-2023	SUPPLY OF LUBRICANTS	03-05-2023 At 11:30 HRS	03-05-2023 At 12:00 HRS
4	OGDCL-SCM-LF-PT-PNP-DKN-205932397-2023	DISMANTLING OF EXISTING TANK & SUPPLY, FABRICATION, INSTALLATION & COMMISSIONING OF NEW NGL STORAGE TANK, 5000 BBLs	09-05-2023 At 11:30 HRS	09-05-2023 At 12:00 HRS

2. Vendors not having Ariba Network ID are requested to register themselves on SAP Ariba Portal by clicking on the link <https://supplier.ariba.com> to access and participate in OGDCL tenders.

3. Complete Tender document(s) along with Scope of Work / TOR/ Clarifications can be viewed and downloaded from SAP-Ariba RFP by clicking on the link discovery.ariba.com/profile/AN01562899621

4. Original Bid Bonds as per RFP/Tender Document shall be submitted at the reception of OGDCL House, Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area, Islamabad, Pakistan on or before bid submission date and time mentioned above.

5. OGDCL reserves the right to accept or reject any bid and to annul the bidding process and reject all the bids as per Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Rule-33".

6. This Tender Notice is also available on PPRA website www.ppra.org.pk and OGDCL website www.ogdcl.com.

GENERAL MANAGER (SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT)
OIL & GAS DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LIMITED
 OGDCL HOUSE, JINNAH AVENUE, ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN.
 Phone No. 92-51-920023540/3795

No.377/54

LARGEST TAX PAYER COMPANY OF THE NATION "SAY NO TO CORRUPTION" **WE EXPLORE PROSPERITY**

Demotion of policemen: PHC suspends seniority list issued by IGP

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has suspended seniority list issued by Inspector General of Police (IGP) on 29th March and ordered Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa along with other respondents including provincial government to submit reply, on Tuesday.

Barrister Dr. Adnan Khan appeared before PHC on behalf of Khalid Usman and Muhammad Sohail along with 108 policemen as applicants while raised two different point before the court stated; he argued that only one personnel became a Cadet out of 300 who is promoted and most of the time out of turn because they had obtained distinction during trainings.

The counsel argued that now the cadets are demoting to bring equity with other policemen which isn't right while added that PHC's larger bench had already ordered provincial government review rules

and regulations in this regard as well constitute committees for the purpose.

However, in Khalid Usman writ petition, Barrister Adnan argued that in 80s the then IGP issued standing orders for instructors that serving for three consecutive years in training center should be eligible for out of turn promotion. He added that it is now record and argued that in 2013&17 Supreme Court of Pakistan has passed two judgements but it's concluded in context of Punjab and Sindh provinces.

Barrister Adnan argued that IGP making SCP 2013&17 for demotion of Cadets and personnel obtained promotion on 1980s standing orders for serving at police training center for three consecutive years while Supreme Court has rejected CPLA against PHC larger bench judgement in this regard. He added that servant shouldn't be deprive from once granted benefit and it will be applicable for future.

The counsel further informed that IGP has written a letter to Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2022 to withdraw benefits which was accepted while demotion was started from 13th March following reconstitution Committees in this regard.

Barrister Adnan argued that IGP is liable for imposition contempt of court proceedings because on 22nd March PHC has granted status quo in this regard but on 29th March IGP has issued another seniority list which has impacted position of petitioners by demoting them. He requested PHC to initiate COC proceedings against IGP and other respondents.

The divisional bench of PHC comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice SM Attique Shah has suspended seniority list issued on 29th March by IGP while ordered Chief Secretary along with other provincial government to submit reply and adjourned further hearing.



PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister on Population Welfare & Secretary Zakat Salma Begum presiding over a meeting of Cabinet Committee regarding timely payment of Zakat to deserving beneficiaries.

PHC issues notices to VC UoP, PUTA over closure of Peshawar University

PESHAWAR (APP): A two-member bench of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Tuesday issued notices to the Vice Chancellor (VC) University of Peshawar (UoP) and the Peshawar University Teachers' Association (PUTA) over closure of the university for a month.

The two-member bench, comprising Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice S.M Attiq Shah, while conducting a hearing on the request of Islamic Jamiat Students against teachers' protest at UoP expressed shock to learn about the closure of

the university for a month due to teachers' protest.

The petitioners' lawyer, Advocate Farooq Malik, informed the court that more than a month had passed since the teachers of the biggest university in the province were on a protest and had boycotted the classes.

He said studies of the students were being affected and their future was at stake as no party was showing flexibility to resolve the issue.

Justice Istiaq Ibrahim questioned the reason for teachers' protest and boy-

cott of classes. Advocate Farooq informed that the teachers were demanding the resignation of the VC in the wake of the killing of a security supervisor by a security guard on the institute's premises.

Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim questioned the linkage between the killing of the security supervisor and the resignation of the VC and said how could VC be removed due to the murder of the watchman.

The court issued notices to all the parties to submit their replies at the next hearing on April 13.

Cloudy weather with isolated rain, thunderstorms predicted

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center Peshawar on Tuesday predicted that mainly partly cloudy to cloudy weather is expected in most districts of the province.

However, it said that isolated rain-thunderstorm with gusty winds is likely to occur over Chitral, Lower & 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 & South Waziristan and Dera Ismail Khan districts.

During the last 24 hours rain-thunderstorms occurred over most districts of the province.

Rain recorded (in mm): Dir 34, Malam Jabba 22, Kalam 21, Drosh & Balakot (each) 16, Saidu Sharif 15, Kakul, Mirkhani, Cherat & Mamad Gut 13, Timergara 11, Parachinar 09, Bunner & Risalpur (each) 08, Pattan 06, Peshawar, Takht Bhai & Chitral (each) 03, Kohat 02, Bannu, DI Khan

and Bajaur (each) Trace.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 22/14, Chitral 14/08, Timergara 19/12, Dir 13/06, Mirkhani 21/05, Kalam 19/-1, Drosh 14/07, Saidu Sharif 15/09, Pattan 18/11, Malam Jabba 06/03, Takht Bhai 22/14, Kakul 14/08, Balakot 15/09, Parachinar 13/01, Bannu 23/10, Cherat 15/05, D.I. Khan 28/15.

The minimum temperature recorded in the province was -01°C in Kalam.



PESHAWAR: Director General Health Services Dr. Shaukat Ali cutting a ribbon to inaugurate latest Nursery Ward at Molvi G Hospital.

PHC acquits alleged smuggler F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice SM Attique acquitted alleged smuggler over lack of evidence, on Tuesday.

According to prosecution, police has arrested the petitioner on 6th September 2021 while smuggling drugs including 12 kilo hashish, 11 kilos heroine and six kilos through truck in the premises of Nowshera Cant police station.

The counsel Muhammad Saeed Khan Advocate argued that trial court has convicted Arshad Ali for lifetime imprisonment which is illegal because evidences and witness produced in the case are contradictory in itself.

The counsel argued that prosecution has failed to established link between the offense and petitioner any sphere, however, divisional bench of PHC acquitted alleged smuggler from the charges after conclusion of arguments.

Minister condoles with Salma F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker Minister for Labour, Excise and Narcotics Control, Haji Manzoor Khan Afridi on Tuesday expressed deep sense of sorrow over the demise of mother of Salma Begum, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Social Welfare, Usher and Zakat.

Manzoor Afridi went to the house of Salma Begum here and offered for the departed soul of mother of Salma Begum who breathed her last the other day. Secretary Labour, Fakar Alam also accompanied the Minister.

Haji Manzoor remained there for some and offered Fateha. He also prayed for courage and patience to the bereaved family to bear the loss with fortitude.

PFUJ flays threatening journalist F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists Khyber Pakhtunkhwa president Shamim Shahid condemned threatening former president Wana press club Shahzad Din.

PUFJ president condemned the threats to Shahzad Din by public servants and demanded public apology otherwise media personnel will be compelled to arrange protest in favor of their demands.

PUFJ president claimed that Deputy Commissioner along with other competent authorities should be responsible for each and every damage to Shahzad Din and argued them ensure institutional accountability.

Power suspension

PESHAWAR (APP): PESCO on Tuesday notified power suspension from Kuram Ghari and Bannu Grid Stations on April 6, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15 due to unavoidable maintenance work.

A press release issued here said that power supply would remain suspended from 66 KV Kuram Ghari Grid Station from 9 a.m. to 1300 hours on the given dates resultantly consumers of 66 KV Kuram Ghari Transmission Line connected 11 KV feeders would face inconvenience.



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali presiding over 6th Board of Governor meeting of Pak-Austria Fachhochschule University Haripur.

Body seeks formation of Zakat Council

PESHAWAR (APP): Cabinet Committee meeting was held here on Tuesday regarding timely payment of Zakat to deserving beneficiaries in the province.

The meeting was attended by Minister Zakat and Information Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel, Special Assistant to Chief Minister on Population Welfare Salma Begum, Secretary Zakat and others. In the meeting it was

decided that to get permission from Election Commission for formation of Provincial Zakat Council to pay Zakat to deserving people on time.

The Provincial Zakat Council will form committees at the district and local levels for safe and transparent payment.

Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel said that transparent and fair distribution of Zakat among the deserving beneficiaries is

the first priority of the caretaker government.

He said that special care of widows, orphans and disabled would be taken while giving payment from Zakat fund.

Salma Begum said that the caretaker government want to ensure payment of Zakat to the beneficiaries in the same month. She said that Zakat funds were there but there was no Provincial Zakat Council for its distribution.

Dismissal of law officers from services: Case referred to larger bench of PHC

PESHAWAR (APP): A two-member bench of Peshawar High Court on Tuesday referred a review petition for the dismissal of law officers from services by the previous governments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the larger bench of the court for a hearing.

The two-member bench comprising Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Attiq Shah after hearing the arguments of the Advocate General Amir Javed and the lawyers of the petitioners

decided to refer the case to the larger bench.

Advocate General Aamir Javed appeared on behalf of the caretaker government and contended that a review request has come before deciding the case by a three-member bench, adding that the petition was filed by the newly appointed Additional and Assistant Advocate Generals.

He said that when the three-member bench was issuing the decision in the case, neither notice was

given to the petitioners nor were they heard, which was mandatory under the law.

He said that under the law the petitioners have the right to file a review petition and should be heard, adding that since the case was decided by a three-member bench so a similar bench or larger bench could hear the case rather than a two-member bench.

The court referred the matter to the larger bench of PHC and adjourned the hearing.



PESHAWAR: Mayor Haji Zubair Ali reviewing cleaning of Kohati nullah during his visit.

Civil society demands vendor licensing for tobacco control

PESHAWAR (APP): 'Provincial Alliance for Sustainable Tobacco Control (KP)' in collaboration with Blue Veins on Tuesday demanded legislative actions around tobacco retail licensing for effective compliance with other tobacco control measures in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Addressing a press conference in Peshawar Press Club the speakers called for the adoption of provincial legislation to regulate the sale of tobacco products in the province.

Earlier, the West Pakistan Tobacco Vendors Act, 1958 was repealed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the influence of the Tobacco Industry in 2010. The re-

enactment and well enforcement of tobacco vendor licensing policies can encourage vendors to comply with existing tobacco control regulations.

The speakers said that tobacco use is a leading cause of preventable deaths worldwide, with more than 8 million people dying each year due to tobacco-related illnesses.

In Pakistan, tobacco use is responsible for a significant number of deaths, with an estimated 160,000 deaths per year attributed to tobacco-related illnesses.

According to civil society organizations, tobacco retailer licensing has been recommended as an effective tobacco control strategy

worldwide. Adopting tobacco retailer licensing laws can be contributing way to ensure compliance with tobacco laws and to combat public health problems.

Qamar Naseem, Program Manager Blue Veins said, "The regulation and enforcement of vending licenses will help regulate the sale of tobacco products in KP and ensure that only licensed vendors are allowed to sell tobacco products. This will not only help reduce the availability of tobacco products but also ensure that the products are sold in compliance with the law."

Zahoor Ahmad, member Alliance for Tobacco Control, said, "Tobacco

Vendor Licensing policies will help to facilitate authorities in strengthening sustainable measures to tobacco control.

Licenses would also increase the likelihood that vendors will comply fully with tax policies, and the revenue generated from the license fees will also help fund tobacco control initiatives."

Usman Afridi, a rights activist and member Alliance for Tobacco Control said, "Requiring tobacco vendors to obtain a license and registration is a critical step towards reducing the availability of tobacco products, especially to minors, and promoting tobacco control."

Dogs neutralizing drive reduces canine bite cases

PESHAWAR (APP): The initiative of neutralizing of stray dogs with the objective of controlling its population to contain deadly zoonotic disease of rabies, has shown encouraging results in the reduction of canine bites by more than 50 percent in the provincial metropolises.

Three years record of Lady Reading Hospital, the largest health care facility of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, has shown that since the inception of Dog Neutralizing campaign in Peshawar, the cases of dog bites has been drastically reduced to a figure

of 3459 in 2021 from 8732 in 2019. In 2020, 5394 dog bite cases were reported at the hospital.

"Decrease in dog bite cases is an indication of a reduction in the population of stray canines and achievement of the objective for which the project was launched in Peshawar in the year 2019," informed Dr. Masoom Ali Shah, Project Director.

The drive was introduced in Peshawar as a replication of WHO recommended programme of Trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR) to

control rabies and overpopulation of street dogs, Dr. Mosoom explains.

The initiative was a pilot project and after evaluation of its encouraging result, the Livestock and Dairy Development Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has decided its extension to all the divisional headquarters of the province, Masoom announced.

The project helped in reducing infection of deadly rabies disease from 8000 cases to 3000 during that period at Lady Reading Hospital, Masoom claimed.

Apart from achieving positive results in regard with public health, the TNVR drive also helped in transition of rabies control policy from cruel practice of dog culling to neutralizing of the animal, he went on to say.

During the TNVR initiative, Livestock Department established a state of the art operation theater in Peshawar having the capacity of operating several dogs on daily basis.

Before releasing the dog in open after operation, a collar installed with reflect-

tors is fixed around its neck and a tattoo is printed on ear as mark of identity that the dog is already operated, he apprised APP.

During operation for neutralizing, the dogs are also vaccinate against rabies and in case of finding a rabbit dog, the animal is euthanased in the larger interest of public safety.

The project for expansion of dogs neutralizing in KP is estimated at a cost of Rs. 40.7 million and summary is awaiting approval of funds to start work, Dr. Masoom added.



In brief

Medicines disposed off

LAYYAH (PPI): Expired government medicines worth millions were disposed of by a hospital staff in Jaman Shah town of Layyah District on Tuesday. The hospital staff had the option of giving the patients the life-saving medications, but they chose to store them instead. When the medicines got expired, they were thrown away in a corner of the Rural Health Center. CEO Health Dr. Shahid Riaz took a strict notice on finding over-the-counter medicines near Jaman Shah Rural Health Center and he asked the Senior Medical Officer of RHC for a response. According to the CEO Health, the matter would be looked into and a strict action will be taken against those responsible. On the other hand, the locals said that patients do not get medicines from government hospitals and medicines worth millions have been expired as a consequence of hospital staff negligence. They also urged Deputy Commissioner Khalid Pervaiz to take strict action in response to the medical staff's negligence.

Violators to be fined

BUREWALA (INP): Local Government will impose fine on shopkeepers and other citizens for throwing trash outside their shops or houses. According to media reports, the Municipal Corporations and Municipal Committees were instructed to take strict action against the citizens responsible for filthy bazaars and streets. The official sources stated that a Rs 1000 fine would be imposed on the violator. The steps were taken to maintain cleanliness.

Focus on to promote business

GILGIT (APP): Acknowledging the substantial role played by private sector investment in advancing economic and social development, the Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid has taken decisive steps to promote investment and enhance business ease in Gilgit-Baltistan through the Pakistan Regulatory Modernization Initiative. To this end, a committee led by the Chief Secretary has developed a purposeful and robust website, www.investgilgit-baltistan.com, aimed at encouraging investors, said a press release. Within a brief period, the committee was able to identify six sectors with significant investment and growth potential. These sectors are agriculture, tourism, information technology, livestock & fisheries, and minerals. After thorough consultations, the committee has streamlined cumbersome procedures by simplifying the steps, shortened timelines and offering a digital roadmap to prospective investors. Prospective investors can now easily submit their applications online, and the implementation procedures will be overseen directly by the Chief Secretary's office. Additionally, the initiative has implemented a mechanism for addressing any delays or complaints that investors may encounter. As part of the initiative, capturing digital data and documentaries have been linked to showcase the stunning natural beauty of Gilgit-Baltistan, giving potential investors a sense of the region's aesthetic charm. It is believed that this initiative will serve as a catalyst for private sector economic growth in the region, resulting in job creation, enhanced productivity, and the stimulation of innovation in the area. Consequently, the per capita income of the region is projected to rise.



LOWER DIR: DPO Tariq Iqbal leading search and strike operations against criminals in Maidan area.

KP police committed to wipe out terrorism: IGP

Sahibzada Afridi

PESHAWAR: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Akhtar Hayat Khan on Tuesday paid tribute to the courage and bravery of the policemen who embraced martyrdom in a terrorists' attack in Tapi area, district Kohat the other night.

He said the sacrifices of police officials would not go in vain and soon the perpetrators would be brought to justice, adding that such a cowardly attack could not shake the resolve of KP police to eliminate terrorism and extremism from the province.

The sacrifice of every martyr gives a new resolve to the police force to fight the menace of terrorism more vigorously, he remarked. He said being a Muslim, attaining the status of martyrdom in the holy month of Ramadan was a great achievement. The IGP reiterated the resolve of KP police to protect the motherland from evil eyes at any cost.

Funeral prayer of martyred cops offered: The funeral prayer of police constables Mohammad Ayaz and Qasim Khan who were martyred in the line of duty, was performed at DSP



Farid Hussain Bangash, Shaheed Police Lines Kohat on Tuesday.

Commissioner Kohat Division Syed Muhammad Ali Shah, Regional Police Officer Kohat Sher Akbar Khan, DPO Kohat Shahzada Umar Abbas Babar, Deputy Commissioner Kohat Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, military and civil authorities, police officers and personnel, relatives of the martyrs and people from different walks of life participated in large numbers.

Commissioner Kohat,

DIG Kohat, DPO Kohat, Deputy Commissioner Kohat and military officials along with a well-armed contingent of police paid their last respects to the martyrs and placed flowers on the coffins of the martyrs. Police constables Qasim Khan and Muhammad Ayaz, residents of Mirozai, Kohat were martyred by terrorists' firing in Tapi while going for the security duty of Taraweeh prayers. A case of the incident was registered in police station CTD Kohat.

Suspected terrorist killed, two injured in D I Khan

D I KHAN (PPI): A suspected terrorist was killed and two others were injured in an exchange of fire during an operation here in the limits of Daraban police station.

According to a police spokesman on Tuesday, the police and security forces conducted a joint operation after receiving credible information about the presence of some terrorists in the Kot Essa area.

A party of three terror-

ists opened indiscriminate firing on the security forces. After this, one terrorist was killed and two others were injured in retaliatory firing of police and security forces. The injured terrorists managed to escape by taking advantage of nearby forests.

In the exchange of fire, one police constable named Ilyas also got injured and was shifted to District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ) Dera. The

killed terrorist was identified as Ansar, son of Gul Rehman, resident of Kot Essa, Tehsil Daraban, who was wanted to police in Daraban check post-attack case and different other cases of attacking police and security forces. The police also recovered an SMG rifle from the dead terrorist which belonged to martyred constable Hazrat Hussain who was martyred in the attack on the Daraban check post.

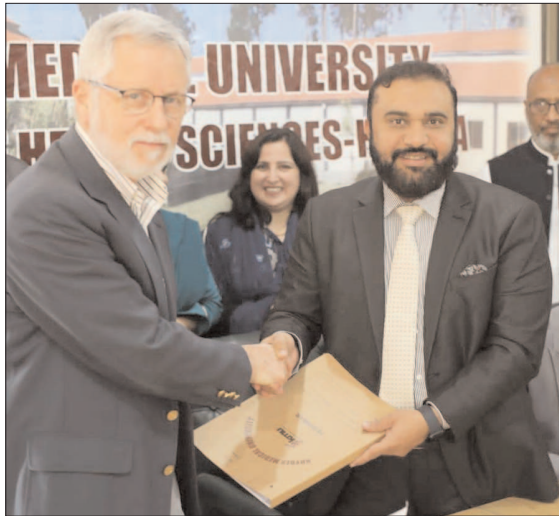
VC opens KMU-IHS Hazara Campus

F.P. Report

ABBOTTABAD: Vice Chancellor Khyber Medical University Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq on Tuesday inaugurated Institute of Health Sciences (KMU-IHS) Hazara Campus. VC Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq was the chief guest while Dr. Luke, Director of Bach Christian Hospital, Qalandarabad, Abbottabad was the guest of honor on the occasion.

