

One killed in Bajaur blast
F.P. Report

KHAR: One person killed in bomb blast at Inayat Kali area of tehsil Khar, on Wednesday. The roof of shop was collapsed due to blast while dead body of deceased recovered. The bomb blast has created fear among public. The deceased was identified as Rafiullah resident of Shenkot. DPO Nazeer Khan along with BDS along with other officers visited crime scene and directed transparent investigations.

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Verification abolished

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan has abolished the verification requirement for the issuance of passports and identity cards of the Hazara community. A three-member bench – headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial – issued the orders while hearing a suo motu notice against target killings of Hazara community.

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PTI apprises top court of talks with PDM

— seeks implementation of Punjab polls verdict

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Wednesday submitted a report to the Supreme Court on negotiations with the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government, requesting the top court to ensure implementation on its April 4 judgement regarding holding elections to the Punjab Assembly on May 14.

In the report, the PTI — the main opposition party led by Imran Khan — apprised the apex court of progress on negotiations, saying it held three rounds of talks with the team of ruling PDM, an alliance of 13 political parties, in line with the commitment made to the top court in the Punjab elections delay case.

During the negotiations, both sides agreed to hold elections on the same day across the country but failed to evolve consensus on the date of the polls, it added. In the report, the PTI further said it has set some conditions for holding elections simultaneously across the country which included the dissolution of the National Assembly and the provincial assemblies of

Sindh and Balochistan on or before May 14.

The elections to the lower house of parliament as well as to the provincial legislature of Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan be held together within 60 days of the dissolution of the national and provincial assemblies i.e. in the second week of July, 2023. "In order to give a Constitutional cover to the holding of the elections to the Provincial Assemblies of Punjab and KPK beyond the period of 90 days, the members of the National Assembly belonging to PTI will rejoin the National Assembly and a one-time constitutional amendment validating the delay in elections beyond the period of 90 days for Punjab and KPK Assemblies shall be carried out by mutual consent of the political parties," the opposition party said.

The PTI further demanded that all political parties should agree that the election results will be accepted as a "whole subject to individual grievances in accordance with law". "An Agreement in writing to the above effect shall be submitted before the Hon'ble

Supreme Court of Pakistan in order to ensure that the implementation of the Agreement is complied with by the parties in letter and spirit," it added.

Moreover, the PTI said the ruling PDM however did not agree with their proposal. Instead, the report stated, the PDM proposed that the dissolution of the National Assembly and the provincial assemblies of Sindh and Balochistan shall take place on the July 30, 2023, and elections be held in 90 days thereafter i.e. the first week of October 2023 for the National Assembly and all provincial legislatures together.

The PTI said despite the "best efforts of parties", no solution within the Constitution could be arrived at. "It is accordingly prayed that the judgement dated 04.04.2023 passed in Constitution Petition No.5 of 2023 requiring elections to be held to the Punjab Assembly on 14.05.2023 may be implemented in letter and spirit so that the Constitution is upheld and does not stand violated, and this petition may be disposed of accordingly," the report added.

Punjab CM calls on PM

F.P. Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday stressed for practical steps to ensure full benefits of the bumper wheat crop to the farmers.

He expressed these views while talking to Caretaker Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Mohsin Naqvi who called on him here. During the meeting, the Punjab caretaker CM briefed the PM about the procurement of wheat production in the province.

Shehbaz Sharif expressed satisfaction over the bumper wheat crop production in the province. Overall law and order situation in Punjab and other matters of mutual interest also came under discussion during the meeting.

Shehbaz reached UK: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reached London to take part in coronation ceremony of King Charles III. He was received by Pakistan High Commissioner to UK Moazzam Ahmad Khan and Special Representative of British Foreign Secretary David Gordon-MacLeod at airport.

"The UK-Pakistan relations are rooted in shared history & multifaceted bonds that have grown stronger over the decades," the prime minister in connection with his visit to the Kingdom tweeted on Wednesday.

Shehbaz Sharif said the British monarch and the royal family had been great friends of Pakistan. He said he would also attend the Commonwealth leaders' summit as well as engage with other world leaders bilaterally.

FM to attend SCO moot

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will lead the Pakistan delegation to the meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)'s Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) being held in Goa, India on May 4-5, 2023.

The foreign minister is attending the SCO CFM meeting at the invitation of the current Chair of SCO CFM, Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister for External Affairs of the Republic of India, a Foreign Office statement said. Our participation in the meeting during the Musharraf era. Federal reflects Pakistan's commitment to the SCO Charter and processes and the importance that Pakistan accords to the region in its foreign policy priorities," the Foreign Office spokesperson said. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had also attended the last meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in July last year in Tashkent.

‘CJP should be summoned’

ISLAMABAD (INP): Former premier and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has demanded to summon the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) for seeking the parliament's record.

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, while speaking on the floor of the National Assembly (NA), said that the Supreme Court (SC) had earlier sought records of the parliament in 1997. "The then NA speaker Elahi Bux Soomro had handed over the parliament's record to the SC without asking anyone." The former premier asked the NA Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf to seek the opinion of the House over the matter of SC's request for the parliament's records. "SC's request for the parliament's record is a serious issue and this House must decide on whether to hand over the records to the top court or not."

He further demanded the NA speaker constitute a special committee over the top court's request and SC judges should be summoned to ascertain the reasons. "The SC's request should be taken seriously. It is a serious matter if these records are sought in the PAC [Public Accounts Committee]."



LONDON: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif being received by Pakistan High Commissioner to UK Moazzam Ahmad Khan and Special Representative of British Foreign Secretary David Gordon-MacLeod at airport.

PTI tickets being sold: Raja told NA

ISLAMABAD (APP): Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Raja Riaz Ahmad Khan on Thursday levelled an allegation that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) tickets for the provincial assembly elections were being sold.

Speaking in the National Assembly, he claimed that he knew the candidates, who had purchased the PTI tickets. Raja Riaz said PTI Chairman Imran Khan was getting treatment from the courts and on the contrary, others were not granted such relief. He said he opposed the submission of the record of House's proceedings to the apex court. He was committed to the Parliament's sovereignty, he added.

Federal Minister for Human Rights Riaz Hussain Pirzada emphasized that the courts should "fulfill their responsibility to dispense speedy justice" to the masses. He also urged the speaker begin the House's proceedings on time Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Chairman Noor Alam Khan reminded the House that as per the Constitution, the PAC was empowered to conduct audits of other institutions. He revealed that former Chief Justice Saqib Nisar had been summoned to provide details on the dam funds.

Chaudhry Muhammad Barjees Tahir supported Raja Riaz's accusations, stating that the House's proceedings record could not be shared with any other institution. He also recalled the important role played by all political parties in restoring the judiciary during the Musharraf era. Federal Minister Javed Latif said since the signing of the Charter of Democracy by the leadership of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), non-democratic elements had been targeting politicians.

He alleged that PTI Chairman Imran Khan was again being facilitated to attain power. He urged the speaker to seek details of plots allotted to former Chief Justice Saqib Nisar and others. He emphasized the need to take concrete steps for

preventing "the contempt of Parliament". Had the Parliament taken a firm stand in 2017 to foil the conspiracy targeting former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, the situation would have been different today, he added.

Asif for NA's Committee of the whole on higher courts' decisions: Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Wednesday urged the National Assembly Speaker to set up a Committee of the Whole to "investigate the decisions of higher courts since Justice Munir to give legal cover to constitutional violations". Speaking in the National Assembly, the minister said there was unfortunately "a clash of opinion between two constitutional institutions". Quoting his own tweet, he said, "The inquest in unethical judicial interventions to destabilise the fountain of democracy and ensure its destruction must start from the Dosso's Case where the court invented the Doctrine of Necessity to justify all wrongs. It is time Parliament inquires into and hold accountable (even posthumously) those Judges who aided and abetted constitutional violations." "A resolution should be drafted in that regard and the Committee of the Whole should be set up."

He said they were not against any institution and "every institution should also not trespass on the domains of others. The minister said some 51,000 cases were being before the Supreme Court and over 400,000 cases in high courts. The judiciary should decide the pending cases as many people were waiting for justice, he added.

Earlier speaking in the House, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said the speaker could not provide the proceedings of the House to the Supreme Court without seeking the consent of members. "It is a matter of the House's sovereignty" and it should be placed before the House for a thorough debate, he added. He said the Constitution was drafted by the Parliament under which the judiciary functioned.

Germany pledges 120m for climate change in Pakistan

BERLIN (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Senator Sherry Rehman held a bilateral meeting with a delegation from Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), led by Federal Minister Svenja Schulze, at the sidelines of the Petersberg Climate Dialogue happening in Berlin, Germany.

During the meeting, the two sides engaged in discussions aimed at exploring and enhancing bilateral cooperation between the two countries on climate adaptation and mitigation measures, a news release said. The focus of the meeting was on three main areas: better protection against flooding, enhancing Pakistan's renewable energy infrastructure, and expanding social safety support programs to assist vulnerable communities facing climate shocks.

Federal Minister Schulze pledged that Germany would provide Pakistan with 120 million in assistance to support these initiatives. Minister Rehman expressed her gratitude to

Germany for supporting Pakistan through the Climate Energy initiative. This initiative has supported a range of activities, including climate risk assessments, sub-national climate risk profiling, mainstreaming climate education into higher education, and capacity building for finance mobilization.

Minister Rehman recognized Germany's contribution to these initiatives as being critical in enabling Pakistan to adapt to the impacts of climate change and build a more resilient future. Minister Schulze emphasized the importance of continuing to mobilize resources for preventive and corrective measures, as well as improving Pakistan's capacity for climate mitigation and adaptation. She highlighted that while technical solutions were critical for mitigating climate change, it was equally important to prepare societies to better cope with extreme weather in the future by incorporating social solutions into the system. Minister Schulze reaffirmed Germany's commitment to supporting Pakistan in these efforts and expressed optimism about

the progress that can be made through continued cooperation between the two countries.

The Ministers also explored opportunities for collaboration under the umbrella of the Global Shield against Climate Risks initiative. Led by Germany and introduced at COP27 in partnership with the Vulnerable Twenty Group (V20) and the G7, this initiative aims to protect vulnerable developing countries and populations from the impacts of climate change. Pakistan is one of the "pathfinder countries" where activities will first be rolled out to improve disaster response and preparedness, as well as social security systems in the event of a climate disaster.

The discussion concluded with potential areas for future cooperation, including exploring the prospects of green hydrogen as a means to achieve energy security in Pakistan. The Ministers expressed optimism about the potential for continued collaboration between Germany and Pakistan to advance efforts in combating the impacts of climate change and building a more sustainable future for all.

PAC chairman summons SC Registrar on 16th

ISLAMABAD (APP): Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Chairman Noor Alam Khan on Wednesday summoned the Supreme Court's (SC) Registrar on May 16, with a warning that in case of non-compliance his arrest warrants could be issued.

Chairing a meeting of PAC, Noor Alam directed the Auditor General of Pakistan to conduct an audit of the Supreme Court from 2010 to 2021. He also directed the Urea fertilizer companies to get an audit of fertilizer prices conducted immediately to ensure transparency in the system. If they failed to do so, then the Auditor General of Pakistan would be tasked to do the audit with the cooperation of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), he warned.

He further directed that the authorities concerned should review the audit of fertilizer companies to facilitate the farmers as agriculture was the backbone of the country. The PAC reviewed the audit paras of the Ministry of Industry to streamline the system.

The Secretary Industries apprised the committee that the relevant authorities would review gas prices for the fertilizer sector to yield desirous results. Noor Alam said the car companies had been taking the advance amount from consumers for eight years, and through cartelization they were increasing the prices of vehicles. The meeting was attended by Members of the National Assembly Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chaudhry Muhammad Barjees Tahir, Khurshed Ahmed Junejo, Nawab Sher, Wajiha Qamar and others.

Imran asks workers to show solidarity with CJP

LAHORE (INP): Former premier and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan asked the workers and supporters to express solidarity with the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) on May 6, Saturday.

In a special message to PTI workers and supporters today, Imran Khan gave a call to the nationals to take to the streets for showing their support to the CJP Justice Umar Ata Bandial on Saturday.

He said that the country is currently at a decisive phase of the history. "Today, Pakistan is going through record inflation and unemployment and a mafia is seizing it. The incumbent government is afraid of facing defeat in the elections." Khan blamed the government for deliberately taking steps for destroying the Constitution and the Supreme Court (SC).

Judiciary can't fix poll date: ECP challenges SC verdict

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court to review its directives to hold elections for the Punjab Assembly on May 14, urging it not to interfere in its matters.

In a 14-page petition, the electoral body said that apex court should review its decision as the judiciary "doesn't have the authority to give the date of elections." The petition was registered hours after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) said that it would submit a detailed report of the talks between the party leaders and the ruling alliance, urging the apex court to implement its verdict in Punjab polls case.

"[...] it is most respectfully prayed that this August Court may graciously accept the instant Review Petition by revisiting, reviewing, reconsidering and recalling its Impugned Order/Judgment dated 04.04.2023, in the interest of justice and equity," the petition read. The petition highlighted that superior courts of the country have been granted a special power under Article 199 and Article 184(3) of the Constitution to judicially review actions/decisions of the public bodies.

"The superior courts can

define the contours within which the power (which vests in the public bodies) is or is to be exercised. At no instance, can the superior courts take upon themselves the role of the public body," the petition read. The electoral body reiterated that the appointing of the date for the election is "not the mandate of superior courts under the Constitution."

"Such powers exist elsewhere under the Constitution but certainly not lie in a Court of law," the ECP said, citing various legalities and reasons behind its statement. The electoral body accused the Supreme Court of disregarding its constitutional jurisdiction, emphasising that it assumed upon itself the role of a public body in giving a date; "thus intervention by the Court is necessitated to correct an error which has effectively changed the settled constitutional jurisprudence of the country."

The executive and the judiciary — two vital state organs — seem to be on a collision course as the Pakistan Democratic Movement-led government demonstrated its disdain over April 4's apex court's ruling, nullifying the ECP's decision to delay the election in Punjab till October 8 this year after initially announc-

ing it to hold on April 30. A three-judge SC bench, comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar, announced the verdict on the PTI's petition challenging the ECP's move to postpone the Punjab Assembly polls till October.

The chief justice announced that the election in Punjab would be held on May 14 as the SC declared the ECP's decision "unconstitutional". While the PTI celebrated the "historic decision, the government; however, termed the verdict contrary to the judgments of the Supreme Court's majority judges, saying it was an "impractical order".

The issue regarding who has the authority to set the date of the election has been the talk of the town since the PTI dissolved the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies in January on Imran Khan's instruction. The ECP, in its petition filed today, claimed that the august court has overlooked material questions of the Constitution and law, which have material bearing on the decision. "The errors of law are floating on the face of the record and are manifest and clear that these may not be allowed to remain as such," the ECP wrote.

Reference against Imran, ex-CJP Saqib Nisar in ECP

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Making former Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar and his son, among seven others including PTI Chairman Imran Khan, as accused persons in a complaint on Wednesday, two PML-N leaders urged Election Commission of Pakistan to remove Imran Khan from chairmanship of the party under corruption charges in awarding tickets to aspirants for forthcoming general elections in Punjab Assembly.

The complainants - Special Assistant to the PM on Interior and Legal Affairs Atta Tarar and Malik Ahmed Khan - filed the complaint before the ECP making Imran Khan, former Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar, his son Najam Saqib, a party ticket holder from Sheikhupura-III, PTI's chairperson Reconciliation

Committee for Central Punjab for tickets Ejaz Ahmad Chaudhary and Secretary General PTI Asad Umar as accused persons.

Substantiating their complaint, both the PML-N leaders cited media report saying recently papers published a report disclosing the fresh list showed that the PTI has also fielded scions of political and influential families or former MNAs and MPAs who had been with PML-N, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) or Pakistan Muslim League Quaid (PML-Q) in the past. They also submitted link of report saying in one of the leaked audios, Najam Saqib, son of the former Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar allegedly asked Abuzar Chahdar to pay a visit to his father to thank him for a favour, while in the other, he argues with Mian Uzair over money.

Advocates Usama Khawar Ghuman, Rahman Aziz and Sajjad Hameed Yusufzai filed the complaint on behalf of their clients and prayed the Commission to conduct an immediate enquiry into the corrupt practices in the matter. They also requested for the Commission orders for cancellation of the awarded tickets. They further prayed the Commission to restrain accused members of the PTI, especially, Imran Khan, Asad Omer, and Ejaz Chaudhry from any role in future in awarding of party tickets for any elections held by the ECP under the Constitution and law. Levelling allegations of corruption against Imran Khan the complainant also prayed the Commission to remove Imran Khan from the chairmanship of PTI for engaging in corrupt practices.

LWMC launches special scrapping operation in city

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Waste Management Company (LWMC) conducted a special cleaning operation for scrapping of roads especially in Johar Town and entry and exit points of the city.

On the instructions of CEO LWMC Babar Sahib Din, the special cleaning operation was carried out for clearance of open plots and manual scrapping in Johar Town.

CEO LWMC Babar Sahib Din said that in order to facilitate people and to provide them a clean environment, major points and roads were being cleared from dust and dirt. Scrapping and washing activities had been completed at the entrance and exit points of Babu Sabu, Saggian Bridge, Ravi Bridge and Thokar Niaz Baig whereas manual scrapping on all major roads and clearance of open plots of the city was also being ensured.

He added that more than 200 workers, and 30 vehicles had participated in the special cleaning operation. Babar Sahib Din said along with the cleaning operation, enforcement teams were also conducting operations to take action against illegal dumping of waste.

The LWMC enforcement team executed a special operation and registered nine FIRs against illegal dumping of waste in Johar Town.

Infant recovered, kidnapper father arrested

LAHORE (APP): The police on Wednesday recovered an infant Dayan Ali who was kidnapped from Hilal e Ahmer Hospital and arrested the kidnapper father and accomplices.

District Police Officer Sargodha told APP that father Adnan Zafar had filed an FIR with Sitar Town Police Station Sargodha that his infant son Dayan Ali was kidnapped by an unidentified cloak-clad woman from Hilal e Ahmer hospital Sargodha where he along with his wife Saba Bibi had gone to get their ailing son treated. The woman had snatched the infant from the lap of their one and half year old daughter Khadija.

The police solved the case in the shortest possible time with the help of geo-fencing and use of modern technology. It was revealed upon investigation that Adnan Zafar contracted marriage with Saba Bibi in 2018 and had two children daughter Khadija Bibi (one and half year) and son Dayan Ali (one and half month).

Farmers welfare focus of federal govt: Governor

LAHORE (APP): Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has said that welfare of farmers and the development of agriculture sector is the focus of the federal government.

During a meeting with Shehzad Ali Malik, CEO Gaurd Agriculture Research Services at the Governor's House here on Wednesday, he said the country cannot make progress without giving importance to the people associated with agriculture sector. The Governor Punjab said rice is one of the commodities which earns a lot of foreign exchange every year by exporting it. He said that good and quality seed is the guarantee of a good harvest.

Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said a good harvest of rice will increase export opportunities and improve the economy. He further said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is taking revolutionary steps for the development of the agricultural sector.

The Governor said the country's econo-

my can be strengthened and stabilized by developing the agriculture sector on modern lines. Shehzad Ali Malik, CEO Guard Agriculture Research Services said work on high-breed seeds of wheat and cotton is in progress in collaboration with a Chinese company. He said that soon other new varieties of rice will be introduced.

Free media vital to democratic values: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rahman has said that free and responsible media plays an important role in the promotion of democratic values.

In his message on the 'World Press Freedom Day' here on Wednesday, he said journalists associated with print and electronic media play an important role in resolving the problems in the society by identifying them.

The governor said that it is a day to pay tributes to the services of journalists who made sacrifices while performing their duties in difficult circumstances.

World Press Day was being observed

Shafi ullah

MINGORA : The world Press Day was being observed here at University of Swat to emphasize the significance for responsible journalism for the uplift of society. Its main celebration was held under the umbrella of Suvastu Photo Video Club, University of Swat, which was addressed by articulate speaker Mr. Mahboob Ali, a senior journalist and Sherin zada , president Swat press club.

The Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Hassan Sher, Treasurer Fayyaz Ahamd Khan, Registrar Imtiaz Ali Khan, Provost Fida Hussan, society's organizer Sadia Younus and students were in attendance.

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Mahboob Ali said that journalists in Pakistan were exercising more freedom than some of the neighboring countries, "where journalism is passing through strict government's restrictions" he added.

However, he said that most of the time the prevailing unfavorable environment becomes a threat to journalists, adding that a recent report of the 'journalists without

borders' listed Pakistan in top 10 countries of the world, where journalists were, more often, facing life threats.

He said that apart from traditional media, the social media was mainly using for the character assassination of opponents, "new generation, especially students of journalism should care of journalistic norms and values even if they are producing contents for their social media accounts" he urged.

Responding to a question the speaker said that the field of journalism was a vast field and many student could excel and make a bright career. Speaking on the occasion Senior journalist Sherin Zada said that, working in conflict zone was a difficult task. however, he added that young journalists should take care of their selves while reporting from the war hit areas. Provost University of Swat Dr. Fida Hussain thanked the guest speakers, and urged the students, to devote their time to studies and research work. In the concluding ceremony shield were awarded to the Keynote Speaker Mahboob Ali and Sherin Zada.

FDA to construct wall to avoid pollution of industrial units

LAHORE (APP): On the direction of the Office of the Ombudsman Punjab, Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) started construction of a boundary wall at a cost of seven million rupees to protect the residents of FDA City from sewage and industrial wastewater emanating from nearby industrial units.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, the spokesman added that the

Director General FDA directed the environment protection department and municipal corporation to take action against delinquent industrial units for not properly disposing of industrial waste in Samana village and dumping sewage into the water-course.

These measures aimed to provide the inhabitants

with respite from the perils of environmental pollution. In a separate development, the ombudsman office interceded on a complaint of Rai Muhammad Samiullah Khan to ensure the issuance of a BS (Hons) English degree to him by Government College University Faisalabad, the spokesman reported.



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Branch Operations Officer	Pan Pakistan
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Relationship Manager Business	Pan Pakistan
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PID(K-3117/22)



LAHORE: An Ariel view of Eid festival at greater Iqbal Park.

‘More efforts needed within Pakistan for release of Aafia’

LAHORE (NNI): Noted Human Rights Attorney and lawyer in Dr Aafia Siddiqui case Clive Safford Smith has said that more efforts are needed within Pakistan to secure the release of Dr Aafia Siddiqui as hurdle in her return appears to be in Pakistan.

Addressing a press conference at Lahore Press Club, here Wednesday, he said that the case of Aafia is the worst example of human rights violations. He said that Aafia's emotional trauma is worse than those in Guantanamo as is understandable. He said Dr Aafia has no idea why she is where she is and being a highly brilliant woman has her entire life being gradually sucked out of her, and all outside communication cut off, is like

being trapped in an avalanche with no one to call. He said Aafia is a mother and taking away little children from a mother is the worst form of human coercion ever. Any woman would go stark raving mad just by losing her child, yet Aafia is hanging in there.

Smith said he met with Aafia, he gave her hope, he told her people in Pakistan love her, she is the daughter of the nation and she should keep hope. Aafia expressed faith in the Pakistani people. I appeal to you not to let her down, he asked the audience. "She is yours and you the keepers of justice, the defenders of constitutional rights need to unite and rise above to support our efforts." Support the legal proceed-

ings of her case. Help us in our struggle to get the federation stand up for Aafia's rights as the constitution of your great nation has provided, he urged.

It appears the hurdle in bringing Aafia home lays here in her own country. And together we need to identify and overcome the hurdle, he said. Smith apologized for the mistakes his country has made and how the justice system is flawed in ways that enable mistakes like Aafia's incarceration and Guantanamo bay to continue, though Bagram and Abu Gharaib have been shut down by efforts of humanitarian activists like you all. He said Aafia's case is human at its core and universal in appeal.

Digital Census declares Central the largest district of Karachi

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) recently released figures have pointed out Karachi Central district has become population-wise the largest district of the metropolis in the digital census.

According to media reports, District Central has 3.442 mln populations in the digital census exercise, the figure released by the PBS. District South, historically the old town of the city has become the smallest district of the metropolis in the 7th population census with a population of 1.824 mln. District East stands second with having 3.171 mln population count in the census, while Korangi has been the third largest district of the city with 2.928 population figure, shared by the PBS.

The District West have 2.275 mln population, Malir 2.217 mln and Keamari have 2.180 mln population counts, according to the latest figures.

The government recently extended the deadline of the population census fifth time to complete the digital census process, which will now be concluded by May 15. Federal Minister

for Planning and said the latest extension remaining people not Development Ahsan Iqbal was made to reach the counted in the census.

