

Funeral prayer offered F.P. Report

RAWALPINDI: Funeral prayers of Sepoy Hamid Rasool who embraced martyrdom during an Intelligence Based Operation (IBO) in Shin Warsak, South Waziristan District, was offered at Frontier Corps (FC) Headquarters Wana initially and subsequently in his hometown Jaswal, district Rawalpindi with full military honours.

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NSC meets today

ISLAMABAD (PPI): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has convened a meeting of the NSC today to discuss the ongoing situation arising out after the Supreme Court's verdict on the PTI petition challenging delay in elections in Punjab and KP. The NSC would meet at PM House during which the prevailing situation in the country will be discussed and decisions will be taken regarding the course of action to be taken by the government.

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RAWALPINDI: Chief of the Army Staff Asim Munir interacting with soldiers during his visit to Line of Control.

Govt to accept decision of full bench of SC: PM

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday said the government would accept the decision of the full bench of the Supreme Court in the case for elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Speaking at the foundation stone laying ceremony of the Islamabad Lawyers Complex here, he said however, those judges who recused themselves should not be made part of that bench. He recalled that Justice Munir was the creator of the principle of necessity which took Pakistan in a certain direction.

He said, "We respect Supreme Court and justices and their decisions should apply to everyone." Talking about proceedings of the Supreme Court in the case for elections, he mentioned that a nine-member bench was formed which was later shortened to three members as some judges recused. In the same case, political parties were not made part of the proceedings despite requests, he noted.

Shehbaz Sharif said if the demand for a full bench of the Supreme Court was accepted in the case for elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa then everybody would have accepted the decision. He said the decision of Supreme Court Justice Qazi Faez Esa was invalidated through a circular in a case then a six-member larger bench was formed for the



same case. Article 63A of the constitution was rewritten and the appeal filed by the government in the Supreme Court was still not heard, he continued.

He said no political party could evade elections as it would bury its politics. He said a court verdict was given that a prime minister was nothing without his federal cabinet but this principle was not applied to others.

He said all the stakeholders should look at their conduct and decide whether they wanted to protect the future of coming generations or they wanted to indulge in fights for their personal interests and take Pakistan in a direction from which nobody could come back.

"We have to protect the future of Pakistan which is faced with many challenges. We should take decisions with a cool head and stay united for the

interest of Pakistan." While expressing happiness at the construction of Lawyers Complex, he said the project would be built at a cost of Rs 1.8 billion.

Earlier, the project was only on paper and nothing was done on it, he told. He directed that a sports complex comprising swimming pools should also be made part of the lawyers complex. He said lawyers were a prominent section of society and they played an important role for the rule of law, restoration of judiciary, and justice since the creation of Pakistan.

Lawyers bore baton charge and physical violence as they held demonstrations and rallies for the restoration of the judiciary, he added. Earlier, Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah and Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar also spoke and highlighted measures taken for the welfare of lawyers.

Ali Amin Gandapur arrested

F.P. Report

D I KHAN: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police on Thursday arrested Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Ali Amin Gandapur from Dera Ismail Khan.

The police arrested Gandapur from outside the (DI Khan) bench of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) and shifted him to an undisclosed location. He had taken refuge in the premises of the High Court to avoid arrest. A heavy contingent of police was present outside the court since Thursday morning to arrest Gandapur.

Reacting to his arrest, PTI Chairman Imran Khan said the "law of the jungle" prevails in Pakistan. "PDM and handlers have a one-point agenda - that is to go after PTI workers and leadership," Imran said in a tweet. Quoting Gandapur's lawyer, Imran said it was decided preemptively to arrest Ali Amin Gandapur despite the bail. "But they will still be decimated in the elections InshaAllah," he added.

Meanwhile, Murad Saeed questioned if the Constitution of Pakistan had been suspended in the country. "Has the state decided to put aside every issue of the country and crush PTI? Do they not even care about the decisions of the honourable courts."

Govt 'afraid' of losing polls: Imran

LAHORE (INP): Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan has claimed that the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) govt is 'afraid' of losing polls.

Soon after his removal in April last year, Khan and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party launched a nationwide campaign demanding immediate general elections, which the government repeatedly rejected. "The government is petrified of losing the elections because all opinion polls show they are going to be decimated," Imran Khan told Al Jazeera in an exclusive interview at his residence in Lahore.

The government is frightened by the increasing popularity of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Imran Khan added. The former prime minister alleged that the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government could "even violate the constitution" to prevent national elections in the country, due later this year. Pakistan's constitution says elections must be held within 90 days of the dissolution of a legislative assembly.

Earlier, Imran Khan said that the nation is heading towards the supremacy of law after the Supreme Court's (SC) verdict in the election delay case. While addressing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Youm-e-Tashakur event, "We welcome the SC verdict [in the election delay case] because we are hearing towards the supremacy of law."

Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa polls Lower House passes resolution rejecting Apex court's verdict

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The National Assembly on Thursday passed a resolution rejecting the Supreme Court of Pakistan's judgment on Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa elections.

The resolution, moved by Khalid Magsi, called upon the Prime Minister and the federal cabinet not to implement this judgment as it is contrary to the constitution. It said the House considers the conduct of general elections simultaneously across the country as the panacea to all the problems. It noted that this is in accordance with the procedure laid down in the law and constitution for political and economic stability.

The House expressed concerns over interference in political matters saying the judgments of the minority are creating anarchy in the country and paving the way for division in the federating units. The resolution also voiced concerns over the wrong interpretation of Article 63 (A) of the constitution and demanded formation of a full court of the Supreme Court to review it. The National Assembly also passed a resolution unanimously strongly condemning the recent Israeli attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque.

The resolution moved by the PPP leader Naz Baloch said the attacks on women and children are a gross violation of human rights. The resolution said this House stands in solidarity with the people of Palestine. It further said that the attacks have hurt the sentiments of Muslims around the world. The House urged the international community including human rights organizations to break silence on this violence.

Earlier, the National Assembly informed that the government is engaged with various countries to enhance export of Pakistani workforce abroad. Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Sajid Hussain Turi told the House during Question Hour that these countries include Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Iraq, Italy, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya,

Asad rules out talks with Imran

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for Communications Asad Mahmood Thursday ruled out dialogue with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on any political issue and called for initiating a judicial inquiry against him for violating the Constitution.

"No one should be allowed to violate the Constitution," he said while speaking in the National Assembly. The minister alleged that "the judiciary is facilitating an accused person who does not bother to attend court proceedings, rather he has been given an opportunity to mark his court attendance while sitting in his car." Referring to the apex court's three-member bench decision regarding the delay in Punjab polls, he said justice was not done in the matter as an appeal of all the political parties regarding the constitution of a full court bench to hear the case was rejected. He reiterated the demand for the full-court bench to settle the matters about elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Asad said the coalition parties had not demanded a decision in their own favour or against Imran Khan but wanted a full court bench to hear the case. He said questions would arise on the transparency of elections in Punjab in the presence of a political government at the Center. The solution to the prevailing constitutional, political, and legal complications was in holding the elections simultaneously across the country and that also in a free and fair manner, he remarked. "All institutions will have to remain in their domains to ensure the supremacy of the Constitution," the minister maintained. He said the country had been facing unprecedented challenges for the last many years but it stood firm and resolute, but today the nation had been divided, which was not good. Asad said the provincial assemblies of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were dissolved at the whims of one person (Imran Khan) who just wanted to satisfy his ego.

Portugal and Romania.

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi informed the House that measures had been taken to ensure security and safety of people in the public parks of Islamabad. He said the government plans to build two new parks in the federal capital. Responding to a Calling Attention Notice, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi said seven Sasta Bazaars have been established in the federal capital territory to ensure provision of essential commodities to the people at reduced rates during the holy month of Ramadan.

He said there is a mechanism to determine the prices of essential items and then magistrates monitor the implementation of the rate list. The Minister said during the holy month of Ramazan, action has been

taken against the profiteers and 67 people have been arrested and heavy fines have also been imposed on them.

Murtaza Javed Abbasi said it is for the first time that free flour is being provided to the deserving families. He said despite difficult economic situation, the government is trying its best to provide relief to the common man. Responding to another Calling Attention Notice, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi assured that escalators, which have been imported, would soon be installed at the Metro Bus Stations between Faiz Ahmed Faiz and New Islamabad International Airport for facilitation of the commuters. He recalled that this equipment could not be imported earlier due to certain restrictions by the State Bank of Pakistan.

Saudi Arabia, Iran sign pact to resume relations

BEIJING (APP): Iran and Saudi Arabia on Thursday signed an agreement for resuming diplomatic relations after the meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang witnessing the signing ceremony, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said.

Upon the proposal of Saudi Arabia and Iran, China on Thursday received Saudi Arabian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, and Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, for a meeting in the Chinese capital here, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Moa Ning said during her regular briefing held here.

The spokesperson informed that the Chinese foreign minister met with his two counterparts from Saudi Arabia and Iran. The foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia and Iran announced the resumption of diplomatic ties and signed a joint statement. Both noted that they will continue to advance the process to



improve bilateral relations in accordance with the roadmap and timeline identified in their Beijing talks in March and thanked China for its important role in facilitating the talks, she added.

Mao Ning said that China welcomes and applauds the continued steps Saudi Arabia and Iran have taken to improve their relations, adding, "We are ready to keep playing a mediating role, support

both sides in building trust, dispelling misgivings and realizing good neighborliness, and contribute China's wisdom and strength to promoting security, stability and development in the Middle East." She said that the further improvement of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran fully shows that regional countries have the will and ability to take the initiative of regional peace and development.

Nawaz to land in Jeddah on 11th

ISLAMABAD (INP): PML-N Quaid and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif will land in Jeddah from London on April 11 with his family, while his daughter and party's senior vice-president Maryam Nawaz along with other PML-N leaders will join him in the Saudi port city, it has been learnt on Thursday.

According to the schedule, Nawaz Sharif will reach Jeddah on April 11 and will spend the last 10 days of Ramazan in Saudi Arabia. His daughter Maryam will also depart for Jeddah from Lahore. Nawaz Sharif will spend the last ten days of the holy month of Ramadan in Saudi Arabia as a royal guest.

He will spend three days in Makkah and Jeddah. Following that, he will meet the Pakistanis on April 15 after visiting the Holy Prophet's mosque in Madinah. The Saudi royals have invited Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for Umrah.

Security of ex-PMs: IHC seeks rules

ISLAMABAD (INP): While hearing a plea for providing security to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) Thursday sought the rules about security to former prime ministers.

"If a prisoner is in jail, he also has rights. Today, we are judges, tomorrow we won't be. Everyone has rights. What level of security is provided to former prime ministers?" IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq inquired from the additional attorney general. "Present the rules, and then we issue order on the plea. The petitioner is a former prime minister. What is the law for his security? Has Imran Khan been provided security yet?" he inquired.

Israeli forces storm Al-Aqsa Mosque

JERUSALEM (Agencies): Witnesses said that Israeli forces smashed through the upper windows of Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest in Islam, and then threw stun grenades and fired tear gas at the people inside. Videos show Israeli soldiers beating the Palestinians with batons, and forcing them to lay handcuffed on the floor of the mosque before being taken away under detention.

Israeli police said they were forced to enter the mosque because "masked agitators" had locked themselves inside, and were armed with fireworks, sticks and rocks. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu - who was already under fire from a significant cross section of the Israeli public over government policies - said Israel was "committed to maintaining freedom of worship".

The violent incident has led to talk of a further escalation, particularly with a large number of ultranationalist Jews expected to enter Al-Aqsa compound to mark the Jewish festival of Passover, which began on Wednesday. Palestinians are warning that the increased presence of Jews at the site may be part of an attempt to gradually take it over. A Jewish activist has already been arrested for planning to conduct an animal sacrifice for Passover there - a practice considered provocative, and one that hasn't been done since ancient times.

Ultrationalism has been growing ever more powerful in Israel, with a presence

now at the highest echelons of government. On Sunday, the Israeli cabinet approved plans for a national guard that would come under the direct control of the far-right national security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, leading to accusations that he plans to use the force to target Palestinians.

Meanwhile, the Arab League strongly condemned an Israeli police raid on Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, saying it put regional stability at risk.

In a statement issued after an emergency meeting on the incident, the League condemned what it called "crimes committed by the Israeli occupation forces against defenceless Muslim worshippers" in the mosque. The pre-dawn raid risked "igniting a spiral of violence that threatens security and stability in the region and the world", it added. Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit had earlier condemned the raid in a separate statement.

"The extremist approaches that control the policy of the Israeli government will lead to widespread confrontations with the Palestinians if they are not put to an end," he said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has claimed the situation had been caused by "extremists" who barricaded themselves inside the mosque with weapons, stones and fireworks.

Meanwhile, Israeli police entered Al-Aqsa Mosque a

second time on Wednesday, witnesses said, hours after the arrest and removal of more than 350 people in a police raid at the compound and despite a US appeal to ease tensions. In the second instance, late at night, police entered the compound and tried to evacuate worshippers, using stun grenades and firing rubber bullets, said staff of the Waqf, the Jordanian-appointed organization managing the complex. Worshippers threw objects at police, witnesses said. The Palestinian Red Crescent said six people were injured.

In a statement, police claimed dozens of youngsters brought rocks and firecrackers into the mosque and had tried to barricade themselves inside. The Waqf, however, said police entered the mosque before prayers were over. Nabil Abu Rudeineh, spokesman for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, said: "Israel's raid into Al-Aqsa mosque, its assault on worshippers, is a slap to recent US efforts which tried to create calm and stability during the month of Ramazan."

Less than 24 hours earlier, police raided the mosque to try to remove what they claimed were masked agitators who locked themselves inside after attempts to remove them by dialogue failed. The Palestinian Red Crescent said 12 Palestinians were injured in the earlier incident, including from rubber-tipped bullets and beatings.





E-Pay Punjab fetches Rs 173bn revenue

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab government has collected a record tax revenue of over Rs 173 billion through e-Pay Punjab, an online platform for collection of the government receipts. The number of online transactions through the system have crossed the mark of 28 million, says a Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) press release, issued here on Thursday. The Punjab government has so far collected over Rs 17 billion as Token Tax, Rs 17 billion as Property Tax and over Rs 3 billion in lieu of Vehicle Transfer Tax, it added.

The e-Pay Punjab app., developed by the PITB in collaboration with Punjab Finance Department and 1 Link, has been offering online payment of 26 taxes/levies for 11 different departments across the province. The app allows payments to be made via ATM, internet banking, mobile banking or over the counter by visiting the nearest 1-Link member banks. The taxes can also be paid through Telco Agents and mobile wallet.

Car lifter held, three stolen cars recovered

KARACHI (APP): The Special Investigation Unit (SIU) of Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) Karachi Police on Thursday arrested an accused allegedly involved in auto-theft and recovered three stolen cars.

Accused identified as Danish Naqvi was arrested on a tip off from Sharifabad and the vehicles recovered were stolen from the limits of Hyderi police station, according to a spokesman for SIU. The vehicles bearing registration numbers Z-0563, ADM-114 and AMH-184 were recovered from his possession. During initial interrogation, the arrested confessed that he along with his accomplices Imran and Shehzad used to steal vehicles from different areas of the city. The cases of recovered stolen vehicles were registered within the Hyderi police station. The arrested was handed over to Anti-Vehicle Lifting Cell for further legal proceedings.

KMC to auction various licenses to increase revenue

KARACHI (APP): Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saif-ur-Rahman has directed the heads of departments of KMC to immediately make arrangements for the auction of various licenses so that recovery could be enhanced.

He expressed dissatisfaction over the revenue collection of various departments and directed them to take steps to increase the revenue through auctioning of various KMC licenses, said a spokesperson of KMC on Thursday. He said that all departments concerned should ensure the implementation of the directive given in this regard and give it a top priority. He said that the availability of revenue is important for any institution, and it is necessary to speed up the recovery process in order to provide better municipal services to the citizens.

CM approves Punjab clean air policy

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has approved the Punjab clean air policy and a comprehensive action plan for transport, agriculture, industries, environment, local government, housing, urban development, energy, labor and other departments while chairing the 7th meeting of the Punjab Environment Protection Council at his office. The line departments would prepare a working plan while the Punjab government would implement the policy and action plan with the support of the World Bank.

The CM also approved the Punjab plastic management strategy which aims to promote sustainable practices for plastic management by introducing modern recycling technologies and offering incentives for recycling and reuse.

Further, the institutional capacity of the line departments would be strengthened to ensure effective execution. The CM emphasized the importance of creating public awareness regarding the harms of plastic pollution and the benefits of sustainable plastic management.

The secretary Environment Protection department provided a detailed overview of the key features of both the Punjab clean air policy and the Punjab plastic management strategy.

The chief secretary, as well as several other officials including the secretaries of P&D, irrigation, specialized health-care & medical education, primary & secondary health, housing, industries, forest, local government, and the DG environment protection authority were also in attendance.

CM visits Govt Central Model School: Caretaker Chief Minister

Punjab Mohsin Naqvi visited Government Central Model School Rattigan Road, Lower Mall and reviewed educational facilities being provided there.

Caretaker Provincial Minister for Education Mansoor Qadir and Secretary Education also accompanied him.

CM Mohsin Naqvi stated on this occasion that Central Model School had earned name in the past, adding that steps would be taken to restore reputation and dignity of the Central Model School.

He remarked that Central Model School holds its distinctive history in the education sector, adding that making changes in the curriculum are necessary so as to improve educational standard of the school.

He stated that educational curriculum should conform to the latest requirements worldwide. Mohsin Naqvi directed that the Board of Governors should conduct a meeting and take prompt measures in this regard.

The CM visited various classrooms, met with the students and talked with them. He questioned the students about their educational activities.

The students answered the questions of the Caretaker CM Mohsin Naqvi and apprised him about their educational activities. Mohsin Naqvi also inquired from the teachers about educational activities of the students and also inquired about provision of free books in the school.

The CM directed to further improve educational facilities for the students in the schools. He said that additional funds would be provided in order to improve educational facilities for the students in the government schools.

PPP always countered dictatorship: Shehzad

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party Central Punjab Information Secretary Shehzad Saeed Cheema has said that the PPP always countered dictatorship unlike other political parties.

Addressing a joint press conference along with other party leaders followed by an Iftar dinner in the honor of the media persons here on Thursday, he said that the PPP was ready for elections but this should be held after a general consensus.

He said that death of party's founder

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a loss to the state.

He said that the current political crises had impacted everything in the country and the people had been mentally and socially paralyzed.

"The PPP demands all institutions to take decisions within the constitutional limits," he said.

He said the PPP had completed its homework for the upcoming elections.

PPP leaders Neelum Jabbar, Faiza Malik and others were also present.

Elephant Noor Jahan being treated by international experts

KARACHI (APP): Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saif-ur-Rahman Thursday said that zoo elephant Noor Jahan is being treated by international experts. The team from Four Paws continuously monitors the condition of the elephant in the zoo and hopes the elephant will get better soon. He said this while reviewing the treatment and updates of the treatment of elephant Noor Jahan of Karachi Zoo.

Maintenance of health and provision of quality food to animals kept in Karachi Zoo is the first priority and therefore all necessary measures will be taken to bring improvement. Earlier, the seven-member team comprising experts from the international animal welfare organization Four Paws conducted a detailed medical examination of Karachi Zoo's elephant Noor Jahan on Thursday, and prescribed new medicines along with the existing medicines.

The team also suggested some changes in the elephant enclosure to provide a better environment for the elephant Noor Jahan, which will help in the treatment of the elephant.

Dr Amir Khalil, the head of the team of experts, expressed the hope that with

the supply of medicines and better care, the condition of the elephant Noor Jahan will improve and her suffering will decrease.

He called the elephant's condition better and hoped that the wound on the elephant's leg would also heal in a few days, which would make it easier to move. It should be noted that in connection with the treatment of the elephant Noor Jahan of Karachi Zoo, a seven-member team of experts from the international animal welfare organization Four Paws reached Karachi on the invitation of Administrator Karachi Dr Syed Saif-ur-Rehman and on Wednesday they performed the successful operation and procedure besides conducting various tests as a result of which a hematoma disease was diagnosed in the elephant and the experts started its treatment.

Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori was also present on this occasion on Wednesday at the zoo along with Administrator Karachi Dr Syed Saif-ur-Rehman who thanked the experts from Four Paws and announced the establishment of a veterinary hospital and modern laboratory at the zoo for providing instant medical help to animals.



KARACHI: Heavy flow of traffic on Shara-e-Faisal as people trying to reach their homes before the time of Iftar.

Only justice can unite Pakistan, says MQM-P convener

KARACHI (NNI): Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) Convener Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui expressed his concerns about the possible state of emergency in the country. He blamed everyone for bringing the country to this state. Speaking at an event in Karachi on Thursday, MQM-P chief said that the country's quota system was 50 years old and needed to be updated.

He also stated that Pakistan had both democracy and a feudal system, but the feudal system had failed. He insisted that the country needed unity to save itself from oppression. Mr Siddiqui expressed reservations regarding the census, saying that the population of Sindh was decreasing in the census. He questioned the justification of the government's existence if it could not conduct a census properly.

Moreover, the judiciary also came under fire as Mr Siddiqui stated that Pakistan needed 'insaf' (justice) and not Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

He asserted that only justice could unite the country and lead it towards a prosperous future. MQM-P Convener Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui's speech focused on the need for unity and justice in Pakistan to overcome the challenges faced by the country.

Bilal Yasin attack case adjourned till May 2

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Thursday adjourned hearing of MPA Bilal Yasin attack case till May 2. The court summoned more witnesses for recording their statements on the next date of hearing.

ATC Judge Abher Gul Khan conducted the case proceedings, wherein accused Mian Haseeb Hamid and others appeared and got their attendance marked.

The shooters -- Majid Hussain and Qasid alias Kashi -- were also produced in the court.

During the proceedings, the defence counsel submitted that his clients had filed an appeal before the Lahore High Court

against insertion of Section 7 of Anti-Terrorist Act in the FIR. He pleaded with the court to adjourn the matter in view of pendency of the appeal. To a court query, the counsel submitted that a new bench had yet not been formed for hearing the appeal.

At this, the court remarked that statements of witnesses should continue to be recorded in these circumstances. Subsequently, the court recorded statements of two prosecution witnesses and adjourned further proceedings till May 2. Data Darbar police had filed the challan in the court against eight accused. The police nominated Mian

Haseeb Hamid alias Mian Vicky, Asad Hamid, Hamid Mehmood, Zulfiqar alias Bhair, Maroof Ali alias Pappu, Mohsin Manzoor besides two shooters -- Majid Hussain and Qasid alias Kashi. The police had declared Mian Haseeb Hamid as the mastermind of the attack in the challan.

Mian Haseeb and five other accused were on bail whereas the two shooters were under custody. On Dec 31, 2021, two shooters riding a motorcycle had opened fire on MPA Bilal Yasin on the Mohini Road, Lahore. It was alleged that the shooters opened fire on the behest of Mian Haseeb.

KATI launches Thalassaemia free Pakistan campaign

KARACHI (APP): Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), on Thursday, launched the Thalassaemia Free Pakistan campaign for raising awareness and facilitating blood donations.

President KATI, Faraz-ur-Rehman, while announcing the launch of the campaign in a meeting with a delegation led by renowned social activist Siddique Sheikh and Kashif Iqbal said that we wanted to completely eradicate diseases like Thalassaemia from the country. Only timely diagnosis could save the future generation from diseases like Thalassaemia, he said adding that awareness would be imparted to the masses about screening before marriage that could keep the new generation healthy and make Pakistan free from Thalassaemia.