Dr. Sadia Fatima, Director of KMU-IHS Hazara Campus welcomed the distinguished guests from Khyber Medical University Peshawar, Ayub Medical College Abbottabad, Abbottabad International Medical Institute, Women Medical College Abbottabad, Bach Christian Hospital Qalandarabad.

She gave a brief presentation on KMU-IHS Hazara Campus, highlighting various programs being offered by the institute, activities, and achievements since its inception. She apprised the audience about various Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) signed by IHS with various institutions. During the ceremony an MoU between KMU and Bach Christian Hospital



(BCH) Qalandarabad was also signed by Prof. Zia ul Haq VC KMU, and Dr. Luke Hospital Director BCH representing their respective organizations.

In the MoU, it was agreed that the two institutions will utilize each other's academic and research resources, while KMU as a medical institution would provide students with knowledge and research opportunities, and BCH would provide teaching training facilities to students in various fields.

Distillery unearthed

MULTAN (APP): Qadarpur Raan police unearthed a distillery and arrested a notorious drug peddler besides recovering wine from his possession during a crackdown launched here on Tuesday. In line with special directives of the CPO Mansoor-ul-Haq Rana, the Qadarpur Raan police under the supervision of DSP Makhdoom Rasheed Imran, launched a crackdown against drug peddlers.

Sewerage water culminated on Hospital Road

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Due to the disruption of the drainage system on the Hospital Road in Timargara, the standing water on the main road has become a problem for the public. Faced with serious problems in transportation, none of the departments including the district administration is ready to accept the responsibility. Public concern is expressed. It has become a pain for the people walking on the road.

For a long time, the stench caused by standing dirty water on the road has not only made it forbidden for the people to live, but also the clothes of the people have become impure due to the splashes of dirty water from the movement of vehicles on the road. There are also many private hospitals and medicine shops including the District Headquarters Hospital and there is a fear of spread of diseases due to this.

The public sector has demanded that the concerned department should fulfill its responsibility by fixing the drainage system near the District Headquarters Hospital, Timargara and draining the dirty water standing on the road into the constructed drain. Get rid of this shame.

Youth commits suicide

F. P. Report

TAKHTBHAI: One youth committed suicide by shooting himself over oral dispute with his father in the premises of Takhtbhai police station.

According to details, the deceased youth identified as Waqar resident of Qudratnabad has shot killed himself over oral dispute inside his residences. Rescue 1122 shifted the deceased to Takhtbhai hospital immediately but he succumbed to injuries.

Meanwhile, on minor has been electrocuted in Speelano Dheri while Rescue 1122 reached the spot but RHC had declared his death due to electric shock. The deceased was identified as Zaryab 6 years of age while it is revealed that he was electrocuted from Washing Machine unprotected wire.

Robber gunned down in encounter

FAISALABAD (INP): A robber was gunned down in an alleged police encounter in the jurisdiction of Police Station Balochnie on Tuesday.

The police spokesperson said police received information that the suspects were trying to flee after a robbery bid. The police followed and reached on them. The police ordered the outlaws to surrender, but they opened fire on the police party. The SHO Balochni along with a police contingent retaliated and so crossfire took place between the robbers and the policemen. One robber was shot dead in the firing, while the other managed to escape. The dead bandit was identified as Muzamil and he was wanted by the police in several cases.

Special people top priority to uplift: Mardan Mayor

F.P. Report

MARDAN: City Mayor Mardan, Advocate Himayatullah Mayar has said that special people have immense abilities and can play an important role in the construction and development of the society, there is a need to develop their skills. He said that a positive step should be taken on a priority basis to ensure the welfare, education and training and provision of all the necessities of life to them.

He expressed these views while addressing the ceremony of distribution of ration to the poor and deserving families of visually impaired in Mardan under the supervision of Pakistan Disable Foundation (PDF) Karachi in the office of Saiban Development Organization (SDO) Mardan with the support of Pakistan Association of Blind Mardan. Sher Nabi Khan of PDF Karachi, President of Pakistan Association of Blind Mardan Abdul Akbar Khan, CEO of SDO Mohammad Arif, Chairman of Neighborhood Bagh Aram Qari Junaid, Former Chairman of Public Safety Commission Mardan Haji Abdul Aziz and Hassan of Labor Education Organization also spoke to the gathering.

City Mayor Hamayat Mayar emphasized on the strict implementation of the quota allocated in government jobs for special people and said that they should not be ignored because of any physical disability. He said that they can be made useful citizens of the society by developing the hidden abilities within them. He expressed that protecting the rights of visually impaired people and providing them with basic facilities is one of the top priorities of the government. "We will play our role for this program and under this program the special people as well as other downtrodden sections of the society can be benefited," said Mayar.

Abdul Akber Khan, president of Pakistan Association of Blind Mardan, said in his speech that PDF is working day and night to alleviate the deprivations of visually impaired people across the country. "Taking care of the needy in the blessed month of Ramadan, its huge blessing and this help will motivate these deprived people best citizens in near

future," said Akber.

CEO of SDO Muhammad Arif said that our organization is always ready to help out such class of the society who needs support to perform positive role in the development of society. He said further we have mission to good opportunities for specially abled people to enlighten their life and finish their difficulties.

Free flour to be distributed transparently: Free flour is being provided to the beneficiaries under the Benazir Income Support Program across the district by the district administration. A meeting was held with administration officers, food department and flour mills association under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Mardan to make the process of free flour distribution more transparent.

On this occasion, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Engineer Syed Shahzeb, Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance and Planning Sami ur Rehman, Assistant Commissioner Mardan Madam Ayesha Tahar and AAC Takht Bhai Gul Nawaz Afridi, including Food Department and Municipalities Flour Mills Association were present in the meeting. DC briefed regarding the daily quota allotted to the selected dealers at the district level and its distribution among the citizens. Free flour has been provided to families affiliated to the program and further distribution is ongoing on a daily basis.

During the meeting Deputy Commissioner Mardan appreciated the performance of the dealers who distributed free flour to the citizens according to the quota. DC expressed anger on the dealers who distributed less than the quota and said that action will be taken against the dealers who distribute less than the given quota, furthermore their quota should be suspended resolutely.

DC further said that the administration officers should inspect the dealers in their areas and strict action should be taken against those who collect ID cards of citizens and illegally enter them. He said that free flour is the right of every eligible citizen and it should be provided to them transparently. DC said that administrative officers, food department and municipalities should monitor the process to avoid any error and omission.

Peace body to award 'Dir Stoori Award' after Eid

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Dir Qaumi Paseon (DQP), a body of elders working for peace and development has announced its 'Dir Stoori Award' for people from different walks of life for their excellent and significant role in peace building and local development.

The DQP chief Malik Jehan Alam and district president Malik Shah Naseem while talking to local journalists at Timargara said that a grand function would be arranged soon after the Eid ul Fitr during which the 'Dir Stoori Award' would be distributed among the selected people from all walks of life. They pointed out that so far, about 300 people had submitted their applications online to achieve the

award. He said that the award winners from different walks of life like education, health, sports, politics, literature, poetry, tourism, trade, employment, research, social work, journalism, lawyer and social media would be selected transparently through a jury.

Malik Shah Naseem said the 40-member core committee would decide about the names of those stars and would finalize the date and time for the award ceremony. About 20 selected people would be awarded during the function.

The DQP was formed in 2019 when the situation worsened again in the region and people feared not to be displaced again. The founding members of the organization include Akbar Khan Lala, Ebrash

Pasha, Umarzada, Ali Shah Mashwani, Malik Inam Khan, Malik Javed Iqbal, Malik Naeem Yousafzai, Malik Shah Naseem and others decided to work jointly for maintaining peace and local development. Through various stages, Malik Shah Naseem is currently the president of this organization while Muslim Khan is performing the duties of its general secretary.

The DQP is a non-political organization that works for peace, development and awareness. On October 29, a grand jirga was organized regarding the establishment of law and order at the level of Malakand division under the auspices of DQP which later proved to be a precursor to the restoration of peace in the entire Malakand Division.

Sisters demand protection from murderers

F.P. Report

HANGU: The two sisters argued Chief Justice Peshawar High Court and Inspector General of Police (IGP) to provide protection from alleged murderers of their sister and their brothers, on Tuesday.

This was requested Wahida Gul and Nasreen Khan while addressing press conference and claimed their Sister Laiba was killed by her husband Muslim Khan along with his son Sana Ullah. They claimed that Muslim Khan wife Safia facilitated the crime but they had lodged FIR to bring culprits before law. They argued that now Muslim Khan and his son Sana Ullah are threatening them while



with Muslim Khan while facilitated to disappear the death but they had lodged FIR to bring culprits before law. They argued that now Muslim Khan and his son Sana Ullah are threatening them while

requested competent authorities for provision of security. They also demanded action against Muslim Khan wife and Sana Ullah mother Safia while requested for provision of security.

Two robbers arrested after police encounter

KASUR (INP): The police arrested two robbers in an operation at Mandi Usman Wala area in Kasur on Tuesday, police spokesperson said. The locals residents informed the police that four robbers had fled after stealing a motorcycle and cash. The police took immediate action and blocked the Garhwal road.

When the suspects saw the police team they started firing, in which their own two accomplices were injured.

Police further said a motorcycle was recovered from the injured robbers that the suspects had snatched from a person a few days ago. Police said the arrested suspects have

been identified as Saqib alias Saqi and Sajid. The suspects were wanted by the police in more than 40 serious incidents of robbery, street crimes and police encounters. Police shifted the injured robbers to hospital for medical test and treatment. Police also gathered possible evidence from the crime scene.



Egypt's leader makes surprise visit to Saudi Arabia

CAIRO (AP): The leaders of Egypt and Saudi Arabia met in the Gulf kingdom, officials said, in the first face-to-face discussions between the two men in months as the North African country battles a domestic economic crisis. President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the de facto leader of Saudi Arabia, held talks that focused on ties between the two Middle Eastern heavyweights, according to Egyptian presidential spokesman Ahmed Fahmy.

Fahmy said in a statement that the two leaders "affirmed mutual concern for promoting common cooperation in all fields." They also agreed to continue "coordination and consultation" on regional and international topics, he added. The statement did not give further details. The surprise visit came as el-Sissi's government is struggling to overcome an economic crisis blamed on the war in Europe, but also on mismanagement of the economy. The two countries also seek to mend their frayed ties with other regional powers, including Iran and Turkey. "I affirm the depth and strength of the bilateral relations between Egypt and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," el-Sissi tweeted after returning to Egypt.

Bin Salman, widely known in the West by the acronym MBS, received el-Sissi in the Saudi coastal city of Jeddah on the Red Sea. Images aired by state-run media in the two countries showed the crown prince waiting for the Egyptian president on the tarmac. Other officials from both countries attended the talks, including Abbas Kamel, head of Egypt's General Intelligence Authority, and Musaed bin Mohammed Al-Aiban, Saudi national security adviser, according to the Saudi official news agency. The trip was the first announced encounter between the two leaders since they met in Qatar during the opening of the World Cup in November. El-Sissi also received bin Salman in Cairo in June ahead of



President Joe Biden's Mideast trip.

Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf states have been the main suppliers of aid to the Egyptian government, which has been struggling to overcome a staggering economic crisis. In 2022, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates pledged a total of \$22 billion in deposits and direct investments in Egypt, in a bid to stabilize its battered economy after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Saudi Arabia's investment in Egypt surpassed \$6 billion last year, making it the second biggest investor in the country, said Egyptian Trade and Industry Minister Ahmed Samir in December. Trade between the two countries reached \$10.3 billion last year, up from \$9.1 billion in 2021, according to figures released by Egypt's statistics bureau. However, in recent months, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states have been increasingly reluctant to help cash-strapped Egypt. They urged el-Sissi's government to make economic reforms to receive aid. Egypt has already begun to make changes as part of a \$3 billion deal with the International

Monetary Fund.

"We need to see reforms. We are taxing our people. We are expecting also others to do the same, to do their efforts. We want to help, but we want you also to do your part," Saudi Finance Minister Mohammed al-Jadaan said at the World Economic Forum's annual gathering in Davos, Switzerland, in January. The criticism of the Egyptian government's handling of the economy has strained ties between Cairo and Riyadh. An online spat between public figures in the two countries erupted after an opinion piece was published in an Egyptian state-owned newspaper in February, arguing that Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states had no right to criticize the Egyptian government's handling of its economy. Speaking at the World Government Summit in Dubai in February, el-Sissi watered down the spat and praised Gulf monarchies for their past financial support. "Reality may be different from what we see in the media or what we hear from politicians ... even when it's politicians who think they are in control," he said.

UN report charges South Sudan officials

JUBA (AP): A United Nations-backed panel of investigators alleges in a new report that several officials in South Sudan have perpetrated serious human rights violations and should be held accountable for their crimes. The governor of South Sudan's Unity State, Joseph Monytil, is cited for being responsible for gross violations of human rights as well as other senior government and military officials, in the report released by the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan.

Lt. Gen. Thoi Chany Reat of the South Sudan People's Defence Forces is among individuals warranting criminal investigation over state-sanctioned extrajudicial killings carried out in Mayom County in August 2022, the report says. Koch County Commissioner Gordon Koang is also mentioned in the report which accused him of playing a role in attacks against civilians in the town of Leer in February and April 2022. The officials were not immediately available for comment. The UN experts' report says South Sudan, the world's youngest nation, must tackle "impunity" to stem persistent violence and rights abuses. Perpetrators of the most serious crimes, including widespread attacks against civilians and extrajudicial killings, remain unpunished, according to the report.

"Over several years, our findings have consistently shown that impunity for serious crimes is a central driver of violence and misery faced by civilians in South Sudan," said Yasmin Sooka, head of the investigating commissions. "So we have taken the step of naming more of the individuals who warrant criminal investigation and prosecution for their role in gross human rights violations." The report is based on the commission's investigations over the last 12 months.

Battle for Bakhmut not over: US

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The battle for Bakhmut is not over and Ukraine is still fighting hard for the town, according to a White House official. John Kirby, a spokesperson for the United States National Security Council, told reporters that Ukrainians have not been repulsed from the city, adding that an additional assistance package for Ukraine could be expected this week.

His remarks came hours after Ukraine also said that Russian forces were "very far" from capturing Bakhmut and that fighting raged around the city administration building where the Wagner Group of mercenaries claimed to have raised the Russian flag. "Bakhmut is Ukrainian and they have not captured anything and are very far from doing that, to put it mildly," Serhiy Cherevatiy, spokesperson for the eastern military command, told Reuters news agency by phone. Earlier, the Wagner Group, which has led the assault for Bakhmut, claimed it had captured the city's town hall. Russia's defence ministry has not confirmed it has full control of the city. The fight for the industrial city of Bakhmut has become the longest and bloodiest battle of Russia's year-long assault on Ukraine. Most of Bakhmut's prewar population of approximately 70,000 people fled the town in 2022.

Ukrainian troops say it is hard to say how many civilians still remain in Bakhmut, with estimates ranging from 1,000 to 5,000. In Slovakia, the Czech and Slovak prime ministers urged the European Union to exert "targeted pressure" on the Kremlin by sticking to sanctions imposed on Russia after it invaded Ukraine last year. The Czech and Slovak governments, led by Petr Fiala and Eduard Heger, respectively, met in the western Slovak city of Trencin. "It is important for the EU and its partners to continue targeted pressure on the Russian Federation and thoroughly implement the sanctions," the premiers said in a statement.

Lawsuit seeks records of toxic exposures at Uzbek air base

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP): Veterans' advocacy groups sued the US Department of Defense seeking records of toxic conditions at an air base in Uzbekistan blamed for causing cancer and other illnesses among American troops who served there in support of the war in Afghanistan. The lawsuit filed in federal court in Connecticut accuses military officials of withholding information about hazardous materials - including uranium, chemical weapons and asbestos - that were on the Karshi-Khanabad Air Base, known as K2, during US operations there from 2001 to 2005.

The contaminants included pools of "black goo" that caused military service members to pass out, according to the lawsuit. At least around 15,800 troops served at the base, and personnel there became ill and died at higher-than-usual rates, the lawsuit says. The legal filing seeks information about the toxic substances and troop exposures so that sickened veterans can obtain accurate medical diagnoses and treatment and healthy veterans can take any preventative actions available.

A spokesperson said that the Pentagon could not comment because "the issue involves litigation." The lawsuit was announced during a news conference in New Haven at the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit. Also suing is the Stronghold Freedom Foundation, a nonprofit group that includes K2 veterans and relatives. The groups are represented by the Veterans Legal Services Clinic at Yale Law School. "These K2 victims have

been living with this truth inside their bodies for over 20 years, and many died as that toxic truth took them to their early graves," said Kim Brooks, a board member for the Stronghold Freedom Foundation. "Yet we still do not know exactly what lurked in the air and water and the earth at K2. We do not know because the government refuses to release the records of the toxins found at K2."

Brooks' husband, Army Lt. Col. Timothy Brooks, from New Milford, Connecticut, died of a brain tumor in 2004, less than three years after serving at K2. He was 36. She and others at the news conference, including US Sen. Richard Blumenthal, a Connecticut Democrat, called on the federal government to release information on the K2 contamination. The foundation said the Defense Department has not fully responded to document requests under the federal Freedom of Information Act. Years before the US military used Karshi-Khanabad to support missions into Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks, the base was occupied by the former Soviet military. US officials said Soviet troops left behind contamination from a number of hazardous materials, including low-level radioactive depleted uranium from destroying missiles at the site as well as jet fuel.

Matt Erpelding, a K2 veteran and executive director of the Stronghold Freedom Foundation, said a 2015 preliminary study by the Army found that K2 veterans were five times more likely to develop cancer, compared with troops who deployed to other places. He said mili-

tary personnel began showing an array of unexplained health conditions after arriving at the base. Military officials have cautioned that the 2015 study is limited and not a definitive link between K2 service and illness. The Defense and Veterans Affairs departments say they are doing a more in-depth study. No one has exact numbers on how many K2 veterans developed cancer and how many died from it. Erpelding said at least 75 people who were at K2 and were members of the Stronghold Freedom Foundation died from 2012 to 2020, and another 10 died in the past eight months. In a 2020 survey of about 2,000 K2 veterans by the foundation, nearly 1,900 illnesses were reported, including 491 incidents of cancer. Some of those surveyed reported multiple illnesses. Last year, President Joe Biden and Congress approved the PACT Act, which expanded VA health care and benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances, including military members who served in Uzbekistan. A number of K2 veterans had said the VA wasn't covering their medical costs. Blumenthal called on the Defense Department to release the information that the lawsuit plaintiffs are seeking. "This document, this complaint, is a powerful story, a really compelling story, of our government's neglect and disregard of our veterans," he said at the news conference. "The United States government has a responsibility to provide information to these veterans so they can get the medical care that they need. That's a basic, fundamental right."

Autopsy finds cause of death for Irvo Otieno was asphyxia

RICHMOND, Va. (AP): Irvo Otieno, a 28-year-old Black man whose death last month at a Virginia mental hospital has sparked outrage and led to second-degree murder charges against 10 defendants, died of "positional and mechanical asphyxia with restraints," a medical examiner's office said.

Arkuie Williams, the administrative deputy in the state Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, confirmed the cause of death findings to The Associated Press after attorneys for Otieno's family first shared them in a statement. The manner of death was homicide, Williams wrote in an email. Otieno, who struggled with mental illness, died March 6 after he was pinned to the floor while being admitted to Central State Hospital in Dinwiddie County. Video released earlier this month showed sheriff's deputies and hospital employees restraining a handcuffed and shackled Otieno for about 20 minutes after he was forcibly led into a hospital room. For much of that time, Otieno was prone

on the floor, pinned by a group so large it blocked the camera's view of him at times.

Personnel who realized he appeared limp and lifeless eventually began resuscitation efforts, the video showed. "The official cause and manner of death is not surprising to us as it corroborates what the world witnessed in the video," family attorneys Ben Crump and Mark Krudys said in a statement. "In a chilling parallel to George Floyd's killing, Irvo was held down and excessively restrained to death, when he should have been provided medical help and compassion. It is tragic that yet another life has been lost to this malicious and deadly restraint technique." Seven deputies and three hospital workers have been charged with second-degree murder in Otieno's death.