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER BUILDING DIVISION KHYBER Advertisement of Notice Re-Inviting E-Bidding Single Stage Two Envelope System

The Executive Engineer Building Division Khyber C&W Department Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Invites Sealed Bids from the eligible Contractors / Firms registered in relevant code in accordance with KPRA Procurement Rules 2014 & registered with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority, established under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Act, 2013 (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act No. XXI of 2013) & who have renewed their registration for the year 2022-23 and also registered with Pakistan Engineering Council in the Relevant Code for the year 2022-23, visible on Website of PEC on Single Stage Two Envelope procedure of the following works:

S. No	Name of work	Require Category of PEC	Bid Security	Period of Completion	Last Date & Time of Submi-ssion of Bids	Date & Time of opening Technical Bid	Date & Time of Opening of Financial Bid
1	Establishment of 12-Degree Colleges (Boys & Girls) in Merged Districts ADP No. 797/210591 (2022-23) (2 nd Time).	--	2% of Estimated Cost	As per Work Order	18-05-2023 At 12:00 (Noon)	18-05-2023 At 12:30 (PM)	After Approval of Technical Evaluation
i	Government Degree College Dora Neher Bara District Khyber.	C2 & PK-C2 & Above CE-01, CE-09, CE-10, ME-02, EE-01 EE-04.	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-
ii	Government Girls Degree College Landi Kotal District Khyber.	C3 & PK-C3 & Above CE-01, CE-09, CE-10, ME-02, EE-01, EE-04.	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-	-do-

TERMS & CONDITIONS

- Bid documents and instructions to bidders can be downloaded upto one day prior to the opening date from C&W website www.cwd.gkp.pk.
- Bid Security 2% of the Estimated Cost in the Shape of Call Deposit (in Original) any Schedule Bank shall be kept sealed in the financial Proposal shall in addition place an affidavit in the Technical Proposal. It is further added that original Stamp Paper duly attested by the Oath Commissioner i.e. List of Staff, List of Machinery, Non Black-Listing / Litigation & Undertaking Certificate are enclosed in Technical Brochures.
- The Financial Bid opening date will be intimated to all concerned after finalization of Technical Evaluation by the Procurement Committee.
- The Bidder should submit their E-Bid as per KPRA Notification No. SRO (14)/Vol: 1-24/2021-22 dated 10-05-2022.
- Technical Bids (Sealed) in Separate Envelopes addressed to Executive Engineer Building Division Khyber should be submitted on 18-05-2023 at 12:00 (Noon).
- Bidders must be registered with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority.
- Tender Form Fee (Non-Refundable) @ 0.03% on Tender Cost in shape of Call Deposit should be accompanied with Technical Bid.
- A complete set of Bid Documents / Criteria should be obtained by an interested eligible bidder on submission of a written application from the office of the undersigned on any working Days / Hours on are before 18-05-2023 on payment Rs. 3000/- (Non-Refundable) otherwise his Bid will not be entertained.
- Joint Venture (JV) not allowed.
- Venue of Bids Opening is C&W Building Division Khyber at plot No. 32, Sector: B-I Phase-5 Hayatabad, Peshawar.

EXECUTIVE ENGINEER , Phone/Fax 091-9217108
Email-building.khyber921708@gmail.com

INF (P) 1990/23



پاکستان بول ایوی ایشن اتھارٹی

PAKISTAN CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (PCAA)

TENDER NOTICE

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY AT GILGIT AIRPORT

1. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is inviting tenders from Companies / Firms / Joint Ventures and Sole-Proprietors in accordance with the criteria for eligibility of bidders as described in detail in tender terms & conditions on a single stage / two-envelope basis, i.e. Technical & Financial offer for award of following concession at Gilgit Airport.

S. No.	Concession Name	RESERVE PRICE (P.M.)	LICENSE PERIOD	TIMING & CONTACT PERSON DETAILS	LAST DATE OF PURCHASE OF TENDER DOCUMENTS	TENDER FEE (NON-REFUNDABLE)	DATE, TIME & VENUE OF SUBMISSION	DATE, TIME & VENUE OF OPENING
(i)	Placement of Mono Branding (Cut Outs) in CAA car parking	93,500/-	Five (05) years	0900 to 1700 hours on working days C.O.O. / APM Gilgit Airport 05811-920418	17th May 2023	Rs. 5,000/- (Rupees Five Thousand only)	18th May 2023 at 1100 hrs C.O.O. / APM Office Gilgit Airport	18th May 2023 at 1130 hrs C.O.O. / APM Office Gilgit Airport

2. For detailed Tender Notice kindly visit: www.caapakistan.com.pk & www.ppra.org.pk.

Director Commercial & Estates
Headquarters, Civil Aviation Authority, Terminal – 1, Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, Pakistan
Telephone: +92 21-99242531, Fax: +92 21 99242532, E-mail: dce@caapakistan.com.pk

PID(K#3107/22) www.caanakistan.com.pk

فوش (مشتر ہویشاریاں)
بذریعہ فوش ہذا مشترکہ کیا جاتا ہے کہ مکان نمبر 476/A نمبر 542/557 محدود روڈ شیڈو گیت جو کہ کنٹونمنٹ یورڈ کے ریکارڈ میں مسیحی مسیحی پرویز دہلوی مرزا خان کے نام پر موجود ہے۔ یہ کہ مسیحی مسیحی پرویز نے کسی زچہ ایلمی دہلوی مرزا خان کا کیا اختیار عام طور پر کہ مکان نمبر 542/557 والا کہ عبداللہ دہلوی مرزا خان ہذا بذریعہ ریشتر شدہ دستاویز نمبر 176، "بھی نمبر" جلد نمبر 90 مورخہ 10.2.2017 اور جی نامہ رجسٹر شدہ دستاویز نمبر 287، "بھی نمبر" جلد نمبر 111 مورخہ 14.3.2019 کو فروخت کر دی ہے۔ سب مسیحی عبداللہ دہلوی مرزا خان ہذا نے مذکورہ بالا مکان کو اپنے نام پر منتقل کرنے کے لیے ایک محدود روخت مسیحی جج نامہ ریشتر پڑا میں آزمادی ہے۔ اس کی شخص بینک یا ادارے کو مذکورہ بالا مکان کی منتقلی پر کوئی اعتراض ہو تو اشتیاء ہذا کی اشاعت کے پندرہ (15) دن کے اندر اندر اپنا اعتراض مسیحی جج کر میں بعد ازاں منتقلی کی کارروائی مندرجہ بالا درخواست کو اس کے نام پر عمل میں لائی جائے گی اور کوئی مذمت قابل قبول ہوگا۔
المشترین: کنٹونمنٹ ایسٹنٹیکو ایسٹنٹیکو پشاور

COMBINED MILITARY HOSPITAL MARDAN

TENDER NOTICE

BULK PURCHASE OF PVMS + NIV/NIF MEDICINES, DISPOSABLE MEDICAL STORE ITEMS & LAB KITS/ REAGENTS FY-2023-24

CMH Mardan invites sealed bids/quotations for supply of bulk "PVMS + NIV/NIF medicines, Disposable medical store items, & Lab Kits/ Reagents" from reputed Chemists/ Druggists, Manufacturers, Distributors who have valid drug license, for fiscal year 2023-24. Interested parties who are financially sound must submit their rebate at lowest rate adopting single stage two-envelope procedure according to Public Procurement Regulatory Authority Rules-2004 (36b). Tender documents along with terms and conditions. (including list of medicines & lab kits/ reagents) can be obtained from CMH, Mardan medical store office during working hours after payment of bank draft Rs. 3000/- (Non-Refundable) in favour of Commanding Officer CMH Mardan after publication of advertisement in newspaper. Quotations/ Bids in sealed envelope marked / mentioned on top as for supply, of bulk purchase PVMS, NIF/NIV medicines, Disposable medical store items. Lab Kits / Reagents for FY 2023-24 will be submitted at MOI/C Medical Store Office CMH Mardan. Last date for submission of quotations/ bids is **24th May 2023 till 1100 hours**. The bids/quotations will be opened on the same day at **1130 hours** in the presence of local purchase committee and bidders or their authorized representatives. Local purchase committee has right to accept or reject bids/quotations under PPRA rules. For details and further information, please contact on **0331-9056566, 0937-870868**.

**COMMANDANT ,
COMBINED MILITARY HOSPITAL
MARDAN CANTT**



Govt to successfully overcome economic situation, says Governor



PESHAWAR (APP): The Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Haji Ghulam Ali has said the present difficult economic situation would be successfully overcome with the cooperation of the trading community. He was talking to a joint

representative delegation of the Haripur Chamber of Commerce & Industry, All Traders' Association (Haripur) and District Bar Haripur here on Wednesday. The delegation told the governor regarding ill-treatment of the district

administration with the trading community and law & order situation including vehicles' lifting incidents in the district. The members of the delegation also invited the governor to the oath taking ceremonies of the Haripur Bar

Association and All Traders' Federation Haripur. The Governor said that he is grateful to the business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and across the country, which visited the Governor House to express their gratitude. He said the business community is the backbone of the national economy and in case of any testing time, they have remained in the forefront and was confident that the present difficult economic situation would also be overcome with the cooperation of the trading community.



PESHAWAR: President PPC Arshad Aziz Malik meeting with Caretaker Chief Minister KP Muhammad Azam Khan. Members KP Cabinet Barrister Feroz Jamal Shah and Pir Haroon Shah present on occasion.

Issuance of CNIC to foreign spouse: PHC orders NADRA to submit reply

Humayun Khan

PESHAWAR: A divisional bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC) comprising of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah ordered Ministry of Interior and National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) to submit comments, on Wednesday. The counsel Mian Zakir Hussain Advocate informed that petitioner Amina married with foreigner while NADRA didn't issue Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) to her

husband. The counsel argued that anyone marry with Pakistani men obtains Pakistani citizenship as per Citizen Act but in this petitioner facing discriminatory attitude as women neither provided citizenship to her husband belongs to Afghanistan nor CNIC was issued to him. The counsel further added that PHC and Federal Sharia't Court has along has granted judgments in this regard by declaring that foreigners married with Pakistani

women are entitled for citizenship while argued several identical cases are placed before different courts. The counsel informed PHC that police harassing petitioner's husband Najeeb Ullah while requested to issue Pakistani citizenship and Pakistan Origin Card. The divisional bench of PHC comprised of Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Sahibzada Asadullah ordered Ministry of Interior (MOI) and NADRA after initial arguments while adjourned further hearing.

Secretary rejects rumors F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: Secretary health Mehmood Aslam Wazir rejected rumors regarding misplacement of recruitment files in the department, on Wednesday. This he said in his statement issued to media personnel and added that all files are available and secure at Health Secretariat as well as in at Directorate General Health. He claimed that all record is safe and secure. Secretary health claimed that inquiry files of medical officers of Malakand, Lakki Marwat, Mansehra and North Waziristan are available at the competent forum. He rejected possession of record with former Health Minister.

Police bust robbers' gang

PESHAWAR (APP): Capital City Police busted a gang of deadly robbers involved in looting the people at gunpoint, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. The arrested accused including Ghulam Mohammad, Rahmanullah and Shan alias Shanay are the residents of Dir Colony, Shaheen Muslim Town and Nawar Kalley (Bara Road). The accused have snatched a heavy cash

amount from a complainant namely Mohammad Asim son of Mohammad Israr, resident of Akora Khattak, district Nowshera at gunpoint on April 12, 2023. The FIR of the incident was registered with East Cantt Police Station. Taking notice of the robbery incident, the police high-ups formed a special team under the supervision of the SP Cantt Waqas Rafiq and DSP Cantt Riaz Khalil, which investigated the case using modern sci-

entific techniques. The investigation team in light of the CCTV footage and other evidence questioned various suspects including habitual criminals released from prison and succeeded in busting the gang. Police have recovered the snatched cash amounting to Rs.5.8 million, arms and motorcycle used in various criminal incidents. During the initial investigation, the accused have confessed to their crimes.

Restrictions on media lead to social chaos: Bacha

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial President Pakistan Peoples' Party and Minister for State Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha on Wednesday congratulated the journalists on eve of World Press Freedom Day and said that there is a need to ensure the safety of media workers. He said that his party will continue to take all possible steps to create an ideal environment for press freedom in the country and promote media literacy among the people. In his message, Minister of State Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha said that the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the freedom of the press and the right of citizens to access accurate information. He said that Pakistan Peoples' Party has never compromised on freedom of speech and writing. He said that martyr Benazir Bhutto abolished black laws against media in 1988. Media workers around the world are facing difficult situations while fake news and hate propaganda are on the rise so there should be given freedom for accurate news. He said that there is a need to ensure the safety of media workers around the world, and bans on media lead to social unrest. Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha said that restrictions on media freedom weaken democracy and cause division and chaos in the society. He said that the dictatorial thinking that is always looking for an opportunity to kill democracy in Pakistan is the same thinking that is always ready to strangle the freedom of the press. Like the past PPP will support media and will work for the freedom of press in future, Bacha added.



PESHAWAR: A view of cleaning canal on Chamkani Road.

No differences of minister with anyone in KPEZDMC

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Minister for Industries Muhammad Adnan Jalil in a press release has clarified that the minister has no personal differences with anyone in KPEZDMC. Soon after the assumption of the charge of the office, unveiling his plans he vowed to promote industrialization and ease of doing business. For this he considered it imperatives that all public sector companies be run

under the public sector corporate governance rules and policies under the Companies Act 2017 and Corporate Governance Rules. For this rule of law and transparency are the most essential features. Based on those principles, he reviewed the working of all public sector companies formed by the department. Consequently, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zone Development Management Company was also issued a questionnaire in order to ensure transparency and merit as well

streamline the affairs with in the policy frame work as laid by the Government. The main questions pertained to However the incumbent CEO has not been able to furnish satisfactory replies or avoided to reply. Even under the Right to Information Act every citizen has a right to seek information. It may be mentioned that the legality of incumbent CEO appointment has also be challenged by two other person who claimed to have been deprived of their right to compete.

KP mulls reduction in BRT subsidy

PESHAWAR (APP): Following reservations showed by the office bearers of the caretaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and in the wake of financial issues faced by the province, a reduction in the subsidy provided for the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was being considered. Official sources said on Wednesday that scrutiny of BRT employees inducted from other districts was also being carried out. The sources said a subsidy of Rs 3 billion was being provided to the BRT project on an annual basis however due to financial issues of the province, a reduction in this subsidy was being considered. The official sources said that a reduction of Rs one billion was being mulled in BRT subsidy that would cause an increase in BRT fares and abolishment of additional staff services. The sources said that hundreds of inductions were made in BRT during the past KP government while 55 BRT vehicles were still non operational. Despite an expenditure of 92 billion rupees on the BRT project, the sources said the construction of three BRT commercial plazas were yet to be completed and an additional cost of around 12 billion rupees was needed to complete these structures.

Taxpayers urged to timely deposit outstanding taxes

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Commissioner Inland Revenue, Regional Tax Office (RTO) Peshawar, Zafar Iqbal Khan has urged taxpayers for timely depositing of tax outstanding against them to play a role in bringing improvement in the national economy. He was speaking during the monthly online open court here in the Regional Tax Office here on Wednesday. Chief Commissioner Withholding Zone, Tariq Jamal Khattak, Commissioner Peshawar Zone Mohammad Ayaz, Commissioner Corporate Zone, Shaukat Hayat, Additional Commissioner Headquarters, Bahadar Shah Afridi and Assistant Commissioner/Focal Person, Faheem Rashid also assisted the Chief Commissioner during the proceeding. The Chief Commissioner said that the aim behind holding online court is the resolution of the problems of taxpayers at their doorsteps. He was of the view that online court is the best forum between the tax collectors and taxpayers. So, he urged the taxpayers to come to the forefront to directly inform them about their problems and hardships.

The taxpayers showed keen interest in the proceeding of the open court and put on various questions relating to various taxes and their collection. The Chief Commissioner and his team satisfied the participants through their answers. To a question about the expiry of the tax exemption in tribal districts on June 30, 2023, the Chief Commissioner said that it is a policy matter, which comes in the ambit of the federal government and parliament and saying anything in this regard is premature. However, he said that the matter has already been sent to the higher authorities of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), which is a suitable forum for taking appropriate decisions in this regard. A taxpayer from Mardan appreciated the holding of lucky draws in connection with Persons of Sales (POS) and said that the initiative will help expand the tax net. He assured the taxpayer that their proposals in this regard would be dispatched to FBR and whatever decision taken by it would be shared with the taxpayers.

Power suspension notified

PESHAWAR (APP): PESCO on Wednesday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Shangla/ Besham Grid Station on 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th May from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 132 KV Maira and Shangla grid connected with 11 KV feeders will face inconvenience. It said that power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Mingora Grid Station 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th May from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Mingora Grid Station 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th May from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV New Khwazakhela, Shin, Charbagh, Shangla, Matta, Charbagh Express, Matta 3, Choprial, Baidara, Darwesh Khela and Express Shawar feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Khwazakhela Grid Station 4th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 10th May from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV New Khwazakhela, Shin, Charbagh, Shangla, Matta, Charbagh Express, Matta 3, Choprial, Baidara, Darwesh Khela and Express Shawar feeders will face inconvenience.



PESHAWAR: Chairman Pakistan Flour Mill Association Haji Muhammad Iqbal addressing a press conference at PFMA-KP office.

SCCI apprises minister about business and industry-hostile actions of Labour Deptt, ESSi

F.P. Report

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) expressed outcry over illegal actions, imposition of heavy fines and harassment by the provincial Labour Department and Employees Social Security Institution (ESSI). These apprehensions and concerns of the business community were conveyed by SCCI president Muhammad Ishaq during a meeting upon visit of provincial caretaker minister for Labour Malik Mehr Elahi here at chamber's house on Wednesday. Businessmen Forum leader former senator Ilyas Ahmad Bilour, SCCI vice president Ejaz Khan Afridi, former presidents Malik Niaz Ahmad, Riaz Arshad, Adeel Rauf, Faiz Muhammad, Sherbaz Bilour, former SVPs Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, Muhammad Iqbal, former vice president

Abdullah Yousafzai, secretary labour Fakhr e Alam, Vice Commissioner Social Security Department KP Ainullah, Director Labour KP, Irfanullah, executive members Haji Ghulam Hussain, Laal Badshah, Hafaf Ali Khan, Monawar Khurshid, and Waqar Ahmad, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ghulam Bilal Javed, Fazal Wadud, Fazle Wahid, Faiz Rasool, Waris Khan Afridi, Sadder Gul, Muhammad Nadeem Rauf, Rashid Iqbal Siddique, Salman Sawwal, Ishtiaq Muhammad, Ashfaq Ahmad, traders, industrialist and others were present during the meeting. Muhammad Ishaq during the meeting apprised the business community concerns about illegal actions, imposition of fines and harassment by ESSI and the Labour Department. Upon which, the provincial minister suggested the

formation of a joint committee to immediately resolve the problem faced by business in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The SCCI chief while speaking on the occasion said it has been made difficult to keep business and industries function under the prevailing circumstances. "Let the business and industry should keep function". Otherwise, Ishaq warned the business community will be forced to take harsh steps if the policies were not reviewed. The provincial minister assured the illegal actions, imposition of heavy fines and harassment of traders' community would be stopped and departmental action would be initiated against those officials which were found in any mal-practices and illegal acts. Mehr Elahi informed

that the Labour Department is working to introduce a slab system for contribution to end the tendency of imposition of heavy fines/penalties. Similarly, he said his ministry initiated a special amnesty scheme for ESSI and Labour specific issues. The Secretary said the Labour Department has established a complaint cell through which traders' issues would be resolved within a short span of time because the complaint cell will be directly monitored by the concerned minister and secretary. Ilyas Ahmad Bilour also spoke on the occasion congratulated Malik Mehr Elahi for becoming part of the provincial interim cabinet and hoped that being part of the business community, the minister (Mehr Elahi) would play an important role in the resolution of the business community.



In brief

Ammunition recovered Sahibzada Afridi

KOHAT: Kohat police on Wednesday foiled an attempt of arms smuggling and recovered a huge quantity of foreign-made arms and ammunition from a truck at Indus Highway, Kohat. DPO Kohat, Jamil ur Rehman told media persons that during an intelligence based operation, a truck was intercepted at Indus Highway near Toll Plaza and a huge quantity of arms and ammunition was recovered from its secret components. He said during the action two inter-provincial arms smugglers were also taken into custody. The recovered arms and ammunition included foreign-made rocket launchers, repeaters, hand-grenades and hundreds of cartridges. The recovered arms and ammunition were being smuggled to Peshawar through Darra Adam Khel. The arrested arms smugglers identified as Samullah and Ayub Khan of Kurram district were shifted to Riaz Shaheed police station where a case was registered against them and further investigation was initiated. Meanwhile, police foiled a bid of sabotage and arrested five suspects near Marai check post. According to Superintendent Operations Zahid Khan a huge cache of arms was also recovered from suspects. The miscreants were trying to smuggle weapons in a government vehicle. The recovered arms include rocket launchers, anti-aircraft guns and, 38 rocket shells. Case has been registered and investigation is underway.

Rs3 lakh returned to victim F.P. Report

KHYBER: District head of Rescue 1122, Khyber handed over 0.3 million rupees to its owner, recovered in rescue and relief operation during the Torkham landslide incident here on Wednesday. Media Coordinator Rescue 1122 Khyber, Maqsood Alam while sharing details said that during the Torkham landslide rescue operation, the Rescue 1122 workers had found 0.3 million rupees and other necessary documents on the site while retrieving dead body from the vehicle carrying registration no.KBL-12271. Driver of the truck was killed and the vehicle was completely demolished in the mishap. Last day, officials of the department after confirming gave away 0.3 million rupees and the documents to the owner of the truck, identified as Umar Gul, resident of Nangarhar province of Afghanistan. The owner thanked the officials for returning his lost money and lauded the services of the Rescue 1122 workers they rendered in the relief operation. It is worth mentioning here that eight drivers passed away and eight others sustained injuries in addition to 25 export loaded trucks and containers destroyed in the landslide incident in Torkham.

Police busts robbery gang F.P. Report

HARIPUR: Police arrested 6 members inter provincial alleged robbery gang involved in the motorway robbery case and recovered stolen money of Rs17 lakh along with 02 pistols and the motor car used in the offense, on Wednesday. This was announced by SP Investigation Asif Gohar along with DSP Circle Khanpur Muhammad Uzair and SHO Police Station Kot Najibullah Muhammad Arif while talking to the media representatives said that on 05.04.2023 the limits of Police Station Kot Najibullah Kot Interchange and Jhari Kas.

LG govt key for development at gross root: Mayar

F.P. Report

MARDAN: Mayor Mardan Himayat Ullah Mayar said that the establishment of standing committees at the tehsil level under the Local Government Act will play an important role in the development of local governments and transparency in the departments. He expressed these views while addressing the 16th meeting of the local council.

On this occasion, the meeting was presided over by Alamgir Khan Advocate, while elected members and various government officials participated in the meeting. Mayor Mardan Himayat Ullah Mayar said that local development is possible through local government, development projects are the responsibility of local governments, but unfortunately in the year 2022-23, local governments have not yet received funds for development projects.

He said that the role of members of provincial and national assembly is to make legislation, local development is the responsibility of local governments because the elected chairman and members of local government are close to the people. He added that negotiations are ongoing with the provincial government for the powers, funds and honorarium of local

governments.

Mayor Mardan said that five and a half crore rupees have been allocated for the improvement of the traffic system in the city under which the improvement of singles, elimination of encroachments and determination of routes for rikshaws will be done. He said further that steps will be taken to educate the public through the elected local government representatives for the problems faced in drainage. Mardan will take all possible measures for the development of the city and solving the problems, said Mayar.

Addressing the meeting, Mayor Mardan announced standing committees for system improvement and transparency in various departments in which various members were included as chairman and members. In the meeting, the resolution of the standing committees was approved. The elected members expressed their views on standing committees and other issues, said Mayar.

Rescue 1122 conducts mock drills: According to the instructions of Secretary Relief Abdul Basit and Director General Dr. Khateer Ahmed, under the supervision of District Emergency Officer Rescue 1122 Mardan Imran Khan Yousafzai and Civil Defense Officer Shaukat Khan between Rescue 1122

and Civil Defense first aid, fire protection, drowning and natural disasters.

Rescue training was provided and mock drills were conducted. On this occasion, Regional Director Operations (Center) Dr. Mir Alam Khan visited Rescue 1122 District Office Mardan. He reviewed the ongoing activities regarding Rescue 1122 and training and addressed the training participants and issued necessary instructions.

In the coming summer season, awareness was provided regarding the avoidance of dangers such as heavy rains, fire on the mountains and drowning while bathing in summer. In case of any accident or natural calamity, they were informed about their importance and responsibility in these accidents.

In case of fire, a strategy was formulated for local people and all institutions to work together to save forests and animals. Rescue 1122 is not only providing services in daily accidents i.e. medical emergency, fire, drowning, shooting, road traffic accidents, falls etc. Providing awareness, mock drills and training on basic lifesaving and fire prevention in the community with the objective of saving lives from accidents and providing timely medical aid during accidents and preventing loss of precious lives.

Monkeypox screening point set up at Torkham

F.P. Report

LANDI KOTAL: Keeping in view the menace of the Monkeypox, the health department has set up screening point at zero point on Pak-Afghan sharing border, Torkham border last day.