He said that there were around one million Thalassaemia patients in Pakistan whose lives depend on the availability of blood so awareness about the disease and blood donations was essential to save precious lives and help the affected people.

Faraz stressed on the need of conducting Thalassaemia screening in the Korangi area and assured that KATI would continue taking steps for the treatment of patients and blood donations.

He also appealed to the government to launch a campaign for prevention from Thalassaemia in the country in collaboration with private sectors like the polio campaign.

Campaign against profiteering, 142 vendors fined

KARACHI (APP): During ongoing campaign to check profiteering, Karachi administration, on Thursday, imposed fines of more than Rs.565,000 on 142 vendors for over charging customers while two shops were also sealed in District Korangi. According to a statement issued here by the commissioner's office, various monitoring teams visited different areas of the metropolis on the 15th of Ramadan and imposed fines of Rs.169,000 on 21 bakeries, fine of Rs.75,000 on 24 poultry shops, over Rs.990,000 on 20 grocery stores, Rs.9,000 on four meat sellers, Rs.30,000 on 15 vegetable sellers, Rs.19,000 on 20 fruit sellers and Rs.158,000 on 37 milk sellers while a fine of Rs.5,000 was imposed on a flour seller.

Commissioner Karachi, Muhammad

Iqbal Memon, directed all deputy commissioners and magistrates to play a proactive role to make the campaign for checking profiteering and ensuring the availability of items of daily use on fixed rates a success.

The commissioner instructed all the officers to conduct field visits and take action against the shopkeepers found guilty of profiteering to ensure relief to the citizens. He further directed that officers shall arrange sell of the confiscated goods on the spot at the official rate in presence of the shopkeeper.

Iqbal Memon also appealed to the citizens to register their complaints against the profiteering at Commissioner Karachi's control room by calling on telephone numbers 02199203443 and 02199205645.


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LAHORE: People enjoying riding on boat during boat tour in River Ravi in the provincial capital.



Merged districts: Body for provision of better facilities, uplift works

PESHAWAR (APP): Senate Sub-Committee on States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) on Thursday sought collective efforts for provision of better facilities and uplift works in newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

A meeting of the committee was held here under the chairmanship of Senator Dr Sania Nishtar, which was attended by Senator Shamim Afridi, Secretary Committee Azhar Saddiq, Chief Secretary Chaudhry Nadeem Aslam, Additional Chief Secretary and secretaries of all the concerned departments.

The Senate Sub-Committee expressed satisfaction over the ongoing projects, e-tendering and introduction of GIS system in NMDs.

Dr Sania said, she visited KP several times and

observed that all the departments were doing tremendous works and province clinched good position in governance than other provinces.

She stressed the need to install the biometric system in health and education departments for smooth working of relevant departments, adding that monitoring cells also should be constituted for transparent utilization of e-tendering.

She assured support to government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in taking funds for the province especially for the NMDs under different heads from the federal government.

She said the issues related to NMD would be raised in Senate.

Speaking on the occasion, Senator Shamim Afridi expressed displeasure over the non provision

of facilities to tribal districts despite all available resources with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including water, electricity and gas.

She said the federal and provincial governments should work jointly for the betterment of common people in the neglected areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Earlier, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry briefed the Senate standing committee about the developmental schemes, expenditures, monitoring, preparation and mechanism in the merged districts.

He informed the committee that shortage of funds were hampering development projects.

The Senate body assured to raise the funds' issue and other problems being confronted by KP government on a priority basis in the Senate.

SSP assures to address issues of Christians

PESHAWAR (APP): Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Haroon Khan on Thursday met with a delegation from the Christian community, led by Pervez Iqbal, to discuss the issues faced by the minority community. During the meeting, the delegation highlighted the challenges faced by the Christian community and urged the SSP to take immediate action to address their concerns.

The SSP Operations Haroon Khan briefed the delegation on the measures taken to ensure the security of minority places of worship, following the recent incidents.

He also assured the participants of the immediate solution to the problems faced by the Christian community. He urged the delegation to continue their cooperation with the police and assured them of his full support.

The delegation appreciated the efforts of the police in ensuring the security of minority places of worship. They also urged the police to take strict action against those involved in the recent incidents of target killings.

SHS to celebrate World Health Day F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: 75th World Health Day is being celebrated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa like other parts of the country, today (Friday) wherein different events have been organized to mark the occasion.

In this regard, an important event has been arranged at School of Health Sciences (SHS) Gulabad Phase 3 Chowk in collaboration with World Health Organization (WHO).

The Caretaker Chief Minister's Advisor on Health Prof Dr. Abid Jameel, Chief Minister's Advisor on Sports Dr. Riyaz Anwar and Peshawar based head of WHO Dr. Babar Alam will address as special guests in the function.

Principal of the school, Dr. Shamsul Haq, will read out his research paper on public health on this occasion. Later on there will be a walk to raise public awareness on the importance of health and hygiene, in which students, teachers and public opinion leaders will participate in a large number.

Afghan street criminals arrested

PESHAWAR (APP): In a successful crackdown the Gulberg police station on Thursday busted a three-member gang of Afghan street criminals and recovered looted items.

According to a spokesman of KP police the gang was involved in looting the public at gunpoint in different localities of the city and had deprived citizens of motorbikes, mobile phones, cash, jewellery.

The police recovered Rs 45,000 cash, eight snatched mobile phones and pistols which were used in the criminal activities.

Meanwhile, Swabi police arrested two members of an inter-district gang of robbers who were involved in millions of rupees robberies in a steel mill and a franchise of Telenor mobile company in the jurisdiction of Lahore and Kalu Khan police stations.

The police recovered stolen money worth millions of rupees and weapons used during the robberies.

Flour price increased

PESHAWAR (APP): The price of flour had been increased by Rs 500 per bag of 20kg, an Atta dealer said here on Thursday.

He said, "The price of the bag of 20 kg flour had increased by Rs 500 as the price of 20 kg of mixed flour is 3100 while the bag of fine flour has reached Rs 3200." He disclosed, "Due to the increase in the per maund price of wheat, the prices had increased."



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan chairing a meeting regarding law & order situation.

PBM MD innagurates social protection program

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Baitul Mall (PBM) Managing Director, Aamir Fida Paracha here Thursday evening inaugurated the first ever social protection program for orphans girls students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Addressing the inauguration function here at Pakistan Baitul Mall KP headquarters, he said that Rs800 per month to be provided to the mother of one school going orphan girl in the province.

He said that Rs12,000 per month to be given to an orphan family whose two or more girls are reading in the schools.

The project was started under orphans and widows support program of Pakistan Baitul Mall.

He said the program was in line of the vision of the Prime Minister and Shah-eed Moharama Benazir Bhutto for educational and socioeconomic empowerment of poor and under privileged segments of the

society. He said sweet home project were continued in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to support orphans and vulnerable children.

The MD said that a donor has provided cloths for 100 sweet homes children at Peshawar.

The poor women and widows were being provided vocational education for their economic empowerment and stand her on own feet.

He said street children were being facilitate in

schools enrolments.

Lal Badshah, Director PBM said that the project was started on pilot basis from Peshawar and later would be extended to other districts of the province.

Later, the MD Pakistan Baitul Mall handed over cheques to widows for education of their girls.

They thanked the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and MD Pakistan Baitul Mall for their support and assistance.

RTS orders CCPO Peshawar to conduct inquiry against SHOs

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Right to Public Services Commission (RTPSC/RTS) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa directed Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) to take disciplinary actions against current and former Station House Officers (SHOs) namely Wajid Khan and Hassan respectively, on Thursday.

RTS Chief Commissioner Muhammad Salim Khan and Commissioner

Judge Muhammad Asim Imam heard four public complaints including against SHOs Peshtakhara for didn't registering FIRs on the commission orders.

A complainant from Peshawar namely Siraj that his driver has sold his truck in scrap while police did not registering the First Information Report, however, RTS ordered SHO Pando Waris Khan to appear before commission on 13th April.

RTS has ordered Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kohat to provide "Fard" to complainants and take stern actions against culprits including concerned Patwari within 30 days as per law while applicant Mir Nawaz was heard on video link and told that Patwari has obtained Rs25 thousand as bribe but didn't provided land documents (fards).

RTS has directed another applicant Gul Rez Khan

from Khyber to establish his ownership by approaching civil courts on his complainant regarding demarcation.

Moreover, RTS ordered CCPO Peshawar to impose fine and hold departmental inquiry against current and the then SHOs Peshtakhara namely Wajid Khan and Hassan for didn't registering FIR of abduction on complaint of Ahmad Yar and directives of the commission as per RTPSC Act.

PBSA appreciates Qatar charity role for deprived segments

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Boys Scout Association (PBSA) Commissioner Sardar Waqar Shahzad meet with Amin Qatar Charity Head, on Thursday.

PBSA Sardar Waqar congratulated Amin for the holy month of Ramzan. Sardar Waqar thanked Amin Eisa for offering much needed help to Pakistan and specially the valley of Swat during the devastating floods and food packages during Holy month of Ramzan.

Pakistan Boys Scout Association (PBSA) commissioner Sardar Waqar Shahzad invited Qatar Charity head Amir Eisa to



visit Swat and hopeful that cooperation among both brotherly states should be continued for uplift of

people.

Qatar Charity head Amin Eisa accepted invitation for his visit to Swat and com-

mitted that the organization should continue its for victims of floods across Pakistan.

The smiling physician – A legend no more

Mohammad Hafizullah

“O soul, perfect peace, Return to your Lord well pleased (with Him), well-pleasing Him! Enter among my (honoured) servants Enter my paradise! (Quran 89: 28-30)

The Almighty elected to pluck the most-gentle, the most fragrant and the most vibrant flower of the medical community BUT in style – on a Friday, in the holy month of Ramzan and in the comfort of his home surrounded by his loved ones. Most believe that his illness over the last few years must have washed away if he had any peccadillos. “He has all the qualities that I have, and many more that I don’t,” remarked Prof Nasir while introducing Prof Sirajuddin in a seminar. These comments disclosed as to why he has been regarded as a “gentleman extraordinary”. His even-handed, balanced, and realistic approach won that coveted position for him in the world of medicine.

Prof Siraj was born to a literary family on August 13, 1935. His father was a

well-respected dedicated teacher. He shared his distinctive genes with his brother, an icon in the legal world, Barrister Zahoor Ul Haq. He graduated in 1958 from King Edwards Medical College, Lahore with flying colors. He proceeded to the USA to join residency at New Jersey but later went to UK for further training in medicine. There he earned membership and later fellowship of Royal Colleges of Physicians Glasgow and Edinburgh. On his return he joined Khyber Medical College and became Professor of Medicine and later became Principal of the college and dean of medical faculty, University of Peshawar. Prof Siraj was received in the medical community as a breath of fresh air. Most previous teachers would wear a stern look and act as ‘class professors’. He, on the other hand, had a peculiar style – friendly, gracious and frank. Perennial smile was his hallmark and remained so till the end!

Prof Siraj had a passion for medical education. He introduced changes in the methods of teaching and evaluation as principal at KMC. He authored a book

on medical education – ‘Quality Education’ and then revising it with a second edition. He was the permanent chief guest on ‘Medical Education’ conferences organized in Khyber medical University and we would distribute his books to all graduates of MHPE.

Prof Siraj was an emblem of grace and elegance. One of the best aspects of his personality was his extreme self-control and patience. Whether God had bestowed him with these attributes, or he had acquired them through hard work and training, only He knows; but I had never seen him angry. Many patients preferred him because he had the patience to listen to their stories. In the class he could not be provoked by a senseless question or a silly answer. He was one of the most favorite examiners, as he would never create a false aura or pester poor candidates.

These satellites provide the desired earth coverage. Currently he is president and founder of Void Inc. technology established in 1997 in Japan. Yasir Siraj is a graduate of Agha Khan

University and is an accomplished interventional cardiologist – well trained in advanced complex coronary procedures. He worked in Islamabad for a few years and earned laurels for himself. He is currently offering services at UW Health Northern Illinois Medical group at Rockford, Illinois. Omair Siraj, the youngest, had a brilliant academic career in the UK and USA. He is Chief Executive Officer and founder of Chestnut Health in Chicago providing high quality acute and post-acute care especially for homebound patients. His daughter Zermina and son-in-law, Owais – a cardiologist, and three sons had been hosting parents for long stints in Indianapolis with profound love, reverence and care.

A year ago, the family suffered a severe setback as they lost their most affable and caring mother Rahat Siraj. She was glue of the family and had her own circle of friends and devoted fans. All together, they looked after the parents very well – setting a new exemplar for others to emulate. Blessed be the parents and the progeny.



PESHAWAR: Senators Sania Nishtar and Shamim Afridi being briefed by top officials of provincial bureaucracy during a visit of Sub-Committee of Standing Committee on SAFRON to Chief Secretary's office.

DIG dispels uses of sub-standard bullet proof helmets, jackets

PESHAWAR (APP): Deputy Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Internal Accountability Muhammad Sulaiman on Thursday dispelled the impression about the use of sub-standard helmet and jacket collected from the scene, wherein constables Ayaz and Qasim were martyred due to intense firing.

Flanked by Director FSL, the DIG Internal Accountability clarified the position and said that the forensics of the helmet and jacket received from the crime scene had been done.

Other evidence found at the crime scene was analysed, Muhammad Sulaiman said, adding, Constable Qasim's jacket

was not even penetrated by the bullet. “The news that our bulletproof jackets and helmets have lost their usefulness is wrong,” he said.

The equipment owned was bought ten years ago, he said, adding, procurement of equipment and supplies was being done for officers and personnel alike and such equipment were purchased from a standard company, the DIG clarified.

He disclosed that 9mm, SMG and 30-bore had been used in the incident.

The bullet had passed through the fabric and not the plate, Director FSL Waqar Khan told media men during the press briefing. “There is no hole in Ayaz Shaheed's jacket,” he

informed.

He said a total of eight shots had been fired while two bullets had touched the jacket. After the forensic report, it was proved that such a wrong impression based on speculation that substandard helmets and jackets were being used by the Police force was being spread, the DIG said.

He said bulletproof jackets and helmets had not lost their usefulness but were still useful as such items were bought 8 to 10 years ago without warranty but now the new purchase that has been made has a guarantee of 3 to 5 years. There was a continuous checking of bulletproof jackets and helmets, he added.

Salaries of 1109 PTI SMIs stopped in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Department has been asked to immediately stop the salaries of 1,109 Social Media Influencers (SMIs) recruited by the PTI government for its publicity at the expense of the public exchequer.

The KP Information and Public Relations Department has asked the Secretary Finance Department to immediately stop the salaries of 1,109 SMIs recruited by the PTI government, says a notification of the KP Information Department here.

The notification stated that after the dissolution of the KP assembly and setup of interim government in

the province, whose constitutional responsibility is to hold free, fair and impartial election, the subject project titled ‘Establishment of Social Media Participatory Platforms for Public Awareness & Feedback Regarding Reforms Initiatives and Encouraging Civil Responsibility’ has lost its relevance.

The Information Department has stopped the Social Media project started by the previous PTI government for its publicity.

In the same project, about 1,300 social media activists were hired and they were tasked to spread the PTI narrative on social media and were paid on

monthly basis.

The notification stated that the election commission has banned new projects and recruitment etc, therefore, the interim government is not mandated by law, rules and regulations to carry out the project objectives and thus the continuation of the project is a waste of resources of the public exchequer.

Therefore, all the objectives of the project are closed and requested that all the expenditures including salaries of the Project Management Unit (PMU), and stipends of interneers may be stopped with immediate effect in the best public interest.



PESHAWAR: Caretaker Minister for Information Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Khakakhel addressing a seminar.



In brief

DPO visits central jail Haripur F.P. Report

HARIPUR: District Police Officer Haripur visited Central Jail and inspected security arrangements while briefed regarding operations, on Thursday. According to the details, District Police Officer Haripur Muhammad Umar Khan visited the Central Jail Haripur. SP Investigation Haripur Asif Gohar was also accompanied on this occasion. District Police Officer Haripur visited various departments of the Central Jail and checked the security arrangements. Talking to the officers, he said that further steps would be taken for fool-proof security arrangements.

Father, son shot killed F.P. Report

SAKHAKOT: Father and son shot killed at Zormandi area of Sakhakot in the premises of Quidabad levies station over alleged personal enmity, however, the levies investigating the matter, on Thursday. According to details, the father and son were going to bazaar when unknown murderers opened firing on them while they were dead on the spot. The deceased were identified as Bakht Munir and his Afrasiab. The dead bodies were shifted to tehsil head-quarter hospital Sakhakot for autopsy while Levies had initiated investigation identification and arrest of murderers involved in the offense.

Section 144 imposed in Kohat F.P. Report

KOHAT: Deputy Commissioner Kohat, Dr. Azmat Ullah, has issued an order under Section 144 Criminal procedure code to prohibit kite manufacturing, selling, and kite flying in the district from 4th April 2023 and shall remain in force for 60 days. The order has been issued due to credible information that there is a likelihood of human casualties and damage to electricity wires due to kite flying with chemical/metal sharp string. The District Administration is satisfied to proceed under the law to stop kite manufacturing, selling, and kite flying forthwith in the district. Deputy Commissioner has urged the general public to comply with the order and refrain from kite flying during this period. Any violation of the order shall be dealt with strictly under the law. The District Administration is committed to ensuring the safety and security of the general public and will take all necessary measures to prevent any untoward incidents during this period.

Jirga held F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: A joint Jirga of Khajak was held to resolve the issues related to Central Kurram mines and minerals as well as resources will be utilized for the development of the area and to remove the economic depression. Tehsil Chairman Ihsanullah, Hussain Bangash, a joint Jirga of Khajak area of Tehsil Central Karam of District Karam was held in which Tehsil Chairman Central Kurram Dr. Ihsanullah, Maulana Abdul Rehman, Maulana Saiful Rahim, Maulana Faiz Muhammad, Maulana Muhammad and other tribal elders and Jirga members participated on this occasion. The long-standing problems and mineral resources of the nation of Khawajak were discussed in detail.

PPP observes ZAB death anniversary



F.P. Report

PABBI: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Nowshera chapter observed 44th death anniversary of party's founding chairman Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

During the anniversary ceremony divisional president Liaqat Shabab, Mian Rashid Ali, Saeed Ullah, Falak Naz Khan, Ilyas Khan, Najeeb Ullah, Hidayat Ullah and

Shaukat Jamal addressed the participants while paid tribute to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto for his services for nation.

The speakers claimed that PPP has granted constitution of Pakistan which has connected all provinces with dignity and unity. They claimed that PPP is only hope to overcome current political and constitutional crisis in the country. They are committed for Rule of Law and constitutional supremacy.

Training held for EPI to ensure good public health

F.P. Report

MARDAN: The EPI Coordinator Dr. Imtiaz Ali has said that interpersonal communication and change in social attitudes is the key to achieving success, which can help to change public opinion in a positive direction.

He expressed these views while addressing a training workshop in collaboration with Saiban Development Organization organized by (UNICEF) at the District Headquarters Hospital Mardan, in relation to interpersonal coordination and change in social attitudes, in the training workshop, CMOs of ten union councils LHS participated in the workshop, SPC Consultants UNICEF Habib ur Rehman, Muhammad Imran Saiban Development Organization Muhammad Arif also addressed the workshop, the speakers said that the professionals associated with the health sector in Pakistan were trained on mutual coordination skills, going so that they can perform their duties in a better way.

Through effective guidance and coordination, the goal of changing public attitudes from the initial

stage at the individual level can be easily achieved. He said that therefore it is certain that our behavior and behavior is always expressed by our attitudes. If we want to improve our behavior from others, we have to work on our behavior and improve it. Improving your personal self-improvement and increasing your personal effectiveness requires beautifying your thinking and behavior.

For this, it is important to learn how to identify behavior and good behavior and use your intelligence accordingly. When a person improves his behavior, his character is filled with the qualities of good behavior. Human behavior is mostly related to human ideas and beliefs, so behavior is not more stable in human behavior, but beliefs. And thoughts change according to ideas. This is why when we build relationships based on our beliefs and ideals and improve them, our personality is balanced and unevenness is eliminated and we are able to show better morals. We start trying. Our attitude and behavior towards others also change and improves.

Excise foils drug-smuggling: The raiding team of

Excise Police Mardan foiled the attempt to smuggle a huge consignment of drugs being transported from Peshawar to Punjab through Nowshera area during a successful raid at Rashakai. The raiding team also arrested two alleged smugglers along with their one local facilitator.

In this regard, on the information of KP Excise Department intelligence sources, the raiding team of Excise Mardan police station stopped the suspected vehicle near Rashakai in Nowshera district. The Excise Police jawans recovered 18 kg of highly refined Charas worth millions of rupees after thorough search of the clandestine cavities of the vehicle. In this operation, two Norcotics smugglers from Faisalabad were arrested red-handed along with their one local facilitator.

The accused have previous criminal records, from whom more interrogation is being carried out and some new revelations about drug Barrons are expected. A case has been registered against the three accused under the anti-narcotics provisions at Mardan Excise Police Station and further extensive investigation has also been started.

PML set-up Iftar, Sahari table at hospitals

F.P. Report

TIMERGARA: Pakistan Muslim League (PML) Lower Dir has set up Iftar and Suhoor table for patients in Timergara Hospital and cheap vegetable stalls in different tehsils of Lower Dir. The series of iftar and suhoor table continues till the end of Ramadan. Central Muslim League district president Malik Yasin and PK-15 candidate Qari Rehmatullah Madani say that if patients come to Timergara hospital from Bajaur, then iftar is served for them.

This series will continue, along with this, we have also started the Cheap Vegetables and Cheap bread Tandoor program in different tehsils, which provide half-price bread with the aim of helping the poor and needy people. At the level of each union council, cheap vegetables, cheap bread programs will be started so that people can benefit from them.

DEO male position vacant: The post of DEO (Male) is vacant in the district of Dir Paiyan for a month. While talking to the media, they said that teachers are facing many problems. The office is full of teachers' files, transfer is transfer, but teachers have been applying for GP fund for three to four months and they are in dire need of money.

The government of Pakistan Dir Lower district is demanding from time to time that God should arrange a DEO (male) for this district and until the DEO has delegated powers to the DDO.

Postmasters demand release of salaries: Hundreds of postmasters

and ADMs of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Postal Department are facing severe financial difficulties after losing their salaries for the past ten months.

They will not be forced to strike and will not distribute the mail and will jam the postal system. In this regard, Tamergharh branch postmasters and ADMC employees Zafar Hayat, Nafees Ahmed, Zeeshan and Rahmatullah said in a joint statement that Lower Dir including In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, ADMC employees who carry mail from branch postmasters and general post offices to branch post offices have been deprived for the past ten months, which is injustice and injustice to the employees of the postal department.

The stoves of their homes have become cold and they are in the need of every penny and the shopkeepers do not even give them loans. He said that the monthly honorarium of the branch postmaster is Rs. which is like cum in the camel's mouth in this period of inflation, he said that on the one hand Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr are coming, but they cannot shop. Otherwise they will be forced to boycott duty and strike and jam the postal system.

Police fails to arrest murderer involved in killing of policeman: Despite a three-way search, the killers of the traffic officer could not be found in Lower Dir. The arrest of the killer became a challenge for the police. The police announced a reward of Rs 5 lacs.

Earlier, Bakht Zamin, a

traffic officer on duty in Talash Bazaar Bajawro Chowk, was martyred by unknown armed men, but the accused managed to escape. Has announced a reward of five lakh rupees and said that the names of those who identify correctly will be kept confidential.