The local prosecutor who brought the charges has previously said in court that Otieno was smothered to death. No additional information from the autopsy beyond the cause and manner of death can be released by the medical

examiner's office, Williams said. Otieno was laid to rest last week. Civil rights leader the Rev. Al Sharpton and other speakers at his funeral said his death shows the need for mental health and policing reforms. Otieno's family and their attorneys have said Otieno was experiencing mental distress at the time of his initial encounter with law enforcement, days before he was taken to the state hospital. He was first taken into police custody in Henrico County March 3, when he was transported to a local hospital for mental health treatment under an emergency custody order. Police have said that while at the local hospital, he "became physically assaultive toward officers," at which point they arrested him and took him to a local jail, something Otieno's family says should never have happened given that he was in need of treatment. On the afternoon of March 6, he was transferred to the state hospital, which has a unit that provides care for people admitted from jails or by court order.

Some of the attorneys

for the defendants charged in his death have said their clients were only trying to restrain Otieno. Otieno's family and their attorneys have said he posed no danger to them and was simply trying to breathe during the encounter at the hospital shown on video. All defendants have been granted bond and court records show pre-trial hearings in April or May. AP sought comment on the medical examiner's findings from defense attorneys for each of the defendants. Attorneys Emily Munn, Emilee Hasbrouck and G. Russell Stone, declined to comment. Attorney Ed Riley, who represents one of the deputies, said he couldn't comment on the merits of the findings without having seen the full autopsy report. He said he worried that public statements from the attorneys for Otieno's family as well as other public disclosures in the case, including the video, could hinder the defendants' right to a fair trial. Other attorneys did not respond to phone and email messages seeking comment.

Russia rejects US claims its UN council presidency is a joke

UNITED NATIONS (AP): Russia's UN ambassador dismissed US and European Union descriptions of its presidency of the Security Council this month as an April Fool's joke and announced a meeting to be chaired by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on defending the principles of the UN Charter, which Moscow is widely accused of breaking by invading Ukraine.

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told reporters that the US expects the Russians will be professional but will use their presiding seat "to spread disinformation and promote their own agenda as it relates to Ukraine, and we will stand ready to call them out at every single moment that they attempt to do that." She and European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell both called Russia's takeover of the council presidency an April Fool's joke.

Under Security Council rules, the presidency rotates monthly in alphabetical order among its 15 members. Russian Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia told reporters there will be no change in the rules of the council, which is charged with maintaining international peace and security. He said Russia has been "an honest broker" during past council presidencies, a

role "which we value and cherish, and we are always trying to maintain it." The council president presides over meetings and gets to decide the topics of key sessions, often presided over by foreign ministers and sometimes presidents. Lavrov on April 24 will preside over a session on "effective multilateralism through the defense of the principles of the UN Charter."

There are also required monthly meetings, including on the Middle East, which Lavrov will also preside over, Syria and other global hotspots, including Mali, Libya, Yemen, Haiti, Africa's Great Lakes region and Colombia. Nebenzia responded to the US ambassador's expectation that Russia will spread disinformation about Ukraine by calling it "a Western narrative" and stressing that "we think just the opposite." He said Russia plans to hold an informal council meeting on what Moscow claims is disinformation being spread by Western officials and media about the Ukrainian children taken to Russia. He said the aim of the meeting is "to dispel this narrative" that they were abducted.

The issue was put in the spotlight when the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants last

month for Russian President Vladimir Putin and his country's commissioner for children's rights, accusing them of war crimes for the "unlawful deportation" of Ukrainian children to Russia. Moscow called the warrants "outrageous" and "legally void." An Associated Press investigation first published in October found that the open effort to put Ukrainian children up for adoption in Russia was well underway. Ukrainian officials claimed at the time that nearly 8,000 children had been deported to Russia, but the exact number was difficult to pin down. Britain's deputy UN ambassador, James Kariuki, said Russia was in no position to talk about international law or UN values.

"It is waging a war of aggression against Ukraine, violating the most basic principle of the UN Charter - you don't redraw borders by force - and its president has been indicted by the ICC for the systematic abduction of Ukrainian children," he said. "The U.K. will keep using our seat on the council to challenge their illegal war, expose their disinformation, and protect the council's vital work tackling other threats to international peace and security, including across Africa and the Middle East." Russia's assumption of the

council presidency also drew strong criticism from Ukraine and Baltic nations. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy denounced the "bankruptcy" of the Security Council and reiterated his call for an overhaul of the UN body and other global institutions. Estonia's UN Ambassador Rein Tammsaar, speaking also on behalf of Latvia and Lithuania, called the Russian presidency "shameful, humiliating and dangerous" for the council's credibility. Under Security Council rules, a member directly connected to an issue should withdraw from participation, and Nebenzia was asked if Russia would recuse itself when Ukraine was discussed.

"No," he replied, indicating that the US, Britain and France, which have been supporting Ukraine, would have to withdraw as well. The Russian ambassador recalled that following the US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the U.K. and US held the council presidency consecutively that September and October. "Nobody raised the question of their legitimacy to hold the presidency," Nebenzia said. "And nobody put on the table the question that they withdraw from discussing an issue that was perhaps the most hot and topical then."

Finland doubling NATO's border with Russia in blow to Putin

BRUSSELS (AP): The blue-and-white Finnish flag rises outside NATO headquarters, making Finland a member and doubling Russia's border with the world's biggest security alliance. The move is a strategic and political blow to President Vladimir Putin, who has long complained about NATO's expansion toward Russia and partly used that as a justification for his country's war with Ukraine.

"What we see is that President Putin went to war against Ukraine with a declared aim to get less NATO," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said. "He's getting the exact opposite." Like all NATO members, Finland will benefit from the collective security guarantee that an attack on one is considered an attack on all. NATO has said that it has no immediate intention to step up its presence in Finland. Some members have deployed troops there for war games over the last year. Russia immediately warned that it would bolster forces near Finland if NATO sends any additional troops or equipment to what will be its 31st member country. Finland has substantial, well-trained armed forces

with elite troops capable of operating in the sub-zero temperatures of the high north. The Nordic country also has a large reserve army and is investing heavily in new equipment, including dozens of US-made F-35 fighter jets.

The Finnish flag rising between the French and the Estonian in a ceremony scheduled for 1330 GMT will complete the fastest accession process in the organization's recent history. Alarmed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year, Finland applied to join NATO in May 2022. Neighboring Sweden also applied, but its accession process will take longer. The ceremony falls on NATO's very own birthday, the 74th anniversary of the signing of its founding Washington Treaty on April 4, 1949. "It will be a good day for Finland's security, for Nordic security, and for NATO as a whole," Stoltenberg told reporters on the eve of a meeting of alliance's foreign ministers in Brussels. Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko warned that Moscow would bolster its own forces "in case of deployment of forces of other NATO members on the territory of Finland."

"We will strengthen our military potential in the west and in the northwest," Grushko said, according to the state RIA Novosti news agency, although Russia is already having trouble marshaling forces against far-smaller Ukraine.

Finland shares a 1,340-kilometer (832-mile) border with Russia and unlike most members of the alliance, Finland did not cut defense spending and investment after the Cold War. "They have trained and built a large army over many years and maintain that high level of readiness. Finland is also a country with extremely high level of resilience, of preparedness throughout the whole society," Stoltenberg said. The country also helps to complete NATO's geographical puzzle by filling in a major gap in the strategically important Baltic Sea region in Europe's north. Stoltenberg said, Turkey, the last country to have ratified Finland's membership, will hand the official document enshrining its approval to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

NATO's top civilian official said he will then invite Finland to hand over its own signed documents, to complete the procedure.

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The politico-constitutional crisis must come to calm now

THE Supreme Court of Pakistan has declared the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) decision of 22nd March as null and void and categorically mentioned the fact that the ECP did not have the legal right to delay the elections. According to yesterday's verdict of the apex court, the elections will be held in Punjab on May 14.

The Pakistani nation has gone through acute political antagonism and chaos over the past year while an all-time combative politics and persistent rivalry of the warring parties rocked the country's economy and extremely polarized the society. The year-long political tussle engulfed the judiciary after violently sabotaging parliament and invading public institutions including the military and the LEAs. The controversy, which flared up after the Supreme Court's suo motu notice over the proposed delay of elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, swept over the top judiciary while splitting the adjudicators into groups and bringing them head to head against each other. The politics of the selfish politicians seriously undermined the national interests, destroyed the economy, polarized society, weaken democracy, and politicized the national institutions only to comprehend the political manifesto and gain power in the country.

Ironically, the tussle between the coalition government and PTI-led opposition reached its climax in recent days, as the hearing of the case headed to its conclusion. Both clashing parties have resorted to condemnable politics by putting forth their demands to the judiciary and launching malicious social media campaigns to manipulate the situation in their favor. The government accused the few judges of misconduct and expressed its disbelief over them and demanded the formation of a full court to hear the case whereas the Chief Judge dissolved the concerned bench hearing the suo motu notice and PTI's plea against the postponement of elections while forming a three-member jury to pursue the most controversial case in history.

Unfortunately, the battle for control and political supremacy badly hurt the functioning of the institutions, and internal issues of the judiciary were brought to the streets for public discussion that seriously damaged the sanctity of the institution. Meanwhile, the conduct of judges and the chief adjudicator also remained debatable for the common public and intellectual circles as the people sitting in high offices do not awe matching caliber which maintains the impartiality and prestige of a sacred institution in the country. On the other hand, the sitting government used all available resources and powers to move things in its desired direction by framing the Practice and Procedure Bill-2023 aims at slashing certain powers from the office of the Chief Justice including summoning suo motu notice, formation of benches, etc. apparently to forestall expected decision of the apex court over the election saga in two provinces. Similarly, the removal of the registrar Supreme Court was also an outcome of ongoing political tussle in the country.

The political philosophy of warring groups has created a constitutional crisis along with an ongoing political predicament in the country. The leaders do not bother with public issues, while the economic future, national sovereignty, and prestige of the national institutions have lost importance to them. The opposition is pursuing its election manifesto whereas the treasury is using a fractured parliament for framing self-benefitting legislation to secure its legal and electoral objectives. In fact, such kind of politics and governance can only be seen in a banana republic where jungle law prevails and institutions adrift their value because of inability, incompetence, and corruption.

Currently, the Chief Adjudicator has rejected all political and institutional pressure and announced a verdict that might suit many political groups and irritates others but this decision must be perceived with positive sentiments and both groups should pause their tussle. The warring groups must not drag the judiciary into their tussle and the judges must also bring their house in order through self-accountability and discipline. Currently, the election is the only solution to the prevailing fiasco, all relevant stakeholders including warring political groups and the ECP must prepare for a smooth, free, and fair election, so the nation comes out of the crisis and moves toward stability in the future.

NETANYAHU'S neo-fascist Cabinet colleagues took a look at Tehran's paramilitary armies around the region, and decided they wanted one too. After hundreds of thousands of Israelis temporarily thwarted Netanyahu's plot to eviscerate the judiciary, he now seeks to placate his extremist allies by giving his security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, his own 2,000-strong private army.

Ben-Gvir says his "national guard" militia approved by the government on Sunday will "restore governance" in mixed Jewish-Arab cities. Given his championing of pogroms by armed settlers against Palestinian villages, little imagination is required to realize how such an unaccountable militia will be deployed against Arab-Israeli communities. Israel's Association for Civil Rights warned that "establishing an armed force subject to the national security minister and separate from the police" would be "illegitimate" and a dangerously problem for law enforcement. This extremist regime has already displayed a permissive attitude toward the indiscriminate use of force: About 100 Palestinians have been killed since Netanyahu's return to power in December, settlers carried out 8,724 documented attacks against Palestinians and their property last year,

and attacks on Christians and other minorities have also increased.

Ben-Gvir perfectly fits the job description for militia warlord. He is a convicted criminal with more than 50 indictments against him, including charges of violence and incitement to racism, and he has a record of support for terrorist groups. Ben-Gvir last week co-organized a demonstration that rampaged through Jerusalem chanting "death to Arabs" and staged the attempted lynching of a Palestinian taxi driver. Right-wing supporters were brought into Tel Aviv by bus.

Many of these elements, masked and dressed in black, attacked pro-democracy demonstrators. The attackers included groups associated with vigilante violence, such as La Familia, with whom Ben-Gvir is personally involved. Israeli commentators explicitly compared Ben-Gvir's ambitions to how former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki established his own private militias, which later mutated into Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi - culpable in massacres, sectarian cleansing and seeking to militarily dominate Iraq. In a close parallel to Hashd commander Hadi Al-Amiri, who simultaneously dominates Interior Ministry forces, Ben-Gvir already controls Israel's border police force, which is responsible for law enforcement in the occupied West

Baria Alamuddin

Bank and Jerusalem. Like Amiri, Ben-Gvir has been agitating for a more violent approach to protests. With paramilitary forces under his control, he can do exactly that.

Paramilitary forces and self-defense militias fuel dangerous escalatory dynamics, brutalize society and provoke retaliatory vigilante violence. Amid escalating tensions in Lebanon, some Christian factions are considering arming themselves in response to the perceived threat from Hezbollah, and the disturbing ambition of "cleansing" Lebanon of Syrian refugees. With a soaring death rate from Israeli military crackdowns, young Palestinians and Arab-Israelis are flocking to join armed factions in a manner unseen for a generation - offering further pretexts to fascists such as Ben-Gvir for more aggressive militarization.

These developments are part of a remorseless long-term trend: the expansion of extreme-right ultra-Orthodox communities compared with centrist secular Israelis. Over 60 percent of Israeli Jews identify as right wing, and only 11 percent as left wing. There are 720,000 Israelis living in illegal settlements, with plans approved for 22,000 new settlement homes. Thus, the proportion of Israeli Jews who see their existence as inseparably tied to the occupation con-

tinues to grow. Relentless settlement expansion is aided and abetted by decades of Western inaction and condonement. Feeble statements are a convenient way to avoid applying actual pressure on Israel.

When Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich argues that Palestinians don't exist, that Palestinian towns should be "wiped out", and that parts of Jordan and Syria belong to Israel, he is articulating the views of an inexorably expanding demographic. Centrist Israelis who sought to block Netanyahu's judicial "reforms" are fighting a rearguard action from a cosmopolitan worldview that is increasingly anachronistic. Ultra-Orthodox ideologues don't even recognize secular Israelis as legitimate citizens. Consequently, highly educated, professional, wealth-creating segments of society who have not already left the country will be remorselessly marginalized from the political sphere. Western politicians will now struggle to maintain the fiction that "Israel is the Middle East's only true democracy." US Jews have so far supplied Israel's international bedrock of support and finance, but many American Jews are thoroughly repulsed by Netanyahu's extremism. Last week, Netanyahu's blunt retort to Biden's rare public rebuke was striking: "Israel is a sovereign coun-

try which makes its decisions by the will of its people and not based on pressures from abroad."

It is remarkable that Netanyahu and Biden have allowed relations to deteriorate so far when Iran is 10 minutes from nuclear midnight. Fulfilling their commitments to prevent Tehran becoming a military nuclear power will require close coordination. Netanyahu's detestable policies have furthermore blown a Palestine-sized hole in his efforts to cultivate Arab allies. Israel will always find uncritical cheerleaders among powerful Western right-wing lobbies, whatever its excesses. However, global publics will harbor little sympathy for a nakedly authoritarian apartheid regime that steals land, while suppressing Palestinian populations and stripping non-Orthodox communities of their democratic rights.

Israel is self-consciously trending toward the authoritarian pariah camp. Netanyahu's officials visited Poland and Hungary to compare notes on subverting judicial independence. But given the messianically theocratic tenor and expansionist commitments of the current regime, especially Ben-Gvir's penchant for cultivating sectarian militias, perhaps the closest model is Tehran's ayatollahs. Everybody expects Netanyahu's judicial "reform" legislation to ultimately be forced through, even if there is a temporary

lull in tensions in the meantime. His Zionist allies want to prevent judicial protection of Palestinian land rights, Orthodox factions want to obstruct judicial support for military conscription for yeshiva students, and Netanyahu wants to avoid prison.

Tensions are already at detonation point in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Hassan Nasrallah has been noisily agitating for war, while Israel has stepped up attacks on Hezbollah-aligned militias in Syria. The creation of Jewish-extremist paramilitary factions is an inauspicious development in a region already overflowing with such forces in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen. Such proliferation of unaccountable militias with mutually hostile agendas, backed by ultranationalists, radical regimes, and terrorist sponsors, is a recipe for engulfing the region in terminal chaos. Netanyahu has been a blight on regional politics since his tireless 1990s efforts to kill off the Oslo process. He is a self-serving extremist. But real power is in the hands of figures such as Ben-Gvir and Smotrich, who take deranged extremism to whole new levels - seeing radical armed settlers and mafiosi militias as their route to consolidating power, expanding territory, and crushing their enemies. We should be fearful for the future.

Arab News

Brexit Britain is finally breaking free from the EU's declining status quo

Robert Tombsi

A favourite question that Remainers, with an air of triumph, ask people like me is: "What single practical benefit have we gained from Brexit?" Now that we are joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Partnership (CPTPP), the world's most dynamic economic grouping, the question is obsolete. Brexit was never just about trade, but neither was it intended (to borrow another Remainer catchphrase) to make us poorer.

The statistics speak for themselves. With British membership, the CPTPP may well now be bigger than the remaining EU, and it is certainly growing faster. So are our exports to it, which even before membership have reached £60 billion a year. And our imports will be cheaper.

But Remainers dislike the CPTPP as a barrier to reintegration into the EU, and so are either ignoring it (as the BBC did on Friday morning in its main news bulletin), searching for downsides, or merely dismissing it as economically negligible. But it is undeniably an opportunity of a kind the EU has long ceased to offer. And unlike the EU, the CPTPP has no ambition to statehood, legal sovereignty, or control of trade policy. The EU is still a major partner - or rather, the six EU states with which we do significant trade are. After some post-Brexit disruption, levels of trade with them have largely recovered. Nevertheless, our exports to EU countries have been

essentially stagnant for 20 years, and as a proportion of total exports have steadily dwindled.

The EU was never a good fit for our exporters, and financial and other services - our special strengths - derived little benefit. Consequently, we had a huge structural trade deficit. In contrast, we already have a trade surplus with the CPTPP. Britain was not alone in finding the EU disappointing. Not only has southern Europe been blighted for decades, but by some estimates every country joining the EU (including Britain) has experienced a decline in economic growth after accession. Common sense and the broad national interest require us to shift the emphasis of our trade to more dynamic, more profitable, and less restrictive markets.

Those who predicted economic disaster from Brexit insisted that this was impossible. There was even an economic theory - the "gravity model" - used to suggest that we must cling to the EU. This is weak economics, and even worse history. Since the 18th century, Britain has been a pioneer global trader - the most outward-looking of European states. Even in the days of sail, our biggest single 19th-century export was cloth to India. Victorian living standards were transformed by wheat from North America, beef from Argentina, lamb from New Zealand, butter from Australia. By joining the Common Market in 1973, we shifted away from global trade under the illusion that postwar Europe was perma-

nently booming. Those wishing to push us back towards a Eurocentric trading system are harking back to the illusions of the 1950s.

The CPTPP is a recognition of a rapidly changing political as well as economic world. We are not the only European country to contemplate a "tilt" to the Asia-Pacific, as Asia resumes the position within the global economy that it occupied throughout most of human history. Both Germany and France have signalled the same shift. President Macron observed that "the 20th century was continental ... the 21st will be oceanic. That is where the power and geopolitics of tomorrow are being played out." He has theorised, but Britain has acted. Our tilt is political and strategic as well as economic. The rise of China was something that the West thought that it could accommodate. But the Chinese regime has chosen an aggressive pursuit of world hegemony, bullying its neighbours, and bribing greedy governments and institutions. It has formed a bizarre alliance of despots with Russia and Iran, threatening the world order.

Britain, with global ties and global interests, cannot ignore this. The Aukus pact with Australia and the United States offers a way of deterring Chinese aggression by controlling its vital sea routes. Our new defence relationship with Japan recalls our first modern alliance, concluded in 1902 to resist Russia. The CPTPP offers an economic buttress against

predatory states which parallels the developing security relationship. Together, they offer the possibility of an alternative trade and security system based around economic and political freedoms. Promiscuous globalisation is finished. We need to form economic as well as security relationships with friendly states. If the world is again to be divided into blocs, we need our own.