District Health Officer (DHO) Dr Zafar said that to curtail the disease at initial level, the center was established to conduct screening of in-coming and outgoing pedestrians at the crossing. A well-trained health crew had been posted for the purpose, he added.

Dr Zafar maintained that

well-equipped two isolation wards had been specialized in Headquarter Hospital, Landi Kotal to facilitate the suspected patients of Monkeypox. Following detection of two patients of Monkeypox in Pakistan, the Director General Health Services Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through a notification nominated police and services hospital and DHQ hospital for management of suspected Monkeypox cases.

He directed the concerned officials of specified health centers to set up at least five bedded isolation ward for suspected Monkeypox cases and

nominate a focal person from the concerned institution. Monkeypox is a rare disease similar to smallpox caused by a virus. The disease spreads through close contact with someone who's infected. You can also get it from an infected animal. It's found mostly in areas of Africa, but has also been seen in other regions of the world.

Signs of Monkeypox include fever, headache, muscle aches, rash, chills, swollen lymph nodes and fatigue. According to health experts there's no proven treatment for Monkeypox but it usually goes away on its own.

Early completion of beautification plan sought

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: Dozens of shopkeepers, local government representatives and residents took to the road and staged a protest demonstration at Timergara against the district administration for its failure to complete the Timergara city beautification project on time here the other day.

The stream water inundated roads, shops and houses in Timergara after heavy rains the other day causing losses of millions of rupees. The protesters led by the president Anjum Tajir Timergara Haji Anwarud Din also chanted slogans against the district administration. They were complaining that work on the project had stopped due to unknown reasons that caused unbearable losses to local residents and traders. The protest rally was addressed by Haji Anwarud Din, JI district general secretary Engineer Yaqubur Rehman, JI youth wing district president Ateequr Rehman, PTI village council chairman Kalimullah Sarhadi, PPP activist Shahab Umani, PTI leader Malik Inam Khan, Dir

Qaumi Pason president Malik Shah Naseem and others.

They alleged that officials of the administration always visited the area just for a photo session as there was no concrete work on the ground and the project had been left uncompleted. They said that the administration had demolished several plazas, shops and other structures before starting work on the project as part of the city beautification project for which the previous government had approved Rs 700 million. The speakers said the administration and the concerned contractor stopped work on the project and left the residents on the mercy of Al-mighty Allah.

The traders' body threatened to observe a shutter down and wheel jam strike if work on the project was not started within a week. Later the assistant commissioner Tariq Shehzad along with AAC Tariq Khan and AD local government Amir Nizam Durrani held talks with leaders of the protesters on which they dispersed peacefully.

Following the directives of deputy commissioner

Lower Dir Iftikhar Ahmad Marwat, the Assistant Director local government Amir Nizam Durrani visited the under construction Timergara Khwar project and held negotiations with the protestors who were demanding earlier completion of the project. The protestors dispersed peacefully after the AD assured them to remove their grievances.

Later Mr Amir Nizam Durrani visited the Khungi and Paito Dara and Yar Khan Banda areas for assessment of damages caused by Monday's torrential rains and hailstorm where a portion of the road was washed away by gushing water besides damaging some houses, a school and a mosque. Also in the day, the AD attended the training session arranged by the officials of Lower Dir Rescue Emergency team for the Jawans of civil defense at Balambat Council hall. Amir Nizam Durrani while addressing on the occasion appreciated the spirit of civil defense Jawans for extending all out support to the district administration in all emergency circumstances and natural calamities.



QUETTA: Federal Minister for Science and Technology Agha Hassan Baloch inaugurating new Khuzdar block at NUST University Campus.

Residents flay unhygienic, uncleanliness condition

Syed Waliullah Shah

NEWSHERA: Nowshera Municipal Committee (NMC) has failed to ensure cleanliness and hygiene because dozens of residents affected by malaria and other parasitic diseases in the premises of union council Peer Sabaq otherwise public knock doors of court for their rights.

This was claimed by former councillor Afzal Beig Afridi in his statement issued to media personnel and added that larva has been germinated in the waste laying in the premises while municipal workers serving till photoshoots. He claimed that municipal staff appears after weeks in the area for photoshoot while receiving benefits from public exchequers at their homes.

Former councillor claimed that residents facing severe mental stress on hand while parasitic diseases and affection had compelled public to bed rotten illness. He threatened that if their demands didn't fulfilled within one week then they residents will approach court for their rights.

Teachers' appointment demanded

F.P. Report

MIRAN SHAH: The tribesmen of Dattakhel argued education department to fulfill vacant seats and ensure presence of teachers at Government High School (GHS) otherwise they will be compelled to arrange protest in favor of their demands after 15th May.

A tribal jirga led by former candidate for tehsil mayor Noor Kalam Wazir on demand of parents and students regarding absence of teachers as well as shortage of staff at GHS Dattakhel. During the visit civil society members of Dattakhel Youth and Local Teachers accompanied the jirga.

The jirga found that total sanctioned teachers for GHS Dattakhel are 25 while 15 severing the students but only five teachers were present during the visit of tribesmen. The tribesmen condemned attitude of teachers toward their responsibilities and argued competent authorities to take stern actions against them.

Flood hit areas in Dir need immediate relief

F.P. Report

LOWER DIR: The Jamaat-i-Islami local chapter on Wednesday demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, district administration and humanitarian organizations to start relief and rehabilitation activities in the flood-affected 16 villages of Paito Dara and Yar Khan Banda. Speaking at a news conference at the Ahya ul Uloom Balambat the JI district general secretary engineer Yaqub ur Rehman, its candidate for PK 15 Shad Nawaz Khan, information secretary Shuiab Ahmad, former tehsil nazim Riaz Muhammad and Al-Khidmat Foundation Paito Dara president Amir Azam Khan demanded the government to declare the affected area as calamity hit and announce a special package for the locals.

The JI leaders said that torrential rains coupled with hail storms and lightning destroyed standing crops and completely damaged 35 individual dug wells and the area link roads. They pointed out that dozens of cattle heads were killed while walls of several houses collapsed by gushing floodwater on Monday. The JI leaders criticized the district administration for its failure to assess the damages properly and start relief and rehabilitation activities in the affected areas.

They said that some of the administration officials visited the area for a photo session and disappeared. They said that a total of 35 water supply dug wells filled with stones and mud in the area and the people had no alternate sources to get drinking water for the last three days. They demanded the provincial and federal government to announce special packages for the affected people of Paito Dara and Yar Khan Banda and declare the area as a calamity hit.

Afghan schools' teachers: Social and political activists on Wednesday demanded the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and high ups of the elementary and secondary education department to regularize the services of Pakistanis teaching at the

Afghan refugees' schools and adjust them in the education department. Addressing a meeting of the Pakistanis teaching at the refugees schools in Lower Dir, the Timergara tehsil chairman Mufti Irfanudin Din, JUI-F district chief Sirajud Din, former chairman of the All Teachers Association Syed Muhammad Shah, female teacher Farhana Gul, Maulana Nabi Shah and others said that a total of 291 teachers across the province had been performing their duties in the Afghan refugees' schools for the last 38 years.

The speakers pointed out that the administration staff, security officials and village administration working for the Afghan refugees had been regularized and adjusted in their relevant departments but the Pakistani teachers of the refugees' schools were totally ignored. They said that schools for refugees were functional at the Timer, Chakdara and Mayar refugees' camps for the last 38 years while its teachers were paid very little as compared to regular teachers. They demanded the KP government to take notice of the matter and regularize the teachers working at the refugees' schools in the province.

Press freedom day: The district press club Timergara on Wednesday arranged a function to mark the World Press Freedom day. The function attended by social and political activists and journalists was addressed by president of the press club Ismail Anjum, general secretary Rehmatullah Swati, senior journalist Abdullah Madani, social activist Akbar Khan and others. The speakers shed light on the freedom of expression and said that unfortunately Pakistan had become a dangerous place for working journalists. They said that several journalists were killed and injured in different parts of the country last year that showed that freedom of expression was not being honoured. The speakers demanded the government to ensure protection to the working journalists and announce financial packages for the martyred and injured journalists in the country.

Speech competition held

F.P. Report

ZHOB: As per the decision of the advisory committee of the National Assembly and in pursuance of directives by Secretary Education Balochistan, a speech competition 'My Constitution - Guarantee of my Freedom' was organized by the District Education Office Zhob here. The competition was held in order to celebrate the significance of the constitution in shaping the nation and guaranteeing the rights and freedom of the citizens.

A large number of students from both boys and girls' high schools of the district participated in the competition and presented their Urdu and English speeches. District Education Officer Lal Jan Musakhail was the chief guest of the completion event held at Model

Higher secondary school. Education department officers, headmistresses of various boys and girls' schools, female teachers and students in a large number attended the event.

Addressing the participants, EDO Education Lal Jan Musakhail, DOE Sheikh Musa Khan Mandokhail, DDOs Asadullah Mardanzai, Ajab Khan Kakar, Education Secretariat Officers Muhammad Asif Rajput, Mehmood Khan Uyghor, Shaista Khan Mandokhail, principal model higher secondary school Wazir Khan Nasar, principal Zhob Militia Gul Rehman Mandokhail and Abdul Qadeem Mandokhail highlighted the history, importance and significance of the constitution and said that the constitution was the guarantor of the rights of all segments of society, which has come into an existence to create balance in societies. 'The Constitution of 1973 is the manifestation of national consensus. It was passed by the National Assembly on April 10, 1973. Its golden jubilee is being celebrated country wide this year,' they said. They also appreciated the hard work and self-confidence of the students who delivered their speeches. The students also presented their heart-warming speeches and showcased their talent by putting their vibrant thoughts in their speeches. At the end of the ceremony, prizes were distributed among all the students, including Malaika, Attar-Rahman and Nabila, who clinched first, second and third positions respectively in Urdu speeches and Humira in English speeches.

Ban on flour transportation sparks fear of hunger in Kurram

F.P. Report

PARACHINAR: The tribal district of Karam is facing a serious flour shortage due to the ban on the delivery of flour from other districts, sparking fears of hunger among the residents. The ban has caused a disappearance of flour from small and big cities and markets in the district, leaving people worried about their basic sustenance needs.

According to sources, vehicles carrying flour to Karam District are being stopped in Payan District of Hangu District, as the authorities suspect that the

flour is being smuggled to Afghanistan. However, the locals are questioning this logic, as the dealers cannot even meet the basic requirement of flour for their region, let alone smuggle it to another country.

The price of an 80 kg bag of flour has exceeded 12 thousand rupees in the district, and after the current stock runs out, the residents fear extreme difficulties in meeting their food needs. The locals are now urging the government to take notice of the situation and start the delivery of flour from Punjab to all the dis-

tricts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially Karam district.

The dealers of Sada city have demanded that if the authorities believe that the flour is being smuggled to Afghanistan, then district Karam should have its own police, administration, and other security institutions. They have also demanded that the quota given to Karam district from all the flour mills of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa should be increased, and a fixed quota should be given by creating facilities.

The situation has also raised

questions about the competence of the police and other institutions in Karam district, as the dealers have become so strong that they are able to smuggle flour to Afghanistan during the day or in the darkness of night. The locals are urging the government to tighten border security and bring the smugglers to justice.

The government and the police have been urged not to ignore the bad prayers of the people and take immediate action to address the flour shortage in Karam district. The sustenance of the poor people should

not be ignored, and the delivery of flour to the district should be started without any excuse.

Meanwhile, the business community and citizens protested against the ban on import of flour and sugar from Hangu and Kohat district and demanded an immediate lifting of the ban.

Addressing the protest in Parchanar, the business community and other leaders, Haji Rauf Hussain, Haji Jameel Hussain, Irshad Bangsh Nazir Ahmad and other leaders said that there was a ban on bringing flour and sugar from Hingo and Kohat to

Kurram district, which is known as Kurram district. Flour and sugar have disappeared and the citizens are facing severe hardships. Due to this, the business community and the citizens have been forced to protest.

The leaders announced that if the problem is not resolved immediately, the protest will be closed. On the other hand, the district administration says that they are in contact with the administration of Hangu and Kohat to solve the problem and steps are being taken to solve the problem.



UN chief urges all nations to stop targeting media and truth

UNITED NATIONS (AP): The United Nations chief warned on the eve of World Press Freedom Day that the media is under attack in every corner of the world and urged all nations to stop the targeting of truth and those who report it. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the 50% increase in the killing of media workers in 2022 "unbelievable," stressing that freedom of the press "is the foundation of democracy and justice" and it is under threat.

At least 67 media workers were killed in 2022. In addition, digital platforms and social media have made it easier for extremists to push false narratives and harass journalists. "Truth is threatened by disinformation and hate speech seeking to blur the lines between fact and fiction, between science and conspiracy," Guterres said in a video message for the UN commemoration of 30th anniversary of World Press Freedom Day. It was first proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in December 1993 and authorized to be held every May 3. Guterres said the collapse of the media industry, which has led to closures of local news outlets and consolidation of media "into the hands of the few," is threatening freedom of expression. So are threatening new laws passed by governments worldwide, such as Russia's 2022 law that anyone publishing information about its military that Moscow deems to be false could face up to 15 years in prison.

Russia detained Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich in late March, accusing him of spying. Journal publisher Almar

Latour vehemently denied the accusation at commemoration. He said the Journal is "tremendously grateful" that President Joe Biden is personally working to secure Gershkovich's release. He added that his Russian lawyers have said, "Evan is thankful and reading every letter that he's getting at the moment." Former journalist and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Samantha Power, who now heads the US Agency for International Development, accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of not only wrongfully arresting Gershkovich but of targeting journalists elsewhere, including Ukraine, "where his forces have shelled broadcasting towers, seized editorial offices, and killed nine journalists" since the invasion on Feb. 24, 2022. Secretary-General Guterres strongly criticized the targeting of media workers both on and offline, saying they are routinely harassed, intimidated and detained. He added that nearly three-quarters of women journalists have experienced violence online and one-quarter have been threatened physically.

The secretary-general said the world must unite to stop threats, attacks and imprisonment of journalists for doing their jobs, and stop the lies and disinformation. "As journalists stand up for truth, the world stands up with them," he said. Audrey Azoulay, director-general of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which organized the commemoration, said the advent of the digital era has changed the entire information landscape. While digital platforms have provided new ways for

expression and information, she said, "they are also proving fertile ground for those who sow disinformation, hate speech and conspiracy theories."

"We find ourselves at a new crossroads," Azoulay said. "Our current path is leading us away from informed public debate ... towards even more polarization," she warned. "The other path is one we must imagine together, to ensure information can remain a public good, accessible to all." Azoulay said UNESCO in 2021 launched a model curriculum for teachers on media and information literacy "to develop critical mindsets to navigate these new flows."

Given that the business models of digital platforms are based on the number of clicks, she said, they "all too often favor sensationalism over truth." That's why UNESCO in February organized a global conference aimed at ensuring that technology promotes human rights and shared values "rather than harming them," which was attended by over 4,000 interested parties, Azoulay said. UNESCO plans to publish a set of guidelines later this year on the moderation and selection of online content - just as it did for broadcasting nearly 20 years ago, she said. UNESCO media expert Guilherme Canela De Souza Godoi told a news conference that commemoration is a kickoff for more than 60 events in 60 countries and over 40 events in New York City to highlight World Press Freedom Day and the unacceptable trend of declining media freedom and increasing attacks.

Authorities uphold legitimacy of election

PARAGUAY (Agencies): An international body charged with overseeing democracy and human rights in the Americas has affirmed that there is "no reason to question the results" of presidential election in Paraguay, where protests have broken out in support of the third-place candidate.

The Organization of American States (OAS) issued a statement saying it "did not observe serious incidents" or "interruptions in the processing of sensitive electoral information", nor did it find any deficiencies in the handling of election material.

Instead, it called "for all complaints and disagreements regarding the electoral process to be processed through institutional channels in accordance with the law and in a peaceful manner". The OAS statement came in the wake of protests in the capital of Asunción and elsewhere, after right-wing candidate Santiago Peña handily won the presidency on behalf of the long-ruling Colorado Party, securing nearly 43 percent of the vote. His centre-left rival Efraín Alegre received 27.5 percent of the votes, followed by right-wing pop-

ulist Paraguay Cubas, with 23 percent. Supporters of Cubas, however, took to the street to contest the election results, alleging fraud.

Outside the electoral court in Asunción, protesters lobbed rocks, and police responded with rubber bullets. Other demonstrators defaced billboards supporting Peña or burned tyres to block roadways. Most of the blockades, however, were removed. Cubas himself posted on social media, sharing a photo of prominent figures in the Colorado Party and calling them "thieves". He then cited a stretch of Paraguay's constitution, calling on citizens to "resist" so-called "usurpers", though he has not cited evidence or filed an official complaint of electoral fraud. "We are not satisfied. The elections were stolen from us. It's that simple," Cubas's wife, Senator-elect Yolanda Paredes, told reporters. Alegre, the second-place finisher, also took to social media to call for a partial manual recount to verify the vote, as well as an independent international audit. "We remain attentive and mobilized," Alegre wrote on Twitter. "The validity and legitimacy of the

proclamation of the results depends on the adoption of these measures to ensure that they faithfully reflect the popular will." Peña is set to be sworn in on August 15. A 44-year-old economist, Peña will become Paraguay's youngest president since before 1989, when a coup d'etat ended the 34-year rule of Alfredo Stroessner, leading to democratic reforms.

But his election continues a string of victories for the conservative Colorado Party, which has led Paraguay for much of the past 80 years. Peña is widely seen as a protégé of party leader Horacio Cartes, a businessman and former president who has faced United States sanctions for corruption. In a Twitter post, Peña emphasised the need for a peaceful transition of power. "Our priority will be for this process to be harmonious and calm," he wrote. Officials in Paraguay reiterated that election was conducted accurately. "There is no possibility of fraud," electoral tribunal spokesman Carlos Ljubetic told reporters. "The results of the election are the expression of the citizenry, whether we like it or not."

Calls for ceasefire at start of latest Colombia-ELN peace talks

HAVANA (Agencies): Colombia's government and the left-wing National Liberation Army (ELN) rebel group have begun their latest round of peace talks, with both sides saying they hope to reach a ceasefire agreement. Talks in Havana, Cuba, mark the start of the third round of negotiations and the most recent attempt to end decades of violence in Colombia.

Speaking from Madrid, Spain, Colombian President Gustavo Petro - a left-wing politician who entered office saying he would seek "total peace" in the country - outlined a proposal for a gradual ceasefire. "You can start with regional ceasefires and, as time goes by and trust is built, we can move on to extending them throughout the national territory," he said. A day earlier, the head of the ELN delegation, Pablo Beltrán, said a successful ceasefire is necessary to win over the confidence of the Colombian public. "We want ... the

Colombian people to see a ceasefire is possible, and that we have agreed to comply," Beltrán said. "This [would be] a preliminary ceasefire, not an end to the conflict, so we are interested in it working 100 percent. That is, zero errors."

The statement came after an ELN attack in late March killed nine Colombian soldiers and threatened to derail the negotiations just weeks after a second round had been completed in Mexico City. An initial round of talks took place in Caracas, Venezuela, late last year. While both sides had hailed progress at the end of those talks, Colombia's government has said March's ELN attack damaged confidence in the group's commitment to peace. Beltrán said that the attack was defensive, brought on by an "offensive campaign" from Colombia's military. He added that ELN fighters had also been killed since the latest round of talks. "For now, there is no ceasefire. And operations on

both sides continue," Beltrán said. Nevertheless, he said it "is possible to move forward" with dialogue under Petro, the country's first left-wing leader and a former M-19 rebel himself. "We feel like partners of the government," Beltrán said.

In a tweet, Cuba's foreign minister, Bruno Rodríguez, said that Havana looked forward to hosting the talks, which are being overseen by Mexico, Venezuela, Chile, Norway and Brazil. "We firmly believe that the Colombian people deserve peace and that they can achieve it," he said. The ELN, founded by Catholic priests in 1964, is the country's largest remaining rebel organisation. It is believed to have about 2,500 remaining fighters and has been accused of financing itself through drug trafficking, illegal mining and kidnappings. Negotiations with the group had faltered under previous administrations, usually due to dissent flaring within the group's ranks.

3 imprisoned Iranian female journalists win top UN prize

UNITED NATIONS (AP): The United Nations announced that its premier prize for press freedom has been awarded to three imprisoned Iranian female journalists "for their commitment to truth and accountability." The winners are Niloufar Hamedí who broke the news that 22-year-old Mahsa Amini died last September while being held by the morality police for wearing her headscarf too loosely, and Elaheh Mohammadi who wrote about her funeral.

Amini's death touched off months-long protests in dozens of cities across Iran. The demonstrations posed one of the most serious challenges to the Islamic Republic since the 2009 Green Movement protests drew millions to the streets. The third winner is Narges Mohammadi, who has worked for many years as a journalist and is one of Iran's most prominent activists. The UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization World Press Freedom Prize is named for Guillermo Cano, a Colombian journalist who was assassinated in front of the offices of his newspaper El Espectador in Bogotá on Dec. 17, 1986. UNESCO has awarded the prize to coincide with World Press Freedom Day on May 3 since 1997.

UNESCO Director General Audrey Azoulay announced the winners at a ceremony in New York, saying: "Now more than ever, it is important to pay tribute to all women journalists who are prevented from doing their jobs and who face threats and attacks on their personal safety." Zainab Salbi, chair of the international jury of media professionals that chose the winners, said the brave work of the three winners "led to a historical women-led revolution."

"They paid a hefty price for their commitment to report on and convey the truth," Salbi said. "And for that, we are committed to honoring them and ensuring their voices will continue to echo worldwide until they are safe and free." In late April, Iran's judiciary acknowledged that two reporters who broke news on Amini's death, Hamedí and Elaheh Mohammadi, had been indicted on charges of collaborating with the United States, acting against national security, and creating "propaganda against the system."

Explosion hits base in Iran, killing 2

DUBAI (AP): An explosion struck a base in Iran belonging to the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, killing two workers, local media reported. There was no word on any damages in the blast. The state-run IRNA news agency said the explosion occurred during a "movement of ammunition" at the Guard base on the outskirts of the city of Damghan, in northern Semnan province.

The report offered no other details about the source of the explosion. IRNA added that he incident was under investigation. The semi-official Fars news agency said on its Telegram media channel that two workers at the base were killed and three were wounded in the explosion. It identified the two killed by name but gave no other details. The Guard, whose expeditionary forces operate across the wider Middle East and aid Iranian-allied militant groups such as the Lebanese Hezbollah and the Palestinian Hamas group, and Iran's military have been targeted before, raising tensions in the region. In February, satellite photos showed damage to what Iran at the time describes as a military workshop targeted by Israeli drones, the latest such assault amid a shadow war between the two countries. Iran offered no explanation of what the workshop manufactured. International concerns have mounted over Tehran enriching uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels, with experts warning the Islamic Republic has enough fuel to build "several" atomic bombs if it chooses.

Sudan crisis sparks fresh wave of Darfur refugees into Chad

DARFUR (BBC): The exhausted faces of the people who have just crossed the Sudanese border into Chad encapsulate the devastation and suffering they have experienced. This is not just a result of the fighting that erupted on 15 April between Sudan's two leading generals but also of two decades of conflict in the country's Darfur region.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that more than 100,000 people have fled the latest round of violence - the largest number have gone to Chad. Darfur has been in turmoil for years with violence between its various African and Arab communities. When non-Arabs took up arms against the government in 2003, complaining about discrimination, the government retaliated by mobilising mostly Arab militias who were accused of widespread atrocities.

Now Arab militias - linked to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the paramilitary group that is fighting the army - appear to be taking advantage of the security vacuum. They have been accused of unleashing violence that has led to an exodus of people from Darfur. Some have ended up in a temporary refugee camp in the Chadian village of Koufroune. An estimated 8,000 are at the camp, having managed to flee with a few of their belongings and livestock, a valuable asset that could help ease the hardship.

Mahmoud Adam Hamad made two dangerous trips last week across the border to bring his two wives and eight children from Darfur. "I made my journey mainly at night. I brought them in, moving from one location to another with my family until we arrived. "I was nearly robbed on the second trip," he tells the BBC, standing next to his temporary shelter made up of sticks and plastic sheeting. His village was previously attacked in Darfur. He lost his farm and animals and some of his relatives were killed by a militia known as the Janjaweed. "We were beaten and lashed. We begged them for our release."

Mr Hamad says about how, at the time, he fled from village to vil-



lage and crossed into Chad. He later took his family back to Darfur thinking it was safe. "We barely managed to return home and start a new life when this fighting forced us to run again." He is now earning a little money in the camp by using his cart to transport the belongings of other refugees. He uses the cash to buy extra food. Ibrahim Bashir Ebra, 83 and his wife, Maka Naseem Taber, 70, sit in the shade of a plastic sheet flapping in the wind offering them some respite from the extreme heat. They are surrounded by their belongings covered in blankets to protect them from the dust.