Lady health worker deprives from salaries: Hundreds of lady health workers of the health department have lost their salaries for the last 8 months, so the stoves of their homes have gone cold. Salaries have been stopped for the last eight months, due to which they are suffering from severe financial problems.

4 merchants goes missing in Shikarpur

SHIKARPUR (INP): Four Multan-based cloth merchants have been going missing in Shikarpur area of Sindh.

According to details, four traders, who are residents of Tibba Sultanpur, had gone to Shikarpur on a business tour to sell their cloth. As the victims reached the Kacha area, they were abducted by unknown people. Meanwhile, security forces retrieved a man and his son from the clutches of some robbers in Kandhkot area of Sindh.

On the other hand, the police sources said that the four cloth merchants of Multan have reached Kacha, it is certain that they have been kidnapped. Meanwhile, security forces retrieved a man and his son from the clutches of some robbers in Kandhkot area of Sindh.

RPO Malakand visits District Jail Swat Shafi Ullah

MINGORA: Regional Police Officer Malakand, Nasir Mahmood Sati on Thursday made a surprise visit to District Jail Swat to review the security arrangements.

Superintendent Jail Ayub Bacha, Assistant Commissioner Asghar Surani and other police officers were also present on this occasion. Superintendent Jail gave a detailed briefing to RPO about the security arrangements of the jail. The RPO inspected the security arrangements of the jail and reviewed all the internal and external security measures of the jail.

He met with prisoners and directed jail staff to provide them facilities. He urged the officials to perform their duties honestly while being alert all the time to ensure their own and public safety.

Two brothers die as car plunges in River Swat: Two brothers died and another injured when their car was plunged into River Swat on Thursday, police said.

The tragic incident occurred at Shegazai Manglawar in Swat district where the driver lost control over the wheel-steering and plunged into river Swat. As result, Murad Ali and Inayatullah Khan son of Gul Muhammad resident of Shagai died on the spot while their cousin, Ibrahim Khan sustained critical wounds. Police and Rescue 1122 officials rushed to the spot and shifted the bodies to their native village besides the injured to hospital.

Nursery established at DHQ

Hafiz Aziz-ur-Rehman

HAIFIZABAD: In order to overcome infants mortality, the first state of the art nursery and children, ICU and CCU wards have been established in the district headquarter hospital and ventilators for children and round the clock ventilators for children would be available in the children ward.

This was stated by the Deputy Commissioner Hafizabad Umer Farooq Warraich while visiting newly established wards in the DHQ hospital. DC said that specialists doctors, nurses and other paramedical staff was deputed for providing health facilities to the children and other patients in the hospital 24 hours.

He said that establishment of children, ICU and CCU was long standing demand of the people and need of present situation. He said that due to lack of treatment facilities in the DHQ hospital, the infants in critical condition were referred to Lahore and other cities which was difficult for poor and less resources to meet expenditure of other cities and sometimes infants were lost their breath before availability of proper medication.

DC also reviewed necessary equipment and machinery installed in the nursery and children wards and took feedback from patients and their relatives about provision of treatment facilities and free of cost medicines.

Meanwhile, prominent social worker and President Awami Mahaz Hafizabad Rana Khalid Mehmood lauded the efforts of Deputy Commissioner Umer Farooq Warraich for establishing state of the art nursery and children wards for controlling mortality of infants in the area.

Govt employees demand filling of DEO post in Dir

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The All Government Employees Grand Alliance (Agega) Lower Dir chapter on Thursday demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa caretaker chief minister and secretary education to immediately fill the vacant post of district education officer male in the district. The demand was made during an emergency meeting held at the Balambat education complex with Akhunzada Ubaidullah in the chair.

The Agega former chairman Muhammad Saleem, President senior officers association Salahuddin Khan, Agega general secretary Muslim Khan, Rahatullah Khan, district president All Pakistan Clerks Association Muhammad Haleem, district president All Class IV Employees Association Ubaidur Rahman, Nizamuddin, Muhammad Ismail of Public Health department and Rahatullah were in attendance.

The meeting demanded the government and concerned high ups to fill the vacant post of the DEO male in Lower Dir as teachers, clerks and class IV employees were facing difficulties in connection with their posting, transfer, leaves and different allowances.

The speakers said the DEO post was lying vacant for more than two months but the government was doing nothing to solve the issue. They also demanded the government and secretary education to hand over the DEO charge to the newly posted deputy district education officer until the post was filled. The participants threatened to bring the government employees onto the roads if the demand was not accepted.

Martyrdom anniversary of political workers observed: Awami National Party (ANP) and civil society observed the 12th death anniversary of the Rest House Timergara bomb

blast that had left 64 political activists dead and 105 others injured. The blast had occurred when a suicide bomber had blown up himself during a rally to celebrate the 'Jashn e Pakhtunkhwa' at the Timergara rest house on April 5, 2010.

A local journalist Bahramand Syed was also injured on the occasion. The ANP arranged a simple function at the rest house to observe the 12th anniversary of those martyrs. In this regard the ANP activists Imran Takur, journalist Bahramand Syed, Jamal Yousafzai, Abbas Ahmad and others laid floral wreaths on the Yadgar e Shuhada and offered fateha for the departed souls.

The speakers paid rich tributes to the ANP martyrs and said that lasting peace was restored due to those sacrifices. They also condemned the ANP local leadership for not participating in the function and said that it seemed the leadership had forgotten the workers.

Free flour to be provided to one Lakh 8400 families

F.P. Report

BUNER: The spokesperson for district administration Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) general Akhtar Nawaz Khan has said that 138400 deserving families having BISP score up to 66 would get free Atta till end of Ramzan.

Talking to *The Frontier Post*, the ADC claimed about 170 distributors were assigned the task to make sure at least one distribution point in every village council and in the hilly areas more than it to provide free Atta to deserving families well during the holy month

of Ramadhan because it was a special package for this holy month. About the mechanism he share all of the beneficiaries must have to send message 8171 and after getting confirmation only one time one member is entitled to get free Atta and just he is consider the deserving for free Atta.

ADC expressed sorry over lacking awareness due to which almost every adult member of the same family was visiting the distribution point with a hope may they get it again caused rush. However, no untoward incident had occurred so far that justify this system was running successfully. He

claimed that all of the distributors were asked to deal ladies first the elders second and rest latter.

ADC explained that women strike for provision free Atta in Torwarsak was staged on the day when there was off day for this distribution point. However, the administration was ensured free Atta for them on the same day without their turn. He repeatedly appealed all of beneficiaries for sending message to 8171 and after getting confirmation message they must visit the distribution points so as to avoid unnecessary rush and disappointment.

School enrollment awareness walk held



F.P. Report

JAMRUD: To sensitize parents to enroll their children in state-run schools, an awareness walk was held at Bab-e Khyber. The activity was organized by the education department and beside District Education Officer (DEO) Uzair Ali, Additional DEO Shahid Ali, Assistant Education officer Tahir Khan it was attended by people from different walks of life.

The participants took a walk from the District Education Office to Bab-e Khyber while carrying banners and placards inscribed with slogans in favor of enrolling children in schools.

Addressing on the occasion DEO Uzair Ali urged the parents to roll their children in government-run schools for their best future. The School's admission campaign had been kicked off in Khyber and the government schools offered enrollment in morning as well as in evening classes, he added.

Additional EDO Shahid Ali said that the government provided free books, stationary and uniform to students in state-run

schools to facilitate havenot sections of the society therefore for the bright future of the country it was binding on the parents to admit their children.

Highlighting the importance of education AEO Tahir Khan said no nation could develop without it thus the government adopting all necessary initiatives to increase literacy rate in the country.

It is worth mentioning here that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has set up a target of 1.6 million children to be enrolled in school in the ongoing campaign.

Orakzai tops Kohat division in digital census completion

Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: The tribal district Orakzai has successfully completed its 7th Digital Population and Housing Census 2023 & stood first in completing the activity in Kohat division as per the report of Divisional Census In charge.

The Census Support Centre declared and reported that 100% households in the area had been covered with no incidents or problems. The Census Support Center established under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner Revenue Asfandiyar Khalid and having officials from the relevant Line Departments played a vital role in successful completion and smooth conduct of Census in the District.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner General Shahbaz Khan Khattak also played a pivotal role in managing and coordinating the census related activities in the district by providing additional oversight to the Census Support Centre.

The census was completed within the stipulated time and met the demands of the Orakzai tribes, including resolving the Bilandkhel issue. It is pertinent to mention that the area of Biland Khel comprising 05 Blocks were excluded from District Orakzai and erroneously included to the Shewa Tehsil of North Waziristan.

The issue was resolved in a very short time and the census activities were initiated in the area on 25th March 2023. Even though the time

was short but still the activity in the area was concluded within the stipulated time.

The census activities in the district were carried out by a total of 135 enumerator teams and 20 supervisors. A total of 54532 households were listed and enumerated in the entire district.

DC Orakzai expressed his gratitude to the police, Orakzai scouts, media, elders, and youth for their full support. The dedication and hard work of the district administration officers were also highly praised. DC Orakzai regards the successful completion of the census in Orakzai as a positive development for the province, saying that it will provide accurate and reliable data for better planning and resource allocation.



TFP Editor calls on Furqat, new Ambassador of Uzbekistan to US

E.P Report

WASHINGTON DC: Managing Editor of The Frontier Post (TFP), Jilil Afridi called on the new Ambassador of Uzbekistan to the United States, Excellency Furqat Sidiqov. Press Attaché of Uzbekistan, Kozimkhon Khuaiev was also present on the occasion.

Excellency Furqat shared his fond memories in Pakistan and highlighted the growing business relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Afridi shared his dream of seeing railroad track connecting the city of Peshawar in Pakistan to Uzbekistan. It is pertinent to mention here that Uzbekistan has already built a rail track from Uzbekistan to the city of Mazare Sharif in Afghanistan.

Afridi thanked the Ambassador for sparing the time to meet him and extended full cooperation in highlighting the development taking place in Uzbekistan. Excellency Furqat Sidiqov was born on February 7, 1971 in Tashkent and graduated from Tashkent State Technical University in 1993. From 1993-1995 Mr Furqat worked as senior specialist of "UzDaewoo Electronics" a joint venture.

From 1995-1996 , he worked as an employee of the Institute of Strategic and Interregional Studies under the



President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. From 1996-2002, he was a senior researcher at the Institute of Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

From 2002-2007, Excellency Furqat served as Attaché of the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the USA. From 2007-2011 he was again appointed as researcher of the Institute of Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. From 2011-2015, he was the First Secretary of the Embassy of

the Republic of Uzbekistan in the USA.

From 2015-2020 – he served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. From 2020-2022, Excellency Furqat Sidiqov served as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Excellency Furqat Sidiqov knows Russian, English and is very well versed in Urdu. He is also blessed with four children. Excellency Furqat Sidiqov has replaced his predecessor Excellency Javlon Vakhbov.

France braces for new protests

PARIS (AFP): France braced for another day of protests and strikes to denounce President Emmanuel Macron's pension reform after talks between the government and unions ended in dead-lock.

There have been signs that the two-and-a-half month protest movement is starting to lose some momentum and unions will be hoping for a mass turnout on the 11th day of action since January.

All sides in the standoff are awaiting the verdict on April 14 over the reform from France's Constitutional Council,

which has the power to strike out some or even all of the legislation. Macron, currently out of the country on a visit to China, is facing the biggest challenge of his second term over his flagship pension overhaul, which includes hiking the minimum retirement age from 62 to 64. Protests descended into violent unrest after Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne on March 16 invoked a controversial executive power to ram the bill through parliament without a vote.

Unions said a meeting with Borne made no progress after she refused to discuss going back on the minimum retirement age of 64. "It's clearly a failure when the prime minister won't even allow a way into that discussion," said Cyril Chabanier, speaking on behalf of the country's eight main unions after they walked out barely an hour into the talks. It was the first such gathering between the two sides since the government presented the contentious pensions bill in January. Despite refusing to budge on the issue, Borne said she would not move forward with any other labour topics "without social partners".

"We are experiencing a grave democratic crisis," said Laurent Berger, head of the centrist CFDT union. Macron is on a visit to Taiwan for the rest of the week, where an aide denied there was a "democratic crisis" in France given that the pension change was in Macron's manifesto during presidential elections last year. "You can't speak of a democratic crisis when the bill has been enacted, explained to the public and the government is taking responsibility for it," said the aide, asking not to be named. Union chiefs called for French people to take to the streets and strike en masse.

However, turnout in the previous round of strikes and protests was down on the week earlier. A record number of people, more than 1.2 million, marched against the reform nationwide on March 7. Meanwhile, the Paris metro system is for the first time on a strike day expected to be working with minimal disruption, according to operator RATP. Sophie Binet, the new leader of the CGT trade union, called for more protests and strikes.

"We have to continue mobilising until the end, until the government understands there is no way out other than withdrawing this reform," she said. "The government will not be able to govern the country until this reform is repealed."

Analysts have this week warned that Eskom's own forecasts indicate that South Africa's businesses and its 60 million people will experience electricity cuts for at least another year. The national state of disaster was announced by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa during

S African opposition protests Uganda's anti-LGBTQ bill

PRETORIA (AP): More than 200 protesters in South Africa have demonstrated at the Uganda High Commission against the anti-gay bill recently passed by Ugandan lawmakers. The demonstration was led by South Africa's leftist Economic Freedom Fighters opposition party, which urged Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni not to sign the bill into law.

LGBTQ activists also joined the march and called on the South African government to speak out against the bill as it threatens the freedoms and safety of the LGBTQ community in Uganda. Homosexuality is outlawed in Uganda but the recent bill has introduced harsh punishment for several acts, including the death penalty and up to 20 years imprisonment. Almost all lawmakers of the 389 who attended the parliamentary session voted in favor of the bill, but Museveni has the powers to veto the bill and not sign it into law.

Some of the punishments introduced by the bill

include the death penalty for the offence of "aggravated homosexuality," which is defined as cases of sexual relations involving those infected with HIV, minors and other categories of vulnerable people. Those who advocate for or promote the rights of LGBTQ people may face up to 20 years in jail, according to the legislation. Ugandan queer activist Papa De told The Associated Press in South Africa that they took part in the protest to speak on behalf of their siblings back home who face arrest if they speak out against the bill. "They are preaching hate crimes and genocide against our queer bodies, but we are human first. So, yes, I am scared because my family is still back in Uganda," said De. While they had been outspoken against the bill, they still feared that there could be repercussions for their own safety.

Economic Freedom Front leader Julius Malema issued a warning against the Ugandan lawmakers who passed the bill, saying

Museveni would in future use it against them if they disagreed with him politically. "We are saying to Museveni, leave the people the way they are. It is not our problem, it is not your problem," said Malema to the protesters in front of the Ugandan High Commission. "If Museveni knows what is good for him, he will not sign it (bill) into law. Already we have a problem with Museveni with how he is treating political opponents in Uganda," said Malema in front of the Uganda High Commission.

The passing of the Ugandan bill has received widespread condemnation from the international community and those promoting the rights of LGBTQ people in Uganda and across the continent. The US has threatened to impose economic sanctions on Uganda if the bill is signed into law while the UN. AIDS agency has warned that the legislation would hurt efforts to fight HIV.

France boosts mily spending amid war in Ukraine

PARIS (AP): The French government approved a key budget bill presented as the country's biggest military spending spree in more than 50 years, underscoring the impact of Russia's war in Ukraine. The bill foresees 413 billion euros (\$450 billion) in military spending over the period covering 2024-2030 - up by more than a third relative to the previous timeframe.

Defense Minister Sébastien Lecornu said bill's political, budgetary, military and technological drive is comparable to the huge push in the 1960s that saw France develop nuclear weapons, making the country one of the world's major military powers. Championed by French

President Emmanuel Macron, the bill would notably modernize France's nuclear arsenal, boost intelligence spending by 60%, double the number of military reservists, reinforce cyberdefense and develop more remote-controlled weapons.

It would also boost the arms industry's production capacity in order to provide assistance to Ukraine and adequately supply the French military. "An issue we unfortunately rediscovered with the war in Ukraine is the issue of the ammunition stocks ... We will need a ten-year period of time to upgrade all infrastructures and equipment of our military," Lecornu said. Lecornu also pointed

to the need for anti-drone technology and equipment as being at the heart of the government's concerns ahead of the Paris Olympics next year and other major events. He warned against a "terrorist threat" but also the potential "misuse" of small, civilian drones.

The budget bill will be debated in parliament in May-June with the aim of entering into force by mid-July, Lecornu said. Macron's centrist alliance doesn't have a majority in either house of parliament, but military officers have long lamented shrinking armed forces spending, while conservative and far-right parties tend to support investment in defense.

South Africa ends ‘state of disaster’ over electricity

CAPE TOWN (AP): The South African government terminated the national state of disaster it declared two months ago to deal with an electricity crisis, although there are no signs that the power problems are ending. The government ended the state of disaster while Africa's most developed economy still wrestles with nationwide rolling blackouts - currently for six hours a day - due to failures at the state-run power company, Eskom.

Analysts have this week warned that Eskom's own forecasts indicate that South Africa's businesses and its 60 million people will experience electricity cuts for at least another year. The national state of disaster was announced by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa during

his State of The Nation address on Feb. 9. It would allow the government to exempt essential services like hospitals and water treatment plants from power blackouts and free up public money to purchase additional power from neighboring countries on an emergency basis, Ramaphosa said. Ramaphosa has also since appointed a new cabinet minister whose sole responsibility is to deal with the electricity crisis.

The government said in a statement that the state of disaster had been "a necessary response" to "critical" levels of power cuts at the time it was issued. The frequency of the blackouts has only eased slightly from up to 10 hours a day in February. The blackouts are usually applied in two-

hour blocks before the electricity is switched back on for a period. South Africa has also issued state of disaster declarations recently in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and flooding.

The electricity problems have been blamed on years of mismanagement and corruption at Eskom, which is struggling to keep its aging coal-fired plants running. Eskom has been unable to provide a constant supply of electricity and relied on blackouts to save power for years but the cuts in 2022 were the worst the country has experienced. They were a key contributor to South Africa's economy shrinking by 1.3% in the fourth quarter of last year, economists said, raising fears that the country is on the brink of a recession.

Philippines’ defence shift towards US risks China’s fury

MANILA (AFP): The Philippines has pulled off a diplomatic U-turn, reviving its traditional defence ties with Washington years after spurning it in favour of Beijing. The pivot appears to indicate Manila believes a robust partnership with Washington can help it stop China from trampling on its rights in the South China Sea, analysts said. But the rapprochement also risks putting Manila at odds with Beijing -- and sparking a backlash at home.

After former president Rodrigo Duterte trashed the Philippine-US alliance while seeking closer ties with China, his successor Ferdinand Marcos Jr has sought to strike a more balanced approach -- describing Manila as a "friend to all, an enemy to none". But Marcos has also expanded defence ties with Washington, announcing this week the location of four additional military

bases to be used by US troops. While there are no indications he will seek to cut Beijing off -- he met President Xi Jinping there in January -- analysts said the shift in policy is clear. Manila thinks that "there's basically nothing the Philippines can do to appease China", said Greg Poling, director of the US-based Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative. "If a Philippine government wants to defend Philippine rights, the only possible recourse is deterrence and that means strengthening the alliance with the Americans," he added.

Relations between Washington and Manila began to improve towards the end of Duterte's six-year term, as he came to understand his pivot towards Beijing had failed to put the brakes on its bid to expand its control in the South China Sea. Beijing claims almost the entire waterway, deploying hun-

dreds of vessels there to patrol the waters and swarm reefs. It has also ignored a 2016 international court ruling that its claims have no legal basis. Marcos's visit to Beijing in January, where he and Xi called for the "friendly" handling of maritime disputes, did little to prevent a row erupting weeks later when Manila accused a Chinese security vessel of using a military-grade laser light against a Philippine patrol boat. Since the start of his presidency, Marcos has received several top US officials, including Vice President Kamala Harris.

They have pledged the United States' "unwavering" and "ironclad" commitment to defending the Philippines under the countries' decades-old mutual defence treaty. "There is a sense of optimism that (the Philippine) government... is doing the right thing now," said Jay Batongbacal, director of the University of the

Philippines' Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea. "Beijing may try to punish the Philippines, but the truth is the Philippines' economic relations with the US, Japan and other traditional partners still far outweigh China's." The Philippines' proximity to Taiwan, a self-governing democratic island that Beijing claims as its own, could potentially make it a key US partner in the event of a Chinese invasion. In February, Manila and Washington struck a deal to give US forces access to more Philippine military bases under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, or EDCA. The EDCA was signed in 2014 under Duterte's predecessor, Benigno Aquino, and allowed US forces to rotate through five bases and use them to store defence equipment and supplies.

But it stalled under Duterte, who threatened to cancel the accord.

US House leader and Taiwan president meet as China protests

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. (AP): Risking China's anger, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy hosted Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen as a "great friend of America" in a fraught show of US support at a rare high-level, bipartisan meeting on US soil. Speaking carefully to avoid unnecessarily escalating tensions with Beijing, Tsai and McCarthy steered clear of calls from hard-liners in the US for a more confrontational stance toward China in defense of self-ruled Taiwan.

Instead, the two leaders stood side by side in a show of unity at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in California, acknowledging China's threats against the island government but speaking only of maintaining longstanding US policy.

"America's support for the people of Taiwan will remain resolute, unwavering and bipartisan," McCarthy said at a news conference later. McCarthy evoked Reagan's peace-through-strength approach to foreign relations and emphasized "this is a bipartisan meeting of members of Congress," not any one political party. He said US-Taiwan ties are stronger than at any other point in his life.

He and Tsai spoke to reporters with Reagan's Air Force One as a backdrop. She said the "unwavering support reassures the people of Taiwan that we are not isolated." Still, the formal trappings of the meeting, and the senior rank of some of the elected officials in the delegation from Congress, threatened to run afoul of China's position

that any interaction between US and Taiwanese officials is a challenge to China's claim of sovereignty over the island. More than a dozen Democratic and Republican lawmakers, including the House's third-ranking Democrat, joined Republican McCarthy for the daylong talks.

During a private session they spoke of the importance of Taiwan's self-defense, of fostering robust trade and economic ties and supporting the island government's ability to participate in the international community, Tsai said. They made no mention of calls from hard-liners in and out of Congress for a greater US commitment to Taiwan's defense if China should attack. Tsai said she stressed to lawmakers Taiwan's commitment "to defending the peaceful status quo where

the people in Taiwan may continue to thrive in a free and open society."

But she also warned, "It is no secret that today the peace that we have maintained and the democracy which have worked hard to build are facing unprecedented challenges." "We once again find ourselves in a world where democracy is under threat and the urgency of keeping the beacon of freedom shining cannot be understated." The United States broke off official ties with Taiwan in 1979 while formally establishing diplomatic relations with the Beijing government. The US acknowledges a "one-China" policy in which Beijing lays claim to Taiwan, but it does not endorse China's claim to the island and remains Taiwan's key provider of military and defense assistance.

Zelenskyy boosts ties with Poland, warns of peril in Bakhmut

WARSAW (AP): Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy won new pledges of military and economic cooperation on a state visit to staunch ally Poland, and he also said that Kyiv's troops battling in the eastern city of Bakhmut could pull out if they face a threat of being encircled by Russian forces. Polish President Andrzej Duda said Warsaw has provided four Soviet-designed MiG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine, with four more in the process of being handed over and another six being prepared.