At home, these developments give welcome signs that the Government - or some of its members - have a coherent vision, and can at last offer the country a positive post-Brexit narrative: yes, this is what Brexit is for - to permit us to respond to a changing world, rather than sticking to a declining status quo. Though the idea of Aukus came from Australia, Britain seized it, and credit must go in large part to Ben Wallace and Boris Johnson. Most of the increase in our defence expenditure is going into the submarine programme. It is right not to be diverted by the war in Ukraine into prioritising our army, when we have the two most effective armies on the Continent - the Ukrainian and the Polish - between us and Russia. We need to support them with arms and intelligence, but our primary strategic aim must be to provide sea and air power both in Europe and the Pacific. Here we have begun, but need to do much more. The CPTPP is the other side of the coin, and the persistence with which it had been pursued and now completed shows

what can be done with ambitious and active political leadership. The start was made by Liam Fox, and the deal has been successfully delivered through the determination of Kemi Badenoch, whose stock will certainly rise further.

Are we now out of the Brexit wood? There is still reason to be watchful. The Government and its advisers seem to be pulling in different directions. There are Remain influences who see alignment with the EU as inevitable. The Windsor Framework gives them ways to keep Britain in the legal grasp of Brussels. There are officials pressing for an EU defence network, though the ineffectiveness of the EU over Ukraine suggests that there is nothing much to attract us. The Prime Minister seems to have acceded to Emmanuel Macron's plan for a European Political Community - a French scheme for boosting their own influence that has been kicking around for decades. But Aukus and the CPTPP have set an entirely different trajectory, diverging in fundamental ways from the EU status quo.

So now come the tests. Is the Government going to pursue the downgrading of obsolete EU laws or not? Is it allowing gene editing which the EU bans? How much divergence from EU rules will the CPTPP require? And what happens when such divergence crashes into the Windsor Framework? Is Northern Ireland regarded as expendable? Or is it hoped that its people will vote to scrap the Northern Ireland

Protocol? Criticisms of the CPTPP from Remainers have already started, backed by the usual lobbies. We can expect objections to be raised again to food imports from Canada and Australasia, even though we cannot feed ourselves, we have serious food inflation, and Australian cattle are free-range feeding on grass (I've spent time on a Queensland cattle station). Yet the same lobbies see no problem with unlimited subsidised imports of factory-farmed produce from the EU, including "Irish" beef fattened in feeding lots.

Signing trade agreements is excellent, but they can only give opportunities that then have to be seized. We have to be more productive and competitive, and this needs serious "levelling up" through investment in infrastructure and in people through education and training. Yet we continue pouring resources into the insatiable maw of Labour's white elephant, HS2. We desperately need a credible energy policy. Is there another country anywhere that would hesitate to back its own manufacturer of modular nuclear reactors, as the Government has so far failed to back Rolls-Royce? The strategic and economic stakes are huge. If we continue to have Europe's most expensive energy and trust madly optimistic forecasts from green energy campaigners, we can forget about global trade opportunities, however many deals we sign. But let's be optimistic. The country seemed rudderless and defeated. Now we have some reason to hope.

The Telegraph

Prosecuting Trump is right. But is it politically wise?

Simon Jenkins

THE best reason for arraigning Donald Trump in New York this week is that he is guilty. It is possible that the jury might agree and he might go quietly to jail, thus being unable to return to the White House were he to be elected. That is a good reason, but it does not make it a wise one. American justice is not political but it can be highly politicised.

We won't know until Tuesday afternoon what exactly Trump has been indicted on, but many assume he will face charges of falsely concealing "hush money" paid to the former adult film actor Stormy Daniels. The case was brought by an elected Democratic district attorney, Alvin Bragg. It comes more than six years after the alleged offence occurred, and at the start of Trump's campaign for the 2024 Republican nomination for president. At the very least, this does not look coincidental.

Most observers had reached the view that

Trump the politician was over the hill. His rallies were tired and his speeches meandering. New Republican hopefuls for 2024 were on the horizon, notably Florida's Ron DeSantis and former vice-president Mike Pence, both of whom have publicly criticised Trump for refusing to concede the 2020 election. Continued reports of his many misdemeanours would surely lead Republicans to accept his days were over.

Legal analysis of this week's case against Trump suggests there are serious obstacles in the way of his ending up in prison. A law professor and former prosecutor, Jeffrey Bellin, has pointed out that falsifying accounts can have numerous mitigating factors. Any judge and jury, even in New York, will be aware of the political perils of jailing an ex-president, not least for crimes ostensibly less awful than those for which President Nixon was excused. Were Trump to be on trial for interfering in the Georgia poll or inciting a riotous

assault on the Capitol, it might be different. But Republicans find it hard to disagree with Trump's claim that the New York case is a witch-hunt that amounts to "political persecution and electoral interference".

Meanwhile, Trump's team have treated the indictment as the best adrenaline boost a populist could ask for. It has given them a platform, an enemy and a cause. They even planned T-shirts with Trump's mugshot on them. The Republican party's belief in its hero might have waned, but now Pence and DeSantis have had to declare the trial "outrageous" and "un-American", while the party's leaders in Congress lined up to decry the "injustice".

This includes those who outspokenly opposed Trump's challenge to his 2020 defeat. Public opinion has vindicated this second coming. YouGov reports 57% of Republicans are now for

Trump, against just 31% for DeSantis. A Harvard CAPs/Harris poll has Trump four points ahead even of Biden. The roughly third of American voters who had remained loyal to him now agree with DeSantis: the Democratic party has "[weaponised] the legal system to advance a political agenda". As one southern churchgoer said with a smile when asked if she would still support Trump after the Stormy Daniels revelations: "We are all sinners, aren't we?"

Trump's political appeal has been built on promoting a boisterous self-confidence in defence of the huddled masses of "middle America" against the so-called liberal elites of New York and Washington. He contrasts "ordinary Americans" with the college-educated, media-driven, woke-obsessed lefties of the east coast and big government. He cries: "I am your warrior. I am your justice." An ill-defined "they" are said to

have stolen the 2020 presidential election and they mean to steal the next one. To Trump his trial is "straight out of the Stalinist Russian horror show".

Democrats must now hope they can damage him on the stage of a high-profile legal theatre as they have not done before the court of public opinion. The strategy must be to see him exploit the trial sufficiently to see off the potentially more electable DeSantis but not enough to win a second contest against Joe Biden. In other words, they are reckoning on 18 months of personalised political viciousness, while the outside world struggles with the twin horrors of global trade wars and an escalating conflict in Ukraine.

The one salutary message to liberals of all stripes is that it is dangerous in any democracy to dismiss out of hand large numbers of those with whom they disagree. They will nurse their grievances unheard in provincial haunts far from the capital

until, sooner or later, they find someone to sympathise with them, someone to listen. This applies in Europe as in the US. As the psephologist Matthew Goodwin has pointed out, if Britain's Labour party is to hold on to its lead it must beware of capture by groups such as those Trump derides: the graduates, the government-employed, the capital city-oriented. They made it "even easier for Nigel Farage, the Brexiters, and then Boris to speak loudly and clearly to their instinctive desire for a more communitarian, nation-first brand of politics". This brand has not gone away and remains the biggest threat to Keir Starmer. He need not agree with them, but he must listen.

A large number of Americans clearly like and trust Donald Trump. They appear to do so more than they trust a New York judge. This is alarming. It has presented not just the US, but the entire western political community with a potential crisis of leadership.

Will America continue to act as the world’s policeman?

BACK in the 1990s, if there was such a thing as the world's policeman, then it was the US. This was the American moment, not least in the Middle East. The Soviet Union had collapsed, Russia was in crisis and the sleeping dragon of China was only just awakening. The questions many ask nowadays revolve around whether the US even wants this role part time anymore? Does the world need a policeman? States are meant to be equal, but of course they are not. And what happens if the US totally abandons such a function? Does China try to step in?

America's reputation is far from pristine. It made telling interventions for the better in both world wars. It was instrumental in the liberation of Kuwait in 1991. Without America's role in the Balkans, things may have been considerably worse. But against that, many people see the US as having acted as a bully. They remember Guantanamo Bay, Abu Ghraib and extraordinary rendition. And what about when the US and others did absolutely nothing, as in Rwanda? Things went downhill for the US after 9/11. It saddled itself with two costly, lengthy interventions in Afghanistan and then Iraq. The former was initially broadly supported internationally. The latter certainly was not and ate away at America's credibility and reputation. The cost in blood and treasure was gargantuan, but what really changed was the crushing of US domestic support for adventurism overseas. That said, America's withdrawals from Iraq and Afghanistan did not bring order and security. Far from it.

The one and only thing that

unites the last three American presidents is that they all understood the public mood no longer tolerated such rash adventures. Barack Obama balked at intervening in Syria in 2015 after the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime. He was also a reluctant backseat driver in the Libya intervention of 2011. Donald Trump wanted to pull US forces out from most of the world, including Europe, the Middle East and Afghanistan. Only push-back from the Pentagon and others prevented this. Famously, he recalled US planes moments before they bombed Iran. Nothing suggests he has abandoned this isolationist instinct.

Joe Biden has also tended to be more domestic-focused. The US exit from Afghanistan was handled disastrously, hardly elevating the country's prestige globally. However, like his predecessors, he knows where the votes lie and they do not come from interventions in the Middle East. Whatever President Vladimir Putin of Russia may say or think, Biden was not looking for a confrontation with Russia over Ukraine. Nothing indicated this at all. In fact, it was probably Putin's calculation that the US and Europe were weak and would not oppose his actions that led him to make this gamble last year. Biden and others showed there were limits to their isolationism. Formally, there is no role for a global policeman. Many ask why the US gets the job. It hardly has a perfect record. Its foreign policy is saturated with inconsistent positions and contradictions. It rails against countries like Iran, North Korea and Iraq for their

weapons programs, but says nothing about Israel's.

The reality is that the US will act like all other states - in its own interests and those interests alone. It does at least understand that allies matter and that, although imperfectly applied, the international rules-based order matters. China is becoming more assertive. The days of Deng Xiaoping's philosophy of "hide your strength and bide your time" have ended. It has built up its soft power, aware that its strength emanates from its economic position. Back in 2000, the Chinese economy was just 12 percent the size of America's. It shows more patience than many democratic countries by playing a long game, largely astutely. But it will ruthlessly pursue its own interests, just as rivals the US and Russia do.

Russia has, for the time being, fallen on its own sword. Whether or not it prevails in Ukraine to some degree, it has reunited NATO and, to an extent, Europe. It had found itself under massive sanctions, largely isolated and weakened. Its influence on European politics has plummeted. Its woeful military performance has raised eyebrows. It will remain a player but will take many years to recover from this. But the US will still matter. Any weakness is more about political reality rather than any absence of military or economic might. In major zones of tensions, its heft can be vital. India and Pakistan, two nuclear powers, have faced off against each other but the US helped de-escalate. This is the sort of occasion that it can, in concert with others, play a positive role as policeman. The

European effort over Ukraine is pitiful in comparison to the American contribution. If the US does not engage, other powers do not. If a genocide is ongoing, other powers look to the US to take the lead, as typically they do not have the military or economic muscle to act alone.

None of the three major powers attract huge acclaim. A recent poll of Britons, French and Germans aged between 18 and 29 found they had little positive to say about either the US or China. It raises the question as to how the UN Security Council functions or otherwise. It remains unrepresentative of the current world order, with India and other states pushing their case for inclusion. Sadly, talk about reform has continued for years, but with zero change. In light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the UNSC will remain a divided and ultimately useless body for years to come. It is not realistic to see the US and Russia agreeing on much at all.

This great power rivalry needs managing, but also calming. Wars have damaged the US this century and Russia is paying a heavy price for its Ukraine gamble. Medium and small states will have to cajole them into cooperation and away from confrontation. Blocs like the EU must play their role and not be timid on the world stage. Middle Eastern states should likewise be wary. Collectively, they must find areas where these powers will cooperate constructively and build trust. They need to steer the big players in a productive direction and persuade them that their best bet is to invest in conflict prevention and resolution, while finding ways to manage their rivalries and not needlessly antagonize each other.



Republicans can’t agree on a path out of their own debt crisis

IT'S been obvious for months that Republicans in the House of Representatives intend to lead the country toward a calamitous debt ceiling crisis in order to get their way on spending. Only in the last few weeks, however, has it become clear just how truly chaotic that process will be. Republicans, it turns out, don't even know what they want in exchange for dropping their threat to cause a default, beyond a fuzzy shared goal of cutting federal spending. Even if President Biden and the Democrats were inclined to negotiate with them to lift the debt ceiling - which would be a serious mistake - it's not clear who their negotiating partners would be. The House has become so factionalized that its leaders cannot speak in one voice, and Speaker Kevin McCarthy may not be able to assemble a majority to lift the debt ceiling at all.

"I don't see how we get there," said Patrick McHenry, a Republican of North Carolina and the chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, who is close to Mr. McCarthy. "And this is a marked change from where I've been. I don't even see a path." The ceiling is a useless legislative construct that lets lawmakers refuse to borrow money to pay for the deficit spending they already approved. If Congress doesn't raise it, the government goes into default and can't make payments on its obligations, including interest on Treasury bonds, Social Security payments and other essential spending, which would quickly crash the US economy. It generally comes up as an issue only when Republicans control at least one house of Congress while a Democrat is in the White House; Republicans are not known to express concern about deficits caused when a president of their own party cuts taxes for the rich. When the G.O.P. took control of the House in January, Mr. McCarthy had to meet the demands of a handful of far-right members to get their votes to become speaker. One of his concessions was a promise not to raise the debt ceiling unless there was an agreement to balance the budget within 10 years by cutting the heart out of the federal government.

That extreme demand was so unrealistic that it is no longer being seriously discussed by House officials. Achieving balance that quickly without raising taxes would mean that all spending, including for defense, veterans, Social Security and Medicare, would have to be cut by 26 percent, as even the spending hawks at the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget noted earlier this year. Exempting those four categories would require cutting everything else by 85 percent. Both levels are unimaginable. But what will replace that ultimatum? So far, there has been a cacophony of proposals from the so-called five families representing different

David Firestone

gradations of small government ideology in the House Republican conference, all vague and lacking details of what members really want to cut. The Republican Study Committee, a prominent group of House conservatives, issued a "playbook" full of tired ideas like cutting waste, fraud and abuse and rolling back recent spending approved by Democrats. The head of the slightly more centrist Main Street Caucus, Dusty Johnson of South Dakota, has talked about going back to spending levels from two years ago, without saying which federal programs will be forced to ignore record-setting inflation. The worst, inevitably, was from the MAGA faction known as the House Freedom Caucus, which wants to go back to either 2019 or 2022 spending levels (it's not clear which), allow 1 percent growth each year and cut \$3 trillion from what it calls "the wasteful, woke and weaponized federal bureaucracy." The proposal manages to invoke all the favorite phrases from the Trump era without telling people that it will mean drastic reductions to homeland security, defense, disaster response, law enforcement and environmental cleanup, among other vital categories.

This is the endless failure of the modern Republican Party. Cutting spending as a concept might sound attractive to many voters until you explain what you're actually cutting and what effect it would have. They cut taxes so they can then rail about the resulting deficits, but don't want to discuss how many veterans won't get care or whose damaged homes won't get rebuilt or which dangerous products won't get recalled. That's why there is still no official budget statement from the House G.O.P., because its different factions can't agree on how open they should be about the results. The details of austerity are unpopular, and it's easier to just issue fiery news releases. In early March, the Biden administration issued a 2024 budget that forthrightly declared how it planned to reduce the deficit: With \$5 trillion in tax increases on the rich and on large corporations over the next decade. It would spend more money on health care for the poor and uninsured, child care, Pell grants and free community college, climate resilience, the military and alliances like NATO. The White House proposal hasn't a chance, of course, as long as Republicans control the House, but at least it represented a clear statement of principles and priorities, unlike the mush trickling out of the G.O.P. caucus.

To mask his chamber's dysfunction, Mr. McCarthy issued a letter on Tuesday that tried to put the blame on Mr. Biden. The speaker accused the president of being "completely missing in action" on debt ceiling negotiation and said he remained willing to talk about raising the ceiling in

exchange for cuts like reducing "excessive" non-defense spending (no details) and strengthening work requirements for unspecified federal benefits. (He undoubtedly meant Medicaid and food stamps, but he didn't choose to put that in writing.) He also put his party's energy and border policies on the table, knowing he cannot achieve them through any tactic other than hostage taking.

But Mr. Biden says he won't let the government and the economy be blackmailed, and he has adamantly rejected the demand that he discuss terms for raising the ceiling. He says it has to be raised cleanly, with no conditions, just as it was three times during the Trump administration. The last time a Democrat negotiated with Republicans over the ceiling was in 2011, when President Barack Obama capitulated and agreed to a deal that created the notorious "supercommittee" to agree on cuts and imposed a stark sequester of spending when the committee couldn't agree. Almost everyone hated that deal, and Mr. Obama vowed never to negotiate again, an important principle adopted by his vice president. That doesn't mean Mr. Biden shouldn't negotiate about the budget and spending, a separate process that is part of the normal give and take between the White House and Congress. But he can't do that under a threat of economic catastrophe, and even Republicans are starting to wonder how they will avert it. Tom Cole of Oklahoma, chairman of the House Rules Committee, said a few days ago that several House members will never vote for any debt ceiling increase, "even if we gave them everything they wanted." Mr. McHenry said he had never been more pessimistic about reaching an agreement. Democrats say privately that with the debt ceiling deadline probably arriving this summer, they are counting on mounting pressure from financial markets, already jittery from the recent banking crisis, as well as business lobbyists, to persuade enough Republicans to join Democrats in ending the threat at the last minute. Maybe, but with the radical mind-set that now pervades the House, it's hard to count on that.

In the end, the best solution is to eliminate the debt ceiling charade once and for all. There are bills in Congress to do so, though few Republicans would support them. And there was a strong argument during the Obama years to test the constitutionality of the ceiling in court, since it appears to violate the 14th Amendment, a tactic still worth trying. Mr. Biden, however, has shown no interest in pursuing that path, and seems to be hoping that this year, Republicans will finally learn that the debt ceiling is not a tool for leverage, because the cost for using it is too high. The country can only brace itself and hope he's right.

The New York Times

Why this is Rahul Gandhi’s crowning political moment in India

RAHUL Gandhi is in Surat, Gujarat today. He is likely to move a plea in the sessions court to set aside the Magistrate order convicting him in a defamation case. More than six years ago, I wrote a column explaining that Rahul Gandhi needs one electoral success to be India's, Justin Trudeau. Though that electoral success is yet to come, India's political class has already accepted Rahul Gandhi as the only secular alternative against the majoritarian nationalist ideology in India.

The Congress Party has been India's principal opposition party for nine years, and Rahul Gandhi is its tallest leader. In any other democratic political landscape, there wouldn't have been any confusion over who should lead the country if the party in power gets defeated in the election. But, since the 2014 election, India's politics and political discourse are not normal. Rahul Gandhi has been the primary voice of opposition to the present government. Whether it is demonetisation or GST, Land Bill or Farm Laws, Abrogation of Article 370 or Citizenship Amendment Bill, Rafale Deal or Hindenburg papers on Adani, the pandemic or job crisis, Rahul Gandhi has always been at the forefront of taking the government to task.

Unlike many other opposition leaders, his criticisms of what he thinks are wrong government policies have never been diluted due to fear of being branded by the ruling party leaders and pro-

government media as 'unpatriotic' or 'anti-majority'. At the same time, as expected, he has been the main target of attacks from the party in power, its supporters, and its controlled media. Dozens of cases have been filed against him in different parts of India. He was the only national-level politician whose phone was allegedly being tapped using military-grade snooping software. The ruling party's social media cell has used all sorts of means to denigrate him in any manner possible. He has never made any political deal with the people now in power. Though Rahul Gandhi remains their prime target, the governing machinery simultaneously has manufactured an impression that he lacks the political acumen and stature to compete successfully with its leadership. This tactic of people in power primarily builds a TINA (there is no alternative) factor in helping their political domination.

However, many political commentators in India have also fallen into this trap knowingly or unknowingly. They keep questioning whether Rahul Gandhi was willing and determined to be a successful politician in the country's rugged and rough political terrain. When Rahul Gandhi started his 144-day foot march, 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', across nearly 4000 kilometres - from Kanyakumari to Srinagar on 7 September 2022, many political commentators doubted that he would walk the

Ashok Swain

entire course. This 'Right is Wrong' column was the first to be published anywhere to envisage the success of the Yatra in creating an alternative discourse for political mobilisation in the country, and that it did.