They lost their livelihoods in the Darfur conflict after their farm was raided in 2003 and their livestock were stolen. In a later attack three of their children were kidnapped and they have no idea where they are. "I became destitute without a home and totally dependent on others," Mr Ebra says. What forced him to move a fortnight ago was a militia attack on his village that killed many people. "The whole village was burned to the ground. I was evacuated by a cart and brought here," he adds, pointing out that arthritis makes it impossible for him to move on his own. His wife turns to him and asks: "What do you think about our future from now on?" "There's no government in Darfur, only the militias, who are killing, rap-

ing and kidnapping. Only God knows what there is in store for us," Mr Ebra responds.

He says he will "never" go back. "I am safe here; I am happy fetching water from this valley to drink. What would I earn from going back? I am a frail 83 years old, but mentally tough." For now, they are being looked after by UN agencies, including the World Food Programme (WFP). Tens of thousands of more refugees are expected and there are fears that the fighting in Darfur could snowball into a full-blown conflict. Chad already hosts more than a million displaced people, including nearly 400,000 Sudanese refugees from Darfur. The race is now on to get support to the camps before the rainy season begins, WFP country director Pierre Honnorat says. "This is very much needed because in a few weeks, the road to come and assist them will be very very difficult. That's really the issue, we have to have the resources to be able to support them," he tells the BBC. The refugees in Koufroune may have reached safety, but like so many Sudanese their future lies in the hands of two generals fighting over their country. They are under intense diplomatic pressure to negotiate an end to the conflict, or risk plunging Sudan into a civil war that could be worse than those in Libya and Syria.

Senator urges release of new US report on killing of Abu Akleh

WASHINGTON (Agencies): A Maryland senator has called on the administration of President Joe Biden to give legislators access to a report from the United States Security Coordinator (USSC) about the killing of Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. Democrat Chris Van Hollen said that he sent a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken urging him to make the assessment "available immediately for Congressional review."

"I ask that you immediately authorize the release of the full and unedited USSC Report under appropriate classification to me and other interested Members of Congress," the senator wrote to Blinken. The Biden administration has not acknowledged the existence of the report, and it is not clear when the report was submitted. But Van Hollen said his office had been in contact with individuals at the State Department over the matter for the past 12 days. The USSC oversees and encourages security coordination between Israeli and Palestinian officials. The US State Department did not immediately respond to Al Jazeera's request for comment.

In his letter to Blinken, dated May 1, Van Hollen raised concerns that the government may alter the report.

"Most recently, we were informed that, before congressional release of the USSC Report is authorized, the Administration plans to make unspecified changes to its contents," the letter reads. "While the Administration has characterized its proposed changes as 'technical,' any actions to alter the USSC's Summation Report in any way would violate the integrity of this process."

Axios first reported on Van Hollen's letter earlier before it was publicly released. Abu Akleh, a US citizen, was fatally shot by Israeli forces during a raid in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin on May 11, 2022. Her killing spurred worldwide condemnation and demands for justice. US officials, including President Joe Biden, have called for accountability in the case, but critics say the US has not done enough to pressure its Israeli allies to ensure justice for the slain journalist.

Washington has rejected efforts to seek accountability for the killing of Abu

Akleh at the International Criminal Court (ICC). Israel, which rights groups accuse of imposing a system of apartheid on Palestinians, receives at least \$3.8bn in US security assistance annually. In its first and only public assessment of the shooting so far, the USSC said last July that the Israeli military "was likely responsible for the death of Shireen Abu Akleh". It found, however, "no reason to believe that this was intentional but rather the result of tragic circumstances". That conclusion was not a result of a full investigation, US officials said at the time, explaining that it served as a summary of Israeli and Palestinian probes. A Palestinian Authority investigation had said weeks earlier that Israeli forces deliberately fired at Abu Akleh "with the aim to kill". In September 2022, Israel said there was a "high possibility" its army fired at Abu Akleh but dismissed the killing as accidental and refused to launch a criminal investigation into the incident.

US officials welcomed the Israeli assessment at that time and called on Israel to review its military rules of engagement to

avoid similar shootings in the future, a demand that was openly rejected by Israeli leaders. US and Israeli outlets reported in November that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had launched an investigation into Abu Akleh's killing, and Israeli officials had vowed not to cooperate with the purported US probe. But the US Department of Justice (DOJ) has declined to confirm the investigation, and the State Department distanced itself from it, referring questions to the DOJ. Abu Akleh's supporters will observe the first anniversary of her death on May 11, a week after World Press Freedom Day on Wednesday.

In his letter to Blinken, Van Hollen praised the slain veteran Al Jazeera reporter as a "respected and professional journalist", noting that she posthumously received the US National Press Club's President's Award last year. "As we approach the one year anniversary of Ms. Abu Akleh's death, no one has been held accountable and no independent, official investigation has been completed," Van Hollen wrote.

Kishida plans to visit Yoon in South Korea before G-7

TOKYO (AP): Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said he is arranging a trip to South Korea for talks with President Yoon Suk Yeol in return for his March visit to Tokyo, aiming to further strengthen their ties before the upcoming summit of the Group of Seven industrialized nations. Tokyo and Seoul have been working to repair relations that were strained over wartime history disputes as they deepen three-way security cooperation with Washington in response to growing regional threats from North Korea and China.

Speaking to reporters in Ghana as part of his trip to Africa and Singapore, Kishida said he hopes to visit May 7-8 and exchange views with Yoon on ways to speed up the strengthening of bilateral ties and discuss regional and global issues. "If my South Korea visit is achieved ahead of the G-7 summit, I expect it will be a great opportunity to give impetus to our shuttle diplomacy" and

have a heart-to-heart exchange of our views on accelerating Japan-South Korea ties and drastically changing the global situation," said Kishida, who is hosting the May 19-21 G-7 summit in Hiroshima. Later, both governments confirmed Kishida's trip and their talks in Seoul.

Yoon's office said Kishida will make a "working visit" to South Korea with his wife, Yuko Kishida, following the president's invitation during his Tokyo visit in March, marking a fresh start in their diplomacy. Kishida's office said talks between the leaders were scheduled. Kishida will be the first Japanese leader to visit South Korea since former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe attended the Pyeongchang Olympics in February 2018. The two leaders are expected to focus on cooperation and responses to North Korea's nuclear and missile development. Japan and South Korea want to ensure their relationship is on track for a considerable recovery ahead of the G-7

summit, where Yoon is invited as one of eight outreach nations. The two leaders are also expected to hold a trilateral meeting with US President Joe Biden on the sidelines. But later, Japan's Foreign Ministry said it strongly protested to South Korea's embassy in Tokyo over a trip by South Korean opposition lawmakers to a disputed island called Takeshima in Japan and Dokdo in South Korea. Seoul controls the island, which continues to strain ties between the nations, including when then-South Korean President Lee Myung-bak visited it in 2012.

The ministry said the visit by the opposition lawmakers to the island was "absolutely unacceptable and extremely regrettable." Washington has been stepping up cooperation with its key Asian allies. Yoon was in Washington last week and won stronger US commitment on extended nuclear deterrence, including improved information sharing and nuclear submarine visits to South Korea.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. was at the White House and Biden reiterated US commitment to the Philippines' security and noted the "deep friendship" of the two nations. Ties between Japan and South Korea have improved rapidly since March, when Yoon's government announced plans to use South Korean funds to compensate forced laborers without requiring contributions from Japan. The plan aims to end a dispute stemming from South Korean court rulings in 2018 that ordered Japanese companies to compensate Korean workers for abusive treatment and forced labor during World War II, when the Korean Peninsula was a Japanese colony. Since Yoon's trip to Japan in March, Tokyo and Seoul have mostly resolved their trade disputes. The two sides also held the first talks between their finance ministers in seven years, seeking strengthened cooperation in resilient supply chains amid China's growing influence.

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Climate change and cost of global inaction

FEDERAL Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Senator Sherry Rehman has noted that global records are being broken by climate change, while actions taken to match pledges fall short. According to the Pakistani Chief Strategist against Climate Change, humanity is in a race against time, and gatherings like COP28 are crucial in dispelling the growing climate cynicism that has taken hold across the world, particularly among the youth. Sherry was of the view that it is imperative that we move beyond talk and take action, especially in the case of countries and big businesses that failed to align with global carbon budgets and Paris Agreement goals. At the Petersberg Climate Dialogue in Berlin, Sherry told the gathering that Pakistan is fully aligned with the commitments of the Paris Agreement, and we look forward to a real change in the glacial pace of climate finance, adaptation, and mitigation in our collective efforts. Developing countries like Pakistan are actually facing climate catastrophe but face significant obstacles in securing the necessary funding to meet their climate goals.

Climate change is posing an existential threat to mankind to gather with all living organisms including animals, sea life, and other creators in the universe, while no nation is secure from the disastrous impact of global warming, and the risk deepens every passing day. The international community is aware of the challenge which confronts the survival of the earth and nations across the world had set a comprehensive plan of action under the Paris Accord dated back in 2015. A worldwide UN-led campaign is currently underway to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the worst effects of global warming in the world. However, there is a lack of seriousness and sustentation of commitments on the part of certain nations, particularly the developed nations that are shedding their responsibility and reluctant to uphold their pledges in respect of investment of resources in climate change projects in Asia and Africa. The Western nations are in a delusion that global warming is a problem of developing countries and has the least impact on them. This serious misperception of the developed states has seriously undermined the global efforts to combat climate change and the international community could not achieve its landmark climate change goals so far.

As of today, the developed countries received 52% of the climate finance in 2022, while developing nations only received 48 percent of the available funds even though developing countries present nearly 80% population of the world. It is alarming that developing countries including Pakistan are highly vulnerable to climate change but have limited access to international climate finance. According to statistics, Pakistan needs \$ 348 billion in funds between 2022 to 2030, which is 10.7% of its cumulative GDP to meet its climate needs. At the same time, the overall tally of global climate financing illustrates that 78 developing nations require a staggering amount of \$ 6 trillion until 2030 to accomplish their financial needs under the Paris Accord.

Historically, the in-action and bigotry of the developed nations are rapidly multiplying the fatality of the impending disaster, while there are still multiple queries about the decisions adopted by the COP-27 and recently created Loss and Damage (F&D) Fund that aimed at providing crucial financial assistance to the victim nations of the Climate-induced disasters including floods, earthquake, droughts, and deforestation, etc. The global community is still far to comprehend its proclamations made during the past summits, while global leaders are again scheduled to weigh the pros and cons of global climate change policy during the COP-28 in UAE. Whilst, the mountainous cost of inaction is projected to reach \$ 23 trillion by 2050 if the conditions persist in the coming years.

Indeed, global warming is a common hazard to the universe and it equally hurts all nations irrespective of their geographical locations, environmental conditions, and economic and technological growth. The incapacities of the poor and the inaction of the well-off countries have the same disastrous effects on all communities around the globe. The climate change agenda is a collective responsibility of the global community that merits urgent actions by all stakeholders to tackle the worst effects of heat and ensure the safe survival of all nations. It is high time that the global community must take action to reduce the worsening impacts of global warming and work to build a resilient, sustainable, and thriving future for all human beings on Earth.

Syria-Turkiye normalization more complicated than anticipated

Ghassan Ibrahim

THE process of rapprochement between Syria and Turkiye faces obstacles, making the normalization of relations between the two countries more complex and demanding than anticipated. The Russian Defense Ministry announced last week that the defense ministers of Russia, Iran, Syria and Turkiye had held quadrilateral talks in Moscow regarding "strengthening security in Syria and normalizing Syrian-Turkish relations."

However, unlike the tripartite summit of the defense ministers of Turkiye, Russia and Syria, which took place last December, the most recent meeting did not indicate a state of harmony and positive prospects.

Conflicting statements by Syria and Turkiye released after the meeting reflect a decline in the aspirations - as previously suggested by the Russian and Turkish media - for an immediate breakthrough between the two neighbors. Syria's statements addressed several issues, the most important

of which was the need for the Turkish army to withdraw from its lands as a prelude to a solution. Currently, the Turkish army is stationed in the northern part of Syria. Its military units are deployed in the province of Idlib, in northern Aleppo and as far east as Tal Abyad and Ras Al-Ain. Several dozen small military bases have been established in these areas.

Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Ayman Sousan called for "actions, not words, to restore normal relations with Turkiye." He said: "At the forefront of these actions is the explicit and clear commitment to respecting the sovereignty, unity and integrity of the Syrian lands and, secondly, the withdrawal of the Turkish occupation forces from all lands, and stop supporting terrorism."

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu confirmed that his country's forces would not be withdrawing from Iraq or Syria at this time. "Our withdrawal from northern Iraq and northern Syria means ceasing our military operations against

terrorism and the approach of terrorists to our borders, which constitutes a threat to our national security," he said.

Ankara supports the alliance of the so-called Syrian National Army, which the Syrian regime considers a terrorist organization. It has called for its dismantling. On the other hand, Turkiye accuses Damascus of supporting Kurdish militias and has called for their liquidation. Cavusoglu stressed that terrorist groups will fill the void if Turkish forces were to withdraw from northern Syria and that national security and border security are paramount to Ankara. He believes his country will not withdraw as long as the Kurdish People's Protection Units and Kurdistan Workers' Party, known as the PKK, exist in Syria and Iraq. His statements indicate that there will be no withdrawal of troops in the near future, as the Turkish-Kurdish conflict has been going on for decades and will certainly not end soon.

These two conflicting announcements indicate that the road to normalization has entered a stage of complexity that will be difficult to solve in the short term. If the situation remains stagnant, it could backfire and lead to an escalation between the two countries, destroying the chances of a quick resolution. Turkiye fears that Syria will support the PKK or its Syrian affiliates if there is no rapprochement between the two countries. Ankara also fears that, if it stops supporting the Syrian opposition, Islamist groups linked to the former Al-Nusra Front will take control of northwest Syria and Kurdish forces will maintain control of the north-east.

On the other hand, even if Ankara insists on maintaining its military presence in Syria, it must show flexibility toward Damascus during the Turkish election period. The ruling Justice and Development Party believes that a meeting between the leaders of

Turkiye and Syria could help it win this month's elections and keep President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in power. Such a meeting would indicate to Turkish voters that the Syrian refugees will eventually return home, increasing Erdogan's popularity and improving his chances of electoral success. Damascus, meanwhile, bets on the victory of the Turkish opposition leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu, which is why it is trying to delay a possible leaders' summit.

Moscow supports Erdogan and also maintains good relations with Bashar Assad. It seems to be trying to bring the two sides closer together without putting on too much pressure. If Vladimir Putin maintains a moderate approach in his dealings with both countries, dialogue and normalization talks could go on for a very long time without significant results. If, however, the Russian president manages to convince Assad to meet with Erdogan and accept the Turkish presence in northwest Syria, the path of rapprochement may bring

tangible results. If there is no summit between the two heads of state, we will most likely hear of several inconclusive rounds of three and four-party talks in the future. These normalization meetings may become similar to the Astana track, which began in 2017 but ultimately failed to achieve the desired results.

The road between Ankara and Damascus is not easy to navigate. Logically, high stakes cannot be placed on the dialogue achieving immediate results. The key to a solution is in Putin's hands, but his preoccupation with Ukraine could make this issue less urgent. Work on the Turkish-Syrian rapprochement may, therefore, remain on the back burner. Despite the lack of official normalization between Syria and Turkiye, the period of serious conflicts and armed clashes has ended and we have now entered a phase of cautious reservations. Both countries will ultimately have no choice but to gradually come to a solution. However, that is still a long way off.

The future of work will be disruptive

Saadia Zahidi

IT is hard to overestimate how tumultuous the last few years have been for workers around the world. A pandemic led to lockdowns for most people and then cautious, partial returns to work or job losses in industries that never fully recovered. Almost immediately, this was followed by the disruption of war and soaring energy and food prices, causing a decline in real wages.

Technology adoption, already accelerating before and during the pandemic, potentially poses a new wave of transformation, especially to white-collar work through the rise of generative artificial intelligence. And now a strong push for a much-needed green transformation is also leading to expectations of future displacement in carbon-intensive roles in favor of growth in emerging green jobs and skills. Each new change alone would be difficult for affected workers to navigate, but together they have disrupted livelihoods broadly and created widespread uncertainty about the future. When uncertainty is this high, forecasting can help, not to generate firm predictions but to provide ways of thinking about the challenges ahead and preparing better for the multiple futures that may unfold.

The World Economic Forum's "The Future of

Jobs Report 2023," released on Sunday, assesses the impact of macro trends as well as technological change on jobs and skills over the next five years and finds that nearly a quarter of all jobs (23 percent) globally will change in the next five years. Across 45 economies, covering 673 million workers, 69 million new jobs are expected to be created and 83 million to be eliminated, a net decrease of 14 million jobs, or 2 percent of current employment. In the Middle East and North Africa, 21 percent of jobs will change - 11 percent growth and 10 percent decline. Investment in the green transition, as well as increasing consumer awareness of sustainability issues, will create new opportunities. Roles from renewable energy engineers, solar energy installation and systems engineers to sustainability specialists and environmental protection professionals will be in high demand, translating to the growth of approximately 1 million jobs.

The largest absolute gains in jobs will come from education (3 million jobs) and agriculture (4 million jobs), driven in part by demographics and in part by applications of new technologies in these fields. The new economic geography created by shifting supply chains and a greater focus on resilience over

efficiency is also expected to create net job growth, with wins for economies in Asia and the Middle East especially. Technology will create structural churn, with a quarter of companies seeing job decline from new technology adoption and more than half seeing job growth. But the human-machine frontier is shifting to new terrain. While expectations of the displacement of physical and manual work by machines has decreased, tasks requiring reasoning, communicating and coordinating - all traits with a comparative advantage for humans - are expected to be more automatable in the future.

This is not surprising. Generative AI is expected to be adopted by nearly 75 percent of surveyed companies and is second only to humanoid and industrial robots in terms of expectations of job losses, most likely to affect bank tellers, cashiers, clerks, secretaries and accounting. Yet the biggest threat to jobs is still seen to come not from technology, but slowing economic growth, the rising costs of inputs and weaker purchasing power among consumers. We also find that almost half of an individual's skills - 44 percent - will need to change on average across all jobs. The skills with the highest share of companies reporting

growing demand include analytical and creative thinking, followed by technological literacy, curiosity and lifelong learning, resilience and flexibility, systems thinking and AI and big data. Skills with less demand include global citizenship, sensory processing abilities and manual dexterity, endurance and precision.

In the Middle East and North Africa, the change in core skills will be 43 percent, lower than the global average, and companies are prioritizing analytical thinking, creative thinking and AI and big data for reskilling and upskilling workers. For many individuals, the concurrent shift in the wider economic environment, the integration of new technologies at work and the expectation of future uncertainty translates into frustration with current job prospects, fear about future ones and despair about growing economic disparity in the future. For many companies, there is concern about the talent required to thrive in the new context: 60 percent of companies are concerned about skills gaps and 54 percent worry about being able to attract talent. And for governments, particularly those that have underinvested in education and lifelong learning systems thus far, human capital will

become the key impediment to navigating the new economic landscape.

How, then, should learners, workers, employers and governments prepare for the future of jobs? In a technology-intensive, greener and potentially deglobalizing world, local skills development will matter more than ever.

For today's students, analytical and interpersonal skills as well as the ability to understand and work with technology will be critical. Every student - regardless of their chosen fields - should aim to build these generalist skills to be ready for a rapidly changing future. For today's workers in declining fields, there is a major reskilling and transition effort needed, whereas for those in changing or growing fields there is a need for upskilling and developing the ability for constant learning. The good news is that skilling is possible fast and online learning can offer a level playing field: Workers from all education levels - including those without college or graduate education - take the same time to acquire online skill credentials.

However, it cannot be on individual learners and workers alone to negotiate a complex new terrain. Governments must provide resources and a roadmap. This presents a major and unprecedented dual chal-

lenge for policymaking. Governments must balance support for innovation with the regulation needed to make new technologies safe and, at the same time, support workers through safety nets, care systems and job centers, while making major investments in skilling systems, rapid certifications and partnerships with the education sector, businesses and non-profits alike, to drive change at scale. Employers must play their part through investment in reskilling and upskilling. Most expect to see a return on investment within one year, making training the most effective and responsible course of action. The best employers go further, supporting workers' transitions outside the company when required, prioritizing safety and well-being, fostering diversity, equity and inclusion, and placing a premium on taking a skills-first approach over one that prioritizes qualifications or job history. Employers that take these actions close skills gaps faster and are proven to enhance loyalty, productivity and motivation. There is no doubt that the future of work will be disruptive. But it need not be dystopian. Instead, it can be an opportunity to lay the foundations for putting people firmly at the center of the new global economy.

Cleopatra was Egyptian - whether Black or brown matters less

Islam Issa

IT'S just a two-minute clip. But the intense reactions to the trailer of Netflix's upcoming Queen Cleopatra docudrama speak volumes about both Cleopatra's enduring legacy and the strength of identity politics. The trailer was met with immediate accusations of falsifying history. Social media hashtags and online petitions were followed by an Egyptian lawyer filing a complaint with the public prosecutor against Netflix, which for its part reportedly closed comments on the clip's YouTube page.

Mine is the only Egyptian voice on the programme. My multigenerational Alexandrian background, on both sides, is key to my passion for Cleopatra. As an historian, I have spent endless days studying and contemplating the queen, not least when completing my book, Alexandria: The City that Changed the World. Some things about Cleopatra are simply fact. That she was of Macedonian-Greek background is beyond doubt. That the Ptolemies intermarried and largely kept their bloodline Hellenic cannot be denied. That almost all of her ancestors would have been fair-skinned is also true. But the largely binary racial terms being used today are anachronistic and can hardly be applied to Cleopatra's context. With the exception of Jews, ethnicities weren't really recorded in early Egyptian history. In Alexandria especially, there was no normative race: genetic makeup was varied as people from

across the region, from Europeans to Nubians, lived and married on its lands.

To claim that Egypt had no dark-skinned people in it, or that the origins of Egyptian civilisations were fundamentally sub-Saharan African, are essentially both forms of erasure. There are also some things about which we cannot be sure. We do not know for certain the identity of Cleopatra's mother and the queen's grandmothers on both sides. In fact, Alexandrians at the time referred to her father as "Nothos", or "the Bastard".

All of this is important because the Ptolemies, including Cleopatra's grandfather and father, were well known to have Egyptian partners and mistresses. There is a chance, therefore, that several of Cleopatra's ancestors could have been Egyptian. It is this enigmatic nature of Cleopatra's grandmothers and her mother that suggests that Cleopatra may have had mixed heritage, which would have tanned her skin complexion. And as curly hair is a dominant gene, an Egyptian ancestor may have changed the Ptolemaic line in that way, too. As I detail in my book, DNA samples recovered in Egypt from the New Kingdom to the Roman Period reveal that Egyptians had predominantly southern European and Near Eastern ancestry; sub-Saharan African ancestry didn't exceed 15 percent in the ancient times and doesn't exceed 21 percent in Egypt today. So it's safe to say that even with some Egyptian heritage, in

today's terms she wouldn't have been Black but biracial. That the Library of Alexandria was destroyed and so much of the ancient city is underwater or underground means that limited material evidence exists. This lack of physical evidence of her life adds to the vacuum that has been filled through myth and speculation.

We do know that Cleopatra, the last pharaoh, was born in Alexandria where her family had been ruling for three centuries. It is an embodiment of Greek-Egyptian hybridity that allowed Cleopatra to become a powerful uniting figure: her mix of Greek and Egyptian attire, her proficiency in the Egyptian language, and her position as the incarnation of the goddess Isis. But to the Romans, she was a foreigner at the heart of their civil war and biased Roman sources had to present a worthy enemy to justify how a woman was able to wield influence over two of their most prominent men - Julius Caesar and Mark Antony.

Over the centuries, Cleopatra has served as a conduit for people throughout history - and today is no different. Visual art tells us as much. During the Middle Ages, she was represented as blonde; during the neoclassical craze, stereotypically Hellenic; during colonialism, she lays passively in need of a European to save or conquer her; during slavery, she is a servant being examined by Julius Caesar. It is no surprise that this

continues through today as she is portrayed during a moment when systemic racism is being called out like never before. Even my own perception might be influenced by my Egyptian roots. But that perception has also pushed me to empower Cleopatra by offering a different narrative to the one popularised in Shakespeare and Hollywood. A few years ago, I presented a BBC television documentary in which I attempted to understand her true nature.

Her rationale was that Cleopatra has for too long been exoticised and sexualised and that this is a far cry from the queen I learned about as an Egyptian child: to me, as in many ancient sources, she was always a powerful, educated and dynamic woman. I also curated an exhibition at Shakespeare's birthplace showing how she has been presented in English literary archives in comparison to Egyptian perspectives. In both of these cases, reclaiming Cleopatra as an Egyptian queen was at the forefront of my mind. But her skin colour wasn't. When Netflix asked me to contribute, I was eager to provide an Egyptian voice on the show - and as it turns out, the only one.