At a news conference with his Polish counterpart, Zelenskyy described the perils in the grinding siege of Bakhmut, which has been all but destroyed by eight months of fighting that also has cost many lives on both sides. "For me, the most important issue is our military," he said. "And certainly, if there is a moment of even hotter events and the danger that we may lose personnel due to the encirclement, there will certainly be corresponding correct decisions of the general on the ground."

In a recent interview with The Associated Press, Zelenskyy underscored the importance of defending Bakhmut, saying its fall could allow Russia to rally international support

for a deal that could require Ukraine to make unacceptable compromises. During his visit to Warsaw - a rare wartime foray out of Ukraine for Zelenskyy - both countries sought to forge a tighter relationship in defiance of Russia's full-scale war against Kyiv that has reshaped international alliances. Russian President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, said Moscow's relations with Washington are "in deep crisis" as the US has led its allies in supplying aid and weapons to Ukraine. Speaking at a ceremony where he accepted diplomatic credentials from ambassadors of 17 nations, including the US, Putin alleged that Washington's support for the 2014 protests in Kyiv that ousted a pro-Kremlin president led to Russia's sending troops into Ukraine.

Zelenskyy said at his news conference with Duda that his government would "extend a hearty welcome" to Polish businesses seeking to help Ukraine's postwar rebuilding, which the World Bank has estimated could cost \$411 billion. He met later with Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and signed agreements on developing Ukrainian infrastructure that opens a door for hundreds of Polish companies. Poland heaped military hon-



ors and praise on Zelenskyy as it welcomed him and his wife on a joint visit, during which they thanked the country for its crucial military support as well as being a haven for Ukrainian refugees. The former Soviet satellite that is now a member of the European Union and NATO feels especially threatened

by Russia and has been a leading advocate for aid to Kyiv. Zelenskyy said the countries signed a new defense package for the delivery of Polish weaponry. They will also set up joint manufacturing plants for weapons and ammunition, he said.

Morawiecki said Zelenskyy's visit was "extremely important

because we are shaping the picture of Europe for the future. The Kremlin and Putin, Moscow wanted an end to Ukraine, but today we can see that this war initiates the end of an aggressive Russia, of the Russia that we know, and (marks) a start of a completely new Europe. This is the beginning of a completely new Europe." Earlier, Zelenskyy and Duda said they wanted to leave behind any World War II-era grievances that linger in Ukraine and Poland. "There are no taboo topics between us," Duda said. "There are still open wounds in the memory of many people."

While Zelenskyy also traveled to the United States, Britain, France and Belgium, the trip to Poland stood out because it was announced in advance and undertaken without the secrecy of past foreign trips. It also was the first time Zelenskyy and first lady Olena Zelenska traveled abroad together since the war began in February 2022, said Marcin Przydacz, head of Duda's foreign policy office. Duda awarded Zelenskyy Poland's oldest and highest civilian distinction, The Order of the White Eagle. "We have no doubt that your attitude, together with the bravery of the nation, has saved Ukraine," the Polish presi-

dent told Zelenskyy. At a ceremony in the courtyard of the presidential palace, Duda and the two countries' first ladies were dressed in formal attire, while Zelenskyy wore the military-style sweatshirt and khaki trousers that have become his uniform since the invasion. His trips to London, Paris and Brussels in February were part of his push for warplanes and for his country admission to the EU and NATO, and his visit to Washington in December was intended to shore up US support.

Zelenskyy traveled through Poland on his previous foreign trips, but until now had not made it his sole destination. The purpose of the journey to Warsaw was primarily to thank a country that has been an international cheerleader for Ukraine, as well as a safe haven for Ukrainian refugees and a transit hub for Ukraine-bound humanitarian aid and weapons. The visit highlighted the central European nation's rising role in a new international security order that has emerged from the war. Poland is seeking to modernize its military by purchasing tanks and other equipment from US and South Korean producers. The United States has also bolstered its military presence in Poland.

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Palestine issue, US role in two-state solution

THE Israeli Police attacked Palestinian worshippers in Al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem and arrested over 350 people during the raid in the wee hours of Wednesday. The incident sparked protests across the occupied West Bank and attracted worldwide condemnation from the global community and Muslims across the world. The Israeli Police claimed to arrest over 350 individuals that allegedly barricaded themselves inside the mosque and were suspected of desecrating the mosque complex. Meanwhile, the Spokesperson for Palestinian authority denounced the vicious act of Israeli Forces and warned the occupation regime against crossing red lines at holy sites, which will lead to a big explosion.

The Israeli-occupier regime has ramped up its anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian campaigns by violating the sanctity of Muslim sacred places in East Jerusalem and regularly unleashing fresh Police crackdowns and Military incursions against unarmed civilians in the west bank and Gaza Strip. The Israeli-occupier regime often causes violence and bloodshed during the holy month of Ramazan in its laid-down pattern. Similarly, the Jewish government intentionally creates violence at the Al-Aqsa mosque to debilitate the religious sentiments of Muslims across the globe while the use of force against innocent worshippers on the accusation of incarceration of the holy mosque is a joke of Jewish Police that must be denounced by the global community which commonly witnesses the desecration and abuse of Muslim holy sites on the hand of occupying forces in Palestine.

The situation in Israeli-occupied territories and the so-called Palestinian self-ruled open penitentiary regions of Gaza and the west bank is very serious because innocent Palestinians are not safe in their own homes in those open prisons. The Israeli military troops are accustomed to invading Palestinians' homes through tanks and heavy bulldozers, razing their residential complexes, and kidnapped innocent Palestinian men, women, and children without any reason, while Israeli fighter jets usually carry out strikes in Gaza, West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Libya to target Palestinian freedom fighters mostly affiliated with Hamas or Islamic Jihad as the PLO resistance has now largely limited to verbal condemnation and press statements only.

Historically, the UN-sponsored two-state solution is the only viable formula that is globally accepted and guarantees equal prospects for the peaceful coexistence of an independent Muslim Palestine and Israel side by side. The people of Palestine and the entire Muslim world demand the creation of a viable, independent, and contiguous Palestinian State, with pre-1967 borders, and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, that totally coincides with the UN's resolutions but Jewish hegemonism is the only hurdle in this regard. However, the UN failed to peacefully resolve the Palestine dispute because of no cooperation from Tel Aviv and the biased role of the Western powers particularly the United States.

In fact, the United States' unlimited material, political and diplomatic support for Israel encouraged the Jewish regnant and played an instrumental role in complicating the Palestine dispute over the past decades. Although President Biden is a vocal supporter of the two-state solution, however, a powerful Jewish lobby has always resisted the Biden administration from playing any decisive role in this regard. Presently, the humanitarian situation in the occupied territory is dire and the entire world looks toward the United States to pause its policy of favoritism and resort to a ruled-based global role of a peace broker and mediator. As the unilateral support of Israel has currently pushed Washington out of the Middle East region while longstanding American foes are enjoying the confidence of the regional nations. The urgency of the situation merits that President Biden personally take interest in the Palestine dispute by fulfilling his promise to his voters and the global community at large. That will not only restore Washington's traditional role in the region but will offer an opportunity for a peaceful settlement of the decades-long Palestine dispute. However, the time would illustrate the wisdom and legacy of the top American in the coming days.

Warnings of Israeli attacks on Al-Aqsa were ignored. Why?

Daoud Kuttab

IT was all expected. The brutal Israeli attacks during Ramadan, and especially Tuesday night, on worshippers in Islam's third-holiest mosque came as no surprise. Everyone predicted it. Jordan, the custodian of the holy places in Jerusalem, called for top-level security meetings to avert the attacks. King Abdullah, whose Hashemite family has taken on the burden of administering the holy site built 1,400 years ago, had taken a personal involvement in the Aqaba summit, which was followed by the Sharm El-Sheikh meetings. His and others' efforts to de-escalate the tensions have failed due to Israeli intransigence and an inability to stand up to their fanatics.

All persons and governments of interest, including Washington and Cairo, pushed for security meetings to avert violence and escalation in and around

this holy mosque, which is revered by 1.9 billion Muslim faithful around the world. Israel promised de-escalation, but did the opposite. But the current Benjamin Netanyahu-led government, full of extremists and subservient to their wishes, appears unable to control its extremist tendencies. Huge popular protests in Israel over plans to overhaul the judicial system have shaken the usually politically steady prime minister. Leaving the sensitive issue of Al-Aqsa Mosque during Ramadan and Passover to the extremist minister of national security has inflamed the situation.

The Israeli government turned a blind eye to radical Jewish zealots who set up a site near the Al-Aqsa Mosque where animals were supposed to be sacrificed. They also did nothing to stop a radical organization posting large rewards for any fanatic willing to breach the mosque area to spread the ashes of the sac-

rificed lamb. Instead, Israeli troops decided that the big problem facing them was the fact that a few Muslim worshippers had decided to stay overnight at the holy site. The practice of Itikaf has been going on during the holy Muslim month of Ramadan for centuries. True, the larger number of people staying overnight during the fasting month do so in the final 10 days, but due to real and serious threats of fanatic Jewish individuals storming the mosque, many decided to preempt this violation of the status quo by literally offering their own bodies in the protection of their holy site.

Warnings by governments and others to the Israeli leadership went unnoticed, as the Israeli Minister of National Security Itamar Ben-Gvir was in charge and wanted to show off to his peers that he is true to his own warped ideology. Efforts to extract

a statement from Ben-Gvir respecting the status quo and opposing the storming of the mosque failed as the minister in charge of security ignored an expected blood bath.

The decades-long Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been largely a political one, even though the Zionist movement has used religion to advance its claims of a divine right to the land of Palestine. But, as far as the international community was concerned, Israel was acting as a democratic civilized country that believed in the right of worship and respected humanitarian law. Efforts by Palestinians, Israelis and international NGOs to expose this lie went unnoticed until hundreds of thousands of Israeli Jews demonstrated in opposition to what they perceived as undemocratic moves even against fellow (largely secular) Jewish Israelis.

The decision by the

Netanyahu settler-controlled government to ignore warnings and violate the millennia-long status quo pushes the area and the region, as well as the global community, into a religious conflict with an ending that no one can predict. Palestinians are using their own bodies to protect their holy places, but the larger world community of Muslims, and others who understand the dangers of what is happening in Jerusalem, will not allow the creation and perpetuation of a religious war.

Faith is an important part of individual and communal life. It is important that one's faith is left to the relationship between humans and their God. Faith is also a communal issue, and the insertion of political conflict in violation of long-held beliefs and attachments to holy places is a dangerous act that is totally avoidable.

Powerful rulers who have occupied Jerusalem have failed to control the

city when they attempted to take on the wishes of the local community of faith with whom they are dealing. Israel is no exception to this proven rule. The sooner the Israelis understand and respect the status quo and ensure that political differences are solved politically without the insertion of religious emotions, the better for all concerned.

Al-Aqsa Mosque is a holy Muslim site that is administered by a respected leadership that has been working hard to avoid violence and bloodshed. If all the preparations and warnings go unheeded, then one has to conclude that there are sinister parties that do not want to see stability and peace. Respect for the holy site and its tradition is a necessary step in keeping the area and the region stable and peaceful. The patience of those whose faith and traditions are being violated should not be further tested.

Arab News

In Bosnia, the past is disappearing and the future is bleak

Ehlimana Memišević

ON November 18, 2022, the remains of at least two people, killed during the 1992 massacres against Bosniak Muslims, were found and exhumed in my hometown of Višegrad, in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The news filled me with dread, but also hopeful anticipation. Could one of these victims be my father, who has been missing since 1992?

I have not always wished for the remains of my father to be found. Afraid that my family would not be able to live with the truth, I spent my whole childhood and most of my adult life hoping we never find out what exactly happened to him. What if we discovered that his last days were filled with unimaginable suffering? What if we learned that he was tortured, humiliated and burned to death like countless other Bosniak Muslims in Višegrad and other parts of eastern Bosnia? How would we go on living with that knowledge? In recent years, however, I changed my mind. I now desperately want my father's remains to be found. This is not because time dulled the pain - I am fast approaching his age when he disappeared (he was just 40), but deep down I am still a six-year-old longing for her father. I changed my mind because the genocidal violence that took him from us is now being celebrated regularly in our hometown and the rest of Republika Srpska. I am afraid that if my father's remains are not soon found, those who are now trying to whitewash genocide will go on to deny he was ever killed or even existed. The rewriting of our town's violent history and denial of the crimes committed against us Bosniaks started long ago. Although the local Serb population witnessed the mass killings of Bosniak civilians, and despite numerous court judgements, countless testimonies of witnesses and survivors, admissions by many paramilitary

soldiers, and the mass graves that are being unearthed in the area to this day, the majority of Višegrad's Serb residents and government officials are denying murder, torture or rape ever took place there.

And in the past few years, the Serb population in my hometown moved from denying senseless bloodshed to openly and shamelessly celebrating it. On January 9, 2023, for example, the fans of the Belgrade-based Serbian football club "Crvena Zvezda" celebrated the 31st anniversary of Republika Srpska's founding with a bonfire on Višegrad's infamous Mehmed Pasa Sokolovic's bridge, where countless Bosniak Muslims were killed by Serbs. The local fans put out banners that read "God's hand is stronger than the court" and "[Republika] Srpska - the only one is you". The celebrations are controversial as they mark the Bosnian Serb assembly's 1992 proclamation of Republika Srpska as an independent "Republic of the Serb people of Bosnia and Herzegovina", with the goal of joining proclaimed Serb autonomous regions they had carved out in the country with Serbia and Montenegro. The move set off the war in Bosnia which involved systematic violence through "ethnic cleansing" and genocide culminating in Srebrenica in 1995, and resulted in more than 100,000 deaths and some 2.5 million displaced, as Croat and Serb forces attempted to divide the country into Greater Croatia and Greater Serbia respectively.

Despite the BiH Constitutional Court's 2015 verdict that declared the celebration of January 9 as "Republika Srpska Day" illegal and unconstitutional, Republika Srpska officials continue to organise official ceremonies around this day where they make nationalist and divisive speeches that honour and glorify convicted war criminals like

Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić. The Republika Srpska authorities also organise a military parade to mark this "holiday". This year, the parade was held not in the de facto capital of Republika Srpska, Banja Luka, but on the outskirts of Sarajevo - a town Serbs held under siege for three years during the war. About 2,500 people marched in the parade, including heavily-armed police officers, firefighters, war veterans, members of civil protection services and a group of pro-Russian bikers called the Night Wolves. Thousands of others watched the parade on the sidelines. Celebration of violence in Višegrad and the rest of my country is not only restricted to genocide and war crimes committed in this country either. It also extends to the violence perpetrated by Serbia's long-term ally, Russia. On April 12, 2022, just a few days after mass graves were uncovered in the Ukrainian town of Bucha alongside strong evidence of war crimes eerily similar to those committed some 30 years ago in Bosnia, several murals supporting Russia and its invasion of Ukraine popped up across Višegrad. Alongside Russian flags, anti-NATO and European Union symbols and the letter "Z" symbolising the invasion, the slogan "Serbs and Russians are brothers forever" was painted on the town's walls. Moreover, on the same day, Republika Srpska officials gathered to commemorate three Russian volunteers who were killed and others who were wounded near Višegrad while helping Serbs ethnically cleanse the town in 1993. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia convicted several of these volunteers of war crimes, yet Višegrad officials continue to celebrate and honour them. In 2017, they even erected a monument in their

memory.

On January 8 this year, at an awards ceremony held in Banja Luka in the run-up to "Republika Srpska Day", Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik awarded Russian President Vladimir Putin in absentia with the Serbian entity's highest medal of honour for his "patriotic concern and love" for Republika Srpska. "Putin is responsible for developing and strengthening cooperation and political and friendly relations between Republika Srpska and Russia," said Dodik. In Republika Srpska, those celebrating violence in Bosnia and beyond are becoming more brazen every passing day. The international community, however, continues to turn a blind eye to Republika Srpska's insistent glorification of violence, aggression and war crimes as well as attempts to rewrite our country's painful history. In the face of Republika Srpska officials' insistence on celebrating January 9 despite the Constitutional Court verdict against it, for example, High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina Christian Schmidt, who is the highest-ranking international official in the country and is tasked with overseeing the civilian implementation of the Dayton agreement, offered nothing more than a polite reminder of the verdict and empty wishes for a better future.

"Decisions of the BiH Constitutional Court are final and binding and must be respected on the entire territory of BiH," Schmidt said. "Therefore, celebrating 9 January as the [Republika Srpska] Day shows a clear disregard for the Constitution of BiH." "Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić are convicted war criminals and authors of genocide," he added. "Therefore, they have to be named criminals and not heroes. I ask all public officials in BiH to respect this and move towards a shared future." Since taking office

in August 2021, beyond such empty words and wishes, Schmidt did little to ease simmering ethnic tensions in Bosnia and stop Republika Srpska officials from glorifying violence in violation of the country's constitution.

In fact, he repeatedly utilised his mandate to deepen Bosnia's ethnic divisions and further strengthen nationalist forces. Last October, for example, he made wide-ranging amendments to Bosnia's election law only minutes after the closing of polls, against the wishes of the Bosnian people, the Bosnian Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights. His intervention not only further destabilised Bosnia's shaky democracy but also helped entrench the power of the country's ruling nationalist parties, especially the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), the hardline political party that, alongside the Serbs' secessionist SNSD in Republika Srpska, serves as a guardian of Russian interests and ethnic divisions in Bosnia and wider Balkans. Such counterproductive and antidemocratic moves by the high representative, coupled with his reluctance to take a stance against Bosnian Serbs' glorification of war crimes and denial of genocide helped make my hometown Višegrad once again a very dangerous place for Muslim Bosniaks like me and my family. Indeed, just a few weeks ago on March 23, two elderly Bosniak returnees were brutally beaten by a masked assailant, robbed, tied up and left to die in the village of Omeragići in Višegrad. This violent attack on the elderly couple, who were eventually found by a relative and taken to hospital, was eerily reminiscent of the incendiary attacks Bosniak families endured in Višegrad in 1992.

High Representative Schmidt condemned "the cowardly attack" on the two returnees in Višegrad and called on the authorities to

find and punish the perpetrators, adding that the "citizens have the right to a safe and free life wherever they want in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Whoever questions this, acts against Dayton and should be aware of the consequences." He, however, perhaps as we should have expected, took no concrete action to prevent the repeat of such a tragedy. The current situation in Bosnia, where the international community is offering nothing other than thoughts and prayers in the face of the glorification of ethnic violence and attacks on innocent Bosniaks, reminds me of my childhood years in Gora de, where I fled with part of my family to escape the genocidal violence in my hometown. Gora de was declared a safe area by the United Nations in 1993. But during the three and a half years I spent in this supposedly "safe" area, deadly bombardments and famine were our daily reality. The UN repeatedly issued warnings and adopted resolutions condemning "in the strongest possible terms the Bosnian Serb forces for their continued offensive against the safe area of Gorazde", but their words failed to deter the Serb forces and ease their attacks on Bosniak lives. In the end, the remains that were found in Višegrad last November were not my father's. I, however, still want to find him and find out what happened to him. I want this because I do not want anyone to be able to deny how and why he died.

Between Serbs glorifying and trying to rewrite the past and the international community turning a blind eye to their actions, the future is once again looking bleak for us in Bosnia. Peace and unity in this country depend on all segments of our society accepting the past, learning from it and with the help of our international partners, taking the necessary steps to prevent its repeat. Sadly, we seem to be moving in the opposite direction.

Aljazeera

Canada's immigration policy benefits all, nationally and globally

Tala Jarjour

THE bodies of eight people who died while trying to cross from Canada into the US were recovered near the border area last week, while the bodies of four other victims were found elsewhere in January. According to the BBC, 367 people were stopped from making illegal crossings by the US Border Patrol in January alone, the largest number apprehended in the past 12 years. These events are prompting questions and, in some cases, multinational investigations.

Canada has a reputation for being more welcoming to immigrants than its southern neighbor, and a record 40,000 people are believed to have entered the country last year from the US through unofficial routes. In response, Canada has announced a new program to accept 15,000 immigrants from Latin American countries.

Canadian government

statistics show that the country's population has increased by a million, primarily as a result of its efforts to address labor shortages by accepting large numbers of immigrants. Almost 96 percent of this increase comes from international immigration, which Canada also hopes will help address the problem of its aging population. An increased immigrant intake has been part of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's policy since his election. In recent years, Canada has been particularly open to immigration from crisis-stricken countries, such as Afghanistan, where the humanitarian situation has been deteriorating. More recently, an increase in immigration from Syria has been announced following the devastating earthquake in early February. Syria has long benefited from Canada's immigration policy. As well as individual asylum applications that were processed in tempo-

rary refugee stations during the Syrian conflict, Canada opened direct immigration routes to Syrians. At one point, the host country flew over twice the number it had initially invited after opening a waiting list to bring people out of the war zone.

While critics say that some parts of Canada face a shortage of housing and other resources that might complicate accepting new immigrants, Canada as a whole can absorb large numbers. The recent increase has brought its population to almost 40 million, which occupies one of the largest national territories on the planet, but is almost half the population of the UK, a much smaller country. The current 2.7 percent population growth rate is the country's highest since 1957 and the fastest among the G7. Canada also has the highest ratio of immigrants in the population, or one in four. Compare this to the US

and UK, where about 14 percent of the population arrived as immigrants. But its ambition goes further.

In one year, Canada has already achieved two-thirds of the three-year target it set itself in 2022: To bring in 1.5 million immigrants by 2025. While a controversial plan by some measures, this policy is a continuation of Canada's immigration ethos, which combines humanitarian considerations with attracting skill and young talent. Consistent with the government's projected growth, especially in relation to challenges in the labor market, immigration currently accounts for almost all of Canada's labor force growth. What is more, immigration is likely to be the main source of population growth by 2032. For aspiring immigrants from Middle Eastern countries, such as Syria and Lebanon, Canada has operated a points-based immigration

system for decades, attracting young, ambitious and bright individuals, along with their families. Canada was already home to significant communities from both countries when conflict erupted in Syria. During the war years, and through targeted humanitarian schemes, hundreds more were resettled across many provinces. Rescue schemes brought over extended families from particularly difficult areas, fast-tracking their integration and document processing. Students were quickly enrolled in schools, and individual efforts were soon rewarded by university acceptances, degrees and employment opportunities. Many lives were dramatically changed in the course of five years.

A large number of these new citizens and permanent residents are now economically productive. This is important not only because it fulfills the country's goals in meeting its labor challenges. With the deteriorat-

ing economy in Lebanon and the scarcity of resources in Syria, immigrant remittances are proving vital lifelines to a significant part of the populations in both countries. According to the International Organization for Migration, remittances to Lebanon in 2021 totaled \$6.6 billion. Now, with a decline in aid pledges by several countries, Syrian and Lebanese immigrants are effectively taking on part of the international burden of providing basic sustenance to these populations. In the current global economic climate, aiding - rather than blocking immigration - is the smarter policy for all involved. Whether they have attempted to walk in subzero temperatures or were abandoned by a smuggler on a boat, people who come knocking at a rich country's doors are not a burden. In the long term, immigrants are an asset to the host country's internal economy as well as its global obligations.

This is karma and it won't help Trump win 2024

Andrew Mitrovica

WHOOPEE! The crook got booked. To be fair, I suppose I should have written, the "alleged" crook got booked. But when has Donald Trump, the former United States president and career meanie, been fair to anyone, at any time? That is, of course, a rhetorical question meant to prick the fragile sensibilities of "Don" Trump's legion of seething followers, who think the idea of civic duty is to parade around in cheap, gaudy T-shirts urging each other to "make a liberal cry" while riding in the cab of flag-draped monster trucks.