The spectacular success of Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Yatra surprised many of his critics; Rahul Gandhi not only walked almost 4000 kilometres, which no other politician has done anywhere in the world in this century, but his message of democracy, secularism, unity, and tolerance also attracted large crowds. The Yatra took away any doubt anyone had about his crowd-pulling ability, tenacity, and simplicity. Immediately after the Bharat Jodo Yatra, the Hindenburg report gave Rahul Gandhi powerful ammunition to take on the government for its perceived links with the Adani Group. He has consistently criticised the present ruling establishment's support of the Adani group for years. The release of the Hindenburg report and its aftermath raised his credibility as a serious politician with a better understanding of economic and political issues. His rising popularity among voters and growing acceptance among other opposition parties brought nervousness within the ruling establishment. Thus, an old and inconsequential case has been used to sentence him to two years in jail, and using that court ruling, he has been disqualified from the Parliament.

The vindictive actions against Rahul Gandhi have brought a larger unity among the opposition parties as they are genuinely worried about what may happen to them soon. In Indian politics, the sympathy factor also plays a significant role. Jail sentences, disqualification from the Parliament, and withdrawal of government accommodation are being seen by the people that a high-handed government is victimising Rahul Gandhi. This sympathy wave has created nervousness in the ruling BJP.

Rahul Gandhi understands well the political advantage he has received on a platter, so instead of being cowed down; he has doubled down his attacks against the majoritarian forces. India's ruling establishment, due to its folly, has transformed Rahul into a Gandhi. Rahul Gandhi is not anymore a reluctant political dynast but a daring mass leader who uses self-sacrifice as a political weapon and is not afraid to take on a mighty political machinery. Unlike the commentators or other opposition party leaders, Rahul Gandhi is least interested in short-term calculations, and he is engaged in a long-drawn-out fight with the majoritarian forces in the country. He knows time is on his side, and there is a time limit for the popular support of majoritarian populism. His fight is more ideological than political, and he understands that the ideological rather than tactical defeat of majoritarian forces is long-term and sustainable for the country.

The Guardian

Why the oil industry is part of the climate change solution

THE Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change last month released its latest alarming report, warning that "there is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a livable and sustainable future for all." Few journalists read past this apocalyptic warning, especially those committed to the demonization of the oil industry as the ultimate villain in the battle to save the human race from ... well, from itself, really, given that each and every one of us, including the hypocritical critics of that industry, benefit in multiple ways from the products generated by it.

As an opinion piece in the Guardian put it, the IPCC report had "drawn the battle lines" for the "crunch" COP28 climate negotiations to be held this November in Abu Dhabi. The choice, opined the writer, boiled down to this: "Oil profits or a livable future." But this is, of course, a false choice, a one-or-the-other fallacy that limits the available options in a way that suits only headline writers and those committed to black-and-white, siloed thinking.

The truth of this is buried deep within the IPCC report, which recognizes that there are "multiple, feasible and effective options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to human-caused climate change, and they are available now." And guess what? Many of those options are in the hands of, and being developed by, the oil industry, thanks to research being funded by - whisper it - the much-resented profits from oil.

By now, the entire world acknowledges the need to transition from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy. But the inescapable reality is that, in the absence of immediately available sustainable alternatives, capable of powering the world for 24 hours each and every day, oil and gas must continue to supply the global energy needs during the period of transition. The oil giants, fully aware that fossil fuel reserves will likely expire within the lifetime of a child born today, are already funding research and development into sustainable energy sources - wind, solar, large-scale energy storage options, and so on.

But less well known is the industry's focus on developing carbon capture solutions, a vital technology that could reduce the impact of the need to continue using fossil fuels during the transition period. Saudi Arabia's Aramco, for instance, began research into this in 2010. Quite simply, it says, "we believe carbon capture utilization and storage will play a key role in global efforts to reduce emissions, while ensuring the world can continue to thrive."

Today, Aramco captures and processes up to 45 million cubic feet of carbon dioxide every day, pumping it 85 km from its plant at Hawiyah and storing it underground in the Uthmaniyah oil reservoir. In the UAE, the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company has been operating and learning from its Al-Reyadah commercial-scale carbon capture, utilization and storage facility since 2016, processing the carbon dioxide

Jonathan Gornall

captured from Emirates Steel Industries, which is then injected into and stored in onshore oilfields. Now, ADNOC is on course to expand its carbon dioxide capture capability by more than 500 percent and it plans to utilize the carbon captured from gas processing plants in the production of green hydrogen fuel. Other scientists and engineers around the world are also racing to develop carbon capture technologies that could dramatically reduce carbon dioxide emissions from car exhausts, ships, aircraft engines, factories and so on. This would bring the world back from the climate change brink, while allowing all of us to continue benefiting from fossil fuels until supplies run out naturally and sustainable technologies are sufficiently mature to take up the slack. Days after the IPCC report, Britain's Energy Secretary Grant Shapps unveiled the "Powering up Britain" strategy, at the heart of which are plans to balance the extraction of oil and gas from under the North Sea with the capture and storage of vast amounts of carbon in the huge caverns from which the fossil fuels are extracted.

The response from those baying for an immediate end to all new oil production was as depressing as it was predictable. Shapps countered that, "unless you can explain how we can transition to net zero without oil and gas, we need oil and gas." He highlighted government plans to invest £20 billion (£24.7 billion) in technology, including capture and storage, to reduce the country's car-

bon emissions. The evidence supporting carbon capture as a viable, if not vital, weapon in the battle against global warming can be found in the following sentence in the latest IPCC report. "In global modeled pathways that limit warming to 2 degrees Celsius or below, almost all electricity is supplied from zero or low-carbon sources in 2050, such as renewables, or" - and here is the punchline - "fossil fuels with carbon dioxide capture and storage."

The IPCC goes further, pointing out that carbon dioxide capture and subsurface injection is already a mature technology used for enhanced oil recovery, estimating that the global geological storage capacity is in the order of 1,000 billion tons of carbon dioxide - "more than the carbon dioxide storage requirements through 2100 to limit global warming to 1.5 C." So, what's the problem? The IPCC has an answer for this, too. Implementation of carbon capture and storage, it says, "currently faces technological, economic, institutional, ecological, environmental and sociocultural barriers." In other words, governments afraid of ill-informed but extremely vocal, vote-wielding protest groups are hesitating to invest in and make use of what could prove to be one of the best weapons we possess in the battle against climate change. Throwing ourselves utterly on the mercy of renewables right now would spell disaster - and doing so while turning a blind eye to better ways of using the fossil fuels the world still depends on would amount to criminal negligence.

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PSX loses 202.64 points, closing at 39,687.26 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) declined by 202.64 points on Tuesday, showing a negative change of 0.51 percent, closing at 39,687.26 points against 39,889.90 points the previous day.

A total of 83,255,062 shares were traded during the day as compared to 74,430,002 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 2.186 billion against Rs 1.750 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 318 companies transacted their shares

in the stock market; 108 of them recorded gains and 190 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 20 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Telecard Limited with 10,944,500 shares at Rs 8.04 per share, Pak Petroleum with 6,695,989 shares at Rs63.02 per share, and Hascol Petrol with 5,786,000 shares at Rs 5.97 per share.

Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 97.50 per share price, closing at Rs 5115.00,

whereas the runner-up was Khyber Textile with a Rs 34.44 rise in its per share price to Rs 493.70.

Sapphire Fiber witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs 75.68 per share closing at Rs 942.10, followed by Bhanero Tex with a Rs 74.75 decline to close at Rs 925.25.

Gold prices increase by Rs.5000 to Rs. 214,500 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 5000 and was sold at Rs 214,500 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs. 209,500 the previous day, All Sindh

Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 4288 to Rs 183,900 from Rs 179,612, whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went up to Rs 168,575 from Rs 164,645.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs 100 to close at Rs 2450 and that of ten-gram silver also surged by Rs 85.47 to Rs 2100.48.

The price of gold in the international market rose by US\$ 12 to \$1982 against its sale at \$1970, the association reported.

Trade deficit narrows by 35.51% in 9 months of current fiscal year

ISLAMABAD (APP): The trade deficit witnessed a decline of 35.51 percent during the first nine months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The trade deficit during July-March (2022-23) was recorded at \$22.900 billion against the deficit of \$35.509 billion in July-

March (2021-22), a decline of 35.51 percent.

The exports during the period were recorded at \$21.046 billion against \$23.350 billion last year, showing a decline of 9.87 percent.

On the other hand, the imports witnessed a sharp decline of 25.34 percent falling from \$58.859 billion last year to \$43.946 billion during the current

fiscal year.

On a year-on-year basis, the exports from the country witnessed a decline of 14.76 percent and were recorded at \$2.367 billion in March 2023 against the exports of \$2.777 billion in March 2022.

The imports also decreased to \$3.828 billion from \$6.407 billion in March 2022, showing negative growth of 40.25

percent.

On a month-on-month basis, the exports during March 2023 however increased by 8.03 percent when compared to the exports of \$2.191 billion in February 2023.

The imports into the country declined by 5.11 percent in March 2023 as compared to the imports of \$4.034 billion in February 2023, according to the data.

Saudi business activity in March keeps up momentum: PMI report

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi private sector output and new businesses creation saw a marked increase in March, leading to surge in staffing across all sectors and employment growth that was among the strongest seen in the past five years, an economy tracker has revealed.

The latest Riyadh Bank Saudi Arabia Purchasing Managers' Index report, formerly known as the S&P Global Saudi Arabia PMI, revealed the Kingdom's metric hit 58.7, a strong indication that the ongoing economic diversification efforts are progressing steadily.

According to the index, PMI readings above the 50-mark show non-oil private sector growth, while those

below 50 signal contraction. "Business conditions remain strongly positive at the end of the first quarter of 2023 as improving market conditions and increased development spending helped to boost demand in the non-oil private sector," said Naif Al-Ghaith, chief economist at Riyadh Bank in the report.

The Kingdom's PMI, however, slightly slowed down from February, when it marked an eight-year record figure of 59.8.

In January, the Kingdom's PMI was 58.2, while in December, it stood at 56.9. The rise in Saudi Arabia's PMI over the past few months, which is a direct indication of robust private sector growth, has also

helped the Kingdom to reduce the unemployment rate. A new report released by the General Authority for Statistics has revealed that unemployment among Saudis is at its lowest level since records began in 1991.

The rate fell to 8 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022, from 9.9 percent in the previous three months.

For the Saudi government, job creation is a key part of the Vision 2030 economic agenda to cut the Kingdom's decades-old reliance on oil.

The PMI survey further noted that non-oil companies in Saudi Arabia saw a sharp uplift in new business intakes in March, as improving market conditions and increased devel-

opment spending helped to boost demand, while some companies opined that a relatively mild increase in output prices had supported sales growth.

"Non-oil firms continued to see a strong improvement in demand from foreign customers for two reasons. First, the improvement in industrial landscape has created positive grounds for producers to diversify their production lines and compete in foreign markets, enlarging their market share.

Secondly, the recent depreciation of the US Dollar made those goods more affordable and accessible to a number of inflation-torn economies," said Al-Ghaith.



HYDERABAD: A large number of customers purchasing watermelons from vendor at fruits market.

Rupee sheds Rs2.25 against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan rupee weakened by Rs2.25 against the Dollar in the interbank trading on Tuesday and closed at Rs 287.29 against the previous day's closing of Rs 285.04.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 288.5 and Rs 291 respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs 4.54 which closed at Rs 313.43 against the last day's closing of Rs308.89, according to the State Bank of Pakistan.

The Japanese Yen gained 3 paises to close at Rs 2.16; whereas an increase of Rs 6.18 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs 357.33 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs 351.15.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham increased by 61 paises to close at Rs 78.22 and Saudi Riyal witnessed an increase of 65 paises to close at Rs 76.59.

Vietnam earnings \$935m from exports

HANOI (APP): Vietnam earned 935 million US dollars from exports of fruit and vegetables in the first quarter this year, 10.6 percent higher than a year earlier, in defiance of a gloomier forecast for the country's export-led economy, according to the country's General Statistics Office.

Fresh produce exports, a key source of hard currency for the Southeast Asian country, has shown resilience in the face of sluggish exports which curbed the country's economic expansion in the first quarter, said the Vietnam Fruit & Vegetable Association (Vinafruit).

Shipments of fruit and vegetables to China, which normally accounts for up to 60 percent of Vietnam's total annual earnings, grew the most in the period at around 23 percent, according to the association.

Vietnam aims to promote durian as the key fruit to boost its export value to 1 billion US dollars after durian exports boomed to a record high of 420 million US dollars in 2022, largely as a result of the rapid growth of demand in China, Vinafruit general secretary Dang Phuc Nguyen said.

Cotton futures close higher

ZHENGZHOU (APP): Cotton futures closed higher Tuesday in daytime trading on the Zhengzhou Commodity Exchange. The most active cotton contract for May 2023 delivery gained 20 yuan to close at 14,365 yuan per tonne.

On Tuesday, the total trading volume for six listed cotton futures contracts on the ZCE was 439,915 lots with a turnover of 31.76 billion yuan.

As the world's largest producer, consumer and exporter of textile, China listed cotton futures on ZCE in June 2004, helping cotton-related enterprises hedge the price risk.

Asian markets swing as oil surge weighs on Fed rate hopes

HONG KONG (AFP/APP):

Asian markets were mixed Tuesday as concerns about the impact of surging oil prices on inflation offset data indicating a slowing US economy that could allow the Federal Reserve to slow its interest rate hikes.

Crude held on to Monday's surge of more than six percent that came after top producers announced a surprise output cut, providing a fresh headache to central bankers as they battle inflation.

Regional investors were given a positive lead from Wall Street, where the S&P 500 and Dow chalked up healthy gains after a closely watched gauge of US factory activity from the Institute for Supply Management missed forecasts and showed a fifth consecutive month of contraction.

Analysts said the figures suggested the world's top economy was showing signs of slowing down and could give the Fed room to ease up on its rate hiking

cycle.

Eyes are now on US jobs data due Friday will provide the latest snapshot of the economy and the effects of monetary tightening.

Last month's turmoil in the banking sector had increased bets that monetary policymakers would pause their tightening early, while news Friday that US inflation -- as judged by the Fed's favoured measure -- eased further in February had given dealers an extra spring.

However, OPEC's shock weekend announcement of a production cut of more than a million barrels a day sent inflation fears soaring again as oil prices jumped more than six percent.

"The services ISM equivalent on Wednesday will, realistically, be more telling about the state of the US economy (and inflation) than (Monday's) release," said National Australia Bank's Ray Attrill.

"But that hasn't stopped markets from lifting (their)

US recession probabilities, something to which higher oil prices were already contributing earlier Monday."

Fed St Louis president James Bullard told Bloomberg News that the move could make the bank's task harder, but added: "Whether it will have a lasting impact I think is an open question."

In early trade, Asia markets fluctuated.

Tokyo, Shanghai, Singapore, Seoul and Wellington were in the green but there were losses in Hong Kong after five days of gains.

Sydney was down ahead of a Reserve Bank of Australia interest rate decision. Manila and Jakarta also fell.

And while equities have enjoyed a positive few weeks, JPMorgan Chase's Marko Kolanovic warned that they "are set to weaken for the remainder of the year" owing to lingering concerns over the banking sector, oil shocks, and slowing growth.

Tokyo stocks close higher

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo shares closed higher on Tuesday, helped by gains on Wall Street, though investors were increasingly cautious ahead of key US jobs data due later this week.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index added 0.35 percent, or 99.27 points, to 28,287.42, while the broader Topix index rose 0.25 percent, or 5.08 points, to end at 2,022.76.

The dollar fetched 132.72 yen in Asian trade, against 132.35 yen in New York on Monday.

The Tokyo market started with gains on sound US shares, "but the upward energy soon lost steam", said strategist Minami Koura of Daiwa Securities. "Blue-chip trading lacked a sense of direction ahead of the US jobs data for March due on Friday," she noted.

Shipping firm Kawasaki Kisen rallied 3.40 percent to 3,070 yen, and its rival Mitsui O.S.K. Lines added 2.29 percent to 3,345 yen.

Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing rose 1.03 percent to 29,970 yen. Energy developer Inpex gained 1.29 percent to 1,493 yen.

Hitachi gained 1.13 percent to 7,442 yen, and Olympus climbed 1.73 percent to 2,411 yen, while

Sony Group slipped 0.12 percent to 12,015 yen.

Japan's central bank buys record gov't bonds in fiscal 2022

The Bank of Japan (BOJ) bought a record 135,989 billion yen (1.02 trillion US dollars) in Japanese government bonds in fiscal 2022, almost double the amount a year earlier, the central bank said.

To counter increased bond sales in the market caused by its yield control policy, the BOJ actively bought 10-year and other government bonds in the year through March, the largest amount on record, topping the previous high of 115,800.1 billion yen marked in fiscal 2016, according to a BOJ filing on Monday.

The purchase amount expanded about 63 trillion yen from fiscal 2021 and about 1.5-fold from the 88,025.6 billion yen in fiscal 2013, when outgoing BOJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda took office and embarked on a massive monetary easing policy, the data showed.

Under its yield curve control program, the BOJ sets short-term interest rates at minus 0.1 percent while guiding 10-year Japanese government bond yields around zero percent.

Profits of SK's listed firms log double-digit fall in 2022

SEOUL (APP): Profits of South Korea's listed companies logged a double-digit fall last year due to curb interest rate hikes to rapid inflation and the local currency's depreciation to the US dollar, Yonhap news agency said Tuesday citing the bourse operator.

Consolidated revenue of 604 listed firms on the benchmark KOSPI market, which closed the books in December, advanced 21.3 percent over the year to 2,814.9 trillion won (2.14 trillion US dollars) in 2022, according to the Korea Exchange. It excluded listed financial companies.

The revenue increased in double digits on the back of product price hikes amid high inflation, but corporate profits retreated in double figures on higher borrowing costs and raw material price hikes boosted by the South Korean currency's descent to the greenback.

Operating profit of the listed companies decreased 14.7 percent to 159.4 trillion won, and net income retreated 17.3 percent to 131.5 trillion won.

Guangdong carbon market closes lower

GUANGZHOU (APP): Carbon emissions allowances closed at 82.84 yuan per tonne on Tuesday, 0.5% down from Monday, at Guangzhou Emissions Exchange, the largest local carbon market in China.

A total of 3,153 tonnes of allowances were transacted on Tuesday, with a turnover of 261,206.22 yuan. The allowances, officially known as Guangdong Emissions Allowances, are carbon dioxide emissions caps assigned to companies. Firms whose emissions surpass their share must buy extra quotas from authorities or purchase unused quotas on the market from those that cause less pollution.

Federal Sexual Violence Response Framework launched

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Sexual Violence Response Framework was launched by the Ministry of Law and Justice, government of Pakistan on 27th March 2023 in Islamabad. "Legislative enactments are inadequate in face of statistics regarding sexual violence. It is with this vision that the Ministry of Law and Justice with support of UNFPA and Legal Aid Society have developed the Federal Sexual Violence Response Framework" observed Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, Federal Minister Law and Justice on the occasion.

The FSVRF has been created to inculcate a multi-fold approach towards prevention and secondary and tertiary response to sexual violence in Pakistan. Presented by Ms. Khadija Ali, she noted that this was



developed after examination of key laws, policies and precedents and collaboration with key actors and on-ground professionals. It has also been developed based on the acknowledgement that while Pakistan has been at the forefront of positive laws, policies and precedents protecting the rights of women, children and other marginalised communities in Pakistan, these have not yet been fully implemented in a holistic and coordinated manner by the administrative and criminal justice actors as revealed by Ms. Maliha Zia, Associate Director Legal Aid Society and Mr. Sharfat Ali, Advocate. Emphasising this point, Mr. Jahangir Jadoon, Advocate General, Islamabad, several positive precedents have been emerging from the superior courts of Pakistan, which have not yet been inculcated into processes and practices on ground by key criminal justice actors including police, medico-legal, prosecutors and the judiciary.

The government of Pakistan through the FSVRF demonstrates its commitment to counter this gap in action and work towards the elimination of

sexual violence in Pakistan. The FSVRF is a compendium of recommended action identified by various stakeholders including government Ministries, Departments, Commissions, lawyers, civil society, police, prosecution and civil society. It incorporates requirements to implement the law and fulfill legal obligations geared towards preventing and responding to sexual violence in effective and efficient ways by the government of Pakistan.