Contributors were approached before the actors were confirmed, details about actors were for a large period under embargo, and contributors were not informed about the other guests. My interview was completed after the acting was filmed, so

the drama couldn't fully utilise my views to inform its artistic project. I recall describing her barge as something of a superyacht with its colours and musicians and dancers on board but being told that this explanation couldn't be included because that scene had already been filmed with a more modest boat. Queen Cleopatra is a docudrama, not a fully-fledged documentary. Though they are interspersed, we must separate the drama from the documentary side. Unless we are expecting every detail to be entirely accurate in the acted segments, how can we treat those parts as anything but drama? Cleopatra may indeed have had mixed heritage, but whether or not that was the case, the fact that she is portrayed by a biracial actor is a casting choice that shouldn't distress us in this day and age. In the past, Cleopatra has been portrayed by white actors (not to mention by boy actors in Shakespeare's time), and the end product remained successful. Am I disappointed that the casting has since been politicised by the director (with whom I've never spoken)? I would be lying if I said I wasn't. Besides, what right does she have to tell Egyptians how to view themselves?

As for the documentary segments, which form less than half of the programme, I expect these to be present different, and I hope intellectual, perspectives and interpretations. These include mine on the importance of recognising Cleopatra's Egyptian-ness.

Obsessing over how a powerful woman looked is ironically reductionist and objectifying in itself, so the documentary part should shed light on her entire, fascinating life, not just how she may have looked. Nonetheless, the trailer shows me saying that I imagine Cleopatra to have curly hair and a similar skin complexion to mine. It's not too dissimilar to how Christians around the world present the historical figure of Jesus diversely. And in the fuller context, I say that the enigmatic natures of her ancestry and legacy - both of which I have detailed in my history of Alexandria - have long encouraged people to visualise her in different ways.

Like art, history is nuanced; it has the capacity to inspire and enrage. And the past is a mirror into our present. The heightened responses to this two-minute trailer say more about the historical moment in which we live. Here, we see how engaging with history has helped us learn about ourselves and what matters to us. Scholarly enquiry, though, is based on weighing up the available evidence, and that shouldn't be something controversial.

Even Cleopatra's foremost European biographer, Egyptology professor Joyce Tyldesley, writes that Cleopatra "possibly had some Egyptian genes" and that she is "most likely to have had dark hair and an olive or light brown complexion". So maybe what I imagine, as I say in the trailer, isn't that far off - though of course, we will never know.

A general election cannot come soon enough for the British people

THERE was a sense of inevitability about the end of the political career, at least for now, of Dominic Raab, Britain's deputy prime minister and justice minister. For months, if not years, stories about his aggressive style of managing the governmental departments he was in charge of circulated on the Westminster village rumor mill. They were eventually referred to an independent investigator, Adam Tolley, who produced a detailed and very unflattering report on Raab's behavior. Tolley concluded that Raab had acted in an "intimidating" and "aggressive" way toward officials that amounted to bullying.

From there on, there were two options: for Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to sack Raab or for the latter to do the honorable thing and resign. To the relief of Sunak, his colleague last month chose to leave of his own accord - sort of - and saved himself the additional ignominy of being given his marching orders. However, Raab then wasted whatever was left of his shattered dignity by attacking civil servants and claiming that they were out to get him.

To the bitter end, Raab showed no sense of self-reflection, remorse or humility. This episode is a perfect summation of the state of the governing Conservative Party and it further adds to the general malaise in British society. So many Britons are utterly dismayed at the government's incompetence, which ranges from its inability to curb the damaging cost-of-living crisis it has inflicted on the country to its flawed evacuation of British nationals from war-torn Sudan. And they are equally appalled by the government's lack of integrity and decency.

As disturbing and concerning as

this case of bullying by a senior member of the Cabinet may be, it is only a symptom of the latest edition of a Conservative government that is at a loss about taking any action in response to the mounting challenges the country is facing, while it is also tainted by corruption and the arrogance of power. This is typically the sign of a party that has been in power too long and has run out of ideas.

The Sunak government is barely six months old, but Raab's is already the third Cabinet departure for questionable behavior. Gavin Williamson, a close ally of the prime minister, resigned last year after a string of allegations over his bullying conduct and other misdemeanors. And Nadim Zahawi, the Tory party chairman and former chancellor, was sacked earlier this year for failing to convincingly explain his tax affairs. Considering that the conduct and finances of Sunak (another recent chancellor) are also currently under official investigation, good governance appears to be extremely questionable in this government.

The more I look at the current state of British politics, the more it reminds me of the time leading up to the 1997 general election and the subsequent decisive victory of Tony Blair's Labour Party. Back then, on one side of the dispatch box was a tired Tory government that a few years earlier had disposed of the charismatic and powerful Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, but above all it was a divided party haunted by its inability to put to rest its deep divisions over EU membership. One corruption scandal followed another and the government of John Major became more and more detached from the realities and concerns of ordinary people. Now, a

Yossi Mekelberg

quarter of a century later, the third Conservative prime minister in as many years, who was selected by his party but not the people, barely enjoys any credibility following the disastrous spell in 10 Downing Street of Boris Johnson, who managed to obliterate his own 2019 electoral success, and the devastating 46 days in office of Liz Truss that trashed the UK economy - a disaster for which the British people will be paying for years to come.

The date for the next general election is still unknown, but it cannot be held later than mid-December 2024, which is a long time for a lame duck prime minister and his incompetent Cabinet to see out in the face of the mounting challenges the country is facing, especially while the Conservative Party is still at war with itself. While the rancor among the Tories, who remain divided over Europe, might subside somewhat, it is painfully obvious that none of the promises of a post-Brexit paradise made by Johnson and company will ever come good. Instead, shortages of goods are common and inflation is persistently above 10 percent, resulting in constant hikes in interest rates that are hitting homeowners and businesses very hard. There is something deceptive even in this worrisome figure, as prices of basic foodstuffs have rocketed even higher, some by as much as 100 percent, hitting low-income families the hardest, as is the case with the phenomenal increases in energy prices. Government spokespeople keep blaming all this on the COVID-19 pandemic or the war in Ukraine, while conveniently ignoring that, last month, inflation in the eurozone stood at 6.9 percent, while in the US it stood at 5 percent, which suggests that, in the UK, at

least some of the problem is home-grown and is down to Brexit and the subsequent actions - or inaction - of the government.

People being forced into poverty, or at least struggling to make ends meet, is one side of the cost-of-living crisis, while on the other side are the continuing widespread strikes by public sector workers, including those in health, education and transport, which are adding to the daily misery of Britain in 2023. In response, the government seems to be out of sorts. As a result, pollsters are putting Labour 18 points ahead of the Tories. And there are also signs that a clear majority of Britons regret leaving the EU, which a small but influential number of Conservatives had wanted for decades. A recent YouGov survey suggests that 55 percent of the British people believe it was wrong to leave and only 32 percent still think it was right. This might play a major role in the next election, as will the fact that most people support the current round of strikes, despite the inconvenience they cause, out of sympathy with the hardships so many of the workers are having to endure.

For now, it is understandable for Labour to be cautious about introducing a radical agenda so far ahead of the next election, even though the Tories are doing so much to make themselves unelectable, as was the case in 1997. Nevertheless, Labour will pretty soon have to up its game and reveal its cards, offering a coherent agenda and a route out of the mess it will inherit from its predecessor. And if it wants to emulate the Labour class of 1997, it will have to hit the ground running with a bold, grand plan fit for the 21st century, because the public is clearly ready for a fresh start - and the sooner the better.



Why this former republican will be tuning into King's coronation

Sunder Katwala

As a teenager, I was in favor of scrapping the monarchy for a republic. That had seemed simple common sense, at first. Why should the highest role in the land only be open to those who were born to it? My parents came to the UK from Ireland and India - both became republics after securing their independence from Britain. Maybe I figured that, if I wasn't going to be a republican, who on earth was?

Fast forward a few decades and I will be one of those watching the coronation. I have changed my mind about the monarchy. The coronation of King Charles is an important moment in history, part of a tradition that stretches back almost a thousand years - and the first time that most of us, everybody under 70, will get to witness this ceremony. So why did I change my mind? Realizing that most people did not seem to agree with my teenage self, I tried to think about why that was. A "democratic monarchy" may sound like a paradox - but a "constitutional monarchy" like ours does have democratic legitimacy, as long as it retains broad public consent. Opponents often say this reflects pro-royal propaganda and media bias. But I don't find the idea that the public is duped into supporting the monarchy convincing.

And the pro-republic case is too much a rational tiding-up exercise - removing something distinctive about Britain, to

make us that little bit more like everywhere else. I also came to think of our symbolic monarchy as largely harmless. It does not determine big questions - like Brexit or Scottish independence. The intuition that it may legitimize inequality seems weaker if you realize that some of the most equal societies - like Sweden - have monarchies, while some of the most unequal - like the US - are republics. More recently, after a decade of stark political polarization, there should be less emphasis on seeing the institution as a harmless symbolic decoration - and more on how it can be socially useful. The monarchy's limited constitutional role is fixed, but its civic role can evolve. In an individualistic, somewhat fragmented era, there are not many things - beyond the biggest sporting events and major royal occasions - when 20 million of us are paying attention to the same thing. We should not give up lightly on one of the few things that we have in common. Rituals and moments that we share matter. In our free society, how people engage will be about choice, not compulsion. In a fast-changing society, symbols of tradition can be important sources of reassurance, especially if there is a proactive effort to reach across society. The monarchy could be particularly important in a Britain of rising ethnic and faith diversity. That is reflected in the King's

desire to balance being head of the established church with articulating his sense of an additional duty to protect the diversity of this country. The King may have a challenge now to reach across the generations. Many among the first generation of Commonwealth migrants to Britain in the decades after 1948 spoke of their identification with the Queen. The Queen was less a symbol of the fading empire she was born into, than the Commonwealth links that she championed. That commitment to the Commonwealth signaled that she recognized the history that explained their presence here. She knew why Britain's ethnic minorities were British. Younger British-born generations from both majority and minority groups may prove harder to reach. But a bridging Crown should make that effort.

A constitutional monarchy needs broad consent, not universal acclaim. The quarter of the public who would get rid of the monarchy should get a fairer share of voice than they did during last Autumn's mourning period. After all, democratic dissent is not disorder. We should try to disagree well about the monarchy: the debate about why people want to keep it, to reform it, perhaps gradually, or even replace it illuminates ideas about who we are and who we want to be. Everybody should be invited to engage with this national occasion in whatever way feels right to them.

CNN

Ursula Von der Leyen should apologize for whitewashing Israel's apartheid regime

Osama Al-Sharif

THE congratulatory video message recorded by the head of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, to mark Israel's 75th Independence Day last week was a blatant insult to millions of Palestinians living under occupation and in the diaspora. Moreover, it was an affront to anyone who is disgusted by Israel's immoral and illegal 56-year occupation of Palestinian territories, the 16-year siege of Gaza, the building of illegal settlements, the demolition of Palestinian homes, the incarceration and killing of children and the repugnant violation of UN resolutions and international conventions and laws, in addition to numerous human rights violations.

The fact that such an unabashed message failed to refer to the occupation or the Palestinian right to self-determination can only be a sign of either ignorance, which cannot be forgiven, or acquiescence, which is criminal. The colonial-era trope uttered by her in reference to making "the desert bloom" resurrects falsehoods spread by the Zionist hasbara propaganda machine many decades ago about a promised land that had no native inhabitants and no civilization that goes back thousands of years. It is no wonder that her message, celebrating Israel's "vibrant democracy in the heart of the Middle East," was condemned by the Palestinian Authority and thousands of social media activists. For starters, one cannot mention Israel's so-called independence without referring to the Palestinian Nakba, or catastrophe, of 1947-48 and beyond. These two events are intertwined and always will

be; one people's liberation came at the expense of another. And if Von der Leyen rejects the Palestinian narrative, she should check the historical accounts of respected Israeli historians such as Ilan Pappé, Tamar Novick and Benny Morris about massacres and ethnic cleansing crimes committed by the Irgun, Lehi - also known as the Stern Gang - and Haganah during Israel's war of independence against the Palestinians. More than 750,000 Palestinians were driven from their ancestral homes and tens of villages were destroyed forever.

But one does not have to go that far back in history. The claim that Israel is a democracy is also false. How can a state that occupies an entire people for more than five decades be described as a democracy? Again, the European Commission president should check the indictment of one of Israel's most-respected human rights organizations, B'Tselem, which in January 2021 reported that "in the entire area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, the Israeli regime implements laws, practices and state violence designed to cement the supremacy of one group - Jews - over another - Palestinians." B'Tselem added that "a regime that uses laws, practices and organized violence to cement the supremacy of one group over another is an apartheid regime." And it concluded: "These accumulated measures ... form the basis for our conclusion that the bar for labeling the Israeli regime as apartheid has been met." Its case also rested on Israel passing the Nation-State of the Jewish People law in 2018.

The same label was soon adopted by Amnesty International, which declared that its "investigation shows that Israel imposes a system of oppression and domination against Palestinians across all areas under its control: in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and against Palestinian refugees, in order to benefit Jewish Israelis. This amounts to apartheid as prohibited in international law." The same conclusion was reached by Human Rights Watch, also in 2021. As for Von der Leyen's provocative statement that Europe and Israel share common values, she should check some figures related to Israel's illegal occupation of the West Bank and its siege of the Gaza Strip. In the first quarter of 2023, the Israeli military killed 95 Palestinians in the West Bank, including 17 children, according to the UN. At least 4,765 Palestinian prisoners, of whom 971 were administrative detainees, were held in Israeli jails at the start of March this year, according to Haaretz. Administrative detainees can be held for an open-ended period of time without charges and without trial.

Furthermore, since the start of this year, Israeli forces have demolished at least 47 Palestinian-built structures in occupied East Jerusalem, including inhabited and uninhabited homes, stores and other structures. This is a war crime under international law. Moreover, Israel continues to approve new illegal settlement building in the West Bank, in violation of international laws. Are these the shared values that Von der Leyen is referring to? Finally, Israel blocked a visit by the EU's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, earlier this year because he

dared to criticize Israel's policies in the West Bank. It has also barred UN envoys from visiting the Occupied Territories on numerous occasions.

And with reference to Brussels' partnership with Israel, Von der Leyen should check how many EU-funded schools Israel has demolished in recent years. By 2017, Israel had destroyed at least \$74 million-worth of EU-funded projects in the Occupied Territories, including schools, playgrounds and agricultural initiatives, according to the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor. In response, eight EU countries demanded that Israel compensate them for the demolition of new school facilities for Bedouin communities in the West Bank. No compensation was ever received. Last year, an EU delegation visiting the West Bank said it was "appalled" after Israeli forces destroyed a primary school in Masafer Yatta. And, in 2021, a group of 160 academics from 21 countries urged the European Commission to "use its leverage" and ban Israeli universities from receiving funds from an EU program worth over \$100 billion. In a letter, they said that "the complicity of Israeli academic institutions in Israel's structural violence perpetrated against Palestinians across historic Palestine has been broadly and systematically documented." Echoing Israeli propaganda about making the desert bloom and shared democratic values is an attempt to whitewash an apartheid regime. Von der Leyen's rhetoric reeks of obscene Orientalist bigotry and she must apologize to the Palestinians, who continue to suffer under the oldest colonial occupation in modern times.

Arab News

Putin claims he's cancelling public celebrations over safety fears

Samantha de Bendern

MAY is traditionally a month for public celebration in Russia, with massive public processions on 1 May for Labour Day and military parades on 9 May for Victory Day, a holiday commemorating the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. Not so in 2023. Russia's biggest trade union cancelled its traditional Labour Day demonstrations because of the "heightened risk of terrorist activity", while regions near the Ukrainian border called off Victory Day parades so as to "not provoke" the Ukrainian army.

The Russian government has warned people across the country to stay away from military installations on Victory Day, while the hugely popular Immortal Regiment, an event during which ordinary citizens all over Russia march with portraits of relatives who died in the second world war, has been moved online. Allegedly the "terrorist" threat comes from Ukraine - Russian media reported on 24 April that a downed Ukrainian drone was found 30km (20 miles) from Moscow - but it seems difficult to accept that Russia's air defences cannot guarantee the safety of Moscow's skies during the country's biggest patriotic celebration of the year, particularly at a time when Putin has been stoking Russian nationalist feelings to garner support for his war in Ukraine.

A Ukrainian drone attack on Red Square during the Victory Day military parade would be humiliating for Putin, but it seems more likely that

he's worried about the potential humiliation of thousands of civilians marching with the portraits of sons and husbands fallen in Ukraine. While official Russian figures have pointed to fewer than 6,000 military casualties in Ukraine, Ukraine claims approximately 150,000 Russian military personnel have been killed. Even conservative western estimates hover around the 60,000 mark - more than triple the 15,000 Soviet troops killed in the 10-year Afghan war. Labour Day parades come with their own risk. In spite of the cancellation of official events, on 1 May a few small sporadic gatherings took place in cities all over Russia, to which some people turned up with anti-war banners. In St Petersburg a 76-year-old man was arrested for carrying a board with the traditional May Day slogan of "Peace, Work, May", with an added Z symbol with a red mark across it. In Ekaterinburg a woman was reportedly detained with a banner inscribed with another traditional May Day slogan, "Peace to the World."

The banning of public events during the May holidays is less likely to be out of concern for citizens' safety, and more to do with Putin's paranoid obsession with shutting down any channel for criticism of his war, even if open support for Ukraine is tiny and the threat of a popular uprising very remote. At the same time that public protest is being preemptively suppressed, dissent and conflict continues to grow in mili-

tary circles. In a 90-minute interview with a military blogger on 29 April, Yevgeny Prigozhin, the de facto leader of the Wagner private military company, bemoaned the catastrophic state of the Russian army, and said that "the time has come when we have to stop lying to the population of the Russian Federation saying that everything is OK". He sarcastically called the war in Ukraine "the so-called special military operation", in a veiled criticism of Putin's ban on the use of the word war to describe events in Ukraine.

Prigozhin also criticised the defence ministry for withholding ammunition and threatened to withdraw his men from the Ukrainian city of Bakhmut, which Russia has been trying to take for nine months. Conflicts are not only surfacing between Russia's private armies and the defence ministry, but among private armies themselves. On 25 April, soldiers from Gazprom's private army, Potok, sent a video to Putin complaining that they had been transferred to a different private army (Redut) and then threatened by soldiers of the Wagner group, who said they would shoot them if they retreated from their positions. In early April, mobilised soldiers from the regular army in the Luhansk region (in Russian-occupied Ukraine) disappeared, after telling relatives that they had been sold to the Wagner group by their commander. When Prigozhin denounces the catastrophic state of

the Russian army, he knows what he is talking about.

Russian nationalist pro-war military bloggers also criticise Putin. The most well-known of these is Igor Girkin (AKA Strelkov), who openly condemns Putin's lack of resolve to use Russia's full military might in Ukraine, and wages a simultaneous battle of words - for now - with Prigozhin. On 2 April, when another notorious military blogger, Vladlen Tatarsky, was assassinated in a bomb attack in a St Petersburg cafe formerly owned by Prigozhin, the Russian government blamed Ukrainian "terrorists". Prigozhin stated that the attack was probably caused by infighting among what he calls Russian radicals. Putin has not reacted publicly to any of the military bloggers or private armies - all armed and violent men - who criticise the way the war is being fought. But walking around with a cardboard sign calling for peace can lead to temporary arrest, and being an anti-war intellectual carries the risk of a 25-year prison sentence.

Russia is not on the verge of a popular revolution, but Putin still feels threatened enough by public anti-war protests to crack down at the first sign of peaceful civil dissent. This betrays a fundamental fear of showing any weakness that his armed critics could exploit. The main message here is clear: if you want to be safe in today's Russia, carry a gun. Better still, create a private army. This will increase your chances of survival the day the strongman falls.

Another smoldering monument to brutality rises in Ukraine

Nic Robertson

On the day Vladimir Putin issued an order to build museums across Russia to commemorate his country's war in Ukraine, another very different kind of monument to the conflict's cruel brutality was created by his forces in the city of Uman, 210 km south of Kyiv. In the early hours of Friday, as civilians slept, a Russian Kh-101 cruise missile soared above the Ukrainian countryside.

Far below, in a complex of some 46 apartments, a resident heard the missile's distinctive "whooshing" sound as it headed toward her building. Grabbing her children, she threw them into a bathtub and covered them with pillows and a blanket. Then, she told us, she just waited and hoped they would see the morning.

In the event, she and her family were among the lucky ones. When the missile slammed into the complex, its ferocious blast tore through 27 of the apartments. Floors collapsed, rubble tumbled to the ground and, in an instant,

as has happened so often in this war, dozens of innocent lives were ripped apart. We spoke to a man who was among the first on the scene. He could hear the screams of children when he arrived, he told us. He saw a woman trapped under rubble and, with help from others, managed to somehow free her and get her into an ambulance. But it was too late - she later succumbed to her injuries in hospital.

As the day wore on, a cluster of firefighters and other rescue workers encircled the still-smoldering base of the complex. A few meters away from them, a group of residents, relatives and friends stood in a line, anxiously awaiting news of the missing. Diggers lifted the larger chunks of concrete, while workers picked through the rubble by hand. Up above them, on the eighth floor of the shattered building, had lived a family of four. The mother had escaped, a resident told me through agonized tears, and the father was in hospital; but their two daughters, aged seven

and 13, were still missing, she explained. It was impossible not to fear the worst.

Throughout the day, more bodies were pulled from the wreckage. By late afternoon, the death toll had risen to at least 23, including four children, and 18 injured. With a total of 109 people registered as living in the building, that grim toll was expected to rise. Russia had fired 23 missiles into Ukraine that night. Twenty-one of them had been intercepted, but the scene in Uman showed the tragic consequences of just one making it through. This is already the deadliest single strike on civilians since January of this year. Russia denies that it is targeting civilians with its missiles, but the evidence strongly suggests otherwise. The museums the Kremlin announced last week will showcase "the events of the special military operation and the heroic deeds of its participants." One wonders what the Russian public would make of deeds such as the one perpetrated here, if only they were allowed to see them.

Important Notice

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ADB President reaffirms bank's continued support

INCHEON, South Korea (APP): Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Masatsugu Asakawa on Wednesday reaffirmed the Bank's continued support for Pakistan.

The ADB President made the reaffirmation during a meeting with a Pakistani delegation led by Secretary Economic Affairs Division (EAD), Dr Kazim Niaz. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the 56th Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors of the Bank.

Masatsugu Asakawa reposed his trust in Pakistan's reform agenda and appreciated the required tough sta-

bilization measures taken by the government to bring about macroeconomic stability in the country.

He assured that the Bank would continue support to Pakistan in the areas of domestic resource mobilization, enhancing public-private partnership, promoting women-inclusive finance, and transitioning to renewable energy.

It is pertinent to mention that the ADB Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors brings together senior leadership from the member countries to discuss the emerging issues of global concern, including food security, climate

change and dealing with external shocks. The central theme of the 56th meeting is "Rebounding Asia: Recover, Reconnect, and Reform".

Appreciating the ADB's long-standing and generous support to Pakistan, the Secretary EAD briefed the president on a series of reforms introduced by the government.

"The key reforms include containing spending, reduction in untariffed subsidies, scaling up social protection, enhancing tax revenues, adherence to market-determined exchange rate and improving the financial sustain-

ability of energy sector," he said. The Secretary EAD also welcomed the ADB President's announcement of the landmark Innovative Finance Facility for Climate in Asia & the Pacific (IF-CAP).

Being one of the top ten most affected countries by the adverse impacts of climate change, he said Pakistan was interested in leveraging the new facility for its mitigation and adaptation efforts.

The Secretary EAD, on behalf of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, extended an invitation to the ADB President to visit Pakistan, which he accepted.



ISLAMABAD: Charge'd Affaires of US Embassy Andrew Schofer meeting with Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at Finance Division.

Envoy expresses confidence in Pak's economic policies

ISLAMABAD (APP): Charge'd Affaires of the United States Andrew Schofer on Wednesday called on Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and expressed confidence in the policies and initiatives taken by the government of Pakistan for its economic stability.

The envoy also extended his country's support to give further impetus to the economic and trade rela-

tions between the two countries, a Finance Division news release said.

During the meeting, the minister exchanged views on remarkable bilateral relations and apprised the envoy of the current challenges being faced by the country, especially on the economic front.

Ishaq Dar further communicated about the difficult policy decisions recently being taken by Pakistan aimed at stabiliz-

ing the economy that resulted into an upward curve ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth.

The minister also informed the US Charge'd Affaires about the on-going IMF programme and assured his government's commitment to complete it.

He thanked the envoy for the US support and reiterated his government's desire to further expand bilateral trade and investment ties with America.

Silkbank attracts merger interest from UBL

KARACHI: Silkbank, a key player in Pakistan's Consumer Banking market has attracted merger interest from UBL, one of the leading financial institutions in the country. This potential merger signifies the importance of Silkbank's strong business portfolio and impressive growth prospects.

Silkbank has consistently demonstrated a robust performance in recent years in the Consumer Banking category with one of the top performing businesses of the industry. Silkbank's Branch Banking network is also strategically located across 29 major cities. The bank has also been developing its Digital infrastructure and capabilities enabling it to offer innovative and convenient digital solutions to its customers. The Bank is known for its personalized and responsive service to its customers that fosters long-term relationships.