Well, liberals and millions of enlightened Americans were, I suspect, crying with unbridled joy and relief as the MAGA ("Make America Great Again") misanthropes tuned in to Fox News to watch their equally seething and illiterate leader enter a not-guilty plea on a remarkable, pristine, blue, Tuesday afternoon sky in New York City. The wailing MAGA hats can take some solace in knowing that Trump has finally joined dozens of the thousands of surplus-store camouflage enthusiasts who, on his rhetorical command, breached the Capitol on January 6, 2021: The insurrectionist-in-chief has, like them, been indicted.

Meanwhile, enlightened Americans and I will take happy solace in celebrating this glorious day that, for too long, seemed beyond reach and will always be fixed in history and memory: Trump is the first US president to be arrested - and on 34 felony counts, to boot. Hip, hip, hooray! Oh, what a marvellous sight it was as Trump scurried into a midtown court to be arraigned in connection with a not-so-hush-hush scheme to pay a porn star \$130,000 to keep mum about a now-historic one-

night stand with the philandering presidential candidate. The aim of the cascading cover-up was, according to Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, to help Trump get elected.

Gone was the trademark tough-guy bravado. Instead, Trump scowled and was silent, even as he attempted to raise his fist in a show of defiance. For once, his big, vile mouth was shut. What a gift and a blessing. For that alone, Bragg should be rewarded with some kind of medal or the key to the city. I remember when Trump and his stunt-addicted allies urged their dupes to invade New York to protest the unfolding "witch hunt". A few dupes showed up and vented, on cue, their ingrained anger. But most stayed home, knowing the last time "Don" Trump wanted them to do his violent, coup d'état bidding, they ended up in the FBI's crosshairs and the clink.

By my count, the QAnon quacks who travelled to Dealey Plaza in Dallas last November, waiting for JFK Junior's resurrection, outnumbered the quacks who made it to New York yesterday. Speaking of jail, "Don" Trump is on a wonderful track to join a host of his "family" members who have been indicted, convicted and shipped to prison.

The rogues' gallery includes Trump's ex-campaign manager, Paul Manafort, Trump Organization's ex-chief financial officer, Allen Weisselberg and Trump's ex-consigliere-turned-cooperating witness, Michael Cohen. But perhaps the most delicious irony of all lies in the fact that Trump was ushered, reportedly, into the same courthouse to face a judge that five innocent Black and Latino teenagers - known as the Central Park Five - were once

hauled into in shackles. There, they were coerced into false confessions by corrupt police and headline-thirsty prosecutors.

In 1989, the youths were wrongly convicted of assaulting and raping a white woman in Central Park. At the time, Trump took out a full-page ad in the New York Times, demanding, in effect, that the teenagers be executed. In 2002, all five were exonerated after enduring nine years of prison. True to odious form, Trump has never apologised for the racist-tinged admonition. Last week, one of the Central Park Five, Yusef Saleem - a candidate for New York City council - issued this delightful and succinct response to Trump's prosecution on Twitter. "For those asking about my statement on the indictment of Donald Trump - who never said sorry for calling for my execution - here it is: Karma."

Sure, a string of US presidents should have suffered Trump's shame and indignity, too. They earned indictments at home and abroad. Still, Trump being held to true and stiff account goes some way in making up for those egregious failures. And there is the prospect of a slew of charges to come stemming from "Don" Trump's central role in the cacophonous events of January 6, his leaning on Republicans in Georgia to "find" 12,000 votes to overturn the presidential election, and his hoarding of state secrets at Mar-a-Lago. So, his legal comeuppance may, in the months ahead, be even more complete and sweet.

Hip, hip, hooray! Trump is also being challenged in court by a determined woman, E Jean Carroll, a former magazine writer who swears that he sexually assaulted her in a New York department store dressing room in the mid-1990s.

Carroll is suing Trump for defamation after he denied the assault, saying "she's not my type", and insisted she made the claim to boost sales of her book. Despite the litany of litigation Trump faces, one perpetually dour essayist is convinced that Trump's indictment is the product of his courageous challenging of America's imperialist war-mongering and neoliberal fiscal doctrine. "He is being targeted because he is deemed dangerous for his willingness, at least rhetorically, to reject the Washington consensus regarding neoliberal free-market and free-trade policies, as well as the idea that the US should oversee a global empire," the essayist wrote at the end of March.

This is where ideology and blindness merge. My goodness, man, Trump is a 100-percent-proof fascist who has made it plain that if he returns to the Oval Office, he will use the powers that come with the job to make Generalissimo Francisco Franco look like a mild-mannered centrist. Trump returned to Florida and said something about being indicted. I didn't watch since, I'm sure, he went on and on and on with his imbecilic, school-yard taunts and incoherent, recycled tirade against his "deep-state" enemies.

Wah, wah, wah. Finally, a parting word of advice to the familiar roster of cable-news pundits poo-pooing the indictment and worrying that Trump will leverage Tuesday's unprecedented events into securing another term in the White House: There's no need to wet your designer pants. You bunch were convinced that Democrats were going to be walloped in the midterm Congressional elections by Trump's hand-picked acolytes. Enlightened Americans proved you wrong in 2022. They will prove you wrong again in 2024.



The Evan Gershkovich I know

Samantha Berkhead

IT took some time after I first saw the breaking news alert - that Evan Gershkovich had been detained in Russia - for the horror to sink in. As more details emerged of my former colleague's arrest, the more it felt like a bad dream. The Federal Security Service (FSB) had detained him while reporting a story in the Ural Mountains city of Yekaterinburg and was now holding him on suspicion of espionage. He is the first Western reporter to face such accusations in Russia since the Cold War.

My memories of Evan keep flitting in and out of my mind, colliding at full velocity with the blunt and devastating fact of the present: that he is now facing charges which can only be described as absurd, and which will likely see him sentenced to up to 20 years behind bars. I first met Evan in 2019, when I moved to Moscow to join The Moscow Times, where he had already been working since late 2017. But it wasn't until he and I found ourselves in Riga, Latvia for a month that spring on a visa run gone awry (don't ask) that I really got to know him.

Over shared meals and drinks around the city, he told me of his upbringing in New Jersey with his parents, who were Jewish exiles from the Soviet Union, and sister. We bantered about the cultural differences between Russia and the United States, our home country. He carried around a well-worn olive-green backpack whose holes he had darned like his mother taught him to do. A big fan of soccer, he would patiently explain to me what was happening on the bar's television as his favorite team, Arsenal, played a match. He cooked me dinner in his Riga apartment, using the skills he'd picked up in a New York City kitchen where he moonlighted while working as a news assistant for The New York Times.

We had only known each other a few weeks, but I shouldn't have been surprised by this generosity. Evan didn't think twice about gestures of kindness. He moved about the world with confidence and ease, seeming to relish in the very act of being alive. He could strike up a conversation with just about anyone. He was quick with a joke and gifted with an acerbic sense of humor. Beyond his fluent Russian - something I coveted - he genuinely loved Russia and embraced it fully, from the idiosyncrasies of long-haul Russian train travel to the rituals of the banya. Russia, for Evan, was a home. He viewed the world through a straightforward, realist lens with little trace of cynicism or idealism. And he was in many ways unshakable. As he recounted in graphic detail the brutality of Russian police against opposition protesters that he'd witnessed, I uttered an expletive. He just shrugged: That was just the reality of it, he seemed to say. From the day I met him, he had had a clear vision for his career and was incredibly driven to realize it. He was always hunting down the next story - and when it came to the story itself, he would always do it justice to the best of his ability.

In the year and a half that we worked together at The Moscow Times, cover-

ing Russia felt like penning a long, drawn-out obituary for rights and freedoms. Evan was devoted to covering this story and sharing it with the world with the fairness, humanity and rigorous fact-checking it demands. He covered topics ranging from the Moscow opposition

that it has taken his imprisonment for him to be recognized for these traits on a wide scale is a terrible irony.

The trees are blossoming in Amsterdam now, just like they were during that month Evan and I spent in Riga four years ago. I cannot reconcile the dissonance between my life today, in an idyllic Western

He cooked me dinner in his Riga apartment, using the skills he'd picked up in a New York City kitchen where he moonlighted while working as a news assistant for The New York Times. We had only known each other a few weeks, but I shouldn't have been surprised by this generosity. Evan didn't think twice about gestures of kindness. He moved about the world with confidence and ease, seeming to relish in the very act of being alive. He could strike up a conversation with just about anyone.

protests that got widespread Western attention to less-reported issues like the erasure of minority languages and environmental degradation. He also played a key role in MT's coverage of the pandemic, which often scooped major Western outlets with stories on how medical students were being deployed to Covid-19 wards and how Russia was vastly under-reporting its death toll. What I remember most about Evan is his readiness to offer guidance. His advice always came without pretension or precondition, nor did it reek of the chauvinist condescension that I can detect like a drug-sniffing dog. In the summer of 2020, I was reporting a story on a proposed law to ban transgender Russians from changing their gender on their documents. Evan called me up. He had been in contact with a transgender woman who'd fled the country in anticipation of the law's passing, he said, and thought my piece was missing a personal account such as hers.

"I don't want to make it seem like I'm coming in and rewriting your story," he told me. The story was much better with his contribution. In summer 2020, he left The Moscow Times to join the Moscow bureau of Agence France Presse. As the months passed, we didn't keep in touch, apart from one or two chance encounters at parties. At the end of one of those nights, he hugged me as he said goodbye. I was surprised that he did that - we weren't exactly close friends - but I shouldn't have been. That's just who he was.

When it was announced in early 2022 that he was joining The Wall Street Journal as a Russia correspondent, it felt right. Just weeks later, Russia invaded Ukraine. Virtually every Western journalist swiftly made arrangements to leave Russia, worried that the Kremlin could put us in its crosshairs next in its sweeping crackdown on the press. That summer, Evan returned to Russia, undeterred by the risks and committed to documenting the country's wartime descent into dystopia. That he chose to return to Russia speaks to his courage and integrity.

Russia is using 'woke' narratives to discredit Britain

Ivana Stradner

IN 2018, the Russian government banned British director Armando Iannucci's satirical film *The Death of Stalin*, with the Communist Party Central Committee Chief, Sergey Obukhov, labeling it a "form of psychological warfare." If only he were right. Since the Cold War, Britain's use of information operations to combat adversaries has deteriorated woefully amid a fixation on hard power. By contrast, Russian disinformation campaigns and propaganda remain as robust as ever. They have repeatedly been deployed in attempts to polarise the country, sow conflict related to the Scottish independence movement, portray the UK as a nefarious, imperialistic, colonial, and racist nation, and rewrite history to cast Winston Churchill as evil.

It is high time for the UK government to call out Moscow's efforts for what they are: psychological war against the UK. In light of Russia's belligerent information operations against Britain - documented, for example, by the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, among other sources - London should aggressively strike back and wage an offensive information operations campaign that puts Moscow on the defensive. And what better way to do it than exploiting the Kremlin's love of Stalin.

Despite Stalin's monstrous crimes against his own people - from the Great Terror of the 1930s, the Gulag labor camps, and the summary execution of thousands of Red Army soldiers

during World War II - he has remained a revered figure among many Russians, with his rose-adorned statue forever standing next to Lenin's mausoleum in Moscow's Red Square. Earlier this year, for example, more than 1,000 Russians gathered in Red Square to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the dictator's death. Putin has capitalised on Stalin's popularity to rewrite Russia's role in both World War II and the Cold War.

He has praised Stalin multiple times for his role in crafting modern Russian society. In one speech, Putin noted Stalin's transformation of Russia, calling him an "effective manager" and discussing how, "from 1924 to 1953, the country that Stalin ruled changed from an agrarian to an industrial society." In a 2017 interview with American film director Oliver Stone, Putin asserted that enemies use the "excessive demonisation" of Stalin as "one means of attacking the Soviet Union and Russia... to show that today's Russia carries on itself some kind of birthmarks to Stalinism."

Meanwhile, Putin blames the start of WWII and the Cold War on Western countries, targeting former leaders like Winston Churchill. Stalin actually began the cult of hatred against Churchill, going so far as to compare him to Adolf Hitler. As a response to Churchill's Fulton speech Stalin said, "It should be noted that Mr. Churchill and his friends are strikingly reminiscent... of Hitler and his friends. Hitler began the business of start-

ing the war by proclaiming the racial theory, declaring that only people who spoke German constituted a complete nation. Mr. Churchill begins the business of unleashing war also with racial theory, arguing that only the nations that speak the English language are full-fledged nations."

Putin's administration has mirrored these sentiments. At a 2019 meeting with heads of various international news agencies, Putin stated, "Let's remember Churchill, who at first hated the Soviet Union, then called Joseph Stalin a great revolutionary when it was necessary to fight Nazism, and after the Americans got nuclear weapons, he called for the immediate destruction of the Soviet Union." Kremlin Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov meanwhile has claimed that "the West's view of Russia is still predominantly clinging to Winston Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech."

Putin's revisionist history has been successful. A 2017 Levada center poll found a quarter of Russians believed Stalin's repressions were "historically justified" and 13 percent admitting they knew "nothing" about Stalin's crimes. Forty-seven percent of respondents believed "it is better to speak less about the repressions and not to dig up the past." Moreover, 56 percent of citizens now regard Stalin as a "great leader," with the largest increase in support for Stalin among those 18 to 30 years old.

The UK should attempt to counter this dangerous rhetoric,

although not with tales about Western democracy, which do not resonate with Russians. Instead, information operations can capitalise on Putin's own narratives, including the image of Stalin as a strong leader. Authoritarian regimes are particularly keen to censor satire and irony because dark humor resonates with the public. Just as Hitler hated the Great Dictator film, Putin detests *The Death of Stalin*. Just as Stalin imprisoned people for telling disrespectful jokes, Putin has passed a law to jail people for "disrespecting government." Stalin's law did not stop the Russians from mocking the regime and neither will Putin's.

UK intelligence should use the powerful tool of dark humour to appeal to Russians, reviving Soviet-era jokes about Stalin and retrofitting them to apply to Putin, posting humorous memes on Russian social media platforms. As the *Death of Stalin* movie hit the Kremlin's soft spot, the UK could encourage production of a humorous movie about the Great Dictator Putin. Britain's information campaign should also redress Russia's misleading narrative regarding WWII and Churchill's critical role, emphasising the importance of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in carving up Eastern Europe and green-lighting Hitler's aggression. Although Putin's army is performing poorly on the battlefield in Ukraine, one of his most powerful weapons is information. To the extent Britain remains reluctant to engage in an information war, it plays right into the Kremlin's hands.

The Telegraph

Trump is charged: A surreal moment without precedent in American history

Fawaz Turkki

IT was on Monday afternoon when an indicted Donald Trump flew out of West Palm Beach on his patriotically painted red-white-and-blue private jet to New York - the city he was born and grew up in, the city whose ostentation, brashness and cheek match his - where he was expected to be arraigned in court the following day.

The nation that following day held its breath when Mr. Trump, the former billionaire business mogul who rose to the presidency, a man not known to suffer from low self-regard, entered the hallway of the Manhattan Criminal Courthouse and into the back corridors to the district attorney's office, where he was formally arrested and fingerprinted ahead of his arraignment, which made him the first sitting or former US chief executive in history to face criminal charges. However, in deference to a defendant who once sat behind the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office as the 45th president of the United States of America, Trump did not have his hands cuffed or his mugshot taken, as would've been the case with other suspects charged with a felony.

"Everyone stands equal under the law", Manhattan district attorney Alvin Bragg said at a press conference after the arraignment.

"No amount of power and no amount of money changes that", a view of the legal system made explicit as far back as medieval times by the English jurist Henry de Bracton (d. 1269) in his treatise, *On the Laws and Customs of England*, in which he opined that "no one is above the law". True indeed. But still the spectacle nevertheless represented a surreal and historic moment without precedent in American history. The disruption of cohesion projected in the image of an American president under arrest, being fingerprinted like a criminal, had the queer uprumpness and illogic of dreams, dreams being a place where reality is often turned on its hinges. Yet the ignominy did not faze diehard Trump supporters, who drank from it as if it were the well of life, convinced that their Trumpist vision will prevail. After all, had not their hero been able earlier to raise well over \$5 million a mere 48 hours after news of his indictment broke on Thursday? Does that not attest to the resilience and durability of that vision?

The indictment, which was unsealed only after the court convened on Tuesday, charged the former president with "repeatedly and fraudulently falsifying business

records to conceal conduct that hid damaging information from the voting public during the 2016 presidential election", to wit, not only a hush money deal with Stormy Daniels, but also a conspiracy to orchestrate a broader scheme aimed at paying a Playboy model and a former doorman at Trump Tower who had scandalous secrets to reveal about the then presidential hopeful. In effect, the New York district attorney was charging Donald J. Trump with relatively low-level felonies that carried a maximum four-year sentence, though if he were convicted, a judge could sentence him to probation. The bad news for the former 45th president of the United States, however, is that his New York indictment should be the least of his worries at this time, for he faces three other, more serious criminal investigations related to his infamous phone call to Georgia's secretary of state, in which he sought to undermine the results of the 2020 elections; to his alleged incitement of the mob on Jan. 6, which led to the storming of the US Capitol; and to his mishandling of classified documents, which he unlawfully kept at his Mar-a-Lago residence in Palm Beach.

But it really was his New York

indictment, which essentially related to tawdry matters, that seemed to garner the most attention. A writer for the New York Times, who was in attendance, had this to say soon after the conclusion of the proceedings: "It is perhaps unsurprising, given the crass and circus-like political era that Mr. Trump ushered in - one marked by the elevation of D-List celebrities, uncouth social media posts and a casual relationship with the truth - that his first indictment stems from lies about a tryst with a porn star". Donald J. Trump was in and out of New York in no time after the hearings. His jet took him back to Palm Beach that same day, where, at 8:30pm, while standing at a podium in his Mar-a-Lago residence, he delivered a speech to an adoring crowd, which included fire-breathing GOP Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene. In it he painted the indictment as the Democrats' latest attempts at kneecapping him.

He said: "I never thought that (the indictment) would happen. The only crime I committed is to fearlessly defend our nation from those who seek to destroy it". Sadly, there are a lot of Americans around - a lot more than we care to admit - who do not consider that claim laughable.

Gulf News

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PSX witnesses bullish trend, gains 633.74 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Thursday, gaining 633.74 points, with a positive change of 1.52 per cent, closing at 40,350.89 against 39,717.15 points on the previous day.

A total of 171,360,309 shares were traded during the day as compared to 86,723,163 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs5.130 billion against Rs2.435 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 354 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 253 of them recorded gains and 79 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 22 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Silk Bank Ltd. with 21,288,500 shares

at Rs1.11 per share, Pak Petroleum with 13,574,497 shares at Rs67.88 per share, and Telecard Limited with 10,980,500 shares at Rs8.13 per share.

Nestle Pakistan XD witnessed a maximum increase of Rs168.20 per share price, closing at Rs5198.20, whereas the runner-up was Sapphire Fiber with a Rs47.90 rise in its per share price to Rs990.00.

Reliance Cotton witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs40.00 per share closing at Rs600.00, followed by Philip Morris Pak. with a Rs15.65 decline to close at Rs328.37.

Rupee gains Rs3.43 against dollar

Pakistan rupee strengthened by Rs3.43 against the Dollar in the interbank trading on Thursday and closed at Rs284.42 against the previous day's closing of Rs287.85.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of Dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs289.5 and Rs292 respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs5.29 which closed at Rs310.31 against the last day's closing of Rs315.60, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen decreased by 02 paises to close at Rs2.16; whereas a decrease of Rs5.26 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs354.744 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs360.00.

The exchange rate of the Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal decreased by 93 paises each to close at Rs78.37 and Rs76.74 respectively.

Gold prices decrease by Rs.2500 to Rs. 214,500 per tola

The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs2500 and was sold at Rs214,500 on Thursday against its sale at Rs. 217,000 the previous day, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs2142 to Rs183,900 from Rs186,042, whereas the price of 10 grams 22 karat gold went down to Rs168,574 from Rs170,539.

The price of per tola and that of ten-gram silver remained unchanged to close at Rs2450 and Rs2100.48 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market dipped by US\$ 04 to \$2019 against its sale at \$2023, the association reported.



PESHAWAR: A woman selecting and purchasing artificial jewellery at Sadar Bazaar.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Six ships namely, GSL Ningbo, EM Astoria, Fethiye-M, Regina, Al Saffiya and Delta Gas scheduled to load/offload Containers, Rice, Mogas, LNG and Chemicals, berthed at Qasim International Container Terminal, Grain and Fertilizer Terminal, FOTCO Oil Terminal, EngroElengy Terminal and EngroVopak Terminal respectively.

Meanwhile two more ships, AT Middle Bridge and Harmony scheduled to load/offload Cement and Sunflower oil also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the last 24 hours.

PQA berths were engaged by 06 ships during the last 24 hours, out of them two ships, GSL Ningbo and Al-Areesh left the Port on Thursday morning, while another Container vessel, EM Astoria is expected to sail on today.

A cargo volume 148,022 tones, comprising 103,550 tones imports Cargo and 44,472 tones export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 4,895 Containers (2,279 TEUs Imports and 2,616 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 05 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them a General Cargo carrier, AT Middle Bridge & another ship, Cosco America scheduled to load/offload Cement and Containers are expected to take berths at Multi-purpose Terminal and Qasim International Container Terminal respectively on Thursday.

Oil prices decline with recession fears

ANKARA (APP): Oil prices decreased on Thursday after weak economic data in the US sparked recession fears.

International benchmark Brent crude traded at \$84.61 per barrel at 10.08 a.m. local time (0708 GMT), a 0.45% drop from the closing price of \$84.99 a barrel in the previous trading session.

At the same time, American benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) traded at \$80.22 per barrel, a 0.48% fall after the previous session closed at \$80.61 a barrel.

Disappointing private jobs figures in the US hinted at a possible recession that would lower oil demand and in the world's largest oil-consuming country.

The American private sector added 145,000 jobs in March, coming in much lower than expectations of an increase of 200,000.

Economic activity in the US services sector expanded in March for a third consecutive month, but the rate of growth slowed. The non-manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) came in at 51.2%, 3.9 percentage points lower than February's reading of 55.1%.

Meanwhile, a drop in US crude stocks prevented further price falls.

US commercial crude oil inventories decreased by 3.7 million barrels to 470 million barrels during the week ending March 31, according to data released by the Energy Information Administration (EIA) late Wednesday.

Inventories fell against the market expectation of a decrease of 1.8 million barrels.

Resumption of operation via Khunrab Pass to bolster Pak-China trade

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis Thursday said the resumption of long-awaited operations via Khunjrab Pass would further bolster trade with China, besides strengthening people-to-people contacts.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists and traders led by Faran Shahid, he said it was also another good omen that the two sides were now working to keep the border crossing open round the year.

The reopening was

expected to witness huge growth of cross-border trade and transportation this year, he said adding a major turnaround for Pakistani producers was expected in the wake of relaxation of COVID-19 related restrictions.

He said cherry had been allowed to be exported to China and this would open a \$2 billion market, he said. Similarly sesame seed export to China had also increased, he added.

He said it was aimed at connecting China to Pakistan's ports which would eventually help

expand and modernize its economy and meet major energy requirements. It would also provide shortest route for Chinese cargo heading towards the Middle East, Africa and Central Asia, he added.

Meher Kashif Younis said on the other hand, imports from China had surged and added there was an urgent need to enhance exports as well.

He said textiles, rice, cherry, mangoes and other food items can be exported to Beijing which would be another way of increasing foreign reserves.