In line with this commitment, several steps have already been taken, as was shared by Mr. Raja Naeem Akbar Secretary, Ministry of Law and Justice in his opening remarks at the launch. These include the notification of 3 rules under the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act 2021; the notification of Special Sexual Offences Investigation Units and the Anti-Rape Coordination Committees across Pakistan. Through the FSVRF, the implementation of these initiatives will be ensured and monitored. This was also emphasised by Senator Aysha Raza Farooq, Chairperson Special Anti-Rape Committee. Noting the high statistics of vio-

lence against women in Pakistan, she highlighted the need for swift action and announced that the government with the support of UNFPA and LAS will be established 3 pilot ARCCs, which will be expanded once best practices are established.

Ms. Latika Maskey Pradha, Deputy Representative, UNFPA sharing experiences of other countries emphasised the importance of a multi-sectoral coordinated response is critical for countries such as Pakistan, where systems and processes must support each other to create the intended change in a sustainable manner. Mr. Ali Naqvi, FCDO highlighted the need to not only pass the laws and policies, but the importance of ensuring behavioural change is achieved at the grassroots level for real, actual sustainable change and elimination of sexual violence.

The launch of the FSVRF was also attended by key criminal justice actors from the police, prosecutors officer, representatives of Islamabad Bar Association and Counsel and civil society members working on the elimination of sexual violence in Pakistan.



In brief

Secretary PHF calls on Wahab

LAHORE (APP): Secretary Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) Haider Hussain called on Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz at the National Hockey Stadium here on Tuesday. Revival of hockey and other relevant measures were discussed in detail during the meeting. Wahab Riaz on this occasion said that Sports board Punjab was fully cooperating with Pakistan Hockey Federation for the development and revival of hockey in the country. "The revival of country's national game is one of the top priorities of Sports Board Punjab." He said that all possible measures would be taken for players' development with the collaboration of private sector. "There are more than 20 hockey turf grounds in Punjab. All possible support will be provided to the hockey players to attract fresh talented hockey players from all parts of the province". Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports further said that the first Ramzan Sports Series is being played from April 7 to 11, in which more than Rs 4 million cash prizes have been allocated for the hockey event. Secretary PHF Haider Hussain on this occasion lauded the efforts of Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz for hockey revival. "PHF and Sports Board Punjab will make collective efforts to secure the future of hockey in the country," he added.

Messi unlikely to extend PSG contract

PARIS (Agencies): Lionel Messi is unlikely to reach an agreement with Paris Saint-Germain to extend his stay at the club, sources told ESPN. French outlet L'Equipe were first to report the story. Negotiations between the two parties are at a standstill, casting major doubts over the World Cup winner's future in Paris, according to sources. The French champions want Messi to take a 25% pay cut from his existing salary, which is worth 40 million gross a year, sources have told ESPN. A new meeting between the club and Messi's father and agent, Jorge, is still scheduled for later this month to find a solution. Sources have told ESPN that Messi was likely to sign a new deal before the World Cup but the situation has changed since then. Messi has failed to replicate his excellent World Cup form with PSG and the club doubts whether Messi can still deliver in big Champions League matches. The Argentine captain was disappointing as PSG were dumped out of the competition by Bayern Munich last month. Sources told ESPN that Messi, 35, is not prepared to reduce his wages and was upset after his name was jeered by a section of the club's supporters in the previous two home matches. ESPN sources added that Messi is leaving all doors open for other teams to make him an offer. His father had already discussed the possibility of a Barcelona return, but financially it will be difficult to achieve while the player's camp is also awaiting a proposition from Inter Miami and Major League Soccer. According to sources, Messi is open to playing in the U.S. before his career comes to an end while there remains interest from Saudi Arabia club Al Ittihad.

Ex-world champion Amir Khan handed two-year doping ban

LONDON (Agencies): Former light-welterweight world champion Amir Khan said he would "never cheat" after being handed a two-year ban from all sport for testing positive for a prohibited substance.

UK Anti-Doping said on Tuesday that Khan, 36, returned a positive result for the anabolic agent ostarine following his loss to Kell Brook in Manchester in February 2022.

Khan, who announced his retirement in May last year, accepted a violation of anti-doping rules but said he had not intentionally ingested the substance, an argument accepted by an independent panel.

"I would never cheat. I'm a retired fighter. I've got a two-year ban now which is quite strange and funny that they banned me. I've already retired. I've no comeback plans at all," Khan told Sky News.

Khan was first notified of his own positive result in April 2022 and given a provisional suspension, with charges following in July



after he had announced his retirement with a 34-6 professional record.

Following the hearing in January this year, the National Anti-Doping Panel accepted Khan's submission he had not taken the substance intentionally but imposed the ban on the basis of strict liability.

Ostarine is a drug designed to have similar effects to testosterone.

"You can see by my performance against Kell Brook wasn't the best. I lost the fight. If I went in there and knocked Kell Brook out it's different," added Khan.

"I've never cheated in my life. I'm the one that wanted testing on that fight. Also, the amount that was in my system could have been by

shaking people's hands. I don't know the drug that was in my system."

The ban is deemed to have commenced on 6 April 2022, when his provisional suspension was imposed, and will expire on 5 April 2024.

UKAD chief executive Jane Rumble said: "This case serves as a reminder that UKAD will diligently pursue anti-doping rule violations in order to protect clean sport."

Khan became a household name in Britain after claiming a silver medal at the 2004 Athens Olympics, aged just 17.

He made his professional debut in July 2005 and four years later won the WBA light-welterweight title with victory over Andreas Kotelnik in Manchester.

Khan unified the WBA and IBF titles with a win over Zab Judah in 2011 but controversially lost his next fight to Lamont Peterson, who would subsequently test positive for synthetic testosterone.



DHAKA: Najmul Hossain Shanto is cleaned up by Mark Adair, Bangladesh vs Ireland, Only Test, 1st day.

Afghan wheelchair-bound cricket team to visit Pakistan in May

ISLAMABAD (APP): Afghanistan's wheelchair-bound cricket team would visit Pakistan in May to play three T20Is and two ODIs against Pakistan, the Pakistan Wheelchair Cricket Council (PWCC) said on Tuesday.

"It will be a momentous event as it will be for the first time in the history that an international wheelchair cricket team will travel to Pakistan for a series," Rookhsana Rajpoot, President of PWCC told APP.

She said it would also be for the first time in the history of wheelchair cricket that an international one-day match would be played between the two teams.

"A new history will be made in the series. The event will be an important milestone as it will help promote wheelchair cricket in the region," she added.

She said preparations for hosting the series had started, adding that separate Pakistan teams would be formed for the ODI and T20 matches. "The final dates and venues for the series will be announced soon," she said.

Girls to play night cricket tournament in Karachi

KARACHI (PPI): Khelo Cricket is going to organize a three-day Women's Ramzan Night Cricket Tournament at the Kokan Ground in Bahadurabad area of Karachi on Tuesday.

Hadeel Obeid, the founder of Khelo Cricket, said that they are organizing a women's cricket tournament especially in Ramadan to promote cricket among Pakistani women. Any woman or girl is welcome to participate in the dusk-till-dawn cricket tournament, and registration is open.

She continued by saying that this platform also promotes fresh talent. On the other hand, the women players, who are participating in the tournament, are happy to have the chance to showcase their talent.

It merits here to mention that nine women teams from Karachi are participating in this tape ball night cricket tournament.

Shaheen Afridi set to return to int'l cricket

LAHORE (Monitoring Desk): Shaheen Shah Afridi is all set to return to international cricket after four months when he was named in the Pakistan T20I and ODI squads for the series against New Zealand, which will be played in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Karachi from 14 April to 7 May.

Shaheen had missed five Tests and three ODIs against England and New Zealand post the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2022 as he was completing his rehabilitation following a knee injury he had sustained during the first Test against Sri Lanka in Galle in July. He had subsequently missed the second Test against Sri Lanka, ODI series against the Netherlands, ACC Asia Cup in the UAE and seven-match T20I series in Pakistan.

The 22-year-old, who has taken 99 Test, 62 ODI and 58 T20I wickets, staged a remarkable comeback in the HBL Pakistan Super League 8 when he inspired Lahore Qalandars to become the first side to successfully defend the title. Not only that, Shaheen's own perform-

ance was outstanding both with the bat and the ball – he scored 133 runs at a strike-rate of 168.35 and grabbed 19 wickets at an economy-rate of 9.13. He was rightly named captain of Team of HBL PSL 8. Apart from Shaheen, also returning to both the squads are Babar Azam, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf and Mohammad Rizwan. All these players had rested for last month's three-T20I series against Afghanistan in Sharjah.

This means Babar Azam will resume his normal services as captain in the ODI and T20I series against New Zealand, while Shadab will return to his original position as vice-captain.

Three young guns – Ihsanullah, Saim Ayub and Zaman Khan – have been retained in the T20I squad following stellar performances in Sharjah, while Ihsanullah has also been added to the ODI squad for the first time in his career.

The squad will assemble in Lahore on 6 April where the training camp will commence on 7 April. **Squads: T20I:** Babar Azam (captain), Shadab

Khan (vice-captain), Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Iftikhar Ahmed, Ihsanullah, Imad Wasim, Mohammad Haris, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shan Masood and Zaman Khan

ODI: Babar Azam (captain), Shadab Khan (vice-captain), Abdullah Shafique, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Haris Sohail, Ihsanullah, Imam-ul-Haq, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Naseem Shah, Salman Ali Agha, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shan Masood and Usama Mir

Series schedule (T20Is to start at 9pm; ODIs to begin at 3.30pm):

14 Apr – 1st T20I, Lahore
15 Apr – 2nd T20I, Lahore
17 Apr – 3rd T20I, Lahore
20 Apr – 4th T20I, Rawalpindi
24 Apr – 5th T20I, Rawalpindi
27 Apr – 1st ODI, Rawalpindi
29 Apr – 2nd ODI, Rawalpindi
3 May – 3rd ODI, Karachi
5 May – 4th ODI, Karachi
7 May – 5th ODI, Karachi.

‘Sarfaraz is our hero and will remain our hero,’ says Nadeem Omar

KARACHI (Monitoring Desk): Quetta Gladiators' owner Nadeem Omar backed his franchise skipper Sarfaraz Ahmed after his side's dismal campaign in the recently-concluded Pakistan Super League (PSL) season eight.

The Gladiators, who were considered the underdogs of the marquee league, won the title in 2019 after beating Peshawar Zalmi in the final. The former champions, however, have been struggling since then to emulate their domination and failed to make it to the playoffs for the next four seasons.

The Gladiators' dismal performance in four straight seasons resulted in their fans questioning Sarfaraz's credibility as the franchise captain and criticised his individual performance.

Meanwhile, the Gladiators' owner Nadeem, spoke to a private sports

channel on the sidelines of a local event here and backed his franchise's captain Sarfaraz despite all the ongoing criticism surrounding the wicketkeeper batter.

"I always say one thing, Sarfaraz is our hero and will remain our hero. Sarfaraz grew up in front of me, he won us U19 World Cup and Champions Trophy. Unfortunately, we unceremoniously dump players with lots of services for the country," he lamented.

"Sarfaraz is a very good human and a cricketer. Recently, he proved himself during the Test series against New Zealand. We can't throw him out just because people are saying.

"He is our trademark and Quetta will never leave him. We have time till next PSL, we will sit with Sarfaraz and discuss. I am sure Sarfaraz will never want Quetta's downfall," he highlighted.

Earlier, Sarfaraz also

opened up on his future with the Gladiators, speaking in a YouTube podcast, said he has no plans to leave the side.

"I am associated with Quetta for the last eight years but my relationship with them is too old. I think since 2003 or 2004, I am with them. I guess I was just 17 when I first played for Nadeem Bhai's team Omar Associates," he recalled.

"I played for the Pakistan club and Nadeem Bhai saw and supported me during my growth as a cricketer. He is just like a father figure to me. I will not leave Quetta until they do," he said.

It is pertinent to mention that Sarfaraz has been leading the Gladiators since the inception of the PSL in 2016. He represented the Gladiators in all their matches before finally missing two straight matches due to an injury.

Tom Latham to lead in Pakistan ODI Series

KARACHI (PPI) Tom Latham will lead a BLACKCAPS ODI Squad in Pakistan later this month featuring two potential debutants in Ben Lister and Cole McConchie.

The regular Canterbury skipper is also part of the T20 Squad to tour Pakistan and has won selection on the back of a strong season across all formats in domestic cricket. McConchie's 1140 runs across formats are the second most of any player this season while he's also picked up eight wickets.

Lister featured in the ODI Squad to face Sri Lanka during the recently completed ANZ ODI Series but didn't take the field and has the chance to add to his international T20 debut against India earlier this year.

The 15-man squad also features further opportunities for recent ODI debutants Chad Bowes, Rachin Ravindra and Henry Shipley. Those new faces are balanced by an experienced core including six

members of the squad that made the final of ICC Cricket World Cup 2019.

Nine players from the squad also have recent experience in Pakistan, featuring in either the Test or ODI Squads that played in Karachi earlier this year. The traveling squads will also have the benefit of extra experience in Pakistani conditions with Saqlain Mushtaq joining the group as an assistant coach.

Gary Stead said the prospect of taking on Pakistan across both white ball formats was an exciting one. "We've enjoyed a number of exciting matches against Pakistan across both white ball formats in the last season home and way. They are a tough team no matter where you take them on.

"The successful ODI Series earlier this year in Pakistan provided big learning opportunities for the players and having more ODI match experience is fantastic in a World Cup year.

"Having someone with

Saqlain's experience is a big boost for the group and we are looking forward to the insights he can offer us to aid our preparations for local conditions, and in particular the assistance he can provide to our spin bowling group."

Stead said McConchie's consistency this season had been impressive. "Cole has been a leader for Canterbury and at New Zealand A level for a number of seasons but his contributions to winning games across formats really stood out this summer.

"His skill set with bat and ball is a valuable one, especially in the conditions we are likely to face on this tour." Stead said that Lister, who plays for the Aces, has impressed the coaching group with his desire to learn since joining the BLACKCAPS environment. "Making your debut in India is a big challenge and it's been great to see Ben really try and soak up every opportunity since then."

Nadal, Alcaraz pull out of clay-court Monte Carlo Masters

MONACO (AP): Rafael Nadal pulled out of the clay-court Monte Carlo Masters on Tuesday, saying he is not yet able to compete at the highest level.

The 22-time Grand Slam champion has been sidelined with a left hip flexor injury since the Australian Open. The Monte Carlo Masters begins on April 8.

"I will not be able to play in one of the most important tournaments of my career, Monte Carlo," Nadal wrote on Twitter. "I am not yet in conditions to play with the maximum guarantees and I continue my preparation process, hoping to be back soon."

Second-ranked Carlos Alcaraz and seventh-ranked Felix Auger-Aliassime also withdrew from the event.

Alcaraz pulled out



because of "physical discomfort" after his semifinal loss in Florida last week. The Spaniard had been so dominant recently, he hadn't lost a set since February before that defeat.

"I have post-traumatic arthritis in my left hand and muscular discomfort in the spine that needs rest to prepare for everything that is to come," the 19-year-old from Spain said.

Auger-Aliassime needs to rest his left knee. "I have been struggling with my left

knee for the past few weeks and decided it was the smartest decision to take some time off so I'm able to fully heal and recover," the 22-year-old Canadian wrote on Instagram.

Nadal has won the Monte Carlo tournament a record 11 times, including an Open Era record streak of eight consecutive titles from 2005-12. The 36-year-old Spaniard generally uses the event as a key part of his preparations for the French Open, which takes place May 28-June 11.

Nadal has won 14 of his major titles on clay at Roland Garros, including last year while dealing with chronic pain in his left foot. In January, Nadal hurt his hip flexor during a second-round loss to Mackenzie McDonald at the Australian Open.

Premier League matches to pause for fasting Muslim players during Ramadan

LONDON (Agencies): Tuesday's Premier League matches will briefly be paused for Muslim players who have been fasting during Ramadan.

If clubs have requested a stoppage before the game, the referee will signal for a break, allowing Muslim players to eat and drink at pitchside. Everton's game against Tottenham was stopped in the 26th minute to allow players that had been fasting during the day to take on energy supplements.

Three Muslim players were in action for Sean Dyche's side at Goodison Park. Although sunset was before kick-off, allowing players to break their fast, a drinks

break was pre-agreed with the referee when both teams - including Toffees trio Abdoulaye Doucoure, Amadou Onana and Idrissa Gueye - came to the side of the pitch to take on fluids.

Play does not stop while matches are in mid-flow, but at the earliest convenient moment during a goal-kick, free-kick or throw-in. Teams and match officials will discuss beforehand whether a pause is required and an approximate time for the stoppage will be agreed.

With the 19:45 BST kick-offs on Tuesday coming close to sunset, an agreement might be reached to delay the start by a couple

of minutes to allow players to break their fast, which was the case in Friday's Championship game between Burnley and Sunderland. In the evening games, Nampalys Mendy could come up against Boubacar Kamara while Leicester host Aston Villa, while Muslim players may also be involved in the Bournemouth v Brighton and Leeds v Nottingham Forest matches.

Chelsea's game against Liverpool in London kicks off at 20:00, shortly after sunset on Tuesday. Manchester United v Brentford and West Ham v Newcastle on Wednesday, as well as the meeting between Leeds and

Liverpool on 17 April and Arsenal against Southampton four days later are the other top-flight matches that kick off at 20:00 BST this Ramadan.

The Islamic calendar follows the lunar calendar, which means Ramadan starts about 10 days earlier each year. With the holy month now approaching the winter, breaks in play for fasting players will be a regular occurrence in the coming years. Last month, Toffees midfielder Doucoure told BBC Sport he always "loves" Ramadan, adding: "I fast every day, I don't miss any days.

"Sometimes playing football has been hard because Ramadan

has been in the summer and during pre-season. "But I have always been lucky to practise Ramadan



and there have never been problems with my physical condition - I am grateful for that."



In brief

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Tuesday issued a power suspension programme for Wednesday due to necessary maintenance and routine development work for various areas of its region. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 07:00 AM to 11:00 AM, Islamabad Circle, Chirah, Kirpa, Ali Pur, CM Pak Zong, Rehara, Tamari, Chatta Baktawar, Lathar Road, ISI Feeder, Rawalpindi City Circle, Nogazi, Banjijal Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Drabi, Talagang City, Main Bazar, Mogla, Dullar, Bilalabad, Daultala Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, From 08:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Kahuta City-2, Haneef Shaheed Feeders From 07:00 AM To 11:00 AM, Cahan, Chontra, Rajjar, Chakri, SPD, SPF Feeders and surrounding areas.

IRSA releases 86,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 86,800 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 62,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1429.91 feet and was 31.91 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 21,400 cusecs while outflow as 7,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1104.15 feet, 54.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 19,900 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 27,300, 35,600, 41,300 and 13,200 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 27,800 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 10,300 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Bike lifter's gang held

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police Ramna police team apprehended two wanted members of a bike lifter's gang involved in bike lifting incidents and recovered three stolen motorbikes from their possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police had started a crackdown against criminal elements involved in car and bike lifting incidents in order to save the precious lives and property of citizens. Following these directives, the police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending two wanted members of a bike lifter gang involved in bike lifting incidents. Police team also recovered three stolen motorbikes from their possession. The accused were identified as Ghulam Hassan and Moeen Akhtar. Cases have already been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. During the preliminary investigation the accused confessed to being involved in numerous bike lifting incidents in the jurisdiction of the Industrial Area police station. CPO/ DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari appreciated the police team's efforts and directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in car and bike lifting incidents.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf receiving Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Mr. Nawaf Bin Saeed Ahmed Al-Malkiy Parliament House.

Rafique claims judges ask for apologies in private after committing injustices

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Federal Minister of Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique made some aggressive remarks during his speech in the National Assembly on Tuesday. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader criticized the judiciary and claimed that judges ask for apologies in private after committing injustices. Mr Rafique stated that the judicial history of Pakistan was full of accidents and injustices and that popular political leadership was targeted in the country. He mentioned the judicial murder of former

Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and the disqualifications of Yousaf Raza Gillani and Nawaz Sharif.

"We had gone so far in the love of the judiciary that we reinstated them even though we had no personal benefit to reinstate the judges," said Mr Rafique. He further said that the doctrine of necessity was still wandering the courtrooms. Mr Rafique criticized the recent judgment regarding elections in Punjab, stating that the hurry for elections in Punjab was just to reimpose one person, referring to former Prime

Minister Imran Khan.