Silkbank has also recently formed a REIT with M/s Anif Habib Dolmen REIT Company on Bank owned real estate which is expected to generate substantial profits in the coming years. The potential merger with UBL will provide a boost to the combined entity to further expand the operations into flagship Retail & Consumer portfolios and will help accelerate the growth.

SBP Governor for evolving effective strategy — to avert impacts of climate change

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Jameel Ahmad on Wednesday underlined the urgent need for creating required resilience against negative impacts of climate change to protect humans, agriculture and livestock, besides uplifting the regional economies to alleviate vulnerabilities faced by them.

Addressing the SAARCFINANCE Symposium here, he said Pakistan was ranked among the top 10 most affected countries in terms of climate change-related disasters despite the fact that its share in greenhouse gas emissions was less than 1 percent.

The SAARCFINANCE Symposium titled "Climate Change and Green Financing: Initiatives & Outlook in South Asia", was organized by the SBP and attended by heads of the central banks of the region, representatives of Asian Development Bank (ADB) and International Finance Corporation (IFC).

The governor said climate change and environmental protection were global issues, which were posing serious threats to economies of the world, adding rising temperature caused by rapid industrialization was negatively impacting the agriculture output.

He said the South Asian region was the most vulnerable in terms of climate change, adding more than half of the region was affected due to changing weather patterns. "A holistic approach is needed of the time to overcome such negative impacts."

Jameel Ahmad noted that the SAARC region was also confronting

other multiple challenges and facing difficult times in terms of very high inflation, slow growth, pressure on fiscal and external balances, climate changes, and increased poverty.

Climate change has also increased the frequent flooding due to heavy rains in Pakistan, he said adding in 2022 over 23 million people were affected by torrential rains and flash floods, which also destroyed agriculture land, infrastructure and communication network.

He said accumulative losses of such catastrophes were estimated at \$1.3-1.9 billion per year; equivalent to 2.5-2.7 percent of GDP. He said the SBP had initiated several programmes to encourage investment in the green economy. "Globally, the financial systems are shifting towards promoting sustainability considerations," he said adding that similarly, SBP had adopted a proactive approach to safeguard the financial sector against climate change and environmental risks by undertaking several green initiatives including green banking guidelines, environmental and social risk management (ESRM) implementation manual and financing scheme for renewable energy.

He said steps were also taken to reduce the carbon footprint in the local banking system by installing solar-operated Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) to encourage the use of renewable energy in the country, adding that local banks were also encouraged to enhance their share of investment in green economy.

Under such circumstances, he said the SAARCFINANCE forum provid-



ed an opportunity to learn from each others' experiences on relevant macroeconomic policies and there was a need to fortify regional cooperation in the face of a challenging environment.

Alongside the Governors' meeting, a session was arranged on SAARCFINANCE collaborative research studies completed during the year.

During the session, the SBP authorities presented a study on the use of unconventional policy instruments by South Asian central banks, and another study was presented by Nepal Rastra Bank on the prospects of Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) in the SAARC region.

Speaking on the occasion, Sima Kamil, Deputy Governor SBP said that the event was a significant step towards fostering greater collaboration and cooperation among SAARC member countries and international organizations to address the pressing issue of climate change.

Cutlery industry urged to enhance quality

ISLAMABAD (APP): Manufacturers of cutlery have been urged to enhance the quality and output of their products to match the international market and better prices.

This was stated by speakers while addressing the launching ceremony of "Study for enhancing the competitiveness of the cutlery sector of Pakistan" at a local hotel on Wednesday.

The event was jointly arranged by Pakistan Business Council and Engineering Develop Board, the attached department of the Ministry of Industry and Production. Chairman Engineering Board, Almas Hyder; Chief Executive Officer, Pakistan Business Council, Ehsan Malik; Chairman, Pakistan Cutlery

Association Wazirabad, Shakeel Azam and Ex-Chairman, Pakistan Cutlery Association Wazirabad addressed the event.

They were of the view that decades-old semi-automated machinery used in making cutlery in Pakistan severely limits the productivity and speed of the production processes.

The cutlery industry can explore the possibility of investing in the machinery and process to start manufacturing ceramic cutlery as its raw material is available in Pakistan easily and its products can fetch higher prices than steel-made products, they added.

The cutlery sector of Pakistan was based on cottage industries located in Wazirabad with around 800

units and 20,500 employees. This sector was categorized into three major groups which include knives, tableware and utensils.

Earlier in his address Chairman Engineering Board, Almas Hyder stressed the need to have close coordination with each other instead of working in isolation as well as establishing linkages with other private organizations to draw benefit from each other's strength, knowledge and expertise.

All possible support will be extended to take forward such activities to bring in positive results to improve the state of affairs on the industrial front and we would witness modern and innovative business flourishing in the country in the cutlery sector, he added.

US, Pakistan partner promote investment in clean-tech SMEs



F.P. Report

KARACHI: Chief Secretary Sindh Dr. Muhammad Sohail Rajput and representatives of USAID and US Embassy jointly inaugurated an Investment Roadshow geared towards raising climate investment in Pakistan for SMEs in solar and wind energy, giving on and off-grid energy solutions as well as innovative companies working on net neutrality goals of the country. The 2-day investment forum and expo took place at Avari Towers in Karachi and brought together key financial institutions and investors together.

The event was organized by USAID-funded Pakistan Private

Sector Energy Project, that is implemented by the Private Financing Advisory Network (PFAN) in partnership with UNIDO and REEEP. PFAN has globally raised \$3bn in investment in climate finance to date.

Chief Secretary Sindh Dr Muhammad Sohail Rajput delivered the keynote address and commented on Pakistan's ripe investment readiness as well as the pressing need for sustainable infrastructure scale-up.

"I am glad to learn that Sindh was found to be a priority province by the Pakistan Private Sector Energy project as our province is rich in scaling up of wind, solar and waste to energy in our provincial and national energy strategy," commented Dr. Rajput.

He further said that The Government of Sindh with the financial support of World Bank (US 100 Million Dollar) launched the Sindh Solar Energy project (SSEP), mainly focused to divert the conventional methods of energy production to the state of the art new and renewable technologies.

This program will finance GoS's electrification program to help provide 200,000 Solar Home Systems to the people in the entire province not connected to the Grid and low access electricity areas. "Uptill now 26 Hospitals has been shifted on roof top solar. The system will be connected to the nearby grid under NEPRA's net-metering policy." He added.

The US Consul General Karachi Liam O'Flanagan affirmed the United States' support for clean energy projects his address and noted that building a robust pipeline of clean energy and circularity companies is integral in driving the clean energy transition forward.

Peter Storey, Global Coordinator at PFAN, expressed his excitement and hope that the investment forum will culminate in raising dollars for the eco-entrepreneurs.

The event featured pitches from companies such as ezBike, Ray Data Analytics and Ouroboros in electric mobility, clean tech and circularity, respectively. While the expo featured selected fourteen companies from the project pipeline.

SBP cancelled license

F.P. Report

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Wednesday has cancelled the authorization/license of M/s. Mega Currency Exchange Company 'B' (Pvt.) Limited on account of contraventions of the relevant laws and regulations.

Therefore, the aforesaid exchange company, including its head office and branches can no longer undertake any kind of foreign exchange related business activity.

Shipping activity at PQ

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activities reported at the Port on Tuesday where one ship namely, MSC Alma VII carrying Containers, berthed at Qasim International Containers Terminal.

Meanwhile an oil tanker 'Dolphin 02' carrying 'Palm oil' also arrived at outer anchorage of the port during the same day another ship Livarden carrying MEDC also arrived at outer anchorage of the port on today.

A total of 04 ships were engaged at POA berths during the last 24 hours, out of them 02 ships, Maersk Kinross and Aviva left the Port on Wednesday morning, while 01 more ship, MSC Alma VII is expected to sail on today in the afternoon.

A Cargo volume of 85,001 tonnes, comprising 71,469 tonnes imports cargo and 13,532 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 3,345 Containers (2,549 TEUs Imports and 796 TEUs export) was handled at the port during last 24 hours.

There are 10 ships at Outer Anchorage of Port Qasim, out of them, SAVER-I, LIVARDEN, CALYPSO, ASTORIA, 3B DESTINY, CENTRAL PARK and LANA are carrying Palm oil, MEDC, Bitumen and Containers are expected to take berths at EVTL, MW-I, SSGC, MW-II and QICT on Wednesday.

Pak Stock Exchange gains 160.29 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 160.29 points, with a positive change of 0.38 per cent, closing at 42,087.93 against 41,927.64 points on the previous day.

A total of 289,835,016 shares were traded during the day as compared to 220,030,472 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs10.178 billion against Rs6.494 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 380 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 163 of them recorded gains and 192 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 25 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with 55,300,688 shares at Rs1.24 per share, Habib Bank with 23,530,334 shares at Rs78.24 per share, and Maple Leaf with 16,457,412 shares at Rs28.77 per share.

Unilever Foods witnessed a maximum increase of Rs1537.50 per share price, closing at Rs22137.50, whereas the runner-up was Bhanero Tex. with a Rs69.04 rise in its per share price to Rs989.55.

Sapphire Tex. witnessed a maximum decrease of Rs74.06 per share closing at Rs1100.94, followed by Sapphire Fiber with a Rs50.00 decline to close at Rs1000.00.

Gold prices increase by Rs1700 to Rs222,700 per tola: The per tola price of

24-karat gold increased by Rs1700 and was sold at Rs222,700 on Wednesday against its sale at Rs221,000 the previous day. All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold also surged by Rs1457 to Rs190,929 from Rs189,472, whereas the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold went up to Rs175,019 from Rs173,683.

The price of per tola silver increased by Rs20 to close at Rs2750 and that of ten-gram silver also rose by Rs17.15 to close at Rs2357.68.

The price of gold in the international market rose by \$ 25 to close at \$2015 against the sale of \$1990, the association reported.

EU team visits PSGMEA

SIALKOT (APP): A delegation of the European Union led by First Counsellor European Union (EU) to Pakistan Daniel Clauss on Wednesday visited the office of the Pakistan Sports Goods Manufacturer and Exporters Association (PSGMEA).

Commercial Counsellors, Embassy of Germany, Denmark, France, Sweden, Poland and European Union Adviser Economy and Trade Husnanin A Iftikhar also participated in the meeting.

During the meeting, PSGMEA Chairman Arshad Latif Butt highlighted the importance of the GSP-Plus and its continuation to support the SME sector of the country as the EU was the largest trading partner of Pakistan.

He also emphasized on ease of visa policy and special consideration to visa applications with the PSGMEA recommendation to exporters of Sialkot, giving them easy access to markets in Europe to enhance

bilateral trade.

On this occasion, First Counsellor EU of Pakistan Daniel Clauss said the EU was keen to establish strong trade relations with Pakistan, adding that the GSP-Plus status for Pakistan was to help and promote trade and exports of Pakistan to the EU countries as the Pakistan business community must get full benefits of the GSP-

Plus.

He discussed various ideas for providing support to the SME sector with focus on creating linkages within the EU to open new markets for products.

The meeting was attended by Senior Vice President Zahir Ahmed Dohdy, Vice President Umar-Uz-Zaman, Secretary General Mohsin Masood and Executive Committee members.

Gold falls on stronger dollar

CHICAGO (APP): Gold futures on the COMEX division of the New York Mercantile Exchange fell on Wednesday as US dollar index rose.

The most active gold contract for June delivery fell 6.90 US dollars, or 0.35 percent, to close at 1,992.20 dollars per ounce.

Investors are digesting JPMorgan Chase's buying of business and deposits of the First Republic Bank, which had teetered on the edge of collapse for weeks, ahead of the Federal Reserve's monetary policy meeting scheduled on May 2 and 3.

Meanwhile, much of Europe is on the May Day holiday. Economic data released Monday are mixed. The Institute for Supply Management's manufacturing purchasing managers' index (PMI) registered at 47.1 percent in April, 0.8 percentage point higher than the 46.3 percent recorded in March.

European stocks rise, dollar lower

LONDON (AFP/APP): European stock markets advanced and the dollar dropped Wednesday with all eyes on the Federal Reserve's latest decision on US interest rates.

Recession fears linger as central banks worldwide have hiked borrowing costs to fight soaring inflation.

Against this backdrop, triggering concerns of slowing demand for energy, the US benchmark oil contract WTI traded under \$70

per barrel Wednesday for the first time since OPEC+ cut output a month ago in a bid to bolster prices.

"Caution is set to take centre stage ahead of the Fed's interest rate decision later (Wednesday), as investors mull what's ahead for the mighty US economy," said Susannah Streeter, head of money and markets at stockbroker Hargreaves Lansdown.

The European Central Bank announces its rate

decision Thursday.

Ahead of the announcements, data Wednesday showed unemployment in the eurozone hit a record low of 6.5 percent in March.

Interest rate worries had the opposite effect Tuesday on Wall Street, conspiring with falling confidence in regional banks to fuel losses that bled over into Asia on Wednesday.

Also weighing on investor sentiment were

fears that Democrats and Republicans could fail to reach a deal on raising the US debt ceiling, triggering a default by the world's largest economy as early as June 1.

"It is a key event risk in the next few weeks and possibly a month or two," BNY Mellon Investment Management's Aninda Mitra told Bloomberg Television, adding that the impasse "feeds into our overall defensiveness".



In brief

'Though Mohibullah lost but learnt a lot'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Olympian and head coach Arshad Hussain believes Pakistani boxer Mohibullah though lost a fight in World Boxing Championship but gained a lot of exposure by featuring in the extravaganza. Pakistan's talented young boxer Mohibullah faced Wang Xiangyang of China in the light welterweight (60kg-63kg) preliminary bout of the World Boxing Championships in Tashkent. Mohibullah who hails from Quetta was the only boxer that Pakistan fielded in the mega event. Though Mohibullah lost the fight, he fought well. "Winning and losing is part of the game and Mohibullah got an opportunity to learn by participating in the World Boxing Championship, which will continue till May 14," Arshad Hussain told APP. He said the boxer attended an international event for the first time which gave him a chance to learn and experience the atmosphere. Around 500 boxers from more than 100 countries from all over the world including Pakistan were participating in the championship being played on a knockout basis.

Raducanu ruled out of French Open

LONDON (Agencies): Former U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu said on Wednesday she will miss this year's French Open and Wimbledon Championships after undergoing surgery on her wrists and ankle. The Brit said she will be out for "the next few months" as she recovers from recurring bone injuries. "It is safe to say the last 10 months have been difficult as I dealt with a recurring injury to a bone of both hands," Raducanu said on Twitter. "I'm having a minor procedure done on both hands to resolve the issues. I'm disappointed to share that I will be out for the next few months and while I am at it will have another minor procedure that is due on my ankle." The news comes as the latest injury setback for Raducanu who has struggled for form and fitness since her fairy-tale run to the title at Flushing Meadows in 2021 as an 18-year-old qualifier. Her withdrawal from Madrid Open last month will likely see her fall outside the top 100 in the WTA rankings for the first time since her stunning breakthrough in New York.

Veronika defeats Pegula

MADRID (AP): Veronika Kudermetova reached the semifinals of a WTA 1000 event for the first time by upsetting third-seeded Jessica Pegula 6-4, 0-6, 6-4 at the Madrid Open on Wednesday. The 12th-seeded Kudermetova sealed her victory with an ace on her second match point to set up a semifinal match against either No. 1 Iga Swiatek or Petra Martic, who will play later Wednesday. Pegula was trying to reach her second consecutive final in Madrid. She was runner-up to Ons Jabeur at the clay-court tournament last year. It was the fourth consecutive three-set win for Kudermetova. "I feel so happy and proud of myself, because every match I played three sets," the fifth-ranked Kudermetova said. "Before this match, every match was almost three hours. Today, only two hours, I feel fresh." She had reached three quarterfinals at WTA 1000 level or above, all in 2022, including at Roland Garros for her best run at a Grand Slam.

Spinners dominate in Pakistan U19 10-wicket win



CHATTOTGRAM (Monitoring Desk): Spinners Ali Asfand and Arafat Minhas shared seven wickets between them as Pakistan U19 beat Bangladesh U19 by 10 wickets on the final day of the solitary four-day match at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram on Wednesday.

Chasing a modest 22-run target to win, opening batters Shahzaib Khan (19 not out) and Azan Awaish (4 not out) achieved the target in the seventh over.

Earlier, resuming their second innings at the overnight score of 166 for

three in 70 overs, Bangladesh U19 lost night-watchman Akanto Sheikh (10, 34b) in the 81st over with Mohammad Ismail uprooting the stumps. Captain Sharear Sakib who returned undefeated on 47 the previous day, was joined by Zakaria Islam and the pair added 60 runs for the fifth wicket before Zakaria (23, 51b, 3x4s) was clean bowled by left-arm spinner Ali Asfand in the 99th over.

Just before rain arrived, the Bangladesh skipper completed his hundred. After the rain interval, well-settled Sharear was adjudged leg-

before wicket to Ali for 106 runs off 235 deliveries, hitting 14 boundaries.

After the departure of Sharear with Bangladesh still trailing by nine runs and four wickets in hand, the Pakistan spinners Ali and Arafat Minhas never allowed Bangladesh to score freely and the hosts were dismissed for 292 in the 126th over with a lead of 21.

Left-arm spinner Arafat bagged the last two wickets to fall and ended up with figures of three for 49. Ali took four wickets for 66 runs and ended up with match figures of six for 103 runs.

First-innings centurion Shahzaib Khan was named player of the match for his knock of 174 off 323 deliveries which included 25 fours and four sixes. Both sides will now compete in the white-ball series, which consists of five one-day matches and one T20. The one-day series will begin from 6 May.

Scores in brief:

Pakistan U19 beat Bangladesh U19 by 10 wickets

Bangladesh U19 149 all out, 59 overs (Sheikh Parvaiz Jibon 56, Sharear Sakib 48; Amir Hassan 4-29, Mohammad Ismail 3-41, Ali Asfand 2-37) and 292 all out, 125.1 overs (Sharear Sakib 106, Ashikur Rahman Shibli 79; Ali Asfand 4-66, Arafat Minhas 3-49, Mohammad Ismail 2-68)

Pakistan U19 420 all out, 128.1 overs (Shahzaib Khan 174, Obaid Shahid 67, Ali Asfand 40, Azan Awaish 40, Shamil Hussain 38; Wasi Siddiquee 5-86, Iqbal Hussain Emon 4-81) and 23-0, 6.3 overs (Shahzaib Khan 19 not out, Azan Awaish 4 not out)

Player of the match - Shahzaib Khan (Pakistan U19).

Fakhar, Rizwan improve in ICC Rankings

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan opener Fakhar Zaman has attained a career-best second position while his teammate wicket-keeper Mohammad Rizwan has moved up in the MRF Tyres ICC Men's ODI Player Rankings released Wednesday.

Fakhar Zaman has attained a career-best second position in the Rankings after smashing back-to-back centuries in the first two ODIs of their ongoing five-match series against New Zealand, said a press release.

The left-hander's scores of 117 and 180 not out earned him Player of the Match awards in both ODIs and have helped him progress eight places in the list led by Babar Azam. Fakhar's previous best was seventh position attained in April 2021.

Meanwhile, Rizwan was another Pakistan batter to move up the rankings - from 64th to 58th position - after notching up unbeaten knocks of 42 and 54, while

fast bowler Haris Rauf has advanced 12 slots to 51st position after his hauls of two for 65 and four for 78.

New Zealand batters Tom Latham and Daryl Mitchell too have made significant progress. Latham is up three places to 29th after scoring 20 and 98 in the two matches, while Mitchell's two centuries have lifted him 57 places to 51st in the rankings.

In other movements on the ODI rankings table, Muhammad Waseem of the United Arab Emirates has moved up three places to 62nd among batters after scoring 48 against Oman in the semifinal of the Asian Cricket Council Men's Premier Cup in Mulpani, Nepal.

Oman captain Zeeshan Maqsood has advanced six places to 43rd among bowlers and three places to fifth among all-rounders after grabbing four for 32 and scoring 40 in that match. Oman's left-arm

seamer Bilal Khan has moved from 36th to 33th after his four-wicket haul.

In the MRF Tyres ICC Men's Test Player Rankings, Sri Lanka players have made significant progress after completing a 2-0 series win over Ireland in Galle.

Angelo Mathews has inched up one place to 22nd after scoring 100 not out, Kusal Mendis is up three places to 39th after top-scoring with 245 while opener Nishan Madushka's knock of 205 puts him in 102nd position in the batting rankings.

Prabath Jayasuriya is up six places to 13th in the bowling rankings after picking up seven scalps in the match while other spinner Ramesh Mendis is up 10 places to 22nd following his six-wicket match haul.

Ireland captain Andrew Balbirnie's scores of 95 and 46 have lifted him 29 places to 93rd while Harry Tector and Lorcan Tucker have also progressed.

Ronaldo becomes world's highest-paid athlete

RIYADH (Agencies): Cristiano Ronaldo has become the world's highest-paid athlete for the first time since 2017 following his move to Saudi Arabian side Al Nassr.

Forbes report the 38-year-old Portugal forward earned \$136m (£108.7m) over the past 12 months.

His contract with Al Nassr is reportedly worth more than 200m euros (£176.5m) per year. Argentina's World Cup-winning captain Lionel Messi is second on Forbes' list having earned \$130m (£103.9m).

Forbes' top 10 also features basketball star LeBron James and boxer Canelo Alvarez, while 20-time tennis Grand Slam champion Roger Federer is the only retired athlete on the list in ninth place.

Dustin Johnson (sixth) and Phil Mickelson (seventh) are the first golfers to make the top 10 since Tiger Woods in 2020.

Johnson was not in the top 50 in 2022 but after becoming the first high-profile player to join the controversial Saudi-funded LIV Golf Invitational Series, he has rocketed up Forbes' rankings.

The American two-time major winner - who received \$18m (£16.2m at the time) after winning the inaugural LIV Golf championship - earned \$107m (£85.5m) over the past year.

Forbes say Mickelson, who earned \$106m (£84.7m), surpassed \$1bn in career earnings pre-tax last year.

Forbes' figures include both on-field earnings -

including salaries, prize money and bonuses - and off-field earnings - sponsorship deals, appearance fees and memorabilia and licensing income.

World's top 10 highest paid athletes 2023

1. Cristiano Ronaldo, football: \$136m (£108.7m)
2. Lionel Messi, football: \$130m (£103.9m)
3. Kylian Mbappe, football: \$120m (£95.9m)
4. LeBron James, basketball: \$119.5m (£95.5m)
5. Canelo Alvarez, boxing: \$110m (£87.9m)
6. Dustin Johnson, golf: \$107m (£85.5m)
7. Phil Mickelson, golf: \$106m (£84.7m)
8. Stephen Curry, basketball: \$100.4m (£80.2m)
9. Roger Federer, tennis: \$95.1m (£76m)
10. Kevin Durant, basketball: \$89.1m (£71.2m).

Torch of 34th National Games reaching Peshawar on May 7: Aqil Shah

PESHAWAR (APP): The Torch of the 34th National Games is reaching Peshawar on May 7 and will be received at the Bacha International Airport after letting it at the Mazar-e-Quaid, Karachi.

This was stated by the Senior Vice President of the Pakistan Olympic Association Syed Aqil Shah while addressing a media briefing here at Green Peshawar on Thursday.

He said soon after receiving the Torch, it would be taken to Governor House Peshawar where Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali would grace the occasion as chief guest.

A colourful ceremony would also be arranged there and after the Governor House Peshawar, the Torch through a Tanga Rally would be taken to the Interior City's historical places including Sethi House, Gor Ghatrri, Peshawar Museum, historical Fort Bala Hisar, and

Qayyum sports Complex. After an overnight stay, the Torch would go to old Attock Bridge "Kharabad" where it would be handed over to the officials of the Pakistan Olympic Association.

Syed Aqil Shah said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's 372-member team will participate in the National Games starting from May 12 in Quetta, for which the preparations are being completed. The Games Torch will reach Peshawar on May 7.

Syed Aqil Shah, President KP Olympic Association said that the number of male athletes will be 252, the number of female athletes will be 120, while male officials will be 51 and female officials will be 17.

He said 10 more officials will go with the squad, DG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sports board Khalid Khan will be the Chef de Mission of the contingent, while Ilyas Afridi and Miss Safina Babar have been

appointed as Deputy Chef of Mission. He will leave for Quetta on May 11.

This time, the National Games are being held in two stages. In the first stage, there will be team events, while in the second stage, individual competitions will be held. Syed Aqil Shah said that the formal opening ceremony of these games will be held on May 22.

In the first phase, hockey, football, handball, boxing, baseball, kabaddi, volleyball, badminton, rugby, tug-of-war and gymnastics. The games torch will be received at Peshawar Airport on the evening of May 7 and it will be brought to Peshawar Sports Complex by international athletes. Sports Complex and from there the Torch will be carried to historical places in Peshawar city with the aim of creating awareness among the people about the Games started by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in different places of Peshawar.



KARACHI: Mohammad Nawaz had to go off after sustaining a blow to his finger, Pakistan vs New Zealand, 3rd ODI.

Pakistan to feature in Four Nation Basketball C'ship

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan team would feature in the upcoming Four-Nation Basketball Championship scheduled to take place in Maldives later this year.