Tokyo stocks end lower on recession fears

TOKYO (AFP/APP): Tokyo stocks ended lower Thursday following a mixed Wall Street close, as investors fearful of a recession awaited key US jobs data due later this week.

The benchmark Nikkei 225 index was down 1.22 percent, or 340.63 points, to end at 27,472.63, while the broader Topix index lost 1.14 percent, or 22.56 points, to 1,961.28.

The dollar stood at 131.32 yen, against 131.35 yen in New York late Wednesday.

Investors view a global slowdown as more likely

following the latest batch of lacklustre US indicators, including a survey showing lower private sector hiring in March and a report indicating easing services sector activity.

These figures "reinforced fears over a recession", IwaiCosmo Securities said.

Worsening investor sentiment took a heavy toll on tech stocks, such as those linked to the semiconductor sector, but strong economic data from China helped curb their falls, the brokerage added.

Among major shares,

Sony Group dropped 2.15 percent to 11,555, Toyota fell 1.40 percent to 1,826 yen and Uniqlo operator Fast Retailing was down 1.05 percent at 29,085 yen.

Seven & i Holdings, a retail giant that operates 7-Eleven and many other stores in Japan, gained 0.49 percent to 5,872 yen.

After Thursday's trading session ended, the company logged sales of over 10 trillion yen between March 2022 and February 2023, an amount that local media called a first for a domestic retailer.

Crude heads for third weekly gain

RIYADH (Agencies): Oil prices eased on Thursday after weak US job openings data signaled cooling economic conditions which may hit demand.

Brent crude fell 51 cents, or 0.60 percent, to \$84.48 a barrel at 12.00 PM Saudi time, while West Texas Intermediate US crude dipped by 57 cents, or 0.71 percent to \$80.04.

Prices jumped by more than 6 percent on Monday after the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies including Russia, collectively known as OPEC+, pledged voluntary production cuts.

A group of investors with \$1.1 trillion in assets under management has joined climate activist group Follow This in asking TotalEnergies shareholders to push for more ambitious targets on emissions cuts.

The resolution filed for the company's May 26 annual general meeting follows others that Follow This has filed for coming shareholder meetings at

rival energy majors BP, Chevron, Exxon Mobil and Shell.

"To achieve the goal of (the) Paris (climate deal), the world has to almost halve emissions by 2030, but TotalEnergies has no plan to drive down emissions this decade," Follow This founder Mark van Baal said.

"These climate resolutions at Big Oil will show which investors are serious about resolving the climate crisis and which prefer to just talk about it."

The investor group co-filing the latest resolution represents 1.5 percent of TotalEnergies' shares.

Follow This wants the companies to commit to absolute emissions cuts by 2030, rather than intensity-based targets, including Scope 3 emissions from the combustion of the fuels they sell. TotalEnergies has said its emissions will not register a big reduction by 2030 in absolute terms.

Shell expects higher liquefied natural gas output in

the first quarter after outages at its Australian plants last year as well as stable earnings from LNG trading, it said on Thursday.

Shell, which recorded a record \$40 billion profit last year, said in an update ahead of results due on May 4 that it expected first-quarter liquefaction volumes of 7 to 7.4 million tons, up from 6.8 million tons in the previous quarter.

Its oil products division also likely boosted earnings through a "significantly higher" trading performance, the world's biggest fuel retailer said.

It expects to have paid between \$2.6 and \$3.4 billion in tax for the first quarter, down from \$4.4 billion.

Its renewables unit is set to contribute \$100 to \$700 million to adjusted earnings, compared with \$300 million in the last quarter of 2022. Colombia's crude oil production in February rose 2.29 percent versus the same month a year earlier, the government said on Wednesday.

South Korea's FDI rises 3 per cent in Q1

SEOUL (APP): Foreign direct investment (FDI) in South Korea rose in single digits in the first quarter of this year due to higher greenfield investment, government data showed on Thursday.

The reported FDI came to 5.63 billion US dollars in the January-March quarter, up 3 percent from the same quarter of last year, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Energy.

It marked the highest first-quarter amount on higher greenfield investment.

Greenfield investment, which involves factory construction and employment, advanced 13 percent over the year to 4.18 billion dollars in the first quarter.

The merger and acquisition investment was reduced by 16 percent to 1.45 billion dollars in the cited quarter.

The FDI in the manufacturing industry shrank 6 percent to 1.54 billion dollars, but foreign investment in the domestic services sector gained 5 percent to 3.95 billion dollars.

The direct investment from Europe more than tripled to 2.08 billion dollars, but investment from the US and Japan retreated by double figures to 750 million dollars and 300 million dollars respectively.

EAG calls for reforms to encourage R&D investment

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Economic Advisory Group (EAG) on Thursday called for institutional reforms to encourage investment in critical research and development areas such as seed development and disease prevention.

The EAG, an independent group of individuals dealing with economics, policy matters and private sector, in a report, stressed the importance of R&D investment to promote innovation, enhance food security, and prevent epidemics and pandemics.

It noted that with rising inflation, 73% of households in the country were experiencing a significant deterioration in savings. The government was trying to provide relief to the people through cash transfers and free flour, "but chal-

lenges remain in aid distribution".

The EAG called for greater transparency in cash transfer infrastructure and liberalization of cross-border trade in agriculture as donations had decreased by 50%, and the number of people seeking help also increased by 50%.

The Group praised the Sindh government's efforts to provide relief to citizens in the face of rising food prices.

While acknowledging that providing free flour may be necessary in certain areas with limited access to markets, the EAG maintained that cash transfers were the most effective means of delivering aid, and highlighted the existing infrastructure available to reach out to those in need beyond the Benazir Income

Support Programme (BISP).

The EAG noted that the federal and provincial governments had stepped up their relief efforts. The Sindh government, for instance, had distributed Rs 3.2 billion in cash transfers through BISP to 1.6 million households across the province, with the reported objective of transferring a total of Rs 15.5 billion to 3.8 million households with a monthly income of less than Rs 50,000, it added.

The coalition government at Center, it added, announced the provision of free wheat flour in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the Federal Capital Territory to provide relief to affected citizens during the holy month of Ramadan.

In 2020, the government had expanded its existing infrastructure to reach out

to 40 percent of households across the country in an effort to provide relief in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, the EAG said.

In response to these challenges, the Economic Advisory Group (EAG) has called for greater transparency in the cash transfer infrastructure, which it believes will reduce opportunities for corruption compared to physical distribution of relief items.

The EAG has also recommended that policymakers across Pakistan learn from their best practices when it comes to providing targeted relief to the masses, and that cross-border trade in agricultural commodities, inputs, and machinery be liberalized to improve the productivity of the agriculture sector in the country.

inDrive joins forces with Akhuwat foundation

— to reconstruct flood-affected schools across Sindh

F.P. Report

KARACHI: inDrive, the global mobility and urban services platform, has donated PKR 10 Million to the Akhuwat foundation for reconstruction of schools to support children's education.

The donated amount will aid the Thatta and Thar region in the rebuilding of schools that were affected by the devastating floods and heavy monsoon rains in the Sindh region in 2022.

The primary purpose of providing these funds is to help students carry on with their education and stand on their own two feet with dignity.

From June to October 2022, floods in Pakistan killed 1,739 people and caused ? 3.2 trillion in damage and ? 3.3 trillion in economic losses.

The catastrophic floods in Pakistan have destroyed nearly 27,000 schools, preventing more than 2 million children from attending school and resuming their education.

The donated amount of PKR 10 million by inDrive will help reconstruct the schools and build new units.

Aleksandra Kirillina, Team Lead of the CSR project at inDrive, stated:



"The flood affected many families; the dreadful situation in the interior of Sindh leaves many people in a devastating situation which forced students to leave their education behind. One of the primary pillars of inDrive's mission is serving and empowering communities, and education is our top priority, as a good education is the greatest gift you can give anyone.

To support and rebuild the education system in the cities of Thar and Thatta is to reopen those schools where children can resume

their studies; to fulfill our commitment to this project, we collaborated with the Akhuwat foundation, who's working at the forefront of this initiative."

Shahryar Rashid, Manager of Marketing & PR at Akhuwat Sindh, says: "The floods, which have affected more than 20 million people, also created an emergency in education as they have made it difficult for schools to operate in more than 21 districts of Sindh. 15,842 schools have been completely destroyed or left in precarious conditions. As

part of our philosophy of alleviating poverty through education, Akhuwat runs schools in districts like Thatta, Jacobabad, and Tharparkar, imparting free quality education to those who are less privileged.

With many schools unable to open, students are forced to drop out or transfer to other schools, which for the less privileged is demoralizing. We admire organizations like inDrive for recognizing the seriousness of the situation and stepping up to help the reconstruction of these Akhuwat-run schools.

Markets drop as recession talk builds

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Growing fears of a US recession weighed on equities Thursday as traders gear up for the release of key jobs data that could determine the Federal Reserve's next interest rate decision.

After a few weeks of gains fuelled by hopes the central bank would soon take its foot off the pedal in tightening monetary policy, data this week has fanned talk that its year-long hiking campaign may have gone too far.

On Wednesday, a report from the Institute for Supply Management showed the US services sector grew less than forecast last month, while another pointed to private

employers slowing their hiring pace in March.

The readings came a day after news that job openings had fallen to their lowest level since May 2021.

While traders have long hoped for a tightening of the labour market and an economic slowdown that would allow the Fed to stop lifting rates, there is now a rising concern of a deep recession.

Adding to the unease is ongoing uncertainty about the banking sector after last month's turmoil that saw two US regional banks go under and Credit Suisse taken over.

The upheaval was largely blamed on the sharp pace of rate hikes over the past year.

"While this sombre economic news might have otherwise been received as good news for the waning soft-landing crew, recent price action suggests that investors are weighing up the possibility that the US economy may have met too much resistance between higher rates and regional bank uncertainty, which could eventually tip the US into recession," said SPI Asset Management's Stephen Innes.

The prospect of a recession weighed on US markets with the S&P 500 and Nasdaq in the red, while traders also shifted into safe-haven Treasuries.

And gold, another go-to in times of turmoil and uncertainty, stayed above

\$2,000 while heading towards a record high of \$2,075.47 set in August 2020.

In Asia, the mood was also broadly downbeat, with business winding down ahead of the long Easter weekend.

Hong Kong and Shanghai fell as they rebounded after a one-day holiday, while Tokyo was weighed by a strengthening yen. Sydney, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei and Manila were also down.

Jakarta was flat and Wellington edged up slightly. Focus now turns to the release of key US non-farm payroll figures on Friday, which will provide the latest snapshot of the economy.



In brief

Inzamam's brother laid to rest

LONDON (Web Desk): Former Pakistani cricketer Inzamam-ul-Haq's brother, Intisar-ul-Haq, has been laid to rest at a local cemetery in London. Intisar-ul-Haq was the resident of Alfred, East London. The funeral prayer of the deceased was offered at the Alfred Islamic Center which was attended by a large number of family and friends, including Mian Inzamam-ul-Haq, Shahid Gogi, Mahmood Bashir Butt, Ayub Cheema, Nadeem Butt, Abdullah Mir, Rizwan Ahmed, Abdul Sattar. After the funeral prayers, the deceased was buried at the Garden of Peace Cemetery in East London. The attendees also condoled with Inzamam-ul-Haq on the demise of his brother.

Stephen loses to James Cahill

SHEFFIELD (Agencies): Seven-time champion Stephen Hendry's bid to reach the World Championship for the first time since 2012 ended in the first round of qualifying. The Scot, 54, lost 10-4 to Englishman James Cahill, who is the nephew of his ex-wife. Ireland's Ken Doherty, the 1997 world champion, beat 12-time women's world champion Reanne Evans in Sheffield. Cahill, 27, faces China's Lei Peifan in the second round, while 53-year-old Doherty takes on England's Hammad Miah. Three-time women's champion Ng On Yee of China lost 10-8 to England's Michael Holt despite making a break of 115 at the English Institute of Sport. Hendry made the 777th century of his career against Cahill but said he played "too many bad shots" in the match. "It is still a very distant dream in the future that one day I'll walk out at the Crucible again," he told World Snooker. "It is very doubtful and huge odds against, but that is the dream."

Lampard returns

LONDON (Agencies): Frank Lampard insisted it was an "easy decision" to make his surprise return to Chelsea as caretaker manager until the end of the season on Thursday, just over two years after he was sacked by the Premier League club. Lampard, Chelsea's record goalscorer, previously managed the Blues from July 2019 until January 2021, when he was replaced by Thomas Tuchel. The 44-year-old's unexpected move back to Stamford Bridge came after Tuchel's successor Graham Potter was dismissed on Sunday with the club in the bottom half of the Premier League. "We are delighted to welcome Frank back to Stamford Bridge," Chelsea co-controlling owners Todd Boehly and Behdad Eghbali said in a statement. "Frank is a Premier League Hall of Famer and a legend at this club. "As we continue our thorough and exhaustive process for a permanent head coach, we want to provide the club and our fans with a clear and stable plan for the remainder of the season." Former England midfielder Lampard had been out of a job since January when he was sacked by relegation-threatened Everton after less than a year in charge. Lampard claimed he did not have to swallow his pride to return to Chelsea despite his brutal exit during Roman Abramovich's reign as owner. The Blues legend couldn't refuse the opportunity to help a club so close to his heart after his 13-year spell as a Premier League and Champions League-winning Chelsea player.

Tucker's debut hundred leads Ireland fightback in Dhaka

DHAKA (Agencies): Debutant Lorcan Tucker became only the second Irishman to hit a Test century, ably assisted by Andy McBrine's unbeaten 71, to lead a tenacious fightback against Bangladesh in Dhaka on Thursday. Ireland reached 286-8 at stumps on the third day to lead the hosts by 131 runs after resuming on a precarious 27-4 in the one-off Test. Tucker made 108 off 162 balls before falling to the bowling of Ebadot Hossain, with Shoriful Islam taking the catch at extra cover. The wicketkeeper-batsman hit 14 fours and a six and was brilliantly assisted by Harry Tector and McBrine in partnerships of 72 and 111 to put the pressure back on Bangladesh. "It is obviously pretty special. It wasn't something that I thought would hap-

pen today," Tucker said. "We were under a lot of pressure. We tried to take it ball-by-ball and bat for as long as we could. It was very special to get a personal reward. "The team is also in a great position. We are looking forward to tomorrow," he said. Tector resumed from overnight for a 28-run partnership with Peter Moor before left-arm pacer Shoriful gave the hosts their first breakthrough of the day. Moor was gone for 16 but Tector and Tucker staved off further damage with their stand. Tector departed after he was found leg before wicket off Taijul Islam, but his 56 made him the first Irish cricketer to hit half-centuries in both innings of a Test match. Tucker brought up his century with a cover drive

for four off left-arm spinner Taijul, raising his bat after hugging McBrine. Mark Adair was next to bat, accompanying McBrine in a 31-run stand before he was removed by Taijul, the most successful Bangladesh bowler of the innings with 4-86. "No one said Test cricket's gonna be easy," said Bangladesh bowling coach Allan Donald. "I thought they grinded out the day beautifully and yes, once again, one massive tick to Ireland. They fought hard today." Kevin O'Brien is the only other Irishman to hit a Test century, scoring 118 against Pakistan during Ireland's 2018 maiden Test in Dublin. Ireland have lost all three of their previous Tests since becoming a full member of the International Cricket Council in 2017.

Pakistan to field a strong team in IBSA World Games

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan will field a strong outfit in the International Blind Sports Federation (IBSA) World Games, taking place in Birmingham, UK from August 18-27. "We've conveyed to the organizers last month that our men's blind team will partake in the event. It is for the first time that cricket has been included in the games, hence we are eager to chip in the event," Syed Sultan Shah, the chairman of Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) told APP on Thursday. According to Shah, a 20-member Pakistan team will be sent for the prestigious event. "We have highly talented players and our focus will be to select the best of

the best for the event. He said so far besides Pakistan, Australia, England and India had consented to send their teams for the Games. "We are expecting a final showdown with India as they too are a very strong side," he said. "The women blind cricket has also been included in the games but I don't think we'll be able to send our [women] team as we don't have sufficient funds for that. "It would have been a great exposure for the women team. We still have the chance to send their entries but finances are a big hurdle," he said. Sultan Shah said that the PBCC had informed Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) about the men blind

team's participation in the games and requested for more financial support to meet the travel and other expenditures. The 2023 World Games is the largest high-level international event for athletes with visual impairment, with more than 1250 competitors from 70 nations. The games, staged every four years are the pinnacle of the international sporting calendar outside the Paralympic Games. The sports taking place during the 2023 World Games include archery, chess, cricket, blind football, partially sighted football, women's football, goalball, judo, powerlifting, showdown, tenpin bowling and tennis.

Rashford on target again, Man Utd into top four

LONDON (Agencies): Marcus Rashford scored the only goal with a brilliant half-volley as Manchester United beat Brentford 1-0 in the Premier League at Old Trafford on Wednesday to climb above Tottenham Hotspur and back into the top four. The victory was a perfect response following a disappointing 2-0 defeat by Newcastle United on Sunday and lifted the Red Devils to 53 points, three ahead of fifth-placed Spurs and level with the Magpies in third. United started brightly, forcing a series of corners and free kicks as Brentford pulled their outfield players behind the ball to try to close down space, and when the breakthrough came in the 27th minute it was from another set-piece. A Brentford clearance from a corner only made it as far winger Antony on the edge of the box. He lofted

it towards the head of Marcel Sabitzer, and Rashford met the Austrian's bouncing knockdown with a sumptuous half-volley that gave David Raya no chance to register his 28th goal of the season. David de Gea almost gave Brentford a lifeline early in the second half when his loose attempt at a clearance cannoned into the onrushing Ivan Toney, ut luckily for the United keeper the ball bounced to safety. The United keeper was called into action again in the 67th minute when substitute Kevin Schade collected a pass from Toney and ran at him, but the keeper stood firm to deflect the shot. Manchester United could have sealed the game in the 80th minute as Rashford broke down the left and squared to Fred, but the Brazilian blazed the ball high over the bar with the goal at his mercy.

Brentford poured forward in the closing stages, but the closest they came to scoring was an audacious attempt at a chip from Toney that drifted harmlessly over the bar as the home side held on. Looking for a top-four finish that will give them a crack at Champions League football next season, Rashford said consistency would be key for United as the Premier League heads into its final phase. "We are in that period of the season where every game is important and every game counts, so we are pleased to win," Rashford said. "The important thing is always to win the next game -- everyone is clear that we are not going to play our best every week, but there is never a time to drop our standards and we have to keep trying to push each other every week," he added.

USA, UAE advance to ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier

ISLAMABAD (APP): The United States of America (USA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have secured a place at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier after finishing in the top two places of an evenly contested, six-team ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier Play-off, the ICC said in a media release on Thursday. USA finished on top of the table with four wins from their five matches, ahead of the UAE on head-to-head, who scored a final-day win over Jersey to level the USA on points. Hosts Namibia and Canada put in some strong performances but fell just short of progressing with three wins each from their five fixtures. Namibia's Gerhard Erasmus was named Player of the Tournament, with 279 runs in five games at an average of 69.75. USA's Ali Khan topped the wicket charts with 16 wickets at an average of 12.37. The USA

and UAE are now just one stage away from securing a guaranteed nine matches at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 that will be hosted in India later this year. USA captain Monank Patel said: "It's a great feeling to be able to progress to the Qualifiers in Zimbabwe, even though we see this as a big accomplishment for USA Cricket, we the players also know that it's going to require lots of improvements for us to compete with the bigger teams. The players and support staff has worked tirelessly prior and during this event, and the hard work paid off. As I said prior to the play-offs, we have an opportunity to play in two World Cups in less than twelve months, and this group continues to believe and work towards that goal. "UAE captain Mohammad Waseem said: "We are absolutely delighted to confirm our spot for

the qualifiers in Zimbabwe. Heading into the tournament in Namibia, we had a clear objective of delivering our best and playing positive and fearless cricket. I want to thank the players and our entire support staff for their untiring efforts that have resulted in our success. "Our batters have been exceptional for us recently and the bowlers and fielders have backed them up really well. The entire team needs to perform at the same level and display the same commitment and passion for us to excel in Zimbabwe. "To reach the pinnacle global event of One-Day International cricket, USA and UAE will be vying with eight other teams in Zimbabwe for two places. These will include the three automatic qualifiers from ICC CWC League 2 - Scotland, Oman and Nepal - in addition to the bottom five-placed teams in the ICC ODI Super League.



SOUTHAMPTON: Mohammad Abbas of Hampshire raises the ball aloft as he leaves the field after claiming 6 wickets for 49 runs during day one of the LV= Insurance County Championship Division 1 match between Hampshire and Nottinghamshire.

Ramzan cricket festival concluded
F.P. Report

GHALANAI: The first-ever Safi Ramadan Cricket Festival was held from 28 Mar to 5 April 2023, under the overall arrangements of the District Administration and Frontier Corps North. The festival saw participation from 15 teams comprising over 200 players from various areas of Tehsil Safi. Cash prizes, trophies and medals were distributed among the best performers of the event. The final match and closing ceremony were witnessed by locals, Mashrans and a large number of youth from the local population. The Safi Ramadan Cricket Festival was the first event of its kind organized during Ramadan in Tehsil Safi. The locals appreciated the efforts of the Civil Administration and Frontier Corps North for creating a healthy environment for the youth. They said that "The event was a great success and helped promote sportsmanship and unity among the local population. We hope to see more such events in the future as well".

Williamson: NZ captain set to miss WC after knee injury

WELLINGTON (Agencies): New Zealand white-ball captain Kane Williamson is likely to miss this year's World Cup after rupturing his anterior cruciate knee ligament. Williamson, 32, requires surgery on his right knee followed by a period of rehabilitation. He sustained the injury while fielding for Gujarat Titans in their win over Chennai Super Kings during the Indian Premier League opener on Friday. The ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in India begins in October. New Zealand Cricket said "standard rehabilitation timelines" mean that Williamson is "unlikely to be fit and available for selection" for the tournament. They added Williamson is likely to have surgery within the next three weeks. "I've received great support over the past few days and want to thank both the Gujarat Titans and New Zealand Cricket for that," said Williamson. "Naturally it's disappointing to get such an injury, but my focus now is on having the surgery and starting rehab. "It's going to take some time, but I'll be doing everything I can to get back on the field as soon as possible." Right-hander Williamson landed awkwardly after leaping to stop a six near the boundary and fell to the ground clutching his knee. He was subsequently replaced by Dasun Shanaka in the Titans squad. Under Williamson, the Black Caps were beaten to the 2019 World Cup title by England in a super over after a thrilling final at Lord's. Williamson, who has led New Zealand in 87 of his 161 one-day international appearances, added he was "looking forward to doing what I can" to support the team "over the next few months".