He questioned the need for conducting elections in Punjab and said that the decision of the court was not respecting the voting right of millions of people mentioning the census was being done. He also stressed that Pakistan was not a country of 22 million blind, dumb and deaf people. He added that the double standards of justice won't work, and justice must be done.

Mr Rafique expressed that the government wants elections, but they should be transparent and impartial. He added that stealing elections creates division in the country.

Motorway Police reunites lost child with mother

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Motorway Police's timely action on Tuesday reunited a lost child with his mother. According to Spokesperson Motorway Police, the Motorway Police officers near M-1 Swabi saw a seven-year-old child in distress. On seeking information, it was found that the child was studying in a madrasa in the Attock district from where he left but lost his way to home. The child did not have any contact number or address. Therefore, the child was taken into protective custody by the Motorway Police. By using all resources, including contacting the district police and announcements in mosques, the child's home was eventually traced. The child's father had died, and he was safely handed over to his mother to which she thanked the Motorway Police.

Police busted 3 wanted members of snatcher's gang

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad Capital Police Lohi Bher police team have arrested 03 members of a snatcher's gang and recovered snatched motorbike, cash, mobile phones and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directions, a Lohi bher police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending 03 wanted members of the snatcher's gang involved in numerous snatching activities in various areas of the city. The accused were identified as Riasat Ali, Haroon Hussain and Muhammad Shahbaz.

Police team also recovered motorbikes, cash, mobile phones and weapons with ammunition from their possession. Cases were registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. CPO/DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari appreciated the performance of the police team and added that it is the prime responsibility of police to provide relief to the citizens and every possible effort would be made to ensure it.

Raja terms parliamentary exchanges an effective tool for regional development

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Nawaf bin Said Al-Malkiy met the National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf here at Parliament House on Tuesday.

During the meeting, they renewed their commitment to further enhance cordial relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The Speaker said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have always enjoyed strong fraternal ties deeply rooted in our shared religion, culture, traditions and mutual goodwill.

"Both nations have stood by each other in the testing times," he added. He remarked that the people and Government of Pakistan have deep respect for the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and the Saudi leadership.

He added that Pakistan remains fully committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia as the country attaches immense importance to its relations with Saudi Arabia.

The Speaker said that Saudi Arabia has always generously contributed to the social and economic development of

Pakistan. Emphasizing enhancing bilateral trade between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the Speaker mentioned that cooperation in different spheres for mutual interest would be mutually beneficial.

The Speaker said that Pakistan's Parliament has always been proactive to improve brotherly relations. He added that Parliamentary exchanges would further boost bilateral relations between the countries.

Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki said that Saudi Arabia also attaches great importance to its deep-rooted ties with Pakistan and considers it a sincere friend.

He assured the Speaker that Saudi Arabia would continue to cooperate in the social sector in Pakistan.

He commended the role of Pakistani expatriates in the economic development of Saudi Arabia. Both sides expressed satisfaction over the current level of cooperation in diverse areas and stressed the need to further strengthen mutual ties.

SC larger bench only way forward to stable country: PPP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday said that the formation of a larger bench of the Supreme Court was the only way to a stable country. Talking to a private news channel, he said that despite reservations, the PPP government has always respected the Supreme Court's decisions.

He said the formation of a larger bench will lead the

country out of constitutional crises and ensure the continuity of the democratic set-up.

"PPP has always believed in a truly independent and impartial judiciary which was a fundamental component of a democratic Pakistan", he added. Replying to a question, he said that the country will always remember the great sacrifices of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto for

democracy.

He also paid tribute to the founder of the People's Party Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on the occasion of his 44th death anniversary.

He praised Bhutto's contributions to the country and said that former President Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari are following Shaheed Bhutto's vision and policies to make the country prosperous and solve the problems of the people.

Railways to float tender for advertising trains, railway platforms

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways is set to float tender shortly, allowing national and multinational firms to utilise several passenger trains and railway platforms for generating maximum revenue for the department.

"All preparations regarding the branding of trains and platforms, railway station, certain crossings and trains have been completed and hopefully the tender will be floated this week," sources in the Ministry told APP on Tuesday.

The sources said the branding of the trains and platforms would not only address the increasing deficit of Pakistan Railways but will also allow private firms to advertise their products for this purpose.

They said that initially, Pakistan Railways would offer five trains for branding their seat covers, internal walls of the passenger coaches, and even toilets as a pilot project.

"The deficit of the department will decrease after starting this project and the minister has already directed the concerned to complete all the formalities in this regard as soon as possible," they added. They said that advertisers would have access to the parking area, platforms, staircases, bridges and other infrastructure at Lahore Railway Station.

The sources said this was not the first time Pakistan Railways has attempted to monetize its assets for advertising purposes. In 2014 also, the organization launched a pilot project to offer branding opportunities to companies across the seat covers, internal walls of passenger coaches, and toilets on the Tezgam, Khyber Mail, and Awaam Express. However, the initiative was unsuccessful. The initiative, the sources said, however, based on the information, looks to mitigate the problems faced by its predecessor by adopting a more grand approach to the issue.

ANF seizes over 105 kg drugs; arrests seven

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in five operations managed to recover over 105 kg of drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed that ANF in an operation at Bacha Khan International Airport Peshawar recovered 1.7 kg Ice drug from the possession of a Jeddah-bound passenger, resident of Mardan, going on flight no ER-703.

ANF and FC in an opera-

tion at Faisalabad Airport recovered 38 grams of heroin from the possession of a Sharjah-bound passenger, a resident of Faisalabad, going on flight no G-9583. He informed that in an operation near Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza, ANF seized 32.4 kg charras, 2 kg Ice drug, and 1.2 kg opium and arrested an accused resident of Jhelum.

In the fourth operation conducted near Attock Burhan Interchange, ANF recovered 18 kg charras from secret cavities of a car

and rounded up two accused, residents of Sheikhupura.

In the fifth operation on Coastal Highway near Pasni Zero Point, ANF foiled a bid to smuggle drugs from Balochistan to Karachi and recovered 50 kg of opium from secret cavities of a van. Two accused were also arrested during the operation.

He said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

15 criminals arrested, drugs and weapons recovered

ISLAMABAD (NNI): Islamabad capital police apprehended 15 outlaws from different areas of the city and recovered drugs and weapons with ammunition from their possession, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directives, the Phulghran police team arrested and accused namely Abdul Qadous and recovered 540 gram heroin from his possession.

Similarly, the Tarnol police team apprehended two accused namely Jameel Khan and Shah Gharib and recovered 1030 gram hashish and one 30 bore pistol from their possession. The Shalimar police team arrested an accused namely Nasir Baig and recovered one 30 bore pistol with ammunition from their possession.

Moreover, the Industrial-Area police team arrested an accused namely Fahad

and recovered two 30 bore pistols with ammunition. Noon police arrested 03 accused namely Abdul Marjan, Haroon and Jameel and recovered three pistols with ammunition from his possession.

Furthermore, Khanna police arrested two accused namely Sulman Shah and Hameed Ullah 1200 gram hashish from their possession. Lohibher police arrested two accused namely Muhammad Afzal and Asif Rauf and recovered 1036 gram heroin from their possession.

During the crackdown against proclaimed offenders and court absconders, the Islamabad capital police teams arrested three absconders and proclaimed offenders from different areas of the city. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. CPO/ DIG Operations Islamabad Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in drug peddling and possessing illegal weapons and said that the safety of the lives and property of the citizens is our prime responsibility.

CDA to clear pathways from car showroom dealers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Capital Development Authority (CDA) will start a massive anti-encroachment drive against the car showrooms owners who parked their vehicles on footpaths, right of way, causing a nuisance to travelers. "The authority in that regard has issued a final notice to car dealers and showroom owners to remove encroachments otherwise the law will take its course," sources in the CDA told APP.

The illegal encroachments were hindering pedestrian movement in different sectors, if the encroachments were not

eliminated, the authority would conduct a drive to remove them, they added. They said the decision was taken on the directions of Chairman CDA Noor ul Amin Mengal as the authority has received several complaints from the residents of different sectors of the federal capital.

During the first phase, the sources said the operation would be launched against the car dealers in sector G-8, G-9 Karachi Company, F-10 and F-11. The authority had also asked the district administration to assist in the operation. They said during the

operation, several illegally constructed ramps and illegal structures would be demolished while unattended parked vehicles of car motor dealers and showrooms in the public parking area were to be shifted to relevant police stations. The sources said that due to encroachments made by car dealers, the pedestrian movement was hindered, and the residents have to face difficulties in parking due to illegitimate ramps constructed by car dealers and showroom owners as well as illegal occupiers on footpaths and parking areas.

Safe City Islamabad playing important role in crime prevention: IGP

ISLAMABAD (APP): Inspector General of Police Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan on Tuesday visited Safe City Islamabad and met the officials posted in various branches and inquired about their duties.

The IGP also reviewed the security situation in different areas of the city through Safe City cameras and directed staff to perform their duties with full attention and immediately inform the concerned authorities about security or any suspicious activity in any area.

He ordered the staff posted on Pucar-15 to respond to the calls of citizens in a timely manner and inform the relevant authorities for immediate assistance.

He said that the work of Pucar-15 was

the most important to provide timely assistance to citizens in emergency situations.

The IGP also appealed the public not to make irrelevant, wrong or bogus calls on Pucar-15 as such calls waste the time of the police and deprive the citizens of timely help in an emergency situation.

He said that Islamabad Capital Police were always engaged in protecting the life and property of the citizens.

The IGP said that Safe City Project was playing an important role in tackling crimes in the city and tracing the criminal elements. The Citizens are also requested to keep an eye on their surroundings and report any suspicious activity to Pucar-15 immediately.



ISLAMABAD: A view of massive traffic jam at expressway during evening time in the Federal Capital.

Child rescued from abductors

KANDAHAR (Agencies): Local officials of the Kandahar Police say that a child has been rescued from grip of abductors in the center of that province. The police spokesman of Kandahar, Hafiz Sabeer, told Bakhtar News Agency that the security forces rescued a child named Zabihullah from the grip of kidnappers in the 8th police district of the center. He said that the kidnappers demanded 70,000 US dollars from the child's family.

Crime levels decreased

BADAKHSHAN (Agencies): In it's annual report the commander police of Badakhshan, said crime levels decreases 20-35% compared to the previous year in that province. The Badakhshan Police Commander said that they discovered and investigated 325 criminal cases, including robbery, murder, and social destruction, and arrested 508 people on charges. The counter-narcotics police, in 83 operations, arrested 96 people in charges of dealing and trafficking drugs.

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

Security Forces kill 6 key Daesh fighters in Balkh province

BALKH (Khaama Press): The Taliban intelligence forces in the Northern Province of Afghanistan, Balkh, killed six Daesh key fighters in a special operation late Monday night. Mohammad Asif Waziri, a spokesperson for Balkh provincial police, confirmed that in a special raid by the Taliban security forces, six key fighters of Islamic State Khorasan were killed in Nahr-e-Shahi District of Balkh province on late Monday night. The operation occurred after one of the perpetrators

was arrested on Sunday by the Taliban intelligence Department which was involved in several deadly attacks in the Balkh province, including the assassination of Mohammad Dawood Muzamal, governor of the province. The accused person allegedly said that he had contributed blast in the office of the Balkh governor, Tebyan Cultural Center and several others. Earlier in March, the Taliban governor of Balkh, Mohammad Dawood Muzmal, was killed in the

blast with two of his aide. Two days after the Balkh governor blast, a journalists' gathering was targeted in Tebyan Cultural Center, leaving at least three people dead and more than 30 others injured. Daesh, or the group also known as Islamic State-Khorasan, claimed responsibility for both incidents. Since the Taliban regained power in Afghanistan, Daesh militants have been considered the main security challenges for the de facto government amid an economic and humanitarian crisis.

Two drug factories destroyed in Ghor

GHOR (Agencies): The counter-narcotics official discovered and destroyed two drug factories in the Teyora and Lal Wa Sarjantal districts of Ghor province. The provincial police spokesman, Abdul Rahman Badri told Bakhtar News Agency that the provincial Counter Narcotic Department officials discovered and destroyed a drug-producing factory during an intelligence operation in the Jeerigag area of the Teyora district of the province. Badri added, that provincial Counter-Narcotic Department officials discovered and destroyed another drug factory during an intelligence operation in the Sarpata village in the Lal Wa Sarjantal district of the province. He said that one individual was also arrested in connection to running the illegal lab.

Ministry vows to improve water management

KABUL (TOLOnes): The Ministry of Energy and Water (MoEW) said on Monday that more than 400 projects will be implemented this year to improve water management in the country. According to figures by the ministry, more than 300 projects have already been carried out in this sector. "In the solar year 1402 (starting from March 2023), the Ministry of Energy and Water has planned 411 projects for the full management of water resources with the goal of balanced development of the country's river basins, big and medium dams, minor water control dams, and irrigation canals, as well as an underground water supply and water supply project from Panjshir river to Kabul," said Rafiullah Stanekzai, head of water program coordination. According to the ministry, the construction on the Shah Wa Aros, Tori, and Kamal Khan dams is still underway while work on the first phase of the second part of the Kajakai dam has been completed. "Work of the first phase of the second part of the Kajakai Dam in Helmand has been completed. The third phase of the Kamal Khan Dam in Nimroz, the Shah Wa Aros Dam in Kabul, the Tori Dam in Zabul, and the reform project of the lake along the Namak-Ab Canal Project in Takhar is underway," said Mujibur Rahman Omar Akhundzada, the deputy minister of energy and water. He noted that Afghanistan only has a water treaty with Iran and it is committed to this agreement. "We only have a water treaty with Iran, and we are committed to that treaty and their right should be given. We do not have a water treaty with other countries and if a problem occurs, we will deal with it in accordance with international principles," Akhundzada noted. Based on data from the Ministry of Energy and Water, water projects worth over \$60 million which were carried out by international organizations have remained incomplete. The ministry urged international institutions to execute their incomplete projects in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan to handover Iranian prisoners soon



KABUL (Khaama Press): The deputy ambassador, Sayed Hasan Murtazavi, met with the Afghan Attorney General Mawlawi shamsuddin Pahlavan in Kabul to discuss judicial and legal cooperation and handing over the Iranian prisoners in Afghanistan to Iran authorities, Iranian Embassy said in a statement. Pahlavan promised that the handing over of the Iranian prisoners in Afghanistan would begin soon to the Iranian side while adding that Afghan authorities would follow

the demands of the Islamic Republic of Iran following the "expansion of relations and commonalities between the two countries," the statement read. In the meeting, the deputy ambassador, Murtazavi, said, "For Tehran, the pursuit of issues relating to Iranian prisoners in Afghanistan has in the past been accompanied by disturbances, but we hope that in the current circumstances, the problems of Iranian prisoners are solved in the shortest period so they can return to Iran."

It is worth mentioning that the Afghan Attorney General's Office, led by Pahlavan, visited Iran two months ago. As a result, 857 Afghan inmates were handed over by Iran authorities to Afghan officials. Meanwhile, according to the statement of the Iran Embassy in Kabul, around 6,000 Afghan prisoners are currently serving their sentences in Iranian prisons. This gesture of goodwill followed the handing over of the Afghanistan Embassy to the present government in late February.

MoIC team to survey historical sites

KABUL (Agencies): A delegation of the Ministry of Information and Culture traveled to Baghlan to survey, ancient and historical monuments. The delegations of Ministry of Information and Culture will survey the places in the remote areas of Baghlan, which have been registered with the Ministry, as historical and ancient places, and those historical sites that were not registered, previously said an official at the department of information and culture of Baghlan. Meanwhile, the provincial head of information and culture of Baghlan, Mawlawi Assadullah Mustafa Hashemi asked for more attention from the Ministry of Information and Culture in the protection of historical sites and cultural heritage of the province. The MoIC called the protection of the country's historical sites and cultural heritage as one of the priorities of the Ministry and called the people's support and cooperation important in the protection of these national assets.

Japan pays additional \$5 million to WFP in Afghanistan

KABUL (Pajhwok): Japan has contributed additional \$5 million to United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in Afghanistan. UN food agency welcomed the contribution, which came amid food ration cuts pushing tens of thousands of families to the brink. In March, WFP was forced to reduce lifesaving assistance for at least 4 million people due to a lack of funds. Nine million people could go without food aid in April if no new funding was received, the agency said in a statement on Tuesday. Japan's Ambassador Takashi Okada said: "The government of Japan has been a consistent and strong supporter of the Afghan people and of WFP over the past years." Japan viewed food assistance as one of the primary ways to reach sustainable development and human security," remarked the ambassador. Of the latest Japanese contribution, \$4 million will be used to provide families with food assistance and US\$1 million through in-kind food aid. WFP Country Director Hsiao-Wei Lee, hailing the Japanese contribution, called the UN food assistance the last lifeline for millions of Afghans. "Catastrophic hunger knocks on Afghanistan's doors and unless humanitarian support is sustained, hundreds of thousands more Afghans will need assistance to survive," she said.

Commission starts land reclamation process

KABUL (TOLOnes): The commission to prevent land grabbing has begun assessing lands seized by individuals in the Deh Sabz district and the Barik Aab area of Kabul. The spokesman for the Ministry of Justice, Abdul Hameed Jahadyar, said it is focussing on 25,000 acres of land in 10 villages in the Deh Sabz and Barik Aab areas. "We will launch our assessment in the Shahrak-e-Jadid (new city) Kabul. The first phase that we planned in our master plan is in the south. It includes 25,000 acres of land," he said. Meanwhile, residents of Kabul praised the Islamic Emirate's efforts to recapture the lands from land grabbers. "This is a good step. If anyone grabbed lands by force and if the land is returned back to its owners, this will be good," said Dadullah, a resident of Kabul. "These lands that were seized previously--we would be happy if this land was returned back to owners and the justice was ensured," said Jahanullah, a resident of Kabul. The Ministry of Justice demanded that residents living in Nader Khan Hill and Mirwais Khan and Habibullah Zazai towns provide their land title. The commission to prevent land seizure and acquisition was established after the Islamic Emirate came to power. The commission has launched its assessments in several provinces.

New bank account created

KABUL (Agencies): The country's Ministry of Finance, has announced the opening of a new bank account and closing of old bank accounts for taxpayers. All the taxpayers informed that a new department called "State Services Taxpayers" integrated within the framework of the Ministry of Finance and located and operating in the area of National Bus Enterprise close to Mahmood Khan Bridge in Kabul city" said the Ministry in a statement.

Central blood bank faces blood shortage, says officials

KABUL (TOLOnes): Officials from Afghanistan Central Blood Bank in Kabul said they are faced with blood shortage and lack of enough facilities to collect blood and keep it for a long time. Head of the Blood Bank, Mohammad Nasir Sadiq, said people's cooperation to donate blood has increased during Ramadan. "Unfortunately, the Central Blood Bank just has one bus to send it to different areas and collect blood," he said. "We call on the Public Health Ministry to provide us more facilities." Patients who need blood said they face lack of blood when they are in need of it. "It has been three hours that I am waiting for blood here, but we couldn't get it," said Azizuddin, father of Ilham, a man who faces haemophilia, or bleeding disorder. "We stand here since the morning, but nobody is ready to donate blood for us and the Central Bank Blood also said that there is no blood," said Khan Mohammad, a patient. The Ministry of Public Health said that it has provided enough facilities for all blood bank centers across the country. "Our purpose is to strengthen the blood bank in every possible way," said Sharafat Zaman Amerkhail, a spokesman for the ministry.



Potable water supply project worth 26m Afs completed

N A N G A R H A R (Agencies): Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department of Nangarhar province said that a potable water supply project worth 26 million Afghani has been completed and in the Haska Mina district of the province. During the inauguration ceremony, Rural Rehabilitation and Development Department head, Mawlawi Qasimatullah Mubariz said, that the potable water supply project implemented in Tor-Ragha village of Haska Mina district powered by the solar energy with the capacity of 60,000 liters water storage. Mubariz said, that this drinking water supply network will provide drinking water to over 900 families in the province.