According to the Associate Secretary of Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) Ouj E Zahoor, in this regard, the Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) has called top national players for the trials to select the national basketball team for the said championship.

The top players nominated by the affiliated departments, provinces, and divisions of the Pakistan Basketball Federation would participate in the three-day trials to start on May 5 here at the Pakistan sports Complex. The trials would continue till May 7.

He said in the first phase of the trials on May 5 and 6, top divisional and provincial players would display their skills while in the second phase (May 6, 7), departmental top players will have trials.

The national selection committee under the leadership of chief selector Colonel (R) Shujaat Ali Rana and members including Muhammad Riaz Malik, DSP Malik Ijaz and Maudood Jafri would observe the participating players during these days.

The national selection committee would shortlist the Names of the players for the training camp of the national basketball team after the three-day trials.

"Pakistan team will participate in the four-nation basketball championship to be held in Maldives this year. PBF secretary Khalid Bashir will announce the training and coaching plan for the selected players as the national team will go through extensive training camp for the preparation of the international event".

This participation would also help in preparing the team and players for the South Asian Games to be held in Pakistan in 2024.

Govt College Peshawar wins overall Inter-College Games trophy

PESHAWAR (APP): Government College Peshawar clinched the overall trophy while Post Graduate Department University of Peshawar got runners-up trophy of the Inter-College Degree Games, which concluded here on Wednesday.

Vice-Chancellor of Agriculture University Peshawar Prof. Dr. Jan Bakht along with Chairman sports Committee Prof. Fazle Naseer, Squash Legend Qamar Zaman, Director Sports Peshawar University Bahre Karam, Dr. Abdur Rashid and Dr. Noorzada and teachers and directors of various colleges, players and spectators were also present.

In a total of eight Games including Table Tennis, Handball, Badminton, Basketball, Tug of War, Cricket, Volleyball and Football Government College secured first position in Handball, Basketball, Volleyball while

got second position in Table Tennis, Tug of War, and

third position in football.

In the overall results of various Games including Handball, Gov't College Peshawar won the first place, Gov't College Mathura Peshawar won the second place, while the Post Graduate Department of Peshawar University won the third place.

Similarly, in the table tennis event, Edwards College Peshawar Gold, Gov't College Peshawar Silver, while Gov't College of Management Sciences Jamrud won the Browns Medal, in Badminton Competitions, Post Graduate Department Peshawar University came first, Government Degree College Hayatabad came second and Government Degree College Mathura Peshawar came third.

Similarly, in the basketball event, Government College Peshawar was the winner, Post Graduate Department Peshawar University was the runner-up, while Edwards

College Peshawar was third, in tug-of-war competitions, Government Superior Science College Peshawar won gold, Government College Silver, while the Post Graduate Department University of Peshawar won the Browns Medal.

In the cricket Postgraduate Department of cricket was won by the University of Peshawar, Government College Peshawar was defeated in the final, while Government Superior Science College was in third place, Government College Peshawar was declared the winner in the volleyball competitions, Mathur College Peshawar and Post Graduate Department Peshawar University second and third position respectively.

In the football event Government College Landi Kotal won first, Post Graduate Department University of Peshawar second and Government College Peshawar won third position respectively.

Bannu secure victory in PM Youth Talent Hunt Program Men Volleyball Championship

PESHAWAR (APP): Bannu Region clinched the trophy after securing victories in all four matches in the League round match part of the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Men Volleyball Championship, which concluded here on Wednesday.

The Inter-Region Men Volleyball competition was held at GM Khattak sports Gymnasium of Agriculture University. The three members selection committee including former skipper national team Abdur Rahim, Ismail Khan and Dr Noorzad thoroughly monitored the performance of the players for the selection of both male and female teams for the national league.

Vice Chancellor,

Agriculture University Peshawar Prof. Dr. Jan Bakht, who was the chief guest at the closing ceremony, distributed medals and prizes to the winning players. Squash legend Qamar Zaman, Director Sports Peshawar University Bahre Karam, Chairman Sports Committee Prof. Fazle Naseer, former captain of the National volleyball team Abdul Rahim Khan, Director of Distance education Dr Noorzada and other important personalities were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the ceremony, Dr John Bakht said, "Sports are very important for mental and physical development." Unfortunately, nowadays the younger generation had fall-

en prey to various addictions, thus healthy activities could be very useful in encouraging them towards a positive life, he added.

The selection committee will select the best players who will represent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the second round to be held in Karachi.

The duties of the scorer in the championship were performed by Yehya Jan while Muazullah and Anwarullah supervised the match. Bannu bagged the first position after four wins, Mardan got the silver medal by winning three matches, whereas Swat with two wins secured third position in the League. Hazara and Peshawar won fourth and fifth positions respectively.



In brief

Rain/thunder storm expected

ISLAMABAD (APP): Rain-wind/thunderstorm is expected at scattered places in western/southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, south Punjab, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. Met Office while sharing the details of synoptic situation, said that a westerly wave is affecting the upper and central parts of the country. According to the past 24-hour weather details, rain-wind thunderstorm occurred in upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Kashmir, north Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan. However, the weather remained dry in other parts of the country. The rainfall (mm) recorded during the past 24 hours including Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa: Kakul 59, Balakot 28, Parachinar 18, Malam Jabba 17, Dir (Lower 15, Upper 04), Mardan 06, Saidu Sharif 05, Cherat 03, Punjab: Kasur 25, D.G Khan 10, Murree 09, Mandi Bahauddin, Narowal 04, Faisalabad 02, Mangla, Attock 01, Kashmir: Garhi Dupatta 18, Muzaffarabad (Airport, City 08), Rawalakot 01, Balochistan: Zhob 10, Bar Khan 07, Gilgit-Baltistan: Astor 02, Bagrote 01. Today's Recorded Highest Maximum Temperature's: Chhor 40, Mithi and Nokkundi 39.

Power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM. Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Fazal Ahmed Shaheed, Chohah Khalsa, Shahjahan, Adiala Jail, Shahpur, Khasala, Chahan, Chontra, Rajar, Chakri, SPD, SPF, Army Flats, RA Bazar, IST, New Rawat Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Kayani Road, Tench Bhatta Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Basharat Feeder, Jhelum Circle, CMH Jhelum, Cantt, Sanghui, Chotala, Domeli, Bhagwal, Thakra feeders and surrounding areas.

12 drug peddlers, bootleggers netted

RAWALPINDI (APP): The police in operations against suspected drug peddlers and bootleggers conducted raids in different areas and rounded up 12 accused on recovery of over five kg charras, 15 liters and three bottles of liquor. According to a police spokesman, Pirwadhai, Waris Khan, Patriata, Westridge, Naseerabad, Saddar Baroni and Dhamial police held Tariq, Khadam, Qamar Ismail, Nadeem, Yasin, Rehmanullah, Jahangir, Khanzada Adil, Fahad Jamal and Akash on recovery of 5605 grams charras.

Banks stop pension

ISLAMABAD (APP): The banks operating accounts of railways retired employees on Wednesday stopped payments of 17,000 pensioners over non-submission of the required documents of periodical verification for the continued banking services. According to a Spokesman of Pakistan Railways, the department has urged the pensioners to submit the relevant documents/certificates to the banks at the earliest so that their banking services could be restored. He clarified that the banks took this action to stop the pensions of only those pensioners who have not yet submitted their life certificate, no-marriage certificate [mandatory for widows of retired employees] and biometric verification.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan Aybek Arif Usmanov called on Engr. Amir Muqam, Adviser to the Prime Minister for Political, Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture.

Kuwait and NDMA Pakistan to collaborate for disaster mitigation

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: His Excellency Nassar Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Kuwait Ambassador to Pakistan called on Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Lt General Inam Haider Malik, HI (M) in his office here on Wednesday.

Chairman NDMA expressed his gratitude to the Government of Kuwait and diplomatic team in Pakistan, for generous support during floods 2022. He shared the significance of enhanced utility of modern technology in creating networked, satellite intelligence on climate based interface and proactive national readiness being developed by Pak NDMA for possible greater usage in region. Pakistan's capability to project future disasters and

accordingly plan mitigation models based on scientific solutions are underway. Besides disaster risk reduction, the high-end approach will enable teams of experts for dissemination of awareness campaigns and multi-lingual early warning messages through automated system to reach public via all possible means of communication. NEOC will prove to be a model disaster mitigation/management hub for the region, and NDMA will replicate same on provincial levels at later stage, highlighted the Chairman.

The Ambassador appreciated the envisioned NEOC of Pak NDMA and agreed to formulate strategies for participative investment in pre-disaster planning and management, to reduce loss of human lives and infrastructure.

They discussed necessity of continued support in the fields of disaster mitigation specifically sharing of satellite feeds/soft wares for pre-disaster predictions, and exchange of academic experts through platform of National Institute of Disaster Mitigation (NIDM) of NDMA for developing shared intellectual repository. The two sides reached consensus on expanding the capacity-building of Pakistan's national disaster response efforts.

"Kuwait and Pakistan enjoy long history of friendship and brotherhood, the ties between the two countries are rock solid and unbreakable, "Our people are deeply indebted for the support by Pakistan especially when medical professionals were sent to help combat Covid 19", the Ambassador endorsed while ensuring possible cooperation.

'Independent media plays important role in holding those in power accountable'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Senator Sherry Rehman on Wednesday said the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) believed that independent media played an important role in holding those in power accountable. In a statement regarding World Press Freedom Day, the federal minister paid tribute to all the journalists on the occasion.

Senator Sherry Rehman said the PPP stood by journalist organizations and all brave and dedicated journalists in the struggle for freedom of expression and pen. "We value and respect the importance, role and contribution of journalists. The People's Party and our leadership firmly believe that a free and independent press is essential for a healthy democracy and a just society," Sherry Rehman said.

She added that the PPP fully supported the struggle for media freedom in the country, and stood in solidarity with all journalists in this regard. "And we will do everything possible to ensure that all journalists across the country can do their duty freely and without fear of reprisal," Sherry Rehman vowed.

World Migratory Day to be marked on May 13

ISLAMABAD (APP): World Migratory Bird Day will be marked on May 13 (Saturday) across the globe including Pakistan to highlight the need to protect migratory birds and their habitats. The United Nations is one of the many organizations that support this global awareness campaign. The 'Blue Jay' is one of the world's migratory birds.

On the second weekend each May, people around the world celebrate World Migratory Bird Day by organizing public events such as bird festivals, education programs and bird-watching excursions. Although the event is usually on the second weekend of May, the first World Migratory Bird Day was launched on the weekend of April 8-9, 2006. The event was created to help turn the world's attention to the wonders of bird migration and the need for their conservation.

Ambassador of Uzbekistan calls on Amir Muqam

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Ambassador of Republic of Uzbekistan Mr. Aybek Arif Usmanov called on Engr Amir Muqam, Adviser to Prime Minister for Political, Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture today in Islamabad.

Adviser to PM Engr Amir Muqam welcomed the Uzbekistan Ambassador and said that the two countries have always had friendly and brotherly relations.

Adviser to Prime Minister Engr Amir Muqam has extended his felicitation to H.E. President Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev on winning nationwide referendum to extend president's term limit.

During meeting, they discussed mutual interest issues including possibilities of strengthening ties in cultural heritage.

Engr Amir Muqam said that the two countries should benefit from the experience of each other, adding that there is significant potential in cooperation between the two countries.

Adviser to PM Engr Amir Muqam said

that economic, political and cultural ties between the two friendly countries are a source of unity.

Ambassador of Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan Mr. Aybek Arif Usmanov acknowledged the potential for cooperation in the field of cultural heritage and expressed his desire to undertake joint ventures on a progressive basis.

The Ambassador invited Adviser to PM Engr Amir Muqam on behalf of President Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Cultural Minister to the cultural event being held from May 5 to May 9 in Uzbekistan.

The Adviser to PM thanked Ambassador of Uzbekistan and also accepted the invitation to attend cultural event. The Ambassador said historic links are manifested in Sufi traditions in Pakistan, adding that two brotherly countries share common history and faith.

Ambassador of Republic of Uzbekistan stressed for promoting connectivity projects between Pakistan and Uzbekistan to bolster bilateral relations.

'Hajj Medical Mission' to be comprised of doctors, paramedics: Talha

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood on Wednesday said the 'Hajj Medical Mission' would be comprised of 500 doctors and paramedics.

Chairing a meeting in connection with Hajj arrangements and training of Moavineen-e-Hujjaj, he said the medical mission includes 180 doctors and 320 paramedical staffers from army and civil sides.

Minister Talha informed that besides establishing two central hospitals one each in Makkah and Madina, 14 dispensaries would also be set up at various locations in Saudi Arabia for the convenience of intending pilgrims.

He further mentioned that the medical staffers would be available 24/7 with free medicines, x-rays, laboratory tests etc.

He said, "550 best Hajj assistants had been selected from across the country, while the ministry's 220-member staff and officers would also assist the pilgrims throughout the Hajj operation." He said Moavineen-e-Hujjaj consisted of employees from Rescue 1122, federal and provincial civil secretariat, Rangers and police.

Minister Talha said the training of the Hajj assistants had been organized in the Haji Camp Islamabad which would continue by May 14 without any interruption. He said reception desks for Pakistani pil-

grims would be established at Jeddah and Madinah airports, besides setting up missing and recovery, guidance and complaints, accommodation, food, travel facilities, and monitoring of private Hajj scheme cells. Meanwhile, Director Moavineen Sajjad Yildirim said pilgrims would be provided with all possible facilities and guidance throughout this holy journey. He said the Hajj assistants were being informed about Saudi laws and trained to cope with the weather and travel rigours.

He said the ministry was using all resources for the ease and comfort of pilgrims and requested them to take special care of cleanliness in holy places.

HEC hosts Declamation Contest on Golden Jubilee of the Constitution

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan organised the national round of Inter-University Bilingual Declamation Competition 2023 held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Federal Minister for Law and Justice Mr. Azam Nazeer Tarar was the chief guest of the final round while Member National Assembly Ms. Mehnaz Akber Aziz was the guest of honour. Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Executive Director HEC Dr. Shaista Sohail, Adviser HEC Engr. Muhammad Raza Chohan, Vice Chancellors, faculty members, and a large number of students attended the event. The students from different universities across the country selected after a rigorous evaluation process through competitions held at regional level delivered their speeches before veteran judges on the themes, "My Constitution - Guarantee of My Freedoms" in English, and "Mera Aien - Meri Azadiyon ki Zamanat" in Urdu.

In the English contest, Mr. Uzair Javed from Mohi-ud-Din Islamic Medical College won the first position, whereas Reemal Intiaz from COMSATS (Wah campus) secured the second position and Maryam Zahid from University of Karachi the third position.

Syed Waqar Haider Zaidi from Greenwich University secured the first position, followed by Fakiha Asif from Sardar Bahadur Khan Women University,

Quetta and Syed Kamal Ahmed from University of Punjab Lahore who respectively secured second and third positions in the Urdu competition.

The objective of the declamation competition was to encourage youth across the country to engage with the Constitution and reflect on its importance. The theme of the Declamation Competition is "My Constitution-Guarantee of My Freedoms" in English language and "Mera Aien - Meri Azadiyon ki Zamanat" in the Urdu language. The winners of the competition would be invited to make speeches at a Parliamentary Convention in Islamabad. Cash prizes for the top three finalists will also be awarded by the National Assembly of Pakistan.

In his keynote address, Federal Minister Mr. Azam Nazeer Tarar emphasised the role of political leaders and teachers in nation building. He highlighted that the Constitution is a sacred document that laid down the foundation for a democratic society of Pakistan.

"Since its independence, Pakistani nation has passed through multiple ups and downs, however it is the Constitution that kept the nation united and provided it with guidance necessary to combat challenges," he underlined. Reading out its preamble, the Minister said the Constitution guarantees the rights of every citizen irrespective of their religious, social and cultural backgrounds as well as reveals their obligations.



ISLAMABAD: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Pakistan Nassar Abdul Rehman Almutairi called on Chairman NDMA Lt. General Inam Haider Malik in his office.

Wild poliovirus detected in sewage samples

ISLAMABAD (APP): Wild poliovirus has been detected in sewage samples from Peshawar and Hangu districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The virus was found in an environmental sample collected from Naray Khuwara site in Peshawar on April 10 and in another collected from Civil Hospital-Jani Chowk site in Hangu on April 10.

According to the Pakistan Polio Laboratory at the National Institute of Health, the two detected viruses are genetically linked to poliovirus that was found in the environment in Nangarhar, Afghanistan in January this year.

Federal Minister for National Health Services Abdul Qadir Patel has said that Pakistan and Afghanistan are fighting the battle against polio and will continue to work together to eradicate it.

"As the only two endemic countries, the risk of cross-border transmission is ever-present. It a cause of concern, but this prompt detection is most crucial to enable us to take the necessary steps to protect children from polio," he said.

Urging parents to ensure polio vaccination, the minister said, "The presence of poliovirus in our environment means our children are constantly at risk. To protect them from lifelong disability, it is critical Pakistan has reported one human case for parents and caregivers to vaccinate their children in the upcoming May campaign and in every campaign."

Dr Shahzad Baig, the coordinator of the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) for Polio Eradication, said the virus is known to move with people and this detection is not unexpected.

He added that virus genetically linked to poliovirus in Nangarhar, Afghanistan was earlier detected in an environmental sample from Lahore in January as well, but the Programme worked tirelessly and successfully prevented its spread to any other district.

Dr Shahzad Baig said, "We are working with NEOC Afghanistan and the provincial EOC to further strengthen cross-border coordination, plug any gaps and ensure quality vaccination at all border crossings. We are confident that we will prevent any further spread of this virus as well."

Pakistan and Afghanistan will be conducting a synchronized vaccination campaign during May to increase children's immunity. The campaign in Pakistan will begin on May 15 in 78 districts, including Peshawar and Hangu and union councils bordering Afghanistan, to vaccinate 23.55 million children under five, while the campaign in Afghanistan will begin on May 14. Pakistan has reported one human case and five environmental samples positive for wild poliovirus so far in 2023.

Six killed in road accident

BAGHLAN (Agencies): At least 6 people have been killed and 1 others injured in road accident in Baghlan, the police spokesman said Wednesday. "Six people have been killed and one other wounded in a road accident in the Khawja Alwan area of the province," said traffic officials. A cattle loaded vehicle collided with a car and killed six people include four men, one woman and children and injured one other, as well as about 20 cattle have been killed in the accident.

The Frontier Post

Shawwal 13, 1444 — Thursday, May 04, 2023

Yusuf appointed as VP CAFA

KABUL (Agencies): The General Directorate of Physical Education and Sports in Afghanistan has announced that Mohammad Yusuf Kargar has been appointed as the Vice President of the Central Asian Football Federation (CAFA). He secured the majority of votes in the 8th congress of the federation held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The head of the Central Asian Football Federation is Rustam Imam Ali and Kargar will be his deputy for another four years, said a statement.

UN pledges to continue speaking on women's rights in Afghanistan

KABUL (Khaama NEWS): The United Nations vowed to continue raising its voice on women's rights in Afghanistan, though it could not disengage with the Taliban's de facto regime over the decision barring women from working with the international organization.

After the two days of UN-led talks between 25 nations and groups of representatives, focusing on issues related to Afghanistan, the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres told reporters in Doha on Tuesday, that the international organizations will never be silent in the face of a systematic attack on women and girls' rights.

The meeting discussed finding a common approach to engage with the

Taliban-led administration and the treatment of women and girls. Forming an inclusive government, countering terrorism, and drug trafficking were also key components of the agenda.

"To achieve our objectives, we cannot disengage with the Taliban. Many called for engagement to be more effective and based on lessons which we have learned from the past," the UN chief said.

Participants in the closed-door talks included representatives from the US, Russia, China, Pakistan, Turkey, and major European donors, who emphasized initiating a joint approach to deal with the de facto regime.

Besides the Taliban authorities having barred women from working with

UN agencies, the UN chief stated that the organization cannot disengage with the Taliban and will continue delivering aid to the people of Afghanistan during these difficult times.

On the contrary, Sohail Shaheen, head of the Taliban's office in Doha Qatar has described such talks as "one-sided and ineffective" as Taliban representatives were invited to the meeting.

Since the overthrow of the previous government, the Taliban regime has persistently deprived women and girls of their fundamental rights to education, work, and participation in public life. These discriminatory policies are unacceptable to the people of Afghanistan and the international community.

Gem and handicraft exhibition organized

BADAKHSHAN (TOLONews): The chamber of industries and mines of Badakhshan province has launched a gemstones and handicrafts exhibition in the province.

Officials at the chamber said the exhibition is held to seek markets for a variety of handicrafts and gemstones of Badakhshan province.

"The purpose of the exhibition is to bring a close coordination between the private sector, traders and the government and to establish a center for selling gemstones in the province," said Hedayatullah Hakimi, head of the chamber of industries and mines of Badakhshan.

Meanwhile, participants called the exhibition a vital step in the extension of the business sector across the province.

"Whatever we put in the exhibition is made from precious and semi-precious stones of Badakhshan province, like vases, maps and bowls," said Anosh, a businessman.

"At least three kinds of garments have been put into the fair," said Hujatullah Mujadidi, a businessman.

'Favoritism should be avoided in ranks'

KABUL (Agencies): The deputy of the National Defense Ministry in a seminar said "Favoritism and cronyism should be avoided in the recruitment process".

The first deputy of the Ministry of National Defense of Afghanistan, Mullah Mohammad Fazil Mazloum, attended in the three-day seminar of the Directorate of Recognition, which was held in order to raise the capacity and implementation of Forms.

Mazloum said during the seminar that favoritism and cronyism should be avoided in recruitment process, and instead, competence, sincerity and commitment to the Islamic Emirate should be the criteria.

Meanwhile, officials of the Department of Identification provided detailed information about the administrative database that has been established in the past and a half year.

MoU signed between Ministry of Water, DRC

KABUL (Agencies): The Deputy Minister of Water and Energy Mujibur Rahman Umar Akhundzada, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Joyce Dalglish Country Director of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) for Afghanistan, the ministry said in a statement.

The MoU signed for the implementation of water development projects, according to the source.

"Afghanistan needs the joint cooperation of national and international institutions in water management sector and the leadership of the Ministry of Water and Energy welcomes the joint cooperation," the statement quoted the deputy minister as saying.

It is worth mentioning



that based on the MoU, the Ministry of Water and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) will cooperate with

the Ministry of Water and Energy in implementing water management devel-

opment projects and supplying drinking water to the people of Afghanistan.

19 individuals arrested on charge of crimes in six provinces

KABUL (Agencies): 19 individuals, in charges of robbery, murder, and other crimes have been arrested in the six provinces of the country, the Ministry of Interior said Wednesday.

The police personnel of the ministry have arrested 19 people who were involved in stealing, murdering, and illegally keeping weapons and ammunition, the statement said.

"Of these, a group of six members of professional thieves from the Kabul province, one person in connection with illegally keeping of military ammunitions and equipment from Samangan, a group of nine members of professional thieves from the country's northern provinces of Kunduz and Badakhshan and two others on charge of murder and theft from

Herat and Uruzgan have been arrested by the security forces of the IEA," the statement quoted.

Meanwhile, an amount of ammunitions and weapons, during a search operation of the security forces of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan have been discovered and seized in the Julgai district of Maidan Wardak province, the statement further said.

The detainees have been taken to the justice and judiciary organs for further investigation in their files, said the source, the statement added. Since the resumption of power by the Islamic Emirate, criminal activities are being tracked down all over the country, with the related organs committed to pursuing criminals everywhere, arresting them, and bringing them to law.

Diminishing reading culture worries Herat's booksellers

HERAT CITY (Pajhwok): A number of booksellers, culturists and writers in western Herat province say people's interest in purchasing and reading books has declined due to poverty.

Mohammad Jamshid Alami, a resident of 3rd police district of Herat city, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the recent developments in the country had affected the education in the country, especially in Herat.

According to Alami, rising poverty and economic problems in the country have caused the culture of reading and buying books to decline day by day.

He considered the situation as disappointing and asked the authorities to use every possible means for the development of the intellectual level of youth.

Ehsan Usmani, another youth, who visited the public library in Herat to study, told Pajhwok that there used to be several study centres in Herat, but currently only the study hall of

Herat library was open to its patrons. According to him, the fact that the number of visitors has decreased is worrying.

He added: "Although I understand the current situation, but the youth are main driving force of the society and every young person should give time to study for the growth of himself and the country on a regular daily schedule."

Meanwhile, some book-

sellers in Herat say the increasing poverty and subsequent economic problems do not allow people to buy books.

Mir Abdul Ali, one of the booksellers in the center of Herat, said that people's interest in reading books, especially young people, had decreased to an unprecedented level in recent months.

He said that the books, which are his capital, could

not be sold for months and their business faced an uncertain future.

These booksellers say they face financial losses due to the decline in culture of reading and lack of sales.

Abdul Basir Ragheeb, an expert on cultural affairs, stressed the need for promoting reading habits and said it was the duty of the government to promote the culture of reading through basic programs.