Buildup to ODI World Cup clouded by Pakistan-India relations

NEW DELHI (Agencies): Six months out from the likely start of the Cricket World Cup in India, the match schedule for the tournament is still under wraps as geopolitics cloud the buildup to the showpiece event. The delay is in stark contrast to the 2019 event, when the dates and venues for the tournament in England and Wales were announced more than a year out in keeping with usual practice for major sporting events. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has previously co-hosted three ODI World Cups and organising the 10-team event in October-November should present no major difficulties for the world's richest board. However, soured political relations between India and Pakistan have complicated matters and cricket finds itself caught in the geopolitical crossfire between the feuding neighbours, who play each other

only in multi-team events. India have ruled out travelling to Pakistan for the Asia Cup in September and are likely to play their matches at a neutral venue after organisers agreed on a 'hybrid' model - a move that looks likely to prompt a tit-for-tat response. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) denied media reports that it had made a similar demand at the ICC board meetings in Dubai last month but in a statement last week said it may push for the hybrid model "at the proper ICC forum at the right time". Should Pakistan agree to travel to India, the BCCI would have to secure visa clearance from the Indian government. A source with direct knowledge of the deliberations told Reuters that moving matches out of India had not even been discussed and the fixtures would be announced in "due course". Cricket news website

cricinfo.com has reported that the BCCI has yet to obtain a tax exemption from the Indian government, which is part of the hosting agreement it signed with the ICC. Should it fail to obtain the exemption the BCCI has said the amount could be deducted from its share of the ICC's central revenue pool. BCCI Secretary Jay Shah was not immediately available to clarify matters surrounding the schedule but, in an ICC statement revealing the tournament's brand identity on Saturday, promised to deliver a "memorable event". "We cannot wait until October to see world class cricket on show in the pinnacle event of the one-day game and for India to host an incredible spectacle," Shah said. Cricinfo has reported the World Cup will start on Oct. 5 with the final scheduled at the world's largest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad on Nov. 19.

Top-seed Pegula, past champ Keys advance in Charleston Open

CHARLESTON (AP): Top-seeded Jessica Pegula and past champion Madison Keys easily won second-round matches at the Charleston Open on Wednesday. Pegula, the American ranked third in the world, needed less than 65 minutes to beat Anna Blinkova of Russia 6-2, 6-0. Keys, an American who took this title in 2019, worked a couple of minutes more (69) to oust countrywoman Hailey Baptiste 6-1, 6-2 in the season's opening clay-court tournament. Defending champion Belinda Bencic of Switzerland ran past Canadian Katherine Sebov 6-0, 6-3. Pegula said the tournament at the Credit One Tennis Center feels familiar to her since she used to train at the facility when she grew

up on Hilton Head Island, about two hours south of Charleston. "It was a fun kind of period of my life, like maturing and growing into my career, and, yeah, figuring things out," she said. "So it was a great time, and I loved everyone here." Pegula used a strong service game and steady groundstrokes to win the first four games of the match. She finished winning more than 71% of her first serves and did not have a double fault. "I guess that's how you want to play first match on clay and with a quick turnaround coming off the hard court," Pegula said. "So just glad I got a good win." Keys put on a dominant show as well, winning all six break points Baptiste had against her. In other matches, No. 3 seed Daria Kasatkina of Russia topped Madison Brengle of the

WC winner Argentina moves top of FIFA rankings

ZURICH (AP): World Cup winner Argentina topped the FIFA rankings on Thursday for the first time in six years. Argentina's two wins in friendlies last month ended the one-year run at the top for Brazil, which lost at Morocco 2-1 and fell to No. 3. France, the World Cup beaten finalist, followed Argentina in rising one place, to No. 2. France won back-to-back European Championship qualifiers against No. 6 the Netherlands and Ireland. Belgium stayed at No. 4, with England next after two wins including beating No. 8 Italy. Europe completed the top 10 with No. 7 Croatia followed by Italy, Portugal and Spain. Morocco, which has joined the Spanish and Portuguese in a 2030 World Cup bidding plan, stayed at No. 11 to lead African teams. The United States was still No. 13, two ahead of regional rival Mexico. Canada, the other North American co-host of the 2026 World Cup, rose six to No. 47. Japan at No. 20 was the best of the Asian teams, and 2022 World Cup host Qatar fell to No. 61.



CHARLESTON: Anna Blinkova reaches for a shot against Jessica Pegula during the Charleston Open tennis tournament.



In brief

Police arrest nine anti-social elements

RAWALPINDI (APP): The Rawalpindi police in an action against anti-social elements on Thursday arrested nine besides recovering 70 liters of liquor, 1,648 grams of charras, 1250 grams of ecstasy tablets and other items from them. According to a police spokesman, New Town and Rawat police held Amjad Sohail and Adnan for having 70 liters of liquor. Similarly, New Town, Airport and Dharmial police rounded up Husnain, Naseeb and Wasi Abbas for possessing 1,648 grams of charras. He informed that Waris Khan police managed to arrest two accused namely Kamran Khan alias Kami, ringleader and Waqar Ahmed, allegedly involved in supplying drugs to the students of educational institutions. Police also recovered crystal methamphetamine (ice drug) and 1250 grams of ecstasy tablets from their possession. He said Sadiqabad police in their operation against illegal petrol agencies arrested two accused namely Shoukat and Shehzad. He added that Rawalpindi district police in their ongoing operation against professional beggars arrested 36.

IRSA releases 90,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 90,600 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 63,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1432.31 feet and was 34.31 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 21,100 cusecs while outflow as 5,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1107.45 feet, 57.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 21,500 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 31,100, 32,900, 38,700 and 11,500 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 30,800 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 9,800 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Mehfil e Milad at PNCA held

ISLAMABAD (APP): A Mehfil-e-Milad of women was held here by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts Islamabad on Thursday in conjunction with the holy month of Ramadan. Speakers enlightened the audience on the life and practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) which present great lessons for his followers to live their life according to the teachings of Islam. Speakers also discussed the significance of the holy month of Ramadan, to purify the souls and bodies of the Muslims and to understand the importance of sharing their blessings with others. Ms. Hajra Mudassir opened the Mehfil with a Qirat, and Professor Salma Khan referred the incidents in hadiths highlighting the need to follow the life of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) for a successful life in the world and hereafter. She also recited a maqabat to commemorate the birthday of Hazrat Hassan (A.S.) Renowned Naat Khawans namely Tasneem Akhtar, Night Zahoor, Shazia Zaheer, Nausheen Ehsaan, Rifat Anjum, Rizwana Khan, Atira Mohsin, Shamma Adil, Anila noor, Professor Salma Khan of twin cities presented naats in the Mehfil-e-Milad. Naat was also recited by Professor Salma Khan, the host of the event.



ISLAMABAD: Member of the National Assembly Ali Gohar Baloch calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

UAE Envoy, Sanjrani agree to intensify efforts to deal with the challenge of Islamophobia

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Pakistan, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al Zabi, and Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani held a meeting to discuss bilateral relations and matters of mutual interest at the Parliament House.

They discussed the deep fraternal relations between Pakistan and the UAE bound by common values and culture for over 50 years. Both leaders agreed to intensify efforts to tackle the issue of Islamophobia and raise a strong voice against the ongoing brutality faced by Palestinians and Kashmiris.

In the meeting, it was agreed to intensify efforts to deal with the challenge of Islamophobia and raise a strong voice against the

ongoing brutality of Palestinians and Kashmiris. The Senate Chairman Senate expressed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthen its relations with the UAE in all areas of common interest.

The Ambassador of UAE appreciated Pakistan's development-oriented economic policies initiated by the government.

Both the dignitaries emphasized the need to explore new avenues in economic diplomacy and investment to further promote and strengthen economic and financial relations between the two countries. "United Arab Emirates is Pakistan's largest trading partner and major source of investment in the Middle East and there is still a lot of scope for economic coop-

eration between the two countries. There are vast possibilities of cooperation in the fields of renewable energy, trade, industry, and infrastructure development", Sanjrani underlined.

The Chairman Senate expressed good wishes for the development and prosperity of the brotherly people of the United Arab Emirates and thanked the UAE for its assistance to the flood victims in Pakistan. The Pakistanis living in the UAE are an asset who are playing an important role in the development of both countries. The meeting concluded with a mutual understanding to explore more opportunities to further enhance the bilateral relations between the two countries.

67 profiteers nabbed for overcharging customers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javed Abbasi on Thursday informed the National Assembly (NA) that the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration had arrested around 67 shopkeepers for overcharging prices of daily commodities. Responding to a calling attention notice regarding an increase in the prices of edible items in the month of Ramadan in the country, especially in Islamabad, he said as many as 28 magistrates were performing their field duties to check the price of edibles in the city.

During the inspection,

he said the magistrates found 67 traders selling the items in violation of the prescribed rate list and ordered their arrest besides imposing heavy fines.

He said that Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation had established seven 'Ramazan Sasta Bazaars' to provide quality edible items including fresh fruits and vegetables at concessional rates throughout the holy month. About fixing the price of edibles in the federal capital, he said, district administration along with traders finalized the prices of all items by giving them 20 percent profit.

He said a complaint cen-

ter in the Deputy Commissioner's (DCs) Office had also been set up for the facilitation and redressal of consumer grievances. The minister further informed the parliamentarians that despite facing difficult economic challenges, the incumbent government provided free flour to underprivileged families under the 'Ramazan Package'. He said the government, in line with directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, was making all-out efforts to execute the initiative of free flour distribution without hurting the self-respect of any citizen.

Experts for tech-based solution, strict regulations to ensure integrated urban waste management

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Institution of Urbanism (IoU) and the School of Leadership Foundation (SoLF), in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy, organized a Twitter space titled "Using Waste as Resource for Zero-Waste Cities in Pakistan" to mark global 'Zero Waste Day' here on Thursday.

The experts at Twitter Space demanded an integrated solid waste management system required in urban areas with an emphasis on maximizing resource use efficiency, tech-based solutions, and strict regulations. The panel of experts included Environmental Engineer of the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) Babar Abbas, CEO of Integrated Resource Recovery Center (IRRC) Sumaira Gull and Senior Program Fellow of the Institute of Urbanism Dr Ejaz Ahmad, said a news release.

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT) have declared 30th March 2023 as the first #ZeroWasteDay to promote the initiatives. In Pakistan, the waste sector is threatening the achievement of the global 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda by exacerbating the triple planetary threat of climate change, biodiversity and nature loss, and pollution.

Dr Ahmad in his welcome remarks noted, "Twitter space is the part of Green Urban Development project. Under the project, the capacity of university students will be built on environmentally compatible development strategies. The student

will also be provided opportunities for conducting field research which will enable them to come up with solutions that can be turned into business cases for enterprises. "The aim of the Twitter space is to highlight the need to shift from a linear to a circular economy and to exchange knowledge around up-scaling best practices for zero-waste solutions, he added.

Expert Babar Abbas stated, "A serious effort is required to use technology for waste segregation, and utilization of the separated materials as raw material and resource for other uses."

"The government must optimize industrial operations to segregate different types of waste. Unfortunately, we do not have any proper sanitary landfill site either," he said. "Lack of segregation of waste at source and low recycling rates are major waste management challenges in Pakistan which lead to an over-extraction of natural resources and hinder the transition towards zero waste and zero emissions. They also prevent the utilization of waste as a resource in Pakistan. This slows the shift from the linear paradigm of production and consumption to a circular model of the economy," Babar added.

Direction General (DG) of Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak EPA) Farzana Altaf, DG of Water Management, Capital Development Authority (CDA) Sardar Khan Zimri Managing Director of SoLF Mariyam Irfan also contributed to the discussion in the live session shared their valuable inputs on the topic.

World Health Day to be marked today

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Health Day will be marked tomorrow (Friday) across the globe including Pakistan to draw attention to particular priorities in global health.

Various local, national and international events are arranged to educate the public and policy makers about a specific aspect of the World Health Organization's work. This event receives plenty of media coverage. A toolkit is provided for those who wish to plan events but emphasizes that these should be suitable for the local cultural, social and economic conditions. Examples of events include conferences for health workers, briefings for local politicians, and informational displays for children and young people. Public marches and demonstrations, as well as free or easy access to medical tests, can also take place on the day.

In 1945 diplomats from a range of countries formed the United Nations. One of the organizations formed was the United Nations Economic and Social Council, which first met in 1946. During this meeting, there were calls for the establishment of an organization in the United Nations, which would be dedicated to health issues.

The new organization would carry on the work of the Office International d'Hygiène Publique (the International Office for Public Hygiene) and the health units of the League of Nations. These organizations were established in the early years of the 20th century, but were overburdened by the huge health consequences of the aftermath of World War I and were unable to function effectively when World War II started. It would also carry on the work of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, which provided medical aid to millions of people in the aftermath of the devastating military action in Europe during the last part of World War II.

The World Health Organization was founded on April 7, 1948. Since then, the organization has carried out a huge amount of valuable work, including the global eradication of smallpox and the implementation of a wide range of public health strategies. Now, 193 countries are members and the organization is still working to improve many aspects of health around the world.

Paigham-e-Islam Conference Ashrafi terms interfaith harmony crucial for int'l peace

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ulema Council (PUC) under the visionary leadership of its Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi is organizing the fifth international 'Paigham-e-Islam Conference' on Monday, April 10, in which a number of religious scholars of national and international stature, ambassadors of various Islamic countries, and members of civil societies would participate.

He, in an exclusive talk with APP, informed that the conference would discuss a wide range of topics related to interfaith harmony, including the role of religious leaders in promoting peace and tolerance, the importance of dialogue and mutual understanding, and the need to counter extremist ideologies and sectarianism.

A unanimous resolution would also be passed in the conference expressing solidarity with the innocent people of India Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine and condemning the atrocities of India and Israel for disturbing the peace process in the world, he maintained. Ashrafi who is also the Prime

Minister's Special Representative on Interfaith Harmony and the Middle East said interfaith harmony was crucial for achieving international peace and the aim of the conference was to promote the message of peace, tolerance, and interfaith harmony as preached by Islam.

He emphasized the need for religious tolerance and respect for other faiths adding that Islam was a religion of peace and that it was the duty of Muslims to promote peace and harmony in society.

He said in a world where people of different faiths and cultures were living side by side, it was imperative that we must find ways to understand and appreciate each other's beliefs and traditions.

He was of the view that by promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding, we could break down barriers and reduce tensions that often lead to conflict. Interfaith cooperation could also help us address global challenges, such as poverty, climate change, and terrorism, which require collective action and mutual respect, he added.

‘Ethiopia believes in equitable utilization of transboundary water’

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to Pakistan Jemal Beker Abdula on Wednesday said his country fully believed and advocated the international rule of equitable and reasonable utilization of the transboundary water.

The ambassador made these remarks while briefing Foreign Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, Dr. Asad Majeed Khan in a meeting about Grand Ethiopian Renaissance

Dam being built on the Nile River with 6,500 megawatt hydropower generation capacity of clean and sustainable energy.

Jemal Baker said the Government of Ethiopia has been pursuing all the international standards to build the largest dam of Africa which would essentially play a critical role in regional integration through energy grid that gives priority for neighboring and riparian countries.

"We have always called for equitable and reasonable utilization of transboundary water to sort out

differences with the lower riparian countries."

The envoy also discussed salient contours of bilateral relations with the foreign secretary outlining priority areas wherein both countries could diversify their cooperation to deepen the longstanding and historic ties in diverse fields of science, technology, tourism, economy and others. Both the dignitaries agreed to foster bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation between the two countries through increased political engagement at all fora.

Ride-hailing company joins Akhuwat Foundation

ISLAMABAD (APP): A private ride-hailing company has donated Rs.10 million to the Akhuwat Foundation for the reconstruction of flood-hit schools in Sindh.

The donated amount will aid the Thatta and Thar region in the rebuilding of schools that were affected by the devastating floods and heavy monsoon rains in 2022. From June to October 2022, floods in Pakistan killed 1,739 people and caused 3.2 trillion in damage and 3.3 trillion in economic losses. The catastrophic floods in Pakistan have destroyed nearly 27,000 schools, preventing more than 2 million children from attending school and resuming their education.

The donated amount of Rs. 10 million by the company will help reconstruct the schools and build new units.

Aleksandra Kirillina, Team Lead of the

CSR project at the ride-hailing company, said, "One of the primary pillars of our mission is serving and empowering communities, and education is our top priority, as a good education is the greatest gift you can give anyone."

"To support and rebuild the education system in the cities of Thar and Thatta is to reopen those schools where children can resume their studies," she added.

Shahryar Rashid, Manager of Marketing at Akhuwat Sindh, said, "The floods, which have affected more than 20 million people, also damaged or destroyed 15,842 schools. As part of our philosophy of alleviating poverty through education, Akhuwat runs schools in districts like Thatta, Jacobabad, and Tharparkar, imparting free quality education to those who are less privileged."

ANF seizes over 541 kg narcotics; arrests six

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in six operations managed to recover over 541 kg of narcotics and arrested six accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that in an operation at Islamabad International Airport, ANF recovered 49 heroin-filled capsules from the possession of a Sharjah-bound passenger, resident of Sargodha, going on flight no ER-703.

In another raid near Islamabad Sangiani Toll Plaza, 36 kg charras was recovered from secret cavities of a car. Two accused were sent behind the bars during the operation.

In the third operation near Jhelum Terraki Toll Plaza, ANF rounded up an accused resident of Charsada with two kg charras. The spokesman informed that in an operation near the Dina Mangla bypass, 75 grams of Ice drug and 64 grams of hero-

in were recovered from the possession of an accused resident of Narowal.

In an operation near the Quetta-Kuchlak bypass, 498 kg charras was recovered from the possession of a drug smuggler resident of Qilla Abdullah.

In the sixth operation near Hub Western bypass, ANF seized 4.8 kg of Ice drug. He said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.



ISLAMABAD: A woman is reciting naat at a Mehfil-e-Milad for women organized by PNCA in connection with the holy fasting month of Ramadan.

DAB to auctions US \$15m

KABUL (Agencies): Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) said that it will put in auction 15 million US dollars by Saturday. DAB has asked eligible banks and money changer services to participate in the tender, adding that the winners of the auction are obliged to settle their accounts by the end of the day. Partial settlement of transactions is not allowed and the winners of the auction are obliged to deliver the money owed to DAB in cash once, within a certain time, the bank added.

The Frontier Post

AFGHANISTAN

Ramazan 16, 1444 — Friday, April 07, 2023

IEA condemn Israeli attack

KABUL (Agencies): On Wednesday night, Israeli forces attacked Al Aqsa Mosque, injuring around 100 Palestinian worshippers and arresting 400 others. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan released a statement condemning the assault and calling it a clear violation of international, Islamic, and humanitarian norms. The ministry emphasized that such actions provoke emotions in Muslims worldwide and show disrespect towards Islamic values.

Gaming and internet cafes closed in Herat

HERAT (TOLOnews): The Vice and Virtue Directorate in Herat province has closed internet and gaming cafes in the province, officials said, adding that the decision was made after residents' complaints. "People had complained about internet clubs and gaming shops that these places damaged their children's mindset," said Aziz Rahman Muhajir, head of Herat's Vice and Virtue Department. Owners of some internet and gaming cafes said their work was legal and that with the closure of their

shops, they would lose their businesses and incomes. "They asked us to close these shops but didn't tell us the reason for the closure of our shops," said Humayun, owner of an internet café. "The municipality gave us a permit to do this work. They have not given details about the reasons for the closure of the cafes," said Abdul Hadi, owner of an internet and gaming café. Meanwhile, some students said that after the closure of the internet and gaming shops, they faced

hurdles in collecting information for their assignments at school and university. "Unfortunately, after the closure of these cafes we faced problems regarding access to information for our assignments," said Murtaza Hussaini, a student. "Some students who are graduated or the study master's degree need information for making assignments," said Mohammad Maiwand, a student. Owners of internet and gaming cafes in Herat said they are worried about losing their businesses if their shops are not reopened.

Natural disasters leave 21 dead in country

KABUL (Khaama Press): At least 21 people have died, and over 100 people have been injured due to natural disasters, including rains, floods, earthquakes and avalanches in Afghanistan during the past two weeks, officials said. Shafiqullah Rahimi, a spokesman for the State Ministry for Disaster Management, said that the casualties across 30 provinces were brought on by earthquakes, heavy rains, flash flowing, and avalanches in the country. The natural disasters, besides human loss, had financial damages in which more than 2,625 residential houses have been entirely or partially destroyed, hundreds of livestock have perished, and nearly 30,000 acres of agricultural land have been destroyed, Rahimi said. On the other hand, more than 20,000 families have received humanitarian relief from international organizations in cooperation with the Afghan authorities. Afghanistan is a disaster-prone country in which several massive incidents, including floods, heavy rain, avalanches, and earthquake, occurred in different parts of the country.

IEA seeking to develop relations with Russia

KABUL (Khaama Press): Afghanistan is seeking to develop its political and economic relations with Russia, acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said. Russian Ambassador Dmitry Zhirnov met acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi and discussed political, security and economic cooperation between Afghanistan and Russia, according to Hafiz Zia Ahmad, deputy spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Muttaqi added that the security situation in the country has improved and assured the Russian envoy that there would not be any security threat emanating from Afghanistan to the neighbouring countries. FM Muttaqi said, "Afghanistan is interested in expanding its political and economic relations with Russia," adding that the "security has improved in Afghanistan and fortu-



nately, there is no serious security threat inside nor emanating from Afghanistan," quoted Ahmad in a tweet. On the other hand, Russian Ambassador Zhirnov emphasized the close relations and cooperation between the two countries. "The Russian Amba-

sador Dmitry Zhirnov also stressed maintaining close ties between the two countries, expressing readiness for future visits by various government delegations between the two countries," Ahmad said. The meeting came after several remarks by the Russian delegations con-

cerning the risks and security threat emanating from Afghanistan to the Central Asian countries or Moscow's bloc. However, the de facto authorities reiterated that they would not allow any groups or entities from Afghanistan to attack the neighbouring countries.

Amid restrictions on employments: Women start small businesses



KABUL (TOLOnews): Many former female employees in government institutions have started their own businesses after losing their jobs and following the ban on women's employment in non-governmental organizations. The women asked the Islamic Emirate to provide them the opportunity to return to their jobs in government and other institutions. Sima is the only breadwinner for her right-member family. She said she worked for the Academy of Sciences, but now she has started making Bolanis, a stuffed flat-bread, to afford the needs of her family. Sima added that she has invested 10,000 Afs in her

business. "When the Islamic Emirate took over, I lost my job. I borrowed some money from relatives and began my small business to cope with life's hardships and afford house rent," she stated. In the meantime, some other women said they are facing financial difficulties, calling on the current government to remove the restrictions on women's employment in the country. "They should allow women to work. I am the family's sole breadwinner. If I don't work, my children and family would starve," said Basirah, a former employee of an institution. "There are families who do not have breadwinners, and women are

compelled to work," said Maryam, another former employee. Meanwhile, Abdul Latif Nazari, the deputy minister of economy, said that the ministry will provide jobs to the youth, using infrastructure projects. "The Islamic Emirate doesn't miss a chance to provide jobs for the young generation. By launching macroeconomic and infrastructural initiatives, we want to reduce poverty in society and provide jobs for the young generation," Nazari added. The Ministry of Economy suspended women's employment in non-governmental organizations in December 2022, but the issue has not yet been resolved.

Office of IE's spokesman opened in Kandahar

K A N D A H A R (TOLOnews): An office of the Islamic Emirate spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid was opened in Kandahar, the spokesman told TOLOnews. Mujahid said his "deputies are in Kabul" and a major "part of my office's work will be in Kabul." He said that the move was made based on the presence of the Islamic Emirate's leadership in Kandahar. "We have shifted a part of the office for performing duties to Kandahar. It was necessary. A major part of our office is in Kabul as well. The deputies are there. I will spend more time in Kandahar. It was the need of the leadership that I should be near them," Mujahid said. Political analysts said that Kandahar is the center of the decision-making of the Islamic Emirate. "Since Hamal 1401, the Islamic Emirate showed that the center of power and decision-making is in Kandahar. The cabinet that is in Kabul plays an executive (you mean administrative?) role in the implementation of the decrees being issued in Kandahar," said Saleem Kakar, a political analyst. "Usually, the shifting of the capital happens based on economic manners. If anything like that happens, the people are being aware of it or asking for their views" said Torek Farhadi, a political analyst. "Kandahar, Kabul and Peshawar have been Afghanistan's capital historically and politically. But now, the shifting of the Islamic Emirate's spokesman to Kandahar could be a temporary action," said Najibullah Jami, a political analyst.