Laghman families reconcile after 45 years of enmity

MEHTARLAM (Pajhwok): A 45-year-old feud between two families in of the Dawlat Shah District of eastern Laghman province has finally come to an end. They had inherited from their ancestors the enmity that claimed eight lives, Mohammad Shah, 55, said on Monday. The families reconciled and pardoned each other as a result of talks. About the bitter story of his past life, Shah told Pajhwok Afghan News he was 13 when his father had a dispute over land with a man named Sala Khan. In the ensuing enmity, eight people from the two sides lost their lives. During the enmity lasting 45 years, he said, members of both families carried guns, suffered psychiatric diseases and lived in grief. In order to come out of that miserable situation, both parties authorised tribal elders to resolve their long-running feud. The two sides pardoned each other and their feud turned into friendship after peace negotiations on March 16 2023. Many believe squabbles, verbal clashes and other reckless incidents lead to enmities that claim the lives and joys of the parties involved. They agree such enmities are eventually resolved through talks. But the question is: Why don't people resort to the final measure (talks and pardon) in the first place? The answer to this question should be searched in Shah's statement. Shah believes if his father and the other side had exercised patience at that time, eight people would not have lost their lives. Their heirs would not have inherited hostilities, he says. Shah recalled: "I was 13 years old when my father pushed himself and his family into the trap of enmity. For years, we lived away from our village house. We were scared even of our own shadows. All of members of my family suffered from psychiatric disorders and never felt secure." Because of the 45 years long feud, both families suffered casualties and their children were deprived of education, he lamented. At long last, Shah said, he decided to sit down for talks with the other party and he succeeded in doing so. The enmity between the families was resolved with the help of religious scholars and tribal elders. He added: "I lived abroad for many years — away from home. Once I asked myself how long will we continue to live miserably. How long will we be aiming our guns at each other? After thinking for a long



time, I picked up my phone and called tribal elder Malik Haidar Khan to save us from this agony." Haidar Khan shared the issue with other tribal elders and religious scholars, who subsequently consulted the rival party. Mohammad Omar, an elder from the other party, also expressed pleasure over the end of the enmity. He said they were no longer haunted by safety concerns. Mohammad Omar commented: "I regret living for 45 years with this feud. We cannot bring back the time that has passed. Our families and children have immensely suffered and we ask all people to save themselves from the agony of enmities." Omar confirmed pardoning the killers of his relatives for God's sake and in response to pleas from tribal elders for ending the enmity. He remarked: "The biggest affliction on earth is enmity. We have suffered a lot of losses. Eighteen of our houses have crumbled and we lost members of our families. Now we have returned to a normal life and live in peace." He called for people to steer clear of enmities because every moment of life in enmity was full of concerns. Malik Haidar Khan, a mediator, told Pajhwok: "It was 45 years ago when Zarif Shah and Sala Khan

clashed over a land dispute in Dara Took area. During the four and half decades of enmity, eight members of their families were killed." At the beginning of the feud, Sala Khan was killed. In revenge, members of the victim's family killed four people from the rival family. Tribal elders and religious scholars had mediated between the families at that time, asking both to stop attacks. However, after 17 years, some members of Zarif Shah's family killed three relatives of Sala Khan, making the enmity more complicated, Haidar explained. Ha added the mediators, authorised by the rival households, had sorted out the enmity. Both sides are now living in peace, according to him. Religious scholar Maulvi Abdul Rasheed, a mediator, said: "The jirga has decided Mohammad Shah, son of Mohammad Rasool will pay 250,000 afs in compensation to Mohammad Omar. The payment has already been made. Now members of both families must live as brothers. Any of the parties violating this decision will be expelled from the village and all of its properties and belongings will be given to the other side." Qari Abdul Qahir Mutawakil, the district governor and mediator, confirmed the conflicting families had asked him for mediation between them. He said the jirga had received written guarantees from both families not to harm each other in the future. Public figures and civil activists want enmities to be resolved at the initial stage. If allowed to linger on, disputes can create disorder and problems in the community, they argue. Maihan, headmaster of a Mehtarlam school, opined all conflicts could be resolved through discussions. He urged people to be careful even on small issues and prioritise talking out their problems. He stressed authorities and tribal elders must push ahead with efforts for ending tribal disputes to enforce order in society. According to information from the district administration, 41 feuds have been patched up in Dawlat Shah with mediation from tribal elders and religious scholars since the Islamic Emirate's takeover. Attempts at ending such long-running enmities in different parts of the country have gained momentum over the past one year and a half.



ISLAMABAD: Provincial Ombudsman of Balochistan, Nazar Muhammad Baloch, presenting the annual report 2021 of his institution to President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

ATC grants interim bail to Imran in three cases

LAHORE (PPI): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Tuesday granted interim bail to the former prime minister and PTI chief Imran Khan in three cases relating to arson, violence against police, vandalism and Zille Shah murder.

Several PTI leaders and workers were booked on the police's complaint for 'attacking' them during a raid at the former prime minister's Zaman Park residence in Lahore. The court dismissed a plea made by PTI Chairman Imran Khan requesting for exemption from court appearance. Khan was asked to appear before the court by 11 am. The PTI chief reached court in strict security after being summoned by the duty judge in the cases.

The former prime minister appeared before the duty judge in her chamber due to security reasons. The court after their appearance extended the interim bail of former prime minister and PTI chief Imran Khan in three cases till April.

Earlier, at the outset of the hearing, the judge asked where is Imran Khan, he was supposed to appear before the court today. Relief would be given to those in the case who appear before the court, the judge remarked and asked PTI chief's lawyer will his client appear before the court or not. former prime minister and PTI chief Imran Khan is not far away from the court, he would appear, the lawyer replied. Later, the court directed Imran Khan to appear before the court in else his bail would be canceled.

Imran, others summoned by JIT in cases against PTI: Joint Investigation Team (JIT) has summoned ex-prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan and other party leaders in cases registered against PTI leaders. The Joint Investigation Team (JIT) was formed by the government to probe the cases registered against the PTI chief and workers over vandalism and attacks on police. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders were booked at Civil Lines, Shadman and Race Course police stations.

As per details, Imran Khan, Fawad Chaudhry, Hamid Azhar, Ejaz Chaudhry, Musarrat Chema, Farrukh Habib and other PTI leaders have been directed to appear before JIT at CCPO Office tomorrow. The former premier and other PTI leaders are asked to appear before the JIT at 1pm on Wednesday (tomorrow). It may be noted that only Asad Umar appeared before the JIT after being summoned, while other Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders did not show up.

Earlier, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan filed a plea with the Lahore High Court (LHC) for quashing cases registered against party workers.

The federal government, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), prime minister, interior minister, caretaker Punjab minister, IG Punjab, anti-corruption, National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and PEMRA have been made respondents by Imran Khan.

Suo motu powers

SC bench overturns Justice Isa's ruling

ISLAMABAD (PPI): A six-judge larger bench of Supreme Court has overturned Justice Qazi Faez Isa's ruling about powers of the chief justice of Pakistan regarding suo motu notices and formation of benches, reported 24NewsHD TV channel.

The six-member bench was formed only hours before it conducted its first hearing and shot down Justice Isa's verdict without wasting any time, saying the detailed judgement will be released later. The larger bench was led by Justice Ijazul Ahsan, and comprised of Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Mazahir Naqvi, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Ayesha Malik.

On March 29, a three-member bench comprising Justice Qazi Faez Isa, Justice Aminuddin Khan and Justice Shahid Waheed had issued a majority verdict of 2-1, ordering the postponement of cases being heard under Article 184(3) of the Constitution till the amendments made to Supreme Court Rules 1980 regarding the discretionary powers enjoyed by the Chief Justice of Pakistan to form benches.

The bench had issued the ruling in a suo motu case regarding the grant of 20 marks to Hafiz-e-Quran while seeking admission to MBBS/BDS degree. Justice Waheed wrote a dissenting note against the order, saying the points raised and discussed in the

order were not relevant to the case. The court further held that neither the Constitution nor the rules granted to the chief justice or the registrar, the power to make special benches, select judges who will be on other benches and decide the cases that they will hear.

On March 31, Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial set aside the observations made by the three-member bench and SC Registrar Ishrat Ali had issued a circular, stating: "With respect to the said order the HCJ has been pleased to observe as under:- The observations made in paras 11 to 22 and 26 to 28 of the majority judgment of two to one travel beyond the list before the Court and invokes its suo motu jurisdiction."

"The unilateral assumption of judicial power in such a manner violates the rule laid down by a 5 Member judgment or this Court reported as Enforcement of Fundamental Rights with regard to Independence of Press/Media (PLD 2022 SC 306)." "Such power is to be invoked by the Chief Justice on the recommendation of an Hon'ble Judge or a learned Bench of the Court on the basis of criteria laid down in Article 184(3) of the Constitution," reads the circular. It added that the three-judge bench's majority judgment "therefore disregards binding law

laid down by a larger bench of the Court".

"Any observation made in the said judgment, inter alia, for the fixation or otherwise of cases is to be disregarded. Accordingly, a circular be issued by the Registrar slating the foregoing legal position for the information of all concerned," it concluded. On April 3, the federal cabinet approved the withdrawal of the services of Registrar Supreme Court Ishrat Ali in its special sitting. Secretary Establishment division also issued a notification in this regard.

The development comes after Justice Isa challenged the authority of the registrar of the apex court who, he said, had no right to annul a judicial order. In a letter written to the registrar of the Supreme Court, Justice Isa said the chief justice of Pakistan also could not issue any administrative order against a judicial order, and that the registrar's circular of March 31 was a violation of the judgement of the three-member bench of the Supreme Court.

Justice Isa further wrote that the registrar should be aware of his constitutional responsibility as a senior officer, and that if he knew that the case in question was heard under suo motu No 4/2022 Article 184/3, he should not have issued the circular. He also advised Registrar Ishrat Ali to leave the charge of the post.

ZAB is the founder

(Continued from Page 1)

The Parliament had also passed a resolution in that regard, he added. The minister said, "The division in the apex court was pointed out, which was requested not to make any decision in haste." The Attorney General for Pakistan, he said, had also requested the court during the last day's hearing to form a seven-member bench but the same was rejected. Another request for a 13-member bench was also turned down. The legal team would decide about the future course of action on the matter, he added.

He said the coalition parties in the present government were not made parties in the case and their lawyers did not get even a single chance to speak during the last six days of the hearing. He felt sorrow over "the creation of such a crisis," he added. The minister said it was also "meaningful" that a six-member bench had been formed to review the judgment of Justice Qazi Faez Isa which had ordered to stop the proceedings of cases initiated under Article 184/3 of the Constitution until the formation of the SC rules.

The matter related to Justice Isa's verdict seemed to have not been addressed with an executive order, he added. He said, "There should not be any environment of conflicts in institutions and the impression of political engineering through institutions should also be avoided." Azam Tara said the government wanted free and fair elections across the country

simultaneously. He cited according to Article 224 of the Constitution, general elections should be held at the same time across the country, while as per Article 254 polls could be postponed due to some extraordinary situation.

The Election Commission of Pakistan had the mandate to adjust the schedule of the election keeping in view the ground realities but the Supreme Court had itself given the date in its verdict now, he added. The minister said the two provincial assemblies were dissolved by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-led governments in January just to satisfy the ego of PTI Chairman Imran Khan.

The three-member SC bench's verdict regarding elections in Punjab, he claimed, would further deepen the constitutional and political crises in the country. "We have reservations about the decision and our legal team will decide about the future course of action after consultations", he added.

Moreover, Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique said the presence of political governments in two provinces would compromise the credibility of the general election. Speaking in the National Assembly, the minister said his party wanted free, fair and transparent elections across the country, but it would not be possible in the presence of political governments in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The minister said the general election should be held simultaneously across the country to restore polit-

ical and economic stability. Collective wisdom was needed to avert the looming constitutional crisis and end the prevailing economic and political ones. Free and fair elections were not possible in the country until the completion of fresh census and delimitation, he said, adding the rigged elections would be dangerous for the unity and integrity of the country.

He regretted that the two provincial assemblies were dissolved by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-led governments to satisfy the ego of Imran Khan, who should understand that his government was removed constitutionally. Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman said today's judgment came at a time when the country was already facing financial and security challenges.

She said unfortunately a full court bench was not constituted to hear the important case despite the demands from political parties, civil society and bar associations. "We stand by the Constitution of the country," she added. She said 44 years had lapsed but the Bhutto family, the Pakistan Peoples Party, and the nation had been waiting even today on his death anniversary when justice would be served in the judicial murder of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (ZAB). Former president Asif Ali Zardari, she said, filed a reference in 2011 to get justice in ZAB's judicial killing. "For the last 12 years that reference is buried under files in the court," Sherry Rehman regretted.

Maryam takes aim at SC judges after polls verdict

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President and Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz took aim at the Supreme Court judges after the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa election verdict.

As per details, Maryam Nawaz tweeted that today's verdict of Supreme Court against delay in Punjab and KP elections is a part of conspiracy and it is a beginning to rewrite the constitution. She said that today the Punjab government has been presented to the PTI chairman Imran Khan in a plate. This bench of Supreme Court has now taken the responsibility of doing what the former chief justice Saqib Nisar, Justice Asif Saeed Khosa and former ISI chief Faiz Hameed, did in 2018. The PML-N senior vice president Maryam Nawaz said that the majority of the supreme court judges have opposed the facilitation done through a 'one man show'. She maintained that just rejecting the verdict is not enough, now is the time for parliament to make efforts to stop this facilitation of PTI through legal and constitutional ways.

‘Never seen cowardly person like Imran’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Tuesday taking a jibe on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Chairman Imran Khan, said she had never seen such a cowardly person in history of Pakistan.

Sharing a video of Imran Khan on her twitter handle covering his head with a protective shield, she said this picture was a proof of Imran Khan's real personality and character. She said that the person who used to ask his followers to 'break the idol of fear' has himself become 'an idol of fear'. She said that the nature of the jackal could not change by wearing a mask. A liar and a hypocrite could not be brave and courageous person, she maintained.

President for speedy relief to citizens

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has underscored the need for expeditiously addressing the complaints of the people so as to provide them timely relief against the maladministration of government organizations.

Highlighting the importance of the institutions of Federal and Provincial Ombudsmen, he said that ombudsmen played a significant role in providing justice to the people, adding that ombudsmen needed to be strengthened so that the maximum number of people could benefit from their services.

The President expressed these views while talking to the Provincial Ombudsman of Balochistan, Nazar Muhammad Baloch, who called on him here at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Tuesday. Nazar Muhammad Baloch also presented the Balochistan Ombudsman's Annual Report for the year 2021 to the President. Talking to the Ombudsman, the President emphasised the need for expanding the outreach of ombudsmen to far-flung areas to provide justice to the people at their doorsteps.

He stressed that the Provincial Ombudsman should continue to ensure the timely implementation of his findings by the concerned agencies to maintain public trust in his office. He said that an effective awareness campaign should be started to sensitize the people of Balochistan about the workings and role of the Provincial Ombudsman.

The Provincial Ombudsman briefed the President about the role and performance of his institution in 2021. He highlighted that the number of registered complaints had doubled since he had assumed the charge. He added that the Provincial Ombudsman received 1321 complaints in 2021 whereas 999 complaints were carried forward from the previous year.

PHC suspends dissolution of MTI Policy Board

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) has suspended dissolution of Medical Teaching Institution (MTI) policy by caretaker government decision and ordered to submit reply while adjourned further hearing till 17th April, on Tuesday.

PHC's divisional bench comprised of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice SM Attique Shah heard writ regarding dissolution of MTI policy Board by Muhammad Tahir along with other board members while Shumail Ahmad Butt and Ali Gohar Advocates argued the case before court on behalf of petitioners.

The counsel argued that petitioners are appointed as Policy Board Members after MTI Reforms Act 2015 while Secretary Health has forwarded summary for dissolution of MTI board which is approved by caretaker government on 28th March. They added that members are appointed for three years by Search and Nomination Committee.

On 26th January 2022 provincial government has appointed the petitioners as members Policy Board while on 8th October 2021 Dr. Ghazala Mahmood but the board has dissolved without completing its timeframe of three years.

The petition stated that Policy Board has initiated reforms on larger scale in MTI hospitals including new construction, provision

Court suspends by-election schedule on three NA seats

PESHAWAR (PPI): The Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Tuesday suspended the April 30 by-election schedule on three National Assembly seats. As per details, the Court announced the short verdict, reserved before on by-election in three National Assembly seats and issued notices to the respondents. Earlier, the Peshawar High Court (PHC) suspended the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) notification of holding by-elections on 24 NA seats in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

Peshawar High Court was moved by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf seeking the suspension of the Election Commission of Pakistan's by-election schedule on 24 NA seats, slated to be held on March 16 and 19. The by-elections were scheduled to be held in the constituencies of NA-4 Swat, NA-17 Haripur, NA-18 Swabi, NA-25 and NA-26 Nowshera, NA-32 Kohat, NA-38 Dera Ismail Khan (DI Khan) and NA-43 Khyber. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had announced resignations from the National Assembly on April 11 last year, minutes before the election of Shehbaz Sharif as the new prime minister. The Islamabad High Court (IHC) suspended National Assembly (NA) Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf's notification regarding the acceptance of PTI MNAs' resignations from Islamabad. The LHC also suspended the order of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) that notified the party's lawmakers elected from Punjab.

of modern facilities& equipment, renovation and to uplift public sector hospital and requested to ensure that Policy Board should complete stipulated timeframe.

The counsel argued that caretaker government has no jurisdiction to dissolve MTI Policy Board while added that Election Commission of Pakistan has imposed ban transfer-posting from 22nd January. The counsel added that it is matter record that Chief Secretary and Secretary health has opposed dissolution MTI policy board but the petitioners were de-notified against the law and

constitution. Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javed appeared before court and assured submission of reply while Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim remarked that caretaker government didn't working in their jurisdiction but busy to work beyond their jurisdiction.

The divisional bench of PHC comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice SM Attiques suspended dissolution of MTI Policy Board while ordered caretaker government to submit reply and adjourned further hearing till 17th April.

Illegal sale of cigarettes

PM directs agencies to cooperate with FBR

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday directed for installation of trace and track system in all the cigarette manufacturing units of the country within next two weeks to control tax evasion.

The prime minister also directed for installation of automatic track and trace system in all the big sectors of the country, besides, formulation of a comprehensive strategy for supplementing of revenue generation. The prime minister chaired a meeting to review installation of track and trace system in cigarette manufacturing industry, points of sales and broadening of overall tax volume, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

During the meeting, the prime minister also directed the law enforcement agencies to provide all possible cooperation to Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to control smuggling and illegal sale of cigarettes. The prime minister also directed for fixing of responsibility against the relevant authorities for their failure to

install auto track and trace system on sugar mills and sought an inquiry report in this regard.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar, Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah, Minister for Industries and Production Makhdoom Murtaza Mehmood, Minister for Law Azam Nazeer Tarar, PM's advisor Ahad Khan Cheema, PM's Special Assistants Jahanzaib Khan, Tariq Pasha and other senior officials. The meeting was apprised in detail of the track and trace system. The system was installed in majority of the cigarette manufacturing units while the installation work was in progress on the remaining ones.

The negotiations for installation of the system in the cigarette manufacturing units in Azad Jammu Kashmir were in the final stages. The meeting was further informed about the steps taken by FBR to control smuggling and illegal sale of cigarette. The prime minister opined that tenure posting of officers with good repute should be made on border crossings.

The prime minister was apprised that FBR had brought 0.7 million new tax payers under the tax net and taking further steps to meet its targets in the current year. The prime minister stressed that tax evaders and their agents should be brought to book because those elements who embezzled wealth of the country and nation did not deserve any leniency.

He also desired that the legal and judicial proceedings over the tax collection matters should be expedited. To a pace of progress on the installation of track and trace system in sugar mills, the prime minister expressed his displeasure and directed that services of the internationally reputed entities should be hired for the installation of latest technology-based track and trace system in all big sectors of the economy.

He observed that with these measures, the economic documentation process would be further improved, enhancing country's revenues. The prime minister also sought a report within two weeks over the positive steps in this regard.



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah talking to media persons after hearing in election suo motu case at Supreme Court.

Sustained reform commitment needed to overcome Pakistan's economic crisis: WB

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Pakistan's economy is expected to grow by only 0.4 percent in the current fiscal year ending June 2023.

According to World Bank's latest Pakistan Development Update: Recent Economic Developments, Outlook, and Risks, released today, the slower growth reflects subdued private sector activity amid deteriorating confidence, import controls, belated

fiscal tightening, and the impacts of the unprecedented floods of summer 2022.

Over FY23, Pakistan faced devastating floods and increasing global commodity prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. An inconsistent policy response, involving monetary tightening, new subsidies, and an informal exchange rate cap, saw the depletion of foreign

exchange reserves and undermined progress with planned fiscal consolidation. Rising macro risks and tighter global liquidity conditions curtailed Pakistan's access to international capital markets. Facing increasing debt, rapidly eroding foreign exchange reserves, and delays with the IMF-EFF 9th program review, the Government recently course-corrected.