Minister visit Qargh Dam

KABUL (Agencies): Acting Information and Culture Minister, Mullah Khairullah Kharikhwa and a number of high-ranking officials of the ministry visited historical sites of Qargha dam, a statement said Wednesday.

Provision of necessary facilities for foreign and domestic tourists and some plans for betterment and

improvement of the dam have discussed during the visit, said the statement.

Acting Minister Khairkhwah, while appreciating the efforts and achievements of the relevant officials, tasked them to focus attention in maintenance of the areas which belongs to the ministry, according to the statement.

"Qargha dam is one of

the recreational place, where large number of foreign and domestic tourists are visiting the place in various seasons of the year, therefore, it is a need to more initiatives and services should be done for improvement of the place," the statement quoted

Director of the state-run Afghan Tour Company Mohammad Nabi Baha as

saying.

The Afghans asked to support the relevant organs in maintaining of recreational and historical sites and green areas in the country.

The Qargha dam attracts thousands of foreign and domestic tourists annually and plays a key role in purification of the Kabul weather.

Residents pestered by broken, bumpy roads



TIRINKOT (Pajhwok): Residents of Tirinkot, the capital of central Uruzgan province, say they encounter problems while traveling on the city's potholed and broken roads.

Ismatullah Hayat, a student of the Uruzgan University, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "The asphalt of the road has broken down and people are forced to travel on alternative routes, which is very difficult." He said the road was constructed about eight years ago, but currently it was damaged and gave motorists a bumpy ride due to poor quality.

He said they faced great inconvenience while commuting from the city to the

university, which was about ten kilometers and sometimes they could not reach the class. He asked the municipality to pay more attention to the roads and repair the city's roads.

Ibrahim Jan, a resident of Tirinkot city, said about a month ago, he took his wife, also a heart patient, and their ailing new-born baby to the provincial hospital for treatment, but they could not reach the hospital on time due to the road's bad condition and their baby died on the way.

Malik Sahib Jan, a resident of Kherkarez area of Tirinkot, also told Pajhwok that the road was built about eight years ago, but

corruption was committed in its construction.

He added that they had complained to the previous government that the quality of the road was not good, but no one listened to them.

Officials also acknowledged that the road in the city had damaged and people travelling on it faced problems. Tirinkot mayor Maulvi Mohammad Rafiq Hanar said: "The blacktopping of this 10-kilometer road was done years ago and widespread corruption was committed at that time."

He said that the Tirinkot Municipality was planning to reconstruct the city's main road this year along with many other urban roads.

IEA marks Press Freedom Day

KABUL (Agencies): Marking World Press Freedom Day on Wednesday, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) said it supports the media and said the day was an auspicious one for the media.

"The media can enlighten the public mind in the light of national interests and Islamic principles and mediate between the people and the system," said the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's deputy spokesman Bilal Karimi. He also called on all media outlets for "more commitment and good performance in the media field."

The UN meanwhile said on Wednesday that Afghanistan's media hangs

"in the balance".

According to a statement issued by the UN, the organization was concerned about the future of the media in the country. The UN said "journalists forced to work in climate of intimidation and fear amid increased restrictions by the Taliban (IEA) de facto authorities."

The UN in Afghanistan said since August 2021, large numbers of media professionals have fled Afghanistan, that large numbers of media outlets have closed, "and female journalists have been disproportionately affected with additional restrictions effectively rendering them almost unable to do their job."

UNAMA also said it had

documents numerous instances of human rights violations against journalists and media workers over the past 18 months.

The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Roza Otunbayeva, said World Press Freedom Day was a moment to show solidarity with the Afghan journalists still attempting to maintain independent reporting in the country.

"Journalists are being forced to make editorial decisions based on fear, not public interest. It's sadly part of a wider trend of declining freedom of expression and access to information," Otunbayeva said.

This year's celebration

takes place under the theme "Shaping a Future of Rights: Freedom of expression as a driver for all other human rights", as the right to freedom of expression, enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is a prerequisite and a driver for a flourishing society and the enjoyment of all other human rights.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Information and Culture officials said at a World Press Freedom Day event in Kabul that the Islamic Emirate is committed to supporting the media and that efforts are being made to deal with the problems faced by the media and journalists.

'Women can organize separate art, poetry gatherings'

KABUL (Pajhwok): Some poets and writers have asked the 'Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan' (IEA) to allow women organized cultural, literature and art related gatherings in order to strengthen this sector.

The Ministry of Information and Culture (MoIC) echoed the demand by saying that women could hold separate cultural and art gatherings by observing hijab.

In post regime change era some of the people believed government attention to cultural, literature and art activities would extinct and they would not be allowed to hold such meetings, while some of the writers and poets said they did not face any sort problems as they held such

gatherings.

He added, about half of the activities were performed by the females in the past, but after the imposition of limitations on the activities of females (in December 2022), the females have never attended our gatherings.

He said, Panj Shunbe Hai Didar trend faced financial problems and asked the acting government to financial support and to allow the females to take part in these gatherings as well.

The "Kitab Sarai Rawzana" has been supporting the Panj Shunbe Hai Didar since three months which is usually held in Khair Khana area of Kabul city and the poets gather, criticize or share

their opinion about the declaimed poems.

Mohammad Ismael Lahsari, a writer and the head of Kitab Sarai Rawzana said, that they hold weekly gatherings about literature, declamation of poems and criticisms of the poems.

He said, two other trends that names "Khair Khana" and "Laila Sarahat Roushani" were also members of their literary association but due to some economic and logistical issues, they stopped their works.

The literary trends leave positive impacts on the society, anyone that picks a pen for the enrichment of the literature must be supported, Lashkari said.

There is no restriction

for the activities of such literary associations, but the absence of females has faded out the value of such gatherings, Lashkari added.

Poet Zamir Ahmad Jahid said: "Human is a social creature, the social, economic and political situations leave positive impacts on the thoughts of this creature, especially those humans who are involved in cultural and literary fields, due to this reason, the poems turned more criticizing and they reflect sadness, sufferings and problems of the society after the takeover by IEA."

Referring to the absence of women in such literary gatherings, Jahid added, in the economic and political fields, a sort of gender gap can be established, but in

the field of literature, culture and artistic works, it is very difficult to exclude a large part of the society for these activities.

Jahid, asked the government to allow female writers and poets to attend literature related gatherings and specify what things were cultural issues for the government or if the government has no strategy it should gather cultural activist and asked them for a strategy.

Some of the female poets said that a society without the presence of females is incomplete, literature and art gatherings can female artists and poets will erode thoughts of half of the society.

Sakina Adib is a poet, she has been writing

poems from the past seven years, she was active in majority of literary gatherings prior to the takeover by Islamic Emirate, but after the imposition of the restriction on females, she could not attend to such gatherings.

However she is a member in some online groups where she can share her opinions about literary topics, but she believed the current situation and weak internet does not respond to her needs and she could not share her ideas.

Adib believed a society without the presence of women was incomplete and disabled, while the female writers and poets are unable to take their actual part in such literary programs, it means that the history of

Afghan literature cannot contain the thoughts of half of the society, which she says is irreparable.

Saadia, another poet and the one who has been writing poems since three years said, they could share their thoughts freely in the past and she was attending "Daneshjo Sher Kanoon" that created a sort of motivation for her, but after the takeover by IEA, she has never taken part in such gatherings.

Referring to presence of females in all aspects of cultural and literary gatherings, the female poets urged the officials of IEA to allow their presence in such occasions.

Mufti Abdul Matin Qani, the spokesman and adviser of the MoICA said, there

was no obstacles in the way of women hold cultural programs adding that such programs were allowed provided that Islamic values, national interest and matters related to the highest importance are not harmed.

Referring to our nation, Qani said every nation has its own cultural values adding that every provincial director of the 33 provinces of the country was obliged to arrange such cultural and artistic gatherings every week or at least once a month with the presence of cadre and youth.

Qani, about the presence of the females said, by observing hijab, the females can hold separate literary gatherings.

Russia says Ukraine tried to kill Putin with drone attack

MOSCOW (Agencies): Russia accused Ukraine on Wednesday of attacking the Kremlin with drones overnight in a failed attempt to kill President Vladimir Putin. A senior Ukrainian presidential official said Kyiv had nothing to do with the purported incident, the most dramatic accusation Russia has levelled against Ukraine since invading its neighbour more than 14 months ago.

The Kremlin said two drones had been used in the alleged attack on Putin's residence in the walled Kremlin citadel, but had been disabled by electronic defences. It said Russia reserved the right to retaliate — a comment that suggested that Moscow might use the alleged incident to justify a further escalation in its war with Ukraine.

“Two unmanned aerial vehicles were aimed at the Kremlin. As a result of timely actions taken by the military and special services with the use of radar warfare systems, the devices were put out of action,” the Kremlin said in a statement. “We regard these actions as a planned terrorist act and an attempt on the president's life, carried out on the eve of Victory Day, the May 9 parade, at which the presence of foreign guests is also planned. “The Russian

side reserves the right to take retaliatory measures where and when it sees fit.”

Baza, a Telegram channel with links to Russia's law enforcement agencies, posted a video showing a flying object approaching the dome of the Kremlin Senate building overlooking Red Square — site of the Victory Day parade — and exploding in an intense burst of light just before reaching it. Reuters could not immediately verify the video's authenticity. The statement from the presidential administration said fragments of the drones had been scattered on the territory of the Kremlin complex but there were no casualties or material damage.

RIA news agency said Putin had not been in the Kremlin at the time and was working on Wednesday at his Novo Ogaryovo residence outside Moscow. Another video circulating on Russian social media showed a plume of smoke over the Kremlin after the purported attack. The video was posted in the early hours of Wednesday on a group for residents of a neighbourhood that faces the Kremlin across the Moskva River. It was picked up by Russian media, including the Telegram channel of the military news outlet

Zvezda.

Victory Day is a major public holiday commemorating the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War Two, and a chance for Putin to rally Russians behind what he calls his “special military operation” in Ukraine. Russia marks the occasion with a huge military parade on Red Square, for which seating has already been erected. The state news agency TASS said the parade — for which the Kremlin last week announced tighter security — would still go ahead. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said earlier today that the city had introduced an immediate ban on unauthorised drone flights.

Russia has accused Ukraine of numerous cross-border attacks since the start of the war, including strikes in December on an air base deep inside Russian territory that houses strategic bomber planes equipped to carry nuclear weapons. In February, a drone crashed in Kolonna, about 110 kilometres from the centre of Moscow. Ukraine typically declines to claim responsibility for attacks on Russia or Russian-annexed Crimea, though Kyiv officials have frequently celebrated such attacks with cryptic or mocking remarks.

Journalism enjoying complete freedom now

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Wednesday that the present coalition government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif fully believed in the freedom of the media and it would continue to take practical measures to protect journalists.

In a statement on the occasion of Press Freedom Day being observed today (Wednesday) all over the world including Pakistan, she said now journalism in Pakistan was enjoying complete freedom. “The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees freedom of the press and citizens' right to access accurate information,” the minister said.

Paying tribute to those journalists who lost their lives in search of truth, she said that journalism in Pakistan went through a difficult period from 2018 to 2022. The minister said that in four years of PTI rule, there was a “mysterious censorship” in the country that scared journalists.

In 2017, Pakistan was ranked 139th in the World Press Freedom Index, due to PTI's anti-media policies, Pakistan's ranking decreased by 12 points. The person sitting in the chair of the Prime Minister was given the shameful title of “Press Freedom Predator”, she remarked.

She said that Imran Khan not only silenced journalists but got them kidnapped and they were fired at to pressurise them. She said that the PTI's four-year tenure was a dangerous period for journalists as Imran Khan had imposed restrictions on journalism. She said by imposing such restrictions, one can mislead the people but ultimately the truth has to prevail. The previous government increased the pressure from the state to muzzle the voice of journalists. Instead of rectifying his mistakes, Imran vented out the anger of his failures on journalists and media institutions. “Journalists make society strong, it is said that information is power and a journalist gives you that power,” she maintained.

KP mulls reduction in BRT subsidy

PESHAWAR (APP): Following reservations showed by the office bearers of the caretaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and in the wake of financial issues faced by the province, a reduction in the subsidy provided for the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) was being considered.

Official sources said on Wednesday that scrutiny of BRT employees inducted from other districts was also being carried out. The sources said a subsidy of Rs 3 billion was being provided to the BRT project on an annual basis however due to financial issues of the province, a reduction in this subsidy was being considered.

The official sources said that a reduction of Rs one billion was being mulled in BRT subsidy that would cause an increase in BRT fares and abolishment of additional staff services. The sources said that hundreds of inductions were made in BRT during the past KP government while 55 BRT vehicles were still non operational.

Despite an expenditure of 92 billion rupees on the BRT project, the sources said the construction of three BRT commercial plazas were yet to be completed and an additional cost of around 12 billion rupees was needed to complete these structures.

Court extends Buzdar's bail

LAHORE (PPI): An accountability court in Lahore Wednesday accepted the plea of former Punjab chief minister Usman Buzdar for exemption from personal appearance and extended his interim bail till May 6 next in the assets beyond means case.

Khurshid Alam Advocate appeared on behalf of Usman Buzdar and informed the court about the latter's appearance before the Lahore High Court (LHC) for protective bail in the anti-corruption case.



ISLAMABAD: Leader of ANP Haider Khan Hoti addressing a joint press conference along with the leaders of others political parties after All Parties Conference at a local hotel.

Free press an important pillar of democratic societies: Memon

F.P. Report

KARACHI: Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon has said that World Press Freedom Day is actually a day to salute brave journalists who brought the truth before the masses with their pen. In a message on World Press Freedom Day 2023, the Provincial Information Minister has said that free press is an important pillar of democratic societies. There is no concept of progress and prosperity where there is no room to bear and tolerate the truth.

Information Minister said that said that no society can develop without free press. The provincial minister said that Pakistan People's Party is the only party in the country, which has struggled and fought hard for press freedom. Pakistan People's Party and

journalists have always remained together for the strengthening of democracy in the country. He said that Pakistan People's Party has always taken unmatched steps to strengthen and stabilize journalists and journalists' associations.

From Shaheed Mohtarama Benazir Bhutto to former President Asif Ali Zardari, the welfare of journalists had remained leading point of our party's manifesto. He said that Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has given special instructions for taking concrete measures for freedom of press. 'The Sindh government had passed the Protection of Journalists and Media Practitioners Bill for the protection of journalists, he said and added under the bill a Commission for the Protection of Journalists has also

formed. Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Sindh government is working to establish the permanent secretariat for the Journalists Protection Commission.

The provincial minister said that a helpline has also been established under the Sindh Journalists Protection Commission for immediate assistance to journalists under threats, which will be announced soon. The minister said that Pakistan is currently facing the challenge of lies and misleading propaganda. Today there is a battle between truth and lies in the country. On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, the minister appealed all to pledge to fight the lies and misinformation in the country and make our young generation safe by informing them about the real facts.

NEPRA allows raise in power tariff

ISLAMABAD (PPI): The National Electricity and Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Wednesday allowed to raise power tariff by 34 paise per unit under the head of monthly fuel charge adjustments for the month of March.

A public hearing was conducted at the Nepra Headquarters on Wednesday on the monthly fuel charges of Discos for the month of March. The hearing was presided over by Nepra Chairman Tauseef H Farooqui. The Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA-G) submitted a petition to the Nepra seeking an increase of Rs1.17 per unit under the head of fuel charge adjustments (FCA). During the hearing, the Nepra rejected the CCPA's demand for Rs1.71/unit hike in the electricity rate and allowed

34 paise increase.

The power regulatory body said that after an initial analysis of the data, only 34 paise per unit hike is justified. It said that the decision will be applicable on all Disco consumers except the lifeline users and the electric vehicle charging stations. The decision is also not applicable on the K-Electric consumers, the Nepra said, adding that it will release its detailed decision after a thorough examination of the data later. Allows Rs3.70/unit increase in K-Electric power price

Meanwhile, the Nepra allowed the K-Electric to increase electricity rate by Rs3.70/unit under the head of monthly fuel charge adjustments. With this hike, the Karachiites will bear an additional burden of Rs5.5 billion. According to Nepra, the decision will not

be applicable on the lifeline consumers. The power regulatory body on Wednesday heard the K-Electric case seeking increase in the power tariff.

Nepra said that in the month of March, the K-Electric produced electricity with its own resources costing it Rs26.44/unit. While the rate of electricity provided by the federation was Rs9.50/unit. It noted that the rate of LNG provided by the Sui Southern Gas went up by 14%. Whereas the LNG provided by the Pakistan LN became expensive by 20%. The price of electricity provided by the CPPA registered 41% hike. The Nepra said the K-Electric added 1,900 MW electricity to its system. The Nepra chairman noted that the production rate of electricity produced by imported fuel has increased manifold.

Taliban rejects lifting ban on women's work education

KABUL (Agencies): Afghanistan has rejected the demand to lift the ban on women's work and education, a news agency reported on Wednesday. “The demand is interference in Afghanistan's internal social affairs,” the Taliban officials said.

Taliban Political Office Head Suhail Shaheen questioned how can the Doha meeting's decision be accepted or implemented when his government is not part of the process. The development comes after a two-day meeting of the United Nations' Security Council Taliban sanctions committee wrapped up in Qatar's Doha city without formal recognition of the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan.

However, Taliban administration was not invited to this meeting

where representatives of over 20 countries and international organisations participated. “Another meeting will be held in the future,” UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, citing the recently-concluded meeting “important”.

When asked by journalist if there will ever be a situation when he will meet the Taliban directly, Guterres, who headed the aforementioned meeting, said: “If the time is right, I will not deny the possibility.”

Countries that took part in the meeting included China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Norway, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Britain, the United States, Uzbekistan, the European

Union and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation.

A day earlier, foreign news agency reported that the committee had agreed to allow the Taliban administration's foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi's meeting with foreign ministers and diplomats of Pakistan and China. For the meeting, Muttaqi will travel from Afghanistan to neighbouring Pakistan next week.

The Afghan minister has long remained under a travel ban, arms embargo and asset freeze following sanctions by the UN Security Council. According to a letter to the 15-member Security Council Taliban sanctions committee, Pakistan's UN mission requested an exemption for Muttaqi was to travel between May 6-9 “for a meeting with the foreign ministers of Pakistan and China.”

Toshakhana case: Court approves Imran's plea

ISLAMABAD (INP): A district and sessions court in the federal capital on Wednesday granted one-day exemption from appearance to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan in the Toshakhana case.

Additional Sessions Judge Humayun Dilawar approved the petition while hearing the case filed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) against the former prime minister over concealing gifts he received from the Toshakhana.

At the outset of the hearing, Mr Chaudhry requested the judge to adjourn the hearing of the case without any proceedings till May 5 as lead counsel Khawaja Harris was not available. He also filed a plea seeking exemption for Imran Khan in today's hearing, stating that there were security threats to his client's life. The judge remarked that the PTI chief could attend the hearing through video-link if he was unable to come to Islamabad.

A lawyer of ECP said the electoral body had announced its verdict in October last and since then there was no development in the case. After hearing arguments, Judge Dilawar approved the exemption plea and summoned arguments on the admissibility of the ECP case on May 5.

Last year, a reference was filed against him by lawmakers from the ruling coalition accusing him of not sharing the details of gifts he retained from

Toshakhana in his assets declarations and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had concluded in October last year that the PTI chief filed false statements regarding the gifts. The electoral watchdog subsequently disqualified him for being dishonest and corrupt and approached the district and sessions court seeking criminal proceedings against Imran Khan for allegedly misleading officials about the gifts.

Medical board advises Imran to take complete rest: The former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan has been advised on Wednesday to take complete rest in order to avoid further complications with his affected leg.

The medical board at Shaukat Khanum Hospital advised PTI chief Imran Khan to take complete rest otherwise the increased swelling could pose a risk of infection, which can lead to a surgery again. The medical board has also directed Imran Khan to use a wheelchair for any non-routine movement to avoid any extra movement in this condition.

It is pertinent to mention here that PTI Chairman Imran Khan, who was shot during long march in November 2022 in Wazirabad, has been shifted to hospital after he experienced inflammation in his feet. Sources said that the PTI chief experienced inflammation in feet due to pressure, after which he was

shifted to hospital for medical examination.

Sources claimed that Imran Khan's feet experienced pressure during his appearance in the Lahore High Court (LHC) today, which caused swelling. It is worth mentioning here that the former premier and several other PTI leaders were injured after a man opened fire near the PTI reception camp at Allahwala Chowk during party's long march.

According to details, unidentified assailants opened fire on PTI Chairman Imran Khan's container near the Allahwala Chowk in Wazirabad, injuring six people and killing one. Earlier in the day, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) expressed annoyance over the non-appearance of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan in inciting mutiny case.

Hearing the case, IHC Chief Justice Aamir Farooq warned that if Imran Khan did not appear before the IHC in inciting mutiny case during working hours, the interim bail granted to him will be dismissed. As the hearing began, IHC Chief Justice Amir Farooq inquired where was the petitioner. At this, Lawyer Naeem Haider Panjotra said that he could not appear before so he had filed an exemption plea. The IHC chief justice then asked about the exemption request. To this, the lawyer replied that the application had been filed.

Parvez Elahi granted interim bail till May 23

GUJRANWALA (INP): An anti-corruption court on Wednesday approved interim bail till May 23 in two cases of former Punjab chief minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi. Two cases have been registered in Gujranwala Circle against the president of Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and former chief minister on the complaint of anti-corruption officials of Gujrat.

Elahi appeared before Special Judge Rana Muhammad Saleem who approved his bail. It may be recalled that Elahi had obtained protective bail from the Lahore High Court in two cases 6 one filed by the Punjab Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) and the other linked to terrorism.

Elahi was granted bail in the corruption case until May 15 and in the terrorism case until May 4. He had moved the LHC after the anti-corruption and police carried out a raid late on Friday night at his Lahore residence to arrest him. A separate raid was carried out early Tuesday morning at

Elahi's residence in Gujrat, his son Moonis said on Twitter.

Ex-CM's front man flees from police custody: The co-accused involved in the corruption case against former chief minister and PTI President Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi fled from the custody of anti-corruption establishment police on Wednesday in Gujranwala. Reportedly, police were shifting Pervaiz Elahi's front man Sohail Asghar from ACE police station to the hospital after the complaints made by the accused of feeling ill.

Sources said when the police van reached near General Bus Stand, some unknown persons intercepted the van, snatched the accused and fled away. Asghar is accused of awarding development projects' contracts to his favourite contractors after offering a cut to then chief minister Elahi.

It may be mentioned here that a second case of corruption had been registered against Pervaiz Elahi in Gujranwala on

Sunday. According to the FIR, Elahi made advance payment worth Rs20 billion of a contract after accepting Rs2 billion as bribe. A case had been registered against nine accused including Pervaiz Elahi's front man Sohail Asghar and contractor Tariq. According to the FIR, Elahi had allegedly received huge bribe while awarding the contract for the construction of 29km patch of road.

The deal worth billions of rupees was brokered by Sohail Asghar. The Gujranwala anti-corruption establishment had then arrested Sohail Asghar and started investigation. Pervaiz Elahi, Sohail Asghar, Tariq, XEN Highway Azmat Hayat, DEO Ashfaq Hamad, sub-engineer Salman Ahmed and others had been named in the case. The anti-corruption and police officials had raided the residence of Pervaiz Elahi in Lahore to arrest him late on Friday night. But the police failed to capture Elahi as he was not at his home at the time of the raid.

Federal budget likely on June 09

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-24 will likely to be presented on June 09, sources said on Wednesday. The National Economic Survey will likely to be presented on June 08. Sources said that the National Economic Council (NEC) session, to be chaired by the prime minister will likely to be summoned in the first week of June.

“The annual planning coordination committee will hold its session in the mid of May. The planning coordination committee will prepare features of the development budget. “The federal development budget will likely to be enhanced by 250 billion rupees in comparison to the current financial year budget,” sources said. The development budget for Fiscal Year 2023-24 could be over 900 billion rupees,” according to sources.

A prior report said that the federal government has started preparations for the budget 2023-24 in which conditions forwarded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are likely to be implemented. Sources privy to the development said the budget for Fiscal Year 2023-24 will be the ‘toughest’ in the country's history. The mini budget might be merged with the budget 2023-24.

With the merger of the mini budget in the federal government, the masses will be overburdened with taxes worth Rs 680 billion. The tax relief for the protected class is also considered to be tighter. Tax income will be increased in the FY2023-24 budget with regard to the inflation, the sources said.

Flight tactical exercise kicks off in Türkiye

F.P. Report

ISLAMABAD: The opening ceremony of Anatolian Eagle 2023, International Flight Tactical Exercise was held in Konya, Türkiye, Pakistan Air Force contingent, consisting of F-16 fighter jets along with the air and ground crew is also amongst the exercise participants.

Anatolian Eagle is an annual exercise which is being hosted by the Turkish Air Force. The exercise is one of the largest and most complex joint air force exercises in the world which aims at promoting interoperability between participating nations while providing an opportunity for shared learning. The exercise mimics a realistic aerial war and provides a real-time opportunity for the participating Air Forces to test their operational readiness.