KABUL (Khaama Press): The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) released a report seeking to understand the challenges facing private sector actors and trade in Afghanistan, focusing on the supply of essential goods. The NRC claimed that the report was prepared based on 25 anonymized interviews in mid-2022 with a range of private sector, development, and banking actors operating in or with Afghanistan. The organization stressed the private sector of the country. It said that since the extension of the ban on female aid workers to the UN, which risks the delivery of emergency life-saving humanitarian aid, the role of

the private sector is even more critical for the recovery of the Afghanistan economy. The document emphasized the solid private sector's role and sustainability besides humanitarian assistance. "Humanitarian aid alone cannot meet the needs of the millions of Afghans who have lost their jobs and been forced to take on huge debts and sell their possessions just to be able to buy food needed for survival," said Neil Turner, NRC's country director in Afghanistan. "We must reverse this devastating economic disaster. A stable economy, thriving private sector, and the reintroduction of development programmes are important to complement the

work of humanitarian organizations." The report said, Since the Taliban returned to power in 2021, international actors have pursued political and economic isolation policies towards Afghanistan in reaction to the Taliban's increasingly restrictive governance, which has contributed to the current financial crisis and the population's reliance on humanitarian assistance. More than 28 million people are now on the brink of survival. "We must educate overseas companies and banks that Afghanistan is not under sanctions. There is a real lack of understanding about this – particularly among key sectors in our main

export and import markets," said an executive of a large agricultural firm in Afghanistan, reported by NRC. Several women have left the Afghan workforce due to the Taliban's attitude towards women. The Afghan people and the country's economic potential are significantly hampered by these constraints, providing significant logistical and moral issues for international aid organizations. According to the organization, establishing measures to stabilize and support Afghanistan's economy for the benefit of the people is the way to address the current economic crisis in the country.

Taliban arrests 3 Afghan journalists in Baghlan

BAGHLAN (Khaama Press): Three journalists were arrested by the Taliban forces in Baghlan province in Northern Afghanistan, local sources said. Three journalists, including two reporters from Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA) and a journalist for the private TV Tanwir, were arrested from their area in Pule-e-Khumri, the capital city of Baghlan province, on Thursday morning. Ghulam Ali Wahdat, a journalist for Tanwir TV, Safiullah Wafa and Noor Agha, reporters from Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA) network, a state TV, have been arrested. Although Taliban intelli-

gence is said to have detained these journalists, the reason for their arrest is still unknown. Afghanistan Journalists Center (AFJC) said in a statement that despite the meetings with de facto authorities, security and intelligence institutions still interfere in the media's work. Earlier, the institution said media freedom is deteriorating in the country, and cases of violence and intimidation of journalists increased compared to last year. According to the AFJC, more than 236 cases of media freedom violations have been documented within the last 12 months,

while it was around 117 cases for the previous year, showing a hundred per cent increase in violations, including arrests, intimidation and violent behaviour. Last month, a deadly attack occurred in the Tebyan Cultural Center during a journalists' gathering. Three people were killed, including two journalists and more than 30 were injured. Since the regime change in the country, the media and journalists' situation has deteriorated. More than one thousand journalists, including female journalists, fled the country, and almost seven thousand lost their jobs.

Disabled ex-soldier calls war the enemy of prosperity



ASADABAD (Pajhwok): A disabled former soldier from eastern Kunar province says he lost both of legs in a bomb blast. He

does not want others to experience bitterness of conflict. Mohammad Bilal, a resident of the Ghaziabad dis-

trict of Kunar, recalled he lost his legs in a landmine explosion in the Alishang district of Laghman province five years ago.

In addition to disability, Bilal is facing severe economic problems as he is unable to purchase even small toys for his little son. Bilal insisted conflict was not in the interest of anyone. "The 20-year war has not only destroyed the physical and spiritual infrastructure of the country, but has also ruined the lives of thousands of young people and made as many disabled, homeless and refugees. "While on duty, I defused hundreds of landmines and saved lives. However, I lost both my legs and became disabled forever." The protracted conflict had snatched his blessings

and hopes besides forcing him to expect help from others at such a young age, he regretted. With his eyes welling up, he told Pajhwok: "It was 8:00pm and we were delivering supplies to the second battalion in the Qala Anjil area of Alishang district. All of a sudden, our vehicle struck a roadside bomb and I lost both my legs to the explosion." He called war the enemy of people and the main reason for the country's backwardness. "Afghans are tired of war. Now that an opportunity is available, people should work together to rebuild the country." Despite his disability, Bilal said, he loved his pro-

fession and serving his country. Given a chance, he is still ready to serve in the national army. "At a young age I joined the national army. I consider it an honor having worked for the army and I have saved the lives of many citizens by defusing landmines," he explained. His family members opposed his job and wanted him to quit it. But he accepted risk and eventually lost his legs. Ever since, he lost his legs, no one has supported Bilal, who could no longer eke out a living for his family. "When I was in sound health and had a job, I used to support my family and help my relatives.

Currently, however, I can't even buy a wheelchair for myself," he remarked. He wished his children and the future of generation of the country a peaceful life. "My life has been marred by war and insecurity, but I hope my children and the future generation of the country will live in peace and tranquility," he said. Both his parents are dead and his brother lives separately. The ex-soldier said: "In hardship, only my wife is helping me. Because of my disability, my wife feels hurt." Bilal said he was deeply hurt when his stepson asked for 10 afghanis and he was unable to pay him.

"The bitter moment of my life is when my three-year-old son, asks for 10 afis but I find my pocket is empty. He cries but I could say nothing to him," he commented. Information and Culture Director Maulvi Najibullah Hanif said the government was striving to help the families of all victims of past wars and the disabled under a concerted regular plan. "The past conflict has left many of our countrymen in grief and anguish. Now that peace has been restored across the country, the government is trying to help the families of war victims and disabled people," he concluded.



KARACHI: A team of veterinarians and wildlife experts from Four Paws International, examining elephant Noor Jehan at Zoo.

MNAs demand political stability for prosperity in country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Lawmakers on Thursday called for ensuring a stable political culture in order to ensure prosperity and prevent any destabilization during the testing times in an effective manner. These were the common views of the Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) who debated the political scenario in the country and the domains of various institutions in the country. Taking part in the debate in NA, Parliamentary Leader of Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) Khalid Magsi said that there had been a split in the judiciary regarding election-related cases.

He raised questions over Supreme Court's March 1 verdict on a suo motu case about the elections in Punjab and KP, saying that it had been not cleared whether the verdict of apex court's was of "4-3 or 3-2". He said there had been political victimization in past against the leadership of various political parties which was really unfair.

Khalid Magsi said the previous government was brought into power in 2018 through the interference of an institution while another institution was intervening now to bring them again into power. He said that the founder of the constitution was executed in a fake case but no lesson had been learned. Khalid Magsi urged all the institutions to remain in their domains and focus on the welfare of the people rather than indulging in political affairs.

Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Shazia Marri said Pakistan cannot avoid uncertainty and it needs political, economic and even social stability. She said that prosperity and peace is required in the country rather than derailing democracy and maneuvering for a particular party. She also recalled the judicial murder of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and appealed all institutions not to weaken democracy and to remain in their own domains. She said that former Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari strengthened the Parliament, signed Constitutional Amendment and returned powers to the Parliament.

The minister also condemned anti-Muslim violence in eight states of India and demanded the international community take notice of brutalities of Modi government in India against Muslims. Chairman Public Accounts Committee Noor Alam Khan appealed to the Chief Justice of Pakistan to conduct an audit of the supreme court of Pakistan. He said there had been no audit of the apex court unlike other institutions and salaries get increased under no law. He said that I am never afraid of accountability and would urge all others to ensure it rather than skip it. Leader of the Opposition Raja Riaz Ahmad said the provincial assemblies of

Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) were dissolved by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-led government to satisfy the ego of Imran Khan. He said he felt proud that he had initiated the move for a no-confidence motion for calling a spade a spade.

Adviser To Prime Minister on Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan, Qamar Zaman Kaira also said amid prevailing times of chaos and uncertainty that gripped the minds of everyone, the parliamentarians would have to create pathways for dialogue to protect the country from any loss. He said the Constitution was an arrangement, a scheme and a web of systems created through the collation of many articles whereas the interpretation of its single article in isolation could not constitute the entire Constitution.

He added that the chaos and uncertainty prevailing across the country were perpetrated under a well-designed plan and did not occur accidentally. As a result of that uncertainty, he said the environment in the courts, media, public and other forums united stakeholders from all walks of life on one page regarding where the country was heading.

He added that political wars have been very long in the country where the political parties including his party were part of it. "But after learning from past experiences we decided that the political parties should transfer power to the next political government in a peaceful manner," he added. Kaira underlined that under the vision of former Prime Minister Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto the Charter of Democracy was signed which was her brainchild for a peaceful transition in 2013 and 2018.

He regretted that this time the coalition government also tried to repeat the same but Imran Khan and the opposition shut this path and tried to get early polls on their own whims. The PM's aide said the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) constitutionally ousted a prime minister and elected the other under the same but Imran Khan completely resisted it.

He added that the courts had previously ruled the dissolution of assemblies wrong but at present, the courts had made a decree that the dissolution of KP and Punjab assemblies was conducted under unconditional authority. Kaira said there was nothing like an unconditional authority in the world as it created chaos and led to crime. While narrating examples from history, he said the dissolution of the Balochistan Assembly in 1988, the Punjab Assembly and the then NWFP Assembly in 1993 were reverted by the courts under a verdict claiming the reasons for dissolving those assemblies as incorrect and unreasonable.

Transfer of tax affairs from RTO Peshawar

PHC declares FBR notification null & void

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court (PHC) declared Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) issued on 5th August 2020 to transfer tax affairs of 360 major set-ups from Regional Tax Office Peshawar to Islamabad by accepting several writ petitions in this regard, on Thursday.

During hearing Ishaq Ali Qazi, Qazi Ghulam Dastagir, Sheraz Butt and Ishfaq Ahmad Senior advocates while informed that on 5th August 2020 FBR issued notification for transfer of tax affairs of 360 major set-ups from RTO Peshawar to Islamabad Office.

The decision has impacted business set-ups and individuals of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa because it is illegal while FBR ignored ground realities, the petition stated. The counsels argued that PHC had already accepted writ petition in this regard but the decision is incomplete due to death of the then Chief Justice (Waqar Ahmad

Seth).

The counsels argued that transferring of tax affairs to other place will also impact National Finance Commission (NFC) award because higher share should be provided to major revenue region in the NFC award. On one hand the industrialists are facing hesitation while on the other transfer of tax affair from RTO Peshawar to Islamabad will decrease Khyber Pakhtunkhwa revenue, the counsel argued.

Balochistan High Court (BHC) has also already declared amendments null and void and ordered to RTOs to continue operations, the lawyers informed. Advocates Ishaq Ali Qazi and Qazi Ghulam Dastagir informed that there is no major tax unit in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which can deal with such matters while four to five tax units are established in Punjab to address the such matter.

The counsel argued that FBR notification of 5th August 2020 is unconstitutional while available law is

clear regarding jurisdiction of tax units and added that transfer of tax affairs should impact badly industry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa which is affected from terrorism since long.

The counsels added that it would increase unemployment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and decrease revenue of the province while argued that transfer of tax affairs of 360 units from RTO Peshawar to Islamabad is against the law and constitution. The act will create hesitation among capitalists for investing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

PESCO Lawyer Sheraz Butt Advocate informed that PESCO has also filed writ petition in this regard because its Khyber Pakhtunkhwa company for power distribution. The divisional bench of PHC comprised of Justice Ishaq Ibrahim and Justice SM Attique Shah accepted writ petitions in this regard and declared FBR 5th August 2020 notification null and void after conclusion of arguments.

Bilawal lauds Sindh for pursuing WHO's theme

E.P. Report

KARACHI/ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that bringing health facilities to the doorsteps of the people is the manifesto of his party, and the Sindh people's government has developed world-class health institutions as a bright example for other governments.

In his message issued from Media Cell Bilawal House on World Health Day being observed tomorrow, the PPP Chairman said that public health has always been one of the top priorities of his Party. After the creation of Pakistan, most hospitals and health centers were established in the country for the first time during the reign of Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The initiative of Lady Health Volunteers by Shaheed

Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was a revolutionary development, which is the backbone of our public health system across the country. The initiative of anti-polio campaign to save the nation's children from becoming crippled is also an unforgettable gift of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto to our present and future generations. President Asif Ali Zardari launched 'Waseela-e-Sehat' program under the umbrella of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) for free treatment of poor women.

The PPP Chairman said that National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) and its satellite network, Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT), Pir Abdul Qadir Shah Jilani Institute of Medical Sciences Gambat, and the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Center (JPMC) and its cyberknife technology unit for cancer treatment are

the gifts of the PPP government to the people of the country including the province. He said that after 2008, the Awami government has built more than 500 small and large health centers and hospitals across Sindh. The foundation stone of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (ZABICVD), the world's largest free cardiology hospital with 1200 beds, is also a reflection of our commitment that having absence of money should not be an obstacle for any Pakistani to get the required media treatment.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari stressed that a large number of the country's population is forced to live below the poverty line, and the people are also facing historic inflation and unemployment. Under such circumstances the state has the responsibility to fulfill its responsibilities regarding public health.

PTI offers to sit with govt for 'national polls' date

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Amid rising political temperatures in the country over polls in Punjab in the backdrop of the Supreme Court's verdict, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) — who had previously been ruling out any possibility of sitting down for talks with the ruling coalition — has once again extended a dialogue offer to the coalition government to finalise a date for the 'national elections'.

Talking to journalists on Thursday, PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry said that the political situation in the country is not as deteriorating to impose an emergency. "Only way to stop elections in Pakistan is throwing out the Constitution," he added. Referring to the NA resolution, Fawad said that the government did not want elections in the country. "The government was not abiding by the Constitution," he added.

He also said that the sole solution to all the crises being faced by the country is fresh "elections". He accused the government of depriving the people of their fundamental right to elect the ruler. The former information minister said that his party would go to any extent for the general elections in the country.

"After April 22, all the actions taken by the caretaker ministers would be unconstitutional," claimed the PTI leader and warned that Article 6 would be applied against the interim minister who would sign any paper after the date. Responding to a question about the NA resolution, he said that the motion was passed by 42 out of the 372 members of the house.

As per the Constitution, a two-third majority in both upper and lower houses of parliament is required to abolish the verdict of the top court, Fawad further said. To another question about the cabinet division's declaration, the PTI leader said, "Those ministers who refused to accept the Supreme Court's verdict have committed contempt of court."

Dar briefs US envoy

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Finance Minister Ishaq Dar met US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome on Thursday and briefed him on Pakistan's economic outlook and challenges.

According to a statement issued by the Finance Division, the finance minister also shared with the US envoy the "pragmatic policy decision" taken by Islamabad to "arrest the country's economic decline and steer the economy towards a positive trajectory, leading to economic stability and growth".

Dar also informed Ambassador Blome about the progress in talks between the Pakistan government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), reiterating the former's commitment to completing the loan programme.

Meanwhile, the US envoy expressed confidence in the policies and programmes being undertaken by the government for the country's economic sustainability and the socio-economic uplift of the masses. He also extended his support for further promoting bilateral, economic, investment and trade relations between the two countries.

For his part, Dar underlined that the two countries shared deep-rooted historic and durable bilateral relations on economic and trade fronts, the statement said. It added that the two dignitaries also exchanged views on matters of common interest and showed interest in enhancing existing bilateral relations between the two countries. They also talked about various economic avenues in which both countries could further strengthen ties.

According to the statement, Dar thanked the US envoy on the occasion and reiterated the government's desire to further deepen bilateral trade and investment ties with the US. The IMF has been negotiating with Islamabad since early February to resume \$1.1 billion in funding held since November, which is part of a \$7 billion bailout agreed in 2019. With central bank reserves falling to critical levels, the IMF tranche is critical for the country as it will also unlock other external financing avenues, helping Pakistan avert a default on its obligations.

KP CM reviews law, order situation

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: A high level meeting to review law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was held here on Thursday with Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan in the chair. The meeting reviewed in detail the overall law and order situation across the province, and deliberated upon the future line of action to improve the situation to the desired level.

Besides Caretaker Minister for Information Barrister Feroz Jamal Kakakhel, Chief Secretary Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and Inspector General Police Akhtar Hayat Khan, the meeting was attended by Principal Secretary to CM Amjad Ali Khan, Secretary Home Muhammad Abid Majeed, Secretary Information Mukhtiar Ahmad and other relevant high ups of police. Participants of the meeting were given detailed briefing on the latest security situation of the province,

and steps being taken by Police specially the Counter Terrorism Department to counter and prevent the incidents of terrorism in the province. It was informed that during the current year, a total of 140 major and minor incidents of terrorism took place across the province so far; and in majority of those incidents, the law enforcing agencies were targeted. It was further told that due to the timely response and preventive measures taken by police, dozen attempts/plans of terrorist attacks were foiled during the period.

It was decided in the meeting to take action against unregistered vehicles, vehicles with tinted glass as well as unregistered motorcycles; and the Excise department was directed to take necessary steps in collaboration with Police. The Chief Minister while showing concern on the increasing attacks on police personnel, directed the special branch and CTD to play more effective role

in preventing such attacks. He also showed concern on a couple of incidents in which minorities were targeted, and directed the quarters concern for necessary steps to ensure safety of minority communities.

Azam Khan made it clear that maintaining law and order was the top most priority and foremost duty of his government which could not be compromised at any cost; and added that all the required resources would be provided to police on priority basis. Lauding the efforts of police to maintain law & order in the province, the Chief Minister said that police personnel were sacrificing their lives for maintaining law and order, and people of the province hold their sacrifices in high esteem. He directed the concerned authorities for measures to equip the front line police personnel with modern equipments and protective gears to enable them effectively cope with the prevailing situation.

'Controversial' elections may create chaos in country: Sana

ISLAMABAD (APP): Interior Minister Rana Sana Ullah on Thursday said efforts were being made by some quarters to conduct 'controversial' elections [in Punjab] that may create chaos in the country. "For holding elections just to satisfy the ego and stubbornness of a person [Imran Khan] will definitely have a negative impact on the upcoming general elections," he said while addressing to lawyers convention here.

The interior minister raised concerns over potential controversies surrounding the upcoming elections, stating that such circumstances could lead to the "country's downfall". The minister declared that the ruling party was not opposed to holding elections, but it was evident in the past that such controversial elections incurred damages to the country the most. "Before this, the elections of 1971 and 1977 were controversial as well. One election disintegrated the country while the other paved the way for terrorism," he added.

The interior minister said that if the elections were held reminiscent of 71 and 77 situations, under unwarranted circumstances, then it would pave the way for the country to move toward "destruction and anarchy". "We are strictly against this destruction," he asserted. He further said that elections held on someone's insistence would not be accepted, rather they should be held at a scheduled time and agreed upon by all the stakeholders.

IHC extends Imran's bail in eight cases

ISLAMABAD (INP): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has extended the bail of former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan in eight cases till April 18. As per details, the Islamabad high court also accepted PTI chief Imran Khan's exemption plea. The Advocate General asked the court if Imran Khan did not appear before the court at the next hearing how will the court proceed then.

The Chief Justice Islamabad High Court remarked that the petitioner has to appear before the court to file the bail petition but if he did not appear before the court then action will be taken against him as per the law. The court does not want to confine him by mentioning this in the order, CJ added.

The IHC Chief Justice asked if the security is beefed up after the analysis of the threat by the Assessment Committee. He said that the IG Islamabad gave him a bulletproof vehicle but he refused. He maintained that a notification regarding PTI chairman Imran Khan's full proof security was submitted in the court but security was not given to him as a former prime minister and it will be considered as taking back his security. The Additional Attorney General informed the court that IG has the power to increase security so the PTI chief should inform the police before he comes to Islamabad.

UoP teachers, staff demand removal of VC

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Peshawar University Teachers' Association (PUTA) and Class-III and -IV employees here Thursday demanded an immediate removal of the sitting Vice Chancellor of the varsity, impartial inquiry against him over 17-allegation of corruptions and distorting image of the varsity by levelling allegations of fake degrees against teachers.

It has been a month since the educational activities at all levels were closed at the university and its schools and colleges due to an ongoing tug-of-war between University VC and protesting teaching and other employees and the issue remained unsolved as nobody from either sides was ready to show flexibility thus resulting in loss of precious time of students.

PUTA General Secretary Dr Salman and President All Pakistan BPS Teachers Association Dr Arif told media that the strike of teachers and other staff members of the university would continue till removal of the VC and initiation of an inquiry against him. They held the VC and Registrar responsible for the prevailing situation and wastage of students' time and money.

Dr Salman said that PUTA held meetings twice with the Governor and Chancellor of the University Ghulam Ali, but he insisted on resolving the issue through a Jirga rather taking notice of the allegations. He said that PUTA presented 17-allegations of corruption against the VC along with the proves to the Governor and also briefed him about the severity of the issue in a meeting with participation of all the secretaries including secretary Higher Education department.

He said that the Governor asked the teachers to end their boycott of classes and assured inquiry against the VC, adding that PUTA told the governor that an impartial inquiry required immediate removal of the VC till findings of the inquiry. He said that the VC had distorted the image of the prestigious university of the country by saying that the degrees of most of the university teachers were fake. "If the degrees were fake then why did the VC not take any action so far," he questioned.

Dr Salman said that PUTA requested the governor to order a probe into VC's allegation of fake degree and if it proves correct then terminate those

teachers otherwise remove the VC. He said that in order to protect his seat the VC was giving sweeping statements and misusing his authority and even stopped the salaries of teachers and employees, which he said was an illegal act. "Under the law the administration cannot deny salaries to employees," he asserted.

He said that the law authorises the Governor as a Chancellor to remove the VC if that latter was not working up to his satisfaction, adding that PUTA also wrote letters to the Chief Minister and Secretary regarding the issue but to no use. He deplored that from a month the teachers were on a strike but neither the government nor any politician or political party took notice of it.

President of all Pakistan BPS teachers association Dr Arif said that since the VC assumed the charge of the office, there was an uncertainty among the university faculty. Regarding wastage of time of students, he said that during corona the teachers took extra classes and covered the courses of students and this time the teachers would also arrange the extra classes as well if the issue gets resolved.

steps for the welfare and social development and law and order activities. The provincial minister directed PDA for abolition of the practice of deputation and repatriation of such employees to their concerned departments. He further directed the identification of ghost employees and withdrawal of additional charge from employees working on additional posts. Besides regulation of the employees and provision of facilities to the residents of Hayatabad, the minister also directed to take steps for maintenance of law and order.

BRT cases: PDA asked to cooperate with NAB, FIA

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: KP Caretaker Minister for Local Governments & Rural Development (LG&RD), Sawal Nazir advocate has directed Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) to extend complete cooperation to National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) in cases related to Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and removal of all hurdles in this regard with immediate effect to accelerate them.

He issued these directives while presiding over a meeting regarding PDA

here on Thursday. Besides, Secretary LG&RD, Aamir Aafaq Engineer Ijaz Afzal, Director Administration Abdul Wahab and other officials of the authority were also present on the occasion.

The caretaker minister was told in detail regarding the affairs and performance of the authority and was told that currently construction work on various mega developments projects in Peshawar is in full swing and some of them are near completion and some already completed.

Furthermore, he was told that PDA is also taking